



“1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia



LUNDS
UNIVERSITET

Lund University

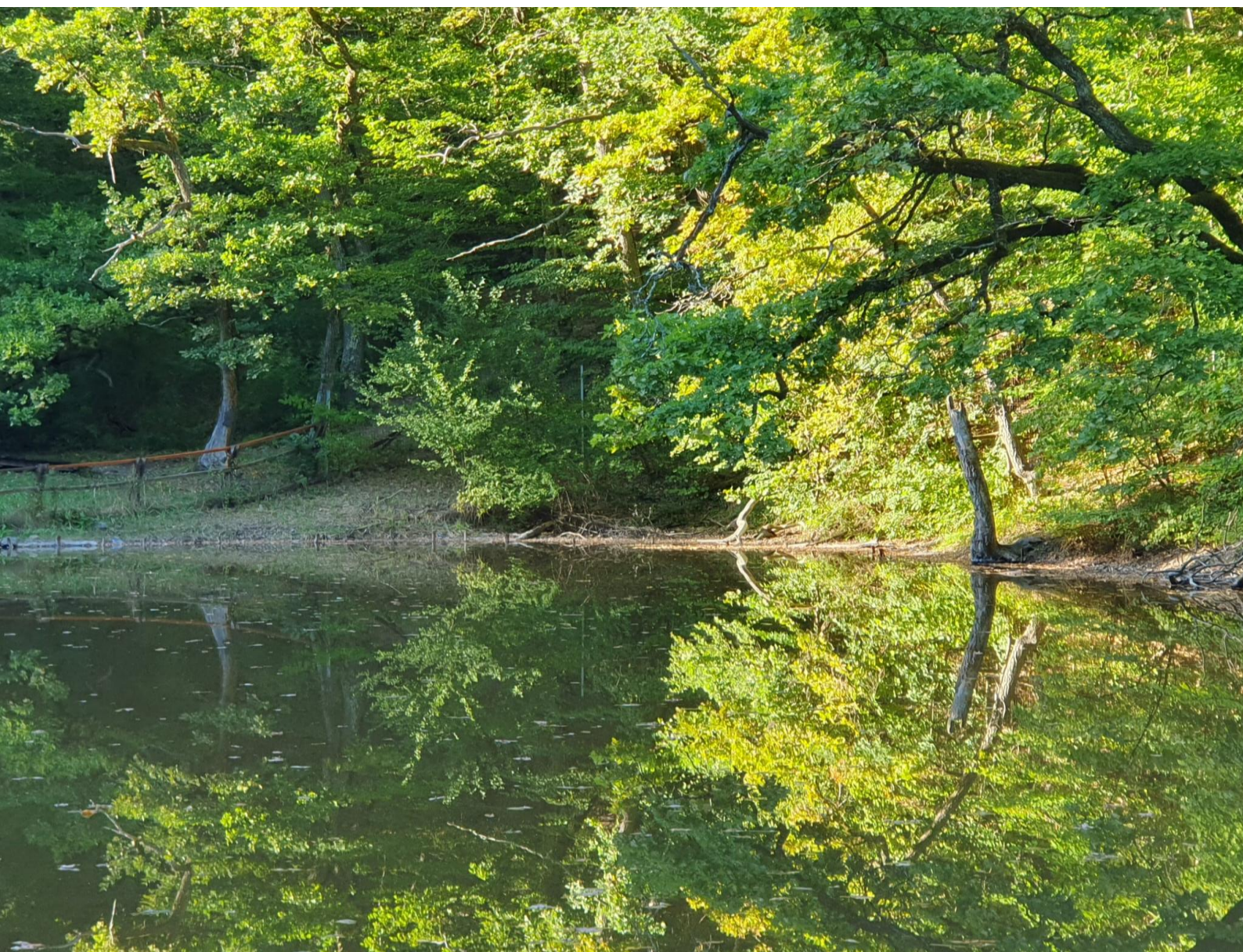


*Institutul
Limbei Române*

Romanian Language Institute, Bucharest

SWEDISH JOURNAL OF ROMANIAN STUDIES

Vol. 9 No 2 (2026)



ISSN 2003-0924

The cover photo was taken by Gabriela Chiciudean on August 28th, 2025, and represents Lacul Roșu (The Red Lake) in Sovata, Mureș County, Romania

The editorial activities undertaken by Associate Editor Lucian Vasile Bâgiu for this issue included two visits to *Jagiellonian* University, Faculty of Philology, Institute of Romance Studies, Krakow, Poland which were funded through the Erasmus + program.

SWEDISH JOURNAL OF ROMANIAN STUDIES

Vol. 9 No 2 (2026)

ISSN 2003-0924

Table of contents

Editorial	7
Introduction for contributors to Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies	10
Literature	
<i>Ileana Alexandra ORLICH,</i> Bolshevism or secular son: Reading Panaït Istrati's <i>Towards the other flame. After sixteen months in the U.S.S.R.</i>	13
<i>Corina Mariana MITRULESCU,</i> The feminized outcast: Gendering male marginality in Panaït Istrati's <i>Kyra Kyralina</i>	31
<i>Cristina Mirela NICOLAESCU,</i> The aesthetics of failure in Emil Cioran's writings: Contextual reflections	43
<i>Ioana MOROȘAN,</i> Bad mothers and maternal ambivalence in <i>Ciclul Hallipilor</i> [The Hallipa cycle] by Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu and <i>Patimi</i> [Passions] by Sofia Nădejde	58
<i>Cristina-Ileana ROGOJINĂ,</i> The functions of water in Romanian fairy tale: A study of Dumitru Stăncescu and Petre Ispirescu collections	72
Cultural Studies	
<i>Annemarie SORESCU-MARINKOVIĆ, Valentina ŽIVKOVIĆ,</i> Migrations and the sacred topography of the Deliblato Sands: The village of Deliblato ...	89
<i>Adriana Elena STOICAN,</i> Fragile structures of attachment in Carmen Firan's <i>The Lost Shadow</i>	109
Anthropology	
<i>Mária SZIKSZAI,</i> Practices of silence: Self-documentation and narrative limits in a Romanian catholic priest's twentieth-century archive	127
Film	
<i>Wojciech ŚWIĘCH,</i> The film <i>The Golden Train</i> (1986) – Polish – Romanian co-production of a missed opportunity?	142

Translation Studies

Daniela HĂISAN,

Robinson Crusoe retold and retranslated into Romanian (1835–2023): From *mimesis* to *telesis* 159

Ana-Magdalena PETRARU,

Translators' diaries as seminal Romanian texts on translation: A study of Antoaneta Ralian's and Irina Mavrodin's works 176

Daniel DEJICA, Patricia Cornelia GRIGORAȘ,

Technical translation pedagogy in Romanian universities: Survey evidence on competence development and technology use 190

Linguistics

Bogdan VĂTAVU, David MORARIU,

Bridging the gap between digital humanities and natural language processing: Text cleaning and NLP accuracy evaluation of a sample of 20th century Romanian novels 206

Raluca-Andreea PETRUȘ,

A focus on the English and Romanian lexicons: The case of cognates 229

Gabriel-Dan BĂRBULEȚ, Andra-Iulia URSA,

Pragmatic Competence in Learning Romanian as a Foreign Language: A Case-Study Analysis of Students' Interpretation of Conversational Implicatures..... 243

History

Attila VARGA,

Abafi Aigner Lajos and the secret societies in Banat in the second half of the 18th century 253

Ela COSMA,

The 25th of March 1821 on the political agenda of The Hellenic Union of Romania 261

Book reviews

Maria-Crina HERȚEG,

Novel approaches to research in applied linguistics and language education: Insights from Teodora Popescu's work 292

Bianca-Maria BUCUR,

Victoria S.-M. (2025). *Rodica Braga – între confesiune și autoficțiune* [Rodica Braga – between confession and autofiction] 295

<i>Maria BÎSCAL (OPREA),</i> The child's voice in migration literature: On Miguel Gane's <i>Când o să te faci mare /</i> <i>Cuando seas mayor</i>	299
Restitutio	
<i>Lucian Vasile BÂGIU,</i> Restitutio (3): Doctoranzii profesorului Mircea Popa. Dosar de studiu / Restitutio (3): Professor Mircea Popa's doctoral students. Study file	303
Contributors	347

The Editorial Board of *Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies* used the anti-plagiarism software <https://sistemantiplagiat.ro/> provided by 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania, to check the research integrity of all submitted manuscripts.

Editorial

The second issue of Volume 9 of the *Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies* features contemporary approaches to a diverse range of themes. Covering the fields of *Literature*, *Cultural Studies*, *Anthropology*, *Film*, *Translation Studies*, *Linguistics*, *History*, *Book Reviews*, and a closing section, *Restitutio*, the articles present engaging insights into Romanian cultural heritage.

Five compelling studies open the issue with analyses of the *Literature*. **Ileana Alexandra Olrich**, from Arizona State University, USA, explores Panait Istrati's book, *Vers l'autre flamme* [*Towards the Other Flame*] and traces its confessional style. **Corina Mariana Mitrulescu**, from Nicolae Bălcescu Land Forces Academy, Sibiu, Romania, examines the construction of masculinity in Panait Istrati's *Kyra Kyralina* (1926/1971) through a gender-critical lens, focusing on the male protagonist, Stavro. **Cristina Mirela Nicolaescu**, from Yozgat-Bozok University, Turkey, analyses the central significance of failure in Emil Cioran's major literary and philosophical works. By exploring the multifaceted nature of failure in his writings, she demonstrates that failure emerges as a source of clarity, liberation, and artistic passion. **Ioana Moroșan**, from the Institute for Literary History and Theory G. Călinescu, Romanian Academy, Romania, interprets the symptomatic representations of maternal experience in modern Romanian women's novels. She traces the theme of motherhood in *Ciclul Hallipilor* [*The Hallipa Cycle*], written by Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, and in *Patimi* [*Passions*], written by Sofia Nădejde. **Cristina-Ileana Rogojină**, from Ovidius University of Constanța, Romania, investigates the symbolic, narrative, and ethical functions of water in Romanian fairy tales, drawing on a corpus collected by Dumitru Stăncescu (2010) and Petre Ispirescu (1984). Her comparison selectively engages with Germanic and Slavic traditions as researched in the Brothers Grimm (2011) and Aleksandr Afanasyev (2020) fairy tales.

The following articles examine cultural elements identified as part of Romanian history. **Annemarie Sorescu-Marinković** and **Valentina Živković**, from the Institute for Balkan Studies, at the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Belgrade, illustrate the co-shaping of the natural and cultural landscapes of the village of Deliblato, located on the margins of the Deliblato Sands, in Vojvodina, Serbia, also known as the "European Sahara". **Adriana Elena Stoican**, from Bucharest University of *Economic Studies*, Romania, approaches Carmen Firan's novel, *Umbra pierdută* [*The Lost Shadow*], and analyses the writer's identity as expressed in fiction in a transnational context. **Mária Szikszai**, from Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, proposes an anthropological study that investigates how silence and reticence are embedded in everyday writing practices under conditions of censorship, surveillance, and personal constraint. Her corpus includes 2400 documents, which were edited and collected by the Catholic priest Mihály Tyukodi.

The *Film* section includes an extensive study on the cooperation between Polish and Romanian cinematography. **Wojciech Świąch**, an independent researcher from Poland, examines how filmmakers from Poland and Romania collaborated on the film *Trenul de aur* [*The Golden Train*], directed by Bohdan Poręba (1934–2014) and identifies the factors that shaped its reception among Polish and Romanian audiences.

Translation Studies opens with an in-depth analysis of eleven Romanian translations of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. **Daniela Hăisan**, from Ștefan cel Mare University of Suceava, Romania, examines the relationship between translation and adaptation, the reasons for retranslation, how retranslation has redefined *Robinson Crusoe*, and the inverse relationship between teaching and entertaining as the two basic purposes that modulate translated children's literature. **Ana-Magdalena Petraru**, from Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, Romania,

aims to reassess and emphasise the importance of Antoaneta Ralian and Irina Mavrodin's diaries. **Daniel Dejica**, from Politehnica University Timișoara, Romania, and **Patricia Cornelia Grigoraș**, from the *West* University of Timișoara, Romania, close the section with an examination of current pedagogical practices in technical translation training in Romania. They reveal a pedagogical landscape that has largely shifted towards practice-oriented and interaction-driven instruction, with project-based learning, case studies, workshops, and guided group activities emerging as central methods. Turning to *Linguistics*, **Bogdan Vătavu** and **David Morariu**, from the *Faculty of Letters and Arts at Lucian Blaga* University of Sibiu, Romania, propose a case study based on Romanian novels in the *Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel* archive. Their study bridges the gap between the field of Digital Humanities and Natural Language Processing by assessing whether off-the-shelf NLP tools are suitable for analysing DH-oriented textual corpora. **Raluca-Andreea Petruș**, from the *West* University of Timișoara, Romania, defines and illustrates the various types of cognates and proposes a classification of cognates into three categories, namely proper, partial, and deceptive, exemplifying the linguistic concept by focusing on the English and Romanian languages. **Gabriel-Dan Bărbuleț** and **Andra-Iulia Ursa**, from *1 Decembrie 1918* University of Alba Iulia, Romania, analyse how international students learning Romanian as a foreign language interpret conversational implicatures, and assess their developing pragmatic competence.

The final three sections address perspectives on *History*, *Book Reviews* and *Restitutio*. **Attila Varga**, from the Romanian Academy, *George Barițiu* Institute of History, in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, emphasises the pivotal role of Abafi Aigner Lajos in understanding the Masonic lodges and secret societies in the Banat region in the late 18th century. **Ela Cosma**, from the Romanian Academy, *George Barițiu* Institute of History, in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, discusses how celebrations of Greece's main National Day (25 March 1821) among Greeks living in present-day Romania are reflected in the pages of the bilingual periodical, *Ελπίς/Speranța* [Elpis/Speranța/Hope]. **Maria-Crina Herteg**, from *1 Decembrie 1918* University of Alba Iulia, Romania, reviews the book *Research in applied linguistics and language education: Design, methods and analysis* (2025), authored by Teodora Popescu, and highlights its substantial relevance for MA students, PhD students and early-career researchers pursuing a career in applied linguistics and language education. **Bianca-Maria Bucur**, from *1 Decembrie 1918* University of Alba Iulia, Romania, examines Sorina-Maria Victoria's critical study, *Rodica Braga – Între Confesiune și Autoficțiune* [Rodica Braga – Between confession and autofiction], and foregrounds the interdisciplinary interpretive framework that reads Rodica Braga's poetry and prose as a unified project of self-writing. **Maria Bîscal (Oprea)**, from *1 Decembrie 1918* University of Alba Iulia, Romania, discusses the debut novel of the Spanish writer Miguel Gane, *Când o să te faci mare / Cuando seas mayor* [When you grow up]. She underscores the originality of the writer's contribution to migration literature and exploring childhood as a site of both trauma and transformation. Ultimately, **Lucian Vasile Bâgiu**, from *1 Decembrie 1918* University of Alba Iulia, Romania, presents the activity of the doctoral supervisor, Professor Mircea Popa, within the Doctoral School of Philology of IOSUD-Alba Iulia during the period 05.03.2005-03.12.2021.

We conclude by expressing our utmost respect and appreciation to the authors from the USA, Turkey, Serbia, Poland, and Romania; to the peer reviewers from Poland, Germany, Israel, and Romania; and to the permanent members of the scientific community from Germany, Spain, the Czech Republic, the Slovak Republic, Sweden, and Romania. Honoured by the commitment and diligence of all contributors to the journal, we are profoundly grateful for the collaboration of the forty-two peer reviewers, notably three academics from each of the following institutions: *Babeș-Bolyai* University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania; the *West* University of Timișoara, Romania; and *Lucian Blaga* University of Sibiu, Romania; along with seven

representatives of *Speculum* Centre for the Research of the Imaginary, *1 Decembrie 1918* University of Alba Iulia, Romania. *Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies* is published in collaboration with Lund University, Sweden; University of Granada, Spain; *1 Decembrie 1918* University of Alba Iulia, Romania; the Romanian Language Institute, Bucharest; and the Technical University of Civil Engineering, Bucharest, Romania, and welcomes contributions from scholars worldwide.

Bianca-Maria Bucur

Introduction for contributors to Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies

Focus and Scope

Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies (Centre for Languages and Literature, Lund University, Sweden / Centre for the Research of the Imaginary *Speculum*, 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania / University of Granada, Spain / Romanian Language Institute, Bucharest, Romania / Technical University of Civil Engineering – Department of Foreign Languages and Communication, Bucharest, Romania) publishes studies about Romanian language, literature, theatre and film, cultural studies, translation studies, education, anthropology, history, along with research seminars and 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 forum for scholars that sets and requires international high-quality standards. The journal accepts papers written in Romanian or English, as well as in French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese.

Peer Review Process

SJRS has a two-stage reviewing process. In the first stage, the articles and studies submitted for publication need to meet the required standards established by the members of the editorial committee. The studies accepted in this stage are then undergoing a double-blind review procedure. Before sending the manuscripts for review, 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. Throughout the blind review process, neither the author's identity nor that of the reviewer is disclosed. The comments and recommendations of the anonymous reviewers are then communicated 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.

Indexation

SJRS is covered by SCOPUS, EBSCO, ERIH PLUS, DOAJ, CEEOL, Index Copernicus, Ulrichsweb: Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, and MLA Directory of Periodicals.

Editorial Staff

Dr. Verner Egerland, Centre for Languages and Literature, Lund University, Sweden – editor-in-chief,

Dr. Habil. Lucian Vasile Bâgiu, *Speculum* Centre for the Research of the Imaginary, 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania – associate editor,

Dr. Habil. Felix Nicolau, University of Granada, Spain / Romanian Language Institute, Bucharest, Romania / Technical University of Civil Engineering, Bucharest, Romania – editor

Dr. Gabriela Chiciudean, *Speculum* Centre for the Research of the Imaginary, 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania – scientific copy editor for Romanian

Dr. Andra Iulia Ursa, *Speculum* Centre for the Research of the Imaginary, 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania – editor (proofreading, copyediting & layout for English)

Bianca Maria Bucur Tincu, *Speculum* Centre for the Research of the Imaginary, 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania – editor (proofreading, copyediting & layout for English)

Scientific Advisory Board

Alina Bako, *Lucian Blaga* University of Sibiu, Romania
Diana V. Burlacu, Leipzig University, Germany / Romanian Language Institute, Bucharest, Romania / *Babeş-Bolyai* University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
Iosif Camară, *Alexandru Ioan Cuza* University of Iaşi, Romania
Adrian Chircu, *Babeş-Bolyai* University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
Daiana Cuiubus, *Babeş-Bolyai* University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania / Romanian Language Institute, Bucharest, Romania
Mircea A. Diaconu, *Ştefan cel Mare* University of Suceava, Romania
Cătălin Ghiţă, University of Craiova, Romania
Jarmila Horakova, *Charles* University in Prague, Czech Republic
Liviu Lutaş, *Linnaeus* University, Sweden
Marius Miheţ, *Comenius* University, Bratislava, Slovak Republic / Romanian Language Institute, Bucharest, Romania / University of Oradea, Romania
Angelo Mitchievici, *Ovidius* University of Constanţa, Romania
Anna Oczko, Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland
Roxana Patraş, *Alexandru Ioan Cuza* University of Iaşi, Romania
Victoriano Pena Sanchez, University of Granada, Spain
Antonio Rafael Rubio Flores, University of Granada, Spain
Chris Tănăsescu, Global Literary Studies Research Lab, Spain
Adrian Tudurachi, Romanian Academy, *Sextil Puşcariu* Institute of Linguistics and Literary History, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
Dragoş Varga, *Lucian Blaga* University of Sibiu, Romania

Reviewer Board for this issue

Mona Arhire, *Transilvania* University of Braşov, Romania
Ileana Benga, The Folklore Archive of the Romanian Academy, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
Iulian Boldea, *George Emil Palade* University of Medicine, Pharmacy, Science, and Technology of Târgu Mureş (UMPhST), Romania
Valeska Bopp-Filimonov, *Friedrich Schiller* University Jena, Germany
Rodica Gabriela Chira, *Speculum* Centre for the Research of the Imaginary, 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania
Sorin Ciutacu, West University of Timişoara, Romania
Mihaela Cozma, West University of Timişoara, Romania
Carmen Dimitriu, Tel Aviv University, Israel / Romanian Language Institute, Bucharest, Romania
Roxana Elene Doncu, *Carol Davila* University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Bucharest, Romania
Irina-Ana Drobot, Technical University of Civil Engineering, Bucharest, Romania
Andrzej Dubicki, University of Lodz, Poland
Marcela Fărcaşiu, *Politehnica* University of Timişoara, Romania
Ioan Fărnuş, *Ştefan cel Mare* University of Suceava, Romania
Oana Benedicta Feher, Theoretical High School Negreşti-Oaş, Satu Mare, Romania / Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, North University Centre, Baia Mare, Romania / *Speculum* Centre for the Research of the Imaginary, 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania
Rodica Grigore, *Lucian Blaga* University of Sibiu, Romania
Alexandra Gruian, ASTRA National Museum Complex, Sibiu, Romania / *Speculum* Centre for the Research of the Imaginary, 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania
Mariusz Guzek, *Kazimierz Wielki* University, Bydgoszcz, Poland

Alina Nicoleta Ionescu, *Aurel Vlaicu* University of Arad, Romania
Petru Ștefan Ionescu, *Speculum* Centre for the Research of the Imaginary, 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania
Laura Jiga Iliescu, *Constantin Brăiloiu* Institute of Ethnography and Folklore, Romanian Academy, Bucharest, Romania
Monica-Lucreția Luca-Husti, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania
Gheorghe Manolache, *Lucian Blaga* University of Sibiu, Romania
Rebeca-Rahela Marchedon, *Speculum* Centre for the Research of the Imaginary, 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania
Nicoleta Medrea, *George Emil Palade* University of Medicine, Pharmacy, Science, and Technology of Târgu Mureș (UMPhST), Romania
Speranța Milancovici, *Vasile Goldiș* Western University of Arad, Romania
Alexandra Mitrea, *Lucian Blaga* University of Sibiu, Romania
Maria Mureșan, *Speculum* Centre for the Research of the Imaginary, 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania
Marius Mureșan, *Babeș-Bolyai* University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
Valentin Orga, *Babeș-Bolyai* University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
Dana Percec, West University of Timișoara, Romania
Daniela Petroșel, *Ștefan cel Mare* University of Suceava, Romania
Cecilia Policsek, Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania
Dan Horațiu Popescu, *Emanuel* University of Oradea, Romania
Dana Radler, Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania
Marina Cristiana Rotaru, Technical University of Civil Engineering, Bucharest, Romania
Aleksandra Salamurović, Regensburg University, Germany
Marcela Sălăgean, *Babeș-Bolyai* University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
Laura-Rebeca Stiegelbauer, *Vasile Goldiș* Western University of Arad, Romania
Simona Șimon, *Politehnica* University of Timișoara, Romania
Anca Tatay, Library of Romanian Academy, Cluj-Napoca Branch, Romania
Cristina Matilda Vănoagă, *Speculum* Centre for the Research of the Imaginary, 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania
Piotr Zwierzchowski, *Kazimierz Wielki* University, Bydgoszcz, Poland

Section Editors

History, Theatre, Film:

Dr. Habil. Lucian Vasile Bâgiu, *Speculum* Centre for the Research of the Imaginary, 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania

Anthropology, Research Seminars:

Dr. Habil. Felix Nicolau, University of Granada, Spain / Romanian Language Institute, Bucharest, Romania / Technical University of Civil Engineering, Bucharest, Romania

Literature:

Dr. Gabriela Chiciudean, *Speculum* Centre for the Research of the Imaginary, 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania

Translation Studies, Linguistics, Cultural Studies:

Dr. Andra Iulia Ursa, *Speculum* Centre for the Research of the Imaginary, 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania

Education, Book Reviews:

Bianca Maria Bucur Tincu, *Speculum* Centre for the Research of the Imaginary, 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania

Literature

**BOLSHEVISER OR SECULAR SON: READING PANAÏT ISTRATI'S
TOWARDS THE OTHER FLAME: AFTER SIXTEEN MONTHS IN THE
U.S.S.R.¹**

Ileana Alexandra ORLICH
Arizona State University, USA

e-mail: orlich@asu.edu

Abstract

In 1928-29, Panaït Istrati, by then established as a writer in France, as well as a controversial communist fellow traveller in his native Romania, undertook a secular pilgrimage across the vast extent of the U.S.S.R. After attending the celebrations to mark the tenth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1927, Istrati was now searching for “the other flame”, a new social ethos and what he thought would be the historical instantiation of salvation for all humanity. His autobiographical account of this journey is a “confession” steeped in the morality of the Eastern Orthodox religious tradition against which he ostensibly positions himself as a secular idealist. As a pious “Bolsheviseer” seeking humanity’s secular salvation, Istrati therefore forces us to confront the Eastern Orthodox apocalypticism latent in the Soviet experiment. The same apocalypticism can be found in a superficially different form in the fascist-adjacent early work of Emil Cioran, which he was later to repudiate as part of his wider critique of the decay of western civilisation, but also in agonised penance for his youthful (ideological) sins. Cioran therefore forms a significant counterpart to Istrati, whose own disillusionment did not, however, lead to a complete break with communist ideal, although his criticism of the Soviet Union did result in his ostracism by the international communist movement. Whereas Cioran, as an émigré to France, moved away from the “enflamed” Orthodox ethnophyletism of Romania’s inter-war fascist ideology, Istrati, “broken”, as he himself put it, by his disillusionment with what he saw as the moral failure of the Soviet experiment, returned to Romania, paradoxically moving closer to the religious traditions he had always rejected. Although never converting, the former critic of organised religion, by now in declining health, stayed in an Orthodox monastery and published articles in the right-wing *Curentul*. In this context, the confessional style and structure of Istrati’s *Vers l’autre flamme* [Towards the other flame] can ultimately be read as a secular iteration of an older and underlying Orthodox eschatological tradition of humanity’s final redemption through suffering.

Keywords: Ideology; Communism, Bolshevism; Orthodoxy, *l’état d’âme*.

1. A Secular Pilgrimage

Panaït Istrati first visited the U.S.S.R. in November-December 1927, where he met and befriended Nikos Kazantzakis (Istrati, 1988; Bien, 2012), who, like himself, was a communist fellow traveller at the time. Both Istrati and the Greek Kazantzakis came from deeply

¹ Article History: Received: 18.02.2026. Accepted: 18.03.2026. Published: 15.05.2026. No funding was received either for the research presented in the article or for the creation of the article.

traditionalist Eastern Orthodox social milieus, and both initially thought to have found in the land of the Communist Revolution the secular realisation of humanity's salvation in this world rather than the next. It was in the company of Kazantzakis and his partner Eleni Samiou that Istrati and his second wife Marie-Louise Baud-Bovy ("Bilili") subsequently embarked on an eleven-month journey across the U.S.S.R. Stretching from March 1928 to February 1929, this secular pilgrimage "by rail, boat, motorcar, cart, and on horseback" was to take them from "Alexandrovsk (a small Lapp fishing village in the Kola bay north of Murmansk, at the gateway to the Polar Sea)... twice from Moscow to the Caucasus, three times to Ukraine, four times from Moscow to Leningrad, then to the Moldavian Republic, the Crimea, the Volga" (Istrati, 2026, p. 89).

Istrati himself frequently emphasises the higher purpose of this epic journey, which he undertakes out of a desire for universal redemption, with the traveller "subordinat[ing] his individual interests to the better mankind to come" (Istrati, 2026, p. 229). His love of humanity transcends all literary or selfish, secular motivations for travel: "there is no need for me to create 'literature.' *I lived*. I didn't succumb to being a tourist". In his painstaking record of his peregrinations—"1) Moscow-Leningrad, Karelia, northern Russia; 2) Ukraine, Moldavia, the Crimea; 3) the Volga, its towns, its delta, the Caspian Sea; 4) the Trans-Caucasus"—Istrati the secular pilgrim is constantly aware of how it is the human element that sanctifies the place. Moreover, the atheist Istrati seems unconsciously to have assimilated the gospel injunction, "Judge not lest ye be judged" (Matthew 7:1): "I gave myself up to people and more often than not they gave themselves up to me, such as they were, good or bad, heroes or villains" (Istrati, 2026, p. 89).

Among the people Istrati met and befriended were the in-laws of his future literary collaborator, Victor Serge (1890-1947). Serge is one of the central figures in Istrati's long and impassioned article "L'Affaire Roussakov" [The Roussakov affair], an exposé of the criminality and injustice that underpinned everyday life under the Soviet system. Nowhere is Istrati's indignation more enflamed than at the vicious official persecution of Victor Serge's in-laws, the Roussakovs, which resulted from a squabble over living space in a crowded communal flat. In order to lay their hands on the Roussakovs' apartment, the other tenants had filed false charges of assault and, far more seriously in the context of the Stalinist regime, accused Serge and his father of being Trotskyites and therefore "enemies of the people."² For Istrati, the Roussakov affair is "a symptom", and for its causes and "abominable conclusion" the Soviet Union must be judged as a whole, "economically, politically, humanly, and above all, alas, *morally*" (Istrati, 2026, p. 182). Ultimately, for Istrati, the moral has universal primacy over the material(ist):

I had gone to Russia *not* to discover in the workers of the "proletarian homeland" a *material* well-being superior to that which the bourgeois countries provide their own workers. Not at all. I would even have closed my eyes *to the absence of any material well-being* (which was not the case). But I was firmly convinced that, from the *moral* standpoint, from the standpoint of *basic justice* the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' left nothing to be desired, that it could not be healthier, because, while it is very difficult to achieve comfort, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, that prevents you from being *just* and *honest* (Istrati, 2026, p. 182) [author's emphasis].

In other words, Istrati's pilgrimage was never merely the search for a superior economic, social and political model, but rather it was a quest for the higher moral order of justice for the

² For a comprehensive discussion of the reception of "L'Affaire Roussakov", published in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, see Dana Radler's Introduction to *Towards the Other Flame* (Istrati, 2026).

poor and oppressed, a quest that sprang from his own passions, from his own character and past experience, rather than from reason, ideology, and the doctrine of party politics. In his memoirs, Boris Souvarine (1985, pp. 56-58) recalls that when Istrati undertook his pilgrimage to the “Mecca of communism [...] he did not know anything about Marxism but was not at all worried on that account; his feelings substituted for doctrine, instinct caused him to take the side of the poor, the exploited, the victims” (Tănase, 2007, p. 46). Ultimately, *Vers l'autre flamme* [Towards the other flame] (1929), Istrati's account of his pilgrimage, sprang from moral revolt in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed betrayed by the Revolution rather than from any ideological or political critique of the Soviet Union (Nacheva, 2018).

2. A Secular Confession

In October-December 1929, after his return to France from the Soviet Union, Istrati published *Après seize mois dans l'U.R.R.S.* [After sixteen months in the U.S.S.R.], an impassioned account of his journey and the first part in a trilogy on the Bolshevik experiment titled *Vers l'autre flamme*. Although Istrati is stated to be the author of all three works in the trilogy, the other two works, *Soviets 1929* and *La Russie nue* [The naked Russia], were by Victor Serge and the founder of the French Communist Party, Boris Konstantinovich Souvarine (1895-1984), respectively.³ The reason for Istrati assuming authorship was that, when the book went to press, Serge and Souvarine could not have put their names to works critical of the U.S.S.R. without suffering drastic, even lethal, consequences. As Serge's French brother-in-law, essayist and translator Pierre Pascal (1909-1990), wrote to Istrati in this period: “The whole country groans and shudders. The prisons are overflowing, the detention camps are full. People are being shot everywhere; where the G.P.U. and the courts vie with each other in their zeal.” (Pascal, n.d., my translation).⁴

Vers l'autre flamme. Après seize mois dans l'U.R.R.S., published by Les Éditions Rieder, Paris, in 1929, is Istrati's only work of non-fiction.⁵ Given the close proximity of Istrati's native country to the Soviet Union, the “flame from the East” was a metaphor that weighed significantly on the Romanian cultural and political mind at the time. It can be found, for example, in the first of George Topîrceanu's two “Pluvial Sonnets” (1921), with its wryly comic vision of a Balkan Peninsula menaced by impending madness and apocalypse ever since “the blaze” [văpaia] of Bolshevism, whose dreaded name the poet needs not state explicitly, was kindled in the East. It is significant that “P. Ioanid's”⁶ rather inaccurate Romanian translation of the book, published the same year as the French original by Editura Cugetarea,⁷

³ In his political history of Stalinism's Romanian iteration, Tismăneanu (2003) characterises Serge, and Souvarine as early communist dissidents.

⁴ Original source text: “Tout ce pays gémit et tremble. Les prisons regorgent, les camps de réclusion sont pleins. On fusille à tour de bras pour cela le GPU et les tribunaux rivalisent de zèle.”

⁵ All quotations are from the author of this essay's newly published English translation of *Vers l'autre flamme* (Istrati, 2026).

⁶ P. Ioanid: pseudonym of Ion Pas (1895-1974). Pas, who received only primary schooling, started out as a day labourer, subsequently became a typesetter and bookbinder, and made his début as a writer in 1912, with the volume *Din lumea celor obidiți* [From the world of the oppressed]. For Editura Cugetarea he published children's stories (his *Familia Chiț-Chiț* [The Squeak-Squeak family] stories were a mainstay of Romanian children's literature throughout the twentieth century), as well as translations of novels by Victor Hugo, Jules Verne, and Dostoevsky. He joined the Romanian Communist Party in 1948, despite suspicions that he had been the pseudonymous translator of Istrati's heretical *Confession pour vaincus* [Confession for the vanquished] (Vasile, 2011) and went on to hold high-ranking positions (Minister of Arts, member of the Central Committee, chairman of Radio Broadcasting, etc.) within the regime. Showered with honours and medals, culminating in the title of Hero of Socialist Labour and the Hammer and Sickle gold medal in 1971, Ion Pas ended up an embodiment of the kind of privileged regime writer that Istrati condemned Maxim Gorky for having become in *Spovedania unui învins* [The confession of a vanquished man].

⁷ Editura Cugetarea, founded in 1920 by Petre C. Georgescu-Delafras (1885-1963), was largely unpolitical, publishing schoolbooks and works of fiction by foreign (Anatole France, Victor Hugo, Dostoevsky, Anatole France, Thomas Mann) and

Bucharest, is titled *Spovedania unui învins* [The confession of a vanquished man]. In other words, the plural of the original French “Confession pour vaincus” [Confession for the vanquished], the heading of the book’s first chapter, is narrowed to the singular, while the confession itself is turned inward towards the self, rather than outwards towards others.⁸ At this level, the Romanian title may therefore be read as an admission of the personal defeat that his native country was only too eager to ascribe to Istrati, who was famous by this time thanks to the great literary success in France of such novels as *Kyra Kyralina* (1923), but above all infamous as a Bolshevik troublemaker.⁹

The *confession* of the French title is ambiguous and can be read in either religious or secular terms: as a written proclamation laying out theological articles of faith, as a declaration of sins or offences before a representative of the ecclesiastical or worldly authorities, or as a painfully honest autobiographical account. A famous example of the last of these senses would be Musset’s *La Confession d’un enfant du siècle* [The confession of a child of the century] (1836). Significantly, rather than opting for *confesiune* or the synonymous *mărturisire*, a word derived from Ancient Greek via Old Church Slavonic, both of which have the same range of religious and secular meanings as the French *confession*, the Romanian translation elects to use the religiously charged *spovedanie*. Derived from the Old Church Slavonic *ispovědanije* (a calque of the Greek ἐξομολόγησις, “speaking out in admission”, i.e., the full and public confession of sin practised in the Early Church), *spovedanie* is used almost exclusively to denote the sacrament of confession in the Romanian Orthodox Church. Despite the implicit revolutionary fervour of the book’s original French title, Istrati’s framing of his text as a confession—whether a declaration of faith addressed to the defeated, as it can be read in French, or the *mea culpa* of a defeated man, as it can be read in Romanian—is a clear statement of his disillusionment with the Soviet regime.¹⁰ That the work is an admission of shattered illusions is reinforced by Istrati’s letter to Romain Rolland in which he simply states, “Russia broke my back” (Lérault & Rièrre, 2019, p. 472, my translation).¹¹

In addition to pointing up Istrati’s loss of faith in the U.S.S.R., the explicitly religious overtones of the Romanian title, *Spovedania unui învins*, might also recommend Istrati’s book as a narrative of salvation deeply influenced by Eastern Orthodoxy. The messianic strain of Eastern Orthodoxy left its mark on secular society and reveals itself in Istrati’s search for both universal salvation through Bolshevism and for personal redemption through confession of defeated idealism. *Towards the Other Flame* (2026) reveals a naïve author, independently minded to the point of being an outright anarchist, who out of enflamed passion embraced a political ideology that he believed could and should have changed the world. Ultimately, as I

Romanian writers (Mircea Eliade, Mihail Sadoveanu, Cezar Petrescu, Gala Galaction). The publishing house first prospered thanks to its translations of the works of Jules Verne.

⁸ In 1990, after the fall of the communist regime in Romania, during which Istrati’s critique of the Soviet Union had been a proscribed work, a Romanian translation with the more faithful title *Spovedania pentru învinși* [Confession for the Vanquished (plural)] was published by Editura Dacia, Cluj.

⁹ The Romanian cultural establishment, in the form of such leading figures as conservative historian Nicolae Iorga (1871-1940) and newspaper editor Pamfil Șeicaru (1894-1980), were contemptuous of the uncultured, upstart Braïla dock and “wretched poet of deflowered derrières” [biet poet al șezuturilor deflorate] (Șeicaru, 1929), who had had the temerity to include a homosexual character in his novel *Kyra Kyralina*. By 1931, Istrati was excoriated by fascists and communist militants alike, with the first accusing him of being engaged in an “infernal” “Judaico-Masonic” “plot to destroy Christianity, royalty and constructive nationalism”, the second decrying him as a “venal” lackey of the capitalist bourgeoisie, and both creating disturbances to prevent him speaking in public (Tănase, 2007, pp. 65-66).

¹⁰ In his historical portraits of figures from the Romanian communist underground in the interwar and war period, drawing on files compiled by the Siguranța [Security] (the pre-communist secret police), Tănase (2007) describes the dire personal consequences of this disillusionment for Istrati within the wider Communist movement. The Communist International and Romanian “ilegaliști” (members of the officially outlawed Romanian Communist Party), described by Tănase as structured and operating as a criminal organisation or mafia, treated Istrati’s soul-searching as the ultimate betrayal, which, in the Soviet Union, would of course have been punishable by death.

¹¹ Original source text: “[c]’est la Russie qui m’a cassé les reins”.

shall argue below, Istrati was a secular son of the Eastern Orthodox tradition, who journeyed to the Soviet Union expecting to find a new and moral society, an instantiation of the salvation which that tradition had for centuries held out. Istrati's defeat is in this sense the inevitable realisation that fulfilment of this transcendent promise is impossible in secular time, in this world rather than the next.

3. Ideology as the Religious Madness of a Secular Age

Istrati's ultimate disillusionment with human history and the possibility of moral progress but also his stubborn refusal to give up the fight allow a reading of *Vers l'autre flamme* consonant with the works of Emil Cioran (1911-1995), another writer who straddled both French and Romanian cultures. Cioran, the son of an Orthodox archpriest,¹² was in his youth if not an actual member or fellow traveller then at the very least sympathetic to the Legionaries/Iron Guard, a Romanian fascist movement whose ideology was rooted in an Eastern Orthodox mysticism distorted by violent ethnophyletism. In this context it is worth noting that in "Le Haidouk de la Sigurantza" [The haiduk of the Sigurantza] (Barbusse, 1935), his slanderous attack subsequent to the perceived apostasy and betrayal of *Vers l'autre flamme*, communist fellow traveller Henri Barbusse (1873-1935) was falsely to accuse Istrati of being connected to the Iron Guard death squads. Political murder, the assassination of both enemies of and traitors to the cause, was integral not only to the Iron Guard but also Bolshevism, however, each of which were fanatical messianic movements that transformed an apocalyptic strain of Eastern Orthodoxy into a fanatical modern political ideology. Like so many other intellectuals of Romania's interbellum, including Mircea Eliade and Eugène Ionesco, Cioran was consumed by what Matei Călinescu calls the "temptation of the absolute" in his essay of the same title (Călinescu, 1997): total ideological commitment, be it religious, nationalist, or communist. His later deep interest in Russia has been read as stemming from a fascination with ideology as a secularised form of religious fanaticism specific to the Eastern Orthodox space, a fascination rooted in lived past experience. Cioran himself was later to connect Russian messianism with Bolshevism (Zarifopol-Johnston, 2009), viewing it as a secular religion that replaced the symbolic structures of Eastern Orthodoxy with its own rituals, icons, and hagiographic narratives.

Having settled in France, Cioran was much later to evince embarrassment towards the impassioned youthful works he wrote in Romanian while labouring under the "temptation of the absolute", such as *Schimbarea la față a României* [The transfiguration of Romania] (1936), whose very title makes national destiny synonymous with theophany. Cioran distanced himself from *Schimbarea la față a României* when it was republished in Romania more than five decades later, after the fall of the communist regime in 1990, or at least he did from the anti-Semitic and xenophobic passages that had been expurgated from this second edition, which he called "stupid" (Totok, 2013, p. 620).¹³ It is perhaps notable in this context that "stupid" was also the epithet that Mihail Sebastian employed in the same period as *Schimbarea la față a României* when he dismissed the impassioned political ideology of Panaït Istrati as comical and embarrassing: "A rhetorical, sentimental thinking, rather coarse in its theories, but lyrical, animated [...] What Mr Istrati says on the subject of political doctrine is guffaw-inducing,

¹² Cioran was born in the ethnic-Romanian Rășinari, Transylvania, then part of Austria-Hungary and also the native village of nationalist poet and virulent anti-Semite Octavian Goga (1881-1938), who as Romania's first fascist prime-minister (1937-8) enacted drastic race laws.

¹³ Original source text: "Daraus waren die anti-semitischen und antiungarischen Passagen entfernt, die Cioran als 'stupid' bezeichnete".

pretentious, mediocre and—and let us say it clearly—stupid” (Sebastian, 1935).¹⁴ The aphorisms of *Précis de décomposition/A Short History of Decay* (1949), Cioran’s first work in French, go to the opposite extreme of impassioned, sentimental, exalted rhetoric: lapidary, unrelentingly bleak, they are pessimistic in their dissection of Western civilisation and the inflamed ideas that drive its history. For Cioran, however, even though such illusions as religious faith, metaphysical systems, utopias, and so on, are false and ultimately decline and decay, they remain indispensable precisely because, as he argues in the following passage, they kindle the flame that humanity needs in order to carry on living and creating history:

Every idea in itself is neutral, or ought to be, but it is man who breathes life into it, projecting his own *flame* and madness onto it; impure, having been transformed into belief, the idea takes its own place in time, it takes on the guise of an event: what thereby occurs is the transition from logic to epilepsy. Thence arise ideologies, doctrines and deadly games (Cioran, 1977, p. 4, my translation) [emphasis added].¹⁵

The clearest articulations of Cioran’s philosophy of the “flame” resonate strongly with Istrati’s *Vers l’autre flamme*, in which the *flamme* is a *moral and vital energy*—the irrepressible need to live truthfully and to feel passionately, even at the cost of disillusionment. More intriguing still, as part of such a consonant reading of the two writers, are Cioran’s disparate notes from the period immediately prior to the *Précis* (1975), which he wrote before he left Romania for France. Collected and published in France only after Cioran’s death, under the title *De la France* [On France] (2009), these notes set forth some of his most prescient intuitions. Of these, the idea that “The world is becoming a threat to Europe because of its excess of soul. Russia has too much of it”¹⁶ (Cioran, 2009, p. 54, my translation) condenses Cioran’s belief that the danger in history does not arise from the sterility of scepticism, but rather from what he calls “an excess of soul”¹⁷ (p. 54, my translation). Which is to say, humanity invests excessive psychical energy in ideas, a surplus of flame, which becomes an ideological fervour that must be released outward. Although consonant with Istrati’s flame as excessive energy, Cioran’s forewarning singles out Russia for having too much soul, what he defines in *Précis de décomposition* as “Russian apocalyptic thought” (p. 47, my translation)—a diagnosis that indicates a civilisation predisposed to radicalising everything it touches.¹⁸

Cioran’s implicit warning that in Russia Socialism is transformed into apocalyptic Bolshevism posits Bolshevism, although not always by name, as the implicit paradigm of the “flame-possessed idea.” Of greater importance for the purposes in this essay is Cioran’s view that Russia does not merely adopt ideas but rather embodies them with all the catastrophic consequences that such embodiment entails, a view that materialises in Istrati’s pursuit of the Bolshevik ideal kindled by the flame that is able to convert belief into destiny.

¹⁴ Original source text: “O gândire retorică, sentimentală, cam groasă în teoriile ei, dar lirică, animată [...] Ceea ce spune dl. Istrati în materie de doctrină politică e hilarant, pretențios, mediocru și—ca să vorbim limpede—prost.”

¹⁵ Original source text: “En elle-même toute idée est neutre ou devrait l’être; mais l’homme l’anime, y projette ses flammes et ses démenées; impure, transformée en croyance, elle s’insère dans le temps, prend figure d’événement: le passage de la logique à l’épilepsie est consommé. Ainsi naissent les idéologies, les doctrines, et les farces sanglantes.”

¹⁶ Original source text: “Le monde s’élève menaçant pour l’Europe en raison de son excès d’âme. La Russie en a trop.”

¹⁷ Original source text: “excès d’âme”

¹⁸ Original source text: “la pensée apocalyptique russe.” I wish to thank Frederic Canovas for the following, more detailed exposition of this idea, which I paraphrase: Cioran’s understanding of *excès d’âme* (excess soul) entails an exaggerated form of emotional and spiritual action identifiable among the Russians and other Slavic peoples, perceived as irrational and threatening by the Western European nations and even by those non-Slavic communities that border Russia. The concept of *l’âme russe*, the Russian soul, identified as a mixture of mysticism and melancholy, developed in Russia from the 1840s onwards, starting with Gogol’s *Dead Souls* (1840) and culminating in the novels of Dostoevsky; the concept fascinated Cioran, who found it hyperbolic and indicative of a reprehensible cultural messianic streak, of a proclivity to violence and overall hostility, which he rejected in favour of western moderation and classical cultural values.

My point is that the disparate aphorisms of Cioran's early writings are affected by the flame which later, in *Précis*, he diagnoses as catastrophic. Nevertheless, *Précis* is to be seen not as a stylistic evolution so much as Cioran's own *retreat*, his self-adjusting attempt to extinguish the flame, which he will diagnose as enabling the infusion of logic into convulsive thought. In his endeavour to quell the flame, Cioran goes West, first to Germany and then to France, where he will embrace lucidity and Enlightenment rationalism as the necessary counterbalance to the excesses of the soul. After *Précis*, continuing Cioran's post-war trajectory, *La Tentation d'exister* [The temptation to exist] (1956) fully articulates his political eschatology in a collection of essays on Russia and Eastern Europe that link Orthodox eschatology with Slavic excess of soul and revolutionary absolutism. According to Cioran, since the only way for Russia to adopt socialism was by transforming it into a religion of the end times, Bolshevism was capable of arising only as a socialism steeped in Orthodox apocalypticism, which in essence means that by adapting to political necessity, Bolshevism would become a secular eschatology with the proletariat standing in for the Messiah.

For Cioran, a denizen of the hinterlands of the Slavic soul that adjoin Russia who emigrated to France, where he wrote his major works, cultural geography played a key role in adapting his thought to a particular social milieu while he himself remained anchored in the cultural system that the Eastern Orthodoxy of his native Romania provided. For Istrati, who preceded Cioran in leaving Romania for France, the flame kindled by the Bolshevik fervour he embraced during his time in France led him also to embrace the U.S.S.R. and Bolshevism with all the fervour of a new convert, but one who nonetheless remained unconsciously grounded in the Orthodox traditions of his native land. The non-religious Istrati saw Bolshevism as a form of ultimate salvation, as a redefined Orthodoxy or secular eschatology focused on transforming the material world, not by seeking to determine how God might be made part of human society but by replacing the divine plan propounded by Orthodoxy with the collective will of the people in determining their own historical, material destiny.

4. World-Consuming Ideological Combustion

In the light of the above, Istrati's excessive initial embrace of Bolshevism may be understood in terms of the unbounded mixture of mysticism and melancholy permeating what Cioran labels the Slavic soul. This Byzantine/Eastern Orthodox apocalyptic psychology is not the exclusive preserve of Russia, but in fact permeates the Romanian space, where it manifests itself both as the violent mystic nationalism of the Iron Guard and as the "other flame" of Bolshevism that kindled an excess of soul in non-religious believers such as Panaït Istrati.

For Istrati, the flame that once burned before the Orthodox icons of his native Romania now begins to burn in historical time, having been kindled within the material present of the Soviet Union. On his secular pilgrimage to the land of the eastern flame, he encounters a Bolshevism which reigns not as an ideological aberration but as a rectified Orthodoxy. Dispensing with God, secular transcendence seeks the divine essence in proletarian collectivism. Ultimately, for Istrati, Bolshevism does not so much reflect an excess of soul as preserve and legitimise it, just as Byzantine Orthodoxy, with the centuries-old weight of its mystical tradition and the eternity of its atemporal liturgy, nurtures the theological zealot and the blindly believing faithful alike.¹⁹

In *Towards the Other Flame* Bolshevism must be *inhabited*, sanctified, suffered for, with Istrati's Orthodox metaphysical temperament finding articulation as a *theory of*

¹⁹ One might note that, in his allegiance to Bolshevism, Istrati differs very little, albeit in a different context, from Alyosha Karamazov, who, although dismayed by Father Zosima's stinking corpse, which might have prompted him to doubt, is actually spurred to even more fervent devotion.

ideological combustion. He declares himself “consumed by my beautiful flame” (Istrati, 2026, p. 128), which also sets ablaze “the faces of the people throughout the Soviet Union” and, having consumed them, will spread to “take hold of the whole world” (Istrati 2026: 116). Entering the Soviet Union, as if passing through the gates of heaven itself, he writes:

the red train [that] makes its majestic entry into the land, passing under the red arch with its letters of flame!

PROLETARIANS OF ALL COUNTRIES! UNITE!

.....

It is with the generous blood of your millions of hearts that these grand triumphal arches and these *letters of flame* on the Soviet frontiers were painted and set ablaze (Istrati, 2026, p. 97) [emphasis added].

Viewed thus, “*la flamme*” is both metaphysical and geopolitical. Ideologies arise precisely where the flame catches hold of ideas, as Cioran foresees in *Précis* when he states, “Thus are born ideologies, doctrines, blood-stained practical jokes”²⁰ (Cioran, 1977, p. 4, my translation). Bolshevism, in the framework of *Towards the Other Flame*, is not an aberration but a symptom, which Istrati’s soul, consumed by the flame, zealously embraces, while refusing to accept that Bolshevism plus the Russian soul equals catastrophe for the U.S.S.R.

5. The Secular Faith of a Bolsheviser

Whereas the flame as *excès d’âme*, as incandescent, all-consuming ideology, causes Cioran to retreat into pessimism, it turns Istrati into what he calls a *Bolsheviser*: a fanatic intent on enlightening others through a substitute religion that must be blindly adhered to, with even the slightest divergence from the revolutionary creed being treated as apostasy. Unwilling to acknowledge defeat when the realities of the Soviet Union dismally fail to live up to the inflamed ideal, Istrati dons the hair shirt of self-excoriating confession, the quintessentially revolutionary confessional of the true believer, vanquished but unbowed, still burning with the fervour to destroy capitalism and the “hotchpotch of false values” (Istrati, 2026, p. 125).

In this context, Istrati cannot be viewed as “the two-faced Panait Istrati” (Volin, 1929, p. 1) who was denounced for voicing a vehement protest against “Komsomol cadres [who are] completely putrid” (Istrati, 2026, p. 85), precisely because Istrati defines himself as a “Bolsheviser”, a term meant to spell out the true task of the Bolshevik when confronted with the deplorable criminality of those who have usurped the revolutionary ideal:

A Bolsheviser—which is to say: for the working-class taking power and for the destruction of capitalism—is what I have always been and what I shall remain, *under the conditions that you will see once you have read this book*. They are wholly to the honour of a Bolshevism à la Lenin, à la Trotsky, à la Dzerzhinsky and all the heroes of the October Revolution who did not become the assassins of their own achievement (Istrati, 2026, p. 90).

Early in *Towards the Other Flame*, Istrati effusively describes his enthusiasm for Bolshevism upon first arriving in Russia, having “slapped the face of the selfish and cautious vermin that is this despicable West” (Istrati, 2026, p. 82), but even after he experiences bitter disillusionment, confessing, “now I am one of the vanquished. Those whom I thought as hard as stone . . . are also vermin, vermin who would sacrifice all *for the salvation of their beloved doctrine, grinding down the innocent*” (Istrati, 2026, p. 83), his Bolshevik fervour remains

²⁰ Original source text: “Ainsi naissent les idéologies, les doctrines, et les farces sanglantes”

unabated. Far from expressing regret over what he now perceives to be the failed Soviet experiment, Istrati declares, employing italics for vehemence, “*Despite all, the U.S.S.R. must remain, for the world proletariat, what it is in reality: the unassailable fortress against which capitalism must shatter one day*” (Istrati, 2026, p. 75) [author’s emphasis]. With unmitigated faith in the communist dream, despite betrayal of the new Bolshevik civilisation at the hands of various Russian communists, Istrati declares, “the *Bolshevism* that I hailed . . . spoke to the working-class world through the mouth of Lenin and will never perish as long as there are revolutionaries sent to their deaths by criminal capitalism and to Siberia by execrable communists” (Istrati, 2026, p. 63) [author’s emphasis].

As Pierre Dominique remarks when interviewing him on his return to France after almost two years in the U.S.S.R., Istrati’s faith in the proletarian movement was so little shaken that he was able enthusiastically to proclaim, “The Revolution is dead, let us move toward the other Flame.”²¹ Sheltering the flame close to his chest, Istrati vows that he will continue to lend his support to the Bolshevik political, economic and cultural experiment playing out in the U.S.S.R., no matter how imperfect it might be, and which he places in opposition to a capitalism envisioned as “American skyscrapers, above which the nightingale does not sing, where man is a mechanical brute, and where existence is nothing but a way of killing life” (Istrati, 2026, p. 80).

Reflecting on the disquieting background of what Cioran calls “the transition from logic to epilepsy,” Istrati not only bears out Cioran’s warning but also encapsulates the central insight of *Towards the Other Flame*: as an idea and belief Bolshevism remains embedded in historical time and events; it endures, clinging to its own myth, which “possesses the virtues of a Phoenix” (Istrati, 2026, p. 91). In a state of perpetual longing for the other flame that heats the incubator for the new civilisation to be birthed by Bolshevism, Istrati holds fast to the conviction that “it is to Bolshevism that humanity will one day owe its complete liberation” (Istrati, 2026, p. 126).

6. Bolshevism Brings the Flame Down to Earth

Istrati nonetheless openly acknowledges the naivety of his embrace of the U.S.S.R., his callowness as an idealistic new convert. In an interview with Frédéric Lefèvre, “Une heure avec Panaït Istrati” (1929), he frankly admits his lack of revolutionary experience and the sentimentality of his ideals. Utterly repudiating the capitalist system, Istrati appears to be hopelessly seduced by the Soviet mirage. As he himself confesses, “the emergence of *Bolshevism* . . . won me over thanks to its charm, its precision, its courage. I promptly signed up, the day after the October Revolution, regardless of the fact that I was in Switzerland at the time and that the gesture might have cost me dearly” (Istrati, 2026, p. 62). At a time when he was “sick to death” of the trades-unionism which had hitherto characterised the Romanian revolutionary movement, Istrati was won over by the enormous energy and resources that went into the implementation of the official ideology engendered by the great revolutionary events of 1917, the victory of the Bolsheviks in the Civil War, and the canonical texts of Marx, Lenin, and Stalin.

Looking back through history at “civilisations . . . that had to be beaten with a stick to evacuate the premises,” Istrati finds that “today, the stick is raised before it, in terrifying menace. It is called *Bolshevism*” (Istrati, 2026, p. 69). Critically encapsulating Russia’s imperial past before proclaiming his firm allegiance, he continues:

²¹ I here quote loosely from Pierre Dominique’s remarks: “Panaït Istrati ne pouvait qu’être scandalisé par ses deux ans de Russie. Il l’a été, et il a réagi magnifiquement en proclamant quelque chose comme: ‘la Révolution est morte, allons vers l’autre Flamme.’” (Dominique, 1929, p. 7).

This Bolshevism has shown what it's capable of. Perfectly. Irreproachably. It did a good job. Not one labourer, of the manual or intellectual variety, can help but applaud. I'm one too. And at the cost of my own life, I really want to contribute to the destruction of tsarist civilisations—their Rasputins, their barracks, their brothels decorated by Rome prize winners, their lying monuments and their hypocritical libraries—I really want to contribute to their destruction by *every means* (Istrati, 2026, p. 70).

What *Towards the Other Flame* therefore outlines is the flame signified and encapsulated by the word Bolshevism, which, once established, will seamlessly bring about everything else. For Istrati, the word Bolshevism is a flame signifying the concept of the world being built in Russia, where it first emerged under the tsarist regime, not as a political party but as a conspiracy woven within a diverse revolutionary underground whose aim was to overthrow the autocracy. Led by Lenin who had returned to Petrograd from

the unofficial Bolshevik headquarters in Zurich, Switzerland . . . the Bolsheviks put forth an engaging long-term vision of Russia's future in the form of a supremely confident narrative of history and all-purpose explanation of the present—a vision that was enhanced by borrowings from the programs of other political parties (Kotkin, 1995, p. 10).

Lenin, whose leadership was more than just the implementation of a Marxist revolutionary worldview, put forward a more vocal, dynamic programme than the Socialist Revolutionaries, claiming for himself the world-historical mission of speaking in the name of and acting on the behalf of the people of Russia with a tyrannical assurance that required huge sacrifices on the part of that people.

The Bolsheviks entrenched themselves as the new regime after the Civil War, which was a formative experience for the Bolshevik party. As both Sheila Fitzpatrick and Moshe Lewin argue, the Bolsheviks won because they created a state, “a dynamism that the other side lacked” (Lewin, 1989, p. 401) and because they had achieved a military victory and developed militant ethos that bequeathed them a heroic myth about themselves.

What began as a war for a generation of rebellious individuals was transformed into a popular movement founded on the idealisation of the working class and peasantry, and what were initially chaotic institutions like the Red Guards, the Military Revolution Committee, and the Communist Party gradually came to make up the regularised components of a new central administration. The Bolshevik desire to build a new state was fuelled not only by the zeitgeist but also by the urge to match the achievements of the European powers and United States. The widespread conviction that Russia had a special mission was coupled with a feeling that Russia was possessed of a specialness, an apartness that superseded the western powers while maintaining a certain moral and social superiority traceable to the mysticism of pan-Slavism and Byzantine Orthodoxy. Armed with an ideology of development centred on the working class, the Bolsheviks were not simply makers of history but also its instruments and saw themselves as embarked on a holy quest that could not be belied.

The coherence of this folk version of revolution, complete with its own mythic heroism, was able to be integrated into a master narrative of social history, a chronicle of Bolshevik visions whereby Bolshevism came to be identified as the guiding light of Istrati's *Towards the Other Flame*. Whereas Byzantine Orthodoxy placed it on high, in the transcendent, Bolshevism brought the flame down to earth, situated it within historical time as a goal towards which material reality must progress and which required total sacrifice and absolute commitment. Drawing on the sacramental, Bolshevism is religious in structure, but secular in vocabulary. The people Istrati meets in the U.S.S.R. speak of the ordinary citizen who asks only for “my

daily bread for myself and my family,” which is the promise fulfilled “in the land of the proletariat” because “bread is the whole of life” (Istrati, 2026, p. 186), while the Red Trade Unions, like a host of archangels, fight for proletarian masses in a country where “the capitalists are nothing more than a memory” (Istrati, 2026, p. 188).

During his first visit to the U.S.S.R. in October 1927, Istrati seems to have wholeheartedly embraced the general message that the Bolsheviks conveyed to the masses, which propounded a total system, an all-encompassing and seemingly consistent worldview based on a sense of social justice and the promise of a better life for all, combined with a call for international solidarity with oppressed peoples everywhere. Consumed by what he perceived to be the victory of the working class and what was trumpeted far and wide as the Soviets’ historical defeat of injustice, Istrati wrote, according to Victor Serge, “as a born poet madly in love with simple things such as adventure, friendship, rebellion, flesh and blood. He was incapable of theoretical reasoning, and therefore incapable of falling into the trap of convenient sophistry” (Serge, 2012, p. 323).

7. Mythic Flame, Promethean Aspiration

In addition to the emotional overtones of his writing, myth and mythical perceptions also magnified the cultural dimensions of Istrati’s visionary idealism. The mythical structure of *Towards the Other Flame* is suggested by the flame of the title, which echoes the myth of Prometheus, the hero whose name in Greek signifies “forethought”. Personifying the celebration of intellect as the highest human faculty embodied by the stolen flame, Prometheus has inspired a long line of authors—Milton, Shelley, Goethe—who have interpreted the Greek hero as emblematic of the rebellious intellectual. By his revolutionary act of defying the gods, Prometheus becomes the archetype of the thinker whose incendiary ideas inspire and provoke resistance against oppressive structures.

Modern readers may therefore readily perceive how the myth resonates with Istrati’s early embrace of the revolutionary spirit of the Soviet Union, which he interpreted early on as a new Promethean flame kindled in the Bolshevik breast—an ideological fire, whose torch was borne forward by devoted revolutionaries, the Russian people committed to liberating the oppressed masses. The Bolshevik, according to Istrati, “was a hero, a titan, a god. First among others, he was the last when it came to feeding himself and he shunned rest. The blaze of a fecundation that ennobled life devoured his breast” (Istrati, 2026, p. 115).

Such ideals were deeply appealing to Istrati, whose life had intimately acquainted him with social injustice and suffering. In his political *imaginaire*, further inflamed by his visit to the Soviet Trans-Caucasus region, the mythical site of Prometheus’s punishment, but also a space where Promethean transformation had ostensibly been realised, exiled revolutionary Leo Trotsky appears as a chained Prometheus. In a 1933 interview with Jacques Hameline, reiterating his position on the disgraced and ousted Trotsky, Istrati declares: “I have never been in direct contact with him [Trotsky]. We have corresponded and we know each other. But I am neither a ‘Trotskyist’ nor a close friend of Trotsky. I admire him very sincerely. And besides, isn’t he a ‘chained Prometheus’?” (Serge, 2012, p. 323).²² The Greek mythological hero, whose earliest dramatic articulation appears in Aeschylus’s *Prometheus Bound*, had been a familiar figure to Istrati since boyhood, when, as a poor servant working in the Kir Leonida eatery, he was befriended by Mavromati, an old Greek sea captain, now living alone and impoverished, who taught the young Istrati Greek and gave him Lazăr Șăineanu’s *Dicționar universal al*

²² “Je n’ai jamais été directement en rapport avec lui. Nous avons correspondu ensemble et nous sommes connus aussi. Mais je ne suis ni ‘trotskiste,’ ni ami personnel de Trotski. Je l’admire très sincèrement. Et puis, n’est-il pas un ‘Prométhée enchaîné’?” (Hameline, 1933, p. 3).

limbei române [Universal dictionary of the Romanian language] to help him improve his vocabulary.²³

The servant boy and soon-to-be day labourer at the Braïla docks, who learned his language skills informally, in both Romanian and Greek, and later taught himself French, once again relying on both classical mythology and a dictionary, associated everyday life with myth and heroes from early on.²⁴ To the mature Istrati, whose sensibility craved heroes and adventure, Leo Trotsky was a new Prometheus in the guise of a revolutionary, whose defiance of Zeus's tyranny was motivated by commitment to human progress. In the tragedy that must have been familiar to the poor servant boy, the Chorus of Oceanids articulates what might be described as a proto manifesto of human progress, proclaiming Prometheus as the torchbearer of the type of emancipatory knowledge that fascinated Istrati.

8. A Revolutionary Writer's Betrayal of Humanity's Secular Salvation

Throughout his life, Istrati was a supporter of left-wing movements which, it may be argued, were Orthodox in structure (revolutions redeem past suffering, justify present violence, offer a reign of justice that brings heaven down to earth, achieve progress independently of God) and secular in vocabulary, steeped in tradition and tinted with religious dualism. He was convinced that education would help the workers develop a society built on secular values. For Istrati, the U.S.S.R. was a country inhabited by a self-proclaimed revolutionary proletariat that spoke Bolshevik, (Kotkin, 1995, p. 198) a language synonymous with advancement and social mobility and conducive to collective action, whose dynamic was that of comradeship imbued with the inherent Christian values of self-sacrifice and service to the collective good. Moreover, Istrati was emotionally committed to embracing Soviet citizens, who were guaranteed to become a part of the movement of history which he voices into a call to arms:

When you go to the paradisiacal Livadya, when you see two hundred and seventy tubercular *mouzhiks* filling the imperial palace where Rasputin used to dip his fingers in the sauce for the Tsarina to lick, when you discover that that Tsarina used to consign to oblivion, as if by accident, on some railway siding on her vast steppes, railcars crammed with soldier prisoners, who little by little were turned into a thousand skeletons above which buzzed fat flies, when you see and know this, nothing but this, labourer, you cannot but be a Bolshevik (Istrati, 2026, p. 69).

It was a prospect enticing to France's literary world—Barbusse and Roman Rolland whose works Istrati “held close to my heart” (Istrati, 2026, p. 63)—which had ever placed its faith in socialism's ability to transform the life of the working class. The French socialists could now hear this promise straight from the horse's mouth of a writer born in Romania, the Eastern Europe of mythical spaces and exotic characters. It was publicity coup for the French left, equal in its way to the enticement of the opposite attitude articulated two decades later by another

²³ The episodes are recounted in Istrati's *Trecut și viitor* [Past and future], a Romanian-language autobiographical work published in 1925 that has never been translated.

²⁴ In this as well as in other instances cited in this essay, which are described in Dana Radler's well-documented “Introduction” to the English translation of *Towards the Other Flame* (Istrati 2026), Istrati talks about learning French by reading and studying a French dictionary. In a letter of 20 August 1919, he writes to Romain Rolland to explain how he taught himself French when he arrived in Switzerland in 1916: “Je ne connais pas la langue que pour demander du pain et produire l'hilarité: je prends Télémaque et un dictionnaire et je commence à déchiffrer. — C'est ainsi que j'appris le français, il y a trois ans et demi. Je n'ai jamais regardé dans une grammaire, même dans ma langue, que je peux enseigner à quelques professeurs” [The only language I know was to ask for bread and to prompt laughter: I pick up *Telemachus* and a dictionary and I start to decipher. — This is how I learned French, three and a half years ago. I never looked inside a grammar book, not even in my own language, which I could teach a few teachers] (Lérault & Rièr, 2019).

exotic easterner, Emil Cioran, who was able to appeal to a larger and more diverse audience with his anti-idealist stance and view of history not as progress towards a bright flame but as boneyard of ideas sporadically illumined by the occasional corpse light.

During his first trip to the U.S.S.R. in October 1927, which lasted only a few weeks, Istrati travelled from one Soviet region to another, finding himself captivated by the sweeping scientific and industrial achievements to be found across the country's vast territories. In his correspondence with Romain Rolland and in articles published in the French press in the summer of 1928, Istrati is effusive about the prospects the country offers and contemplates moving to and living to the end of his days in the U.S.S.R. In his reportage "La Fête de Taras Sevchenko à Kaniev" (Istrati, 1928, pp. 12-13, my translation), he writes: "I think that here I shall be able to work more productively than in France. We are at home here. They are heading straight for the target: world revolution. Here is where I shall end my days."²⁵ A piece in *Le Rappel* confirms this intention, in which Istrati is quoted as saying, "Russia was the only country where a writer could live, because in other European nations he was doomed to complete moral isolation"²⁶ ("Panaït Istrati se fixe à Moscou," 1927, p. 2).

Istrati's second journey to the U.S.S.R., which is the primary focus of *Towards the Other Flame*, includes numerous accounts and reflections that gradually reveal the collapse of his faith in the U.S.S.R. There are numerous significant instances of this disillusionment, but one in particular is crucial to an overall understanding of Istrati's attraction to Bolshevism and his inflamed interiority, which is inseparable from his *metaphysical temperament* rooted in *Byzantine Orthodoxy*. Among the several positive dimensions of the U.S.S.R. that won Istrati's admiration was the Bolsheviks' emphasis on education. Avid autodidacts, they believed in the perfectibility of the New Man, in self-improvement through reading and learning quotations, and in cultivating writers who, in Stalin's words, had to be "engineers of human souls". As most historians agree, Stalin's appetite for Bolshevik ideology and absolute power were as strong as his hunger for literary knowledge. He loved his Cossack novelist Mikhail Sholokhov and regarded Maxim Gorky as his regime's chief literary ornament. As Simon Sebag Montefiore observes, "Stalin and Gorky were the two most famous men in Russia, their relationship a barometer of Soviet literature itself" (Montefiore, 2003, p. 96).

Notably, Gorky's childhood was similar to Istrati's, with both having lived on scraps and feeling like outcasts. Born Maxim Pleshkov in 1868, the 'bitter' Gorky drew on his own harsh experiences to write masterpieces that inspired the Bolshevik Revolution. Although he became disillusioned with Lenin's dictatorship and went into exile in Italy in 1921, Gorky was lured back by Stalin and quickly became a loyalist and indispensable advocate for culture in a country that only a generation earlier had been blighted by widespread illiteracy. Tall and haggard, Gorky was a commanding presence, rewarded for his ideological complicity with a Moscow Art Déco mansion, a dacha near the capital, and a palatial villa in the Crimea.

In a letter to Voroshilov and later in conversation, Stalin called Gorky "a good, clever, friendly person" (Montefiore, 2003, p. 97) and went on to say, "He's fond of our policy. He understands everything ... In politics he is with us against the Right" (Montefiore, 2003, p. 97). Using his proverbial charm, Stalin succeeded in "binding Gorky with cables to the party" (Montefiore, 2003, p. 97) to the point in *Pravda* that Gorky even lashed out at the Ukrainian kulaks: "If the enemy does not surrender, he must be exterminated" (Montefiore, 2003, p. 98).

For Istrati, Gorky is a glaring example of the moral failure of the Revolution, "guilty of complicity, the guiltiest," (Istrati, 2026, p. 84) because he was one of those "held highly in the

²⁵ Original source text: "Je crois qu'ici je pourrai travailler bien plus utilement qu'en France. Nous sommes chez nous. On y va droit au but: à la révolution mondiale. C'est ici que je finirai mes jours."

²⁶ Original source text: "la Russie était le seul pays où en écrivain puisse vivre, car dans les autres nations européennes. Il était voué à la plus complète solitude morale."

world's esteem" (Istrati, 2026, p. 84) and because "Maxim Gorky came from as low down as can be and had a duty to remain as close as possible to the lowest" (Istrati, 2026, p. 86). Instead, Gorky became one of the "disciplined" nomenklatura, in whose name "people are starved and the prisons and Siberia are filled with workers named 'traitors' and who are the only revolutionaries in this Soviet Union" (Istrati, 2026, p. 86).

Istrati cries out against Gorky's betrayal of the Bolshevik principles and morality embodied in the eternal flame of the revolutionary mindset. More importantly, however, this denunciation of Gorky's betrayal of revolutionary ideals, which otherwise also illustrates Cioran's lucid, tragic view of ideological ethics as incapable of saving humanity, underscores the Orthodoxy inherent in Istrati's soul not as structured religious faith so much as a spiritual style.

9. The Vanquished Writer as Secular Monastic

For Cioran, the negative wisdom of such betrayals as Gorky's is based on the recognition that ideology, once incarnated in history, is structurally condemned to violence, illusion, and ethical ruin, as he argues in *The Fall into Time* (1970) and *Les Nouveaux Dieux* [The new gods] (1969). From this perspective, Gorky is less a historically accountable agent and more a symptomatic figure, an inevitable outcome of the human compulsion to convert ideals into totalising systems that demand obedience. Where Cioran aestheticises damnation with the resignation of high intellect formulated in polished prose, Istrati recasts damnation as an ethical scandal that demands protest, a protest in which too much of the soul, an *excès d'âme*, has been invested. In this circuit, Gorky's betrayal is subject to judgment in the name of the vanquished who suffer from *too much inwardness*: "For the day will come," Istrati insists, "when the vanquished will have a say, above all the other classes, and on that day, terrible voices will interrogate Maxim Gorky, who will not be able to give an answer, to the misfortune of his legacy" (Istrati, 2026, p. 87). Ethics, for Istrati, does not culminate, as it does for Cioran, in contemplative lucidity but in a revolt of the wounded soul verging on a cosmic, tragic, interiorised Christianity; moral responsibility persists precisely because betrayal remains historical rather than fatal. Protest thus emerges in *Toward the Other Flame* not as a residue of revolutionary faith, but as the last coherent moral convulsions of the vanquished who will project their affective, mystical, quasi-pathological energy onto ideas.

Istrati's interiorised Orthodoxy, which was, unbeknownst to him, a fundamental factor in shaping his selfhood during the visit to the U.S.S. R., recommends him as a new type of religious virtuoso in whom the professional and the personal life are intertwined. A closer examination of his life reveals that in his early years Istrati was appalled by the rapaciousness of the clergy in a small village near his hometown of Braila called Cotu-Lung and this left deep and lasting mark. He tells the story of grasping priests in an article from 1907, published in Romania and titled "Biserica și popi" [Church and clergy] (Ursulescu, 2004). A few years later, in 1910, he wrote again on the subject, describing the rape of a young girl by a church deacon in an article called "Monstruoasa faptă a unui diacon" [The monstrous deed of a deacon] (Istrati, 1911, p. 1), which the magnates of the time, such as the very wealthy Constantin Mille, tried to suppress from being published in the local press.

Istrati's toned down his revulsion towards the representatives of the Church when, around 1932, in declining health, he was taken in by Neamț Monastery, where he lived from the summer of 1932 to February 1933. During this interval, Istrati wrote four articles for *Curentul* newspaper, in which he described the hardships of monastic life. In the summer of 1934, when his health was failing due to severe bouts of the tuberculosis that was ultimately to kill him, he began a correspondence with Monseigneur Vladimir Ghika (1873-1954), who

wrote six letters to Istrati appealing to him to recant and convert to Christianity.²⁷ Similarly, according to the account of Ion Th. Ilea in “La Bușteni, într-o vară cu Panait Istrati, Cincinat Pavelescu” [While with Panaït Istrati and Cincinat Pavelescu at Bușteni in a summer], an article published in *Almanahul literar* [The literary almanac] in 1970, the Monseigneur had personally attempted to convert Istrati to Catholicism.

Although Istrati never converted, I would argue that his life and the autobiographical style of *Towards the Other Flame* fit the confessional pattern of Orthodox monasticism, which is fundamentally communal in structure and not insulated from the rest of society. By virtue of the elevated educational position that monasticism holds in traditional Orthodox thinking, often even rivalling Orthodox Christian lay scholars, monks ranked higher than the parish clergy, who were not necessarily very learned or even lettered. Many monks articulated their faith and life experiences in autobiographies that laid out their devotional achievements; they were often regarded as martyrs and were held in high esteem in Byzantium, mediaeval Russia, and throughout Byzantine Orthodox Christendom more generally. Since in Eastern Orthodoxy sexual relations are not considered inherently sinful, with the priesthood being permitted to engage in marital relations, the holiness of monks often took the form of a celibacy elevated to a higher spiritual level. Finally, social activism was encouraged and in seminary textbooks such as Petr Zavedeev’s 1908 publication, “life is representative of the same asceticism as Saints Nil, but not of a contemplative, but a practical direction.” (Manchester, 2008, p. 92)²⁸

Istrati’s book shares the dual contradictory elements of self-affirmation and defeat that characterise the narratives of those who realise that the task ahead of them is immense, even unattainable, and thus requires explicit assessments of their own lived experiences and of devoting themselves to people, as Istrati professes to do in the opening pages of *Towards the Other Flame*. While anticipating many of Cioran’s hardened expectations and fears, Istrati’s intoxicating excesses of a soul consumed by the Bolshevik flame verge on the transfigured agony of the saints depicted in Byzantine Orthodox icons. For Istrati, the U.S.S.R. is “a vast land rich in hopes” (Istrati, 2026, p. 229), where a more inclusive order was founded on the universality of the proletariat, echoing a Christian brotherhood and where “a blessed land full of the future” (Istrati, 2026, p. 229) could still be achieved, not as a product of the scientific socialism propounded by Marx, but as a victorious Bolshevism heralded by the other flame of secularised Orthodoxy.

References:

- Barbusse, H. (1935, February 22). Le Haïdouk de la Sigurantza [The haiduk of the Sigurantza]. *Monde*.
- Bien, P. (Ed.). (2012). *The selected letters of Nikos Kazantzakis*. Princeton University Press.
- Călinescu, M. (1997). Romania’s Intellectuals and the Temptation of the Absolute. In R. Griffin & S. G. Payne (Eds.), *The temptation of the absolute: Essays in honour of George L. Mosse*. University of Wisconsin Press.
- Cioran, E. M. (2009). *De la France* [On France] (A. Paruit, Trans.). Éditions de l’Herne. (Original work published 1991)

²⁷ Ghika, the scion of an old Moldavian princely line, was himself a religious convert, from Eastern Orthodoxy to Roman Catholicism. He died under torture in a communist prison and was beatified in 2013.

²⁸ For this interesting discussion and bibliographical references, see Chapter 3 of Tosee Laurie Manchester, *Holy Fathers, Secular Sons: Clergy, Intelligentsia, and the Modern Self in Revolutionary Russia* (2008, pp. 68-93).

- Cioran, E. M. (1998). *The temptation to exist* (R. Howard, Trans.). Arcade Publishing.
- Cioran, E. M. (1977). *Précis de décomposition*. Gallimard.
- Cioran, E. M. (1975). *A short history of decay* (R. Howard, Trans.). Viking Press.
- Cioran, E. M. (1970). *The fall into time* (R. Howard, Trans.). Quadrangle Books. (Original work published 1964)
- Cioran, E. M. (1969). *Les nouveaux dieux* [The new gods]. Gallimard (English translation published 1974)
- Cioran, E. M. (1956). *La tentation d'exister* [The temptation to exist]. Gallimard.
- Cioran, E. M. (1949). *Précis de décomposition* [A short history of decay]. Gallimard.
- Dominique, P. (1929, December 21). Panaït Istrati chez les Soviets [Panait Istrati among the Soviets]. *Les Nouvelles littéraires, artistiques et scientifiques*, 375, 7.
- Panaït Istrati se fixe à Moscou [Panait Istrati has moved to Moscow]. (1927, December 17). *Le Rappel*, 20845, 2.
- Fitzpatrick, S. (1989). The legacy of the Civil War. In D. P. Koenker, W. G. Rosenberg & R. G. Suny (Eds.), *Party, state and society in the Russian Civil War* (pp. 389–398). Indiana University Press.
- Hameline, J. (1933, October 24). La tendre tristesse de Panaït Istrati [The tender sadness of Panait Istrati]. *Notre temps*, 29, 3.
- Ilea, I. T. (1970). La Bușteni, intr-o vară cu Panait Istrati, Cincinat Pavelescu [A Summer at Bușteni with Panait Istrati and Cincinat Pavelescu]. *Almanahul literar*, 76.
- Istrati, P. (2026). *Towards the other flame: After sixteen months in the U.S.S.R.* (I. A. Orlich, Trans.). National Museum of Romanian Literature.
- Talex, A. (Ed.) (1988). *Panait Istrati în corespondență cu scriitori străini* [Panait Istrati in correspondence with foreign writers], Minerva.
- Istrati, P. (1929). *Vers l'autre flamme* [Towards the other flame]. Rieder.
- Istrati, P. (1929). *Spovedania unui învins* [The confession of a vanquished man] (P. Ioanid, Trans.). Cugetarea.
- Istrati, P. (1928, June 20). La fête de Taras Sevchenko à Kaniev [The feast of Taras Shevchenko at Kaniev]. *Le cri des peuples*, 4, 12–14.
- Istrati, P. (1927, November 1). De Paris à Moscou [From Paris to Moscow]. *L'Humanité*, 10551, 1.
- Istrati, P. (1911). Monstruoasa faptă a unui diacon [The monstrous deed of a deacon]. *Dimineața*, 7(2172), 1.
- Istrati, P. (1925). *Trecut și viitor* [Past and future]. Cugetarea.

- Kotkin, S. (1995). *Magnetic mountain: Stalinism as a civilization*. University of California Press.
- Lefèvre, F. (1929, February 23). Une heure avec Panaït Istrati [An hour with Panaït Istrati]. *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*, 332, 1.
- Lérault, D. & Rière, J. (Eds.). (2019). *Panaït Istrati–Romain Rolland, Correspondance 1919-1935* [Panaït Istrati–Romain Rolland. Correspondence 1919-1935]. Gallimard.
- Lewin, M. (1989). The civil war: Dynamics and legacy. In D. P. Koenker, W. G. Rosenberg & R. G. Suny (Eds.), *Party, state and society in the Russian civil war* (pp. 399–423). Indiana University Press.
- Manchester, T. L. (2008). *Holy fathers, secular sons: Clergy, intelligentsia, and the modern self in revolutionary Russia*. Northern Illinois University Press
- Montefiore, S. S. (2003). *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*. Vintage Books.
- Nacheva, G. (2018). Panaït Istrati: The dissident as a mediator between the East and the West. In M. Militaru (Ed.), *Synergies in communication: 7th International Conference* (pp. 67–68). Bucharest University of Economic Studies.
- Pascal, P. (n.d.). *Letter to Panaït Istrati* (MS. 2544) [Manuscript]. National Museum of Romanian Literature, Panaït Istrati Papers.
- Sebastian, M. (1935, January 30). Panaït Istrati, ideolog politic [Panaït Istrati, political ideologue]. *Rampa*.
- Șeicaru, P. (1929, September 29). Un om năserios [An unserious man]. *Curentul*.
- Serge, V. (2012). *Memoirs of a revolutionary* (P. Sedgwick & G. Paizis, Trans.; R. Greeman, Notes; A. Hochschild, Foreword). New York Review Books Classics.
- Souvarine, B. (1985). *Souvenirs*. Editions Gérard Lébovici.
- Talex, A. (1988). *Panaït Istrati în corespondență cu scriitori străini* [Panaït Istrati in correspondence with foreign writers]. Minerva.
- Tănase, S. (2007). *Auntie Varvara's clients: Clandestine histories* (A. I. Blyth, Trans.). Spuyten Duyvil.
- Tismăneanu, V. (2003). *Stalinism for all seasons: A political history of Romanian communism*. University of California Press.
- Topîrceanu, G. (1912, September). Sonete pluvioase [Pluvial sonnets]. *Viața Românească*, 9, 376–377.
- Totok, W. (n.d.). Schimbarea la față a României (Emil Cioran, 1936) [The Transfiguration of Romania (Emil Cioran, 1936)]. In W. Benz (Ed.), *Handbuch des Antisemitismus: Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart* [Handbook of antisemitism: Hostility toward Jews in history and the present], Vol. 6 *Publikationen* (pp. 619–620). De Gruyter.
- Ursulescu, I. (Ed.). (2004). Biserică și popi [Church and clergy]. In *Panaït Istrati: Trei decenii de publicistică* (Vol. 1, *Scăpare de condei* [A slip of the pen], pp. 17–19).

- Vasile, C. (2011). 1968 Romania: Intellectuals and the failure of reform. In V. Tismăneanu (Ed.), *Promises of 1968: Crisis, illusion, and utopia* (pp. 249–251). Central European University Press.
- Volin, B. (1929, April). Dvulikiy Istrati [The two-faced Istrati]. *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 2, 1.
- Zarifopol-Johnston, I. (2009). *Searching for Cioran*. Indiana University Press.

THE FEMINIZED OUTCAST: GENDERING MALE MARGINALITY IN PANAIT ISTRATI'S *KYRA KYRALINA*¹

Corina Mariana MITRULESCU

Nicolae Bălcescu Land Forces Academy, Sibiu, Romania

e-mail: mitrulescu.corina@armyacademy.ro

Abstract

This paper examines the construction of masculinity in Panait Istrati's *Kyra Kyralina* (1926/1971) through a gender-critical lens, focusing on the largely neglected queer figure of Stavro. While existing scholarship has predominantly addressed the novel's exoticism and autobiographical elements, or the transgressive femininity of Kyra, comparatively little attention has been paid to the gendered complexity of its male protagonist. By foregrounding Stavro's life narrative, this paper seeks to reassess *Kyra Kyralina* as a significant early twentieth-century exploitation of subordinated and queer masculinity. Drawing on Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity (1990/2006) and R.W. Connell's model of hierarchical masculinities (1992/2005), the article conceptualizes masculinity as socially constructed, performative, and coercively regulated rather than a stable identity. Butler's framework enables an analysis of Stavro's repeated failure to embody hegemonic masculine norms such as authority, autonomy, and heterosexual dominance, while Connell's typology elucidates the structural mechanisms through which such failures result in subordination, stigmatization, and vulnerability to violence. Together, these perspectives illuminate how masculinity is constituted in Istrati's text through marginalization. The paper offers close readings of key episodes from the novel, including Stavro's exposure to sexual exploitation, his homoerotic desire, and his social marginalization. These experiences are analyzed not as incidental biographical details, but as formative processes through which Stavro's gendered identity is produced. Rather than presenting suffering as character-building or redemptive, Istrati depicts trauma as central to the formation of masculinity, challenging dominant literary tropes that equate male hardship with moral or heroic development. Most importantly, the paper argues that Istrati does not moralize or sensationalize queer desire. Instead, homosexuality is portrayed as intertwined with longing, confusion, and affective attachment, while social condemnation and coercion are shown to originate from surrounding patriarchal order. In this respect, the novel anticipates later queer trauma-informed approaches to gender by exposing the human cost of rigid normative frameworks. By repositioning Stavro at the center of gender analysis, this study contributes to a growing body of scholarship that reconsiders early twentieth-century literature as the site of critical engagement with masculinity. It ultimately argues that the text offers a prescient critique of gender norms, revealing masculinity as hierarchical and unstable, an insight that remains highly relevant to contemporary gender studies.

Keywords: Panait Istrati; *Kyra Kyralina*; gender performativity; male marginality; subordinated masculinity.

¹ Article History: Received: 31.12.2025. Accepted: 03.03.2026. Published: 15.05.2026. No funding was received either for the research presented in the article or for the creation of the article.

1. Introduction

Panait Istrati occupies a paradoxical position in Romanian literature, situated simultaneously at the margins and at the crossroads of national, linguistic, and ideological traditions. As Rodica Grigore (2023, p. 52) observes, his work has elicited deeply polarized critical responses since the beginning of his career. While critics such as Nicolae Iorga or Ovid Densusianu, regarded his work as insufficiently aligned to the Romanian national spirit, other prominent literary figures – including E. Lovinescu, G. Ibrăileanu, and T. Vianu – praised Istrati for the orientalism, narrative vitality, and picturesque quality of his prose. His international success contrasts sharply with his unstable canonical status in his native country, a tension that mirrors many of the thematic preoccupations of his fiction.

Istrati became a well-established writer quite late in his life, first in France and later in Romania. Born in the Danube port of Brăila in 1884, Istrati experienced a fragmented formal education and relied largely on self-instruction. Despite the economic hardships of his youth, he taught himself French while working various modest jobs to support himself, cultivating an early passion for travel. His journeys took him as far as Egypt and through Western Europe, including Switzerland and France. As Lucian Chișu (2019, p. 102) notes “although he started from the bottom and was educated at the school of misery and humiliation in life,” Istrati was always driven by “his aspiration to overcome his own condition”, an aspiration that would later be transposed into his fictional characters.

In 1921, Istrati found himself in Nice, France, penniless and on the verge of despair, even attempting suicide. Rescued at the last moment, he almost miraculously met Romain Rolland, the esteemed French writer and Nobel laureate whom he deeply admired. Rolland encouraged him to begin writing in French, which led to the publication of *Kyra Kyralina* in 1923. The novel was met with immediate acclaim, securing Istrati’s status as a professional writer. As Mircea Iorgulescu (2004, p. 20) observes, rather than dying in obscurity, Istrati became a celebrated writer first in France, and subsequently across Europe, Russia, and even the Americas. Nevertheless, his reception in Romania remained ambivalent. As both Grigore and Chișu emphasize, Romanian audiences often regarded him primarily as an “example of exotism” (Grigore, 2023, p. 53), a perception shaped by the fact that he wrote his oeuvre in French and only later translated it into Romanian. This linguistic and cultural mediation arguably attenuated the perceived artistic quality of his works in his native literary milieu. His recognition mostly came from his “fellow French writers,” while “he was not properly accepted by his native country” (Chișu, 2019, p. 103).

Istrati’s marginal position was further intensified by his political trajectory. At the turn of the twentieth century, he developed a keen interest in the socialist movement, actively participating in strikes and protests. In 1927, he traveled to the Soviet Union as a self-proclaimed Bolshevik sympathizer, despite never having been an official member of the Communist Party. This visit, however, exposed him to the stark realities of the regime, which sharply contrasted with his earlier ideological enthusiasm. In response, he authored *Spovedanie pentru învinși* [Confession for the defeated] (1929/1990), a work in which he ardently dismantles the utopian promises of Bolshevism. The publication of this book eventually triggered severe backlash, subjecting Istrati to sustained campaigns of denigration (Crăciun, 2020, p. 44), resulting in the loss of the support of many of his former promoters and further marginalization within both political and literary spheres (Gavril, 2023, p. 176).

Published in French in 1923, *Kyra Kyralina* is framed as a collection of three interlinked stories: *Stavro*, *Kyra Kyralina*, and *Dragomir*. The story opens with Adrien Zograffi’s encounter with Stavro, a once notorious and charismatic character who is now reduced to a marginalized figure. Through Stavro’s retrospective narration, the readers gain insight into his

family background, particularly the influence of his mother and sister, Kyra, and his gradual descent from a comfortable life to one shaped by adversity. The second part reconstructs Dragomir's childhood in a turbulent domestic environment marked by paternal violence, maternal neglect, and moral instability. His mother leads a life of pleasure, and she often neglects him while hosting numerous lovers and encouraging an unrestrained lifestyle for herself and her children. Kyra is portrayed as a beautiful, passionate, and uninhibited young woman who mirrors aspects of her mother. After a violent episode involving their father and elder brother, the mother disappears, leaving the two children effectively orphaned. Dragomir and Kyra run away from home and become the victims of a Turkish man who manipulates them into believing that he offers an apparent opportunity, while basically kidnapping and taking them to Istanbul, where Kyra is sold into a harem and Dragomir manages to run away from the ship where they were being held captive. Stavro/Dragomir's narration establishes the emotional and psychological roots of his character and the deep attachment he feels toward his sister, even as her fate becomes increasingly precarious. Dragomir himself suffers grave abuse aboard the ship and is used as a sexual object, a detail that marks a rupture in his innocence and contributes to his deep cynicism and mistrust of humanity.

In the final part, the narrative returns to the present timeline of Adrien Zografhi as the listener to Stavro/Dragomir's testimony. Stavro revisits his own experiences of wandering, searching for meaning, and confronting the consequences of his earlier choices. After the traumatic events following his separation from Kyra, Dragomir wanders across the Middle East, from Istanbul to Damascus, experiencing further hardship and sexual abuse from those in power. Stavro recounts the closing chapters of the life story that shaped him, while his tone becomes more meditative and introspective.

Through Stavro's story, the condition of marginality is not limited to Istrati's biography but is reproduced at the level of his fiction. Stavro's exclusion from normative masculinity reflects a broader exploration of social and existential displacement that parallels Istrati's own position as an outsider within literary and political institutions. Both figures occupy unstable positions within dominant hierarchies, reinforcing the novel's sustained concern with vulnerability and exclusion.

Read in this broader biographical and narrative context, *Kyra Kyralina* emerges not merely as an exotic or autobiographically inflected text, but as a sustained meditation on marginality and vulnerability. Stavro's life story, structured on abuse, displacement, and social exclusion, exposes the fragility of normative masculinity and challenges literary models grounded in male authority and autonomy. This paper argues that Stavro embodies a subordinated and queer masculinity that destabilizes hegemonic gender norms. Drawing on Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity (1990/2006) and R.W. Connell's concept of hierarchical masculinities (1992/2005), the analysis demonstrates how Istrati anticipates modern gender theory by portraying masculinity as performative, coercively enforced and sustained through violence rather than naturalized power.

From a trauma-informed perspective, Stavro's subjectivity develops under conditions that repeatedly undermine his bodily autonomy and sense of agency. While queer theory interrogates the instability of gender as socially constructed (Butler, 2006, p. 174), trauma studies examine the psychological and temporal disruptions produced by experiences of violence, abuse, and coercion (Herman, 1997; Caruth, 1996; LaCapra, 2001). According to trauma theory, trauma is not viewed simply as an external event but as a disruption of subjectivity that continues to affect the individual long after the original disturbance has ended. Judith Herman (1997, pp. 51-53) argues that trauma produces profound and lasting effects on identity, particularly by undermining the survivor's sense of bodily autonomy and safety which determines experiences of shame, emotional numbing and difficulty in sustaining interpersonal

relationships. Similarly, Cathy Caruth (1996, p. 4) emphasizes that trauma is characterized by its belated impact, as the traumatic experience cannot be fully processed when it occurs but returns later in intrusive forms, including emotional disturbance, compulsive repetition, and disconnection from the self. Dominick LaCapra (2001) further notes that trauma destabilizes the relationship between past and present, leading to a dissociation of the individual as a protective response that allows subjects to endure overwhelming violence.

Within this framework, we do not argue that queer identity is caused by trauma. Instead, trauma theory makes it possible to analyze how repeated violence affects the subject's sense of autonomy and identity, while gender theory explains how these disruptions destabilize normative gender performance. This approach makes it possible to demonstrate how Istrati's narrative represents masculinity as formed under conditions of violence and marginalization. While queer theory provides the conceptual tools to understand the instability of gender norms, trauma theory clarifies how repeated violations shape the subject's relationship to the body, agency, and intimacy, thus allowing for a more precise reading of Stavro's masculinity as a literary representation of gendered vulnerability.

Despite the novel's evident gender complexity, scholarly engagement with the queerness of Istrati's character remains limited and fragmented and has generally tended to privilege the figure of Kyra in discussions of sexuality and female agency, while Stavro's masculinity has received comparatively little sustained attention. Ramona Dima (2018), for instance, posits that the narratives included in *Kyra Kyralina* can be situated within the framework of queer literature; however, her analysis focuses predominantly on the figure of Adrien Zograffi, adopting a broader comparative perspective that surveys diverse representations of sexuality across Romanian literature, rather than offering a sustained reading of Istrati's text as such. In a more conservative interpretive vein, Angelo Mitchievici (2010) approaches the homoerotic subtext present in Istrati's prose as a form of moral and social deviance, framing homosexuality as a corrupted manifestation of normative human behavior. Such readings tend to reproduce dominant heteronormative discourses, thereby limiting the critical potential of Istrati's text to be examined through contemporary queer theoretical frameworks. Consequently, the absence of in-depth, text-centered analyses that address the narrative, ethical, and affective dimensions of the queerness in Istrati's fiction points to a significant gap in existing research, one that calls for a reassessment of his work beyond reductive moral and biographical interpretations.

2. Performing Masculinity and Queer Vulnerability

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, outlined in *Gender Trouble* (1990/2006), offers a productive framework for understanding the instability of masculinity in Istrati's *Kyra Kyralina*. Butler argues that gender is not something we *are* (so it is not an innate or essential identity), but rather something we *do* repeatedly and under social pressure. Therefore, the behavior men and women display (that is considered the heterosexual normative) represents, in fact, a performance or enactment of "an internal core or substance" that is a response to external anticipation; as a result, these behaviors are "produced *on the surface* (original emphasis) of the body" and are effects and functions of a "decidedly public and social discourse" (p. 178).

A key component of Butler's argument is the concept of *performativity* which differs from *performance* in the theatrical sense. Gender performativity does not imply conscious role-playing; instead, it refers to the compulsory repetition of gendered acts that create the illusion of a coherent and natural identity over time. These acts are compelled by what Butler terms the "heterosexual matrix", a regulatory framework that links biological sex, gender identity, and

heterosexual desire into a seemingly natural and unified system. Within this matrix, certain gender expressions are rendered intelligible and legitimate, while others are marginalized, pathologized, or even erased.

Butler (2006, p. 37) further argues that gender norms are maintained through mechanisms of social sanction and exclusion. Subjects who fail to conform to normative gender expectations risk becoming socially unintelligible or abject. However, Butler also identifies this instability as a site of potential subversion. Because gender must be constantly reiterated, it is never fully secured; deviations, failures, and repetitions that expose its constructed nature can destabilize dominant gender norms.

Within this paradigm, masculinity must be continuously performed in ways that align with culturally sanctioned expectations, such as authority, physical strength, sexual dominance, and emotional restraint. Stavro struggles to 'perform' masculinity correctly because he cannot embody strength or authority, and his desires do not align with heterosexual norms. Thus, his body becomes a site of control for others. This vulnerability is explicitly articulated in Stavro's own reflection on his bodily submission: "I was ready, without knowing it, to sacrifice my body which had accommodated itself to the corrupt life I was leading. One gets used to everything in life and to vice most easily" (Istrati, 1926/1971, p. 130). The passage underscores the extent to which Stavro's body becomes a site of inscription of external power relations, and it reveals a process of psychological adaptation to coercion. Rather than expressing a stable or coherent sexual identity, his reflections suggest a subject marked by shame, resignation, and emotional disconnection. In Butlerian terms, this illustrates how gender subjectivity is produced not through inner truth, but through repeated submission to normative constraints.

Unlike the traditional male protagonist who masters circumstances and exerts control over others, Stavro occupies a position of exposure. He does not act upon the world but is acted upon by it. This subverts the conventional literary equation of masculinity with agency and dominance, replacing it with a model grounded in dependence, emotional intensity, and corporeal vulnerability. Masculinity, in Stavro's case, is not a source of power but a condition imposed upon him – a role he is expected to perform yet structurally prevented from fulfilling.

The spaces in which Stavro's sexuality is formed vary from the comfort of his childhood home, where his mother had him perform "the Arab stomach dance" (Istrati, 1926/1971, p. 79) while entertaining her lovers, to those that are explicitly violent. His confession that he "had to submit to the pleasures of our respectable benefactor and was irrevocably corrupted" (p. 123) highlights the asymmetry of power underlying his sexual experiences. Later, his incarceration exposes him to further abuse, described in dehumanizing terms that erase ethnic and cultural distinctions in favor of shared degradation: "The most appalling things went on in full sight of everyone; Turks, Greeks, Armenians, and Arabs ceased to be human beings and yet no animal could have indulged in such indescribable degradation [...] Into this earthly hell I was thrown one day, and for one horrible month I suffered the most unbelievable insults at the hands of those degraded men" (p. 203).

The pattern of recurring victimization corresponds to what trauma theory identifies as the compulsive repetition of traumatic structures. Sigmund Freud first observed that traumatic repetition often manifests not as deliberate action but as passive experience imposed upon the subject. He notes that psychoanalysis understands traumatic recurrence as a result of "early infantile influences" (Freud, 1920/1961, p. 15) which gives trauma survivors the impression of frequently experiencing events that "seem to be entirely outside their wish or control" (Caruth, 1996, p. 2). Stavro's experiences do not result from his own choices but reflect what trauma theory identifies as the enduring impact of violence on later vulnerability.

Stavro's homosexual inclinations are not framed as a coherent or affirmative identity. Early in the narrative, he insists: "I've always been surrounded by perversion and outrage and

vice; the very air I've breathed from youth onwards has been tainted by them. And in spite of all this I never indulged myself voluntarily" (Istrati, 1926/1971, p. 26). This statement reveals a subject caught between desire and denial, internalizing moral condemnation while attempting to disavow agency. His queerness is framed not as an essence but as an imposed condition, emerging from environments marked by exploitation, secrecy, and coercion.

From a Butlerian perspective, Stavro's gender queerness emerges not as an inherent identity but as the cumulative effect of repeated performances shaped by vulnerability. The theory of gender performativity emphasizes that gender is constituted through reiterated acts that are socially regulated, rather than through any stable inner essence. Stavro's life trajectory exemplifies this process of constrained repetition. During his childhood, his rejection of masculinity does not stem from physical harm inflicted upon him by his father, but from his inability to endure the spectacle of patriarchal violence directed at his mother and sister. His aversion to his father's and brother's brutality and the fact that the only examples he could guide himself after were his mother and sister, transformed him into a feminized version of himself. This interrupts the normative script that would align masculinity with authority, replacing it instead with an ethics of emotional responsiveness. This early disidentification with authoritarian masculinity marks the first rupture in his gender performance.

Subsequent experiences further sediment this deviation. Repeated sexual abuse by adult men transforms Stavro/Dragomir's body into a site of coercion rather than agency, producing fear, shame, and dissociation that fundamentally reshape his capacity to perform heterosexual masculinity. His later inability to engage in marital intimacy with Tincoutza, who remains a virgin even after ten months of marriage, cannot be read as individual failure but as the embodied residue of trauma that disrupted his heterosexual normative. The idea that gender norms are enforced through social exclusion is particularly relevant here as Stavro's fear of intimacy with women and his discomfort with sexual exposure reflect a body disciplined by past violations rather than a refusal of normativity *per se*.

Thus, Stavro's narrative reflects his queerness not as deviation from gender norms but as an effect of their violent enforcement. His identity emerges through a series of thwarted performances that expose the fragility of heteronormative masculinity itself. Istrati does not romanticize queer desire, instead foregrounding the ways in which it is distorted by systemic violence. Rather than presenting masculinity as an innate or stable identity, Istrati represents it as emerging through social regulation. Masculinity, for him, is associated with fear and submission rather than agency. This supports the idea that gender identity is shaped by material conditions, not inner essence. The text therefore does not reduce sexuality to trauma but depicts a subject whose gendered identity develops under conditions of structural vulnerability.

The pivotal episode involving Stavro's attempted sexual advance toward Adrien crystalizes these tensions. The scene is narrated from Adrien's perspective, marked by confusion, fear and disbelief:

Adrien could not have said what time it was, but at a certain moment during the dark night, he felt a hand touch his shoulder, then his face. Opening sleepy eyes for a second, he could scarcely remember where he was. He slept again for a moment, but the hand kept wandering over his face and he felt a hot kiss on his right cheek. This time Adrien woke fully but he didn't move. What the devil did it mean? As he lay there blinking in the dark, he remembered his companions' position. To his right and in the middle there was Stavro; the other side of Stavro, Mikhaïl.

A horrid thought entered his mind but he brushed it aside.

'No, surely I must be dreaming; it's not possible!'

Again he felt Stavro's hand on his chest and asked in a voice which he succeeded in making fairly deep in spite of his fright and bewilderment:

‘Do you want my tobacco-box, Stavro?’ (Istrati, 1926/1971, pp. 23-24)

Stavro’s gesture, although hesitant, silent, and furtive, constitutes a failed performative act, suggesting that even he is not sure of his own intentions. It is neither a straightforward nor an overly explicit action in which the “natural body” could be “permanently breaking loose from patterns” (Tupan, 2021, p. 43). It neither achieves intimacy nor affirms identity; instead, it triggers moral panic and social sanction. Mikhaïl’s reaction is particularly revealing, because, during the heated argument that ensues this scene, he frames Stavro’s act as immoral contamination:

Mikhaïl, who had regained his control by now, put in:

‘It’s worse than dishonesty; it’s perversion. Everything was going so smoothly and you spoiled it all by doing this outrageous thing; you’ve contaminated the atmosphere. The worst crime of all is to try to spread a vice like that...’ (Istrati, 1926/1971, p. 26)

Here, queerness is constructed as infectious and destabilizing, necessitating immediate containment. Mikhaïl thus assumes the role of normative enforcer, attempting to restore heteromale order through verbal condemnation.

Dana Radler’s (2021, p. 3) observation that each character’s response reflects “different levels of experience, expectation and inner struggle” is especially pertinent. Adrien’s bewilderment, Mikhaïl’s moral policing through his “attempt to restore order by making Stavro aware of his own actions,” and Stavro’s silence while facing his “own torment” collectively map a spectrum of male positions, none of which are fully stable or secure. As Radler further notes, the narrative leaves key motivations unresolved, most notably Stavro’s decision to travel with both Mikhaïl and Adrien despite the evident risk.

Through Stavro, Istrati thus anticipates Butler’s insistence on the instability of gender norms. Masculinity in *Kyra Kyralina* emerges not as an ideal but as a fragile performance enforced through shame, discipline, and social exclusion. Stavro’s queerness exposes the cost of this enforcement, revealing how bodies that fail to *do* gender correctly are rendered disposable within both social and literary narrative economies.

3. Hierarchical Masculinities

The previous section of this paper demonstrated how Stavro’s gender identity is constituted through trauma and failed performances. If Butler’s framework allows us to understand *how* masculinity is done, R.W. Connell’s theory of hierarchical masculinities (2005) explains *why* certain gender performances are sanctioned by society. Connell suggests that society has developed the “idea of a male sex role” (p. 21) as a “way of explaining social behaviour generally” (p. 22). It is also noted that being a man or a woman

means enacting a *general* (original emphasis) set of expectations which are attached to one’s sex – the ‘sex role.’ In this approach there are always two sex roles in any cultural contexts, a male one and a female one. Masculinity and femininity are quite easily interpreted as internalized sex roles, the products of social learning or ‘socialization’” (p. 22).

This claim thus further supports Butler’s theory of gender performativity discussed in the previous section. Connell conceptualizes masculinity not as a singular or universal ideal, but as a hierarchical configuration in which multiple masculinities coexist in relations of dominance and subordination.

Within this system, *hegemonic masculinity* – although “not assumed to be normal in the statistical sense” is “certainly normative” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832) – functions as the culturally exalted form (dominant, heterosexual, powerful, socially rewarded, not necessarily violent but supported by force), that “can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy” (Connell, 1992/2005, p. 77). Other masculinities, defined as *subordinated masculinity* (often associated with weakness, dependency, queerness), are marginalized, with the most important case being “the dominance of heterosexual men and the subordination of homosexual men” (p. 78). Furthermore, Connell explains that this subordination is not a simple cultural stigmatization of gay identity but the result of an array of practices which include “political and cultural exclusion”, “cultural abuse,” “legal violence,” “street violence,” as well as “economic discrimination and personal boycotts” (p. 78).

Using Connell’s theory of masculinities, Stavro can be read as an example of subordinated masculinity, whose vulnerability, homosexual desire, and exposure to violence reveal how hegemonic masculinity is maintained through domination rather than natural male authority. Stavro is introduced as a flamboyant, cunning, and paradoxical figure. He is playful, humorous, witty, and theatrically expressive, yet simultaneously morally ambiguous. He is both charming and pitiable, embodying a dual personality that fascinates Adrien:

Adrien had begun by liking Stavro on account of his fooling, but sometimes there were strange things about him which perplexed and troubled the young man. In the midst of some silly joke, Stavro would suddenly become serious and gaze at him with a look of calm superiority, whereupon Adrien would feel completely insignificant. Stavro was only an ignorant pedlar but Adrien was fascinated by him and could not tell why. This didn’t happen often, and never, as far as he could tell, to anyone else, so Adrien set himself to solve the mystery. He called these mysterious and upsetting experiences “the other Stavro.” (Istrati, 1926/1971, p. 8)

Adrien gradually discovers that Stavro himself is haunted by the question of which version of his self – the virtuous or the corrupted – is the authentic. The narrative thus traces a symbolic transition from Dragomir, the naïve youth, to Stavro, the adult whose identity has been shaped by exploitation and displacement.

Stavro’s subordinated masculinity becomes particularly legible in early episodes that stage his encounter with hegemonic male figures, most notably in his first meeting with his uncles. Their bodies are described through a vocabulary of excess and animality – “beards and moustaches covered their mouths” and “their hairy hands looked like bears’ paws” (Istrati, 1926/1971, pp. 92-93) – which aligns them with a form of physically imposing masculinity associated with authority and dominance. Within Connell’s framework, these men embody a localized version of hegemonic masculinity, defined by physical strength, weaponry, and ease with violence. Dragomir’s reaction, however, is not admiration but fear as he is rendered speechless, immobilized by the presence of “too many guns and things” (Istrati, 1926/1971, p. 94). His timidity and bodily vulnerability position him immediately within what Connell terms subordinated masculinity, a category that exists in a structural relation of dependence and inferiority to hegemonic male norms. However, this subordination is not corrected or disciplined into masculine toughness; instead, it becomes a stable aspect of Dragomir’s identity.

A similar dynamic reappears later in Beirut, when Dragomir feels ashamed when a male room-sharing companion remarks: “One would take you for a girl!” (Istrati, 1926/1971, p.182). The comment, prompted by Dragomir’s reluctance to undress in full light, functions as a moment of gender policing, in which masculinity is defined negatively through the rejection of femininity. Connell emphasizes that “from the point of view of hegemonic masculinity,

gayness is easily assimilated to femininity” (2005, p. 78). Thus, subordinated masculinities are often feminized, not merely symbolically but affectively and corporeally. Dragomir’s shame, modesty, and fear of exposure mark his body non-normative within a homosocial environment that equates male identity with bodily confidence. Stavro’s gendered position is thus not the result of individual weakness but of repeated confrontations with dominant masculine norms that render his vulnerability both visible and punishable. This process of exclusion reflects not only individual stigma, but collective enforcement of normative identity. As Aritina Micu observes (2023, p. 83), Stavro’s marginalization occurs under the pressure of the group that does not accept a deviation from what is perceived as normal behavior. This pressure reinforces his subordinated position within the masculine hierarchy confirming that his exclusion is socially produced rather than individually determined.

The narrator explicitly accounts for Stavro’s marginalization which was the result of his refuse to embrace the role that the traditional heteronormative society assigned to him, emphasizing that he had come to embody the social outcast as a result of leading an “odious life” (Istrati, 1926/1971, p. 5). Even his attempt to conform to social norms through marriage fails. His marriage to Tincoutza does not rehabilitate him within the gender order; instead, his past resurfaces and ultimately proves fatal to their union: upon discovering his true identity, Tincoutza commits suicide, a tragedy for which Stavro bears indirect but inescapable responsibility. From a Connellian perspective, this episode demonstrates how subordinated masculinities are denied redemption because access to normative heterosexual institutions (such as marriage) does not neutralize stigma but rather intensifies the punitive consequences of deviation.

Beyond its social consequences, this failed marriage cannot be reduced to individual inadequacy but must be understood as the psychological residue of repeated abuse. Trauma theory emphasizes that survivors of sexual violence frequently experience disruptions in intimacy, including emotional withdrawal, shame, and difficulty sustaining sexual relationships (Herman, 1997, pp. 77-79). Stavro’s inability to consummate his marriage reflects precisely this form of trauma-related disconnection, as his body functions based on his memories related to coercion and violation rather than on autonomous desire. This also reflects Caruth’s observations that past trauma persists by shaping the survivor’s present experience, preventing full integration into the present. Stavro’s failed marriage therefore illustrates how his earlier abuse continues to structure his present adult identity, interfering with his ability to perform normative heterosexual masculinity. His adult identity is therefore not simply unstable in abstract gender-theoretical terms but concretely structured by embodied memory.

Stavro’s masculinity is defined not by virile strength, but by passivity, emotional dependence, and vulnerability. He is deeply affected by his sister’s suffering, experiences guilt and grief as central components of his identity and repeatedly frames himself as morally compromised. Rather than acting as a protector or avenger, Stavro becomes a witness to suffering, including his own. This feminized mode of witnessing positions him outside the dominant masculine ideal.

Connell’s model is particularly useful in illuminating how Stavro’s homosexuality functions within the masculine hierarchy. Connell explicitly identifies gay masculinity as the most explicit form of subordinated masculinity, not because of inherent weakness, but because it destabilizes the heterosexual foundations of hegemonic masculinity. Stavro’s homosexual desire, compounded with his passivity and history of sexual exploitation, places him at the lowest end of gender hierarchy. Importantly, his queerness is not framed as a private orientation but as a public mark of exclusion.

This dynamic is made explicit in Stavro’s confrontation with Mikhaïl, following the attempted kiss of Adrien. Stavro resists the moralizing discourse that Mikhaïl directed at him:

You talk about perversion, outrage, and vice, and you expect me to be overcome with shame [...] But perversion, outrage, vice – my dear Mikhail, they flourish all about us and no one objects. The laws and customs of our life are full of them, and I am one of life's victims (Istrati, 1926/1971, p. 26).

This statement constitutes a powerful critique of hegemonic masculinity, revealing it not as a moral ideal but as a structure that displaces its own violence onto marginalized men. Stavro's self-identification as a victim underscores Connell's assertion that masculinity hierarchies are sustained not through consent but through domination.

Violence plays a central role in this process. Connell argues that violence functions as a means of asserting masculinity in group struggles and that men who fail to meet hegemonic standards are particularly vulnerable to coercion and abuse. Stavro's narrative confirms this insight with striking clarity. He is not a perpetrator of violence; he is its object. This pattern of repeated victimization extends across Stavro's entire life trajectory. His childhood exposure to paternal violence establishes an early association between masculinity and fear, which is later reinforced through repeated exploitation by adult men and abuse during his imprisonment. As Judith Herman points out (1997, pp. 47-48), trauma survivors often remain vulnerable to further victimization because trauma normalizes conditions of domination. Stavro's experiences reflect this pattern and, as a result, he becomes deeply vulnerable in his lack of masculine power and marginal position within the masculine hierarchy.

Through Stavro, Istrati exposes the cost of hegemonic masculinity not only for women and queer subjects, but for men who cannot or will not conform. Stavro's suffering reveals masculinity as a stratified system sustained through exclusion. When read through Connell's framework, *Kyra Kyralina* emerges as a remarkably prescient critique of gender performativity and gender hierarchy, demonstrating how subordinated masculinities are disciplined.

4. Conclusion

The critical significance of Stavro/Dragomir's character within *Kyra Kyralina* lies in his capacity to expand and destabilize literary representations of masculinity while challenging the idea that men are naturally dominant or invulnerable. His story demonstrates how gender intersects with sexuality, class, violence, and it anticipates later queer and trauma-centered readings of male identity.

Istrati's portrayal of Stavro aligns with key insights of modern gender theory. Read through Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity and R.W. Connell's model of hierarchical masculinities, *Kyra Kyralina* reveals masculinity as a hierarchical, performative, and coercive system. Stavro's subordinated and queer masculinity exposes how gender norms are maintained through violence and non-conforming male identities are rendered vulnerable within patriarchal structures. Stavro represents subordinated masculinity. Throughout his youth, he is abused, exploited, and powerless, particularly within male-dominated spaces. He lacks social, economic, and physical power. His masculinity is defined by trauma and vulnerability rather than authority, which directly contrasts with traditional literary male heroes. Istrati thus challenges a long-standing literary trope in which male suffering is framed as formative and ennobling. In Stavro's case, suffering is not a catalyst for heroism but a mechanism of subordination.

The novel's sustained attention to sexual and physical abuse is central to this reconceptualization of masculinity. Rather than functioning as a marginal biographical detail, trauma functions as a central force in the narrative, shaping Stavro's relationship to masculinity.

His subjectivity develops under conditions of fear, underscoring the extent to which gendered identities are produced through structural violence rather than individual choice. Stavro's suffering comes not from his sexuality itself, but from a society that offers no safe place for it.

Importantly, Istrati resists sensationalizing or moralizing Stavro's homosexuality. Instead of depicting it as comic, monstrous, or purely immoral, the narrative intertwines queer desire with longing, confusion, and emotional attachment. This nuanced portrayal complicates early twentieth-century literary conventions and anticipates contemporary queer readings that emphasize vulnerability and relationality. Stavro's queerness exposes the fragility of rigid gender systems by revealing the human cost of exclusion and norm enforcement.

From a gender-critical perspective, *Kyra Kyralina* thus emerges as a remarkably forward-looking text. Through its protagonist, Istrati offers a literary exploration of masculinity shaped by trauma and defined by subordination. In doing so, the novel not only broadens the representational possibilities of male characters but also invites a re-evaluation of masculinity as a contested and unstable construct that remains acutely relevant to contemporary debates in gender studies.

References:

- Butler, J. (2006). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge. (Original work published 1990)
- Caruth, C. (1996). *Unclaimed experience: Trauma, narrative, and history*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Chișu, L. (2019). Identity and universality in the work of Panait Istrati. *Transylvanian Review*, 28(Suppl. 1), 101–112.
- Connell, R. W. (2005). *Masculinities* (2nd ed.). University of California Press. (Original work published 1992)
- Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & Society*, 19(6), 829–859. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27640853>
- Crăciun, A. (2020). Drumul spre singurătate: Panait Istrati și URSS [Road to loneliness: Panait Istrati and USSR]. *Transilvania*, 4, 44–50.
- Dima, R. (2018). Queer Romanian literature: A selection of gay and lesbian characters from the 20th century to the present. *Lambda Nordica*, 1–2, 143–145.
- Freud, S. (1961). *Beyond the pleasure principle* (J. Strachey, Trans.). W. W. Norton & Company. (Original work published 1920)
- Gavril, G. (2023). Biografie și ficțiune: Contradicțiile lui Panait Istrati – capcane pentru exegeți [Biography and fiction: Panait Istrati's contradictions: Traps for exegetes]. *Romanica Cracoviensia*, 175–181. <https://doi.org/10.4467/20843917RC.23.018.18512>
- Grigore, R. (2023). Panait Istrati, Chira Chiralina: Inocență și inițiere [Panait Istrati, Kyra Kyralina: Innocence and initiation]. *Transilvania*, 7, 52–58. <https://doi.org/10.51391/trva.2023.07.07>
- Iorgulescu, M. (2004). *Celălalt Istrati* [The other Istrati]. Polirom.

- Istrati, P. (1971). *Kyra Kyralina* (J. Whittall, Trans.). Books for Libraries Press. (Original work published 1926)
- Istrati, P. (1990). *Spovedanie pentru învinși*. Dacia. (Original work published 1929)
- Herman, J. L. (1997). *Trauma and recovery*. Basic Books. (Original work published 1992)
- LaCapra, D. (2001). *Writing history, writing trauma*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Micu, A. (2023). Alteritatea ficționalizată: Idealizarea unei fantasme – Chira Chiralina de Panait Istrati [Fictionalized otherness: Idealization of a fantasy – Kyra Kyralina by Panait Istrati]. *Incursiuni în imaginar*, 14, 71–88. <https://doi.org/10.29302/inimag.2023.14.4>
- Mitchievici, A. (2010). Sexualitatea damnată și literatura gay românească [Cursed sexuality and Romanian gay literature]. *Dilematica*, 5(49), 15–21.
- Radler, D. (2021). Age, feeling and experience: Framing a modernist vision in Panait Istrati's *Stavro*. *Rupkatha Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 13(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v13n1.27>
- Tupan, M. A. (2021). The otherness of the sexed, raced, and classed body in Mircea Eliade. *Incursiuni în imaginar*, 12, 33–45 <https://doi.org/10.29302/InImag.2021.12.2>

THE AESTHETICS OF FAILURE IN EMIL CÎORAN'S WRITINGS: CONTEXTUAL REFLECTIONS¹

Cristina Mirela NÎCOLAESCU
Yozgat-Bozok University, Turkey

E-mail: crist.nicola@bozok.edu.tr

"Only one thing matters: learning to be the loser".
(Cioran, 1992, p. 47)

Abstract

This paper examines the central significance of failure in Emil Cioran's major literary and philosophical works. Situating him within the tradition of the literature of failure, this study demonstrates how failure paradoxically emerges as a source of clarity, liberation, and artistic passion. This study explores the multifaceted nature of failure in his writings, which traverse the boundaries between aphorism, essay, and philosophical lamentation, offering a singular perspective on the limitations of language, absurdity of existence, and the ironic grandeur of decay. Cioran's distinctive style and pervasive nihilism are better understood as an ongoing literary and philosophical exploration of the aesthetic potential of failure, rather than mere expressions of pessimism. By tracing his trajectory from early Romanian essays (*On the Heights of Despair*) to later French aphorisms (*The Trouble with Being Born*), this paper reveals how failure operates simultaneously as both substance and style in his work. Positioned in dialogue with European pessimism and modernist literature. By engaging with contemporary debates on modernity, absurdity, affect, and the aesthetics of negation, this research draws on the thought of philosophers such as Theodor Adorno and Maurice Blanchot, as well as scholars including Ilinca Zarifopol-Johnston, Paul Newton, and Hilton Kramer. Cioran's work created a lasting legacy defined by the acceptance of failure as a necessary—and philosophically generative—condition. His work offers a trenchant yet candid reflection on what it means to live, think, and write under the shadow of failure, resonating not only within philosophical pessimism but across literature, cultural theory, and existential thought. The primary aim of this study is to theorize failure as a generative aesthetic category within Cioran's oeuvre by analyzing his aphoristic style within the broader contexts of literary and philosophical modernism. Also it aims at contributing to ongoing discussions surrounding the role of affect in contemporary European thought, failure in literature, and negativity in philosophy. It further explores the philosopher's preoccupation with excess and silence as dual aspects of a language's failure, where irony functions simultaneously as complicity and distancing. Ultimately, this paper argues for philosophical resistance through the aesthetics of failure. Cioran also emerges as a writer of unresolved paradoxes, where excess and silence delineate the horizons of mind and language—not merely as a thinker of despair but as a nuanced explorer of metaphysical tension. By providing an original synthesis of failure as a literary, stylistic, and metaphysical concept, this study provides a comprehensive literary and philosophical analysis of failure in Cioran's writings. As a conclusion, failure for Cioran, functions not merely as a thematic concern but as a metaphysical stance, a stylistic commitment, and a medium for spiritual irony. His technique forges a voice that oscillates between confession and prophecy, blending the intensity of poetic despair with the rigor of philosophical reasoning. Often grouped alongside thinkers such as Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Beckett, Cioran's work is united by a profound commitment to failure—not as moral deficiency, but as a fundamental metaphysical condition in human existence. Cioran's enduring influence resonates across literature, philosophy, and cultural theory as a sobering reminder of the complexities and contradictions inherent in the human condition.

¹ Article History: Received: 01.10.2025. Accepted: 09.11.2025. Published: 15.05.2026. No funding was received either for the research presented in the article or for the creation of the article.

Keywords: Cioran; failure; philosophy; negativity; self.

1. Introduction

This study engages with Emil Cioran's writings in both French and Romanian, as well as their English translations. Cioran's early works, written in Romanian prior to his self-imposed exile, are marked by youthful fervor and lyrical intensity. From 1949 onward, he composed exclusively in French, developing a mature philosophical style evident in works such as *Précis de Décomposition (A Short History of Decay)*, *Syllogismes de l'amertume (The Trouble with Being Born)*, and *La Tentation D'Exister (The Temptation to Exist)*. The English citations primarily derive from translations of these French texts.

For Cioran, failure functions not simply as a biographical or existential condition but as a metaphysical principle, a mode of thought, and a poetics of existence. This monograph contends that Cioran formulates a philosophy of failure that stands in opposition to Western philosophical emphases on achievement, coherence, and progressive logic. While often labeled a nihilist or characterized as a literary aphorist, Cioran's work is here approached as a sustained philosophical and aesthetic project. The study integrates the concepts of failure, excess, and silence to elucidate his literary and philosophical stance. This approach underscores the philosophical import of Cioran's literary techniques while expanding the aesthetic vocabulary available for engaging with contemporary modes of negativity. Rather than mere negation, Cioran's notion of failure produces a paradoxical beauty found in collapse.

Recent critical scholarship situates Cioran's distinct and uncompromising philosophy of failure as a singular contribution to contemporary intellectual history. A rigorous thinker expressing profound honesty about the human condition—marked by fragmentation, suffering, and the impossibility of stable identity or meaning—Cioran emerges not merely as a melancholic pessimist but as one who writes “from the vantage point of failure as the fundamental human condition, a failure that is ontological rather than accidental” (Kramer, 1987, p. 5).

Karl White highlights birth as the primal rupture constitutive of all human existence, emphasizing failure as ontological and foundational in Cioran's thought: “The first catastrophe is birth itself, the origin of consciousness as an irreversible failure of innocence and unity” (White cited in Kramer, 1987, p. 6). Ilinca Zarifopol-Johnston interprets Cioran's self-negating style as a deliberate literary and intellectual tactic aimed at dismantling the intolerable visibility of the self that his aphoristic form seeks to destabilize and dissolve. Paul Newton foregrounds the sardonic humor permeating Cioran's writing, portraying denial as a tragicomic resistance to despair and an ethical stance. Hilton Kramer expands this view by illustrating how Cioran's incisive critique of language and reason exposes the limits of human understanding and communication, rendering failure a metaphysical condition rather than a mere affective state.

Together, these scholars reveal an author whose writings transcend nihilistic despair to articulate failure as an essential and authentic response to the human predicament. Cioran challenges traditional philosophical discourse through language that enacts negation, self-erasure, and fragmentation, eschewing consolation and affirmation in favor of an uncompromising confrontation with existence's absurdity and finitude. As a result, contemporary scholarship remembers Cioran as a philosopher of failure whose works compel readers to face the limits of meaning, the instability of the self, and the poignant clarity of lucidity bereft of hope. As Kramer notes, “Hope is a form of self-deception for Cioran; the

refusal to hope is a tragic, yet authentic embrace of the human predicament” (Cioran, 1987, p. 13).

2. The Literature of Failure: Cioran and the Poetics of Negation

Within the landscape of the literature of failure, Emil Cioran occupies a distinctive and indispensable position in terms of form, philosophy, and thematic engagement. His writings articulate a radical voice that resists redemption, coherence, and teleological progress by navigating the interstices of existential nihilism, aphoristic skepticism, and a poetics of despair. For Cioran, failure is not merely a thematic device or critical tool—as it often appears in modern and postmodern literary traditions—but the fundamental ontology of existence itself. This situates him uniquely as a philosopher-poet of radical negation whose work blurs the boundaries between literary expression and philosophical inquiry.

Through language conceived as negation, Cioran offers a profound meditation on failure—of the self, of meaning, and of discourse itself. Writing becomes an enactment of disintegration, a process by which the self’s pretensions to coherence are stripped away. His aphorisms, each a self-contained collapse, dismantle the illusion of continuity that sustains philosophical systems and literary narratives alike. By subverting both literary and philosophical conventions, Cioran generates a literature of failure in which writing itself becomes an act of metaphysical rejection and self-erasure. His fragmented prose performs what it describes: the impossibility of totality. The aphorism, as Cioran employs it, is not a fragment of an unrealized system but a deliberate refusal of system—a form that affirms its own insufficiency.

The aesthetics of failure in Cioran resonate with, and are enriched by, affinities to Samuel Beckett’s linguistic minimalism in *Molloy* and *Endgame*, and Franz Kafka’s allegorical paralysis in *The Trial* and *The Castle*. All three share an aesthetics of subtraction—a commitment to unmaking, to the productive exhaustion of form and meaning. Beckett enacts failure through performance, turning linguistic breakdown into tragicomic theatre, while Kafka’s opaque bureaucratic structures and inaccessible laws embody the futility of desire and comprehension. Cioran, though less dramatized, conceptualizes failure similarly: as a condition rather than an obstacle to writing. He turns failure into an epistemological vantage point—a space from which the human condition can be perceived without the comforting illusions of progress, transcendence, or reason.

Cioran’s distinct contribution lies in endowing failure with ontological weight by fusing these artistic gestures with metaphysical investigation. In *On the Heights of Despair* (1934), he traces the existential consequences of impotence, portraying failure as intrinsic to consciousness itself: to exist is to fail at being. In *A Short History of Decay* (2012), he reframes the historical and philosophical pursuit of meaning as an interminable process of collapse; progress and ideology are mirages that conceal humanity’s relentless return to decay. *The Trouble with Being Born* (1998) radicalizes this logic further: existence is not simply marked by failure—it *is* failure, an ontological accident, an error in the cosmic order. Life is defined not by its striving but by its irredeemable mistake, its tragic redundancy. Through such inversions, Cioran transforms failure into philosophical insight and literary form, rendering collapse, sterility, and absurdity aesthetically compelling.

The literature of failure, as a broader aesthetic constellation, extends beyond Cioran, encompassing diverse modes of ethical and epistemological experimentation. Beckett’s linguistic exhaustion, Kafka’s juridical labyrinths, and Thomas Bernhard’s monologic obsessions in *Correction* and *The Loser* all dramatize failure as the very motor of artistic production. In postmodern and contemporary contexts, writers such as Kathy Acker, Samuel

Delany, and David Foster Wallace transform failure into a narrative principle: the impossibility of closure, the breakdown of selfhood, and the recursive collapse of meaning. In poetry, Anne Carson's fragmentary *Nox* and John Ashbery's syntactic dispersions in *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror* perform failure as inquiry—poetic acts of searching that refuse resolution. Across these texts, failure becomes both theme and method: a strategy for resisting the totalizing demands of coherence and productivity.

Scholarly discourse on failure has increasingly foregrounded its generative dimensions, emphasizing its potential to unsettle dominant epistemologies and hierarchies of value. As Judith Halberstam observes, failure allows for “alternative ways of knowing and being that are not always about winning or making it” (Halberstam, 2011, p. 2). Drawing on queer theory and affect studies, Halberstam reframes failure as subversive potential: an act of refusal that destabilizes normative narratives of success, identity, and time. From this perspective, Cioran's thought can be understood as a metaphysical counterpart to such critical frameworks—his writing dismantles not social norms but ontological ones. The very concept of being, in Cioran, is what must fail if one is to think freely. His radical negativity thus aligns with a long philosophical lineage—from Nietzsche's laughter at metaphysics to Blanchot's “infinite conversation” and Adorno's “negative dialectics”—in which negation itself becomes the site of truth.

Cioran's ambivalence toward history emerges not from indifference but from intimate familiarity. His early engagement with Romanian nationalism and fascism—stances he would later renounce—imparts to his mature philosophy a profound skepticism toward ideology and collective purpose. History, for Cioran, is a series of mirages: civilizations rise on illusions of destiny only to disintegrate into the debris of their own excess. Unlike Oswald Spengler's cyclical determinism, Cioran's reflections are suffused with metaphysical irony. He aestheticizes decay, transforming historical collapse into poetic meditation. Degradation becomes an occasion for beauty, a site where grandeur and ruin coexist. As he notes, the ultimate failure is the impossibility of timely suicide—an irony that captures the tension between the desire for annihilation and the persistence of being.

Even Cioran's bleakest revelations are stylized. His prose oscillates between gravity and levity, despair and dark wit, producing a tone that is simultaneously tragic and ironic. Suicide, in his reflections, is not simply an existential question but a literary trope—a space where meaninglessness acquires aesthetic precision. Echoing Albert Camus's assertion that “it is not worth the bother of killing yourself, since you always kill yourself too late” (*The Trouble with Being Born*, 1998, p. 104), Cioran transforms the failure to die into a paradoxical triumph of endurance. Sterility—the incapacity to produce, to progress, to believe—recurs throughout his work not as deficiency but as creative condition. From the ruins of productivity, Cioran fashions a poetics of exhaustion: insight without consolation, thought without system, beauty without redemption.

In this sense, Cioran's literature of failure performs a double negation: it denies transcendence while affirming the expressive potential of that denial. His aphorisms are not declarations but detonations—each fragment a controlled implosion of meaning. By dismantling coherence and teleology, Cioran reveals a counter-aesthetic grounded in incompleteness, irony, and humility. The act of writing becomes a way of bearing witness to futility without seeking to overcome it. For Cioran, to write failure is to write truth: fragmented, wry, and luminous. His oeuvre stands as both the culmination and the critique of modernity's search for meaning, proposing instead a radical aesthetics of nothingness—an art of negation that, paradoxically, affirms the inexhaustibility of despair.

3. Language and Failure: The Aphorism and the Limits of Expression

For Emil Cioran, language is not a transparent conduit of truth or self-expression but rather a site of failure, self-erasure, and metaphysical doubt. Words do not reveal; they obscure. They displace the immediacy of being and multiply the distance between experience and its articulation. This study situates his work within a broader tradition of linguistic skepticism by examining how Cioran employs language to negate identity, disrupt coherence, and expose the limits of thought. His preoccupation with the boundaries of language is poignantly expressed in his claim: “It is no nation we inhabit, but a language. Make no mistake: our native tongue is our true fatherland. Mine is the language of collapse” (Cioran, 1987, p. 125). In this aphorism, belonging becomes not geographic but linguistic; exile is inscribed in the very act of speech.

Cioran’s aphorisms enact a verbal excess that subverts logic while simultaneously valorizing silence as an ideal—the only possible locus of ultimate truth. The tension between utterance and its negation defines his aesthetics. For instance, in *On the Heights of Despair*, he writes: “One does not inhabit despair, one is inhabited by it” (Cioran, 1974, p. 23). Here, fragmentary syntax mirrors ontological dislocation: the self is no longer subject but site, no longer the speaker of despair but its dwelling. The aphorism stages a reversal in which agency and expression dissolve into passivity and silence.

Similarly, in *The Trouble with Being Born*, he observes: “We are born to be witnesses of ourselves failing” (Cioran, 1998, p. 45). The aphoristic brevity amplifies the recursive failure of existence—language compresses despair into rhythm, only to reveal its inadequacy. In another instance, he writes: “It is not worth hoping; it is not worth despairing. One should not hope, nor should one despair; one should die laughing” (Cioran, 1987, p. 76). The abrupt tonal oscillation between nihilism and irony illustrates his method: language as fracture, aphorism as interruption, and failure as aesthetic. Humor becomes a mode of survival within negation—a paradoxical laughter at the futility of speech itself.

Therefore, central to Cioran’s writing is the tension between the need to express failure and the impossibility of doing so. Language, for him, is both the disease and the symptom: it betrays the self even as it makes self-knowledge possible. While language distorts and falsifies, it also functions as confession—an imperfect yet necessary ritual of exposure. Silence thus emerges not as absence but as limit, the horizon of meaning where thought falters. As he declares in *A Short History of Decay*: “I write to empty myself, to pour out the refuse of my existence into words that fail to contain it” (Cioran, 2012, p. 88). Here, writing becomes both purgation and self-cancellation—a movement toward void. Each sentence enacts the paradox of expression that simultaneously creates and destroys meaning.

Cioran’s fragmentation evokes profound affinities with Beckett’s formal experiments in *The Unnamable*, where language collapses into repetition and stammer. Both writers confront the void not through metaphysical resolution but through linguistic exhaustion. The “failure of language” becomes their shared medium. As Kramer observes, “Language in Cioran’s work becomes a symptom of the human fracture, a tool that reveals more the distance than the connection between beings” (Kramer, 1987, p. 8).

The aphoristic form enacts this distance formally: it refuses transition, continuity, or causality, privileging paradox, contradiction, and abrupt tonal dissonance: “My texts are tombs of sentences” (Cioran, 1987, p. 41) and “Each sentence I write is an epitaph for a thought I have buried” (Cioran, 2012, p. 9). These declarations dramatize the transformation of language into graveyard—a place where meaning decomposes but also becomes strangely luminous.

Nietzsche’s influence is unmistakable. The aphorism as philosophical dagger and performative negation reaches its most radical incarnation in Cioran. Yet while Nietzsche’s aphorisms aim toward affirmation—toward the dance beyond good and evil—Cioran’s circle

endlessly back upon despair. Paul Newton remarks that his aphorisms enact a “dual movement—entering existence crying, only to exit grinning—capturing the bitter irony at the heart of failure” (Newton, 2025, p. 3).

Aphorisms such as: “I would like to commit suicide, but I’m too lazy to die.” (Cioran, 1987, p. 103) and “To exist is to fail magnificently” (Cioran, 1998, p. 61) express the tension between desire and incapacity, between lucidity and paralysis. Stylistically, they embody this tension: short, rhythmically self-contained, ending in contradiction or irony. The aphorism itself becomes the perfect form of existential failure—self-refuting, circular, and resistant to systematization.

Cioran’s pervasive irony and disjointed syntax symbolize failure in both form and content. Language, for him, is the stage where the self disintegrates, coherence evaporates, and meaning collapses into echo. As he notes: “Language is the prison of the mind.” (Cioran, 2012, p. 18). The “prison” metaphor encapsulates his linguistic metaphysics: words confine rather than liberate, mediating experience through endless deferral. This aligns Cioran with a lineage of modern linguistic skepticism—from Mallarmé’s “disappearance of the poet” to Blanchot’s “writing of the disaster” and Derrida’s *différance*. Like these thinkers, Cioran conceives of writing as both exposure and concealment, an act that reveals its own failure to capture the real.

For Cioran, then, writing is an ethical gesture of surrender—an acknowledgment of the impossibility of total expression. His fragments do not seek reconciliation but endure fragmentation as a mode of truth. In this sense, his aphoristic style shares something with Adorno’s *Minima Moralia*, in which fragmented thought becomes the only honest form of philosophy after catastrophe. Both writers refuse systematic closure, proposing instead a negative writing—lucid, self-critical, and aware of its own insufficiency. Moreover, Cioran’s paradoxical oscillation between confession and concealment has a Levinasian dimension: his language bears witness to the impossibility of full self-presence, revealing the irreducible alterity at the heart of speech. Writing, in this sense, is not mastery but exposure to the infinite—an ethical act that affirms vulnerability.

Through aphorism, paradox, and fragmentation, Cioran transforms failure into a radical literary ethos. His texts dramatize the impossibility of language while extracting from that impossibility aesthetic, ethical, and metaphysical insight. Each fragment is an articulation of despair and a performance of its limits—a linguistic act that enacts, rather than merely describes, failure. As Zarifopol-Johnston observes, “Writing for Cioran is a self-negating act, a linguistic performance aimed at dissolving the ego rather than affirming it” (2009, p. 112). The result is a body of work that hovers between philosophy and poetry, confession and silence, failure and form.

Cioran writes not to overcome the failure of language but to inhabit it—to dwell within its ruins. His “language of collapse” is not an admission of defeat but an aesthetic principle, one that renders fragmentation luminous. Through this poetics of negation, he achieves the paradox of articulating the inexpressible: a literature where the act of writing becomes indistinguishable from the experience of falling apart.

4. The Failed Self: Cioran’s Ontology of Failure

At the heart of Emil Cioran’s philosophy of failure lies the tragic drama of the self—a consciousness too lucid to feign unity and too honest to believe in it. The fragmentation and dissolution of identity emerge as central and recurring themes throughout his work, forming what might be termed an *anti-metaphysics of subjectivity*. For Cioran, the self is not a sovereign or stable unity but a provisional illusion—an ephemeral construction continually undone by the very consciousness that perceives it. Under the pressures of language, thought, and history,

identity unravels, revealing instead a residue of awareness: raw, lucid, and bereft of purpose. “To live,” he writes, “is to lose ground” (Cioran, 1992, p. 71). The very act of existence is therefore an erosion of self-possession, a descent into awareness that corrodes stability rather than affirms it.

The human subject, in Cioran’s vision, is a fractured vessel—neither heroic nor coherent—and philosophy seeps from its cracks like despair refined into style. His aphorisms dismember the self not through confession but through relentless irony and lucidity. The Cioranian subject is not a Cartesian *cogito* (“I think, therefore I am”) but an inverted one: *I despair, therefore I disintegrate*. This section examines Cioran’s theory that the self is inherently flawed, exploring how loneliness functions as metaphysical hygiene rather than social exile, and how melancholy evolves from pathology into philosophy. Failure becomes the most authentic form of being—a consciousness stripped of illusion, persisting in the ruins of identity. Within Cioran’s *anti-system*, decline is not a stage to be overcome but the fundamental rhythm of existence.

Melancholy, which Cioran repeatedly links to hyperconsciousness, represents the torment of knowing too much yet being unable to act. “Only a man who has felt ultimate despair is capable of feeling ultimate bliss,” he writes (Cioran, 1993, p. 31). Yet the “bliss” he envisions is not ecstasy but resignation—a tranquil lucidity, a “silent sob” that dissolves both hope and despair into irony. Thus, melancholy assumes a metaphysical dimension: a *knowledge without consolation*. In this regard, Cioran belongs to a lineage of philosophical melancholics—Montaigne’s introspective irony, Pascal’s trembling before the void, Leopardi’s lyrical pessimism, and Kierkegaard’s despair as dialectic of faith. Unlike Kierkegaard, however, Cioran does not oscillate between faith and despair; he remains suspended in what Blanchot would call the *infinite conversation*—a space of perpetual irresolution. “Melancholy is the privilege of consciousness,” he asserts (Cioran, 1987, p. 55), equating awareness itself with dissolution. Consciousness, far from liberating, is the wound through which the self perpetually bleeds.

Solitude, for Cioran, is both sanctuary and sentence—a philosophical necessity that enables the self to contemplate its own disappearance. “Solitude is a country where one gets lost through excess of lucidity” (Cioran, 2012, p. 19). The metaphor of the “country” conveys the expansiveness of isolation; it is not a prison but an uncharted landscape where lucidity becomes unbearable. Solitude heightens self-awareness to the point of annihilation: the more one perceives, the less one believes in the perceiver. For Cioran, the failed self is not defeated but purified—emptied of illusions, stripped to a bare consciousness that recognizes its own futility.

Repeatedly, Cioran poses the ontological cry: “What am I doing?” (Cioran, 1993, p. 29). This is not the practical query of moral philosophy but a metaphysical lament—a recognition of the absence of purpose at the core of being. His questioning aligns with negative mysticism, wherein retreat from the world leads not to divine union but to luminous void. In contrast to mystical theology, however, Cioran’s withdrawal does not promise transcendence; instead, it exposes the terrifying autonomy of nothingness. Solitude becomes the last ethical stance available to a consciousness that has outlived belief.

Although not confessional in a conventional sense, Cioran’s writings possess an unmistakable autobiographical resonance. His works form a mosaic of aphorisms, proverbs, and interruptions that reject narrative coherence, mirroring the collapse of the self they describe. The aphorism’s brevity mirrors the instability of identity: each thought appears, flares, and extinguishes itself. Unlike Descartes’ *cogito*, which secures being through reflection, Cioran’s self dissolves in reflection. “I exist only because I can’t help it” (Cioran,

1992, p. 27): existence is an accident, not a triumph. His prose unsettles by refusing closure, compelling readers to inhabit fragmentation as a mode of understanding.

This stylistic fragmentation carries ethical and epistemic significance beyond aesthetic innovation. The refusal of system, of completed discourse, exposes the arrogance of totalizing thought. Cioran's contradictions, retractions, and hesitations demonstrate that thought itself can be an act of failure—a performance of uncertainty that preserves the dignity of not knowing. In this, he resonates with Adorno's *negative dialectics*, which likewise envisions thinking as a form of resistance against false reconciliation. Cioran's unsystematic form becomes an ethical refusal to turn despair into doctrine.

Cioran's melancholic stance, far from being an antiquarian lament, responds directly to the conditions of modernity: the commodification of identity, the exhaustion of ideologies, and the evaporation of transcendence. The modern self, once imagined as autonomous and rational, has become a parody of its former sovereignty. "The more I write, the more I realize I am nothing" (Cioran, 1993, p. 91). Writing becomes a mode of vanishing, a process of erasure that paradoxically affirms existence through negation. In this clarity, ambition drains away; the will to power transforms into a will to lucidity. Being a failure to oneself becomes the highest form of honesty—a refusal to deceive through coherence.

In this sense, Cioran's critique aligns with modernist and postmodern explorations of fractured subjectivity—from Beckett's dissolution of voice in *The Unnamable* to Foucault's "death of the subject." Yet unlike theoretical postmodernism, which often celebrates multiplicity, Cioran's fragmentation is existential, even bodily. His failed self is not an intellectual abstraction but a lived condition, felt as fatigue, nausea, and dread. His aphorism—"Activity is the refuge of people who have nothing to say" (Cioran, 1987, p. 43)—condemns the compulsive productivity of modern life, while "Sleep is a form of cowardice" (Cioran, 1991, p. 55) expresses an ironic mistrust of even temporary oblivion. Within failure, however, he discovers a strange authenticity: the courage to persist without justification. When the self collapses, what remains is neither transcendence nor rebirth but lucid wandering—a consciousness adrift without promise. "There is no cure for being" (Cioran, 1993, p. 38). This is not resignation but confrontation: the acceptance of existence as incurable, of life as terminal condition. The failed self thus becomes the most profoundly human state—broken, ironic, and aware. Cioran's philosophy redefines authenticity as endurance without illusion.

In conceiving of the self as failure, Cioran offers one of the most radical modern critiques of subjectivity. He dismantles the humanist assumption of the self as substance or project, revealing it instead as a metaphysical accident. His aphorisms do not construct identity but perform its undoing: "The self is the past made present in the pain of becoming" (Cioran, 1992, p. 67). This conception aligns with Julia Kristeva's notion of *abjection*, where identity emerges only through its own expulsion, its confrontation with the formless. The self, in Cioran's terms, is a wound—a metaphysical injury inflicted by consciousness.

In an age obsessed with affirmation, empowerment, and identity, Cioran's failed self stands as a radical counter-gesture—a defense of emptiness, ambiguity, and incompleteness. His work disturbs by withholding solace, by insisting that the price of lucidity is fragmentation. This corresponds to Blanchot's concept of *the neuter*, the impersonal voice that arises when subjectivity disintegrates into pure presence. Yet, for Cioran, this disintegration is not an aesthetic game or a mystical transcendence but an existential tragedy. "Only a theology of failure," he writes, "could approach a truth commensurate with man's condition" (Cioran, 1987, p. 24).

By opposing psychological and philosophical paradigms that valorize self-realization, Cioran views identification itself as a trap. The paradox of identity lies in its double negation: it can neither be wholly affirmed nor relinquished. The failure of the self is therefore

totalizing—a continual disidentification from all forms, roles, and narratives. “The self becomes unbearable the moment it becomes too visible,” observes Zarifopol-Johnston; “Cioran’s style of aphorism is an evasion, a fragmentation of identity” (2009, p. 42). Consciousness, for Cioran, means not mastery but exposure—to the absurdity of the world, the futility of reason, and the impossibility of wholeness. Through this radical lucidity, Cioran transforms despair into an epistemology, solitude into ethics, and failure into form. The result is not nihilism but an *aesthetics of endurance*: a literature that teaches how to inhabit fragmentation without illusion, to find meaning not in redemption but in the luminous clarity of loss.

5. Failure as a Philosophical and Ethical Subject

Situated within a tradition of radical pessimism, Cioran rejects metaphysical meaning: “Cioran’s pessimism is inseparable from his Romanian heritage, which exposed him early to historical and existential failure, shaping his lifelong meditation on despair” (Zarifopol-Johnston, 2009, p. 78). Unlike Nietzsche’s vitalism or Schopenhauer’s redemptive turn toward art, Cioran offers no consolation; instead, he asserts that “to exist is to fail” (Cioran, 1998, p. 4). This succinct statement signals a crucial shift from viewing failure as contingent to embracing it as necessary. For Cioran, human consciousness constitutes a rupture with nature rather than its conquest; it is defined by self-awareness, sorrow, and abstraction, functioning as both revelation and destruction. Although his approach is post-theological, sometimes adopting the musical cadences of mysticism, it resonates with a Gnostic vision of creation as catastrophe—an accident rather than a divine act. Cioran’s philosophical convictions are manifest in his writing style. He adopts the aphorism—a form traditionally linked to gnomic wisdom—and repurposes it as a vehicle for anti-systemic insight, explicitly rejecting teleological argumentation and systematic totality.

Religious and mystical themes are significant in Cioran’s thought, despite his reputation primarily as a philosopher of failure and despair. His mysticism is distinctive in its rejection of transcendence and salvation, contrasting with traditional mystical frameworks. His ethics of despair embraces failure, negation, and withdrawal as ethically significant, challenging established moral paradigms. His approach resembles Kofman’s ethics of loss and Adorno’s negative dialectics—far from mere quietism or cynicism, this ambiguity invites serious moral reflection on the limits of action and the sincerity of hopelessness.

Often read as an unyielding acceptance of nihilism, withdrawal, and despair, Cioran’s philosophy harbors a nuanced ethical dimension that defies simplistic denunciations as cynicism or political quietism. This study emphasizes how his writing of failure negotiates the tension between hopelessness and responsibility, denial and moral transparency. His despair constitutes an ambivalent ethical posture, resisting conventional moral categories and enriching ongoing debates about ethical nihilism.

Failure occupies a distinctive thematic and methodological role in Emil Cioran’s philosophical system. As he famously remarked, “Philosophy should be a discipline of defeat, but it has too much pride” (Cioran, 1993, p. 52). Beyond an existential condition, failure functions as a philosophical lens through which Cioran interrogates language, ethics, and ontology. His focus on failure sets him apart from other existentialists and nihilists who often seek to overcome or transcend meaninglessness. Instead, Cioran resolutely rejects the consolations of hope and system-building, embracing failure as an irreducible reality: “In Cioran’s universe, hope is indistinguishable from resignation, a failed attempt to escape the fundamental failure of being” (Zarifopol-Johnston, 2009, p. 156).

Cioran’s engagement with despair reveals affinities and contrasts with other thinkers. Like Nietzsche, he employs poetry and critiques metaphysics, yet he resists Nietzsche’s will to

power. While sharing resonance with Schopenhauer's pessimism, Cioran's rejection of philosophical solace is more radical. His thought parallels Theodor Adorno's negative dialectics but diverges in its refusal to see atonement as achievable through reason alone. Thus, Cioran's philosophy of failure can be read as an intensified development of existential and nihilist themes, pushing skepticism to the point of philosophical collapse.

Significantly, Cioran's stance contrasts with failure philosophies that celebrate struggle or triumph. He holds lucidity as the highest—and most agonizing—form of existence, rejecting even artistic redemption: "Cioran's lucidity is itself a torment, for the clearer the mind, the more acute the sense of failure" (Kramer, 1987, p. 12). Far from mere lamentation or authorial inadequacy, failure in Cioran's thought is a fertile aesthetic and philosophical category enabling critique of dominant ideologies and the exploration of alternative ontologies.

Cioran's nihilism is uncompromising and extreme. Failure is ontological and ethical, exposing human finitude, limitation, and the impossibility of ultimate meaning. The notion of collapse—whether ontological, temporal, or political—signifies decay and dissolution in his thought, conjoined with a pervasive sense of hopelessness central to his existential pessimism. Emphasizing failure, misery, and the absence of hope as permanent human conditions, Cioran stands as a singular and radical voice within existentialism and nihilism. His philosophy offers a sobering, introspective confrontation with meaninglessness, refusing any transcendence or resolution. This position foregrounds failure as a core ontological and ethical reality, enriching contemporary philosophical discourse.

Cioran's relentless examination of failure, negation, and hopelessness has profoundly influenced modern literature, philosophy, and cultural criticism. By uncompromisingly articulating failure as an existential condition, he challenges prevailing myths of progress, success, and mastery. His theory of failure remains influential in contemporary intellectual debates, inspiring fresh reflections on human frailty and limits. His philosophy insists on the unavoidable presence of collapse, despair, and finitude, challenging fundamental Western ideals of progress, mastery, and ultimate significance. Failure is not merely a negative state but an integral aspect shaping language, politics, ontology, ethics, and temporality. In place of comforting systems, Cioran offers a candid reckoning with human vulnerability, inviting readers to confront the abyss without succumbing to illusion or despair. This philosophical mood extends beyond the personal to express a culturally symptomatic condition: "Consciousness is a catastrophe. The more lucid we are, the more we fail" (Cioran, 2012, p. 45).

Cioran's philosophy of failure is a mode of lucid witnessing, demanding objective appraisal rather than defeatist surrender. It requires political skepticism, ethical humility, and an awareness of the fragility of language and identity. His aphoristic style—and the fragmented self it enacts—forms the cornerstone of his aesthetics of failure. The aphorism, for Cioran, becomes both existential trace and ethical refusal, embodying self-dismemberment and negation. This fragmented self resists systematization and closure, emphasizing the limits of language, subjectivity, and philosophy itself.

The failed self, for Cioran, epitomizes the human condition—fractured, tormented, provisional—not an aberration but the norm. His thought anticipates many posthumanist critiques of subjectivity by refusing transcendence of suffering or idealization of identity, highlighting disintegration as the price of insight. Cioran's distrust of all-encompassing philosophical systems is mirrored in his aphoristic and fragmented prose. Its brevity and discontinuity enact the very disintegration he diagnoses. His writing invites readers into uncertainty and introspection, embodying the failure it describes by rejecting closure and ultimate meaning. He proposes an ethics grounded in humility, fragility, and acceptance of failure, rejecting metaphysical foundations. Responsibility thus becomes an acceptance of

one's limits rather than adherence to universal principles, prioritizing clarity and prudence over heroic certainty or moral absolutism.

6. Emil Cioran Today

Emil Cioran's work occupies a distinctive space at the crossroads of literature and philosophy, where the aphoristic form probes the limits of language, failure, and negativity. Since his emergence in the Romanian literary scene of the 1930s and through his later French writings, Cioran's oeuvre has both intrigued and perplexed readers. Often dismissed as mere nihilism or pessimism, his writings resist facile categorization and demand nuanced analysis of their formal and philosophical intricacies. As this study interprets Cioran through the lens of an *aesthetics of failure*, the dynamic tension between negativity and collapse that permeates his thought and style has been emphasized. Failure, in this framework, is not simply defeat or despair but an ethical and artistic posture that embraces fragmentation, incompleteness, and the impossibility of absolute meaning. This approach aligns with broader 20th-century philosophical and literary discussions on negativity and the limits of representation. Thinkers like Theodor Adorno and Maurice Blanchot have characterized failure and negativity as spaces of resistance against ideological closure and domination. Cioran's aphorisms enact a continuous deferral of presence and perception, resonating with Blanchot's notion of infinite deferral (Blanchot, 1982, p. 53).

Cioran's legacy remains vital amid contemporary crises marked by uncertainty and demands for certainty. His worldview encourages toleration of conflict, acceptance of ambiguity, and honor in admitting failure. Although sometimes dismissed as a gloomy thinker, Cioran's work has garnered increasing scholarly attention within existential philosophy, negative aesthetics, and postmodern thought. His radical skepticism and aphoristic mode have influenced figures such as Giorgio Agamben, Jacques Derrida, Susan Sontag, and Thomas Bernhard—authors concerned with collapse, failure, and negativity.

Philosophically, Cioran is credited with anticipating key debates on posthumanism, ecological crisis, and the limits of reason. "For Cioran, reason is not a tool of liberation but the rust of vitality itself, eroding life's immediacy and reducing it to despair" (Kramer, 1987, p. 4). His emphasis on embracing failure complements contemporary critiques of progress narratives and technological hubris. In an era of rapid technological change, environmental degradation, and political instability, Cioran's philosophy of failure gains renewed relevance. His warnings against illusions of control and mastery echo in critiques of surveillance capitalism, climate denial, and political disenchantment. To confront these global challenges genuinely, humanity must first recognize its limitations—a stance that Cioran's work powerfully advocates.

Situated between philosophy, literature, and mysticism, Cioran's writings articulate failure not only as existential condition but as an aesthetic and ethical principle. This study's lens of aesthetics of failure reveals a dialectic between excess and silence, affirmation and negation, despair and sardonic detachment. Such a reading rescues Cioran from simplistic labels like pessimist or nihilist, uncovering a subtle engagement with subjectivity, language, and ethics: "Negation for Cioran is not despair's capitulation but an ethical posture of lucid refusal, which humor punctuates without diminishing its depth" (Newton, 2015, p. 9).

Cioran's legacy encourages embracing failure as an inherent feature of life rather than a defeat. This stance accepts the fragility and unpredictability of existence while rejecting triumphalism. It fosters a moral sensibility grounded in lucidity without despair and resilience without false hope, providing a necessary counterpoint to prevailing narratives of certainty and control. Cioran's philosophy of failure is a profound invitation and challenge—demanding a somber, lucid mode of thought and being that confronts limitation, despair, and collapse head-

on. His writings serve as a vital resource for philosophy grappling with ambiguity and crisis, reminding us that failure is not an endpoint but a fundamental aspect of the human condition deserving of respect, reflection, and even aesthetic appreciation.

The aphoristic form, central to Cioran's style, intensifies interpretative challenges. Following Nietzsche's insight, aphorisms resist systematic philosophy, instead provoking introspection and rupture. Short and dense, Cioran's aphorisms invite a poetics of reading marked by openness and ambiguity. His fragmentary prose aligns him with modernist literary traditions that favor paradox, sarcasm, and discontinuity over systematic clarity. Language in his work simultaneously fails and insists—his aphorisms frequently gesture toward silence and the unsayable while brimming with excess. Understanding Cioran's negation as more than despair is enriched by engaging with scholars exploring loss, fragmentation, and their ethical dimensions.

These ethical implications are urgent in a contemporary context where political quietism and resignation coexist with pervasive disillusionment. This study explores whether Cioran's articulation of failure can be seen as a form of moral resistance—a refusal of naïve optimism and ideological cooptation. Adorno's dialectical ethics, which embraces negativity as critical thought, provides a useful comparative framework.

Cioran's influence extends widely among thinkers probing language's limits and representation. His poetics of failure anticipates postmodern explorations of irony and disintegration. More than aesthetic, Cioran's failure aesthetics carry ethical weight—advocating humility, honesty, and openness to contradiction through stylistic resistance to closure. This echoes contemporary literary theories linking form and ethics. Moments of stylistic excess—repetitions, abundant imagery, emotional intensity—contrast with quiet pauses in Cioran's prose. This interplay of negation and abundance forms a paradoxical style both lavish and economical.

Maurice Blanchot's concept of literature as a space where meaning is perpetually deferred and silence is as vital as speech is especially pertinent here. Cioran's pauses, ellipses, incomplete thoughts, and rhetorical questions draw readers into this liminal space, where failure becomes a means of engaging the inexpressible rather than a sign of weakness.

Cioran employs paradox to reveal life and thought's inherent contradictions. His aphorisms often simultaneously assert and negate, exemplifying Adorno's "negative dialectics," which oppose closure and identity. This poetics of negation enacts failure as creative force, disrupting conventional notions of truth and meaning. By transforming silence and absence into expressive tools, Cioran's style enacts a purposeful failure of language's promise to fully capture reality.

Ultimately, Cioran's literary style—marked by paradox, aphorism, fragmentation, and negation—constitutes a novel contribution to twentieth-century aesthetics and a formal expression of his existential concerns. It illustrates how failure functions not only as a theme but as an embodied aesthetic practice, integrating form and content. Drawing on Blanchot's theories, this nexus is captured poignantly:

What if what has been said one time not only does not cease to be said but always recommences, and not only recommences but also imposes upon us the idea that nothing has ever truly begun, having from the beginning begun by beginning again (Blanchot, 1993, p. 343).

In conclusion, Cioran's legacy is one of rational refusal rather than despair. His works neither offer political programs nor comforting narratives but demonstrate the courage to reject philosophy, life, God, and self while remaining in the world without illusion—but not without

style. Failure, for Cioran, is not a foe to conquer but an essential reality to inhabit. It represents the clarity of being no one, nowhere, and for no purpose—a lucid elegy for a world that knows too much and dreams too much.

His enduring importance lies in affirming the dignity of failure over providing answers. In an age when philosophy risks politicization, psychologization, or instrumentalization, Cioran reminds us that lucidity is both wound and weapon, and that deep thought often entails suffering. Far from outdated, his writings continue to reflect and challenge our fractured, fatigued, yet clear-headed moment—searching for meaning amid the ruins of abandoned certainties.

7. Conclusion

This study concludes by exploring how Emil Cioran's aesthetics of failure profoundly shape contemporary ethical discourse. His radical skepticism and refusal of closure challenge traditional notions of responsibility, prompting new forms of ethical engagement grounded in humility, openness, and an acute awareness of human limits. Philosophers who situate Cioran within ongoing ethical conversations highlight his enduring influence: "Despite—or because of—his embrace of failure, Cioran continues to exert a powerful influence, offering a radical form of honesty about human existence" (Zarifopol-Johnston, 2009, p. 198).

Cioran's profound exploration of failure and despair remains strikingly relevant in an age marked by political volatility, ecological crises, and epistemic uncertainty. His works provide conceptual tools for confronting the contemporary crisis of meaning characteristic of late modernity. His distinctive aphoristic style has inspired literary and cultural figures such as Paul Auster and Michel Houellebecq, who similarly grapple with nihilism, identity fragmentation, and the limits of language.

Moreover, Cioran's reflections resonate strongly with contemporary critiques of identity, progress, and Western humanism. His investigations into excess, failure, and silence have significantly influenced twentieth- and twenty-first-century literary, philosophical, and cultural debates. This study situates Cioran's legacy within current discussions on representation, meaning, and moral obligation, revealing how his thought continues to shape existential literature, postmodern philosophy, and critical theory.

Cioran's legacy is thus one of profound engagement with failure as both a philosophical problem and an aesthetic strategy: "I do not pretend to resolve problems; I only wish to deny their importance" (Cioran, 1987, p. 14). His impact spans philosophy, literature, and cultural theory, contributing to contemporary debates on language, identity, nihilism, and ethics. Far from a relic of despair, Cioran's work endures as a vital resource for reckoning with the complexities of failure in the modern world. His insights are increasingly invoked by intellectuals who view nihilism not as an endpoint but as a critical stance capable of fostering moral and creative renewal.

Through his distinctive use of aphorism, paradox, silence, and excess, Cioran's aesthetics of failure give formal expression to his philosophical concerns. Beyond conveying existential sorrow, his poetics of negation enacts an ethical and aesthetic rejection of closure, inviting readers into a nuanced engagement with failure as a state of language and consciousness. Cioran's *politics of failure* contests the binary of involvement and withdrawal. His characteristic quietism emerges as a morally complex refusal of naïve activism and ideological totalization, instead proposing a position of ethical negation and critical distance. This stance opens new avenues for political ethics, especially in times of crisis, ambiguity, and failure.

An ethical reorientation toward vulnerability and humility arises from Cioran's analysis of the self's failure and dispossession. This ethics embraces the limits of agency and the inevitability of pain in place of mastery and control. Cioran's depiction of identity failure entails a radical dispossession—the dissolution of illusions of agency and selfhood. Paradoxically, though painful, this process opens the possibility for ethical openness and humility. His aphorisms often dramatize this tension: a despair at losing identity alongside a resolute refusal to reconstruct it artificially.

Religious and mystical themes are significant in Cioran's thought, despite his reputation primarily as a philosopher of failure and despair. His mysticism is distinctive in its rejection of transcendence and salvation, contrasting with traditional mystical frameworks. His ethics of despair embraces failure, negation, and withdrawal as ethically significant, challenging established moral paradigms. His approach resembles Kofman's ethics of loss and Adorno's negative dialectics—far from mere quietism or cynicism, this ambiguity invites serious moral reflection on the limits of action and the sincerity of hopelessness.

Although often read as an unyielding acceptance of nihilism, withdrawal, and despair, Cioran's philosophy harbors a nuanced ethical dimension that defies simplistic denunciations as cynicism or political quietism. This study emphasizes how his writing of failure negotiates the tension between hopelessness and responsibility, denial and moral transparency. His despair constitutes an ambivalent ethical posture, resisting conventional moral categories and enriching ongoing debates about ethical nihilism.

Cioran's work enacts a poetics of linguistic experience, dwelling in the paradoxical tension between excess and stillness. His aphorisms simultaneously reveal and conceal the ineffable dimensions of failure, despair, and denial through irony, reflexivity, and acute awareness of language's limits. His aesthetics of failure depend on this dialectic, creating space for conceptualizing language beyond conventional constraints. Silence in Cioran's writings functions as both an aesthetic and metaphysical element: "Paradoxically, art must testify to the unreconciled and at the same time envision its reconciliation; this is a possibility only for its nondiscursive language" (Adorno, 1997, p. 168). This recalls the apophatic tradition of negative theology, which approaches the divine through negation and silence rather than positive affirmation. For Cioran, silence marks the boundary of human understanding and the ultimate failure of language to capture the absolute. Simultaneously, silence is a conscious withdrawal from language's deceptive promises of representation. It is a deliberate embrace of the unsayable, not mere retreat: "The most honest words are those left unspoken" (Cioran, 2012, p. 135).

In his writings, excess manifests as an overabundance of expression—paradoxes, repetitions, and intensities that push language beyond normative limits—while silence denotes absence or negation. The overwhelming nature of despair itself is expressed through this stylistic excess, which can function as a deliberate strategy to inundate and unsettle the reader.

Cioran's aphoristic fragments reflect a profound meditation on language's possibilities and constraints. His work foregrounds the tension between excess—the overwhelming urge to speak and testify to failure and despair—and silence—the inexpressible void beyond words. Irony serves as a critical tool that both implicates and distances writer and reader, staging language as a realm of creative excess and inevitable failure.

References:

- Adorno, T. W. (1997). *Aesthetic theory* (R. Hullot-Kentor, Trans.). University of Minnesota Press.
- Adorno, T. W. (2004). *Negative dialectics* (E. B. Ashton, Trans.). Continuum. (Original work published 1966)
- Blanchot, M. (1982). *The space of literature*. University of Nebraska Press.
- Blanchot, M. (1993). *The infinite conversation* (S. Hanson, Trans.). University of Minnesota Press.
- Cioran, E. M. (1987). *The temptation to exist* (R. Howard, Trans.). Arcade Publishing. (Original work published 1956)
- Cioran, E. M. (1991). *Drawn and quartered* (R. Howard, Trans.). Arcade Publishing. (Original work published 1979)
- Cioran, E. M. (1992). *On the heights of despair* (I. Zarifopol-Johnston, Trans.). University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1934)
- Cioran, E. M. (1998). *The trouble with being born* (R. Howard, Trans.). Arcade Publishing. (Original work published 1973)
- Cioran, E. M. (2012). *A short history of decay* (R. Howard, Trans.). Arcade Publishing. (Original work published 1949)
- Geary, J. (2005). *The world in a phrase: A brief history of the aphorism* (2nd ed.). Bloomsbury/University of Chicago Press.
- Grant, B. (2016). *The aphorism and other short forms*. Routledge.
- Halberstam, J. (2011). *The queer art of failure*. Duke University Press.
- Hui, A. (2019). *A theory of the aphorism: From Confucius to Twitter*. Princeton University Press.
- Kramer, H. (1988). The anguishes of E. M. Cioran. *The New Criterion*, 6(7), 37–44.
- Morson, G. S. (2003). The aphorism: Fragments from the breakdown of reason. *New Literary History*, 34(3), 409–429.
- Newton, P. (2025). The sardonic philosophy of Emil Cioran: Enter crying, exit grinning. *The Philosophy of Humor Yearbook*, 6(1).
- Zarifopol-Johnston, I. (2009). *Searching for Cioran*. Indiana University Press.

BAD MOTHERS AND MATERNAL AMBIVALENCE IN *CICLUL HALLIPILOR* [THE HALLIPA CYCLE] BY HORTENSIA PAPADAT-BENGESCU AND *PATIMI* [PASSIONS] BY SOFIA NĂDEJDE¹

Ioana MOROȘAN

Department of Critical Editions and Literary History
Institute for Literary History and Theory G. Călinescu Romanian Academy, Romania

e-mail: ioana.morosan@inst-calinescu.ro

Abstract

The article analyzes the symptomatic representations of maternal experience in the modern Romanian novel written by women. It aims to draw attention to maternal voices portrayed in literary texts across national contexts at the beginning of the 20th century. The two novels proposed for this study focus on two prominent Romanian women writers who held ideologically opposing views: Sofia Nădejde (1856-1946), a feminist and socialist activist, and Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu (1876-1955), a well-established female novelist associated with the influential literary group which marked Romanian literary modernism during the interwar period – *Sburătorul*. This article examines the instrumental role of maternity and maternal ambivalence in these two novels. The often distant or even toxic relationship between mothers and children illustrates that maternity in this context is not a choice, but a question influenced by social demands and “female responsibility.” Thus, I explore significant aspects of “modern motherhood” as a gendered experience shaped by the social order: maternity as a matrimonial transaction, domestic oppression, social pressure, and finally, how the need for social emancipation and economic advancement interfere with the maternal role that women experience in terms of patriarchal constraints. This article aims to reflect on how these novels depict maternity as an experience beyond women’s agency.

Keywords: motherhood; Romanian modern novel; modern mothers; women’s responsibility; social and domestic oppression.

1. Introduction

In Romanian literary representations of the late 19th century and the early 20th century, female experiences, such as childbirth, menstruation, or even miscarriage, are considered to extend beyond what can be represented as such. Motherhood is conceived as an attribute of a traditional woman and contrasts with the image of emancipated, independent women at the time. Starting in the early 20th century, metropolitan global modernism and the values of a new capitalist society revolved around a different identity for women, who were defined outside the traditional private sphere. An image that became a referential representation of women in Romanian female writing during this period.

Studies on Romanian social history discuss the dichotomy concerning women’s emancipation, which, during the first half of the 20th century, was perceived as either “a

¹ Article History: Received: 15.12.2025. Accepted: 06.03.2026. Published: 15.05.2026. Acknowledgement: This research was supported by a grant from the French government under the FMSH Atlas Postdoctoral Fellowship Program.

relaxation of morals”² or “decadence”³ (Pippidi, 1988, p. 17). In the late 19th century, women were naturally associated with procreating and safeguarding the Romanian nation⁴ (Băluță, 2003, p. 63). The intersection of this principle with women’s emancipation and sexual liberation influenced societal perceptions of women at the crossroads of these two significant trends.

The concerns about women’s emancipation in the 19th century emerge in Mihail Kogălniceanu’s⁵ writing, who, in 1859, proposed a project aimed at the “improvement of the family,”⁶ emphasizing its importance for “moralizing society”⁷ (Vintilă, 2003, p. 269). In the early 20th century, the family crisis was associated with a moral crisis primarily attributed to the emancipation of sexual relations and women. Numerous conservative and reactionary voices (from the traditionalist movement opposed to aligning Romanian culture and society with Western values⁸) in the first half of the 20th century deemed women’s newfound freedoms a major cause of Romanian society’s moral decay. The moral corruption attributed to women became a significant topic by the mid-century, particularly during the interwar years, when women’s “excessive Europeanization” was still deemed a social danger (Jianu, 2003, p. 138).

Taking into accounts these elements, I aim to analyze the origins and dimensions of the tense relationship with motherhood developed by female characters in the novels of two authors, Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu and Sofia Nădejde, representative as female novelists in Romania in the first half of the 20th century. The representation of women as mothers emerges through the lens of monstrosity projected onto the children, constructed as a deviated identity, and onto the mothers whose experience is defined through subversive maternal desire (Goriss-Hunter, 2021, p. 20). Maternal subversion is characterized by two forms of rejection that are intensified in the two writings. Motherly experience is viewed either as an obstacle and failure that prevents women from achieving the social status they aspire to as independent bourgeois women or as a punishment for women who give birth outside of the normative social order. My argument is that the rejection of the maternal role and children reveals a gender crisis and a feminine anxiety against the background of social and economic changes at the beginning of the 20th century in Romania.

I aim to firstly examine the impact of self-desires and aspirations of women on the conflict between women as mothers and women’s agency, starting from the biographical data of the two authors. Maternal experience is illustrated through a radical representation of mothers who are either hypersexualized, hysterical, ambivalent, or even violent and monstrous with regards to their children. Female characters’ maternal posture inevitably turns into a spectacle meant to caricaturize them, on the one hand, and to replace their inability to express their fears and anxieties outside these radical behaviors.

Secondly, through a close reading focused on the mother–daughter relationship, the article examines radical representations of the mother–child bond as symptomatic of women’s internal conflict between motherhood, domesticity, independence, and economic aspirations. In the interwar period, the undeniably bourgeois institution of the family prescribed the terms

² Original source text: „o relaxare a moravurilor”

³ Original source text: „decădere”

⁴ The first Romanian-language magazine dedicated to mothers and raising children was founded in 1865 by revolutionary Maria Rosetti, in her advice to mothers, Rosetti says that the mission of mothers is to build good patriots.

⁵ M. Kogălniceanu (1817-1891) was a liberal politician and chief editor at *Dacia Literară*, one of the most important political and cultural magazines in the late 19th century, and the third prim-minister of Romania)

⁶ Original source text: „îmbunătățirea familiei”

⁷ Original source text: „moralizarea societății”

⁸ The cultural synchronization movement led by E. Lovinescu was a real phenomenon of opening for Romanian culture in the interwar period. It manifested itself in literature, philosophy, politics, and social practices. The synchronism promoted by Lovinescu was strongly boycotted by conservative and traditionalist factions. Synchronism was at the center of polemics in the interwar years, E. Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației române moderne* [The history of modern Romanian Civilization], 2016.

under which women could participate in the public sphere and the extent to which they were expected to devote themselves to childrearing. Motherhood functioned to reinforce the social order embodied by the family, while women's social deviations and extramarital procreation were used against them. From this perspective, motherhood acquires a punitive dimension. The tension between motherhood and women's independence during this supposed era of emancipation is reflected in representations of children. The selection of the novels takes into account the authors' ideological positions and their relationship to writing. Both Nădejde and Papadat-Bengescu were mothers and wives; however, Nădejde, as a socialist intellectual, articulated proto-feminist sensibilities, whereas Papadat-Bengescu belonged to the aesthetic circle gathered around E. Lovinescu and *Sburătorul*. The works analyzed – Papadat-Bengescu's *Ciclul Hallipilor* [*The Hallipa cycle*] which includes: (*Fecioarele despletite* [Disheveled maidens], 1925; *Concert din muzică de Bach* [A concert of music by Bach], 1927; *Drumul ascuns* [The hidden road], 1933, and Nădejde's *Patimi* [*Passions*], 1903 – are particularly illustrative in this regard. Finally, the article explores the social and economic instrumentalization of motherhood. It examines the role of children within these fictional families to understand women's attitudes toward childbirth and childrearing, and how ambivalence—even repulsion—toward maternity may generate forms of violence directed at children.

Thus, the article proposes a socio-historical and contextual analysis of the tense relationship between womanhood and motherhood, as well as the shifts in mindset occurring in this Eastern European context as it opens up to modernity and socio-cultural progress. The condition of motherhood during this period is unique as it is situated at the intersection of two histories: the 19th century, when maternity became the ultimate social mission for women, and the new socio-cultural context of synchronizations that occurred in this era of women's emancipation.

2. Mothering and Women's Independence – the Maternal Ambivalence

Intellectual occupation and motherhood are not socially acceptable, whereas “in the life of a woman, mind and body, creativity and procreation, books, and babies, have historically been mutually exclusive” (Benedetti, 2007, p. 27). For instance, Papadat-Bengescu started to publish at an older age, nearly 40, and was the mother of five children and the wife of a man who scorned her intellectual and literary interests. In her autobiography and in the letters she sent to her fellow writers, she mourns the way her family and children hinder her writing. In her published diary fragments, she complained about her authoritarian husband who prevented her from writing: “[...] It is the realization that your whole life, for 45 years of marriage, has been destroyed by the selfishness of the man who was and is your husband, but the meaning of husband, companion, protector does not exist”⁹ (Papadat-Bengescu in Baltazar, 1962, p. 70, my translation).

Nădejde wrote numerous articles about motherhood and family, drawing attention to how motherhood is socially exploited. She frequently asserted that a woman has the social mission to give birth, which limits their role in society:

“So, what are we but just some slaves reduced to the role of giving birth? We give birth and raise our children through life's most demanding work and adversities! How many

⁹ Original source text: „E constatarea că viața ta întreagă, timp de 45 de ani de căsătorie (ba mai mult), a fost distrusă de egoismul felurit al omului ce a fost și îți este soț, dar sensul de soț, de tovarăș, de protector, nu există.”

sleepless nights! And how many things do we give up for that? [...] Happy should be the mother who is not sacrificed!”¹⁰ (Nădejde in Mihăilescu, 2002, p. 86, my translation).

For Nădejde, motherhood under the patriarchal constraints represents a form of subjugation akin to slavery. She equates bondage and motherhood, as neither circumstance allows individuals autonomy over their bodies.

For this writer, motherhood presented its own specific. According to her testimony, they were longing for independence, and their maternal feelings were rather related to the “loss of freedom of movement that led to deprivation” (LaChance Adams, 2014, p. 45). This fact determines the novelist have a rather ambivalent attitude towards motherhood; as a result, the author responded to these feelings through the impulse of fight or flight (LaChance Adams, 2014, p. 50). As we can further see, such a narrative follows all these impulses that characterize an “unconventional”, and ambivalent maternal experience.

3. Writing “Bad Motherhood”: Resentment and Failure in Mother-Child Relationships

Papadat Bengescu’s novels explore themes of monstrous motherhood and cursed children (Crohmălniceanu, 1984, p. 159). Her family trilogy, which includes the novels *Fecioarele despletite* [The disheveled maidens] (1925), *Concert din muzică de Bach* [A concert of music by Bach] (1927), and *Drumul ascuns* [The hidden road] (1933), focuses on an urban upper-middle-class family story, more precisely on a rather harmful mother figure. This character often experiences anxiety in what regards female corporeality in a hostile society; the result is the representation of women as hypersexual and deviant mothers and wives responsible for the moral decay of the bourgeois family institution. We consider the entire trilogy for the proposed analysis since these novels are interconnected and present symptomatic representation of monstrous mothers across generations. In modern Romanian literature, parent-child relationships generally lack affection and romanticized portrayals of motherhood. Resentment and repulsion, bordering on disgust, grow between mothers and their children, and portrayals of children are often extreme. In Sofia Nădejde’s first feminist novel (Baghiu, 2022, p. 51), a hysterical mother’s behavior underscores the dominant patriarchal constraints on women’s bodies and maternal experiences, especially in the absence of a vocabulary to express women’s anger and fear outside of female sexual deviation and maternal ambivalence and rejection (Ransirini, 2021, p. 104).

Since the monstrous is closely linked to the feminine (Goriss-Hunter, 2021, p. 23), maternal ambivalence is also shown in Papdat-Bengescu’s trilogy through the figure of a monstrous mother and daughter. Elena, along with her sister, Mika-Lé, and their mother Lenora, is mischievous in similar ways. Meanwhile, their sons become victims of maternal cruelty. The sons of these monstrous mothers’ end by killing themselves (as in the case of Elena’s son) or are characters worthy of pity, suffering from various pathologies. They are disabled and powerless in the face of the complexity of mothers’ drives, and they also tragically end, as it happens in the case of Elena’s twin brothers. The violence that characterizes the mother-child relationship appears in many social and intimate forms and interactions. Such violence aims to create space for “alternative” maternal aspirations and desires (Goriss-Hunter, 2021, p. 21), thereby challenging the traditional, male-centered view of the maternal experience in family and society. On the other hand, the monstrous portrayal of children signifies the

¹⁰ Original source text: „Așadar ce suntem noi decât niște sclave menite a perpetua genul omenesc? Noi naștem și creștem copiii prin cele mai mari munci și necazuri. Câte nopți nedormite! De câte plăceri nu ne privăm! Ferice de mama care nu este sacrificată!”

rejection of the maternal role. These monstrous children work as a language of negation, reflecting the mothers' attempts to assert their agency.

In Papadat-Bengescu's third part of her trilogy (*Drumul ascuns*, 1933), Elena Drăgănescu, the "good daughter" of Lenora Hallipa, who is a "fruit" of her marriage with landowner Doru Hallipa, faces a dramatic experience as a mother, which forms the main tension in the novel. Nothing tender or comforting happens in her relationship with her son, only resentment and indifference; she became a mother dominated by desires outside of her marriage. Elena has never seen him as a person, but rather as someone she controls to fulfill her desires and ambitions:

"Elena was shaping her heir according to her own preconceived ideas; she loved him because she could fulfill them [...] through him. She could multiply her ambition, [...] she could add him to her possession, through him she could represent herself once again, this was the great motivation of her affection."¹¹ (Papadat-Bengescu, 2012, p. 947, my translation).

Elena and her partner instrumentalize the child as an economic mobility mechanism. Since the goal has been achieved, the child has become a subject who has fueled the mother's anger.

Along a similar line of thought, *Patimi* [Passions] (1903) focuses on sexual sin and the grim fate that "frivolous" women, who seek sexual pleasure, may face. In the rural aristocracy, Matilda, the main character, marries a landowner and has a child with him. As well as Elena Drăgănescu's experience as a mother, Matilda's daughter ends up serving as a representation of Matilda's inability to enjoy unconventional desires. When she falls in love with a man who represents the bohemian, civilized, urban world, the child becomes an obstacle to her freedom to evolve into an emancipated woman who can embrace the urban and cosmopolitan lifestyle. In Matilda's marriage, motherhood plays an instrumental role imposed by the prevailing sentiments of the rural community, against her desires. The presence of her daughter provoked Matilda's fury and repulsion. When the little girl spontaneously appeared in front of her and her lover, Matilda denied the filiation with her own daughter, treating her as if she were a stranger (Nădejde, 2021, p. 51). This harsh behaviour questions the interpretation of motherless feelings as a gendered attitude of resistance in front of an asymmetric distribution of power in the family.

From one generation of mothers to another, in Papadat-Bengescu's trilogy, as well as in the feminist novel by Nădejde, women contest all definitions of mother as a person "who meets child's demands for preservation, growth, and social accessibility" (LaChance Adams, 2019, p. 19). The unconventional desires of mothers are rendered through their *hypersexual* behaviour that diminishes familial ties and affection. *Fecioarele despletite* [The disheveled maidens] (1925), the protagonist, Lenora Hallipa, mother of Elena, illustrates femininity: she is candid and voluptuous, and she is described as looking like a "Nuremberg doll", which has a sexual connotation itself (Bryan Ganaway, 2010, 217). The level of affection between mothers and children is determined by the sexual tension that occurs in their relationship. For instance, Elena is desirable to her mother because she is no competition for her: "She is a lifeless mechanism, porcelain complexion, earthenware eyes, and a rigid body"¹² (Papadat-Bengescu, 2012, p. 431, my translation).

¹¹ Original source text: „Elena își pregătea moștenitorul pentru ideile ei preconcepute, îl iubea pentru că i le putea satisface. (...) prin el își putea multiplica ambiția, (...) îl putea adăuga drepturilor ei de proprietate, că se putea, prin el, reprezenta o dată mai mult, era argumentul mare al afecțiunii ei”

¹² Original source text: „Este un mecanism lipsit de viață, piele de porțelan, ochi de faianță și un corp rigid”

Lenora's second daughter, Mika-Lé, born of an extramarital affair, appears as a "monstrous doll,"¹³ characterized by sexual deviance and corporeal excess, traits presented as inherited from her mother. (Papadat-Bengescu, 2012, p. 437). Mika-Lé illustrates her mother's sinfulness, and her sexuality is seen as a moral depravity that weakens the family. Mika-Lé has an affair with her sister's fiancé, a fact that led to the separation of the couple, as well as with all men who enter the family's house. She is treated like a servant, and, in turn, she "profits" from the fragile morality of her family's members, although she is rather a victim of sexual violence, as a way of expressing her feminine anger. This is why her sexuality is concerning and dangerous: "Mika-Lé speculates everywhere on her mysterious and harmful instinct"¹⁴ (Papadat-Bengescu, 2019, p. 1045, my translation). Mika-Lé's physical description, "deformed creature, degeneracy of nature"¹⁵, "trash-face good only for lay"¹⁶, highlights the fact that she embodies an unconventional and undesired femininity of "a prostitute"¹⁷ who provokes fear and anxieties for other women, and violent behaviour and fascination for men. Lenora is punished for the first time by giving birth to unofficial, thus, cursed children, and, secondly, through illness, as the cancer will attack the reproductive part of her body. In a depraved and "commercialized" society, women's ability to reproduce provokes doubts and anxiety; instead of affection, maternity raises fears and hate as a response to the new capitalist world (Baghiu, 2022, p. 51; Rogozanu, 2024, p. 114), defined by the struggle for social advancement. The legitimate daughter, Elena, is described as the opposite of her mother, who is an "instinctual, passionate and beautiful woman"¹⁸, unlike the daughter, who is a "rigid and lifeless figure without senses"¹⁹ (Papadat-Bengescu, 2012, p. 419, my translation). The first novel of the trilogy presents the tension between women's aspirations for economic and social advancement and the conservative forms of the bourgeois family. The *hypersexualization* is embedded in the profile of bourgeois women who respond through the sexual spectacle to the dichotomy between agency and constraints that marks ambivalent maternal experience.

The same sexual desire will take possession of Matilda's body. It is ingenious how Sofia Nădejde explores the entrenched patriarchal biases regarding women's roles as mothers. Nădejde shows that the refusal of maternity is a socially unacceptable gesture, whereas it represents a boycott of the patriarchal structure of society. Mothers and children have an important role in the communal economy. They must serve the social and economic interests of the father (Mihăilescu, 2002, p. 286). Matilda falls in love with a dandy lawyer who seeks her husband's fortune²⁰, and she becomes a victim of her desires and, in this way, a social pariah: "Matilda was one of those women destined to fall prey to love! In middle age, when passion knows no bounds and borders on madness"²¹ (Nădejde, p. 42, my translation). A caricatural representation of clandestine affairs is common for both writings. For instance, Matilda, every time she saw the family friend, the ambitious lawyer, "felt a pleasant softness; she lacked the strength to resist the alluring love, the hidden passion that consumed her"²² (Nădejde, p. 49, my translation). In fact, Matilda's passion does not belong to the sphere of

¹³ Original source text: „păpușă monstruoasă”

¹⁴ Original source text: „Mika-Le specula pretutindeni misteriosul și nocivul ei instinct”

¹⁵ Original source text: „creatură diformă, degenerescență a naturii”

¹⁶ Original source text: „față de gunoi mic care duce la tăvăleală”

¹⁷ Original source text: „a prostituatei”

¹⁸ Original source text: „O femeie, frumoasă, pasională și instinctuală”

¹⁹ Original source text: „O figură rigidă, lipsită de viață și fără simțuri”

²⁰ Original source text: The phenomenon of *thruster* is symptomatic for the economic development of Romania in the first part of the 20th century, as a new class that interestedly oscillated around the old aristocracy., see Ștefan Baghiu's preface (2022).

²¹ Original source text: „Matilda era din acele femei menite a cădea pradă iubirii la vârsta de mijloc, atunci când patima nu mai cunoaște mărgeni și esoră de aproape cu nebunia”

²² Original source text: „a simțit omângăiere plăcută; nu avea tăria să reziste iubirii seducătoare, pasiunii ascunse care o mistuia”

pure desires, but rather to her aspiration to advance in the social hierarchy represented by her clandestine lover.

Nădejde critically highlights how female characters in Romanian literature are put in a dishonorable light. Thus, “Matilda had been a poor girl; she got married and gave birth to secure her life, not out of love, and since she was very young when she told her friends that she would marry out of financial interest”²³ (Nădejde, 2021, p. 32, my translation). Mothers are depicted as self-absorbed and infamous, while fathers are more responsible and victims of monstrous mothers, in the context that both mother and father’s aim is the same: economic gain and social prosperity. Matilda’s husband, a landowner who is dealing with significant financial issues, is shown in the background. His generosity, devotion, and patience highlight the asymmetric involvement in their child’s education: “Oh, if only I didn’t have a baby! I’d shoot myself or disappear from the country, nobody would know me, and it’d be easier than here”²⁴ (Nădejde, 2021, p. 46, my translation). Thus, she is not only indifferent, but she betrays her husband and daughter by eloping with another man. The radical gesture of abandonment hides indifferent women in front of the institution of family, qualified as a male property, social expectations, and women’s attempt to accede to the values promoted by the new society, connected to the values of global capitalism defined by individual gain and wealth. Matilda’s husband represents the decline of the “old world” and of the landowners in rural areas. She flees from the fear of social decline and of ending up back among the peasant class, so she implicitly flees from her family, which is an extension of this rural world, contrasted by the new urban capitalist society represented by the lawyer.

In contrast with Papadat-Bengescu’s trilogy, which establishes maternal ambivalence as pathology, Nădejde takes a critical position in front of women’s constraints, and sheds a different light on maternal ambivalence seen as a paradoxical dimension of motherhood, split between women’s agency and separation from their desires and social aspirations. The attitude towards maternal ambivalence of these authors became evidence of the ideological beliefs of these two writers.

4. Spectacular Mothers and Dramatic Motherhood

In both writings, at the debut, the female character follows the social norms of femininity and responds to social expectations about women’s roles in national imagery. They get married for interest; they are feminine, obedient, flirty, and very kind to men. They play their roles as mother and wife in a very spectacular way. Motherhood stands for an institution that women honor without being truly familiar with because men appropriate motherhood to respond to their social assertion needs (O’Reilly, 2004, p. 176). In these novels, dichotomic feelings concerning children and family life determine that spectacularity replaces an articulate vocabulary of representation of women’s needs and voice. The most common representation of a mother oscillates between obedience and hysteria, which contains their fear and anxieties (Ransirini, 2021, p. 111).

In Nădejde’s novel, Matilda aspires to a bohemian, cosmopolitan, urban life, and her lover is the only reference she has to this world. In the way of her path, the child is a hindrance in her attempt to achieve these goals. Her reactions are more radical when the clandestine lover is around. Her sharp dialogues on the role of women in society with her husband and friends are partially fueled by her inability to live independently from the family. Matilda is spectacular

²³ Original source text: „Matilda fusese o fată săracă. S-a măritat și a făcut un copil pentru a-și asigura viața, nu din iubire. De când era foarte tânără, le spunea prietenilor că se va mărita din interes”

²⁴ Original source text: „Oh, dacă n-aș avea un copil! M-aș împușca ori m-aș duce în lume, să nu mă cunoască nimeni și mi-ar fi mai ușor decât aici!”

as she plays a role. Her attitude is flirty; she is showing off continuously and always looks exquisite. She is described at the beginning of the novel as a very irritable person, like a smoldering fire: “she was like a smoldering fire, smothered under a layer of ash; all it took was a gust of wind for the fire to burst forth furiously”²⁵ (Nădejde, 2021, p. 42, my translation).

Matilda’s political beliefs and position regarding women’s roles are truly scandalous for her husband’s friends, who frequent their house. She is harshly boycotting the institution of marriage and the traditional gender role (Nădejde, 2021, p. 133). In her daily life, Matilda is very apathetic, except when it comes to the presence of the men she desires, and through him, the social ascension she aspires to. All her gestures are a spectacle in those circumstances. Matilda desires to enjoy secret feelings at the expense of her family. Her younger sister, Maria, provokes jealousy (p. 62), and her daughter and husband provoke repulsion. Sarah Ruddick questions the “natural inclination” of mothers to care for their children, and finally, she delimits two phases of mothering marked by the act of birthing. The first one, pregnancy, which involves an unconditional tie with the fetus and embryo, and after birthing, which is, in fact, a rupture. Thus, mothering implies the adoption of the infant after giving birth, and this adoption determines the care of the child (Ruddick, 1995, p. 62). This is why mothering is not a gendered act. In Nădejde’s novel, for instance, the father fully adopted her daughter and provided care and resources for the child. Moreover, in these families, children are identified by mothers as an extension of fathers, as Matilda bluntly states: “She totally takes after her father”²⁶ (Nădejde, 2021, p. 78, my translation). This is happening with Lenora Hallipa’s unofficial daughter, Mika-Lé, who is seen as an extension of her father; she is a “flith”²⁷, and her infamous nature is the “hereditary dowry passed down to her by her real father, the Italian vagabond”²⁸ (Papadat-Bengescu, 2012, p. 410, my translation). The division between mothers and children after birth is common in both writings, as maternal experience is marked by the mother’s struggle to defend her own space, violated by expectations and constraints. From such a perspective, the mother-child relationship is defined by hysteria, violence, and repulsion, altogether inserted into the spectacular representation of female weakness.

Excess defines the characters’ journey in Papadat-Bengescu’s trilogy. In the second part – *Concert din muzică de Bach* [A concert of music by Bach], motherhood is experienced in the context of organizing a large-scale soirée. Women live intimacy in salons and gatherings that are more or less out of interest. Everything is excessive and spectacular. The description of the main female character, Lenora Hallipa, is emblematic for the spectacular representation of women, who are not only hysterical, anxious, and hypersexual, but they are also seen as objects too. Thus, Lenora is perceived as a doll. Women pay a lot of attention to dressing; they are flirty, as the conventional code of femininity imposes on them, involved in romantic drama, and cruel to their children. The intrigues and conflicts between mothers and children sometimes border on the limits of a drama with burlesque overtones.

The extra-marital affairs have become a casual alternative for emotionally unsuccessful marriages. Thus, Lenora gave birth to monstrous children resulting from an extramarital tragic accident. Nevertheless, Mika-Lé serves as a concrete presence of her sin of having been a “lustful”²⁹ woman. As such, Lenora punishes not only herself but her daughter, too. She calls her daughter a “degenerate creature who does nothing but disturb any trace of harmony”³⁰ (Papadat-Bengescu, 2012, p. 348, my translation). Unlike Matilda, in Papadat-Bengescu’s

²⁵ Original source text: „Era ca un foc care ardea mocnit, acoperit de un strat de cenușă; a fost de ajuns o rafală de vânt ca focul să izbucnească cu putere.”

²⁶ Original source text: „Seamănă leit cu tatăl ei”

²⁷ Original source text: „târfa”

²⁸ Original source text: „Zestrea ereditară pe care i-a lăsat-o tatăl ei, vagabontul acela italian”

²⁹ Original source text: „desfrănată”

³⁰ Original source text: „creatură degenerată care nu face nimic decât să distrugă orice urmă de armonie”

novels, mothers are not only ambivalent and unconventional, but they are also *uncanny* in their monstrosity. In both writings, motherhood is feminized as women somatize their anxieties and fears through hysterical, hypersexual behavior, and even physical or mental illness. Lenora Hallipa, along with her daughter Elena, acts irrationally in their maternal experience. This irrationality does problematize the interpretation of “radical deviations” as a response to the emotional emptiness, male gaze constraints, as well as social and economic aspirations.

5. The Social Role of Children in the Family's Economy

It is not by chance that not one novel dating from this period and written by women depicts a serene relationship with children - motherhood is a social fact, and the fact of having children belongs to men. The conflict of motherhood faced by the protagonist in Nădejde's novel is partly determined by this dominant quality of the father who rules over the family and the body of the wife who is meant to serve him.

Women have the wrong upbringing; men, when they marry, are of good faith, they want a mother for their children, but most women do not want to fulfill their duties. For them, the man is a banker; he must give without expecting accountability in return, and they consider marriage and children slavery.³¹ (Nădejde, 2021, p. 114, my translation)

In the Romanian world – both rural and urban – children are meant to provide family security for fathers and prevent mothers from immoral deviations: “Master Todiriță had not had the good fortune to be blessed with five or six children in his marriage, as, perhaps, the care of them would have saved Matilda from many falls and sins”³² (Nădejde, p. 165, my translation). In the rural novel, the female body is a reproductive object. For mothers who betray the social norms imposed by family law, the insurrectional gesture turned against them. Nădejde's main character left her family to be seduced by a lawyer, who promised her the life that she aspires to, but her love story is predictably doomed to fail. When pregnancy occurs outside the social order, out of feeling and not reason, then it is damned to a tragic end. Unlike the standard profile of a woman vitiated by moral depravity in the modern Romanian novel, who fails in the role of mother and wife, here, the protagonist does not submissively admit her mistake of stepping outside the social order but critically relates to social constraints:

No, said Matilda to herself, our faults and even the crimes of a few are not able to atone for all the wrongs done by men. We are miserable like the servant who steals or even kills his master, but the sufferings of thousands and thousands of men are avenged in one man.³³ (Nădejde, 2021, p. 494, my translation)

A marriage succeeded by motherhood is established as the main goal for women (L. Benedetti, 2007, p. 27). In Papadat-Bengescu's writing, mothers and their bodies are deemed as instruments of servitude to society, and they are meant to reinforce the social order ruled by male domination. The novel's main conflict revolves around social constraints, self-desires, and aspirations. Under the family's pressure, legitimate children, especially daughters, have to look for a “good catch” – just as their mothers did. The legitimate daughter of Lenora, Elena, is already matrimonially settled. Her marriage is endangered by her vulgar sister, Mika-Lé, who

³¹ Original source text: „Femeile au o educație greșită, bărbatul când se însoară este de bună-credință, el vrea să aibă mama la copii, dar cele mai multe nu vor să-și îndeplinească datoriile. Pentru dânsule, bărbatul este un bancher, dator să le dea fără socoteală, căsnicia o socotea robie.”

³² Original source text: „Conașul Todiriță n-avusese noroc să-i fie căsnicia binecuvântată cu vreo cinci-șase copii, grija de aceștia, poate, ar fi scăpat-o pe de multe căderi și păcate.”

³³ Original source text: „Nu, își zise Matilda în gând, greșelile și chiar crimele noastre ale cîtorva nu-s în stare să răscumpere tot răul săvîrșit de bărbați. Sîntem mizerabile, ca robul care-și fură ori chiar omoară stăpînul, dar suferințele a mii și mii de inși se răzbună în unul singur.”

is not a viable option for the creation of a family that would enforce the family's fortune because of her origin.

Women's natural tendency toward maternal affection is dismissed as an outdated concept unfamiliar to middle-class women in Eastern Europe. In these authors' novels, children do not engage in activities typical of bourgeois families, such as education, having governesses—characters absent in these novels—or taking piano or French lessons. The birth and presence of children reflect fears shaped by a new society where everything has become commodified. The anxiety women experience is specifically tied to Eastern countries, particularly the fear of falling back into the rural class (a class that is almost nonexistent in Western capitalist societies at that time), and into serfdom or poverty (Rogozanu, 2024, p. 115). The rejection of motherhood as an inherent part of womanhood stems from a desire for Westernization and socio-economic mobility.

6. Violence Against Children and the Rejection of Mothers

Maternity is shaped as a violent experience in both rural and urban novels. In the Romanian rural world, women are often animalized, as are their children. For instance, one of the most common sentences that defines the act of birthing in the rural world is *dropping her litter* ("să fete") (Parvulescu & Boatcă, 2020, p. 132). There is in Romanian culture a violent image regarding women and birthing. Women are often associated with animals (dogs, doves, cows etc.) whilst men are compared with more powerful creatures such as bulls or dragons (V. Bopp-Filimonov, 2024, p. 20). A pregnant woman is often called "grea" or "borțoasă", which is a rather trivial term and means "gestating." In the language of the early 20th century, violence was used to animalize women's representation. Romanian studies on the history of sexuality showed that Romanian writers and intellectuals were mostly influenced by theories that established the consubstantiality of women's reproduction with the reproduction of animals or plants: "Human sexuality entails the sexuality of animals and plants"³⁴ (Oișteanu, 2016, p. 78, my translation). Women's sexuality was deemed essential for animals' fertility (Eliade apud Oișteanu, 2016, p. 79). These "philosophical reflections" are intertwined with local misogynist beliefs promoted and established in that period. Worth noting that women, especially those women who are out of the social order and morality, as we can see in the case of Mika-Lé or Matilda, were conceived as otherness; they are harshly judged, and they have non-human and almost animalistic features. For instance, Mika-Lé "is not used to the forms of human sensitivity"³⁵ (Papdat-Bengescu, 2012, p. 819, my translation), and she is called by her family "insect,"³⁶ "mosquito,"³⁷ "grasshopper"³⁸, and "cockroach"³⁹ (p. 427, 435, my translation). These women's socially undesirable positions are seen as disability (Tova, 2020), a presence that loses its human traits and becomes animalized.

Physical violence against children consisted of emotional trouble generated by the mother's attitude toward their social role. Mathilda wants her daughter to die rather than share her fate. Moreover, when the little daughter suspects her mother's infidelity, and she is berating her mother for that, Matilda beats her daughter cruelly:

³⁴ Original source text: „sexualitatea umană este asimilată sexualității animalelor și a plantelor”

³⁵ Original source text: „nu este obișnuită cu formele sensibilității umane”

³⁶ Original source text: „insectă”

³⁷ Original source text: „țânțar”

³⁸ Original source text: „lăcustă”

³⁹ Original source text: „gândac”

Matilda grabbed her little daughter by the hand like a hawk and dragged her into the house. When she reached the house, she started hitting her on the head, on the back. The child didn't say anything; she did not whimper or cry⁴⁰ (Nădejde, 2021, p. 171, my translation).

The mother's cruelty towards the little child drives her to extreme gestures. Even though she does not understand what is happening to her parents, she feels misfortune with her instinct, not her mind (Nădejde, 2021, p. 171). As such, Matilda's daughter decides to commit suicide, so she almost drowns in the nearby lake but is rescued by her dog and by a friend of her father's. In this case, passionate love for a man equals violent hatred for the child. Matilda callously leaves her family without looking back. According to the principles of the traditional community: "the woman who is passionate is a thousand times more heartless than the man who is passionate"⁴¹ (Nădejde, 2021, p. 289, my translation), as monstrosity is mostly related to the feminine identity.

The pity for a man is stronger than maternal feeling, and this sin is turned against them by disqualifying the woman from being able to bear children or to bear healthy children. As such, Matilda's violence against her daughter turns against her in the form of rejecting her as a mother. She becomes pregnant a second time with the man for whom she left her family. Her attempts to get rid of the pregnancy prove fatal. The feminist commitment of Nădejde's novel is apparent from this point. Matilda's drama of keeping the pregnancy, against the will of her partner, generates real female cohesion. For instance, the midwife says to Matilda:

I did not want to commit myself to anything in front of the gentleman until I knew your will. Although I tell you, abortion would be impossible. The pregnancy is advanced. I know many men force women to take this step. That's why I usually ask women first, they are the ones who suffer, they are put in danger, and her will is what counts⁴² (Nădejde, 2021, p. 471, my translation)

In the end, beyond the prejudices of society and the misogynistic condemnations to which she has been subjected, only death makes her aware of the regret of not having fulfilled her role as a mother: "The more she looked at herself in the mirror, the more she mourned for the past, the past she had so cruelly mocked"⁴³ (Nădejde, 2021, p. 534, my translation).

In Papadat-Bengescu's novel, the violence directed toward children is more verbal, psychological, and emotional rather than physical. They are also victims of fate, paying for their mother's sins. The main character, Lenora, gives birth to "a monster" because of an embarrassing affair. She calls her daughter a "blackguard, bastard, degeneration of nature, instinctual creature,"⁴⁴ and her daughter acts like "an animal in heat"⁴⁵ (Papadat-Bengescu, 2012, p. 439, my translation). Additionally, many children are the result of failed abortions. Abortion is a significant theme in modern Romanian novels written by women. How women view abortion reflects the patriarchal control over women's pregnant bodies. Abortion is often seen as available only to women who are denied the right to become mothers by men or society. For instance, Matilda can no longer give birth after her failure, as judged by the community. Lenora and her illegitimate daughter are considered unable to bear children from a maternal

⁴⁰ Original source text: „Matilda o apucă de mână, ca un uliu, și o târî în casă. Ajungând în casă, începu a o bate cu palmele peste cap, peste spate. Copila nu zicea nimic, nici nu se văita, nici nu plângea.”

⁴¹ Original source text: „Femeia pătimașă e de o mie de ori mai fără inimă decât bărbatul pătimaș.”

⁴² Original source text: „N-am vrut să mă angajez de față cu domnul la nimic înainte de a ști voința dumitale. Deși îți spun, avortul ar fi imposibil. Sarcina e înaintată. Eu știu că mulți bărbați silesc femeile să facă pasul ăsta. De aceea obișnuiesc să întreb femeile mai întâi, ele sunt cele care suferă, sunt puse în pericol, prin urmare, voința ei contează.”

⁴³ Original source text: „Cu cât se privea mai mult în oglindă, cu atât o năpădea jalea pentru trecut, acel trecut de care și-a bătut, cu atâta cruzime, joc!”

⁴⁴ Original source text: „ticăloasă, bastardă, degenerescență a naturii, creatură instinctuală”

⁴⁵ Original source text: „animal în călduri”

perspective because they have also “failed”. The failure of maternal responsibility is marked by the mother through the sin of giving birth to an illegitimate child, and Lenora’s daughter, Mika-Lé, misses out on motherhood because of her status as a “bastard”⁴⁶. Lenora calls her daughter “a fiend, a mutant, a woodland creature”⁴⁷ (Papadat-Bengescu, 2012, p. 481, my translation).

The narratives of the time poorly address the absence of medication and contraception. As a result, the pain of abortion and its fatal nature are blamed on female sin and the deprivation of women’s right to become mothers because of their perceived “betrayal” of social norms. When Lenora’s daughter, the “fruit of sin”⁴⁸ and the “cursed child”⁴⁹, becomes pregnant from a secret affair, her baby is stillborn, “mort-né” (Papadat-Bengescu, 2012, p. 470). Nădejde and Papadat-Bengescu’s female characters reject this submissive role and their children because motherhood occurs beyond their control. In the face of the terrible acts committed by Mika-Lé, one character recalls the well-known Romanian proverb: “What is born of a cat will eat mice”⁵⁰ (Papadat-Bengescu, 2012, p. 491, my translation). What she shares with her mother is the inability to give birth due to moral punishment, as they can no longer be accepted as mothers by society. In this vein, Matilda’s final reply is emblematic: “Today, your man will not even let you be a mother”⁵¹ (Nădejde, 2021, p. 507, my translation). Matilda’s assertion can be tied to Ruddick’s take about the prenatal relationship between mother and child, when motherhood does not raise a matter of “inclination”. The fetus is part of the mother’s body. This is why Matilda protests against the violation of her choice and her body when she contests her partner’s decision to have an abortion. Instead of adoption and providing care for their children, maternal experience reminds them that they are “weak, miserable creatures that men do whatever they want with”⁵² (Nădejde, 2021, p. 511, my translation).

7. Conclusions

Romanian scholarship dedicated to realistic and social novels has avoided the topic of motherhood, even though mothers’ practices in fiction remain dependent on social changes at the time. Ambivalent motherhood is inherently connected to the social nature of these novels. In a society newly integrated into the capitalist system, the experience of motherhood and the act of having children become part of a logic of transaction and commodification, obtaining or reinforcing goods that are both assured and threatened by the birth of children—this aspect shapes the true social character of novels. This reading applies both to Nădejde’s novel and, especially, to Bengescu’s novel, which is mostly regarded as a psychological analysis.

This research aims to open a dialogue on the mechanisms that have placed the figure of the mother in the spectrum of monstrous agents in social and realist narrative from the beginning of the 20th century. Maternal ambivalence and the monstrous figure of the mother have become, in the novels of Papadat-Bengescu and Nădejde, not just a fictional representation but also a language of resistance. The significance of these works lies in their depiction of the tangible, material aspects of maternal experience, which extend beyond being a metaphysical idea to include political and social implications. Female characters experiencing motherhood in these novels exemplify the subaltern, and their children are often victims of uneven economic and social forces. The often-overlooked issue of dysfunctional motherhood reflects

⁴⁶ Original source text: „bastardă”

⁴⁷ Original source text: „pocitanie, spurcăciune, o făptură pădureață”

⁴⁸ Original source text: „fructul păcatului”

⁴⁹ Original source text: „Copil blestemat

⁵⁰ Original source text: „Ce naște din pisică, șoareci mănâncă”

⁵¹ Original source text: „Azi, bărbatul nu te lasă nici măcar să fii mamă”

⁵² Original source text: „creaturi mizerabile și slabe cu care bărbații fac ce vor”

the troubled state of women in Romanian society of that time, where childbirth, children, and family are framed as male possessions used to assert male social capital, as Pierre Bourdieu discussed in *Masculine Domination* (2001). If this perspective emphasizes the link between the monstrous portrayal of the mother, maternal ambivalence, and a gender identity crisis – particularly in this region of Eastern Europe where tradition and modernity, emancipation and conservatism intersect – the question remains: to what extent does the ambivalent discourse on motherhood and childbirth influence the development of a general violent imaginary directed against both children and mothers in the narratives of this period?

References:

- Anderson, H. (1992). *Utopian feminism: Women's movements in fin-de-siècle Vienna*. Yale University Press.
- Baltazar, C. (1962). *Contemporan cu ei: Amintiri și portrete* [Contemporaneous with them: Memories and portraits]. Editura pentru Literatură.
- Baghiu, Ș. (2022). Liviu Rebreanu și Sofia Nădejde ca world literature: Geopolitică, interimperialitate și descoperirea lumii în romanul modern [Liviu Rebreanu and Sofia Nădejde as world literature: Geopolitics, interimperiality, and the discovery of the world in the modern novel]. *Transilvania*, 10, 46–54. <https://doi.org/10.51391/trva.2022.10.06>
- Băluță, I. (2008). *La bourgeoisie respectable: Réflexion sur la construction d'une nouvelle identité féminine dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle roumain* [The respectable bourgeois woman: Reflection on the construction of a new feminine identity in the second half of the Romanian nineteenth century]. Bucharest University Press.
- Benedetti, L. (2007). *The tigress in the snow: Motherhood and literature in twentieth-century Italy*. University of Toronto Press.
- Bopp-Filimonov, V. (2024). Extraordinary bodies in Liviu Rebreanu's *Ion*: A reading through the lens of disability studies. *Dacoromania Litteraria*, 11, 8–27. https://dacoromanialitteraria.instpuscariu.ro/pdf/11/1%20Bopp_Filimonov.pdf
- Bordeianu, M., Botez, V., Botez, Gr., Lăzărescu, I., & Teodorescu, Al. (Eds.). (1966). *Scrisori către Ibrăileanu* [Letters to Ibrăileanu]. Editura Minerva.
- Bourdieu, P. (2001), *Masculine Domination*. (R. Niche, Trans.). Stanford University Press.**
- Devesel, A. (2012). *Sofia Nădejde: A nineteenth-century Romanian socialist feminist* [Master's thesis, Central European University].
- Ganaway, B. (2010). *Toys, consumption and middle-class childhood in imperial Germany, 1871–1918*. Peter Lang.
- Gill, R. (2009). *Narratives of mothering: Women's writing in contemporary France*. University of Delaware Press.
- Goriss-Hunter, A. (2021). Patchwork girl: Fractured maternal monster. In A. L. Palko & A. O'Reilly (Eds.), *Monstrous mothers: Troubling trope*. Demeter Press.

- Jianu, A. (2003). *Women and society in the Romanian principalities, 1750–1850* [Doctoral dissertation, University of York]. <https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/26166/>
- LaChance Adams, S. (2014). *Mad mothers, bad mothers, and what a “good” mother would do*. Columbia University Press.
- Lovinescu, E. (2016). *Istoria civilizației române moderne* [The history of modern Romanian civilization] (O. Soare & N. Mecu, Eds.). Editura Fundația Academiei Române.
- Mihăilescu, Ș. (2002). *Din istoria feminismului românesc* [From the history of Romanian feminism]. Polirom.
- Mondry, H. (2006). *Pure, strong and sexless: The peasant woman’s body and Gleb Uspensky*. Rodopi.
- Nădejde, S. (2021). *Patimi* [Passions] (rev. ed.). Publisol.
- O’Reilly, A. (Ed.). (2004). *From motherhood to mothering: The legacy of Adrienne Rich’s Of Woman Born*. State University of New York Press.
- Oișteanu, A. (2016). *Sexualitate și societate: Istorie, religie și literatură* [Sexuality and society: History, religion and literature]. Polirom.
- Papadat-Bengescu, H. (1937, July 11). Autobiografie [Autobiography]. *Adevărul Literar și Artistic*, 18(866), 5–6.
- Papadat-Bengescu, H. (2012). *Opere complete: Vol. 1. Romane* [Complete works: Vol. 1. Novels] (G. Omăt, Ed.). Fundația Națională pentru Știință și Artă.
- Pârvulescu, A., & Boatcă, M. (2022). *Creolizing the modern: Transylvania across empires*. Cornell University Press.
- Pippidi, A. (1988). Amour et société: Arrière-plan historique d’un problème littéraire [Love and society: Historical background of a literary problem]. *Cahiers roumains d’études littéraires*, 3, 4–25.
- Ransirini, S. (2021). “She laughed at anything”: The portrayal of the monstrous maternal in Anna Burns’s *No Bones*. In A. L. Palko & A. O’Reilly (Eds.), *Monstrous mothers: Troubling trope*. Demeter Press.
- Rogozanu, C. (2024). *Naratorul cel rău: Un studiu despre realismul românesc: Rebreanu, Preda, Dumitriu* [The evil narrator: A study of Romanian realism]. Tact.
- Ruddick, S. (1989). *Maternal thinking: Toward a politics of peace*. Ballantine Books.
- Rye, G., Browne, V., Giorgio, A., Jeremiah, A., & Lee-Six, A. (Eds.). (2017). *Motherhood in literature and culture: Interdisciplinary perspectives from Europe*. Routledge.
- Tova, M. (2020). *Literary bioethics: Animality, disability, and the human*. New York University Press.
- Vintilă, C. (2006). *Focul amorului: Despre dragoste și sexualitate în societatea românească, 1750–1830* [The fire of love: On love and sexuality in Romanian society, 1750–1830]. Humanitas.

THE FUNCTIONS OF WATER IN ROMANIAN FAIRY TALE: A STUDY OF DUMITRU STĂNCESCU AND PETRE ISPIRESCU COLLECTIONS¹

Cristina-Ileana ROGOJINĂ
Ovidius University of Constanța, Romania

e-mail: cristina.ileana.rogojina@gmail.com

Abstract

This article investigates the symbolic, narrative, and ethical functions of water in Romanian fairy tales, drawing on a corpus collected by Dumitru Stăncescu (2010) and Petre Ispirescu (1984), with selective comparative reference to Germanic and Slavic traditions researched in Brothers Grimm (2011) and Aleksandr Afanasyev (2020) fairy tales. Water emerges as a central organizing principle of narrative imagination, functioning in multiple, interrelated roles that structure plot development, mediate moral testing, and facilitate transformation. The study employs a motif-based methodology, systematically cataloguing narrative sequences in which water appears and analyzing them according to functional typologies. The approach allows for an integrated understanding of water as a dynamic agent within the narrative economy rather than as a static symbol.

In Romanian fairy tales, water often operates as a liminal threshold, marking various transitions. Aspects and bodies of water (rivers, brooks, lakes and wells) define spatial and temporal boundaries, signalling the onset of trials, quests or transformative experiences. Immersion, bathing or proximity to water is regularly associated with shifts in identity, especially for female characters, and may precede changes in physical appearance, social or marital status, or even human and non-human embodiment. Sometimes, water functions as a site of moral testing, where enchanted or forbidden waters activate narrative crises, whose outcome depend solely on the dispositions of the characters. Consuming or coming into contact with forbidden water leads to immediate repercussions, frequently manifesting as transformation, illness, or social alienation. Certain narratives illustrate that restoration is either postponed or contingent, emphasizing water's function as a mediating element in moral assessment rather than as a neutral or inherently advantageous entity. This is demonstrated in fairy tales such as *Busuioc și Musuioc* from Stăncescu's collection, where the brothers' engagement with water shapes the moral and spatial outcomes of the story, ultimately resulting in their irrevocable separation from the human realm instead of their reintegration.

A related function pertains to the role of water in resurrection and deferred restoration. Water serves to preserve bodies or identities, facilitating eventual reconstitutions through extended narrative processes. Stories that involve the repeated death and transformation of children exemplify how water mediates a prolonged suspension of life, postponing restoration until specific narrative and moral conditions are met. Likewise, enchanted waters offer promises of rejuvenation and renewal.

A comparative analysis reveals that Romanian fairy tales set themselves apart from Germanic and Slavic traditions through their narrative restraint and ethical mediation. In contrast to the narratives of Brothers Grimm or Afanasyev, which frequently depict water as a striking or pivotal magical force, Romanian tales focus on ambiguity, gradual change, and conditional restoration. In these stories, water serves as a medium through which moral, social and narrative repercussions emerge, thereby contributing to a unique poetics characterized by process, restraint, and ethical contemplation.

¹ Article History: Received: 12.02.2026. Accepted: 11.03.2026. Published: 15.05.2026. No funding was received either for the research presented in the article or for the creation of the article.

Through a systematic examination of the various roles of water, this study illustrates its significance within the Romanian fairy tale tradition and establishes a foundation for future comparative investigations into water, symbolism, narrative agency, and the interplay of ritual, gender, and spatial dynamics in oral narrative traditions.

Keywords: aquatic symbolism; liminality; Romanian folklore; comparative research; gendered transformation; enchanted water.

1. Introduction

Water occupies a privileged position within the symbolic economy of traditional narratives, functioning as one of the most persistent and polyvalent elements of the imaginary. In fairy tales, water is rarely a neutral or decorative presence; rather, it operates as a charged narrative space where transitions occur, identities are tested, and transformations are enacted. Rivers, wells, springs, ponds and enchanted waters repeatedly appear at decisive moments of the plot, making thresholds between world, mediating encounters with alterity, and structuring symbolic rites of passage embedded in narrative form.

In Romanian fairy tales, water symbolism proves especially complex and narratively active. Transmitted within an oral-tradition framework and later recorded by folklorists, these narratives preserve a symbolic logic in which water mediates fundamental oppositions: life and death, purity and danger, order and chaos, the human and the otherworldly. The present article focuses on a corpus of fairy tales collected by Dumitru Stăncescu and Petre Ispirescu in the Romanian region of Muntenia, a geographical and cultural area characterized by a coherent folkloric horizon. By limiting the corpus to a clearly delimited regional space and to two major collectors, the study aims to ensure both internal consistency and symbolic representativeness. Rather than approaching water as a universal archetype detached from cultural context, this article examines how water functions within the internal logic of Romanian fairy tale narratives from Muntenia. Particular attention is paid to narrative sequences in which water appears as a decisive element – triggering action, imposing interdictions, testing moral conduct, or enabling transformation. In these contexts, water functions not merely as a setting, but as a liminal operator embedded in specific symbolic, ethical, and ritual structures.

While water symbolism has been extensively discussed in mythological and religious studies, fairy tales require a distinct analytical approach. Unlike myths, which tend to articulate cosmogonic explanations and sacred origins, fairy tales dramatize individual and social transformation through symbolic trials. Within this narrative economy, water frequently appears at moments of crisis or transition: as a boundary that must be crossed, an ordeal that must be endured or a medium through which metamorphosis becomes possible. The recurrent presence of such configurations in the Muntenian fairy-tale corpus suggests the existence of a coherent symbolic system governing narrative progression and character development. The significance of water as a narrative resource extends into contemporary literary studies as well, where it has been explored across genres and media (Bâgiu, 2023).

An important aspect of this system concerns the relationship between water and gendered transformation. In a number of Romanian fairy tales from Muntenia, water mediates crucial moments in the transformation of female characters, whether through enchantment, testing, displacement, or reintegration into a new social or existential state. These episodes not only reflect narrative convention but articulate culturally specific representations of femininity,

liminality, and moral evaluation. Water thus emerges as a symbolic space where individual destiny intersects with collective norms and values.

Although the primary focus of this article remains firmly on Romanian fairy tales from Muntenia, selective comparisons with Germanic and Slavic fairy tale traditions are introduced in order to contextualize and clarify the specificity of the Romanian material. Fairy tales collected by the Brothers Grimm and selected Slavic narratives offer structurally analogous motifs, such as wells leading to otherworldly realms, enchanted or forbidden waters, and water-bound trials, that allow for a controlled comparative assessment. These references are not intended to establish lines of influence or diffusion but to illuminate how shared narrative motifs are reconfigured within distinct cultural imaginaries.

Methodologically, the article adopts a motif-based and symbolic-hermeneutic approach, drawing on theories of liminality and rites of passage (van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1969), material imaginary (Bachelard, 1942), and the anthropology of the sacred (Eliade, 1949/2025), complemented by perspectives on purity, danger, and boundary transgression (Douglas, 1966). By analyzing a carefully constructed corpus of Muntenian fairy tales, the study argues that water functions as a dynamic narrative agent that structures transition, regulates transformation, and articulates culturally specific meanings within the Romanian fairy tale tradition. Through this analysis, the article seeks to contribute to folklore and fairy tale studies by offering a focused examination of water symbolism as a key organizing principle of Romanian narrative imaginary, while situating these findings in a broader, yet deliberately restrained, European comparative framework.

2. Corpus Construction and Analytical Framework

The analysis presented in this article is based on a systematically constructed database of narrative sequences extracted from Romanian fairy tales collected by Dumitru Stăncescu and Petre Ispirescu in the region of Muntenia. Rather than treating the fairy tale as a homogenous textual unit, the study adopts a micro-analytical approach, focusing on those narrative sequences in which water appears as a meaningful element of the plot. This methodological choice allows for a more precise examination of water's symbolic and functional roles within the narrative economy of the fairy tale.

The corpus was constructed through a close reading of the selected fairy tales, during which all episodes involving water (such as rivers, springs, ponds, enchanted waters, or water-related interdictions) were identified and extracted. Each occurrence of water was treated as a separate analytical unit, even when multiple instances appeared within the same tale. This approach made it possible to observe recurring patterns of symbolic usage across different narratives and collections, while avoiding the risk of reducing water symbolism to a single, overarching meaning per tale.

All identified narrative sequences were entered into a structured database, which served as the primary analytical tool for the study. For each sequence, the database records the title of the fairy tale, the collector, the narrative context in which water appears, the specific water motif involved, the characters affected by the encounter with water and preliminary interpretive observations. Organizing the material in this way ensured consistency in analysis and facilitated the comparative examination of motifs across the corpus. The database thus functions not only as a repository of examples but also as an intermediary analytical stage between textual reading and symbolic interpretation.

The decision to include fairy tales collected by both Stăncescu and Ispirescu was motivated by the desire to balance ethnographic proximity to oral tradition with canonical literary mediation. While Stăncescu's collection often preserves a more immediate folkloric

texture, Ispirescu's tales reflect processes of narrative stabilization and stylistic refinement. The recurrence of similar water motifs and functions across both collections strengthens the argument that the symbolic patterns identified are not the result of individual editorial choices but are ingrained in a shared regional narrative imaginary.

From the database, a typology of water functions was inductively developed. This typology does not impose predefined symbolic meanings but emerges from the repeated narrative roles that water assumes within the corpus. While individual motifs may vary in form, they tend to converge around a limited number of symbolic functions, which structure narrative progression and character transformation. These functions can be summarized as follows.

Initially, water frequently acts as a liminal threshold, delineating the boundary between various narrative or ontological realms. Rivers, wells, and ponds often indicate the shift from the known human domain to a realm of peril, trials, or otherworldly encounters. Approaching or crossing such waters initiates narrative progression and subjects characters to transformation. Moreover, water serves as an initiatory challenge, particularly in scenarios involving immersion, perilous crossings, or interactions with forbidden waters. In these instances, water places the character in a precarious situation, testing their endurance, moral integrity, or compliance. Typically, survival or successful navigation precedes rewards, knowledge, or advancement within the story.

Furthermore, water acts as a catalyst for transformation, facilitating changes that may be physical, moral, or existential. This role is evident in fairy tales featuring female protagonists, where water enables enchantment, metamorphosis, or transition into a new social or symbolic status. In this context, water functions as an active agent of change rather than a mere passive environment. Additionally, water emerges as a locus of moral and symbolic testing, often organized around prohibitions. Enchanted, poisoned, or forbidden waters necessitate ethical discernment, and the character's reaction influences narrative outcomes. In these cases, water serves as a judge of moral order within the fairy tale universe.

Water represents a realm of symbolic ambiguity, positioned between the sacred and the perilous. Wells and springs may provide healing or life, yet they also conceal threats and supernatural entities. This duality reflects broader cultural perceptions of water as a medium capable of both regeneration and destruction. Ultimately, in certain narratives, water takes on a destructive or chaotic role, manifesting as a force that disrupts order through floods, engulfment, or mortal peril. These instances often signify narrative crises that necessitate the restoration of balance through heroic or moral intervention.

This typology provides the analytical framework for the sections that follow. Rather than treating these functions as mutually exclusive, the analysis acknowledges that a single narrative sequence may activate multiple symbolic roles simultaneously. By grounding interpretation in a systematically organized corpus and inductively derived typology, this article aims to demonstrate how water operates as a key organizing principle of the Romanian fairy-tale narrative imaginary in Muntenia.

3. Water as a Liminal Threshold

One of the most stable and structurally significant functions of water in the Romanian fairy-tale corpus analyzed is its role as a liminal threshold, indicating the transition between narrative worlds, states of being, or phases of the protagonist's journey. In the fairy tales collected by Stăncescu and Ispirescu from Muntenia, water repeatedly appears at moments of departure, encounter, or irreversible choice, functioning less as a decorative motif and more as a narrative operator of passage. Unlike clearly guarded thresholds (gates, castles, or explicit prohibitions), water in these tales often constitutes a naturalized boundary, one that must be

crossed, approached, or negotiated without overt instruction. Its liminality is therefore implicit, revealed only through narrative consequences.

In several tales, *wells and water sources* serve as sites of full decisive encounters between the human protagonist and otherworldly figures. In *Sur-Vultur* (Stăncescu, 2010), the well functions as a meeting point between human and demonic spheres, where the young hero comes into contact with Tartacot, a devilish figure connected to subterranean forces. The well here is not just a utilitarian structure but a vertical axis, linking the surface world with infernal or chthonic realm. The act of approaching or drawing water implicitly places the hero at crossroads: the encounter initiates a narrative trajectory from which return is no longer possible. Importantly, no explicit warning marks the well as dangerous; its liminal nature is revealed retroactively, through the transformation of the plot that follows. A similar logic operates in *Cerbul de Aur* [The golden stag] (Stăncescu, 2010), where an enchanted water source becomes the point at which the protagonists' fate diverges. Lost in the forest, the children encounter a spring whose water is unequivocally marked as dangerous through interdiction. The decision to drink or abstain from the water works as a threshold act, separating survival from enchantment, human continuity from metamorphic suspension. Here, water mediated the transition from familial space into the forest's symbolic otherness.

Flowing water, such as brooks and rivers, frequently appears at the beginning or midpoint of journeys, marking the passage from *social marginality into narrative centrality*. In *Fratele Bucăţică* [Brother Morsel] (Stăncescu, 2010), the encounter with a brook occurs during a journey undertaken by two beggars, a blind man and a lame man. When the blind man drops his last piece of bread into the water and the lame man chases it, the narrative situates them at a boundary:

The blind man was tearing off pieces from a log of dry bread [...] The cripple went hobbling after it—hobble, hobble; the water carried it along, he followed it, and the blind man stumbled after him, holding onto the rags of his clothes² (Stăncescu 2010, p. 27, our translation).

This movement across the brook signals a shift from itinerant vulnerability toward narrative agency, *marking a spatial and symbolic transition* before they reach the palace:

The sun seemed to be casting its rays upon a tin roof: it was a strikingly beautiful house. "Listen, blind man, let us stop quarrelling. Look, there is a palace over there—let's go that way and see; perhaps we too might obtain something"³ (Stăncescu, 2010, p. 28, our translation).

The brook functions as a silent delimiter between worlds: the wandering life of marginality and the structured, morally charged world of power. This pattern recurs throughout the corpus: water crossings tend to precede encounters with royalty, supernatural beings, or decisive trials, reinforcing water's role as a preliminary threshold rather than a climatic obstacle.

A striking feature of the Romanian material is the *relative absence of anthropomorphic guardians* at water thresholds. Unlike Germanic fairy tales, where bridges or rivers may be guarded by trolls or demand tolls, Muntenian fairy tales often present water as unguarded but not neutral. The burden of recognition falls on the protagonist, whose moral disposition or

² Original Romanian text: „Orbul rupea dintr-un codru de pline uscată [...] Şchiopul, şontâc, şontâc, după ea; apa o ducea, el după ea şi orbul d-a-n boue după el se ţinea de zdrenţele lui.”

³ Original Romanian text: „Pasămite soarele îşi lăsa razele pe un acoperiş de tinichea : era o casă frumoasă de speriat. — Ia ascultă, orbule, să nu ne mai batem, uite un palat ; ai într-acolo să vedem, poate-om căpăta şi noi ceva.”

attentiveness determines the outcome. In *Fratele Bucățică* [Brother Morsel] (Stăncescu, 2010), nothing guards the brook and nothing announces the transition explicitly; instead, the shift depends on perception. It is the lame man who suddenly “He closed his eyes, for something shone so brightly that it dazzled him”, dazzled by the light reflected from the palace roof. The palace is not concealed, yet neither is it self-evident: “The sun seemed to be casting its rays upon a tin roof: it was a strikingly beautiful house.”⁴ (Stăncescu, 2010, p. 28, our translation).

The threshold demands interpretation, not context; entry into the new social order becomes possible only when the shining object is recognized as *palace* and named as such “Look, there’s a palace—let’s go over there and see”⁵ (rather ironic since one of them is blind). In the palace they discover twelve enchanted pigeons that transform into young men, one of them being Bucățică itself. In this sense, water does not impose an external trial; it precedes a moment of perceptual and moral discernment, transferring responsibility from a guardian figure to the protagonists themselves. The narrative strategy internalizes liminality: water does not block passage; it reveals readiness. The threshold is crossed not through force or trickery, but through choice, sometimes informed, sometimes transgressive.

Across the analyzed tales, once water has been crossed, approached, or consumed, the narrative rarely allows a simple return to the initial state. Whether the result is enchantment (*Cerbul de aur* [The golden stag]), pact (*Sur-Vultur*), or social ascent (*Fratele Bucățică* [Brother Morsel]), water marks moments of irreversible transition. In *Fratele Bucățică* [Brother Morsel], the irreversibility of the water transition becomes clear once the characters enter the *baths* of „Cucoana miloasă” (*The kind lady*). The offer – “You take a bath, and when you leave, she gives you a set of clothes as well.”⁶ (Stăncescu, 2010, p. 30, our translation) – frames immersion as exchange and transformation. After bathing, the narrative emphasizes their altered status: “Both the blind man and the cripple bathed; after they came out... she cut their nails, trimmed their hair, combed them, gave them a set of clothes, and then took them, thus transformed, into a room”⁷ (Stăncescu, 2010, p. 30, our translation). The phrase „așa schimbați” (*thus changed*) signals more than physical cleansing because it marks a shift in social visibility and narrative function. No longer anonymous beggars on the roadside, they are admitted into an interior space where storytelling circulates as symbolic capital: “The lady then asked them, too, to tell what they knew”⁸ (Stăncescu, 2010, p. 30, our translation), water operating as an initiatory medium. Once immersed, the protagonists cannot return to their former marginality; they have crossed into a new economy of exchange, recognition and narrative agency.

The same logic of irreversibility governs *Cerbul de aur* [The golden stag]. Unlike *Fratele Bucățică* [Brother Morsel], where water mediates social ascent, here water produces ontological rupture. The boy resists twice, heeding his sister’s warnings: “Do not drink, little brother... or you will turn into a fox” and later “for you will turn into a bear”, but the third time he yields to thirst. The act of drinking marks a point of no return: “but he could no longer resist and drank. And as soon as he drank, he turned into a stag.”⁹ (Stăncescu, 2010, p. 15, our translation). The repetition underscores the element of choice; the transformation is not imposed by a guardian or spell but triggered by his decision. Once the water is consumed,

⁴ Original Romanian text: „închise ochii, că-i lucea ceva de-i lua vederile”; “Pasămite soarele își lăsa razele pe un acoperiș de tinichea: era o casă frumoasă de speriat.”

⁵ Original Romanian text: „uite un palat; hai într-acolo să vedem.”

⁶ Original Romanian text: „faci baie și când pleci îți dă ș-un rând de haine pe d-asupra.”

⁷ Original Romanian text: „Făcură baie și orbul și schiopul; după ce ieșiră... le tăie unghiile, îi tunse, îi pieptănă, le dădu rânduri de haine și-i luă de-i duse așa schimbați într-o odaie.”

⁸ Original Romanian text: „cucoana le zise și lor să spuie ce știe.”

⁹ Original Romanian text: „Nu bea, frățiorule... că te faci vulpe”; „că te faci urs”; „dar el nu mai putu răbda și bău. Dacă bău, cum bău se făcu cerb.”

reversal is impossible. The narrative does not suspend the change or mitigate it, but it aestheticizes “Such was the beauty of the stag that the wind itself might have stopped in its blowing.”¹⁰ (Stăncescu, 2010, p. 15, our translation). Water is, in this case, an agent of metamorphosis that seals fate instantly. If in *Fratele Bucătică* [Brother Morsel] immersion leads to incorporation into a new social order, in *Cerbul de aur* [The golden Stag] ingestion produces a permanent shift of being. In both cases, however, water marks the hinge beyond which the initial state cannot be restored. When compared with Germanic and Slavic fairy tales, the Romanian representations of water as a liminal threshold reveal both shared structural patterns and culturally specific emphases. In all three traditions, water frequently marks a boundary between the familiar world and the realm of trials, functioning as a transitional space that initiates narrative transformation (Propp, 1968).

In Germanic fairy tales, particularly those collected by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, water thresholds are often explicitly dramatized and externally marked. Rivers, wells, or descents into water operate as clearly delineated entry points into the supernatural realm, as in *The Frog King* or *Mother Holle*, where immersion or descent is followed by immediate narrative reorientation (Grimm & Grimm, 2011). In *Mother Holle*, the heroine jumps into the well she lost her spindle and she is transported into an enchanted realm. By contrast, Slavic fairy tales, as recorded in the nineteenth century collections such as those of Aleksandr Afanasyev, tend to associate water with zones of instability and latent danger. Rivers and lakes frequently mark the boundaries of territories inhabited by ambiguous or hostile beings, and crossing water often requires magical mediation or confrontation with supernatural forces (Afanasyev, 2020). Against this comparative background, the Romanian fairy tales from our corpus stand out for their naturalised and understated use of water as a liminal threshold. Instead of functioning as an explicitly guarded or moralized boundary, water operates through narrative consequence, confirming the structural observation that transitional functions in fairy tales often become legible only retrospectively, through their effects on narrative trajectory (Propp, 1968).

4. Enchanted and Poisoned Waters: Moral Testing and Narrative Crisis

In addition to serving as a liminal threshold, water in the fairy tales compiled by Stăncescu and Ispirescu often acts as a locus for moral testing and narrative conflict. In these contexts, water is distinctly characterized as enchanted, forbidden, or perilous, thereby transforming a natural element into a pivotal force for ethical distinction. Encounters with such water lead to moments of crisis where obedience, restraint and moral judgement are challenged, resulting, most of the times, in irreversible outcomes. Unlike neutral thresholds, enchanted or poisoned waters are prominently highlighted through prohibition, warnings, or ritualistic contexts, rendering their symbolic significance immediately apparent. Nevertheless, the true importance of these waters is not solely rooted in their supernatural attributes, but in the human reactions they provoke.

A paradigmatic example of enchanted water as moral test appears in *Cerbul de Aur* [The golden stag] (Stăncescu, 2010), yet it is by no means an isolated case within the corpus. In this tale, two children lost in the forest encounter a water in an animal footprint: drinking the water results in a transformation. The interdiction is clearly articulated, and its violation results in immediate metamorphosis: the child who drinks is turned into a stag. The narrative foregrounds the causal link between disobedience and metamorphosis, establishing water as an ethical threshold rather than a neutral magical substance (Rogojină, 2024). What is significant is that the water itself is not described as inherently malicious: it appears simply as “a fox’s

¹⁰ Original Romanian text: „aşa frumoşele de cerb că s-ar fi oprit vântul din adiere.”

footprint filled with rainwater,” later “a bear’s footprint, also filled with rainwater,” and finally “a stag’s footprint”¹¹ (Stăncescu, 2010, p. 15, our translation). Nothing in the narration attributes intrinsic danger to it. The threat emerges only through the sister’s verbal interdiction — “Do not drink, little brother... or you will turn into a fox”, “for you will turn into a bear,” “and he turned into a stag” — and the transformation occurs solely once the prohibition is broken: “but he could no longer resist and drank. And as soon as he drank, he turned into a stag”¹² (Stăncescu, 2010, p. 15, our translation). Its dangerous quality is activated through transgression, suggesting that enchantment operates *relationally*. Water becomes ‘poisoned’ not by nature, but by narrative rule. The transformation encodes a moral lesson: the magical effect derives not from a quality of the water itself but from the violation of the rule governing access to it.

This logic recurs across the corpus, where enchanted or cursed waters acquire symbolic charge only when ethical boundaries are crossed (Propp, 1968). Comparable mechanisms appear in *Ileana Simziana* (Ispirescu, 1984), where sacred or enchanted water is embedded in a sequence of ritual testing, and in *Broasca țestoasă cea fermecată* [The enchanted turtle] (Ispirescu, 1984), where an enchanted pond functions as the medium through which a curse is disclosed and moral truth revealed. In these narratives, water does not merely trigger transformation but exposes hidden transgressions and unresolved moral debts.

Beyond interdicted springs, the database I compiled records several instances in which *poisoned or corrupted waters* are deliberately instrumentalized to produce narrative crisis. In *Cerbul de aur* [The golden stag] (Stăncescu, 2010), the emperor’s mistress replaces potable water with poisoned water in an attempt to cause death to the empress, transforming water from a life-sustaining element into a covert instrument of betrayal. In Afanasyev’s (2020) *Sister Alyonushka and Brother Ivanushka*, a witch drowns Ivanushka and takes her place as the mistress of the house. This act initiates a prolonged narrative disruption that cannot be resolved through simple recognition or repentance. Similarly, in *Făt-Frumos cu carâta de sticlă* [Prince Charming with the glass coffin] (Ispirescu, 1984), enchanted waters appear within hostile magical strategies employed against antagonistic figures, reinforcing water’s association with *irreversibility and danger*. Once contaminated, water collapses moral choice and narrative consequence into a single moment, forcing the tale into extended sequences of trial, pursuit, or restitution:

The ogress did everything she could, gnawing at the trees, climbing from branch to branch and slipping through the thickets until she crossed over and set off after them. The horse flew like the wind, but the ogress followed them like a thought. Just as she was about to seize them, the girl threw her kerchief behind her. At once it became a great, vast expanse of water, so wide that its edge could scarcely be seen, and surrounded on all sides by fire. The ogress turned herself into boat and bridge and crossed it. Through fire and through water she went, still after them—always after them—and in her furious chase she never let them out of her sight¹³ (Ispirescu, 1984, p. 148, our translation).

A recurring feature throughout the corpus is the unequal impact of enchanted waters on various characters. When several individuals come into contact with the same water source, the

¹¹ Original Romanian text: „o urmă de vulpe, plină cu apă de ploaie,” ; “o urmă de urs tot cu apă de ploaie,” ; “o urmă de cerb.”

¹² Original Romanian text: „Nu bea, frățiorule ... că te faci vulpe” ; „că te faci urs”, “că se făcu cerb”; „dar el nu mai putu răbda și bău. Dacă bău, cum bău se făcu cerb.”

¹³ Original Romanian Text: „Zmeoaica făcu ce făcu, roase la copaci, cățărându-se din cracă în cracă și strecurându-se prin desiși, până ce trecu dincolo și să te ții după dâșii ! Calul zbura ca vântul, dară zmeoaica venea după dâșii ca gândul. Când să puie mâna pe dâșii, fata aruncă în urma ei basmaua. Odată se făcu o apa mare, mare de d-abia i se vedea marginea și de jur împrejur înconjurată de foc. Zmeoaica se făcu luntre și punte și trecu. Dete prin foc și prin apă, și după dâșii ! tot după dâșii, și din goană nu-i slăbea !”

result differ based on their moral character, level of obedience, and underlying intentions. Impulsive or malicious characters are punished, while restraint or ethical conduct mitigates or delays catastrophe. The pattern is also visible in *Cerbul de aur* [The golden stag] (Stăncescu, 2010), *Ileana Simziana* (Ispirescu, 1984), and *Broasca țestoasă cea fermecată* [The enchanted turtle] (Ispirescu, 1984), confirming that enchanted water operates as a mechanism of moral sorting, externalizing ethical judgment through narrative consequences. Such structuring aligns with the fairy tale testing function identified by Propp (1968), where differentiation between hero and non-hero emerges through trials and not through declarations. Comparatively, enchanted or poisoned waters are also well attested in Germanic and Slavic fairy tales. In Germanic narratives collected by the Brothers Grimm, forbidden water sources frequently serve as moral traps whose violations result in immediate punishment or enchantment (Grimm & Grimm, 2011).

A particularly relevant example is *Brother and Sister*, which corresponds structurally and thematically to *Cerbul de Aur* [The golden stag] in Stăncescu's collection. In both variants, the interdicted water functions as a decisive moral test, and the act of drinking from the forbidden source leads to the younger sibling's transformation into an animal, thereby initiating prolonged narrative crisis. Slavic fairy tales associate in the same manner dangerous waters with enchantment or death, often linking rivers, springs, or lakes to hostile supernatural entities and framing water crossings as zones of heightened peril (Afanasyev, 2020). In these narratives, water tends to function as an actively antagonistic force, frequently guarded or inhabited by supernatural beings. What distinguishes the Romanian examples, however, including *Cerbul de Aur* [The golden stag] (Stăncescu, 2010), is the economy of dramatization. The water is introduced without ominous atmosphere or supernatural mediation, merely as *rainwater* („apă de ploaie”) gathered in an animal's footprint. No voice emanates from it, no enchantress guards it, no curse is pronounced over it (as it happens in Grimm's *Brother and Sister*). The only marker of danger is the sister's simple warning (“Do not drink, little brother”) and the transformation follows without spectacle (“but he could no longer resist and drank. And as soon as he drank, he turned into a stag” (Stăncescu, 2010, p. 15)), as happens in its Russian fairy tale counterpart, *Sister Alyonushka and Brother Ivanushka* (Afanasyev, 2020). The dramatic charge is thus displaced from the environment onto the ethical act itself.

Enchanted waters are rarely personified or guarded; their danger is communicated through simple interdiction rather than spectacle. This narrative restraint places greater emphasis on ethical choice and responsibility, reinforcing water's role as an instrument of moral testing rather than an externalized supernatural threat. Even when the Romanian tale clearly shares a common narrative core with its Germanic counterpart (both being ATU 450 tale type), the symbolic handling of water reflects a distinct narrative sensibility within the Romanian imaginary.

5. Water as an Agent of Transformation. Gendered Configurations

A notably important subset of the Romanian fairy tales analyzed in these collections emphasizes water as a transformative agent, often intersecting with instances of female vulnerability, testing or redefinition. In these stories, water serves not only to cleanse or restore; instead, activities such as immersion, washing, drinking or being near enchanted water lead to changes in physical form, social standing, or existential state. Consequently, transformation is portrayed not as an abrupt magical break but as a process embedded in daily actions linked to care, obedience, or domestic responsibilities. This trend is evident in tales where female protagonists must engage with water as part of a task or challenge, blurring the line between ritual purification and metamorphic danger.

In *Răsplata Sfintei Vineri* [The reward of Saint Friday] (Stăncescu, 2010), water-mediated actions function as a decisive moral and narrative threshold. The female protagonist is instructed to wash a series of animals, an act that combines humility, patience, and bodily proximity. Although the water itself is not enchanted, its narrative function is transformative: the girl's careful washing mediates her passage from a marginal position to reward and recognition. Here, water eases a symbolic reconfiguration of status, not a literal change of form. Correspondingly, in *Fratele Bucăţică* [Brother Morsel] (Stăncescu, 2010), washing and cleansing scenes are closely tied to female endurance and moral discernment. The act of washing becomes a liminal gesture, situating the female character between servitude and elevation. Transformation unfolds gradually, encoded in narrative consequence rather than instantaneous magical effect. These examples suggest that Romanian fairy tales associate water-based task assigned to female characters with conditional transformation, a change that emerges over time and through sustained ethical behaviour.

More overt metamorphic dynamics appear in tales involving explicitly enchanted waters. In *Broasca ţestoasă cea fermecată* [The enchanted turtle] (Ispirescu, 1984), contact with pond water mediates a *reversible transformation*, oscillating between human and non-human states. The narrative resists definitive closure: transformation is neither wholly punitive nor fully liberating but remains contingent upon relational bonds and future actions. A similar ambiguity governs *Busuioc şi Musuioc* (Stăncescu, 2010), where drinking water initiates a chain of events affecting identity and recognition. The female character (mother of the tale's heroes) becomes pregnant after merely gazing at young man who was carrying a trough to fetch water. Interpreted as a transgression, this inexplicable conception leads to her expulsion from the parental household. Subsequently, she gives birth to two sons: the first is baptized by God and Saint Peter and named Busuioc, while the second is named Musuioc. Although not exclusively gendered, the narrative situates the female figure as particularly exposed to the consequences of enchanted water, reinforcing its role as a medium through which hidden conditions are revealed or tested.

In *Şarpele moşului* [The old man's snake] (Stăncescu, 2010), the presence of a brook operates as a quiet but persistent *metamorphic threshold*. The water itself does not instigate transformation; rather, it delineates the area where human and non-human entities converge. Female characters perceive this area as one of negotiation instead of domination, highlighting transformation as relational and temporary. After losing her husband due to excessive curiosity, the wife is fated to roam the world dressed entirely in iron garments, which serve as a material representation of penance and resilience. Her journey brings her to Saint Monday's house, a transitional helper figure who facilitates the connection between the human realm and the supernatural. Upon listening to the woman's story, the saint discloses the presence of a nearby brook, along whose banks resides a man accompanied by a fairy. This man persistently asserts that he was once wed to an emperor's daughter. This revelation turns the brook into a significant narrative landmark: a watery threshold where memory, enchantment, and displaced identity intersect. For the heroine, this revelation indicates the nearness of her lost husband and rekindles the potential for narrative restoration, shifting the tale from one of punitive wandering to one of hopeful pursuit. Until this moment, her trajectory is marked by exhaustion and expiation: "being utterly exhausted", she arrives at Saint Monday's house burdened by iron garments that materialize her guilt. The saint's disclosure, that "nearby, there is a small stream, and on its bank stands a man who lives with a fairy; and he keeps saying over and over that he was once married to a king's daughter"¹⁴ (Ispirescu, 1984, p. 136, our translation), transforms

¹⁴ Original Romanian text: „fiind ostenită prăpădită”, „în apropiere se află o gârlă, şi pe marginea gârlii stă un om care trăieşte cu o zână, şi el tot spune întruna c-a fost însurat c-o fată de împărat.”

geographical space into emotional certainty. The brook is not only a liminal zone but a site of recognition, where displaced identity persists in memory. The heroine's reaction "The girl could barely contain her joy"¹⁵ (Ispirescu, 1984, p. 136, our translation) signals a decisive tonal reversal. Her wandering is no longer a circular punishment but a linear quest. The watery threshold points out the transition from atonement to restoration, from passive endurance to active recovery of the lost marital bond.

Several tales in the database associate *immersion in water* (or merely contact) with a *reconfiguration of female identity*. In *Ileana Simziana* (Ispirescu, 1984), water plays a crucial role in ritualized testing and transformation. Contact with enchanted water precedes changes in the heroine's narrative status, marking her passage from vulnerability to recognition and from liminal existence to social reintegration (as van Gennep, 1960, and Turner, 1969 explain). Here, water does not mediate punishment but *initiation*, enabling a transition that is simultaneously bodily, social, and symbolic. In a similar manner is presented the cursed female figure bound to a water-associated space in *Broasca țestoasă cea fermecată* [The enchanted turtle] (Ispirescu, 1984). The enchanted pond is both a site of concealment and revelation, where the true identity of the transformed woman is disclosed. Notably, the transformation is not instantaneous nor final; instead. It unfolds through repeated encounters with water, emphasizing *process over resolution*. Water sustains the transformation while also holding the potential for its undoing. The fairy herself reveals that her condition is the result of enchantment rather than essence: "and I too am a king's daughter... But the cursed spells have covered our palace with this filthy water."¹⁶ (Ispirescu, 1984, p. 34, our translation). While water works initially as concealment, submerging both palace and identity beneath its surface, the same aquatic space becomes the medium for disclosure and restoration. When she invokes the customary pre-marital bath ("It is our custom... to take a bath"¹⁷), the pond withdraws, revealing the hidden palaces, and immersion in the prepared baths precedes her luminous reappearance. Only after this ritual purification does the visible sign of her restored status emerge: "a morning star settled upon her forehead"¹⁸ (p. 34, our translation).

Therefore, transformation is sustained, negotiated, and ritually completed through water. It is not a single magical rupture, but a gradual reconfiguration of identity mediated by concealment, revelation, and purification. In Romanian folk custom, the ritual of pre-marital bathing for the bride and groom serves as both a practical and symbolic act of purification. Typically performed in natural running waters (rivers) or prepared waters (drawn baths), the bath functions as a liminal space in which physical cleansing mirrors spiritual and social renewal: impurities and misfortunes are ritually washed away, while the couple is ritually prepared to enter communal life (Marian, 2019). Although bathing rituals appear in several Romanian fairy tales, they do not always involve water directly. In *Ileana Simziana* (Ispirescu, 1984), the heroine demands that a bath be prepared before marriage, specifying that it must contain the milk of her mares, thus deliberately replacing water with milk, a substance traditionally associated with fertility, nourishment, and abundance. The milk is itself linked to an earlier trial that the hero completed before the ritual bathing took place. This substitution suggests that the symbolic logic of purification in Romanian fairy tales extends beyond water alone, incorporating other life-giving liquids that signal renewal and transition. Consequently, while the scene participates in a broader ritual framework of bodily preparation before social transformation, it does not exemplify water symbolism in a strict sense.

¹⁵ Original Romanian text: „Pe față n-o mai încăpea casa de bucurie.”

¹⁶ Original Romanian text: „și eu sunt fată de împărat... Dară blestematele de farmece ne-a acoperit palaturile cu apa aceasta murdară.”

¹⁷ Original Romanian text: „La noi este obiceiul... să ne îmbăiem.”

¹⁸ Original Romanian text: „un luceafăr se așază pe fruntea ei”

Comparable motifs are attested in Germanic and Slavic fairy tales, most notably in *Brother and Sister* (Grimm & Grimm, 2011) and *Sister Alyonushka and Brother Ivanushka* (Afanasyev, 2020), direct analogues of *Cerbul de aur* [The golden stag] (Stăncescu, 2010), where drinking enchanted water results in animal transformation. Similarly, in *Mother Holle* (Grimm & Grimm, 2011), water-mediated labor functions as a crucial moral and narrative threshold. The diligent girl is tasked with shaking feathers from beds, a chore that entails attentiveness, perseverance, and close physical engagement. While the act does not involve magical transformation of her body, it sets the stage for a symbolic elevation: her steadfast work earns her reward and social recognition. As in *Răsplata Sfintei Vineri* [The reward of Saint Friday], the completion of various tasks (ones that also test her kindness) facilitates a passage from marginalization to acknowledged virtue, emphasizing the role of humble, patient labor in narrative and moral structuring. However, Romanian narratives tend to soften the finality of transformation, favouring ambiguity, reversibility, and moral endurance over irreversible enchantment.

6. Resurrection Waters and Deferred Restoration

In the examined corpus, water seldom functions as a means of immediate resurrection. Instead, it mediates processes of suspension, preservation, and gradual restoration, prioritizing delayed narrative repair over instantaneous reversal of death and enchantment. This restrained deployment sets resurrection waters apart as exceptional, placing them within wider patterns of ethical testing and endurance. A notable example can be found in *Voinicul fără de tată* [The stalwart without a father] (Ispirescu, 1984), where *water of death* is not used to revive the hero but to reassemble and preserve the body after dismemberment. Restoration remains conditional and incomplete until further narrative actions take place. Water thus signifies a transitional state between annihilation and recovery, emphasizing process over outcome. The tale foregrounds the fragility of revival and frames resurrection as hard-earned, multi-staged achievement not as a magical certainty.

A related, though less explicit, logic governs *Sur-Vultur* (Stăncescu, 2010), where the well functions as a site of loss, recognition, and symbolic restoration. Instead of reviving the dead, water facilitates the recovery of genealogical knowledge and disrupted identity. The restorative function operates at the level of narrative meaning, allowing lineage and social position to be reconstituted before any material resolution occurs. The well thus participates in a mode of deferred restoration that privileges epistemic and symbolic repair.

In *Aleodor împărat* [Emperor Aleodor] (Ispirescu, 1984), immersion in water works as a symbolic death, followed by re-emergence and renewed agency. Although no literal resurrection takes place, the sequence reproduces the *structural logic of annihilation and return*. Water operates as an initiatory medium that temporarily suspends the hero's status, enabling his transformation in a grasshopper through ordeal not through miraculous intervention. In a quite position is the hero of the homonymous tale *Irimia* (Stăncescu, 2010); the sea prolongs narrative crisis by delaying resolution and exposing the protagonist to repeated danger. Survival itself becomes a form of restoration, achieved through endurance, not necessarily enchantment. Water here resists closure, reinforcing the Romanian fairy tale tendency to stretch recovery across extended narrative sequences.

A distinctive and remarkable variant of water-mediated transformation appears in *Busuioc și Musuioc* (Stăncescu, 2010), a tale previously discussed. Water does not only suspend death at the end of the fairy tale or enable restoration but becomes the site of a definitive ontological decision. Following Musuioc's drowning at the hands of his brother, driven by jealousy and misrecognition, Busuioc plunges into the lake out of remorse,

anticipating his own demise. However, the submerged environment reveals itself to be non-lethal and entirely inhabitable: Musuioc survives beneath the water, and reconciliation becomes possible solely within the aquatic realm. Notably, divine intervention does not compel a return to the human world. While God bestows forgiveness and presents the opportunity for reintegration into earthly existence, both brothers decline, expressing their weariness with the moral decay of the world above. Their decision to remain submerged transforms the lake into a permanent alternative residence rather than a mere transitional threshold. In this part of the tale, water ceases to act as a medium of passage or delayed restoration but enables a *radical narrative closure* through withdrawal. The aquatic world is not a stage to be traversed but a sanctuary of ethical refuge, where reconciliation is achieved without reintegration. Ethically, their choice reflects a profound negotiation of responsibility and moral agency: they accept the consequences of past transgressions while refusing to participate in a society whose values they no longer endorse:

At that moment, behold, God and Saint Peter were at the bottom of the lake.
— Peter, said God to the saint.
— Yes, Lord!
— Hey, aren't those our godchildren over there, embracing each other?
And he put his hand to his forehead to see more clearly.
— Yes, they are, Lord, said Saint Peter, looking closely as well.
— But what are you doing here, godchildren?
— We are seeking your forgiveness, Lord, said Busuioc, for look at the sin we have committed.
And he told God about the wrongdoing he had done.
— Forgive him, Lord, for he did not know what he was doing, prayed Musuioc.
— He is forgiven! said the good Lord... But don't you want to return to the earth?
— As for me, I am fed up, Lord, with the wrongdoings on earth, said Busuioc.
— And I too, Lord, said Musuioc.
— It is better that we remain here, both spoke in unison.
— Remain you shall, said God, if that is your wish.
And so, they remained until this day, for they never went back out¹⁹ (Stăncescu, 2010, pp. 86-87, our translation).

This voluntary immersion exemplify an extreme form of restraint in Romanian fairy tales: restoration is offered but declined, and water envelops the characters into a liminal permanence that resists normative narrative return. This episode thus expands the logic of deferred restoration previously outlined, demonstrating that in the Romanian fairy tale imaginary water may preserve the possibility of return while, at the same time, legitimizing its refusal.

¹⁹ Original Romanian text: „În vremea asta iacă Dumnezeu și Sfântul Petre prin fundul lacului.

— Petre, zise Dumnezeu către sfânt.

— Poruncă, Doamne!

— Măi, nu sînt finii noștri ăia de se îmbrățișează colo? Și puse mîna la frunte să vadă mai bine.

— Ba ei sînt, Doamne, zise Sfîntul Petre uitîndu-se și el bine.

— Dar ce căutați p-aici, finilor?

— Iertare de la tine, Doamne, căutăm, zise Busuioc, că uite ce păcat am făcut. Și spuse lui Dumnezeu nelegiuirea ce săvârșise.

— Iartă-l, Doamne, că n-a știut ce face, se rugă Musuioc.

— Iertat să fie! zise bunul Dumnezeu... Ei! dar nu mai vreți să ieșiți pe pămînt?

— Eu unul sînt sătul, Doamne, de nelegiuirile după pămînt, zise Busuioc.

— Și eu, Doamne, zise Musuioc.

— Mai bine rămînem aici, grăiră amîndoi într-un glas.

— Rămăși să fiți, zise Dumnezeu, de voiți așa. Și rămăși au fost pînă în ziua de azi, că n-au mai ieșit.”

Another complex instance of deferred restoration is found in narratives where death is not a singular event, but a repeated condition and revival unfolds through successive metamorphic stages. In one such tale, *Înșir-te mărgărite cu dalbe flori aurite* [Unfold yourself, pearls with fair golden blossoms] (Stăncescu, 2010), the children of the imperial couple are killed multiple times, reemerging first in non-human forms (tree or animals) before their final restoration to human existence. Water plays a decisive mediating role in this process. After the children's remains are cast aside near a brook, a surge of water carries part of them downstream where it becomes lodged in the branches of a tree. When the water recedes, the remains generate new life: two children emerge, already bearing the tools and attributes of human labor and culture. Restoration, however, is not immediate nor miraculous in the conventional sense. It is achieved gradually, through vegetal and animal intermediaries and only reaches completion after lengthy displacement and repeated loss. Water thus functions not as a direct agent of resurrection, but as a preserving and redistributive force that enables life to reconstitute itself over time. The narrative emphasizes endurance and continuity, not immediate revival, reinforcing the Romanian fairy tale preference for postponed and processual restoration.

Same situation is found in the fairy tale named *Dan și bivolii ai albi* [Dan and the white oxen] (Stăncescu, 2010), where water is an agent of enchanted preservation. Dan, whose apparent destruction culminates not in annihilation but in metamorphic survival is condemned to be burned; the hero transforms himself into a spark, entrusting an old woman with the task of carrying it out to a nearby brook. Once cast into the water, the spark becomes a golden duck, whose precious materiality and gem-like eyes signal its enchanted status. Therefore, water suspends the finality of death, converting fire's destructive force into a new non-human form of existence. The brook is a protective medium in which identity is displaced rather than erased, allowing Dan to persist in an altered embodiment.

A further articulation of water's enchanted and quasi-sacred function appears in narratives where it promises radical renewal without guaranteeing fulfilment. In the tale *Fântâna Sticlișoarei* [Sticlișoara's Fountain] (Stăncescu, 2010), water is attributed rejuvenating properties: it is said to restore those who wash in it to the age of twelve. The emperor's yearning for this water stems not from a collective necessity but from a profound attachment to life and authority. While the fountain is depicted as having remarkable power, the story presents it as remote and challenging to reach, thereby converting rejuvenation into a postponed and conditional prospect rather than an instantaneous miracle. Water acts less as a spontaneous agent of renewal and more as a catalyst for a quest and moral revelation. Its sacred nature resides not only in its promise of transformation but also in its ability to challenge human perspectives on aging, power, and mortality. Consequently, the enchanted fountain aligns with the Romanian fairy tale tradition of moderating miraculous potential through narrative delay, ensuring that renewal is ethically and narratively mediated rather than freely granted.

As we can observe, water consistently mediates restoration indirectly: bodies are preserved, identities are recovered, agency is regained but rarely through a single, spectacular act. This pattern suggests a cultural preference for narrative moderation, in which transformation unfolds gradually, and restoration remains contingent upon moral, physical, or temporal trials. In contrast, Germanic and Slavic fairy tales more frequently deploy resurrection waters as explicit and efficient magical devices. In Afanasyev's *Sister Alyonushka and Brother Ivanushka* and Grimm's *Brother and Sister*, enchanted water effects immediate and visible transformation, while other Grimm narratives make recurrent use of *water of life* to reverse death decisively. A similar structuring of water as a site of moral and narrative testing appears in the Brothers Grimm tale *The Water of Life*. Like the fountain of Sticlișoara, the magical water promises radical renewal—in this case, the restoration of the ailing king's health, but only through the mediation of human effort and virtue. The youngest son's quest demonstrates that

access to the water is contingent on humility, perseverance, and ethical comportment, rather than on entitlement or authority.

From an ethical perspective, both tales underline the transformation is inseparable from the cultivation of virtue: the water's power is exercised in tandem with moral responsibility, and its rewards are contingent upon ethical action as much as upon questing skill. The water's transformative potential is therefore deferred and conditional, echoing the Sticlișoara motif: renewal is never automatic but must be earned, and the narrative rewards moral discernment alongside successful completion of the quest. Both tales emphasize that enchanted water functions less as an immediate miracle and more as a test of character, structuring the moral and narrative passage from aspiration to reward.

Slavic fairy tales collected by Afanasyev (2020) similarly feature paired waters of death and life, whose functions are clearly differentiated and narratively conclusive. Both the Russian tale *The Bold Knight, the Apples of Youth, and the Water of Life* (Afanasyev, 2020) and Stăncescu's *Fountain of Sticlișoara* exemplify the motif of resurrection waters and deferred restoration, in which water possesses the potential to heal, rejuvenate, or restore life, but only through a conditional and ethically mediated process. The Russian fairy tale is a very convoluted story, but the water of life can restore the youngest prince and his beloved to full health and wholeness, but only after a series of perilous trials, betrayal by the older brothers, and the intervention of patient ingenuity. In both narratives, the waters' transformative power is deferred, serving as a narrative mechanism that tests perseverance, virtue, and ethical judgment, reinforcing the idea that miraculous restoration is neither immediate nor unearned. What distinguishes the Romanian examples analysed here is not the absence of these motifs, but their narrative containment. Resurrection, when present, is delayed, partial or symbolic. Water does not dominate the plot through miraculous efficiency; instead, it marks transitional states and preserves the possibility of restoration without guaranteeing it. The restraint reinforces the ethical and experiential dimension of the narrative, aligning recovery with endurance rather than enchantment.

7. Conclusions

This article has examined the symbolic, narrative, and ethical functions of water in a selected corpus of Romanian fairy tales collected by Stăncescu (2010) and Ispirescu (1984), with comparative reference to Germanic and Slavic traditions where relevant. The analysis conceptualizes water as a multifaceted narrative agent, operating through distinct yet interrelated functions that contribute to both narrative structure and moral articulation. Across the corpus, water emerges first and foremost as a liminal medium. Rivers, brooks, wells and lakes consistently mark thresholds between worlds, states of being, or phases of the narrative. Passage through or contact with water signals transition instead of resolution, initiating processes of testing, transformation, or displacement. This liminal function situates water as a structural organizer of narrative movement rather than a passive backdrop.

Secondly, water frequently operates as an instrument of moral testing. Enchanted or forbidden waters activate narrative crisis not through inherent hostility, but through interdiction and transgression. Drinking, bathing, or approaching the wrong water sources produces immediate consequences, thereby externalizing ethical judgment through symbolic environments. This pattern aligns with fairy tale morphology while retaining a distinctive economy of expression within the Romanian tradition.

The analysis has further shown that water functions as a powerful agent of transformation, particularly in relation to female figures. Immersion, washing, or proximity to enchanted water often precedes shifts in bodily form, social position, or marital status, with

rare absolute or instantaneous transformations. Romanian fairy tales privilege gradual, ambiguous, or reversible metamorphoses, allowing identity to remain fluid across narrative stages.

A central contribution to this study is its examination of resurrection waters and deferred restoration. Although motifs of revival occur, water seldom produces immediate or unconditional resurrection. Instead, it preserved bodies, identities, or possibilities of return, enabling restoration only through extended narrative effort; sometimes, water becomes a space of permanent withdrawal as we can observe in *Busuioc și Musuioc* (Stăncescu, 2010), differentiating Romanian fairy tales from their German or Slavic counterparts.

The article also identifies a restrained but significant destructive or chaotic function of water. Romanian fairy tales avoid cosmic floods or total annihilation, favouring localized rupture instead: drowning, irreversible transformation or long exposure to danger. Even here, chaos remains narratively contained and ethically productive, generating endurance or displacement, not collapse. Sacred and enchanted waters – such as the rejuvenating fountain of Sticlișoara – further reveal water's capacity to promise renewal. Access is distant, conditional, and morally charged.

Taken together, these findings suggest that Romanian fairy tales articulate a distinctive water symbolism marked by narrative restraint, ethical mediation, and processual transformation. Water rarely resolves conflict directly; instead, it suspends, tests, preserves, or redirects narrative. In contrast to traditions emphasizing spectacular enchantment or miraculous reversal, Romanian fairy tales integrate water into a disciplined symbolic economy in which meaning unfolds gradually and restoration remains contingent. By foregrounding water as a dynamic agent, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Romanian fairy tales poetics and offers a framework for future comparative research, including extensions to other regional corpora or intersections with ritual, gender, and space imagery.

References:

- Afanasyev, A. N. (2020). *Tales from Russian folklore*. (S. Pimenoff, Trans.). Alma Classics.
- Bachelard, G. (1942). *L'Eau et les rêves* [Water and dreams]. Corti.
- Băgiu, L. V. (2023). Facets of some wrecks: Water. *Incursions into the Imaginary*, 14(1), 293–310. <https://doi.org/10.29302/INIMAG.2023.14.14>
- Douglas, M. (1966). *Purity and danger: An analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo*. Routledge.
- Eliade, M. (2025). *Tratat de istorie a religiilor* [Treatise on the history of religions]. Humanitas. (Original work published 1949)
- Grimm, W., & Grimm, J. (2011). *The complete Grimm's fairy tales (The Pantheon fairy tale and folklore library)*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.
- Ispirescu, P. (1984). *Legende sau basmele românilor* [Romanian Legends or Fairy Tales]. Facla.
- Propp, V. (1968). *Morphology of the Folktale* (2nd ed., L. Scott, Trans.; L.A. Wagner, Ed.). University of Texas Press.
- Rogojină, C.I. (2025). Cerbul de aur / Frate și soră, o metaforă a dualității laturii instinctiv-rațională umane în basmul european și turcesc [The golden stag / Brother and sister, a metaphor of the

- human instinctive-rational duality in the European and Turkish Fairy-Tale]. In N. Hasan (Coord.), *Cultural polyphonies: The Turkish language, culture, and civilisation worldwide: A volume dedicated to the centennial of the Republic of Turkey*. (pp. 291–299). Editura Universitară. <https://doi.org/10.5682/31005470ciR22>
- Stăncescu, D. (2010) *Basmele românilor* [Romanian Fairy tales]. Curtea Veche Publishing.
- Marian, S. F. (2019). *Nunta, nașterea, înmormântarea la români I-IV* [Marriage, birth, and funeral customs among Romanians]. Saeculum I.O.
- Turner, V. (1969). *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. Cornell University Press.
- van Gennep, A. (1960). *Rites of passage* (M. Vizedom & G. L. Caffee, Trans.). The University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1909)

MIGRATIONS AND THE SACRED TOPOGRAPHY OF THE DELIBLATO SANDS: THE VILLAGE OF DELIBLATO¹

Annemarie SORESCU-MARINKOVIĆ

Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade

e-mail: annemarie.sorescu@bi.sanu.ac.rs

Valentina ŽIVKOVIĆ

Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade

e-mail: valentina.zivkovic@bi.sanu.ac.rs

Abstract

This paper focuses on the co-shaping of nature and the sacred landscape of the village of Deliblato, located on the margins of the Deliblato Sands, in Vojvodina, Serbia, also known as the “European Sahara”. This study illustrates how ‘natural’ and ‘cultural’ landscapes are inseparable, mutually shaped by human and non-human forces. We take two directions of research into how environmental reality impacts human-created sacred spaces: 1) we explore how migrations and cultural interactions, defining this area, constructed the sacred spaces on the margins of this specific landscape, and 2) we analyse how the landscape is represented and reflected in the sacred topography of the village of Deliblato. The object of our study is two rural Christian Orthodox churches – the Serbian and the Romanian, as well as the village cemetery, in which we investigated whether certain landscape features favoured the formation of certain types of religious or sacred representations.

Keywords: migration; sacred topography; linguistic landscape; natural landscape; Banat.

1. Introduction

The Deliblato Sands (Serb. *Deliblatska peščara*, Rom. *Dunele Deliblata*), also referred to as the “European Sahara” or “one of the last deserts in Europe”, is a large sandy area of around 300 km² located between the Danube River and the southwestern slopes of the Carpathian Mountains, in South Banat, Vojvodina Province, Serbia. The sands are named after the village of Deliblato, which will be the focus of this paper. Once part of a vast prehistoric desert that originated from the withdrawal of the Pannonian Sea, the Deliblato Sands are today comprised of forest steppe, sand steppe, and fragments of sand dunes. However, records from the Middle Ages, but also remnants of bones and horns of deer represent evidence that in the past the area was covered by forest vegetation (Stankević & Pavićević, 1963). The changes in

¹ Article History: Received: 09.09.2025. Accepted: 07.11.2025. Published: 15.05.2026. This paper is a result of the research carried out at the Institute for Balkan Studies at the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, funded by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development, and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia, based on the Agreement on the Implementation and Financing of Scientific Research Work in 2025, no. 451-03-136/2025-03 dated 27 January 2025.

vegetation until the 18th century were the result of historical circumstances: the successive migration waves of different populations, accompanied by frequent battles and wars, led to the reduction or increase of the forest surface (Sedlak, 2019). Maps of the southern part of the Pannonian Plain drawn in the 18th and 19th centuries reveal that this region was at that time already dominated by sand, and almost entirely devoid of woody plants (Ćuk et al, 2023).

Nonetheless, starting with the 19th century, this sandy area has been subject to afforestation projects, some of which are still ongoing. This was undertaken primarily to combat wind erosion and stabilize the sandy terrain, which was hindering agricultural development in the region. The first program of intense afforestation of the Deliblato Sands was instituted by the authorities of the Habsburg Empire in 1818, and it was coupled with human activity in the form of vineyard plantation and cattle grazing. All these drastically changed the profile of this zone, leaving behind only sporadic or mosaic sandy areas. As early as 1909, Austro-Hungarian conservationists recognised the importance of the legal protection of the Deliblato Sands and made the first steps to preserve its unique flora and fauna (Kaán, 1914). However, the Deliblato Sands became a special nature reserve only in 1977; it is now home to many endemic species of plants and animals that are rare or endangered in Europe and globally, as well as to new non-local species, brought by human intervention.

Given that this protected area has a unique profile, which has influenced the development of special flora and fauna, the Deliblato Sands aroused the interest of scientists from different disciplines. Studies on the vegetation of this nature reserve prevail, be it that they are of a general character (Ćuk et al., 2019; Gajić, 1983) or deal with specific issues, such as the role and use of wild flora in traditional phytotherapy (Popović et al., 2014) or the impact of invasive plants on biodiversity degradation (Kalinić et al., 2020). Microclimate studies are also numerous, and they deal, among other things, with the aeolian dynamics of the Deliblato Sands (Marković et al, 2024) or aridity indicators (Kadović et al., 2014). Lately, the potential of sustainable tourism in the area has also been investigated (Trišić et al., 2021).

As shown, most studies on the Deliblato Sands have focused either on its vegetation and geo-morphological characteristics or the impact of the human factor on the profile and biodiversity of the natural landscape of this area. Nevertheless, in modern scholarly discourse, the *landscape* functions as a complex and polyvalent concept, which should not be understood as independent of people, or even as made by people, but as the outcome of the physical and symbolic implication of people with their surroundings. Anthropologists have convincingly demonstrated that the environmental setting is an integral element of the society and culture (Christian, 1972), and an ongoing “cultural process” by which we mentally and imaginatively locate ourselves in the world (Hirsch, 1995, p. 5). More recently it has been reiterated that the phenomena designated as *natural landscape* and *cultural landscape* are inseparable (Cosgrove, 2003; Descola, 2013; Maddrell et al., 2015; Popović, 2024), and that *landscape* is something constructed by humans in the course of their daily lives and interactions, both physically and symbolically, “by being invested with meaning, memory, and value” (Filippucci, 2023, p. 2).

In light of the recent switch from an anthropocentric to an ecocentric paradigm, even in the case of religious landscapes (Campopiano, 2025), we advocate for a change of perspective on the Deliblato Sands: we focus on the co-shaping of the natural and cultural landscape, in this case, the sacred landscape. More precisely, we analyse the influence of ecosystems on individuals, and in the same time the way in which the human-created sacred spaces impact the environmental reality, focusing on how the natural landscape is represented and reflected in the sacred topography of the village of Deliblato. The object of our study is two rural Christian Orthodox churches – the Serbian and the Romanian, as well as the village cemetery. We also investigate whether certain landscape features favoured the formation of certain types of religious or sacred representations. In addition, we explore how migrations and cultural

interactions, definitory for this area, constructed the sacred spaces on the margins of this specific landscape, situated in the liminal zone of the border – a natural one at all points in time, as well as political and military in certain periods.

We base our study on a set of primary and secondary sources. Apart from consulting the relevant literature, we made several field trips to Deliblato during 2025, when we interviewed the residents and used a photo camera to collect visual material. In addition to open-ended interviews with locals conducted in Serbian and Romanian, we had extensive discussions with local Serbian and Romanian Orthodox priests, who explained to us in detail the specific history of the village and their respective churches, as well as their relationship with the inhabitants and the surroundings of the village. The collection of more than 200 photographs from the two churches and graveyard, taken during our fieldtrips, is deposited in the Digital Archive of the Institute for Balkan Studies (DABI), and available upon request.

2. The Village of Deliblato: Nature and Migrations

The map of human settlements forming a network on the margins of the Deliblato Sands comprises Šušara, Grebenac and Kajtasovo in the east, Šumarak and Dubovac in the south, Gaj, Deliblato, Mramorak and Dolovo in the west, Vladimirovac and Banatski Karlovac in the north. The village of Deliblato, which gives the name to the Deliblato Sands, is situated in the Kovin municipality of Vojvodina, at an altitude of 94 m, and has an area of 164 km². There are several hypotheses about the origin of the name Deliblato. It is most likely that it is derived from the Turkish word *deli* (“mad”) and the Serbian word *blato* (“mud”), so the full meaning in English would be “mad mud”, probably because this sandy area became very muddy during long rain periods in ancient times.

It is not certain when the village of Deliblato was founded. However, it was first mentioned in 1660 and described as populated by ethnic Serbs (Meza, 2022, pp. 28–29). Following the First Great Migration of the Serbs, during the Habsburg-Ottoman War of 1683–1699 under Serbian Patriarch Arsenije III Crnojević, more Serbs settled there (Erdeljanović, 2013; Krstić, 2022a, 2022b; Maticki & Jović, 2010; Stojančević, 1981). During the wars between the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy, Deliblato suffered considerable damage. Therefore, the settlement was listed as uninhabited on the map series created between 1723 and 1725 by Count Claude Florimond de Mercy (Bataveljić, 1964).

A decision of Empress Maria Theresa in 1770 included Deliblato in the Military Frontier, the borderland of the Habsburg Monarchy, which from the 16th to the 19th century served as a protective barrier against incursions from the Ottoman Empire (more in Ilić Mandić, 2020). This was roughly the period when more Serbs and Romanians colonised this settlement, in exchange for land-grants, religious freedom and favourable tax rates offered to all frontiersmen of the Habsburg Monarchy. The first wave of Romanians came in 1765 from around Sighișoara and Alba Iulia in Transylvania. A few years later, in 1771, another wave of Romanians migrated from Oravița, Goruia, Giurgiova and Răchitova in the Romanian part of Banat, and in 1800, Romanians from Șoșdea, Ilidia, Răcășdia, Jam and Naidăș arrived in Deliblato (Popi, 1993, p. 250).

It should not be overlooked that, besides its security function, the Military Border itself has been subject to the population policy of the Habsburg authorities throughout the centuries. In fact, the Military Frontier was the result of carefully planned, controlled immigration, since adequate population size was a precondition for the sustainability of the frontier system and the justification for its initial role as a “protective wall” in the 16th and 17th centuries, and for its later role as a “manpower reservoir” in the 18th and 19th centuries (Ilić Mandić, 2022, p. 48). In the 18th century, when the migration of different ethnic groups shaped the modern ethnic profile

of Deliblato, the Habsburg migration policy was based on the principle of a comprehensive mercantilism, which highly valued population size as the basis for state self-sufficiency and power (Ilić Mandić, 2022, p. 48).

According to data compiled by the Romanian priest in Deliblato, in 1916, an all-time high number of Romanians was registered in the village: 2,336 (Meza, 2022, p. 85), accounting for almost half of the village population, with the Serbian community being only slightly more numerous. In 1921, according to the official population census, Deliblato had 4,366 inhabitants; the ethnic structure of the village was as follows: 2,393 Serbs, 1,810 Romanians, 117 Germans, 32 Hungarians, 11 other Slavs and 3 “others”. Therefore, Romanians represented 41.5% of the population. The population of the settlement has been steadily declining during the last century, following a similar trend as most other settlements in Vojvodina and generally in Serbia: in 2022, Deliblato had only 2,409 inhabitants, with Romanians accounting for approximately 10% of the total population, as per official statistics.

In the village of Deliblato, the life of the different populations that migrated and settled there at different points in time has been inextricably linked to nature, waters, plants, and animals. Deliblato was also the seat of the Banat Border Management Directorate, which officially began its activity in 1818 and was in charge of the afforestation of the territory of the Deliblato Sands (Sedlak, 2019, pp. 47–48). Afforestation was accompanied by the introduction of control measures related to the prohibition of woodcutting and grazing of cattle. Kraljevac Lake, registered already in 16th-century maps, lies in the vicinity of the village (Meza, 2022, p. 24).

3. Sacred Topography of Deliblato

Sacred topography is defined as the creation of holy spaces where miracle-working icons and relics, iconographic programs, and tombs are all woven together in specific sites, comprising churches, shrines, cities, villages and landscapes. Sacred topography shows how places are imbued with symbolic meanings and how these meanings contribute to religious practices, serving as repositories of collective memory (Della Dora, 2016; Erdeljan, 2017; Lidov, 2006, 2014; Walsham, 2012). The environmental setting is understood as a matrix where the relationships among people and the powers that preside over their world, in other words God, are articulated physically and imaginatively (Christian, 1972). Specific divine figures are implanted in the landscape through shrines, which are “transaction points in the landscape between the human group, the land, and the powers that influence the success of the group’s enterprises” (Christian, 1972, p. 45).

The sacred topography of Deliblato is closely intertwined with the history of migration, especially of the two main ethnic groups that live in the village – Serbs and Romanians. We will investigate how these aspects of migrations are reflected in interpretations of the local landscape, but also the imaginary (sacred/nationalistic) landscape/space/cultural imagination that might differ between ethnic groups and migration trajectories.

After their arrival in Deliblato, the Serbs and Romanians attended religious services in the shared church (the present-day Serbian Orthodox church), as they were both Orthodox Christians. A law issued in 1868 approved the separation of the Serbian-Romanian Christian Orthodox communities in the Habsburg Monarchy. The process of separation in Deliblato started in 1890 and lasted until 1896. In the beginning, the Romanians attended religious services in a rented house, until the local Romanian Orthodox church was finished in 1925. Hence, much of the history of today’s Serbian Orthodox church also relates to the Romanian Orthodox community. Therefore, the phenomena discussed below cannot be observed and

interpreted as belonging exclusively to the Serbian community of Deliblato, but to both the Serbian and Romanian communities.

3.1. The Serbian Orthodox Church

The Serbian Orthodox church, dedicated to the Translation of the relics of Saint Nicholas from Myra to Bari situated on a hill overlooking Kraljevac Lake, shows an astonishing integration with the landscape,² creating a particular sacred space (see Fig. 1). Kraljevac Lake was formed after building a dam that collected the water from several streams flowing down from the Deliblato Sands. As the sandy formation is tens of metres higher than the surrounding plains, these streams have formed characteristic cuts at the edge of the sandy terrace. These cuts are now filled with water, forming the long and winding Kraljevac Lake, surrounded by reeds, grassy hills and pastures, sandy cliffs, and arable lands. A protected area today, the lake is inhabited by extremely rare species of flora and fauna. The lake is characterised by floating peat islands, formed when deposited peat from the lake's bottom pops up to the water surface, giving it a dynamic appearance and creating a specific landscape (Stojanović et al, 2024).



Fig. 1. The Serbian Orthodox church, dedicated to the Translation of the relics of Saint Nicholas, on a hill overlooking Kraljevac Lake, Deliblato (photo credit: Valentina Živković, 2025)

The present-day church on the lake shore was preceded by two older structures that were subsequently demolished. The oldest Orthodox church in Deliblato was built in the second half of the 17th century, and it was located, together with the original village settlement, near Velika Vrela (“the big springs”), a drinking water spring, after which the place got its name. This place was closer to the Deliblato Sands and the village of Šumarak (Emanueltelep) (Meza, 2022, pp. 161–162). It was a timber church, built of logs and planks, which speaks of the economic resources of the church-goers at a given historical moment; still, we can also assume that this type of construction involved a special way of fitting the man-made structure into the natural environment.

After the locals demolished this church and moved to the area of today's village, they built another wooden church in the middle of the 18th century.³ According to the church chronicles, the old church was demolished in 1778 and replaced by a new one, whose construction was jointly funded by Serbs and Romanians. The new church was made of hard building material

² It has been noted that many shrines are located at “critical points in the ecosystem”, such as mountain peaks, springs, and caves (Christian, 1972, p. 181).

³ The place where this church used to be is today marked by a stone cross.

– specifically, bricks produced in the nearest town, Kovin. This sacred site, as a place of liminal experience, since the church building is a threshold between the earthly and the divine realms (Bacci, 2017), and the transformative experience (the church is dedicated to the translation of the relics of Saint Nicholas), is situated in a liminal zone: the end of the village and the beginning of the lake wilderness (Tilley & Cameron-Daum, 2017). The special connection of Deliblato with the original settlement can be seen precisely in the location of the cemetery on the other part of the village, which is linked by ploughed fields and a country road to Velika Vrela and, further, to the forest of the Deliblato Sands.

In the west and south parts of the churchyard, there are several tombs of people significant to the village and church, dating from the 18th century. Among them are the tombs of priest Maksim and his daughter, Anđelija Maksimova (Meza, 2022, p. 33). They are made of pink stone and are typologically similar to the tombs located on the north side next to the apse of the Church of Saint Peter and Paul in the neighbouring town of Bela Crkva (Biserica Albă).

According to the *Chronicle of the Deliblato Church*, written in 1861 by the chronicler and priest Jovan Grigorijević,⁴ the iconostasis was made in 1788 by Jakov Orfelin, a famous Serbian painter whose iconographic designs combined the traditional Orthodox heritage and contemporary Baroque models that had migrated from Central European religious art (Kostić, 2007; Vlăsceanu, 2023). Orfelin's dissemination of Western iconography is also evident in the iconostasis of Deliblato, which bears a strong resemblance to the iconostasis in Sremski Karlovci, his previous work from 1780. Although the iconostasis was damaged and has layers of later coating, it is one of Orfelin's better works, with his recognizable bright rococo colours (see Fig. 2). The scenes from the Passion of Christ cycle are among his finest works, especially the scene *Christ before Caiaphas*, which shows an aspiration towards freedom in his draughtsmanship: Orfelin skillfully avoided the frontality of the composition with a boldly foreshortened soldier in the foreground. In the composition *The Descent of the Holy Spirit*, he created a lively scene by turning the head of an apostle completely towards the viewer, as he had done on the Sremski Karlovci iconostasis (Batavešić, 1964, pp. 395–398; Medaković, 1968, pp. 76–77; Stojančević, 1981).



Fig. 2. Jakov Orfelin, iconostasis, 1788, Church dedicated to the Translation of the relics of Saint Nicholas, Deliblato (photo credit: Valentina Živković, 2025)

⁴ In 1859, the military command of the Banat Military Frontier ordered its priests to collect historical, ethnographic and geographical data about the places in which they served and send them to the Protopresbyterate in Pančevo. The Serbian priest in Deliblato, Jovan Grigorijević, wrote the *Chronicle of the Deliblato Church*, fragments of which were published in the magazine "Javor" in 1880 (Meza, 2022, p. 161).

On the Virgin Mary's throne, there is an icon (see Fig. 3) which is a replica of the miraculous *Mother of God of Bezdin* (Serb. *Bogorodica Bezdenska*) (Timotijević, 2003), in the Banat region of what is today Romania, with the inscription:

This is the true icon of the Miraculous Image of the Purest Virgin of Bezdin, who abideth there even unto this day, granting healing to all who draw near with faith. Upon Thine all-pure and sovereign countenance, O Lady, the faithful set their gaze.⁵



Fig. 3. Icon, replica of *Mother of God of Bezdin*, Church dedicated to the Translation of the relics of Saint Nicholas, Deliblato (photo credit: Valentina Živković, 2025)

The *Mother of God of Bezdin* is a replica of the *Mother of God of Vladimir* (Serb. *Bogorodica Vladimirska*) (Tatić-Đurić, 1985), which was brought from Kiev by the monk Paisios (Serb. *Pajsije*) the Greek in 1727. It was kept in the Belgrade Cathedral before being transferred to the Vinča Monastery. After the monks fled from Vinča before the Turkish onslaught in 1739, they settled in the Bezdin Monastery, taking the miracle-working icon with them. In 1743, the Serbian Patriarch Arsenije IV Jovanović decided to transfer this icon from Bezdin to Sremski Karlovci as the protector of the new patriarchal throne (Timotijević, 2003).⁶ The *Mother of God of Bezdin* became famous for its thaumaturgic powers as a miraculous healing icon, especially of those with mental and spiritual disorders. A number of painted and print replicas of the miraculous icon from Bezdin were created, often accompanied by votive texts celebrating the miraculous icon which as a miracle worker who heals everyone who approaches it with faith, as was the case with the icon from Deliblato. As a replica of the original miraculous icon, the icon from Deliblato inherited not only the form and iconography, but also miracle-working powers, which can be explained by the concept of “sacred likeness” (Holmes, 2018). The presence of a

⁵ We thank our colleague Milena Davidović for transcribing and translating this inscription. Original source text: “Сіе истинное изображеніе Чѹдотворнаго вбраза пре(чи)стыа Б(огороди)цы Без[ь]дин[ь]скіа, идѣже и доселѣ пребываетъ и цѣленіа источаа всѣмъ вѣроу приходяшти. На твои пре(чи)стыи вбразъ царице вѣм[ь]риаю.”

⁶ After the death of the Patriarch, by the decision of Empress Maria Theresa, in 1748 the icon was returned to Bezdin. It stayed there until the end of the World War I, when it was transferred to Kikinda, and then to Vršac, where it remains today, in the diocesan court chapel (Timotijević, 2003).

replica of the highly revered miracle-working icon reflects the careful construction of the holy site in Deliblato, as well as the entire sacred topography of Banat.

The “migratory” miraculous icon that has been transferred to another seat reflects the same concept as the translation of the relics. The very essence of the sacred life of Deliblato can be expressed via two phenomena: migration and transfer. The translation of the body of Saint Nicholas from Myra to Bari was depicted in a painting created in 1906 by the painter Milutin Dejanović on the church ceiling (Meza, 2022, p. 165). This painting is of particular importance for our topic, as it demonstrates the layers of reinterpretation of the sacred space (see Fig. 4). In the usual iconography of this topic, in the background of the translation of Saint Nicholas’ body, a church is shown, typically on a seashore, which should suggest the basilica in Bari.⁷ However, the painting by Milutin Dejanović shows a church tower that strongly resembles the tower of the Deliblato church. The changed landscape of the holy event points to its adjustment to the perception and needs of local believers. The holy event is transposed to a space that is recognizable and builds a connection with the natural environment (Carta, Michetti & Noce, 2024). This demonstrates how the sacred was imaginatively reinterpreted and experienced (Bacci, 2023) by the people in Deliblato. Namely, the procession carrying the saint’s body from Myra on a bier passes through a brick-walled gate, with a typical Banat village, very much like Deliblato, visible in the background. The houses in the painting are characteristic Banat houses with an elongated shape and a thatched roof, as they were until the end of the 19th century. Behind the houses rises a church tower like the tower of the Deliblato church. The procession moves along a sand-coloured road bordered by a meadow. The vegetation consists mainly of bushes and two tall trees that, with their slender shape, suggest that they could be poplar trees or junipers. Therefore, the visual language indicates that Deliblato was chosen purposely for the stage of the translation of the relics of Saint Nicholas (whose feast day is 22 May).

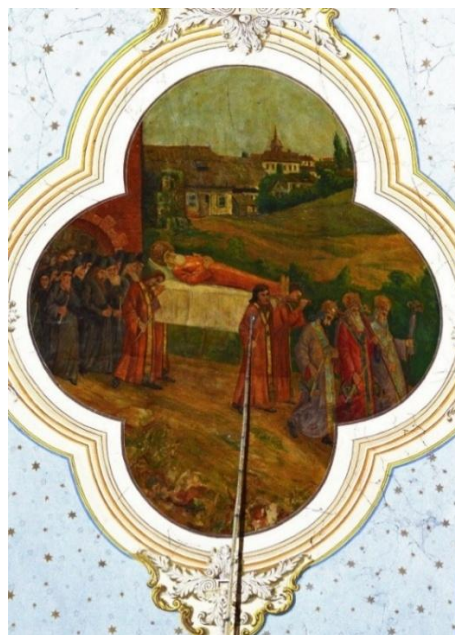


Fig. 4. Milutin Dejanović, *The translation of the relics of Saint Nicholas from Myra to Bari*, 1906, Church dedicated to the Translation of the relics of Saint Nicholas, Deliblato (photo credit: Valentina Živković, 2025)

⁷ For example, in the Monastery of the Patriarchate of Peć (the Saint Nicholas Chapel) there is the usual iconography of the translation of Saint Nicholas’ relics to Bari, painted in 1673–1674 by the Serbian painter Radul (Rakić, 1998, pp. 106–119; Todić, 2013, pp. 104–110).

This leads us to the question of how we can understand and explain the topic of the translation of relics at a certain historical moment (Geary, 1978; Papasidero, 2019, 2025). The act of translation is intimately bound with migration: the Latin *translatio* (“to ferry” or “carry across”) was originally used to name the process of moving and transplanting sacred relics (Maher, Polezzi & Wilson, 2025.) The *translatio* of the relics should presumably be seen as an important ritual within migration, when people transfer icons, relics, valuables, feasts and holidays to a new settlement. When it comes to this particular settlement on the edge of the Deliblato Sands, which, according to some geographical parameters, can be considered a desert, the transfer of relics and the enrichment of the desert with temples acquire a special symbolic meaning (Popović, 2009; Lidov, 2014).

Likewise, the translation of the relics of Saint Nicholas from Myra to Bari took place in the 11th century due to the invasion and devastation caused by Ismailians. As soon as the relics arrived in Bari and were placed in the church, miraculous healings began (Bacci, 2009). The legend about the translation of the relics (*furta sacra*, in fact) is based on the idea of rescue from the Islamic conquerors. Serbs from the country’s south migrated to the Banat and Vojvodina regions precisely because of the Turkish conquest. It is not by chance that churches dedicated to the Translation of the Relics of Saint Nicholas from Myra to Bari are common in the Deliblato Sands. For example, in Dolovo, there are two Serbian churches dedicated to the same holiday, as well as the village feast, which testifies to the power of the cult of Saint Nicholas as the protector of all those who leave their places of origin (Bacci, 2009; Živković, 2010).

3.2. The Romanian Orthodox Church

The Romanian Orthodox church in Deliblato is dedicated to the Holy Trinity. It is located in the relative vicinity of the Serbian Orthodox church, but without the spectacular view of the latter. In the beginning, after the separation of the Orthodox churches along ethnic lines, before purchasing the land needed for the construction of a new church, the Romanian parishioners gathered in a rented house for religious services. The construction of the church began in 1924 and ended in 1925 (Đurić Milovanović & Măran, 2019, pp. 57–58; Meza, 2022, pp. 184–185). By the time the church was finished, the parishioners no longer had the money to pay for its painting, so the interior of the church was decorated only in the 1980s by two painters from Romania, namely the Bucharest-based painter Grigore Popescu, who painted the iconostasis, and the Timișoara-based Viorel Țigu, who was in charge of the wall paintings (see Fig. 5).

The Romanian Orthodox church in Deliblato is one of the newest Romanian Orthodox churches in the Serbian Banat, being one of the only three churches built in the interwar period, together with the ones in Ovča and Kuštilj (Đurić Milovanović & Măran, 2019, p. 57). In the vestibule on the west wall above the portal, there is an inscription in Romanian stating that the cornerstone was laid during the time of the Romanian Patriarch Iustin and the Serbian Patriarch German, who are painted on the wall at the entrance to the nave. The foundation was consecrated by Bishop Iosif Traian Bădescu during the time of the local priest Cornel Jurca. During the painting of the church, the parish priest was Bujorel Lupșici (see Fig. 6), who is shown near the two patriarchs, together with Aurel Uroș, the first vicar of the Orthodox Romanians in the Serbian Banat. Bujorel Lupșici is buried in the Deliblato cemetery, and the portrait photo used on his tombstone also served as the template for the fresco portrait in the church.



Fig. 5. The interior of the Romanian Orthodox church dedicated to the Holy Trinity, Deliblato (photo credit: Valentina Živković, 2025)



Fig. 6. Viorel Țigu, *Parish priest Bujorel Lupșici*, 1980s, Romanian Orthodox church dedicated to the Holy Trinity, Deliblato (photo credit: Valentina Živković, 2025)

The Holy Trinity occupies the central place on the iconostasis, surrounded by the most important scenes of the Great Feasts: The Nativity, the Baptism of Christ, the Descent into Hades and the Ascension. Although in a solid schematic iconographic formula, one of the three shepherds from the Birth of Christ seems to be wearing a traditional Romanian long fur coat, while two wear traditional fur hats. The scene of Christ and the Samaritan woman who came to collect water from the spring also reveals the connection between the scriptural scenes and the Banat nature and landscape. Namely, the Samaritan woman is dressed in a national costume, while the background features a village with two houses and haystacks, very similar to traditional Banat houses, made of mud and straw (see Fig. 7). It is worth mentioning that the painter Grigore Popescu placed his signature among the painted plants in the scene of the Ascension of Christ on the iconostasis, where floral decoration is present.



Fig. 7. Viorel Țigu, *Christ and the Samaritan woman*, 1980s, Romanian Orthodox church dedicated to the Holy Trinity, Deliblato (photo credit: Valentina Živković, 2025)

The devotion to the Romanian Christian tradition is highlighted by the choice of Romanian martyrs depicted next to the main inscription above the entrance to the church, named in the captions as *Sf. M. Ioan Valahul* (Holy Martyr John the Vlach), in traditional attire, and *Sf. M. Ioan Cel Nou de la Suceava* (Holy Martyr John the New from Suceava).

Another characteristic of this church, which distinguishes it from all other Romanian churches in the Serbian Banat, is that the walls of the nave next to the sanctuary on both sides feature famous Romanian medieval rulers and national heroes in pairs: *Mihai de la Alba Iulia* (Michael the Brave, 1558–1601) and *Vlad Țepeș* (Vlad the Impaler, 1431–1476), *Mircea de la Cozia* (Mircea the Elder, 1355–1418) and *Ștefan de la Putna* (Stephen the Great, 1433–1504) (more about these Romanian national heroes in: Djuvara, 2014; Giurescu, 1935/2007; Iorga, 1968). The decision to paint them probably speaks of the need to showcase the glorious past of the Romanian people, which certainly played a prominent role in the cohesion of the Romanian community after the separation from the Serbian church, but also before this event, starting from their arrival in Deliblato. The four national heroes share several common features: they are all symbols of the defense of Christianity and the fight against the Ottoman conquest; they are symbols of national unity; and they are all founders of important Romanian Orthodox churches that became pilgrimage sites. Moreover, two of them, Stephen the Great and Michael the Brave, are considered the founders of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania (see Iorga, 1904).

In conclusion, it can be said that the painting of Romanian national heroes, holy martyrs, priests and patriarchs on the walls of the Romanian Orthodox church in Deliblato serves as an explicit visual reminder of the history of the Romanian people, to which the small Romanian community in Deliblato belongs. Also, the symbolic meaning of the depicted heroes and martyrs is actively reconstructed in the sacred space of the Romanian Orthodox church.

3.3. The Cemetery

The original village cemetery stood next to the old Orthodox church, built in the 18th century on top of a hill (Meza, 2022, pp. 205–208). Today, the cemetery of Deliblato is at the eastern end of the village, towards the springs that connect the village with the Deliblato Sands. The cemetery is split down the middle by the main path and, in theory, separates the Romanian and Serbian sides, but in reality, this is not the case, and the graves are mixed, although one part is predominantly Serbian. The oldest tombstones are approximately 200 years old and are made of sandstone, usually in a cruciform shape, while the most recent ones are made of marble, typically black.

As has been noticed, in the rural settlements of Banat, the biggest number of inscriptions is to be found in local cemeteries. The inscriptions and epitaphs on tombstones represent a corpus that can be used for a dynamic perspective of the linguistic landscape, as they preserve samples of written language from different time periods (Sorescu-Marinković & Salamurović, 2022, p. 72). In the context of multilingual communities, tombstone inscriptions are also “indicators of linguistic prestige, change and death of language” (VanDam, 2008, p. 31), which closely follow and reflect the ethnic and linguistic component of migrations and population dynamics. Sociolinguists have highlighted the bidirectional relationship and mutual influence between the linguistic landscape and the sociolinguistic context: the linguistic landscape reflects the relative strength and status of different languages in a specific sociolinguistic and multilingual context, but, at the same time, contributes to the construction of the sociolinguistic context itself, influencing how the status of different languages is perceived (Cenoz & Gorter, 2006, pp. 67–68).

The Deliblato cemetery contains inscriptions in Serbian, Romanian and German, reflecting the ethnic composition of the village in different periods. The several Roma and Hungarians buried here have epitaphs in Serbian. German is used exclusively on older monuments, as the local Germans were expelled from the village after World War II. Although there is a fairly large number of inscriptions in Romanian, Serbian dominates on the more recent tombstones, reflecting the village's current ethnic composition, but also language prestige. Regarding the inscriptions in Serbian, Cyrillic ones prevail, but it is not uncommon to encounter signage in the Latin alphabet, especially on newer tombstones. As for the inscriptions in Romanian, a phenomenon already noted in other mixed Banat cemeteries is present: the local, Banat variant of Romanian infiltrates many of them and is used in parallel with standard Romanian (Sorescu-Marinković, 2021; Fenner, Sorescu-Marinković & Salamurović, forthcoming). There are also several tombstones featuring inscriptions in both Serbian and Romanian.

Unlike in other regions of Europe, where minimal markings on monuments prevail as a sign of self-preservation that characterises the Protestant tradition, epitaphs in Orthodox cemeteries of Southeast Europe can be very long, complex and inventive. It has been shown that both in rural and urban cemeteries of Serbia, one can find tombstones with long epitaphs containing emotional thoughts on life, verses or details about the life of the deceased or those left behind. In his collection of new Serbian epitaphs from the second half of the 20th century, *Literature in the Graveyard*, anthropologist Ivan Čolović states that the main reason for placing epitaphs on tombstones is “the existence of a pattern of social communication on our soil, which not only allows but also encourages public verbal expression of emotions, and not only in connection with death” (Čolović, 1983, p. 10). Due to their anecdotal and documentary character, the epitaphs transform cemeteries into a kind of village chronicle. The epitaphs in the Orthodox cemeteries of Banat villages, as well as elsewhere in Serbia were, and partly remain to this day, a means by which the community learns what the deceased was like during their life and how they died, and hence their relatively high degree of narrative and documentary nature (Sorescu-Marinković, 2021, p. 54).

The Deliblato cemetery is not an exception, although the share of longer epitaphs here is slightly smaller than in other village cemeteries in Vojvodina. They include epitaphs in both Serbian and Romanian from the end of the 19th century up to the first decades of the 21st century. The beginning of one of the oldest epitaphs in Serbian contains a variant of the antique and medieval formula implying the separation of the perishable body and the eternal soul (for details, see Živković, 2020, pp. 85–88) (see Fig. 8). The whole epitaph reads:

In this dark grave rests Aleksansar Aca Ivačković, merchant. He passed away at the age of 68, in 1907. To a faithful husband and good father his grieving wife Jelena Ivačković and their children raise this memorial. (Our translation)⁸

⁸ Original source text: “У овом мрачном/ гробу почива/ Алексансар Аца/ Ивачковић/ трговац/ Преминуо у 68 год/ живота свога 1907/ свом верном/ супругу и добром оцу/ подиже спомен/ ожалошћена/ супруга/ Јелена Ивачковић/ и деца.”



Fig. 8. Epitaph in Serbian, from the beginning of the 20th century, containing a variant of the antique and medieval formula which points to the separation of the body and soul, Deliblato cemetery (photo credit: Annemarie Sorescu-Marinković, 2025)

However, newer epitaphs follow different templates. Below is another longer epitaph in Serbian, found on a tombstone erected for a person who died in 2002:

Uncle, may every season bring you peace and warm sleep. May every flower on your grave smell fragrant. May my tear reach you through the black earth to bring you the last greetings now, when words are worth the least. May these words stay in the heart and memory of all those who loved and respected you, and those who hated you and spoke badly about you, you gave them nothing and took nothing from them. You owe them nothing, let that be their sin. (Our translation)⁹

As already mentioned, some epitaphs in the Deliblato cemetery are in Romanian. The one below, on a family vault, dates from 1994 (see Fig. 9):

Oh, Tavi, beautiful child, you were loved by everyone. Oh, Tavi, clever child, Ghedrement's offspring, five generations struggled to make you a nice fortune, but you did not live, you left us too young and did not inherit the fortune. Our beautiful house remained eternally mournful. (Our translation)¹⁰

⁹ Original source text: "Ујко/ Нек свако годишње доба/ Мир и топли сан ти донесе/ Нек сваки цвет на гробу твом замирише/ Нек суза моја кроз црну земљу/ Стигне до тебе да ти донесе последњи/ Поздрав сад кад речи најмање вреде/ Нек ове речи остану у срцу и сећању/ Свих оних који су те волели и поштовали/ А они што су те мрзели и лоше о теби/ Причали ништа им ниси дао ни узео/ Ништа им не дугујеш/ Нека то остане њихов грех."

¹⁰ Original source text: "O, Tavi, copil frumos/ La toti ai fost dragăstos/ O, Tavi, copil isteț/ Lăstarul lui Ghedrement/ Cinci genunchi s-au chinuit/ Mândră-avere ți-au stăcit/ Tu însă nu ai trăit/ Prea tânăr ne-ai părăsit/ Averea n-ai moștenit./ Casa noastră a frumoasă/ A rămas veșnic jăloasă."



Fig. 9. Epitaph in Romanian, in verses, Deliblato cemetery (photo credit: Annemarie Sorescu-Marinković, 2025)

Although not frequently, nature is also represented, reflected or alluded to in the epitaphs, such as in the one below (1995):

Dad, you left us weak, like a bud swaying in the wind. We will bloom without you, but with eternal memory of you. (Our translation)¹¹

On the same note, the Romanian names on the tombstones in the Deliblato cemetery, be they of the deceased or their family members who erected the monuments, present a peculiarity: many of them are names of flowers or plants, with an unusually high share in such a small community. Several examples are: *Bujorel* (“peony”), *Firuța* (“meadow grass”), *Florica/ Florika* (“flower”), *Mugurel/ Muguriel* (“bud”), *Rusalin* (“flower”), *Trandafir* (“rose”), *Viora/ Viorel* (“violet”).

Apart from the linguistic elements on the tombstones, the extralinguistic elements point to an even closer entanglement between the world of the living, the world of the dead and the natural environment. Doves, roses, flower twigs, palm branches and weeping willows are frequent iconographic representations on tombstones, regardless of the period when they were constructed, as depictions of plants on graves carry the archetypal meaning of constant renewal of life (see Fig. 8). This can certainly be interpreted in the context of old Christian floral symbolism as an integral part of the *locus amoneus*, the paradise garden with a source of fresh water, an abundance of flowers and lush vegetation (Miller, 2000; Popović, 2008), while the meaning of *desertum floridus* among the first Christian hermits meant the aspiration to recreate the Garden of Eden in their desert settlements (Popović, 2009).

As already noticed, the palm tree and the weeping willow are common symbols throughout Southeast Banat, the former Habsburg borderland (Stanković, 2020, p. 121). The weeping willow made its way into Christian imagery and iconography from the semiotic systems of ancient worlds. Apart from being a symbol of sadness, death and mourning on Victorian graves (Loren, 1989), the willow tree is also a symbol of immortality. Nevertheless, its symbolic and spiritual powers have been strongly intertwined with its botanical properties and allegorical dimensions since the medieval period in Europe. However, the weeping willow, native to dry areas of Asia, is a newcomer to Europe, being transplanted here only at the end of the seventeenth century (Laforêt, 2022).

¹¹ Original source text: “Tata/ ostavio si nas/ neјake kao/ pupolјak na/ vetru pa se/ њишемо/ цветаћемо без/ тебе али са/ вечном/ успоменом/ на тебе.”

In Deliblato, the weeping willow is particularly common on older sandstone tombstones from the 19th and early 20th centuries (see Fig. 10). The Deliblato Sands, with its autochthonous, but also migratory vegetation, hosts, among other tree species, the weeping willow. The small Orthodox chapel called “Vodica”, between the villages of Deliblato and Mramorak, was built near such a tree, considered sacred by the locals. Unfortunately, the willow was cut down a few years ago.

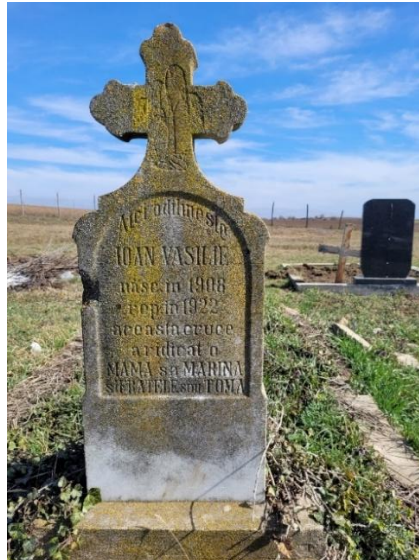


Fig. 10. The weeping willow depicted on an older sandstone tombstone, from the early 20th century, Deliblato cemetery (photo credit: Annemarie Sorescu-Marinković, 2025)

4. Conclusions

In light of the recent developments in landscape studies, which do not see the landscape as independent of, or as made by people, but as the outcome of the physical and symbolic implication of people with their surroundings, we focused on a rural settlement of South-Eastern Europe: Deliblato. Being part of the network of settlements on the margins of the Deliblato Sands, a sandy region in the Vojvodina province of Serbia which is considered one of the last deserts in Europe, Deliblato has been shaped by the different populations who settled here at different points in time, and in turn it shaped their physical and imaginative articulation of the sacred space.

Our interdisciplinary analysis – historical, iconographical, linguistic and anthropological – and the triangulation of landscape-religion-migration, revealed that this village, placed in the liminal zone of the desert and forest, is a particular case, especially when compared to other environments in South-Eastern Europe. The reason for this peculiarity lies precisely in the third key-element of the triangle: migration. Just as the Deliblato Sands are today made up of autochthonous and “migratory” flora and fauna, the network of human settlements on the border of the Deliblato Sands is made up of layers of population who settled here in successive waves, at different moments in time, and lived together for centuries. These communities first faced the natural phenomena of the new environment and then adapted and changed nature to meet their needs. Nevertheless, nature and environment were not only passive objects but were incorporated into the newly created sacred landscape of the local population. All ethnic groups were influenced by the natural landscape of the Deliblato Sands and they punctually mixed up features of the local landscape with other imaginary landscapes, like general Christian motifs and particular national elements, to create their distinct sacred landscape.

Finally, the comparative analysis of the sacred topography of the village of Deliblato through history supports the hypothesis that the cultural and natural landscape are inseparable. It was shown that the sacred places of this settlement blended with the natural landscape and became important landmarks in the ecosystem. Specifically, the Serbian Orthodox church, which belonged to both denominations until the separation of the Serbian and Romanian Christian Orthodox communities in the Habsburg Monarchy, has fused and become a feature of the landscape, due to its outstanding position, on the hill above the lake.

References:

- Bacci, M. (2009). *San Nicola: Il grande taumaturgo* [Saint Nicholas: The great miracle worker]. Laterza.
- Bacci, M. (2017). Materiality and liminality: Nonmimetic evocations of Jerusalem along the Venetian sea routes to the Holy Land. In Bartal, R., Bodner, N. & Kuhnel B. (Eds), *Natural Materials of the Holy Land and the Visual Translation of Place, 500-1500* (pp. 127–153). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315210315>
- Bacci, M. (2023). On the spatialization of the sacred in Caucasian cultures. In Bacci, M., Chitishvili, N., Grigoryan, G. Kaffenberger, T. Studer-Karlen, M. & Šćepanović, V. (Eds), *Approaches to Sacred Space(s) in Medieval Subcaucasian Cultures* (pp. 5–62). “Convivia” IV. Masaryk University Press.
- Bataveljić, O. (1964). Crkva u Deliblato [The church in Deliblato], *Zbornik Narodnog muzeja, IV*, 395–298. (Cyrillic)
- Campopiano, M. (2025). *Storia dell'ambiente nel Medioevo: Natura, società, cultura* [The story of the environment in the Middle Ages: Nature, society, culture]. Carocci.
- Carta, F., Michetti, R., & Noce, C. (2024). *Sacra Silva: Bosco e religione tra tarda antichità e medioevo* [Sacred forest: Forest and religion between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages]. Viella.
- Cenoz, J. & Gorter, D. (2006). Linguistic landscape and minority languages. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 3(1), 67–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790710608668386>
- Christian, W. (1972). *Person and God in a Spanish valley*. University Press.
- Cosgrove, D. (2003). Landscape and the European sense of sight – Eying nature. In Anderson, K., Domosh, M., Pile, S. & Thrift, N. (Eds), *The Handbook of Cultural Geography* (pp. 249–268). London: Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781848608252.n17>
- Ćuk, M., Ilić, M., Igić, R., Šikuljak, T., Vukov, D. & Čarni, A. (2019). Classification and diversity of perennial sand-dune vegetation in Serbia. *Archives of Biological Sciences*, 71(4), 647–653. <https://doi.org/10.2298/ABS190717047C>
- Ćuk, M., Ponjarac, R., Igić, D., Ilić, M., Oldja, M., Vukov, D. & Čarni, A. (2023). Historical overview of the Deliblato sands afforestation. *Šumarski list*, 7–8, 383–392. <https://doi.org/10.31298/sl.147.7-8.7>
- Čolović, I. (1983). *Književnost na groblju: Zbirka novih epitafa* [Literature in the graveyard: Collections of new epitaphs]. Beograd: Narodna knjiga.
- Della Dora, V. (2016). *Landscape, nature, and the sacred in Byzantium*. Cambridge University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316488386>

- Descola, Ph. (2013). *Beyond nature and culture*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Djuvara, N. (2014). *A brief illustrated history of Romanians*. Humanitas.
- Đurić Milovanović, A. & Măran, M. (2019). *Biserica ortodoxă română din Banatul iugoslav în perioada interbelică (1918-1941)* [The Romanian Orthodox Church from the Serbian Banat in the Interwar Period]. Presa universitară clujeană; Editura Episcopiei Caransebeşului.
- Erdeljan, J. (2017). *Chosen places: Constructing new Jerusalems in Slavia Orthodoxa*. Brill.
- Erdeljanović, J. (2013). *Srbi u Banatu* [The Serbs in the Banat]. Istorijiski arhiv. (Cyrillic)
- Fenner, J., Sorescu-Marinković, A. & Salamurović, A. (forthcoming). Silent Echoes: Romanian Language Varieties in the Rural Cemeteries of Serbian Banat. In Bopp-Filimonov, V. & Sorescu-Marinković, A. (Eds), *Linguistic and Semiotic Landscapes of Southeast European Border Regions*. Peter Lang.
- Filippucci, Paola. 2023. Landscape. In Stein, F. (Ed.), *The Open Encyclopedia of Anthropology* (pp. 1–12). Available at: <http://doi.org/10.29164/16landscape> (accessed: 15 May 2025).
- Gajić, M. (Ed.). (1983). *Flora Deliblatske peščare* [The Flora of the Deliblato Sands]. Prirodno-matematički fakultet Univerziteta u Novom Sadu, OOUR Institut za biologiju, Šumsko-industrijski kombinat “Pančevo”, OOUR Specijalni prirodni rezervat “Deliblatski pesak”.
- Geary, P. (1978), *Furta sacra: Thefts of relics in the Central Middle Ages*. Princeton University Press.
- Giurescu, C. (2007 [1935]). *Istoria românilor* [The history of the Romanians]. Editura All.
- Hirsch, E. (1995). Landscape: Between place and space. In Hirsch, E. & O’Hanlon, M. (Eds), *Anthropological studies of landscape: perspectives on space and place* (pp. 1–30). Oxford: Clarendon Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198278801.003.0001>
- Holmes, M. (2018). Reproducing the sacred likeness in early modern Italy. In Heisterberg, M., Müller-Bechtel, S. & Putzger, A. (Eds), *Nichts Neues Schaffen. Perspektiven auf die treue Kopie, 1300-1900/ Creating Nothing New: Perspectives on the ‘Faithful Copy’ 1300-1900* (pp. 27–44). De Gruyter. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110431148-003>
- Horton, L. (1989). Messages in stone: Symbolism on Victorian grave markers. *The Palimpsest*, 70(2), 62–72.
- Ilić Mandić, J. (2020). *Banatska vojna krajina (1764–1800)* [Banat military frontier (1764–1800)]. Istorijiski institut. (Cyrillic)
- Ilić Mandić, J. (2022). The military frontier and emigration challenges in the 18th century. In Brzozowska, Z., Kręzel, P. & Lis-Wielgosz, I. (Eds), *Migrations in the Slavic Cultural Space: From the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (pp. 45–62), Łódź University Press. <https://doi.org/10.18778/8331-033-6.04>
- Iorga, N. (1904). *Ştefan-cel-mare şi Mihai-Viteazul: Ca întemeietorii bisericii Românilor din Ardeal* [Stephan the Great and Michael the Brave: Founders of the church of Romanians in Transylvania]. Minerva.

- Iorga, N. (1968). *Istoria lui Mihai Viteazul* [The history of Michael the Brave]. Editura Militară.
- Kadović, R., Spasov, P., Ali Bohajar, Y. M., Belanović Simić, S., & Košanin, O. (2014). Analysis of aridity indicators in the Deliblato Sands. *Bulletin of the Faculty of Forestry*, 109, 97–112. <https://doi.org/10.2298/GSF1409097K>
- Kalinić, A., Bjadov, I., Obratov-Petković, D., & Tomićević-Dubljević, J. (2020). Invasive plants as a factor of floristic diversity degradation in Deliblato sands SNR. *Glasnik Sumarskog fakulteta*, 121, 27–46. <https://doi.org/10.2298/GSF2021027K>
- Kaán, K. (1914). *A természetvédelem és a természeti emlékek fentartásának kérdéséhez* [On the issue of nature conservation and the preservation of natural monuments]. Pallas Részvénytársaság Nyomdája.
- Kostić, M. (2007). *Jakov Orfelin i njegovo doba* [Jakov Orfelin and his time]. Novi Sad: Galerija Matice Srpske. (Cyrillic)
- Krstić, A., (2022a). The emergence of “Sırf Vilâyeti”: Serbian migrations to the territory of Banat by the mid-16th century and their Results. In Brzozowska, Z. A., Kręzel, P. & Lis-Wielgosz, I. (Eds), *Migrations in the Slavic Cultural Space. From the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (pp. 95–111). Łódź University Press.
- Krstić, A. (2022b). Srbi u Banatu tokom 15. i 16. veka: Istoriografski rezultati i mogućnosti za dalja istraživanja [The Serbs in the Banat during the 15th and 16th centuries: Historiographical results and possibilities of further research]. *Glasnik Attendite*, 18, 49–60. (Cyrillic)
- Laforêt, A. (2022). ‘Eve was a fruitless willow’: Botanical properties and spiritual dimension of an ambiguous tree. In Lamsechi, G. & Trınca, B. (Eds), *Spiritual Vegetation: Vegetal Nature in Religious Contexts across Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (pp. 49–70). Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. <https://doi.org/10.14220/9783737014267.49>
- Lidov, A. (Ed.) (2006). *Hierotopy: Creation of sacred spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*. Moscow: Progress-tradition.
- Lidov, A. (2014). Creating the sacred space: Hierotopy as a new field of cultural history. In Carnevale, L. & Cremonesi, C. (Eds), *Spazi e percorsi sacri: I santuari, le vie, i corpi* [Sacred spaces and routes: Sanctuaries, roads, bodies] (pp. 61–89). Limena: Libreriauniversitaria.it Edizioni.
- Maddrell, A., Della Dora, V., Scafi, A., & Walton, H. (Eds) (2015). *Christian pilgrimage, landscape and heritage: Journeying to the sacred*. Routledge.
- Maher, B., Polezzi, L., & Wilson, R. (Eds) (2025). *The Routledge handbook of translation and migration*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003287797>
- Marković, R., Perić, Z., Gavrilov, M., Marković, S., Vandenberghe, J., Schaetzel, R., et al. (2024). Aeolian dynamics at the northern edge of Deliblato (Banat) Sand Sea, Vojvodina, Serbia, at the time of the last deglaciation. *Quaternary Research*, 121, 59–72. <https://doi.org/10.1017/qua.2024.13>
- Maticki, M., & Jović, V. (Eds) (2010). *Banat kroz vekove: Slojevi kultura Banata* [Banat through the Centuries: Layers of Banat cultures]. Vukova zadužbina. (Cyrillic).
- Medaković, D. (1968). *Srpski slikari XVIII-XX veka. Likovi i dela* [Serbian Painters of the 18th–20th

- Centuries. Persons and Works]. Matica Srpska. (Cyrillic)
- Meza, V. (2022). *Deliblato: Tragovi prošlosti* [Deliblato. Traces of the past]. Centar za banatske studije.
- Miller, P. C. (2000). 'The Little Blue Flower is Red'. Relics and the Poetizing of the Body. *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 8(2), 213–236. <https://doi.org/10.1353/earl.2000.0030>
- Papasidero, M. (2019). *Translatio sanctitatis: I furti di reliquie nell'Italia medievale* [Translatio sanctitatis: Thefts of Relics in Medieval Italy]. Firenze University Press. <https://doi.org/10.36253/978-88-6453-943-0>
- Papasidero, M. (2025). *Thefts of relics in Italy. From Late Antiquity to the Central Middle Ages, 300-1150*. Amsterdam University Press. <https://doi.org/10.5117/9789463723879>
- Popi, G. (1993). *Românii din Banatul Sârbesc* [The Romanians in the Serbian Banat]. Libertatea.
- Popović, D. (2008). Cvetna simbolika i kult relikvija u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji [Floral symbolism and the cult of the relics in Medieval Serbia]. *Zograf*, 32, 69–79. (Cyrillic)
- Popović, D. (2009). Desert as heavenly Jerusalem: The imagery of a sacred space in the making. In Lidov, A. (Ed.), *New Jerusalems. Hierotopy and Iconography of Sacred Spaces* (pp. 151–175). Indrik.
- Popović, D. (2024). The landscape of the monastic endeavour: The choices of St Sava of Serbia. *Balkanica*, LV, 99–122. <https://doi.org/10.2298/BALC2455099P>
- Popović, Z., Smiljanić, M., Kostić, M., Nikić, P., & Janković, S. (2014). Wild flora and its usage in traditional phytotherapy (Deliblato Sands, Serbia, South East Europe). *Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge*, 13(1), 9–35.
- Rakić, Z. (1998). *Radul, srpski slikar XVII veka* [Radul, Serbian Painter of the 17th Century]. Novi Sad: Galerija Matice srpske. (Cyrillic)
- Sedlak, M. (2019). Afforestation as a factor of physically geographical changing: A case study of Deliblato Sand. *Collection of Papers – Faculty of Geography at the University of Belgrade*, 67(1), 45–59.
- Stanković, S. (2020). *Worldness behind the Cemetery: Stories of Absent Germans and Jews in the Former Habsburg Borderland*. PhD thesis. Available at: <https://edoc.hu-berlin.de/items/d8bdf0df-e94f-4705-b3cf-995d01fd76e3> (accessed: 15 May 2025). <https://doi.org/10.18452/27371>
- Stojančević, V. (Ed.) (1981). *Istorija srpskog naroda V-2* [The history of the Serbian People V-2]. Srpska književna zadruga. (Cyrillic)
- Stojanović, T., Trišić, I, Brđanin, E., Štetić, S., Nechita, F., & Candrea, A. N. (2024). Natural and sociocultural values of a tourism destination in the function of sustainable tourism development: An example of a protected area. *Sustainability*, 16, 759. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16020759>
- Sorescu-Marinković, A. (2021). Jezički pejzaž banatskog rumunskog groblja: Epitafi, priče o identitetu [The linguistic landscape of Banat Romanian cemeteries: The epitaphs, identity stories]. *Acta Pannonica*, 2, 53–69. (Cyrillic)
- Sorescu-Marinković, A. & Salamurović, A. (2022). The rural linguistic landscape of Banat. *Eastern European Countryside*, 28(1), 51–79. <https://doi.org/10.12775/eec.2022.003>

- Stankević, P. & Pavićević, N. (1963). *Deliblatski pesak: sastav – osobine – problematika* [The Deliblato Sand: Composition – Characteristics – Problematics]. Institut za šumarstvo i drvnu industriju SR Srbije.
- Tatić-Đurić, M. (1985). Bogorodica Vladimirska [Mother of God of Vladimir]. *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti Matice Srpske*, 21, 29–50. (Cyrillic)
- Tilley, C. & Cameron-Daum, K. (2017). *Anthropology of landscape: The extraordinary in the ordinary*. UCL Press. <https://doi.org/10.14324/111.9781911307433>
- Timotijević, M. (2003). Bogorodica bezdinska i versko-politički program patrijarha Arsenija IV Jovanovića [Holy Virgin of Bezdin and religious and political program of Patriarch Arsenije IV Jovanović]. *Balkanica*, XXXII-XXXIII, 311–346. <https://doi.org/10.2298/BALC0233297C>
- Todić, B. (2013). *Srpski slikari od XIV do XVIII veka* [Serbian painters from the 14th to the 18th centuries]. Platoneum. (Cyrillic)
- Trišić, I., Štetić, S., Maksin, M. & Blešić, I. (2021). Perception and satisfaction of residents with the impact of the protected area on sustainable tourism: The Case of Deliblatska Peščara special nature reserve, Serbia. *Geographica Pannonica*, 25(4), 317–325. <https://doi.org/10.5937/gp25-33196>
- VanDam, K. (2008). Dutch-American language shift: Evidence from the grave, *LACUS Forum*, 34, 31–40.
- Vlăsceanu, M. (2023). Rethinking tradition and individualism as key traits of Jacov Orfelin's Style: A case study on iconostasis painting in the historical Banat. *Ishodišta*, 9(1), 391–407. <https://doi.org/10.46630/ish.9.2023.26>
- Walsham, A. (2012). Sacred topography and social memory: Religious change and the landscape in early modern Britain and Ireland. *Journal of Religious History*, 36(1), 31–51. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9809.2011.01154.x>
- Živković, V. (2010). Kult svetog Nikole u religijskoj praksi Kotora XIV–XVI vek [The cult of St. Nicholas in the religious practice of Kotor, 14th–16th centuries]. In Martinović, J. (ed.), *Dvanaest vjekova Bokeljske mornarice* [Twelve centuries of the Boka Navy] (pp. 95–102). Bokeljska mornarica Kotor.
- Živković, V. (2020). *Legati pro anima. Testamenti Kotorana 1326–1337* [Legacies pro anima. The Wills of the Citizens of Kotor 1326–1337]. Beograd: Balkanološki institut. (Cyrillic)

Acknowledgements

We want to express our deepest gratitude to Vera Meza, author of the only monograph about Deliblato and a former schoolteacher in the village, who selflessly provided us with invaluable information every time we visited Deliblato and made us feel at home. We also want to thank schoolteacher Stojanka Kolarski, who guided us through the local cemetery and answered all our questions, Romanian Orthodox priest Emanuel Veveriță and Serbian Orthodox priest Zoran Jovanov, who opened the doors of their churches and homes to us.

FRAGILE STRUCTURES OF ATTACHMENT IN CARMEN FIRAN'S *THE LOST SHADOW*¹

Adriana Elena STOICAN

Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania

e-mail: elena.stoican@rei.ase.ro

Abstract

Relying on an interdisciplinary approach that blends Jungian criticism and cultural studies, this paper aims to analyze the Romanian writer's drama, registered through the double filter of exile (Aciman, 2000; Hirsch, 1996; Hoffman, 2000; Manea, 2012) and transnational approaches to literature and identity (Basch et al., 2003; Jay, 2021; Schultersmandl, 2021; Vertovec, 2009), as illustrated in the recent novel *Umbra pierdută* (2018) by Carmen Firan². This book presents the evolution of a Romanian couple, Fred (a successful writer) and Mimi (an ambitious ballerina), relocated from communist Romania to France and eventually to the United States of America, where they are shaped differently by the values of the host country. Considering the fact that Firan settled in New York after 1989, when migration to the West was no longer prohibited, the paper aims to establish whether this novel, (first published in Romanian), advances a nostalgic perspective or a deterritorialized notion of the migrant's identity, filtered through the dilemma of the deracinated writer. The discussion investigates the fragmentation of Fred's subjectivity, an uprooted individual, divided by opposing forces that gradually consume him: on the one hand, the character acutely needs to express himself in Romanian, on the other hand, he is tragically constrained by the ideology of the American Dream and the logic of the market (Cullen, 2003). While Mimi is fascinated by American consumerist values, Fred seems to retreat more and more into an inner silence, a tangled thicket of feelings: nostalgia, guilt, fear, alienation. How can one interpret the character's withdrawal into a space devoid of creative urges, as opposed to his prolific writing before emigration? In order to decipher the valences of Fred's entrapment, the paper discusses his psychological decline through the grid of Jungian archetypes, especially persona and the shadow, whose connotations may serve to uncover the impact of exile on Fred's creative potential. Comparing the two protagonists' different reactions to the American realities, the discussion aims to answer a series of questions related to the status of Romanian literature and identity in the competitive context of American global capitalism. Can Fred's silence and flight be considered mechanisms of survival, resistance, or do they represent his unwillingness/inability to accept American consumerist ideologies? Can we say that *The Lost Shadow* outlines a diasporic or a transnational perspective on a Romanian (albeit fictional) case of transatlantic relocation? How does Carmen Firan, a writer coming from a minor culture, situate herself in the world republic of letters (Casanova, 2004) through her fictional heroes: through differentiation or assimilation?

Keywords: assimilation; diaspora; differentiation; exile; persona; shadow; transnationalism.

¹ Article History: Received: 31.12.2026. Accepted: 20.02.2026. Published: 15.05.2026. No funding was received either for the research presented in the article or for the creation of the article.

² In this paper, I have used the English translation of the novel, *The Lost Shadow*, published in 2022.

1. Introduction

The present article starts from the relevance of contemporary fiction written in Romanian by authors embedded in a transnational context. Carmen Firan is an example of an author who chose to settle in the United States in the early 2000's, enjoying the benefits of unrestricted mobility between the country of birth and her new home in New York. This paper considers Firan's novel *Umbra pierdută*, first published in Romanian at Polirom Publishing house (2018), and subsequently translated into English as *The Lost Shadow* (2022). Its recent publication accounts for the relatively reduced body of literary criticism, fact that leaves room for novel interpretations. For example, Pavnotescu (2024) builds a comparative perspective between Firan's *The Lost Shadow* and Mihai Eminescu's *Sărmanul Dionis* [Poor Dyonisus], analysing the shadow symbolism, while not considering the context of exile. Florin-Corneliu Popovici's critical essay (n.d.) situates the novel within literature of exile discussing its main themes, but without sufficiently developing the significance of the shadow. Relying on a cognitive-semiotic (semantic) paradigm, Moraru's study (2022) focuses on conceptual metaphors in the novel, highlighting how Fred's emotions, as an immigrant and a (previously accomplished) writer, reflect profound estrangement.

2. Theoretical Background and Methodology

Therefore, aiming for a new angle of interpretation, the present approach analyzes the *The Lost Shadow* considering both the implications of the characters exile/transnationalism and the shadow symbolism from a Jungian perspective, while correlating these aspects with Firan's own reflections from recent interviews³. At the same time, the thematic aspect of this novel renders it very suitable for discussing the status of contemporary Romanian literature in the world republic of letters (Casanova, 2004). The analysis operates with a close reading of the text, coupled with a body of theories that connect mobility across borders with transnational identity and literature of migration. In order to decipher Fred's complicated affiliations, the present argument blends theories regarding the writer's condition in exile (Aciman, 2000; Hoffman, 2000; Manea, 2012) shaped by facets of nostalgia (Boym, 2002; Hirsch and Miller, 2011). Another theoretical layer considers the main coordinates of transnationality (Basch et al, 2003; Vertovec, 2009) in relation to features of transnational literature (Jay, 2021; Schultersmandl, 2021).

The Lost Shadow presents the trajectory of a Romanian immigrant couple— Fred, a successful writer in communist times, and Mimi—a goal-oriented ballerina determined to turn her emigration into a success story. After their separate departure from Romania, the two characters meet in Paris, and they continue their journey to America as a married couple. *The Lost Shadow* presents the unfolding of their lives in New York in an interval that historically overlaps with the fall of the communist regime in Romania. Therefore, the timeframe of their lives as immigrants grasps the transition from an exilic context that denies all possibilities of homecoming to a transnational regime that facilitates free travel. Considering Firan's own voluntary relocation and her fictional scenarios of Romanian immigration before and after 1989, the paper aims to establish the type of discourse(s) that seem supported by the novel: do the characters' identification illustrate an embrace of a transnational perspective that privileges a regime of multiple attachments or do their stories suggest an intersection with exilic nostalgia? Since the title of the novel is mostly connected with Fred's struggle to find his voice as a writer, the analysis focuses on this character, aiming to clarify the connotations of the

³ All the cited interviews are published in Romanian, and this paper uses my translations.

shadow in relation to his symbolic silence and psychological decline. To this end, the discussion also considers Mimi's antipodal evolution, foregrounding how it is processed by Fred's different system of values. Last but not least, an important research question is whether the novel illustrates the dilemma of a writer coming from a minor culture, by forging strategies of assimilation/differentiation (Casanova 2004, p. 179).

3. Fred and Mimi: Antipodal Reactions to the American world

The dynamics of the Mimi-Fred couple signals a strong opposition, a sense of duality that constructs antithesis as an underlying trope of *The Lost Shadow*. The idea of contrasting responses to the American environment is suggested from the very day of their arrival in New York. As they leave the airport, Mimi's and Fred's dissimilar postures anticipate their antagonistic evolution in the Big Apple: "While Fred sank in the back, Mimi's neck strained with curiosity. He grew *smaller* as she grew *taller*, as if they had both sipped from a miraculous drink that caused opposite effects" (Firan, 2022, p. 47) [emphasis added]. Therefore, Fred's pose expresses a sense of resignation and apprehension, while Mimi's embodies her confidence in the potential of the New World to fulfill her dreams. Mimi is determined to embrace the opportunities she expects from migration to America: "I want to make it. That's all. It doesn't matter how or in what field. I'm ready!" (Firan, 2022, p. 98) or "I struggled to get here and I won't let this good fortune go away. I'll be someone, mark my words." Mimi threatened him with her playful eyes, tearing up with ambition" (Firan, 2022, p. 46). Mimi's confidence in her future success reveals her trust in a version of the American dream that provides access to "upward mobility, a dream typically understood in terms of economic and/or social advancement" (Cullen, 2003, p. 80). Mimi's spectacular evolution demonstrates that she knows how to speculate the opportunities embedded in the American dream; starting from a humble position as a cosmetician, she becomes a successful entrepreneur (she starts her own beauty clinic *Mimosa* using Romanian ingredients such as Gerovital medicines, royal jelly, propolis and mud from a famous Romanian lake, Techirghiol). While Mimi's dazzling ascension is not the focus of this paper, the impact of her metamorphosis on Fred is relevant for understanding his frame of mind.

Although Fred enjoys the material benefits resulted from his wife's businesses, his reflections regarding her transformation express skepticism regarding the American strategies of acquiring success. More specifically, he regards Mimi's entrepreneurial triumph as an element that diminishes her femininity:

She went weekly to the Himalaya Center, where all sorts of people initiated in happiness and expert in matters of the soul strengthened her *self-esteem* and *confidence*, preparing her for *success* and *immortality*. She came home like a bomb of *energy and positivity*; which Fred couldn't run away from [...] She would stack three or four bricks atop each other on a chair, take some steps back, and hurling herself with a *warlike* cry, break them in two. Then she'd triumphantly show her arms to Fred, *her muscles still flexed* (Firan, 2022, p. 213) [emphasis added].

In the American context, Mimi's quest for success is perceived as imbued with aggressivity, the necessary tool that consolidates Mimi self-assurance and helps her navigate through the entrepreneurial jungle. However, while these instruments are definitely useful for Mimi's business career, they are considered a threat to the type of femininity appreciated by Fred, that his wife once possessed: "In the old days, he had also taught her how to defend her vulnerabilities and hide her strength. *A way to save her femininity* [...]. Their bedroom looked like a *battlefield* now. Weights, fitness balls, exercise bands and bricks" (Firan, 2022, pp. 215-

6) [emphasis added]. Fred experiences similar feelings as he observes his psychiatrist's secretary whose sad and resigned air triggers his ruminations regarding different versions of femininity. On the one hand, he cherishes his mother's ideal of "distinguished, healthy and elegant" womanhood (Firan, 2022, p. 2). On the other hand, the women he notices in the New York subway are associated with lack of sophistication and coquetry, attributes that Fred directly correlates with the American model considered to promote comfort over style: "Comfort has become a collective ideal, and it has never been better achieved than in America [...] Today no one cares any longer about style and how they look; femininity and elegance disappeared with the older generation" (Firan, 2022, p. 2).

By presenting the contorted dynamics of this couple when transplanted into the American soil, Firan may imply that migration is the trigger of identity changes that reverse and undermine the traditional approach to the male and female gender roles. Patriarchal gender frameworks are grounded in a binary logic that aligns men with the public sphere and women with the private domain (Ganser, 2009; Cattán, 2008; Creswell & Uteng, 2008). This division has also been theorized as a spatial-temporal opposition, in which masculinity is associated with time, movement, and progress, while femininity is linked to space, stasis, and immobility (Fay, 2008; Massey, 2001). Women's confinement to the domestic sphere thus functions as a mechanism of subordination through restricted mobility (Ganser, 2009). Conversely, access to mobility enables women to challenge patriarchal norms by developing new forms of subjectivity, destabilizing hegemonic discourses, and achieving greater social and sexual autonomy (Creswell & Uteng, 2008; Ganser, 2009; Kronlid, 2008). Considering these reflections, the next part of the paper aims to establish how *The Lost Shadow* configures the relation between mobility and gender, the public and private spheres in the context of migration.

Once Mimi becomes involved in her business routines, we notice a reverse of the traditional discourse in the sense that Fred appears (voluntarily) attached to the private space, while Mimi is in the city every day:

Fred spent his life mostly *in the apartment, and Mimi outside of it*. Sometimes he felt like a prisoner, sometimes a master in that space that he had gotten used to and had even come to like, but which lacked something to make him feel at home (Firan, 2022, p. 201) [emphasis added].

Mimi claims that her efforts to become financially strong are also justified by her intention to enable Fred to write freely, unburdened by quotidian worries. In a sense, she takes over the role of the provider, traditionally associated with hegemonic masculinity, i.e., "being a breadwinner, taking risks" (Urdea, 2020, pp. 273-275). Discussing this process in Jungian terms, it seems that Mimi's enthusiastic pursuit of the American dream has a magnifying effect on her animus, the male image in her psyche (Cherry, 2024). If we couple this fact with Fred's perception of Mimi's transformation, it becomes clear that her alignment with the norms of American success is regarded as a process of masculinisation, which intimidates Fred. Overwhelmed by his wife's dynamism, Fred falls into a passive stance, which is interrupted only when Mimi has an accident that literally confines her to bed. It is only during this interval that Fred seems able to restore his fading (traditional) masculinity, becoming very active both at home and outside it:

Paradoxically, Fred was doing well. He was writing several hours a day while Mimi watched TV, read magazines or slept. He went grocery shopping, vacuumed, helped her wash dishes; he had suddenly become very busy and full of responsibilities, but still was inspired and in good spirits, strong and in control (Firan, 2022, pp. 158-159)

How can one account for Fred's revival in the context of Mimi's ebbing energy? Could it be just a coincidence or does his sudden transformation encode a more elaborate message about his reaction to Mimi's Americanisation? I would argue that Mimi's fast adherence to the conventions of the American business world is perceived as an aggressive change that seems to erode her femininity, while diluting Fred's own masculinity. Therefore, this fact partially explains why Fred cannot act, as he feels totally eclipsed by Mimi's entrepreneurial crusade. However, I consider that another justification for Fred's apathy in New York is represented by his incompatibility with certain norms of the American society that Mimi can manipulate in order to reach her goals, while he considers them unacceptable.

For example, Fred is critical of the American consumerist apparatus, associated with "American cultural control" (Stearns, 2001, p. 72), which creates fake needs by encouraging material accumulation via manipulating strategies used in advertising (Ljubičić & Vukasović, 2023; Michalak & Stypiński, 2023). For example, he condemns the American advertising industry for persuading consumers to purchase unhealthy food (macaroni and cheese) by idealizing the product as a guarantor of happiness:

One day he had come across a site on the Internet promoting a sort of food that was found to cure loneliness and depression: macaroni with cheese. Beneath a dish with yellowish pasta covered in butter, there were calls by *nutritionists and psychiatrists* enlisted by the advertising agency saying that macaroni with cheese makes you happy. *Fat and happy*. They'd even found out that thin people get depressed more easily than the overweight who are jovial and content, encouraged to be comfortable with their own bodies, free from any sort of complex. Consumption must be encouraged at any cost; a *joyful and prosperous society, in which pathological consumption combats the pathologies of the mind* (Firan, 2022, p. 39) [emphasis added].

This passage clearly illustrates the perceived complicity between the advertising industry and the scientific community, in this case, nutritionists and psychiatrists, whose expertise is relied upon in order to create persuasion by invoking the "rule of authority" (Michalak & Stypiński, 2023, p. 198). At the same time, by associating food with the ability to make one happy, the advertising message works with the principle of idealization where a product is presented in a manner that "that overrates its advantages and minimises its disadvantages" (Michalak & Stypiński, 2023, p. 201). Moreover, by apparently focusing on consumers' well-being, the ad clearly targets an emotional level, meant to further encourage one's decision to purchase. Fred's perceptive mind is sensitive to the bitter irony of the discourse that implicitly associates the unhealthy condition of being overweight with the psychological state of contentment. Along similar lines, another ad glorifies the therapeutic value of shopping, that is again supported by the authority of scientific arguments: "a Harvard professor with a gray beard and a white coat pompously confirmed the benefits of shopping for one's self-esteem and its positive influence on curing any sort of psychosis" (Firan, 2022, pp. 39-40). The complicity thus created between the American advertising industry and representatives of prestigious academic institutions is not exculpated by Fred. This nuance is also indicated by the manner adverbial "pompously", which undermines the reliability of the academic source of authority. These two examples illustrate the existence of a clash between Fred's ethical principles and the incongruities disseminated by the American advertising apparatus, in the name of capitalist consumption. Moreover, Fred's life in communist Romania has made him especially sensitive to mechanisms of propaganda, manipulation and censorship; hence, finding them operating in the Free World comes as a shock that hinders his adaptation:

People here aren't alert; they trust authority. And they're perfectly manipulated by mass media. Quiet and obedient. Commercials work like a virus. We were suspicious in Communist Romania; we detected, but tried to ignore any form of *propaganda* to stay sane. Here propaganda, it's called *promotion*, the difference being that it doesn't target the political, but relies on the commercial spheres. *One censorship replaced by another* (Firan, 2022, pp. 75-76) [emphasis added].

Therefore, the perceived American conformity shaped by consumerist ideologies is a notion rejected by Fred, who seems appalled by the possibility of having his freedom endangered by any form of censorship. Therefore, the character's understanding reframes the ideal of autonomy afforded by migration to the West into as a grand sense of disappointment (Elvireanu, 2017, p. 138). Fred's anguish is further aggravated as he registers Mimi's compliance with American norms of success:

Mimi's obsession was also to laugh as much as possible, as often as possible; she'd learned all the rules of this New World. She was crazy about *having fun*, chasing a poster of happiness and getting ready for never-ending youth. She liked jokes and jests, *superficial society* where all show off their teeth and ask each other exasperatedly how they're doing, only to have a chance to answer that they're doing great (Firan, 2022, p. 82) [emphasis added]

Fred perceives Mimi's exuberance as a strategy of entrepreneurial ascension that relies on her ability to emulate the behaviour of successful Americans. Her ostentatious manifestation of happiness is supposed to indicate her compliance with the norms of the consumerist paradise, where the act of consumption guarantees individuals' sense of hedonism and utilitarianism (Scarpi, 2020, p. 16). At the same time, her voluntary involvement in superfluous relations indicates her adherence to the neoliberal discourse that privileges "homo economicus – the view that people are isolated individuals whose actions reflect mostly their material self-interests" (Manfred & Roy, 2010, p. 3). Moreover, the idea of perfunctory human bonds indicates another implication of the capitalist competition that turns people into "self-interest actors responsible to the market" (Manfred & Roy, 2010, p. 12), who lose their ability to forge meaningful relationships. Mimi's ability to succeed as a woman in the American business world does indeed require her fruitful cultivation of neoliberal entrepreneurial values such as competitiveness, self-interest and individual empowerment (Manfred and Roy, 2010, p. 12). However, from Fred's perspective, Mimi's successful career is considered the result of a hypocritical endeavour, supported by endless compromises. Thus, she manages to extend her business, opening the second beauty clinic, *Mimosa II*, by glorifying the miraculous powers of Romanian ingredients that are guaranteed to maintain eternal youth:

'The body has to keep up with the soul', she decreed, citing the publicity slogan of the *Mimosa* salons. '*The business of plastic surgery will go bankrupt*,' she foretold at the end of the article. [...] But she had gotten silicon breasts and injected Botox. These didn't impede her from adopting the *Pharisaical attitude of the American advertising industry*. To pretend means more than to be. A world that exists in images and appearances. What could be more convincing? (Firan, 2022, pp. 237-238) [emphasis added]

In order to succeed, Mimi appropriates the manipulative strategies of the American advertising, making fake promises to potential consumers. Her duality is suggested by the fact that she does not rely on the advertised products to maintain her looks but secretly resorts to the plastic surgery that she publicly condemns. Discussed in Jungian terms, one may say that Mimi's behaviour illustrates her ability to create a strong persona for the American world, the mask she chooses to wear in order to deal with the realities of the new context. From a philosophical

standpoint, the Jungian tension between the persona—understood as the “mask of the soul”—and the shadow, conceived as a form of counter-persona, corresponds to a dialectical opposition between appearance and essence, or, in existential terms, to the distinction between inauthenticity and authenticity (Bolea, 2016, p. 84). It follows that Mimi conceals her authentic self and adopts the strategy of falseness in order to create a space for herself in New York. Fred’s reflections regarding her transformation register the artificiality of her behaviour and clearly express his disapproval of this strategy.

As a deracinated writer in the United States, Fred himself must face the capitalist logic of the market that seems to govern the publishing industry, as well. Pressured by Mimi, Fred attempts to understand the mechanisms of writerly success in America and hence he agrees to seek advice from a prosperous Romanian writer in New York, Sebastian. To Fred’s disappointment, Sebastian praises the virtues of American capitalism that provides opportunities for success as long as one is willing to accept its values:

‘Why not go into a system that works instead of lamenting from the outside? After you answer the simple questions: What do I want to be, where do I want to go? It’s good to study the rules of the world you’ve entered. *A world built for champions*. The mechanisms of success are set. But it’s not all about accessing them; you also have to accept them afterward. You know how it is. The result is worth it even if you have to *anesthetize your conscience*. Are we talking about compromise? No, about *adaptation*. *A-dap-ta-tion*,’ Seby whispered bluntly, lowering his voice as if he’d just told him the greatest secret (Firan, 2022, p. 136) [emphasis added].

When Sebastian talks about Fred’s adaptation, he actually implies that Fred should accept the underlying values of American capitalism such as possessive individualism, economic power and inequality of possession (Weinberg, 2003, pp. 4-8). The premise of Sebastian’s discourse is that the condition of becoming a successful writer may contain elements that Fred may disapprove of. This fact is suggested by Sebastian’s allusion to Fred’s necessity to freeze his moral system as the price for becoming a visible presence in the American literary space. According to capitalist logic, human beings are motivated exclusively by “self-interest [...] not by social obligations, moral commitments or altruism” (Edsforth, 2012, p. 4). Therefore, if he were to act according to these values, Fred should publish his book at any costs, even if they involve the alteration of the manuscript according to the editors’ demands: “Only you know how it is, the book will sound more like *what my editor will want* than how I’d write it” (Firan, 2022, p. 135) [emphasis added]. Therefore, compromise seems to be the most important ingredient for artistic success, which is also confirmed by old Anita, a Romanian visual artist who has tasted glory in America. This woman deconstructs Fred idealistic expectations, as she shares Sebastian’s tactics of sacrificing the authenticity of a creator’s voice to the demands of the market:

‘*What freedom?* Just wait till you get an agent, and then an editor. They’ll teach you how and what to write. You either adopt the *formula for success that the market imposes* or you go play at home with crayons’ (Firan, 2022, p. 108) [emphasis added].

In her interviews, Carmen Firan also discusses the fine balance between opportunism, selfishness, failure and success, as conceived in America. Interestingly, she points out that in the cruel competition of America where everybody “bets on winning horses”⁴ (Giodea, 2022, 26:37, my translation) understanding opportunity is not something to blame (Giodea 2022,

⁴ Original source text: “pariază pe cai câștigători”

19:14), but a matter of adaptation. In order to become acknowledged, a writer has to be flexible enough and accept the editors' guidelines for producing success (Giodea 2022, 25:14). These principles also surface in *The Lost Shadow*, through Fred's predicament which is created by the tension between the desire for recognition and his unwillingness to accept "a success recipe"⁵ (Giodea, 2022, 24:29, my translation). As he consults with fellow Romanian artists in America, Fred draws the conclusion that in order to avoid failure, he has to succumb to the pressure of capitalist logic according to which "anything real or imagined can be constructed as a *commodity*" (Edsforth, 2012, p. 3) [original emphasis]. However, the price paid for turning his creations into profitable goods involves the acceptance of manuscript revision, which Fred resents:

Fred ran away, thinking about how much loss of energy, how much every book published under communism took out of him, with the political censorship on his heels. Yet he had never sold himself out to the censors, taking the risk of not being published in the end (Firan 2022, p. 136).

Well-acquainted with the mechanisms of communist control that he managed to defy, the deracinated writer is equally disturbed by the forces of capitalist authority that stifle his creativity in the name of market success. Even outside her fictional world, Carmen Firan is strongly aware of this paradox of the Free Word which provides opportunities for accomplishment, while exerting a double censorship, through the forces of the market and those of political correctness (Zeca Buzura, 2019, 8:22). Unlike Mimi, who swiftly adopts the capitalist logic of accumulation, Fred cannot prioritize the idea of market success, as it contradicts his belief in artistic freedom of expression. From a Jungian perspective, Fred's attitude reveals his refusal to construct a persona for the American context, more specifically, his rejection of a "compromise between individual and society as to what a man should appear to be" (Bolea, 2016, p. 4). At this point, we note the idea that the character's lack of persona is an indicator of his fragmented psyche. According to Jung, the psyche tends to become a harmonious whole, by maintaining a "a balance between opposing qualities while constantly striving for growth, a process Jung called *individuation*" ("The Jungian Model", n.d., np.) [original emphasis]. Fred's incapacity to build a persona as well as his obsession with the potential loss of the shadow will be further analyzed in relation to his deracination and inability to write in a foreign language.

4. Between Transnationality and Exile: The Inability to Create in a Foreign Language?

Fred illustrates a fictional example of an uprooted Romanian writer of the 20th century, who experiences the transition from a world of restricted mobility behind the Iron Curtain to a transnational regime of travel, made possible by the fall of communism in 1989. Considering the fragmented temporality of the novel, it becomes challenging to discuss Fred in terms of distinct categories, i.e. as an exiled and/or a transnational writer. Exile is associated with "geographical dislocation but also cultural and psychological uprootedness" (Zeng, 2010, p. 1), a sense of unmitigable loss, triggered by one's separation from homeland (Said, 2000, p. 173). The disconnection from one's native space appears to be the greatest source of distress, as implied by "the orthodox understanding of exile as political banishment enforced by a geopolitical state or regime" (Allatson & McCormack, 2008, p. 22), initially experienced by Fred and Mimi. However, considering that their story continues well after 1989, the characters are portrayed in transition from an exilic to a transnational regime that enforces their possibility

⁵ Original source text: "formulă de succes"

of homeland connection. Transnationalism describes a mode of belonging defined by multiple affiliations and sustained cross-border ties, enabled by the fluidity of contemporary mobility (Vertovec, 2009; Basch et al., 2003). Despite mobility's normalization, exile continues to be debated as a condition of displacement, with scholars arguing that it remains a significant lived and critical experience in the twenty-first century (Hoffmann, 2000; Allatson & McCormack, 2008). Accordingly, this paper examines *The Lost Shadow* as a potential work of transnational literature and an expression of exilic consciousness. Recent scholarship situates transnational literature within a historical moment marked by the increasing permeability of the nation-state under the intertwined forces of decolonization and globalization (Jay, 2021). Works in this field foreground experiences of migration, displacement, exile, and cultural hybridity, and circulate across multiple literary systems rather than belonging to a single national tradition (Jay, 2021; Walkowitz, 2006). Accordingly, transnational literary analysis attends to both transnational modes of production and circulation and the diverse racial, ethnic, and religious communities they engage. Echoing this view, Hoffman (2000) conceptualizes transnational literature as an expression of "new nomadism," (p. 27) defined by the dynamic interplay of multiple cultural references.

Certain thematic aspects of *The Lost Shadow* certainly illustrate these transnational concerns, enabling its inclusion into the wide family of the "literature of mobility" (Dagnino, 2012, p. 6) while other themes allude to the challenges of exile. Carmen Firan herself may be considered a transcultural writer, immersed in a regime of transnational mobility that transcends the traumatic divisions of exile (Dagnino, 2012, pp. 1-2): "[...] they [the transcultural writers] find themselves less and less trapped in the traditional migrant/exile syndrome and become more apt instead to embrace the opportunities and the freedom that diversity and mobility bestow upon them" (Dagnino, 2012, pp. 1-2). Firan's biographical background certainly supports this hypothesis, as she moves freely and frequently between the United States and Romania, enjoying her nomadic status. Firan considers herself an "open door emigrant"⁶ (Buciuta, 2022, 4:32, my translation), regarding contemporary emigration like a "hotel with open doors, where one arrives and leaves according to their disposition and, of course, financial status"⁷ (Giodea, 2022, 13:03-13:11, my translation). The metaphor of "fluid doors"⁸ (Giodea, 2023, 3:39, my translation) conveys the difference between an old notion of exile, before 1989 when the doors closed forever (Giodea 2022, 13:29) and the new condition of free travel that replaces exile's deracination with a choice to relocate (Zeca Buzura, 2019, 6:38). The idea of emigration as a controlled option seems to define Firan's understanding of her own transnational mobility (Zeca Buzura, 2019, 6:38) which she perceives as a condition devoid of nostalgia that affords repeated reconnection with Romania (Giodea, 2023, 4:09). At the same time, Firan's Romanian origins as well as her commitment to writing in her native language may also point to the lingering dilemma of writers from peripheral countries and their struggles to become visible within the international literary world (Casanova, 2004, pp. 20-21).

The centrality of the native language for the transplanted writer is an important topic for Carmen Firan. Thus, the author considers that for a writer, the process of emigration entails relocation to a different language (Giodea, 2022, 32:56), which she perceives as a frustrating circumstance. Having left Romania at a mature age, Firan considers English a foreign language (Giodea, 2023, 20:12), acquired late, in which she cannot properly render the nuances and the cultural complexity of the native tongue (Giodea, 2022, 30:56). Therefore, she argues that the native language is the most important dowry/ally (Branea, 2022), but also an impediment for a

⁶ Original source text: "emigrant cu ușile deschise"

⁷ Original source text: "emigrația e un hotel cu ușile la perete în care intri și pleci după pofta inimii și ... după pungă, bineînțeles."

⁸ Original source text: "ușile fluide"

displaced writer who aspires to become successful in a foreign language (Giodea, 2022, 17:03). This statement perfectly aligns with the credo of one of Firan's exiled writer characters, whom Fred meets in Paris: "An exiled writer has only this inheritance. The language of birth is his weakness, but also his strength. And, in the end, his only ally" (Firan, 2022, p. 45). In this context, Firan considers reliance on translation as the perfect solution (Giodea, 2022, 31:52), a proof of the writer's responsibility and their respect for the word.⁹At this point, Firan underscores the advantage of the transnational background of her migration that enables her reliance on a new generation of bilingual translators who have arrived very young in America. Firan is grateful for their contribution to the dissemination of Romanian literature in a global context (Buciuta, 2022, 28:10).

By creating Fred, Carmen Firan reflects upon the quandary of the uprooted writer confronted with the necessity to express themselves in a different language. From this perspective, even if one talks about a writer placed in a transnational context, Fred's position suggests that certain exilic mindsets continue to be relevant. In Fred's case, exile manifests itself as a dispossession of language that complicates the already sensitive condition of the writer:

The writer, always a 'suspect,' as Thomas Mann said, an exile par excellence, conquers his homeland, his placenta through language. To be exiled from even this last refuge represents a *multiple dispossession*, the most brutal and *irredeemable decentering of his being*, a tragic end (Manea, 2012, p. 8) [emphasis added].

Apart from his reluctance to embrace American values, Fred does not seem to display strong symptoms of homeland nostalgia, such as the urge to physically return to Romania. However, his constant vacillation between his Romanian past (via memories of his happy, successful youth) and the American (bitter) present do reveal "the creation of a bipolar personal world" (Hoffman, 2000, p. 21), an indication of exilic division. I would argue that the entire structure of *The Lost Shadow* relies on duality as an underlying trope, that indirectly points to exilic bipolarism. More specifically, the novel is built on tensions resulting from the interplay of opposite forces such as the past versus the present, male vs female, failure vs success, differentiation vs assimilation. Clearly, Fred experiences his transition to America as a weakening of his creative ability to make sense of the world, when transplanted into a foreign language:

Is it the subconscious fear that I can't get across exactly what I think and feel in a *foreign language*, despite a vocabulary that's probably richer than the average American's? Or that I can't make myself understood as I'd like to? Either one is possible ... Like these last years, here, where no one listened to me anymore. Perhaps that's why I have this feeling that I'm effectively and definitively *losing my voice*. I have a feeling that *silence* lurks around me. And it's not like in the old days, when my silences carried weight and meaning, said something, were listened to, minded, even awarded. My *silence* here is simple; it hides and pretends nothing (Firan, 2022, pp. 29-30) [emphasis added].

Fred's reflections resonate with Eva Hoffman's observations regarding the emigrants' supreme challenge of having to deal with the loss of language that generates the incapacity to properly

⁹As a participant in a common interview, Firan's friend, the Romanian author Andrei Codrescu, a protagonist of classical exile (before 1989), also links exile with language, but it regards it as a rupture and rebirth in a different language (Giodea, 2023, 13:31).

understand and describe the (new) world: “*To lose an internal language* is to subside into an inarticulate darkness in which we become alien to ourselves” (Hoffman, 2000, p. 55) [emphasis added]. Following this line of argumentation, Fred’s fear of losing his voice echoes the awareness that he has lost his internal language, that also triggers his alienation from his own self as well as a sense of profound disconnection from everything familiar. Moreover, his reflections point to his nuanced understanding of silence, as a “layered form of expression” (Debbarma, 2024, p. 268), alluding to the possibility of both positive and negative connotations of the concept. Literary criticism and psychological studies on silence point out the multifaceted nature of this notion that may have “various nuanced meanings” (Bao, 2023, p. 1), such as: “psychological, emotional, ethical and political” (Guignery, 2009, p. 1). In this context, Fred’s silence has to be discussed in relation to the effects of deracination on his creative potential as a writer. At the same time, the character’s inability to relate to a sense of home and belonging is an expression of his utter estrangement that makes him feel a complete outsider both in America and in Romania. Hence, even his brief return to Bucharest for a book launch becomes a reminder of non-belonging and despair: “He felt like a stranger everywhere. A stranger in this strange city, whose every corner he had known; a stranger in the city he had emigrated to, where he’d thought he would find himself a warm home (Firan, 2022, p. 230).

5. Fred: The Exilic Silence of Writers from Minor Cultures

As previously noted, the condition of exile has been associated with a negative experience of rupture and loss (Said, 2000), “dislocation”, “transiency” (Aciman, 2000, p. 9), “disorientation, self-division” (Hoffman, 2000, p. 20). However, the postmodern paradigm, best represented by writers like Rushdie, has valorized precisely the features of exile that have traumatic connotations: “uncertainty, displacement, the fragmented identity ... instability, marginality, absence and outsidersness” (Hoffman, 2000, p. 20). For the exiled writer, the exilic condition is associated with the centrality of the concept of home, which translates through the attempts to “reinvent the concept with what they [the exiled writers] got, the way we reinvent love with what’s left of it each time” (Aciman, 2000, p. 8). The need to recreate a sense of belonging when confronted with a plurality of worlds places the deracinated writer in a position of “fertile detachment” (Hoffman, 2000, p. 24) which shapes a creative perspective that questions familiar assumptions: “This perhaps is the great advantage, for a writer, of exile, the compensation for the loss and the formal bonus—that it gives you a perspective, a vantage point” (Hoffman, 2000, p. 24). By allowing the writers to position themselves at a crossroads beyond cultures, the condition of exile shapes an enlarged cultural perspective that leaves room for inspiration: “exile can be a great impetus to thought and to creativity, which is why so many artists have actively chosen it” (Hoffman, 2000, p. 25).

Considering these reflections, the next part of the paper discusses the effects of exile on Fred’s destiny as a writer. Is Fred capable to transpose the challenges of his bicultural condition into fiction? Although there are hints that he is working on a manuscript, the book does not really come out, and we are presented with a depressed Fred, who seems unable to cope with the changes brought about his double relocation: from Romania via France to America. Caught up between staying at home, visiting the psychiatrist’s and psychologist’s office and meeting other fellow artists and friends, Fred experiences nostalgic trips down the memory lane. Yet these episodes are not impregnated with the character’s homesickness, but rather with nostalgia for a time of personal glory in the native space:

In his youth, he had only fought with censorship in an Eastern European Communist country where he had also tasted a bit of glory. Three books, three awards. It’s true that

this was in a *tiny closed-off country* that no one cared about, *without the chance he'd ever be translated or recognized internationally*, but he'd been still young then and national glory flattered him enough. He received elegiac reviews, a faithful public—a golden future that he wouldn't get to grasp there (Firan, 2022, p.18) [emphasis added].

I would say that apart from Fred's pining for his former (local) eminence, this attitude corresponds to Svetlana Boym's definition of nostalgia as "yearning for a different time" (Boym, 2001, p. 17), therefore a manifestation of "rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress" (p. 17). If we couple this understanding of nostalgia with Fred's unwillingness to create a persona for the American world, we may say that his reference to the Romanian past is an attempt to seek refuge from the Western vectors of modernity, exemplified by the forces of the American capitalist society (aggressive advertising, competition, the prevailing logic of the market).

At the same time, the character's reflections also point to an aspect related to the circulation of literature in the world literary space. According to Pascale Casanova (2004), writers coming from peripheral countries have a hard time trying to gain access in the space of literary capital, as they lack the prestige of cultures with established literary traditions (pp. 15-16). As a writer displaced from behind the Iron Curtain to the Free World, Fred experiences a rather brutal transition from a minor literary tradition to the consecrated space of the English language: "You're talented, but you come from a minor culture, an uncirculated language. You need large props. Or large compromises" (Firan, 2022, pp. 108-109). Therefore, his commitment to his native language comes at the high cost of his becoming invisible in the American literary space, which is part of his predicament. As previously discussed, Fred is unwilling to succumb to the pressure of the market by embracing recipes for success, and this reaction also generates his silent stance. This attitude may be read as Fred's refusal to build a hybrid cultural identity which would involve "openness to a different culture, getting closer to the Other, while accepting their difference and diversity"¹⁰ (Elvireanu, 2017, p. 131, my translation). Considering the multifaceted nature of silence discussed above along with Fred's tragic evolution, how can one interpret the character's quiescence? Is it a case of "active silence" (Bao, 2023, p. 5), the result of Fred's choice to be silent or does it reflect an instance of "passive silence" (Bao, 2023, p. 5), the consequence of an inability or interdiction to express himself?

On the one hand, I think Fred's silence as a writer expresses his "willful decision" (Guignery, 2009, p. 2) to repudiate American values, therefore a form of resistance, a "radical form of agency" (Debbarma, 2024, p. 268). On the other hand, Fred's depression points to an unsettling dimension of his deracination, therefore expressing his "inability to capture experiences which have been psychologically and emotionally traumatic" (Guignery, 2009, p. 2). Relying on Debbarma's connection between suicide and silence, (2024, p. 269), I have also considered the possibility of interpreting Fred's suicide as an expression of silence; I would say that his final gesture of withdrawal has to be read as a reaction that blends active and passive connotations: it is a voluntary act of leaving a world that has paralyzed Fred's capacity to react, rendering him a passive spirit.

6. Deracination and the Shadow: Between Assimilation and Differentiation

Moreover, at some point in the novel, Fred must literally prove his fertility, by undergoing specific tests, when pressured by Mimi who decides she wants to become a mother. The fact that Mimi and Fred do not have offspring is indirectly correlated with Fred's

¹⁰ Original source text: "deschidere spre altă cultură și apropiere de celălalt, acceptând diferența și diversitatea."

barrenness; at a metaphorical level this condition overlaps with Fred's incapacity to access his creative potential when transplanted into a new language and culture. At this point, one may conclude that in Fred's case, exile does not function as a creative matrix, but rather as an endless source of anxiety. In this context, the shadow symbol, which also gives the title of the novel, can further elucidate the depth of Fred's torment. According to the Jungian conception of the psyche, the shadow represents "the dark aspects of personality" (Jung, 1959, p. 14). It is associated with sexual instincts, repressed ideas, desires, shortcomings and elements that are considered unacceptable to society and therefore often denied (Cherry, 2024). However, confronting one's shadow is an important part of the process of individuation that helps people come to terms with their inner personal world (Bolea, 2016, p. 90; Thurmond, 2012, pp. 4-5). Interestingly, the shadow archetype does not contain only negative parts of our unconscious, but also positive forces embedded in the structure of the human psyche: "[The shadow] does not consist only of morally reprehensible tendencies, but also displays a number of good qualities, such as normal instincts, appropriate reactions, realistic insights, *creative impulses*" (Jung, 1959, p. 266) [emphasis added]. Considering the layered symbolism of this archetype, how can one account for Fred's recurrent fear of losing his shadow that he mentions to his therapist?

Sometimes I dream of my own shadow. Dark, like any shadow. And simple. An outline. Sometimes indescribably long and skinny. Other times, absurdly stocky. I know it's still me. Only my outline changes. I make a step toward it, then another, and *my shadow runs away from me*. I need to try many times to get closer or further until I fit into my shadow exactly. But I can't complain; each time, it fits me perfectly; none of me is left on the outside. But I get up tired; *the effort of fitting into my shadow* seems to have exhausted me. And yet, luckily, I never lose my shadow; I always catch up to it one way or another (Firan, 2022, p. 35) [emphasis added].

In order to decipher Fred's dilemma, I think one should consider the creative potential ingrained in the shadow. As a counter-persona archetype, the shadow is associated with an authentic part of the self, which corresponds to a writer's creativity, in Fred's case. Relying on Mîrzea's discussion of Jung's psychological manners of artistic creation, one may argue that Fred experiences the destiny of the tormented artists, who display a strong desire to generate art. In such cases, the intensity of this visionary urge "may take over their entire human dimension, putting them at the service of their work in a complete way, even at the risk of losing their happiness or health"¹¹ (Mîrzea, 2018, p. 288, my translation). Therefore, Fred's obsession with the possibility of losing his shadow may express his worries regarding his (in)ability to be productive as a writer, when transplanted in a foreign language. Given the repetitive nature of Fred's nightmares, it seems that the challenges of Fred's uprootedness also manifest as a fragmented self that generates "grotesque [...] dreamlike projections"¹² (Elvireanu, 2017, p. 138, my translation). However, the character does not seem to consider the negative valences of the shadow, given that he is not reluctant to embrace it; on the contrary, Fred wishes to keep his shadow active and thus maintain permanent contact with his resourceful core. This is why the character's supreme apprehension is fueled by the scenario of a perpetual disconnection from his creative source:

The fear in the dream, more tangible than all lived fears, that I'm running after my own shadow and when I reach it, it disappears swallowed by sand, and I awake naked,

¹¹ Original source text: "poate acapara întreaga dimensiune umană a acestora, punându-i în slujba operei într-un mod deplin, chiar cu riscul pierderii fericirii sau al sănătății."

¹² Original source text: "proiecții onirice [...] grotești"

sometimes bodiless, other times without a voice ... The fear that some morning I'll wake up as somebody else, in another room, without memories (Firan, 2022, p. 251).

As noted previously, the process of individuation through which the psyche strives to become whole relies on achieving a balance between persona and the shadow. However, Fred has not built a persona in order to adapt to American norms, which means that his self is incomplete, fractured. Interpreted through a Jungian gird, Fred's lack of persona entails the character's entire reliance on the shadow, manifested as nostalgia for what he considers representing his authentic side (that of a Romanian writer, attached to his mother tongue). In this context, the title of the novel, *The Lost Shadow*, expresses Fred's creative defeat in America where exile does not reveal its fertile potential for the writer. At the same time, the character is equally incapable of enjoying the advantages of his transnational condition that would enable the maintenance of simultaneous, culturally enriching attachments to different spaces: "Fred didn't like bridges. They made him feel unsure and dizzy, like all *suspended* things" (Firan, 2022, pp. 37-8) [emphasis added]. His fear of a pendulous status indicates a reluctance to fully embrace the opportunities offered by migration in a world devoid of constraints regarding cross-border interactions. At the other end of the spectrum we have Mimi, who upholds a strong persona that guarantees her spectacular integration into the American business world.

Coming back to one of our research questions regarding Firan's strategies of positioning herself in the world's republic of letters, I suggest that her fictional characters, Fred and Mimi, can be read as symbolic instances of the writer's choice to situate herself in the international literary space. More specifically, Mimi represents the scenario of "*assimilation* as integration within a dominant literary space through a dilution or erasing of original differences" (Casanova, 2004, p. 179) [original emphasis], while Fred illustrates the path to "*differentiation*, which is to say the assertion of difference, typically on the basis of a claim to national identity" (Casanova, 2004, p. 179) [original emphasis]. Indeed, Mimi displays neither a desire to return to Romania nor a deep attachment to her country of origins, both being stifled by her belief in the grandeur of the American dream: "I said 'our country' thinking about Romania. We need to be more careful about what we say, darling. Our country is America now!" (Firan, 2022, p. 164). While Fred does not blatantly celebrate his Romanianness, his nostalgic stance along with his attachment to language reveal an embrace of differentiation. If one accepts the idea that the exiled writer's transition from their maternal language to the language of the host country is an expression of identity hybridization (Elvireanu, 2017, p. 128), then Fred clearly refuses this process. Considering the different destinies of the two characters, the indirect message of the novel is that the strategy of assimilation is more likely to yield successful results, as suggested by Mimi's magnificent ascent. While allowing the preservation of a perceived authentic identity core, differentiation involves the price of inaction and ultimately self-elimination from the American space, as implied by Fred's tragic end. Maintaining the analogy between Firan's characters and her choice of positioning herself as an author, I would say that the author successfully blends both strategies as she celebrates her origins by writing in Romanian (differentiation), but also relies on translations of her fiction into English (assimilation), thus successfully integrating Romanian literature into the world republic of letters.

7. Conclusions

Mimi's and Fred's trajectories beyond the homeland illustrate divergent modes of negotiating exile and transnational affiliation, as well as possibilities of a writer's positioning in the global republic of letters. Mimi rejects exilic nostalgia in favor of assimilation, aligning

herself with American capitalist values through the construction of a stable persona. By contrast, Fred remains suspended between exilic alienation and transnational mobility, which allows return to homeland, yet fails to restore a sense of belonging. His rejection of American consumerism and refusal to adopt an adaptive persona underscore his inability to reconcile the multiplicity of transnational positions, a tension metaphorically reflected in his fear of bridges. In this context, the bridge functions as a signifier of transnationality, symbolizing a mode of multiple belonging that transcends fixed affiliations. Yet this floating condition of plurality provokes anxiety in Fred, who experiences it not as enrichment but as a source of unstable and insecure belonging.

References:

- Allatson, P., & McCormack, J. (Eds.). (2008). *Exile cultures, misplaced identities*. Rodopi.
- Bao, D. (2023). The multiple meanings of silence in social psychology. *Environment and Social Psychology*, 8(3), 2058. <https://doi.org/10.54517/esp.v8i3.2058>
- Basch, L., Glick Schiller, N., & Szanton Blanc, C. (2003). *Nations unbound: Transnational projects, postcolonial predicaments, and deterritorialized nation-states*. Routledge.
- Bolea, Ș. (2016). The persona and the shadow in analytic psychology and existentialist philosophy. *Philobiblon*, 21(1), 84–94. <https://philpapers.org/archive/STETPA-23.pdf>
- Boym, S. (2001). *The future of nostalgia*. Basic Books.
- Branea, D. (2022, May 5). Carmen Firan: „Importante sunt temele existențiale, eterne și universale” [Carmen Firan: What matters are the existential, eternal, and universal themes]. *Orizonturi culturale italo-române / Orizzonti culturali italo-romeni*. http://www.orizonturiculturale.ro/ro_intalniri_Carmen-Firan-interviu.html
- Buciuta, A. N. (2022, May 31). Despre singurătatea bărbaților și curajul femeilor [On the loneliness of men and the bravery of women] [Video]. *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QsSbulIjyQ0>
- Casanova, P. (2004). *The world republic of letters* (M. B. DeBevoise, Trans.). Harvard University Press. (Original work published 1999)
- Cattan, N. (2008). Gendering mobility: Insights into the construction of spatial concepts. In T. P. Uteng & T. Cresswell (Eds.), *Gendered mobilities* (pp. 83–97). Ashgate.
- Cherry, K. (2024, October 14). What are the Jungian archetypes? *Verywell Mind*. <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-are-jungs-4-major-archetypes-2795439>
- Cresswell, T., & Uteng, T. P. (2008). Gendered mobilities: Towards a holistic understanding. In T. P. Uteng & T. Cresswell (Eds.), *Gendered mobilities* (pp. 1–12). Ashgate.
- Cullen, J. (2003). *The American dream: A short history of an idea that shaped a nation*. Oxford University Press.
- Dagnino, A. (2012). Transcultural writers and transcultural literature in the age of global modernity. *Transnational Literature*, 4(2), 1–14.

- Debbarma, A. (2024). The power of silence in English literature: A personal reflection. *International Journal of Novel Research and Development*, 9(11), 267–270. <https://www.ijnrd.org/papers/IJNRD2411321.pdf>
- Edsforth, R. (2012, February 21–24). On the definition of capitalism and its implications for the current global political-economic crisis [Paper presentation]. *The International Conference on Cultural Diplomacy & the UN: Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power in an Interdependent World: The Opportunities for Global Governance*, New York and Washington, DC, United States.
- Elvireanu, S. (2017). Identități hibride în romanele lui Dumitru Țepeneag [Hybrid identities in the novels of Dumitru Țepeneag]. *Incursiuni în imaginar*, 1(8), 123–148. <https://doi.org/10.29302/InImag.2017.8.6>
- Fay, M. (2008). Mobile belonging: Exploring transnational feminist theory and online connectivity. In T. P. Uteng & T. Cresswell (Eds.), *Gendered mobilities* (pp. 65–81). Ashgate.
- Firan, C. (2022). *The lost shadow*. New Meridian Arts.
- Ganser, A. (2009). *Roads of her own: Gendered space and mobility in American women's road narratives, 1970–2000*. Rodopi.
- Giodea, M. (2022, November 1). *Cu cărțile pe față – Carmen Firan* [With the cards on the table – Carmen Firan] [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMFIczouaqY>
- Giodea, M. (2023, October 24). *Cu cărțile pe față – Andrei Codrescu și Carmen Firan* [With the cards on the table – Andrei Codrescu and Carmen Firan] [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r900BEOf_rg
- Guignery, V. (Ed.). (2009). *Voices and silence in the contemporary novel in English*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Hirsch, M. (1996). Postmemories in exile. *Poetics Today*, 17(4), 659–686. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1773218>
- Hirsch, M., & Miller, N. K. (2011). *Rites of return: Diaspora poetics and the politics of memory*. Columbia University Press.
- Hoffman, E. (2000). The new nomads. In A. Aciman (Ed.), *Letters of transit: Reflections on exile, identity, language, and loss* (pp. 17–31). iBooks.
- Jung, C. G. (1959). *Aion: Researches into the phenomenology of the self* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). Princeton University Press. (Original work published 1951)
- The Jungian model of the psyche. (n.d.). *Journal Psyche*. Retrieved July 27, 2025, from <https://journalpsyche.org/jungian-model-psyche/>
- Kronlid, D. (2008). Mobility as capability. In T. P. Uteng & T. Cresswell (Eds.), *Gendered mobilities* (pp. 15–33). Ashgate.
- Ljubičić, K., & Vukasović, T. (2023). Manipulation in the world of marketing. *Journal of Innovative Business and Management*, 15(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.32015/JIBM.2023.15.1.2>

- Manea, N. (2012). *The fifth impossibility: Essays on exile and language*. Yale University Press.
- Manfred, B. S., & Roy, R. K. (2010). *Neoliberalism: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Massey, D. (2001). *Space, place and gender*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Michalak, J., & Stypiński, M. (2023). Methods of manipulation used in advertising. *Olsztyn Economic Journal*, 18(2), 195–206. <https://doi.org/10.31648/ocej.10314>
- Mirza, N. (2018). Opera literară în perspectiva Jungiană [The work of art in Jung's approach]. *Incursiuni în imaginar*, 9, 279–285. <https://doi.org/10.29302/InImag.2018.9.19>
- Moraru, A. (2022). A journey between East and West in Carmen Firan's *The Lost Shadow*. In *Proceedings of the 10th International Conference Synergies in Communication* (pp. 311–321). <https://doi.org/10.24818/SIC/2022/04.03>
- Pavnotescu, R. (2024, November 20). Umbra pierdută a sărmanului Dionis [The lost shadow of poor Dionis]. *Atelier LiterNet*. <https://atelier.liternet.ro/articol/48840/Roxana-Pavnotescu-Carmen-Firan/Umbra-pierduta-a-sarmanului-Dionis.html>
- Popovici, F.-C. (n.d.). Zidul din spatele zidurilor [The wall behind the walls]. *LaPunkt*. <https://www.lapunkt.ro/2020/09/zidul-din-spatele-zidurilor/>
- Ramazani, J. (2009). *A transnational poetics*. University of Chicago Press.
- Said, E. (2000). *Reflections on exile and other essays*. Harvard University Press.
- Scarpi, D. (2020). *Hedonism, utilitarianism, and consumer behavior: Exploring the consequences of customer orientation*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Schultermandl, S., & Toplu, S. (2010). A fluid sense of the self: The politics of transnational identity in Anglophone literatures. In S. Schultermandl & S. Toplu (Eds.), *A fluid sense of the self: The politics of transnational identity* (pp. 11–24). LIT Verlag.
- Stearns, P. N. (2001). *Consumerism in world history: The global transformation of desire*. Routledge.
- The archetype of anima and animus. (2024, February 4). *Centre of Applied Jungian Studies*. Retrieved July 2, 2025, from <https://appliedjung.com/the-archetypes-of-the-anima-and-animus/>
- The Jungian Model of the Psyche. *Journal Psyche*. <https://journalpsyche.org/jungian-model-psyche/>
- Seyhan, A. (2001). *Writing outside the nation*. Princeton University Press.
- Thurmond Brook, D. (2012). *The influence of Carl Jung's archetype of the shadow on early 20th century literature* (Master's thesis, Rollins College). <https://scholarship.rollins.edu/mls/32>
- Urdea, A. (2020). Fashioning masculinities through migration narratives of Romanian construction workers in London. *Migration and Society: Advances in Research*, 3(1), 272–286. <https://doi.org/10.3167/arms.2020.030126>
- Vertovec, S. (2009). *Transnationalism: Key ideas*. Routledge.

- Walkowitz, R. L. (2006). The location of literature: The transnational book and the migrant writer. *Contemporary Literature*, 47(4), 527–545. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cli.2007.0019>
- Weinberg, M. (2003). *A short history of American capitalism*. New History Press.
- Zeca Buzura, D. (2019, June 15). *Mic dejun cu un campion: Carmen Firan* [Breakfast with a champion: Carmen Firan] [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=waL0z4iLq9w>
- Zeng, H. (2010). *The semiotics of exile in literature*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Anthropology

**PRACTICES OF SILENCE:
SELF-DOCUMENTATION AND NARRATIVE LIMITS IN A
ROMANIAN CATHOLIC PRIEST'S TWENTIETH-CENTURY
ARCHIVE¹**

Mária SZIKSZAI

Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

e-mail: maria.szikszai@ubbcluj.ro

Abstract

This study examines how unspoken elements are given meaning in a specific case study and how they shape our understanding of everyday life as it is documented and narrated in the context of dictatorship and personal relationships. The investigation focuses not on what the documents say, but on what they conceal. Based on a corpus of over 2,400 documents – including carbon copies of letters, notes, and other paper-based documents – the study investigates how silence and reticence are embedded in everyday writing practices under conditions of censorship, surveillance, and personal constraint. The archive reveals that silence operates on multiple levels. In this study, we do not view silence as deficiency, but rather as a form of expression that is culturally shaped by the environment. Politically, it is shaped by self-censorship and the avoidance of sensitive topics or names. Personally, it appears in the suppression of emotions, indirect expressions of affection or allegorical writing in correspondence. Interpretation of the texts shows that omitted or concealed elements are often just as revealing as those that are written down. The fragile boundary between writing and its narrative limits is central to understanding not only the personal history of the main protagonist, but the broader conditions of writing under authoritarian rule. His documents speak not just through what they say, but through what they choose not to say – leaving traces of silence as durable as ink.

Keywords: silence; correspondence; censorship; narrative limits; self-documentation.

1. Introduction

Anthropologists have increasingly recognized that silence is not the opposite of communication, but one of its modes. Silence is presence, as Iza Kavedžija writes, capturing the affective space created by moments of shared quiet in caregiving environments: “(...) being silent, facilitated a comfortable space, one that would be inclusive and welcoming for others, but also a companionable, shared silence could offer a respite from loneliness (...)” (Kavedžija, 2025, p. 18). Such silences can be saturated with care, tension, or moral weight. Ana Dragojlović and Annemarie Samuels state that for a researcher, silence may appear as a meaningful, multivocal and sometimes opaque phenomenon that requires focused ethnographic

¹ Article History: Received: 26.12.2025. Accepted: 01.02.2026. Published: 15.05.2026. No funding was received either for the research presented in the article or for the creation of the article.

attention, arguing that anthropology must identify and incorporate “traces of silence” in relation to verbal articulation, voice, visibility and representation, while confronting its potential unknowability (Dragojlović & Samuels, 2021, p. 417).

Authors ask how silence becomes recognizable, how it connects to voice, visibility and representation, how it can be sensed both bodily and narratively, and how we might begin to interpret it even when it resists full understanding (Dragojlović & Samuels, 2021, p. 418).

Silence is not simply the mere absence of sound or speech. In what follows, silence is understood as written silence, embodied in letters and documents, which can only be inferred by the reader. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot has forcefully argued:

Silences enter the process of historical production at four crucial moments: the moment of fact creation (the making of sources); the moment of fact assembly (the making of archives); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of history in the final instance). (Trouillot, 1995, p. 26)

Silence, therefore, is a socially and politically produced condition that reveals the workings of power. It functions transversally across history, memory, and narrative, encoding absences that are themselves meaningful (Trouillot, 1995).

Anthropological studies about silence have further shown how it operates in interpersonal relationships, in institutional and political domains. Several authors describe silence as a practice with clear moral and ethical weight, influencing how acts of concealment and revelation take shape in social life (Uusihakala et al., 2019, p. 5) This duality complicates normative readings of silence as either oppression or resistance. James Scott had earlier conceptualized the notion of “hidden transcripts,” which emerge in silenced or encoded forms of resistance under domination (Scott, 1990, p. 4).

Silence can be both enforced and chosen – a point also made by Andru Chiorean in his study of censorship in early socialist Romania (Chiorean, 2019). The control of discourse, especially in written forms, became central to postwar regimes of Eastern Europe.

Cultural norms around silence vary widely across contexts. For example, in his classic work on the Western Apache, Keith Basso (1970) shows that silence becomes the appropriate, socially expected response in a number of situations – meeting strangers, courtship, interacting with others in different situations. In these moments, silence is not a matter of individual reserve but a culturally shaped way of handling relationships when social intentions and roles are uncertain. (Basso, 1970, pp. 217–223, 226)

These studies show that silence is a socially constructed practice that creates meanings and shapes relationships. It is a layered, productive phenomenon that can simultaneously reflect affective, epistemological, and political realities. As Trouillot states, “any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences” (Trouillot, 1995, p. 27).

2. The Research Project

The research project I am referring to here began in 2013, when the key documents forming the basis of this investigation were recovered. The 2,400 documents at the core of my study were written, edited and collected by the Catholic priest Mihály Tyukodi, born in 1916 in Căpleni, Satu Mare County (Romania), and deceased in 1997 in Alba Iulia (Romania). The discovery of these documents in 2013, in the attic of his native village, alongside other documents belonging to the parish, marked a crucial moment, as their provenance and content

were already unknown at that time. The research takes a microhistorical² approach that focuses on small-scale life worlds and the ways in which individuals navigate social and political constraints (Szikszai, 2023).

The archive comprises documents left behind by a Catholic priest of Swabian origin.³ The texts and analyses published so far about this archive have not addressed the theme of silence – which is precisely what I intend to discuss now. During the repressive political regime in Romania, correspondence served as a tool for exchanging information and also as a nuanced form of communication. The study examines the role of personal silence and institutional silence through the presentation of a specific case: the main protagonist is a Catholic priest who served in small and isolated communities and who deliberately chose remote locations where silence allowed him to avoid political and social unrest, while maintaining his social networks and resilience. The correspondence not only conveyed information, but also became a carrier of hidden messages, contributing to a delicate balance between silence and speech, between what was expressed and what remained unsaid. In this sense, paper-based culture became an essential form of survival and resistance – an observation that resonates with work in the anthropology of writing, which stresses that writing is an everyday communicative practice that shapes social interaction and knowledge (Barton & Papen, 2010, pp. 18–33).

In my analysis, I viewed the twentieth century as an era in which the typewriter played a decisive role (Szikszai, 2023, pp. 57–61). The protagonist, Mihály Tyukodi (1916–1997), began using a typewriter in his youth, around 1942, when he was ordained in Satu Mare. He corresponded extensively, writing his letters with carbon paper and keeping copies of them. In addition to letters, he preserved many paper-based documents: official papers such as birth and marriage certificates of his relatives dating from the mid-nineteenth century, diplomas, driver's licenses, bills, journal-like notes, photographs and more. My analysis is based on those 2,400 paper documents. My questions focused both on the historical background and on the everyday lives of the people involved: What kind of world did the protagonist and those he interacted with inhabit? How did they live their everyday lives, how did they organize their existence, how did they make important decisions, what were their sorrows, hopes and joys, what did they write about, and what did they leave unsaid? The archive offers insight into the life of a man from Eastern Europe who lived from the early to the late twentieth century, attempting to document the era in which he lived.

The collection is unique above all for its extraordinary quantity of personal documents. The volume of personal documents examined is exceptionally large, making it a rare collection in this field.⁴ This is a distinctive situation, as not only the letters he received are available, but also those he wrote. All of these bring us closer to understanding the protagonist's worldview and the mentality of his narrower community. Second, the protagonist's particular situation ensures the uniqueness of the material. Mihály Tyukodi lived through the twentieth century and several political regime changes. He belonged to an ethnic group undergoing a process of identity transformation – the Swabians of Satu Mare. The region where he was born was historically multi-ethnic and multi-religious; in the past three hundred years as many as six significant ethnic groups and several denominations have lived there (Tátrai, 2013, pp. 19–37).

² On the concept of microhistory: Levi, 1991; Ginzburg, Tedeschi & Tedeschi, 1993; Magnússon & Szijártó 2013.

³ Mihály Tyukodi's family was of Swabian origin. Their ancestors were settled in the region by the Károlyi counts in the first half of the 18th century. By the 20th century, the family spoke only Hungarian and no longer knew the Swabian language. Mihály's parents also spoke Hungarian at home, and this was characteristic of his native village, Căpleni (Romania), as well. The family originally bore the surname Kind. In 1941, they decided to change their family name, similarly to other families in the village. Tyukodi was the family name of one of their female grandparents, which is why they chose this name. Mihály received the official document confirming the name change in 1942, a few months before his ordination as a priest.

⁴ The original language of the documents is predominantly Hungarian, but the collection also includes letters in Romanian and German, as well as some notes written in French and Latin.

The Roman Catholic Germans arriving from South Germany were called Swabians in Hungary, and they have been living in the area since 1712 after the aristocratic Károlyi family settled Catholic German peasants there to repopulate the region (Tátrai, 2013, pp. 60–80). Tyukodi was a first-generation intellectual who did not entirely distance himself from the values of his peasant family. Although he lived his life as a priest and teacher, he also practiced agriculture: as a parish priest, he worked in the garden, planted vines, made wine and raised animals. He knew not only Hungarian, Romanian, Latin and German, but also was able to write and to read French. He was imprisoned during the early communist dictatorship, between 1950 and 1953, as one of the priests persecuted by the regime of that time. And finally, although scholars in Eastern Europe have begun to work with twentieth-century documents, we still know relatively little about the everyday lives of priests under the communist dictatorships of Eastern Europe.

One of the dilemmas researchers face when dealing with such written materials is the issue of personal data. When publishing research results in the social sciences, it is necessary to protect the confidentiality of personal data in such a way that the rights of the individuals involved are not violated, while maintaining the relevance of the research. Some researchers opt for full anonymization, while others argue that the credibility of the material would be compromised if the identities of the subjects were obscured. After much deliberation, I decided to apply partial anonymization in my publications. Individuals who are no longer alive but played an important role in the life of the community – as public figures of their time (e.g., priests, bishops) – are mentioned by name. Those frequently referenced but who were not public figures, such as members of the protagonist's family (siblings and their families), are mentioned in the analysis using encrypted names. This procedure is justified both by the need to protect personal data and by my intention to emphasize that my interest does not lie in individual biographies but rather in social processes. My research objectives are not historical or ecclesiastical but belong to the domain of social sciences and anthropology.

It is also important to mention the historical and religious context of the protagonist. In the first half of the eighteenth century, the Károlyi counts brought a Catholic Swabian population to the region; as a result, by the twentieth century the area had become highly diverse in terms of ethnicity and religion (Tátrai, 2013, pp. 19–37). In the Swabian villages of Satu Mare County, an ethnic identity shift began in the nineteenth century, occurring at varying paces across the region. The language shift to Hungarian in the community where the protagonist was socialized likely began at the end of the nineteenth century and progressed gradually. Although the majority eventually adopted a new language, a sense of Swabian identity persisted into the twenty-first century. Throughout my research, I kept in mind that the documents do not necessarily reflect facts, but rather personal points of view, potentially distorted or biased. Nevertheless, I considered these texts to be important imprints of the past, and I believe that research must pursue not only the personal destinies of the protagonists but also the social and cultural contexts in which these texts emerged.

The researcher's alienation and the levels at which it manifests in relation to the examined documents is another aspect worth mentioning in the context of anthropological analysis. In many respects, the world revealed in these letters was foreign to me. First, there was the temporal distance between me and the world described in the documents. Another challenge was understanding the economic and technological context of the period, as well as the ecclesiastical context – since the protagonist was a priest, the texts often contain liturgical and religious expressions specific to this social segment. Lastly, the family background of the protagonist – a Catholic Swabian peasant family – added an additional layer of foreignness for the researcher.

An important aspect of the context is the practice of correspondence during the period covered by the archive: the cultural context of letter writing, the toolkit of correspondence, the

unwritten rules of postal communication and the ways in which people built their social relationships in the age of correspondence. The use of carbon copies and their effects are also relevant from the perspective of the anthropology of writing. Writing research emphasizes that writing is an everyday practice that pervades social interaction and that written texts are central to how societies operate (Barton & Papen, 2010, pp. 18–33). In the region under study, for most of the twentieth century, written correspondence – alongside face-to-face interactions – was the primary mode of communication. Given that most of these texts were written during a dictatorship, they are often evasive and tend to avoid specifics. At the same time, they invite us to read between the lines – as we shall see in the next chapter.

3. Communication as a Strategy of Survival and Resistance

Under conditions of political oppression and isolation imposed by the Romanian regime in the second half of the twentieth century, writing became a means of survival and, at times, a form of silent resistance. James C. Scott's concept of "hidden transcripts" helps to frame this observation: subordinate groups who cannot speak openly in the presence of power create secret discourses that critique domination behind the backs of the authorities (Scott, 1990, pp. 128–135). Our archive shows how such hidden voices operated in the everyday correspondence of a rural priest.

3.1 A Transnational Epistolary Network

Mihály Tyukodi maintained an extensive correspondence network that extended beyond Romania's borders. He wrote to fellow priests and believers within the country, as well as to friends who had emigrated abroad (to Hungary or Germany). The fact that he duplicated his letters (using carbon copies) demonstrates his intention to amplify his "voice" – each letter sent left behind a copy as testimony for those who might one day be interested in his life. This practice can be interpreted as a form of resilience: the priest ensured that his messages would survive, and even if intercepted or the recipient discards it, a copy remains in his possession.

3.2 The Voice of the Ordinary Person under State Surveillance

In the communist regime, written communication became an essential tool for Mihály Tyukodi and his network in a world where spoken voices were often silenced by terror. The dictatorial state profoundly shaped what people could say: openly expressing political opinions, or even mentioning ideas related to national culture or religious faith, were dangerous. Self-censorship was pervasive: as one commentator on Romanian censorship observed, writers tried to disarm the censor by censoring themselves, creating "wooden language" and indirect messages that forced readers to probe between the lines (Vianu, 1998, pp. 282–349). In this context, the letters and other documents left behind by Mihály Tyukodi were used to record events, maintain connections and share information and emotions – all under the looming shadow of surveillance.

3.3 Archiving Memory as an Act Of Resistance

Mihály Tyukodi consistently documented his own everyday life and that of his surroundings, and this endeavor can be seen as one of his strategies of resistance. In an era when even the use of a typewriter required a permit (as was characteristic of Romania in the 1980s), every page written for documentation purposes can be considered a gesture of

resistance. On 3 May 1983, Mihály Tyukodi wrote the following lines in the form of a note, at a time when the Romanian authorities required typewriter owners to register their machines in order to monitor the activities of those who possessed a typewriter:

A cultured person naturally considers it self-evident, all over the world, that a typewriter should be available to them. After all, whom does its use harm? The secular authorities? Is a typewriter a weapon? Yes. The weapon of the free spirit. One of the instruments for expressing thought. But does this expression harm the state? I say it boldly: a weak person is one who is terrified to death by a spoken word. Even more pitiable is the one who is frightened by a written word or sentence, when that word or sentence is kept in a desk drawer without anyone reading it. The wider world believes that there are one million three hundred thousand typewriters in this country. And it is only the number above one million that represents typewriters in private use. I ask: are these three hundred thousand people who sit down at a typewriter engaged in anti-state activity? Is it these few hundred thousand that the twenty-two million – or the leadership – are afraid of?

They begrudge us as the typewriter. And where is the photocopier? Where is color television, where is three-dimensional television, or the video recorder?

In 1953 I read a Russian study about the conquest of outer space. It spoke of rockets, of devices carrying humans into space, of space laboratories. All this was included. I believed it all at first reading. And it has been realized in many forms. Since then, humans have even been to the Moon. There they 'drove around' in lifeless dust, from one place to another. Through research, we grow richer. The community is growing richer. Is it only the law governing the individual that demands moving backwards? True, if there is no typewriter, there remains a pen or pencil. After all, there was a time – a hard three years – when even those were lacking. Is this perhaps the ideal hovering before the eyes of the authorities, which the society and its leadership, so deeply concerned with our prosperity, are keeping in reserve for us as a gift?

We thank them in advance – but we do not ask for it.

I await the representatives of the authorities, for them to knock on my door, as they did at the beginning of the summer of 1953, and to take this machine from me as they took that one.

This is our fate under present conditions. (Tyukodi, 3 May 1983; in Szikszai, 2021, vol. I, p. 159 – my translation)⁵

In the passage above, he subtly alludes to his own years of imprisonment, when for three years he did not even have access to paper and pencil to make notes. While the regime dictated

⁵ This text was a personal note in Hungarian that Tyukodi wrote for himself and did not send to anyone. It was common for him to put a sheet of paper into the typewriter and write a note, recording daily events or setting down his thoughts. Even so, this was dangerous at the time, because the anti-regime document could have been discovered in his possession at any moment. The original text: "Egész világon természetes dolognak tartja a kultúr-ember, hogy írógép álljon rendelkezésére. Mert hiszen kinek árt ennek használatával? A világi hatalomnak? Hát fegyver az írógép? Igen. A szabad szellem fegyvere. A gondolat kifejezésének egyik eszköze. De vajon ez a kifejezés árt az államnak? Kimondom bátran: gyenge ember az, akit egy kiejtett szó halálra rémít. Még sajnálatra méltóbb az a valaki, akit megrettent a leírt szó, vagy mondat, ha azt a szót vagy mondatot az íróasztal fiókja őrizi, anélkül, hogy bárki is olvasná. A nagyvilág úgy véli, hogy egy millió és háromszázezer írógép van ebben az országban. És csak a millió fölötti szám jelenti a magánhasználatban levő írógépeket. Kérdem: ez a háromszázezer ember, aki az írógép mellé ül, végez államellenes tevékenységet? Ettől a pár százezertől fél a 22 millió, vagy a vezetőség? Sajnálják tőlünk az írógépet. Hát hol van a fénymásoló? Hol a színes televízió, hol a háromdimenziós Tv készülék vagy a képmagnó? 1953-ban olvastam egy orosz tanulmányt a világűr meghódításával kapcsolatban. A rakéták, az emb(er)t világűrbe szállító készülékek, az űrlaboratórium. Ezek szerepeltek benne. Elhittem első olvasásra az egészet. Meg is valósult sok formában. Hiszen már a holdon is járt azóta az ember. Ott »szekerezett« az élettelen porban egyik vidékről a másikra. A kutatások révén gazdagodunk a közösség. Csak az egyénnek a törvénye az, hogy visszafele haladjon? Igaz, ha nem lesz írógép, marad a toll vagy a ceruza. Hiszen volt idő – kemény három év – amikor az sem volt. Ez talán a hatóság szeme előtt lebegő eszmény, amelyet ajándékképpen tartogat a boldogulásunkat szíven viselő társadalom és vezetősége? Előre is megköszönjük – de nem kérünk belőle. Várom a hatóság embereit, hogy bekopogjanak, mint 1953 nyár kezdetén, és úgy vegyék el ezt a gépet is, amint az(t) elvették. Ez a mi sorsunk a mai viszonyok között."

official archives and told the “official version” of history – often erasing traces of opposition or real human suffering – Mihály Tyukodi quietly gathered evidence of the genuine lives lived by his community. By preserving copies of his sent letters and the originals of those received, as well as taking notes, keeping journals and saving various paper-based documents, he created a parallel memory of the era. Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues that historical narratives are produced under specific conditions of power and that focusing on the processes by which narratives are produced helps us understand why some stories are amplified while others are silenced (Trouillot, 1995, pp. 104–115). Every piece of paper priest Tyukodi preserved can therefore be read as a counter-narrative resisting official memory.

We can therefore say that Mihály Tyukodi documented the era in which he lived. This documentary impulse can be considered as a form of intellectual resistance – a refusal to allow the lives, sufferings and joys of his generation to be erased or distorted. In his archive we find the surviving voices of many ordinary people who otherwise would never have been known. Through his insistence on not throwing anything away that had been committed to paper, Mihály Tyukodi gave them a chance to speak from beyond decades of silence.

Tyukodi Mihály himself would not be the subject of scholarly research today had he not written these notes and set the letters aside. Nearly his entire circle of correspondents – priests, friends, parishioners, and former students – and the thoughts they committed to paper and sent to him would not be readable today if he had not preserved these documents. With the exception of a few leading figures, such as Scheffler János and Márton Áron, the individuals appearing in these documents would not otherwise have entered the spotlight. We would know nothing about the fate of Mihály’s siblings and their children, the sometimes-difficult circumstances of his fellow priests, or the everyday concerns of his friends. The archival material reveals not only his own person, but also the ordinary people of his immediate social world (see: Szikszai, 2021, 2023).

In short, paper-based communication served this priest and his circle as a lifeline – both practically (informationally and emotionally) and symbolically. Each note taken defied the isolation imposed upon them, and every preserved document became a brick in the monument of memory built against time and oppression.

3.4 The Limits Imposed by the State

Nevertheless, his voice had to be calibrated. The regime monitored correspondence – everyone knew that letters could be read by the authorities before reaching their destination. As a result, Mihály Tyukodi and his interlocutors often practiced preventive self-censorship, deliberately avoiding certain topics or formulations. They learned what could be said and what could not: for instance, they would allude to a person rather than explicitly naming individuals or institutions deemed “sensitive”. Written communication thus became a balancing act between conveying information and avoiding suspicion. Writers and readers became accustomed to indirectness and allegory, a strategy that – according to testimonies of Romanian writers – turned censorship into a “school of poetic indirectness”, creating devious writers and eager readers ready to probe between the lines (Vianu, 1998, pp. 282–349).

4. Political Silence: Self-Censorship and “between-the-lines” Messages

Under dictatorship, external censorship and internal self-censorship created a metaphorical layer of silence over Mihály Tyukodi’s correspondence. And yet, people found ways to convey messages “between the lines,” using coded language, allusions or intentional omissions. Silence itself became a message, as noted by scholars of silence who argue that

tracing social silences requires attention to multivocality, unintelligibility and uncertainty of interpretation (Dragojlovic and Samuels, 2023, pp. 48–60). Other authors also explore self-censorship. Chiorean, for instance, notes that even after in Romania the Department of the Press and Printed was formally abolished in 1977, censorship did not disappear. It transformed into a mode of self-censorship in which the fear of committing ideological errors – and facing the resulting sanctions – functioned far more effectively than the earlier system of decrees and official controls (Chiorean, 2019, p. 7).

4.1 Silence as Protection

At times, the safest option was complete silence on a given subject. In some letters, the authors explicitly stated that certain things could not be put into writing. For example, in a letter to a friend, Mihály Tyukodi mentions that he cannot write down what he has to say and that he will only share it face to face. With this kind of phrasing, he signaled two things: (1) that an important message existed, but one too risky to commit to paper – either politically or personally sensitive; and (2) that postal surveillance was a reality, and both parties needed to exercise caution. This type of explicit self-censorship – “I cannot write more” – was routinely used to indicate the presence of a problem without naming it: silence itself became a message.

4.2 Subversive Coding of Language

Many letters contain indirect or coded expressions designed to convey information without stating it explicitly. This subversive coding echoes Scott’s description of hidden transcripts, in which subordinate groups create secret discourses behind the backs of the dominant (Scott, 1990, pp. 128–135). Readers needed to decipher euphemisms and allegories, and mistakes could be costly. An example from the 1950s shows a family asking the priest for news about their detained relative by referring to the term prisoner as “pensioner.” They ask him to write to them “what it means to be a pensioner in there.” The family knew that Mihály Tyukodi had met their imprisoned relative in prison, and when Mihály was released in 1953, they wrote to him in order to obtain news about their family member. They encouraged Tyukodi not to respond with an open postcard but with a closed, personal letter – naively believing that private letters would not be read by the censors. Their euphemisms illustrate how people attempted to talk about prohibited topics without triggering surveillance.

4.3 Avoiding Names and Concrete Details

Mihály Tyukodi’s correspondence shows that explicitly naming sensitive persons or places was often avoided, out of fear that the letter might be intercepted. In 1984, for instance, Tyukodi wrote to an acquaintance in Germany and offered his own explanation for an earlier letter that had gone missing: “And because there were names in the letter, it never reached you.” (Tyukodi, 9 April 1984; in Szikszai, 2021, vol. II. p. 195 – my translation.)⁶ For him, the only plausible reason for its disappearance was content-related censorship triggered by the mention of specific individuals. This suggests that, in his and his circle’s view, any concrete name or identifiable detail could raise suspicion and lead to the interception of a letter.

As a consequence, in letters, which they themselves considered delicate, intentional anonymization became common practice: friends were turned into “an acquaintance”, places were described vaguely or reduced to initials, so as not to give the censor a pretext to stop the

⁶ Original text: “És mivel nevek szerepeltek a levélben, az nem jutott el hozzád.”

correspondence. For example, shortly after the death of the Catholic bishop Áron Márton (1896–1980), Tyukodi referred to him in a letter simply as “our great departed”, without mentioning his name.

4.5 Fictional Scenarios to Mask Reality

One particularly inventive way of communicating under the nose of the censor appears in a 1964 letter, where the writer resorts to the fiction of an imaginary friend. A young priest was writing to Mihály Tyukodi about the possibility of visiting the pilgrimage site at Șumuleu Ciuc. Fully aware that the authorities might read the letter, he devised a small narrative trick: he framed his message as if he were asking Tyukodi to pass on a note to “a common friend” who was supposedly planning to travel to Șumuleu. Thus, he wrote: “Please be so kind as to tell him that, if possible, he should bring his camera with him, so that we may capture a few beautiful winter landscapes of the Harghita” (Tyukodi, 1 March 1964, unpublished letter – my translation)⁷, adding that if this friend announced the time of his arrival, they would meet him at the station. The name of the friend is never mentioned; everything remains deliberately vague. In reality, no third person existed – the “friend” was none other than Mihály Tyukodi himself, who was considering the visit. The unusual formulation was intended precisely to mislead the censor’s scrutiny.

Tyukodi’s reply, written two weeks later, confirms their tacit understanding: this time addressing the matter in first person, he wrote that he was cancelling his planned trip to Șumuleu Ciuc. The two were, in effect, conveying their intentions to each other indirectly. The solution to hide the real content in a message addressed to a third party clearly shows that they had anticipated the letters being monitored by the Securitate and they attempted to avoid direct implication. Ironically, if Tyukodi had written back with his exact arrival time, the authorities could simply have sent someone to observe who actually showed up at the station in Șumuleu Ciuc. Their caution did not extend that far, and this underlines the limits of such strategies: they were never foolproof, merely the improvised solutions of amateurs seeking some measure of safety. Such tactics reflect the “arts of political disguise” that Scott identifies as characteristic of subordinate discourses (Scott, 1990, p. 136).

4.5 Silence after Imprisonment: Narrative Limits and Traumatic Omission

One of the most conspicuous absences in Mihály Tyukodi’s documents concerns the years he spent in prison between 1950 and 1953. For this period – and even in the years immediately following his release – he offers no personal account of his experiences. The only mentions appear in official correspondence or in brief, factual references, without emotional or narrative elaboration. This silence is particularly striking given his otherwise consistent habit of documenting the events of his life. Before the prison years, Tyukodi regularly recorded his activities, thoughts, concerns, and joys. After he returned from prison and gradually began making notes again, he still did not reflect on his years of imprisonment. The absence of any reflective writing about this experience suggests not forgetfulness, but a different kind of limit: one that concerns what could not be narrated. In the absence of a direct text, I cannot verify whether Tyukodi’s post-prison silence was primarily driven by psychological trauma. What the archive supports more directly is that narrating prison on paper could have been dangerous. In a context where letters were assumed to be monitored, any concrete detail – names, places,

⁷ Original text: “Tessék szíves lenni megmondani, hogy lehetőleg hozza magával fényképezőgépjét, hadd örökössünk meg néhány hargitai szép téli tájat.”

dates, fellow inmates - could have exposed both the writer and others. This is consistent with the wider epistolary norm visible in the corpus: imprisonment is referenced in coded, euphemistic terms (for example “pensioner”), and sensitive matters are either anonymized or deferred to face-to-face communication. Read this way, the absence of a prison narrative is not only an “unspeakable” experience but may also be understood as a deliberate practice of self-censorship shaped by surveillance and by the everyday obligation to protect others.

As has been discussed above, anthropologists have increasingly emphasized that silence must be understood not only as the absence of speech, but as a meaningful, multivocal phenomenon in its own right. Ana Dragojlović and Annemarie Samuels (2021) have argued that certain silences are rooted in the limits of articulation – in experiences that are unspeakable not simply because they are forbidden or shameful, but because they resist being made intelligible through narrative. As the scholars point out, the unspoken and the unspeakable are not opposed to narrative experience but form an integral part of it (Dragojlović & Samuels, 2021, p. 422). In their view, silence often marks the edge of what can be rendered into discourse: it is not emptiness, but a trace of something that remains unformulated and unresolved.

In Tyukodi’s case, the absence of reflection on his imprisonment aligns with this anthropological understanding of silence. Even in contexts where he otherwise felt free to express himself – in private notes, in letters to close acquaintances, or in retrospective comments – he only returns to the subject much later, with rare and superficial references. And when he mentions those years, he doesn’t talk about what happened to him during that time, he just refers to his imprisonment. Given his detailed and persistent documentary practices, this omission stands out. It suggests that the experience of detention created a break not only in his life, but in his narrative self-understanding – a rift that could not be easily mended with words.

What matters here is not the content of the prison experience itself, but the way its absence affects the structure of Tyukodi’s self-documentation. His writing usually follows a steady rhythm: everyday events, duties, encounters and concerns are recorded in a cumulative, almost continuous manner. The years of imprisonment interrupt this continuity, yet they are never fully reintegrated into the narrative afterwards. In this sense, imprisonment does not appear as a narrated episode, but as a rupture in the flow of documentation. It divides the narrative into a distinct pre-imprisonment and post-imprisonment phase, while the prison years themselves remain outside what Tyukodi seems able or willing to put into words. The silence, therefore, does not erase the prison years from the archive, but marks them as a boundary of narration, shaping the material through omission rather than description.

This kind of silence is not uncommon in the aftermath of political violence or personal trauma. I agree with Dragojlović and Samuels, that anthropological approaches must learn to attend to such silences not as gaps in data, but as forms of presence that shape memory, subjectivity and voice. The challenge lies in recognizing when silence is a way of signaling that the experience in question cannot be fully contained within the available frameworks of narration – and in resisting the impulse to “fill in” such silences with retrospective interpretation. In this sense, Tyukodi’s restraint does not reflect a lack of testimony, but rather a recognition – perhaps intuitive, perhaps deeply personal – that some aspects of experience cannot be said, only held.

5. Personal Silences and Unspoken Emotions

In addition to silence driven by political reasons, Mihály Tyukodi’s documents also reveal a spectrum of personal and emotional silences. Certain feelings, conflicts or vulnerabilities were not directly expressed in his letters – sometimes out of personal discretion,

other times as part of his role-related obligations. Scholars of silence emphasize that silence relates to voice, visibility and representation and that interpreting silences requires acknowledging unintelligibility and uncertainty (Dragojlovic and Samuels, 2023, pp. 48–60). The correspondence indicates that Tyukodi generally refrained from openly expressing anger or personal grievance; when he did break his restraint, he marked those moments explicitly.

The letters also reveal pain and concern left unspoken: even when dealing with his sister's accident or a friend's despair, Tyukodi suppressed his own distress to comfort others. Such emotional self-censorship can be read both as an act of generosity and as a way to maintain an image of strength. Similarly, expressions of love, affection or longing were cloaked in allegory and metaphor. Tyukodi's correspondence with a woman who emigrated to Hungary shows that both parties used seasonal metaphors ("spring," "blossoming") and references to a third-person "friend" to express feelings without breaching propriety. Again, the real message was between the lines.

5.1 Affection and Longing Expressed between the Lines

Some of the most intriguing "messages between the lines" in Mihály Tyukodi's correspondence emerge in his exchanges with certain individuals from his social circle. One particularly revealing case is that of Melania, a woman from the same community who emigrated to Hungary in the early 1960s. In her letters to Tyukodi, Melania often conveyed a deep sense of unhappiness. She described her new life in Hungary as a "forced solution," openly admitting that she took no pleasure in her surroundings – she disliked the people, the places, and her work – and confessed to suffering from an overwhelming homesickness, at times feeling "nearly in despair."

In these moments of emotional turmoil, it was Tyukodi she turned to. Gradually, he became her emotional anchor, a living link to the home she had left behind. The tone of her letters reveals a deep and sincere affection toward the priest. In one particularly personal letter, she writes that only she knows – not even her older brother – that she owes everything to Mihály. This powerful statement suggests an extraordinary sense of gratitude and attachment, although the exact nature of the help he had once offered remains unstated.

Toward the end of that same letter, Melania mentions her hope to visit her brother in Romania the following year. She adds that she would be glad if they could see each other then. While she does not explicitly say that she wants to meet Tyukodi, her wording seems deliberately open to this possibility. It is evident that both correspondents were fully aware of the subtext: Melania could not openly state her wish to see the priest again – perhaps out of modesty, or perhaps out of fear of compromising his reputation – but she found a way to allude to it, using the visit to her brother as a socially acceptable pretext.

Tyukodi, for his part, seems to have cherished this special bond, though he consistently maintained a proper and restrained tone in his letters. (A note from the future: the two never met again – not that year, nor ever after.)

In March 1987, Mihály Tyukodi wrote a personal note after reading one of Melania's letters, remarking on her allegorical style of expression:

She likes to speak allegorically in her letters, telling her experiences in this way. We rejoice that we are at the end of winter. An old heart can carry spring as well. Old branches, too, burst into bloom. The scent of the great acacia tree is intoxicating, its nectar sweet as honey.⁸ (Tyukodi, 10 March 1987; in Szikszai, 2020, p. 78 – my translation)

⁸ Original text: "Ő szeret alleg(ri)orikusan beszélni levelében, így mondani el élményét. Örvendünk, hogy a tél végén vagyunk. Öreg szív is hordozhat tavaszt. Öreg ágak is virágba borulnak. A nagy akácfá illata bódító, nektárja mézédese."

What struck him most in these poetic images was their function as a kind of encrypted emotional language. Melania's references to "spring" and "blossoming" are not merely decorative – they are metaphors for a personal rebirth, a tentative return of joy and hope to her life. Tyukodi admits (again, only in a private note) that, as the correspondence continued, he noticed a shift in his own feelings toward her. In other words, something within him changed during the course of their letter exchange. And yet he stops there. He does not elaborate on the nature of this change. What is telling, however, is that he never shares these reflections directly with her – he records them privately, for himself. The attachment, then, remains silent in their direct communication. It is never openly stated, only implied, hovering just beneath the surface. This is a striking example of personal silence: even though affection is present, and the parties occasionally allude to it, it is never spoken by either of them. It is merely suggested – through symbols like seasons and flowers – and silently understood.

For us, as readers, these hidden emotional messages lend the correspondence a quiet depth. They reveal that, beyond political caution and social constraints, people also concealed their personal feelings in letters – safeguarding them from prying eyes and preserving their intimacy through metaphor and silence.

One of the distinctive features of Mihály Tyukodi's correspondence with Melania is the recurring presence of a third figure – a so called "friend" who is not named – to whom he attributes the thoughts and emotions he does not express in his own name. Over a longer period, this rhetorical device appears repeatedly: instead of articulating his own feelings, Tyukodi describes the feelings of this "friend". In one letter, for instance, he writes:

May these few lines, which now and then enter your home, serve as proof that my friend has a heart in which you – as lonely as he is – can read its warmth, reaching you like the rays of sunlight that enter our homes and bring joy.⁹ (Tyukodi, 12 February 1988; in Szikszai, 2021, vol. II, pp. 291-292– my translation)

What makes this particularly intriguing is that Melania understood the allusion. She, too, addresses this non-existent friend in her reply, subtly adopting the same code: "To your friend as well, wishing all good things, thinking of him always with true affection, Melania." (Melania, 15 December 1987; in Szikszai, 2021, Vol. II, p. 274 – my translation).¹⁰

This brief yet telling exchange reveals a delicate interplay of distance and intimacy. The use of a third person serves both as a protective veil and as a shared metaphorical space, allowing them to express emotional closeness without ever breaking the bounds of discretion. The "friend" becomes a narrative device through which affection can be voiced obliquely, maintaining a carefully sustained balance between suggestion and silence. It only becomes clear that this person does not exist when Tyukodi fails to consistently maintain the references in his narratives, thereby revealing that he is not speaking about a friend, but about himself.

Based on these examples, it becomes clear that the personal silences found in Mihály Tyukodi's documents – whether in the form of repressed anger, unspoken sorrow, or affection transfigured into metaphor – are not merely shaped by fear of the regime, but also by individuals' own moral, psychological, and cultural frameworks. People may choose silence out of love, respect, or shame, not just fear. And these silences, too, tell their own story – one that unfolds through close attention to both context and subtext.

⁹ Original text: "Legyen ez a pár sor, ami néha-néha beköszönt a hajlékba bizonyíték arra, hogy a barátom olyan szívvel rendelkezik, amelyben Te, aki magányos vagy, mint ő, kiolvashatod, hogy szívének melege úgy hatol Hozzád, mint a napsugár beköszönt hajlékainkba, hogy örömet hozzon."

¹⁰ Original text: "Barátodnak is minden jót, igaz szeretettel mindig Rá gondolva, Melánia".

6. Conclusions

As can be seen from the examples above, silence and non-disclosure were not always complete. We know that a letter writer has more to say than he or she writes, as he or she indicates this, but does not disclose the sensitive content itself. For example, although we never receive a detailed description of the events, we learn about Mihály Tyukodi's years in prison from brief references in later documents. Emotions were similarly considered a category to be kept secret: letter writers tend to only allude to their emotions, even allegorically, while never naming them. The aim in such cases is not to conceal the information completely, so that the content in question is not addressed at any level or in any form, but rather to communicate the minimum amount of information to the communication partner and leave the rest to their imagination. In other cases, the letter writers aim to arouse the reader's anticipation by hinting that the exchange of information will take place during their next personal meeting.

The case of Mihály Tyukodi and the silences in his documents reveals the complex relationship between repression and the unspoken, inviting us to read meaning between the lines. At the macro level, the dictatorial national state imposed enforced silences (through censorship and fear), but it also stimulated the development of alternative modes of communication – hidden transcripts or coded behavior (Scott, 1990, p. 139). For anthropologists, tracing these silences is essential: silences must be interpreted alongside the voices, and what is not said can be as important as what is said.

For Mihály Tyukodi, silence was often a conscious decision: it was used to protect others, to hide emotions, or to preserve one's social role. Paper became both a medium of expression – a written form of voice – and a medium of omission: a place where silences were carried not visibly, but perceptibly, for those attuned to reading between the lines.

From an anthropological perspective, evaluating these documents as cultural data reveals both the explicit and implicit layers. Examining written texts is essential for understanding how societies operate and are organized; writing is created by people, passed on culturally and crucial to interaction and knowledge creation (Barton & Papen, 2010, pp. 60–68). The writing strategies identified here and the concealment strategies hidden between the lines – deliberate self-censorship, metaphorical drift, the creation of trusted networks – are not unique to Mihály Tyukodi. They appear in various forms among many individuals who lived under oppressive regimes, but not exclusively so, underscoring the need for micro-historical approaches that attend to small-scale life worlds and the contradictions they reveal. We can observe how people structured their daily lives, how they made decisions, what forms of pain, joy, or hope they experienced – and what they felt compelled to articulate versus what they were forced to leave unspoken. Examining hidden references provides a more nuanced picture of everyday life under dictatorship: not merely as a story of fear and control, but also as one of quiet resistance, creative adaptation, and solidarity. In the end, we might say that when the human voice was silenced, paper spoke in its place – and today, thanks to this archive, those long-muted voices and silences can once again be heard and interpreted, offering enduring lessons about power, vulnerability, and hope.

One of the most profound revelations of this anthropological research is that not everything was written down, not everything was spoken – and yet, in certain cases, posterity can still read between the lines, though from a different historical and experiential position. As I read through Mihály Tyukodi's letters and the silences surrounding them, I became increasingly aware that what is essential often hides in these unspoken spaces. Between the silences imposed by censorship and the ones shaped by inner restraint, another force was at work: the desire to protect what language cannot carry.

The absent presences, the sentences never written, the gaps left intentionally – these do not fragment the message but complete it. Silence does not narrow down meaning, but expands it, while also rendering it more ambiguous. This openness, this dense and deliberate silence, is precisely what remains beyond the grasp of archival material, and yet, paradoxically, it bears the deepest kind of testimony.

References:

- Barton, D., & Papen, U. (2010). *The anthropology of writing: Writing as social and cultural practice*. Routledge.
- Basso, K. H. (1970). "To give up on words": Silence in Western Apache culture. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, 26(3), 213–230.
<https://web.stanford.edu/~eckert/Courses/11562018/Readings/Basso1970.pdf>
- Chiorean, A. (2019). The politics of silence: Cultural production and censorship in early socialist Romania. In D. Petrescu & C. Petrescu (Eds.), *Authoritarianism and everyday life in East-Central Europe after World War II* (pp. 111–129). De Gruyter Oldenbourg.
https://www.etd.ceu.edu/2009/chiorean_andru.pdf
- Dragojlovic, A., & Samuels, A. (2021). Tracing silences: Towards an anthropology of the unspoken and unspeakable. *History and Anthropology*, 32(4), 417–425.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2021.1954634>
- Ginzburg, C., Tedeschi, J., & Tedeschi, A. C. (1993). Microhistory: Two or three things that I know about it. *Critical Inquiry*, 20(1), 10–35.
- Kavedžija, I. (2025). Silence as presence: Affective spaces of silence and care. *Medicine Anthropology Theory*, 12(2), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.17157/mat.12.2.9873>
- Levi, G. (1991). On microhistory. In P. Burke (Ed.), *New perspectives on historical writing* (pp. 93–114). Polity Press.
- Magnússon, S. G., & Sziájtó, I. M. (2013). *What is microhistory? Theory and practice*. Routledge.
- Scott, J. C. (1990). *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts*. Yale University Press.
https://monoskop.org/images/0/0f/Scott_James_C_Domination_and_the_Arts_of_Resistance_Hidden_Transcripts_1990.pdf
- Szikszai, M. (2020). *Letűnt világok antropológiája és a megismerhetetlen különös szépsége. Szociális kapcsolatháló és kulturális gyakorlat az írógép korszakában* [Anthropology of bygone worlds and the peculiar beauty of the unknowable. Social networks and cultural practices in the age of the typewriter]. EME Publishing.
- Szikszai, M. (2021). *Levelek egy letűnt világból. A mindennapok dokumentálása a 20. század papíralapú kultúrájában* [Letters from a vanished world: Documenting everyday life in the paper-based culture of the twentieth century] (Vols. I–II). EME Publishing.
- Szikszai, M. (2023). *Community networks and cultural practices in twentieth-century Romania. Paper-based cultures in the writings of a Catholic priest*. Lexington Books.

- Tátrai, P. (2013). Between Hungarians and Romanians: Swabians in Sathmar County. *Ethnographica et Folkloristica Carpathica*, 18, 116–137.
- Trouillot, M.-R. (1995). *Silencing the past: Power and the production of history*. Beacon Press.
https://www.metodos.work/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Michel-Rolph-Trouillot-Silencing-the-Past_-Power-and-the-Production-of-History-20th-Anniversary.pdf
- Uusihakala, K., Kallinen, T., & Alava, H. (2019). Introduction: Silence, secrets, and revelations. *Suomen Antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society*, 44(1), 3–11.
<https://doi.org/10.30676/jfas.v44i1.84181>
- Vianu, L. (1998). *Censorship in Romania*. Central European University Press.

Film

**THE FILM *THE GOLDEN TRAIN* (1986) – POLISH – ROMANIAN
CO-PRODUCTION OF A MISSED OPPORTUNITY?¹**

Wojciech ŚWIECH

Independent researcher, Poland

e-mail: wojtek_swiech@tlen.pl

Abstract

In the past, there was no extensive co-operation between Polish and Romanian cinematography. In the 1980s, a film entitled *The Golden Train* (referring to the common history of both nations during World War II) was produced with great fanfare. The joint project involved, for those times, huge financial resources. It is necessary to refer to the political situation at that time to understand why it was decided to implement this project in the final form. The artistic vision presented in the film, which refers to a real situation, may arouse great controversy. However, the creators involved in the production of the film probably had their own reasons. In the 1980s, it was not necessarily possible to officially disclose the factors that influenced the artistic expression of a work. In the post–World War II period, cooperation between Polish and Romanian cinematography acquired particular significance and deserves closer examination. The text presents, among others: an outline of formal issues (provisions of bilateral agreements) that preceded the production of the film and is based on sources held in the Archive of New Records in Warsaw (Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie¹) and the State Archive in Warsaw (Archiwum Państwowe w Warszawie). The collection of documents regarding the Polish – Romanian co-production has historical value but reflects the spirit of a bygone era. While the artistic value of the films produced in that period is open to debate, the cinematography of the time constitutes a valuable source for understanding the cultural relationships that existed then. The purpose of this article is to examine whether filmmakers from Poland and Romania made proper use of the opportunities offered by their cooperation. It also seeks to identify the factors that shaped the reception of the film directed by Bohdan Poręba (1934–2014) among Polish and Romanian audiences. It seems that the choice of the film director was not accidental and was motivated by issues that the Romanian audience may not have been aware of. Bohdan Poręba was a rather controversial figure who, even in the Polish People's Republic, provoked strong reactions, not all of them positive. The director could certainly have counted on greater leniency from institutional censorship, which played a huge role in limiting artistic freedom throughout the Soviet Bloc. The ambition of this article is also to provoke a broader discussion in Poland and Romania about the place in the culture of politically engaged film production created during the existence of the Soviet Bloc.

Keywords: Bohdan Poręba; Polish and Romanian cinematography; *The Golden Train*; co-production; history and fiction.

¹Article History: Received: 09.11.2025. Accepted: 16.01.2026. Published: 15.05.2026. No funding was received either for the research presented in the article or for the creation of the article.

1. Introduction

After World War II, Poland and Romania were part of the same political bloc. It seemed, therefore, that cooperation between the two countries would develop in various fields. However, there was no broader cooperation that would stand out in Central and Eastern Europe. This was probably due to the Romanian approach, which sought some independence within the bloc of communist states. The early 1980s brought unexpected events in Poland and the development of the movement associated with the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union “Solidarity”. For this reason, the introduction of martial law in Poland was met with satisfaction in Romania, as it was in line with the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of individual socialist countries, which was proclaimed by the Romanian Communist Party (Partidul Comunist Român, abbreviated as PCR). On the other hand, Nicolae Ceaușescu made it clear that he disliked the increasing importance of the military in Poland’s political life. “The Genius of the Carpathians” was probably aware that the armed forces could be the only force that could remove him from power, so he saw the solutions adopted in Poland as a precedent that was dangerous for him (Dubicki, 2020, pp. 112-113).

In June 1984, the Romanian president and General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party visited Poland, which was reported more extensively in the Romanian press (especially in the official voice of the PCR, i.e., the daily newspaper *Scînteia*) than Ceaușescu’s previous visit to Moscow. During this visit, the special political and economic ties between the two countries within the Warsaw Pact and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance were emphasized (Dubicki, 2020, p. 113). A few months before Ceaușescu visited Warsaw, documents regarding the production of a Polish – Romanian film titled *The Golden Train*² were signed (*Współpraca z Rumunią w sprawie filmu „Złoty pociąg”*, 1984–1986, pp. 50-52). It can be assumed that the film cooperation between the two countries, for which a large amount of money was planned to be allocated from the Polish side, was to be one of the elements to convince the Romanian party comrades that the Polish People’s Republic was still based on the ideological principles of the common bloc.

The purpose of this article is to evaluate the feature film titled *The Golden Train*. It is important to answer the question whether the filmmakers properly used the opportunity to show Polish – Romanian relations in the difficult times of World War II. In this context, it is worth asking why the cooperation took place in a specific way and why it was decided to select certain filmmakers for the film’s production. It is also worth paying attention to what circumstances could have distorted the perception of the film among viewers, especially Romanian ones.

2. Bohdan Poręba – The Voice of Regime Power

Bohdan Poręba (born Jerzy Bogusław Poręba) is a highly controversial figure in Poland. A film and theatre director, screenwriter, politician, and publicist, he remains a figure full of paradoxes in the history of Polish cinematography. Poręba is remembered primarily for his film full of patriotic emotions entitled *Hubal*³ (Mazurek & Zaremba, 2008) from 1973. It is a Polish war film depicting the fate of Major Henryk Dobrzański (pseudonym: Hubal) and his cavalry unit, the last regular unit of the Second Polish Republic that did not lay down its arms after the defeat of the September Campaign. The reviews for this film are mixed. Some have called this production “a monumental work” (Jasina & Kozłowski, 2019, p. 72), but even in the 1970s,

²In Polish: *Złoty pociąg*, in Romanian: *Trenul de aur*.

³In English: *Hubal*, in Romanian: *Ultima luptă*.

opinions emerged that *Hubal* had become a manifestation of “pseudo-documentary” or “fantasy adventure cinema” (Maron, 2015, pp. 128-129).

Bohdan Poręba (born 1934 – died 2014) also referred to the subject of war more than 10 years later in a film made together with a Romanian film studio. Considerable financial resources were allocated for co-production at that time.

Poręba openly declared his support for communism and, as an artist, he largely represented the official ideological line of the regime, a view widely shared in Poland (Stelmach, 2020, p. 162; Marszewski, 2021, p. 42). The director was part of a group of artists who were associated with the regime, but they belonged to the so-called national communist movement, which referred to Polishness, the cult of the military, the soldier’s ethos, and romantic tradition (Maj, 2013, p. 19). However, the director claimed that he did not look at the Polish United Workers’ Party⁴ through the prism of ideology, but saw it as a structure in which, as an artist, he could strengthen the national trend and contribute to introducing a strong Polish character into cinematography (Poręba, 2011, pp. 233-234).

Years later, the director claimed that he joined the communist party in 1969 to fight the Sovietization of Poland, because he was anti-Soviet, although not anti-Russian. Poręba never hid his national views (Mazurek & Zaremba, 2008; Poręba, 2011, pp. 392-394). It is therefore not surprising that in the 1980s the director was one of the founders and main ideologists of the Patriotic Union “Grunwald”. The association, which had a national-communist rather than a strictly dogmatic character, combined anti-German and anti-Semitic elements. The organization avoided rather, entering the fields of political activity, because it was within the competence of the PZPR (Gasztold-Seń, 2013, p. 179). The main goal of the association was to attack the opposition from nationalist and anti-Semitic positions. In this form, it was useful to the state authorities led by General Wojciech Jaruzelski.

Therefore, the choice of Bohdan Poręba for the Polish – Romanian co-production was not accidental. Nicolae Ceaușescu’s way of exercising power in the years 1965-1989 can be described as national communism. Romanian communists tried to emphasize their independence from Moscow in foreign policy (Petrescu, 2009, pp. 530-536). There is a fairly common opinion that the Romanian authorities had an anti-Soviet attitude (Gheorghe, 2015, p. 65). The regime was not openly anti-German or anti-Jewish. However, the way Ceaușescu treated Romanian citizens of Jewish and German descent showed a lot about his attitude towards those nations. The dictator believed that Jews and Germans, along with oil, were Romania’s best export commodities. In the case of people, the authorities based in Bucharest accepted not only cash settlements, but for reputation purposes, also barter (Cârstocea, 2014, p. 22). For this reason, Poręba, who tended to approach artistic issues through a “nationalist filter” (Guzek, 2011, p. 11), may have appeared the most suitable choice for cooperation with Romanian cinematography, over which Ceaușescu exerted overwhelming influence.

It is no coincidence that Bohdan Poręba, in an interview for the Romanian press in 1987, claimed that the task of his filmmaking unit was to promote the values of the modern Pole defined according to the expectations of the regime at the time (Maj, 2013, p. 19), who should respect tradition and be able to draw conclusions in order to be responsible for his own fate and that of the Polish nation both nowadays and in the future (Modorcea, 1987, p. 9). In the interview, the director excessively and artificially raised the importance and rank of the political values he proclaimed. With his work prior to *The Golden Train* the director guaranteed an interpretation of history in line with the guidelines of the Ceaușescu’s regime.

⁴In Polish: Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, abbreviated as PZPR, in Romanian: Partidul Muncitoresc Unit Polonez.

The director's views were consistent with the PCR's assumptions. In the first half of the 1980s, Nicolae Ceaușescu declared that all cultural, artistic, and educational activities had to permanently reflect not only the heroic work of people but also their desire for knowledge and their characteristic moral virtues. Cinematography was also to play a role in this plan, creating films inspired by the life of Romanian nation. The films were to depict not only the great epic of the present and the bright future of socialist Romania, but also draw inspiration from the past (Ceaușescu, 1984, p. 5).

3. Bilateral Cooperation in the Field of Culture, Including Cinematography

Before moving on to issues related to the film titled *The Golden Train*, it should be mentioned that on 26 November 1964, the Agreement between the Government of the Polish People's Republic and the Government of the Romanian People's Republic concerning cultural and scientific co-operation was signed in Warsaw (*Umowa o współpracy kulturalnej i naukowej (Polska–Rumunia)*, 1964). On 10 August 1965, the ratification documents of the agreement in question were exchanged in Bucharest⁵ (*Oświadczenie rządowe w sprawie wymiany dokumentów ratyfikacyjnych (Polska–Rumunia)*, 1965). Article 5 of the 1964 Agreement stated:

The two Contracting Parties shall promote co-operation in the spheres of literature, theatre, music, plastic arts, films, folk arts and mass cultural work through the exchange of delegations of cultural workers, artistic performances, the exchange of exhibitions, the inclusion of certain works by the playwrights and composers of each country in the theatrical and musical repertoires of the other country, and the exhibition of films (*Umowa o współpracy kulturalnej i naukowej (Polska–Rumunia)*, 1964).

Cooperation with Romania in the field of cinematography for many years did not go beyond organizing cultural events. The Polish People's Republic was much more involved in joint projects with other countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Szczutkowska, 2014, pp. 302-314). In the 1970s, the Polish Film Days were held annually in Romania. Bohdan Poręba took part in this event in 1976, and the Romanian audience had the opportunity to see his film titled *Jarosław Dąbrowski* (Szczutkowska, 2021, p. 89). The next year in a press report from the Polish Film Days, Edmund Żurowicz announced that the first Polish – Romanian film, titled *A Train with Gold*⁶, would soon begin production. At the time, it was known that the project would tell the story of the transport of Polish gold through Romania at the beginning of World War II. Among the filmmakers of the planned action film, only Ion Grigorescu was mentioned, who had already prepared the script (Żurowicz, 1977, p. 4).

On 17 November 1983, an Agreement was concluded in Bucharest between the Ministry of Culture and Art of the Polish People's Republic – the Supreme Board of Cinematography, and the Centrala România-Film (Romania-Film Central) Headquarters of the Council of Culture and Socialist Education of the SSR for the years 1983-1985. This document included a chapter titled "Co-operation in the field of production". Pursuant to the Agreement in question, the parties were to support joint production of films. The films were to be produced directly by specialized cinema companies in both countries, subject to management approval. For the purpose of film co-production, the Agreement required prior confirmation from the

⁵This agreement was repealed on 1 March 1995.

⁶In Polish: *Pociąg ze złotem*, in Romanian: *Un tren cu aur*.

competent authorities and the conclusion of a separate agreement (*Współpraca kinematografii polskiej z rumuńską*, 1977–1986, pp. 2-5). It may seem that the Polish side did not have high hopes for cooperation with Romania. An interview with a member of the Polish government responsible for the film industry was published on 24 November 1983 in *Trybuna Ludu*. Jerzy Bajdor, in the official and nationwide press organ of the Polish United Workers' Party, mentioned cooperation with the USSR and Czechoslovakia, as well as promising projects with Hungarian and Bulgarian cinematography (Zaryczny, 1983, p. 4).

On 9 February 1984, an agreement was signed in Bucharest between the Supreme Board of Cinematography in Warsaw, represented by the Deputy Minister of Culture and Art, Jerzy Bajdor, and the Centrala România-Film (Romania-Film Central) Headquarters, represented by the General Director, Mariu Stanciu, for the co-production of a feature film entitled *The Golden Train*. The contract precisely defined the implementation periods for each phase of the film. The preparatory period was to end by 31 July 1984, and the final acceptance of the film was to be made no later than 28 February 1985 (*Współpraca z Rumunią w sprawie filmu „Złoty pociąg”*, 1984–1986, pp. 50-52).

As mentioned earlier, the script for the film was proposed to the Polish side by Ioan Grigorescu (Tronowicz, 1986, p. 13). At the time of production, the Romanian screenwriter had already written books on Polish topics, including one about his time in Poland from 1956 to 1958 as a correspondent for the Agerpres press agency (Grigorescu, 1961). Considering Grigorescu's roles in cinematography and television during the Ceaușescu regime (Grigorescu, 2019, p. 335), it must be assumed that he was well-versed in the Polish film community. Therefore, it is difficult to believe that the Romanian side did not have a significant influence on the choice of Bohdan Poręba as director of the joint film co-production.

On 18 June 1984, the Polish side decided to send the film into production. However, the production of the film quickly encountered obstacles (*Współpraca z Rumunią w sprawie filmu „Złoty pociąg”*, 1984–1986, p. 51). Already on 27 June 1985, in Warsaw, the parties concluded an annex to the co-production agreement for the film. Polish side, among others took note of the extension of the Romanian part of the film material with the necessary scenes with a length of approximately 200 screen meters highlighting more specifically the political affairs of the Romanian side of the presented period. Moreover, the parties agreed that they would make every effort to complete the production of the film according to the Romanian side's plan by the end of 1985, and the Polish side stated that it would complete production by the end of the first quarter of 1986 (*Współpraca z Rumunią w sprawie filmu „Złoty pociąg”*, 1984–1986, pp. 54-55). At that time, information appeared in the Romanian press about the ongoing production of the film *The Golden Train* (Panait, 1985, p. 24).

It should be mentioned that at the end of 1985 the Agreement between the Supreme Board of Cinematography and the Centrala România-Film expired. At the beginning of 1986, there was no Cultural Agreement Implementation Plan for 1986-1987. No new agreement has been signed between the Polish and Romanian cinematography. However, the Polish side assured that further cooperation was on the same terms and conditions as those provided for in the previous agreements. At that time, in matters of co-production, the parties cooperated only on the completion of work on the film *The Golden Train*. On the occasion of the 22 July holiday (the National Day of the Rebirth of Poland—the most important state holiday of the Polish People's Republic, celebrated annually until 1989 to mark the proclamation of the manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation, a Soviet-backed authority opposed to the London-based Polish government-in-exile), the Romanian side was to organize a ceremonial premiere of the film *The Golden Train* in Bucharest. A delegation consisting of two people was supposed to leave Poland for this ceremony (*Współpraca kinematografii polskiej z rumuńską*, 1977–1986, p. 9). Ultimately, the world and Polish cinema premiere of the adventure-thriller film directed by

Bohdan Poręba, according to the database of The Leon Schiller Polish National Film, Television and Theatre School in Łódź, took place on 2 March 1986 (*Złoty pociąg*). However, documents indicate that the film's pre-release screening (the committee's acceptance of the film, i.e., its final form) took place in Poland on 19 February 1986. The co-production was released for distribution by official letter dated on 10 December 1986 (*Złoty pociąg: Zespoły Polskich Producentów Filmowych*, n.d., pp. 11-12). The film was presented in September 1986 at one of the film festivals in Poland (*11. Festiwal Polskich Filmów Fabularnych w Gdańsku*, n.d.). Jarosław Grzechowiak, a Polish film expert, points to the film's premiere date on 2 March 1987 (Grzechowiak, 2023, p. 586).

The co-production was shown in Romania for the first time on 17 March 1987. However, the version presented to Romanian viewers was shorter because several scenes of the film were deleted ("*Trenul de aur*", *povestea reală a tezaurului polonez*, 2020).

4. The Reception of *The Golden Train* in Poland and Romania

It should be emphasized that the script and plot of the film are fiction. The transport itself (in the sense of activity) of Polish gold from the Polish Bank through Romania refers to real events from World War II. The historical facts related to Romania's involvement in the action certainly did not have such a dramatic, adventurous or sensational tone as the film entitled *The Golden Train*. A reliable source for understanding the fate of Polish gold reserves, all of which were evacuated from Poland in September 1939, is Wojciech Rojek's monograph *Odyseja skarbu Rzeczypospolitej: losy złota Banku Polskiego 1939–1950* [The gold Odyssey: The fate of Bank Polski gold 1939-1950] published in 2000 by Wydawnictwo Literackie. The author of the mentioned monograph conducted thorough research in the archival resources of many countries (Rojek, 2000). The book was also published in Romania in 2017 under the title *Odissea Aurului. Destinele Aurului Bank Polski 1939–1950*, translated by Anca Irina Ionescu and issued by the Oscar Print publishing house in Bucharest. Anyone interested in history, even at the basic level of the national core curriculum for secondary schools in Poland, must quickly realize that the film is full of historical inaccuracies that make the film production ridiculous. In the artistic community, Poręba was and still is considered a person who used the issue of World War II for purely ideological purposes. At best, this director treated the tragedy of war as a chance for a spectacular topic, giving the opportunity to make his presence known and, consequently, for a quick career (Replewicz, 2009, p. 17). Using contemporary language, Poręba's tabloidization of the events related to the evacuation of Polish gold comes to mind.

Romanian actor Mitică Popescu, who played Commissioner Munteanu, stated in an interview that the Polish audience received the Polish – Romanian co-production very positively at its premiere ("*Trenul de aur*", *povestea reală a tezaurului polonez*, 2020). However, the facts do not seem to confirm this, because in Poland the film was not considered an outstanding work among the public. The film was nominated for the Golden Lions, the main prize at the 11th Polish Film Festival in Gdańsk in 1986 (*11. Festiwal Polskich Filmów Fabularnych w Gdańsku*, n.d.), but it rather served as a background for other films taking part in the main competition. Despite the critical reviews from festival viewers, Bohdan Poręba believed in the film's success among cinema audiences (Sas, 1986, p. 1). In the press, even those associated with the regime in Poland, it was suggested that the film titled *The Golden Train* could only appeal to a youth audience because of the special effects with allegedly fast-paced action and surprising plot twists (Klemiato, 1986, p. 6).

From a press report of the screening of the co-production (in the presence of some of the creators) on 3 March 1987, in the Polish city of Lublin, it might have seemed that the film was well received:

It's been a long time since we witnessed such a storm of applause as erupted after Tuesday's premiere screening of the film *The Golden Train* at the Kosmos cinema (...). Ioan Grigorescu predicts great success for the film in his country, especially since all Polish films shown in Romania have always been well-received by the audience (*Dramatyczne losy polskiego złota*, 1987, p. 1 - my translation).

It should be mentioned that the film was made by two studios: the Profil Film Unit⁷ and the Centrala România-Film. The first of the mentioned film unit, headed by director Bohdan Poręba, from the beginning of its existence was considered in the film community to support the regime ruling in Poland. It was no secret that the film unit could count on strong support from the state authorities, primarily financial. Poręba therefore implemented cultural and historical policy in accordance with the guidelines of the Polish United Workers' Party⁸ (Grzechowiak, 2022, p. 113). A Polish film director born in Wilno had more creative freedom than most filmmakers in the 1980s (Świąch, 2024, p. 332-333).

For this reason, some actors refused to cooperate with Poręba during the production of the film *The Golden Train*, and the people involved in the production of the work did not feel the pressure of institutional censorship, as Mitică Popescu mentioned in one of the interviews (*"Trenul de aur", povestea reală a tezaurului polonez*, 2020). However, Bohdan Poręba's environment was parodied by director Stanisław Bareja – who presented the absurdities of the Polish People's Republic (Świąch, 2023, p. 104) – in 1981 in a film comedy entitled *Teddy Bear*⁹ (Hendrykowski, 2013, p. 345).

It often happened that the official reception of the film did not match the audience's reaction, especially in Poland. This was certainly the case with the film *The Golden Train*. Moreover, one may agree with the view that, from a political perspective, it was appropriate to highlight the assistance Romania provided to Poland in 1939 (Zwierzchowski, 2018, p. 156), although it seems that fictional thriller and adventure elements were added excessively. The film can even be treated as repaying the debt of gratitude to the Romanian nation. Poręba emphasized this repeatedly in the interviews he gave. The director maintained his stance on Romania even after many years:

If it hadn't been for the then prime minister of that country, Călinescu, we wouldn't have saved either the Wawel treasures or the gold for which we were to have a government and an army later. And there would be no Polish army in the West, because our people made their way through Romania and Hungary, and the Romanians, despite being blackmailed by the Germans and having their knife at throats, helped us a great deal (Poręba, 2011, pp. 223-224 - my translation).

However, the Polish press even expressed regret in 1987 that Poręba paid off the debt to the Romanians not with gold, but with the Polish currency, which was devalued at the time, and the co-production was boring and far from a reliable representation of historical events (Niemiec, 1987, p. 37).

Jarosław Grzechowiak, a film scholar and historian of Polish film, in his doctoral dissertation cited remarks made during the film's pre-release screening (the committee's acceptance of the film, i.e., its final form) in February 1986, particularly regarding the film's final scene, depicting the assassination of Armand Călinescu. Polish historian Jan Baszkiewicz stated

⁷In Polish: Zespół Filmowy Profil.

⁸In Polish: Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza, abbreviated to PZPR.

⁹In Polish: *Miś*, in Romanian: *Ursuleț de plus*.

at the time that the prime minister was murdered because he ordered the elimination of one of the leaders of the Iron Guard and the Legion of the Archangel Michael, and the motive for the assassin's actions was not the assistance the head of government had provided to the Poles. Even Stanisław Trepczyński, a Polish United Workers' Party activist, expressed the opinion during the pre-release screening that the film should have ended with the scene of the ship departing with the gold rather than with the assassination of Călinescu, which was thus overemphasized (Grzechowiak, 2023, pp. 471-472). The issue of incorrect emphasis placement was also noted in Polish party press. One newspaper from Silesia pointed out that the screenwriter had suggested that the assassination of the prime minister was a direct response to his government's position on the transfer of Polish gold, although the historical truth was much more complicated (Knichowiecki, 1987, p. 3).

For these reasons, the Polish recipient of the film may have had the impression that there was a certain idealization of Romania's attitude towards Poland after the September defeat. Already in 1987, Maria Malatyńska stated that the topic of the story of the removal of eighty tons of gold from Poland in September 1939 was a "film virginity". The journalist actually considered it the only value of the mentioned film (Malatyńska, 1987, p. 2). Moreover, there may be doubts as to whether the film's creators, by referring to historical figures, accurately presented the political situation in Romania in 1939. It seems that Poręba's film placed too much emphasis on various aspects, primarily regarding the causes of certain events. It also seems to be an indisputable fact that the director infantilized the story too much and presented certain characters in a caricatured way, especially those from the pre-war authorities of the Second Polish Republic (Zwierzchowski, 2018, p. 156). Bohdan Poręba claimed that the fictional elements in his film did not contradict historical facts. However, it seems that certain boundaries were crossed, and some audiences (especially young people) may have drawn too far-reaching conclusions from the film (Derecki, 1987, pp. 5, 8).

The Polish audience also did not seem delighted with the artistic level of the film. Historical threads were unsuccessfully combined with the rules of action cinema. Even the regional daily of the Polish United Workers' Party published a review unfavourable to the co-production:

The Golden Train is a "talking heads" film. Its characters talk, eat, and sometimes even fight (...). There is no deeper content, hidden allusions, great ideas or messages (...). It is not enough to film the script faithfully. Scene by scene. Word by word. You have to feel the cinema. You have to know the laws that govern it and respect the viewer. Otherwise, film as art loses its meaning. If it were different, all you have to do is give everyone a camera, a tape, and start filming, brother... (Maksymczak, 1987, p. 4 – my translation).

The way some intrigues are presented sometimes borders on ridiculousness or primitivism of the thought structure. For this reason, the script was not rated highly in Romania either, because one local cinema expert expressed the opinion that the film creates such "real" tension (recalling real events) that it seems to have been invented (Căliman, 2000, p. 308). Despite this, Bohdan Poręba stated in one of his interviews that Ioan Grigorescu was an excellent specialist with a recognized international brand (Kazimierczyk, 1987, p. 11).

It seems that at the request of the Romanian side, numerous political considerations were included in the adventure film, which inevitably had a negative impact on the slowdown of the pace (numerous office scenes, although on the other hand the viewer had the opportunity to learn about the intricacies of the politics of the time), the narrative and the structure of the film. On the one hand, in the post-festival discussion in Gdańsk, Poręba even called his film a

western, wanting to emphasize his ambition to create a great adventure (Malatyńska, 1987, p. 2). However, Malatyńska found it difficult to ignore another issue. In the journalist's opinion, in the field of presenting Romanian political arguments, the scenes could only be placed in the genre of... television non-fiction theatre. It is hard to disagree with the opinion of Malatyńska, who wrote in the Krakow press:

Genre indecision has its further consequences. Well, the whole film is extremely long, and when watched, it goes on forever, which in the case of sensation and adventure is an unforgivable mistake (Malatyńska, 1987, p. 2 – my translation).

Romanian critic Tudor Caranfil also stated that despite promises of spectacular action, the film “derails” in the quagmire of diplomatic negotiations, which was not helped by static sequences. This distracts the viewer's attention from the plot and slows down the pace of the film, which was supposedly intended to be an ambitious action film. For this reason, Caranfil rated the film two stars out of five (Caranfil, 2002, pp. 204-205). Maria Malatyńska expressed it more clearly. The Polish journalist even stated that Bohdan Poręba made two films, or rather two shows, which he then decided to edit “blindly”, hoping that somehow, they would be put together into one whole (Malatyńska, 1987, p. 2).

On the other hand, it's worth mentioning that immediately after the film's premiere in Romania, most reviews were enthusiastic. According to Romanian journalist Eva Sîrbu, *The Golden Train* was built on a foundation of historical facts with due care and respect providing the viewer with a picture with a huge emotional charge. The filmmakers created an action film, but with the hope for the impressive power of historical truth. In Sîrbu's opinion, the creators let their imagination run wild, but they did it to appeal to the viewers' interests. Although fiction was limited by the strong framework of reality. This was achieved thanks to the excellent script, executed with great directorial skill and exemplary work by a team of Polish and Romanian filmmakers (Sîrbu, 1987, p. 6).

Mădălina Stănescu in *Cinema* focused on Gheorghe Cozorici, who played the role of Armand Călinescu in the film. According to the journalist, the co-production resulted in a true moral portrait of Prime Minister, who defied the threats and arrogance of the Nazis and defended Romania's sovereignty. Stănescu expressed the opinion that actor demonstrated fearless Romanian dignity through his performance. In the reviewer's opinion, the film *The Golden Train* perfectly showed the courage of the Romanian statesman, who became a true defender of great virtues, humanity and a symbol of brotherly mutual help. The journalist even suggested that Cozorici's seemingly secondary role was actually taking center stage (Stănescu, 1987, p. 6).

Meanwhile, Nicolae Mateescu, in *Luceafărul*, recognized *The Golden Train* as a significant achievement among adventure films. In the journalist's opinion, the creators of the co-production referred to history, but did not fall too much into a didactic manner. Therefore, the film has not lost its proper rhythm and conciseness. According to Mateescu, the significant value of the work was to show the nobility of Romanian politics, which remained faithful to the brotherhood of both nations. However, a reviewer for a cultural and literary magazine pointed out that the film starred Romania's most prominent actors, while the Polish side cast lesser-known actors in the roles (Mateescu, 1987, p. 5).

5. Film Production Controversies

A few years ago, reports emerged suggesting that Romanian cinematography in the 1980s was marked by an obsession with staying within budgetary limits. This is indicated by the report found in archival resources on the co-financing agreement for the Romanian-Polish

co-production, i.e. the film *The Golden Train*. Regarding the proposal to change the size of the film's budget, information was found in Romanian archival documents:

As regards the expenditure estimate, the level of expenses proposed shall not be endorsed and it is recommended that the cost estimate should be reconsidered after the completion of the filming stage in Romania (Turcuș, 2017, p. 19).

However, there is a common opinion that the Polish side for the production of the film allocated huge financial resources, i.e. 143,100,000 old złoty (Grzechowiak, 2022, p. 124). The cost of co-production was originally estimated at 48,000,000 old złoty (*Złoty pociąg: Zespoły Polskich Producentów Filmowych*, n.d., p. 22), and then at 95,000,000 old złoty, which turned out to be insufficient. The film crew then claimed that during production, it turned out that the literary material contained in the shooting script was much larger than previously thought. Therefore, the film had to be divided into two parts. It was argued that considering the film's two-part format, which required expensive staging and numerous widely separated shooting locations, the costs were not particularly excessive and were fully justified (*Złoty pociąg: Zespoły Polskich Producentów Filmowych*, n.d., p. 18).

However, in Polish cinemas, the film was watched by only 190,000 viewers, which resulted in box office revenues of 13,546,000 old złoty (Grzechowiak, 2022, p. 124). A commentary on this situation can be found in a Polish press report from March 1987 about the film: "The audience is most excited when the subtitles appear: 'End of Part One' and 'Part Two' – and this audience revival is rather unfavorable to the film (Młynarz, 1987, p. 4 – my translation).

Therefore, it can be said that the work aspired to be a super-production, i.e. a very expensive film that was supposed to be a blockbuster, although it certainly did not have a star cast (at least when it comes to Polish actors).

In the years 1984-1987, the Profil Film Unit made 16 films, of which the Polish – Romanian co-production was the most expensive. It must be emphasized that the above-mentioned unit created in 1986 the film *On the Niemen*¹⁰, directed by Zbigniew Kuźmiński, which cost 70,897,000 old złoty, but in Polish cinemas it had box-office earners of 304,132,000 old złoty (5,733,000 viewers). The film *Alabama* (1984), directed by Ryszard Rydzewski, was certainly a success. It was produced by the Profil Film Unit for 28,625,000 old złoty, and its box-office earners in Polish cinemas amounted to 83,303,000 old złoty (1,216,000 viewers) (Grzechowiak, 2022, p. 124). However, the Polish – Hungarian co-production made in 1985 by the Zodiak Film Unit¹¹ and Hunnia Filmstúdió, i.e., *H.M. Deserters*¹² directed by Janusz Majewski, was a success. The adventure comedy attracted over 6 million viewers in cinemas (Zajiček, 1992, p. 297) – it was the highest-attended film of the season. The production, produced together with Hungary, also received an award called Golden Duck (awarded by the *Film* magazine) in the category: best Polish film for 1986 (C.K. Dezerterzy).

Bohdan Poręba's film titled *The Golden Train* once again gave critics in Poland arguments for opinions that have been voiced for many years. The Profil Film Unit has been incurring huge losses since its beginning, and this could not be changed by occasional box office successes. The regime authorities had long been aware that Poręba's political views were correct from their point of view, which was not matched by the appropriate level of artistic skills (Grzechowiak, 2019, pp. 155, 159). Poręba, as the artistic director of the Profil Film Unit, failed in many aspects of film production organization, which was consequently particularly

¹⁰In Polish: *Nad Niemnem*, in Romanian: *Pe râul Neman*.

¹¹In Polish: *Zespół Filmowy Zodiak*.

¹²In Polish: *C.K. Dezerterzy*, in Romanian: *C.c. Dezertori*.

evident in economic matters. The director's megalomaniacal ideas demanded enormous financial outlays without producing tangible results (Grzechowiak, 2023, pp. 251, 318-321). It was no different in the case of the Polish – Romanian co-production. The remarks that appeared in one of the local newspapers in Poland were significant:

Poręba's films, so lavish and made with such great expense, simply have poor attendance. Recently, the director even felt the need to explain himself, he appeared on television, talked about the budget of his films, but he spoke in an extremely convoluted way and probably didn't seem to convince anyone to watch his latest work (Młynarz, 1987, p. 4 – my translation).

It should be remembered that at that time there was institutional censorship in the Polish People's Republic (Mielczarek, 2010, pp. 29-49). Previous attempts to express criticism in this regard ended with the censorship suspending the publication of the press article (Grzechowiak, 2023, pp. 320-321). It seems that in 1987 the regime authorities lost hope that Bohdan Poręba's form of communication would reach the Polish cinema audience. The fact that such open criticism of the director's work was allowed, even in a regional daily, was significant. This probably indicated the scale of the disaster, which the authorities of Poland had no intention of covering up at any cost.

6. Conclusions

Considering the above, it is difficult to say that the film *The Golden Train* was an outstanding film work. It seems that this happened because creators from Poland and Romania had completely different goals. Bohdan Poręba wanted to create, above all, an action film, while the Romanian side was particularly interested in presenting its political arguments in the context of the international situation at that time. Moreover, the film, in a way, became a victim of the director's political involvement. Bohdan Poręba was associated by many people with the ideology of national communism, which influenced the perception of his work. It is an indisputable fact that the director was ostracized for many years, which was related to his controversial political involvement and had an impact on Bohdan Poręba's activities in cultural life. However – according to Piotr Zwierzchowski and Krzysztof Kornacki – the approach to the Polish director's work is completely incomprehensible in the field of historiography. The "Bohdan Poręba's School" (or rather the Profil Film Unit that he led) is "a mine of knowledge" and topics related to the Polish People's Republic (Zwierzchowski, Kornacki, 2014, pp. 29-30). It would also be extremely valuable to undertake a broader discussion on the role and importance of the film *The Golden Train* in Romanian cinematography, taking into account in particular the realities of filmmaking during the rule of Nicolae Ceaușescu. Polish and Romanian film critics assessed the film similarly in some respects. However, it seems that the Romanian audience (the so-called average recipient) received the film *The Golden Train* better. According to official data from the Romanian Film Center, the film was seen by 2,376,136 viewers in Romania, which seems to be a good result considering the country's population (Centrul Național al Cinematografiei, 2025). The different perception (and reasons for it) of Polish – Romanian co-production in both countries may also be the subject of further research. It seems that Polish audience was primarily outraged by the huge prevalence of fictional themes over historical facts. The production was also hampered by the director's views, which had previously alienated many viewers. Bohdan Poręba proposed a co-production that was characterized by a surplus of form over content and improperly placed emphasis. On the other hand, Romanian audience had the opportunity to see the country's most prominent actors on screen at the time. Screenwriter

Ioan Grigorescu also had a strong reputation in Romania. Furthermore, the film portrayed Prime Minister Armand Călinescu in a very positive light, giving him the characteristics of a noble politician with chivalrous virtues.

It seems that the Polish side decided to jointly produce a film with Romania for one simple motivation. The authorities of the Polish People's Republic wanted to warm up relations with Nicolae Ceaușescu, who felt a bit concerned about the events in Poland in the first half of the 1980s. For this reason, a specific form of political corruption was decided upon, with no financial means spared for the production of the film. If the joint film production did not bring financial success, it could ensure the gratitude of comrade Ceaușescu, who could use the cinema screen for propaganda for internal purposes.

The Polish – Romanian co-production was useful for the Profil Film Unit, which once again, under the pretext of creating supposedly ambitious historical cinema, obtained huge funds from the state budget, although Bohdan Poreba's achievements from previous years were rather questionable. At the same time, in the 1980s, filmmakers who tried to show the breakthrough moments in Polish history that were taking place at that time were limited (Święch, 2025, pp. 57-86).

The Polish People's Republic invested in Polish – Romanian relations through film, which brought results in the following years, even after the political changes in both countries. Ioan Grigorescu soon wrote the script for a film directed by Manole Marcus titled *Marea sfidare*¹³, also about the Romanian government's help to Poles after the outbreak of World War II (Constantin, 2021, p. 144; Dubicki, 2022). Grigorescu then served as Romania's ambassador to Poland from 1993 to 1998 (Grigorescu, 2019, p. 335).

Bohdan Poreba's film titled *The Golden Train* has earned its place in the Romanian culture (Bădoiu, 2018, p. 61). The co-production was broadcast on the worldwide Romanian TVR International (Societatea Română de Televiziune). On the 80th anniversary of the Polish exile to Romania, an exhibition related to the transportation of Polish gold was presented in Wieliczka in 2019. The Romanian Cultural Institute had taken patronage of the event. On this occasion, a screening of the co-production titled *The Golden Train* also took place (Institutul Cultural Român, n.d.). Poles and Romanians therefore perceive the co-production of the 1980s through a different prism.

References:

11. *Festiwal Polskich Filmów Fabularnych w Gdańsku* [11th Polish film festival in Gdańsk]. (n.d.). Festiwalgdynia. <https://festiwalgdynia.pl/filmy/zloty-pociag>
- Agreement between the Government of the Polish People's Republic and the Government of the Romanian People's Republic concerning cultural and scientific co-operation was signed at Warsaw, on 26 November 1964. (1964, November 26). <http://www.forost.ungarisches-institut.de/pdf/19641126-1.pdf>
- Bădoiu, M. (2018). Alexandru George. *Târgoviștea Literară*, 2, 52–64.
- Caranfil, T. (2002). *Dicționar de filme românești* [Dictionary of Romanian Films]. Litera Internațional.
- Căliman, C. (2000). *Istoria filmului românesc (1897-2000)* [The history of Romanian film (1897-2000)]. Editura Fundației Culturale Române.

¹³In Polish: *Wielki bunt*, in English: *The great defiance*.

- Cârstocea, R. (2014). *Anti-Semitism in Romania: Historical legacies, contemporary challenges*. European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI). <https://archive.jpr.org.uk/download?id=20912>
- Ceaușescu, N. (1984). Din Raportul Comitetului Central cu privire la activitatea Partidului Comunist Român în perioada dintre Congresul al XII-lea și Congresul al XIII-lea, și activitatea de viitor a partidului în vederea îndeplinirii obiectivelor dezvoltării economico-sociale în cincinalul 1986-1990 și, în perspectivă, până în anul 2000, a României, prezentat de tovarășul [From the Report of the Central Committee regarding the activity of the Romanian Communist Party in the period between the 12th Congress and the 13th Congress, and the future activity of the party in view of carrying out the objectives of socio-economic development in the 1986–1990 five-year plan and, in perspective, up to the year 2000, of Romania, presented by our Comrade]. *Arta*, 11, 4–5.
- C.K. *Dezserterzy (komedia, film przygodowy)* [H.M. Deserters (comedy, an adventure film)]. (n.d.). Filmpolski. <https://www.filmpolski.pl/fp/index.php?film=121742>
- Constantin, I. (2021). 80 de ani de la Marele Refugiu Polonez – moment emblematic al prieteniei tradiționale româno-polone [80 years of Polish exile in Romania – a symbolic moment for traditional Polish – Romanian friendship. Summary]. In: E. Wieruszewska-Calistru, I. Dascălu & I. Biseada, (Eds.), *O relațiilor polsko-rumuńskich na przestrzeni wieków w stulecie nawiązania polsko-rumuńskich relacji dyplomatycznych. Despre relațiile polono-române de-a lungul timpului în anul centenarului stabilirii relațiilor diplomatice polono-române* [On Polish – Romanian relations throughout the centuries: on the centenary of the establishment of Polish – Romanian diplomatic relations] (pp. 136–155). Związek Polaków w Rumunii. Uniunea Polonezilor din România.
- Derecki, M. (1987). Złoty pociąg do historii najnowszej [The Golden Train to contemporary history]. *Kamena*, 7, 5–8.
- Dramatyczne losy polskiego złota. Pierwszy film polsko-rumuński [The dramatic fate of the Polish Gold: The first Polish – Romanian Film]. (1987). *Kurier Lubelski*, 45(8536), 1.
- Dubicki, A. (2020). Polska wobec jej południowych sąsiadów w latach 1945–1989 [Poland towards its southern neighbors in the years 1945–1989]. In P. Waingertner (Ed.), *Polska wobec południowych sąsiadów w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w XX wieku. Tom II* [Poland towards its Southern neighbors in Central and Eastern Europe in the 20th century. Volume II] (pp. 83–114). Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Centrum Europejskie Natolin. <https://dx.doi.org/10.18778/8142-849-1.04>
- Dubicki, A. (2022). Evacuarea tezaurului național polonez în memoria colectivă [The evacuation of the Polish national treasure into collective memory]. https://magazinistoric.ro/evenimente/20220730_simpozionul_c_popisteanu/Simpozion_20220730.pdf
- Gasztold-Seń, P. (2013). Partia zjednoczona czy podzielona? Różne nurty PZPR w ostatniej dekadzie PRL [United or divided party? Different trends in the Polish United Workers' Party in the last decade of the People's Republic of Poland]. *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia Politologica*, X, 174–192. <https://studiapolitologica.uken.krakow.pl/article/view/2668>
- Gheorghe, E. (2015). Nicolae Ceaușescu. In S. Casey & J. Wright (Eds.), *Mental maps in the era of détente and the end of the Cold War, 1968–91* (pp. 60–80). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137500960_5

- Grigorescu, I. (1961). *Pasărea Fenix. Doi ani în Polonia populară* [The Phoenix Bird: Two years in the Polish People's Republic]. Editura Tineretului.
- Grigorescu, I. (2019). *Jurnal nediplomatic (1998-2001)* [An undiplomatic diary (1998-2001)]. Editura Corint.
- Grzechowiak, J. (2019). Zespół Filmowy „Iluzjon”. Studium upadku (artystycznego i politycznego) [The “Iluzjon” Film Group: Case study of an (artistic and political) decline]. *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, 108, 150–169. <https://doi.org/10.36744/kf.188>
- Grzechowiak, J. (2022). The audience and reception of the films from the Profil Film Unit in 1982–1989. *Images*, XXXII(41), 113–127. <https://doi.org/10.14746/i.2022.41.07>
- Grzechowiak, J. (2023). *Filmy kinowe i telewizyjne polskich „zespołów partyjnych” w latach 1975-1991. Rozprawa doktorska* [Cinema and television films of Polish “party units” in the years 1975-1991. PhD thesis]. Uniwersytet Łódzki. https://www.bip.uni.lodz.pl/fileadmin/user_upload/rozprawa_doktorska_mgr_Jaros%C5%82aw_Grzechowiak.pdf
- Guzek, M. (2011). Świat przyjaciół czy wrogów? Polski film fabularny o rewolucji rosyjskiej [Russian Revolution: The word of friends or the world of foes? Polish feature film on the year 1917], *Historyka. Studia Metodologiczne*, XLI, 5–13. https://journals.pan.pl/Content/124352/PDF/2_Historyka_41_2011_Guzek_Swiat.pdf
- Hendrykowski, M. (2013). Historia zespołów filmowych z dzisiejszej perspektywy [A history of Polish film units from a present-day perspective]. *Images*, XII(21-22), 341–351. <https://doi.org/10.14746/i.2013.21.28>
- Institutul Cultural Român. (n.d.). Lista proiectelor organizate de reprezentanțele ICR din străinătate în luna septembrie 2019 [List of projects organized by the Romanian Cultural Institute representative offices abroad in September 2019]. <https://www.icr.ro/uploads/files/lista-proiectelor-organizate-de-reprezentantele-icr-din-strainatate-in-luna-septembrie-2019site.pdf>
- Jasina, Ł., & Kozłowski, M. (2019). Wrzesień 1939 w filmie polskim [September 1939 in Polish film]. *Polska Zbrojna. Historia*, 3(11), 68–72. <https://zbrojni.blob.core.windows.net/pzdata2/TinyMceFiles/PZH%203-4%202019.pdf>
- Kazimierczyk, B. (1987). Rozmowa z Bohdanem Porębą: Z szacunku dla państwa [Interview with Bohdan Poręba: From respect for the state]. *Odrodzenie*, 13, 11.
- Klemiato, W. (1986). Polityka na ekranie [Politics on the screen]. *Gazeta Krakowska*, 213(11704), 1–6.
- Knichowiecki, B. (1987). Fałszywy pociąg [The fake train]. *Trybuna Robotnicza*, 51(14123), 3.
- Maj, E. (2013). Źródłowe badanie dziejów Polski Ludowej: przypadek fabularnej twórczości filmowej [Desk research of the history of the People's Poland: Feature films as the case study]. *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia Politologica*, 10(132), 3–23. <https://studiapolitologica.uken.krakow.pl/article/view/2658>
- Maksymczak, P. (1987). Nudny pociąg [The boring train]. *Gazeta Lubuska – Magazyn*, 74(10828), 4.
- Malatyńska, M. (1987). Złoty pociąg [The golden train]. *Echo Krakowa*, 50(12350), 2.

- Maron, M. (2015). „Hubal” Bohdana Poręby i „Pasja” Stanisława Różewicza – spór o romantyzm w kinie polskim lat 70 [Bohdan Poręba’s “Hubal” and Stanisław Różewicz’s “Passion” – The dispute on Romanticism in the Polish cinema of the 1970s]. *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, 92, 123–140.
- Marszewski, J. (2021). *Ekranowe metamorfozy bohatera historycznego w zmiennych kontekstach estetycznych i politycznych w polskim filmie fabularnym, serialu, teatrze telewizji i dokumencie na przykładzie postaci Józefa Piłsudskiego (lata 1918–2021). Rozprawa doktorska* [Screen metamorphoses of a historical hero in varying aesthetic and political contexts in Polish feature films, series, television drama and documentaries on the example of the figure of Józef Piłsudski (years 1918–2021). PhD thesis]. Katowice: Uniwersytet Śląski. https://opus.us.edu.pl/docstore/download/USL5a467c730859492ea20da15e5572098d/4647_doktorat_Jaroslaw_Marszewski.pdf
- Mateescu, N. (1987). Trenul de aur [The golden train]. *Luceafărul*, 14(1299), 5.
- Mazurek, R., & Zaremba, P. (2008). Reżimowy filmowiec PRL: Niczego nie żałuję [PRL regime filmmaker: I don’t regret anything]. <https://wiadomosci.dziennik.pl/opinie/artykuly/131300,rezimowy-filmowiec-prl-niczego-nie-zaluje.html>
- Mielczarek, T. (2010). Uwarunkowania prawne funkcjonowania cenzury w PRL [Legal conditions for the functioning of censorship in the Polish People’s Republic]. *Rocznik Prasoznawczy*, 4, 29–49. https://bazhum.muzhp.pl/media/texts/rocznik-prasoznawczy/2010-tom-4/rocznik_prasoznawczy-r2010-t4-s29-49.pdf
- Młynarz, K. (1987). „Złoty pociąg” – czyli zadęcie na torach [“The Golden Train” – or pretentiousness on the rails], *Express Poznański*, 51, 4.
- Modorcea, G. (1987). „Cînd te simți bine în casa ta, vrei să împărtășești și altora sentimentele tale”. Interviu cu regizorul polonez Bohdan Poreba [“When you feel good in your home, you want to share your feelings with others.” Interview with Polish director Bohdan Poreba]. *Scînteii Tineretului. Supliment literar-artistic*, 15(290), 9.
- Niemiec, Z. (1987). Film miesiąca «Matka królów» [Movie of the Month «The Mother of Kings»]. *Informator Kulturalny Województwa Bielskiego*, 8 (79), 36–37.
- Oświadczenie rządowe z dnia 13 września 1965 r. w sprawie wymiany dokumentów ratyfikacyjnych Umowy o współpracy kulturalnej i naukowej między Rządem Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej a Rządem Rumuńskiej Republiki Ludowej, podpisanej w Warszawie dnia 26 listopada 1964 r. [Government declaration of 13 September 1965 on the exchange of instruments of ratification of the Agreement between the Government of the Polish People’s Republic and the Government of the Romanian People’s Republic concerning cultural and scientific co-operation signed at Warsaw, on 26 November 1964]. *Dziennik Ustaw* [Journal of Law], No. 41, item 259. (1965). <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU19650410259>
- Panait, R. (1985). Trenul de aur [The golden train]. *Cinema*, 6(270), 24.
- Petrescu, D. (2009). Building the nation, instrumentalizing nationalism: Revisiting Romanian national-communism, 1956–1989. *Nationalities Papers*, 37(4), 523–544. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905990902985728>
- Poręba, B. (2011). *Obronić polskość. Z Bohdanem Porębą w 75: rocznicę urodzin o kulturze, polityce i historii rozmawia Lech Z. Niekrasz* [Defending Polishness: Lech Z. Niekrasz talks with Bohdan

- Poręba on his 75th anniversary of his birth about culture, politics, and history]. Fundacja Polskie Gniazdo.
- Replewicz, M. (2009). *Stanisław Bareja: król krzywego zwierciadła* [Bareja: King of the distorting mirror]. Zysk i Spółka. Wydawnictwo.
- Rojek, W. (2000). *Odyseja skarbu Rzeczypospolitej: losy złota Banku Polskiego 1939-1950* [The gold Odyssey: The fate of Bank Polski gold 1939-1950]. Wydawnictwo Literackie.
- Sas, R. (1986). Widz a sprawa filmu [The viewer and the film issue]. *Dziennik Łódzki*, 213(12119), 1.
- Sîrbu, E. (1987). Trenul de aur [The golden train]. *Cinema*, 4(291), 6–10.
- Societatea Română de Televiziune: Raport de activitate 2015 [Romanian Television Society: Activity report 2015]. http://mediatvr.tvr.ro/media-tvr/other/201604/raport-activitate-2015_97554500.pdf
- Centrul Național al Cinematografiei. (2025, November 1). *Total nr. spectatori* [Total number of spectators] [Data set]. <https://cnc.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Total-nr-spectatori.pdf>
- Stănescu, M. (1987). Forță de avocare [Advocacy force]. *Cinema*, 4(291), 6.
- Stelmach, M. (2020). *Przecucie końca: modernizm, późność i polskie kino* [Premonition of the end: Modernism, lateness, and Polish cinema]. Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika.
- Szczutkowska, J. (2014). *Polityka kulturalna PRL w dziedzinie kinematografii w latach 70.* [Polish People's Republic's cultural policy towards cinematography in the 1970s]. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego.
- Szczutkowska, J. (2021). *Zagraniczna polityka kinematograficzna PRL w latach 70. XX w.* [PRL foreign cinematographic policy in the 1970s]. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego.
- Świąch, W. A. (2023). The censorship interference in television serials and series during martial law in Poland (1981-1983) – historical and legal context. *Revista ARTA*, 32(2), 101–107. <https://doi.org/10.52603/arta.2023.32-2.16>
- Świąch, W. A. (2024). Interferences of the Main Office of Control of Publications and Performances during martial law in Poland (1981-1983) in the writing on the rule of law: Selected examples. *Italian Review of Legal History*, 10(2), 327–347. <https://doi.org/10.54103/2464-8914/27624>
- Świąch, W. A. (2025). Institutional censorship of documentary films during martial law in the People's Republic of Poland (1981-1983): A legal and historical approach. *Codrul Cosminului*, 31(1), 57–86. <https://doi.org/10.4316/CC.2025.01.03>
- “Trenul de aur”, povestea reală a tezaurului polonez salvat cu ajutorul românilor [“The golden train”, the real story of the Polish treasure saved with the help of the Romanians]. (2020, August 19). TVR. http://www.tvr.ro/povestea-reala-a-tezaurului-polonez-salvat-cu-ajutorul-romanilor_28681.html
- Tronowicz, H. (1986). Złoty pociąg [The golden train]. *Filmowy Serwis Prasowy*, 16/17(602/603), 10–14.

- Turcuș, C. (2017). Restructuring a cinema that didn't exist: The Romanian film industry of the 1990s, *Illuminace*, 29(3), 9–26. <https://doi.org/10.58193/ilu.1528>
- Umowa o współpracy kulturalnej i naukowej między Rządem Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej a Rządem Rumuńskiej Republiki Ludowej podpisana w Warszawie dnia 26 listopada 1964 r. [Agreement between the Government of the Polish People's Republic and the Government of the Romanian People's Republic concerning cultural and scientific co-operation signed at Warsaw, on 26 November 1964]. *Dziennik Ustaw* [Journal of Law], No. 41, item 258. (1965). <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU19650410258>
- Współpraca kinematografii polskiej z kinematografią rumuńską: Notatki, korespondencja (1977–1986) [Co-operation of Polish cinematography with Romanian cinematography: Notes, correspondence]. *Naczelny Zarząd Kinematografii: Archiwum Akt Nowych, Warszawa, Poland* [Supreme Board of Cinematography in Warsaw: Archives of New Records in Warsaw], ref. no. 2/1843/0/2/2/199. (n.d.).
- Współpraca z Rumunią w sprawie filmu „Złoty pociąg”: Umowy, aneksy, korespondencja (1984-1986) [Co-operation with Romania on the film “The Golden Train”: Agreements, annexes, correspondence (1984-1986)]. *Naczelny Zarząd Kinematografii w Warszawie: Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie* [Supreme Board of Cinematography in Warsaw: Archives of New Records in Warsaw], ref. no. 2/1843/0/12/12/137. (n.d.).
- Zajiček, E. (1992). *Poza ekranem: kinematografia polska 1918-1991* [Beyond the screen: Polish cinematography 1918-1991]. FilMOTEKA Narodowa. Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe.
- Zaryczny, Z. (1983). Mamy twórców – powróci dobre kino. Rozmowa z szefem kinematografii, wiceministrem kultury i sztuki - Jerzym Bajdorem [We have creators – good cinema will return: A conversation with the head of cinematography and Deputy Minister of Culture and Art – Jerzy Bajdor]. *Trybuna Ludu*, 279, 4.
- Złoty pociąg (film fabularny)* [The Golden Train (a narrative film)]. (n.d.). Filmpolski. <https://filmpolski.pl/fp/index.php?film=121732>
- Złoty pociąg: Zespoły Polskich Producentów Filmowych w Warszawie.* [The golden train: Polish Film Producers' Units in Warsaw]. *Archiwum Państwowe w Warszawie, Oddział Dokumentacji Osobowej i Płacowej w Milanówku* [State Archive in Warsaw, Personal and Payroll Documentation Branch in Milanówek], ref. no. 72/3419/0/825. (n.d.).
- Zwierzchowski, P., & Kornacki, K. (2014). Metodologiczne problemy badania kina PRL-u [Methodological problems in researching the cinema of the Polish People's Republic era]. *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, 85, 28–39. <https://doi.org/10.36744/kf.2452>
- Zwierzchowski, P. (2018). Polityczne konteksty kina popularnego w Polsce w latach 80. [Political contexts of popular cinema in Poland in the 1980s]. *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, 103, 154–163. <https://doi.org/10.36744/kf.1924>
- Żurowicz, E. (1977). „Pociąg ze złotem”: pierwszy film polsko-rumuński [“A train with gold” – the first Polish – Romanian film]. *Kurier Polski*, 209, 4.

ROBINSON CRUSOE
RETOLD AND RETRANSLATED INTO ROMANIAN (1835–2023):
FROM MIMESIS TO TELESIS¹

Daniela HĂISAN

Ștefan cel Mare University of Suceava, Romania

e-mail: danielahaisan@litere.usv.ro

Abstract

Our attempt to construe the ways in which translation redefines texts for children is based on a corpus (i.e., Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* translated into Romanian) which spans three centuries. Our conjectures are based on an in-depth analysis of a selection of 11 out of 36 identifiable Romanian versions, the main criteria for selection being their availability but also their relevance to the various periods in the history of translations and to the history of the Romanian language (which often went hand in hand). The selection goes accordingly from 1835 (the probable date of the first translation of Crusoe's story – rather than text – into Romanian) up until 2023 (when the latest version came on the market), with equally interesting editions (published in 1899, 1900, 1908, 1943, 2017, 2018, and 2022, respectively) in-between. The aspects we examine are the relationship between translation and adaptation; the reasons behind retranslation (among which linguistic change, ideological change, corrective change); the ways in which retranslation has redefined *Robinson Crusoe*; the (inverse) relationship between the two basic purposes modulating (translated) children's literature (namely to teach and to entertain). Since our selection covers three centuries, they are tagged according to the prevailing ideology regarding the translation of children's literature (e.g. translation norms, translation practice) at the time. Therefore, we consider nineteenth-century translations to be largely governed by mimesis, the twentieth century could be characterized by synopsis and meiosis, and the dawn of the twenty-first century does point to a sort of effervescence which will hopefully move towards telesis (if intelligently planned and directed). For a transnational approach, we contrast our case-study with the situation in France (which represented a model and an influence in various key moments of the Romanian translation history) and the situation in the Republic of Moldova (which was, in turn, influenced by the Romanian situation).

Keywords: (re)translation (history); *Robinson Crusoe*; imitation; abridgement; paratext.

1. Introduction

A paragon of *crossover literature*², *Robinson Crusoe* has known a wide range of (con)versions and variations through the centuries, and translation has definitely had a crucially

¹ Article History: Received: 29.12.2025. Accepted: 20.02.2026. Published: 15.05.2026. No funding was received either for the research presented in the article or for the creation of the article.

² “‘Crossover books’, those works that begin as titles for adults and then become the reading matter of children. Classics such as Swift's (1726) *Gulliver's Travels* and Defoe's (1719) *Robinson Crusoe* figure prominently in the history of children's reading...” (Stevenson, 2011, p. 181).

transformative role in reinventing it (whether via retelling, adapting, abridging, euphemising, illustrating, dramatising, or digitising it). The present research sets out to map a (re)translation³ history of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in Romania (occasionally contrasting it with the situation in the Republic of Moldova and in France), in an attempt to deduce some discernible patterns and idiosyncrasies in retranslation for children in general.

Our attempt to construe the ways in which translation redefines texts for children is based on a corpus (i.e., Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* translated into Romanian) which spans three different centuries; more to the point, it goes accordingly from 1835 (the probable date of the first Romanian version – which is the translation of an adaptation of Defoe's text) up until 2023 (when the latest – to our knowledge – version came on the market).

The panoramic look at the Romanian translation history of *Robinson Crusoe* is based on a thorough investigation of 11 of the 36 editions identified; in addition, a similar examination of the French and the Moldovan history of the novel was carried out with a view to placing the Romanian phenomenon in a larger (be it still limited) context which could afford a better understanding of the drives and mechanisms of retranslation.

Our research aims are as follows:

- outlining the translation history of *Robinson Crusoe* as a complex process in which adaptation is interlaced with translation, and therefore deserves to be taken into account as part and parcel of the phenomenon of retranslation
- screening the reasons behind retranslation of a children's classic such as *Robinson Crusoe* in their respective historical evolution (the necessity for linguistic change being gradually replaced with a need for ideological then corrective change)
- relying on conceptual metaphors (*mimesis*, *synopsis*, *meiosis*, *anthesis*, *telesis*) to encapsulate the most significant trends which have regulated translation norms in Romania since 1835 up to the present
- gauging the (inverse) relationship between the two basic purposes modulating (translated) children's literature (namely *to teach* and *to entertain*).

We are equally interested in examining the ways in which retranslation has redefined *Robinson Crusoe* (i.e., which interpretative possibilities of the source text are favoured by which retranslation era). To this end, we will refer to Thomas Keymer's enumeration of labels that have been attached to Defoe's text in the Introduction to the 2007 Oxford edition of the novel:

The novel rewards analysis as many things – an exotic adventure story; a study of solitary consciousness; a parable of sin, atonement, and redemption; a myth of economic individualism; a displaced or encoded autobiography; an allegory of political defeat; a prophecy of imperial expansion – yet none of these explanations exhausts it. (Keymer, 2007, p. i)

³ *Retranslation* is often used to designate *back-translation* (i.e., a word-for-word translation of a TT back into the SL, usually with a view to checking the adequacy of the translation – see, in this respect, Jones' 1997 book, in which retranslation is seen exclusively as a checking device in translation). On the other hand, plenty of researchers equate retranslation with *indirect translation*, also called *intermediate*, *mediated*, or *second-hand translation*: "A term used to denote the procedure whereby a text is not translated directly from an original ST, but via an intermediate translation in another language." (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 2014, p. 76; see also Palumbo, 2009, p. 62) In the present paper, however, we will use *retranslation* to designate a new translation into the same target language (in this particular case, Romanian) of a previously translated text (in this particular case, *Robinson Crusoe*). Incidentally, the history of (re)translations of Robinson Crusoe's story into Romanian happens to include not only indirect translations (usually via French or German) *per se*, but also indirect translations of adaptations of the original text. Retranslation is, therefore, the larger term here, which includes indirect translation (rather than the other way around). As for *back-translation*, it is not used conceptually but practically throughout the paper, not as a checking device but for the sake of linguistic uniformity (all citations in Romanian being translated into English, between brackets, by the author of the paper).

Terms like *mimesis*, *synopsis*, *meiosis*, *anthesis*, and *telesis* will be employed as some kind of compendious metaphors meant to suggest and capture the main features of the phenomenon of retranslation in a particular period of time, while carefully situating the translations in the context of their production.

From the wide range of meanings carried by *mimesis* (as derived from its very etymology – the Greek word *mīmeisthai* [to imitate], and as conceptualized by Plato, Aristotle, Auerbach, or Girard), we single out the following aspects:

- *mimesis* (just like retranslation) is inherently a matter of repetition with a difference
- while it may not be a perfect synonym of “imitation,” it does point to imitation (in the sense of re-presenting rather than of copying)
- the most important element in the thematic complex of *mimesis* is the imitation of role models and the reliance on mediators to help us understand what we desire (see Potolsky, 2006; Girard’s Mimetic Theory, 2001; 2017)

In the present paper, *mimesis* will be used interchangeably with *mimeticism* and *imitation*, and *mimetic* will be used interchangeably with *imitative*. *Mimesis* is characteristic, one way or another, of the entire translation history of *Robinson Crusoe* under consideration here. Various instances of *mimesis*, detectable in the Romanian translation history of *Robinson Crusoe*, are classified into cultural, textual, and editorial.

Synopsis and *meiosis* will be used in relation to the twentieth-century retranslations (in order to encapsulate the propensity towards retranslation via abridgement, on the one hand, and towards privileging just one side of the novel and producing purified, bowdlerized, censored versions, in accordance with the policy and the politics of the time).

Anthesis (which in Botany designates the period of opening of a flower) will be used here to refer to the b(l)ooming publishing industry oriented towards young readers after the 1990s. *Telesis*, on the other hand, defined as the attainment of desired ends by the application of intelligent human effort, summarizes our hope for a future direction in the evolution of translated children’s literature, based on progress that is intelligently (not programmatically) planned and directed.

While there is no shortage of studies on *Robinson Crusoe*’s (re)translatability in various languages (e.g. Kristiina Taivalkoski-Shilov’s 2015 “Friday in Finnish: A Character’s and (Re)Translators’ Voices in Six Finnish Retranslations of Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*”; Veronica A. Razumovskaya’s 2018 “Translatability of *Robinson Crusoe*: 300 Years Adventure in Time and Space”), there is still little research on a transnational and transcentennial level, which motivates our own research in the field.

2. Material and Methodology

The present research uses a diachronic corpus which spans a wide historical time frame (1835–2023). For practical reasons, we divided the Romanian translation history of *Robinson Crusoe* into three relatively distinct periods, loosely termed: the nineteenth century, the twentieth century, and the twenty-first century. As with any periodization, this, too, supposes osmotic communication between the eras. Furthermore, by “nineteenth century” we understand the interval between 1835 (when the first story about Crusoe appeared in Romanian) and 1900; by “twentieth century” we understand the interval between 1901 and 1989 (in the vein of Eric Hobsbawm’s 1994 *The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991* – in Romania, too, there should be a clear-cut distinction between the epoch before 1989 – the year the Communism regime was overthrown – and the one after 1990 – characterized by a considerably more democratic attitude to reading practices, children’s literature, translation and the book market); by “twenty-

first century” we therefore understand the interval between 1990 and 2023 (the date of the latest known *Robinson Crusoe* edition in Romanian).

“nineteenth century”	1835–1900
“twentieth century”	1901–1989
“twenty-first century”	1990–2023

Table 1. *Translation History. Periodisation*

There are 36 Romanian texts (versions of *Robinson Crusoe*) which we were able to identify and procure; after an overall (textual and paratextual) analysis, we selected 11 translations which we contrasted with the original text as well as with one another. The 11 versions (V1–V11) are presented in the figure below (with the name of the translator and the year of the publication).

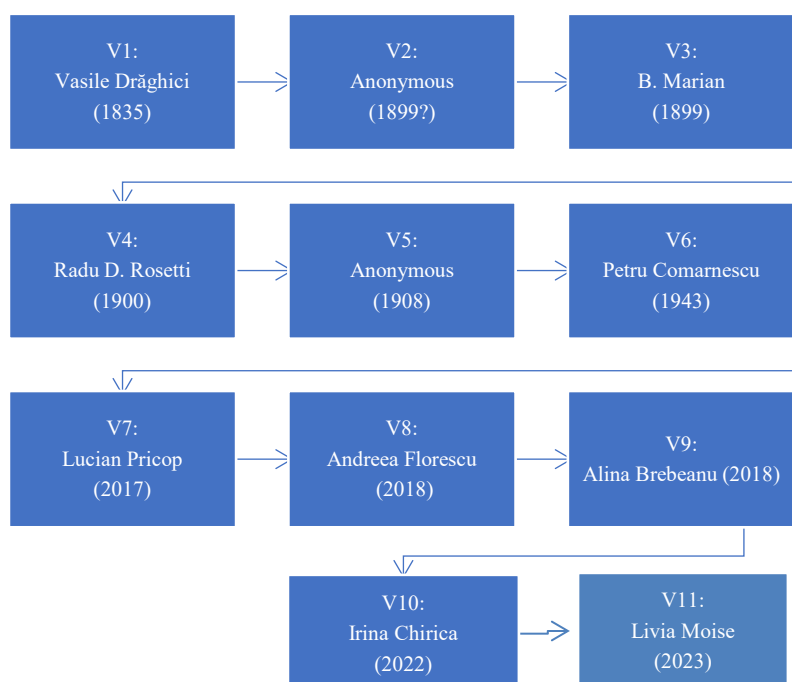


Figure 1. *11 Romanian Versions of Robinson Crusoe Analysed Contrastively*

The date is not clearly indicated in the case of V2 and, despite the fact that the Romanian Academy Library Catalogue indicates “1892” we believe it may actually be 1899. Our conjecture is based on some of the illustrations in the volume which bear the following signature: “F. Schirato ’99”; moreover, the volume contains pictures which purportedly reproduce (or imitate) Berwald – a painter, graphic artist and illustrator born in Berlin, who indeed illustrated a German translation of *Robinson Crusoe* published a few years later than 1892. Rodica Dimitriu also points, in a 2006 study, to 1899 as a possible date (Dimitriu, 2006, p. 75).

The 11 versions presented above were selected according to the following criteria:

- their availability (most nineteenth-century versions – and some of those published in the twenty-first – being completely out of reach)
- their relevance to the various periods in the history of translations (the nineteenth century and the 1990s being characterized by “relaxation” of translation norms, in stark contrast with the restrictiveness of the mid-twentieth-century)

- their representativity in terms of target language evolution, the progress of the Romanian literary language often going hand in hand with the fluctuations in the history of translations; thus, the nineteenth- and twentieth-century versions point to different stages in the evolution of the literary language (from the Cyrillic script – 1835 – to the Latin alphabet – 1899; from using apostrophes to signal elisions – the 1800s – to employing hyphens – the 1940s) as well as to different ideological trends and cultural norms (reflected in the more or less prominent figure of the translator among the agents of translation: a salient paratextual presence in the nineteenth and mid-twentieth century, yet a more subdued involvement in the twenty-first).

Since the history of translations of *Robinson Crusoe* is, in Romania as elsewhere, to some extent, indistinguishable from the history of adaptations of Crusoe's story, we included among the 36 target texts not only complete translations (which in reality would only be 9: Petru Comarnescu's 1943 translation and subsequent revised versions; Al. Lascarov-Moldovanu's (1945) version; Aretia Dicu's (2002); Magdalena Kis' (2007); Cristina Nicolaescu's (2008); Alexandra Petrea's (2008); Lucian Pricop's (2017), Irina Chirica's (2022), and Livia Moise's (2023)), but also (slightly) adapted texts.

As a classic of world literature, but also a classic of children's literature, *Robinson Crusoe* yielded, as expected, many types of adaptation. Leaving aside transmediation and intersemiotic translation (e.g. stage adaptations, films, radio plays, graphic novels etc.), which are fairly common but not our concern here, the dynamics of *Robinson Crusoe* retranslation is interlaced with adaptation in the sense of:

1. adapting while translating (i.e., operating textual, linguistic, and stylistic changes, like simplifying, euphemising, abridging for a young target reader)
2. translating adaptations of Defoe's novel – an (in)famous case being that of Joachim Heinrich Campe's adaptation (1779).

The reasons why we include translations of Campe's version in our corpus have to do with two main facts. First, for many years, Romanians (and the French, too, before them) were convinced Campe's story was the original one; the first Romanian translation (1835) mentions Campe as the author of Crusoe's story. Then, Campe actually largely preserves the plot and the most important details, and just operates some narratological alterations. Thus, while Defoe's book was written as a continuous, long first-person narrative with no divisions into chapters, Campe's *Robinson der Jüngere* contains a frame story (that of a father telling it to a small group of children living just outside the gates of Hamburg) and condenses the story significantly. Should we leave Campe aside, then the first translation of Defoe's text occurred in 1891, and the first complete translation appeared in 1943.

Here is the diachronic distribution of the 36 Romanian versions of *Robinson Crusoe*. In orange are the years in which multiple versions of Crusoe's story appeared in Romania. Some of these versions have been reprinted over the years, the most reedited version being the one in green (Petru Comarnescu⁴ being the translator).

⁴ Petru Comarnescu (1905–1970) was a Romanian literary and art critic who translated extensively from English and Russian.

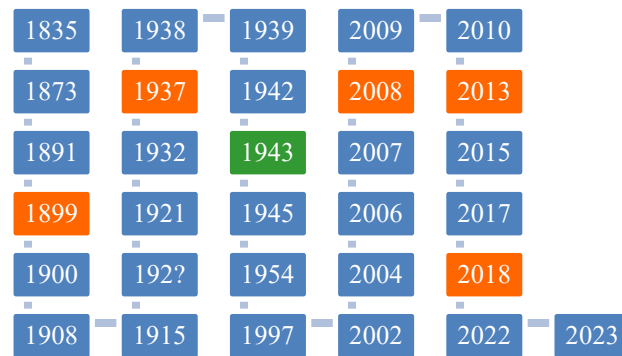


Figure 2. 36 Romanian Versions of *Robinson Crusoe*

For the purposes of our transnational analysis, we also identified and looked into 6 versions published in the Republic of Moldova as well as 210 versions published in France, as follows:

- 5 (the eighteenth century)
- 45 (the nineteenth century)
- 131 (the twentieth century)
- 29 (the twenty-first century).

The research design is qualitative, with occasional quantitative touches, and empirical, as it focuses on the observable aspects of translation. 11 versions from the Romanian corpus, 2 from the Moldovan corpus, and 2 from the French corpus have been analysed in full detail. Thus, real-life examples of the 15 translated texts have been compared against their source texts. Besides these bilingual parallel corpora, translators' biographical details have equally been studied with a view to ascertaining their agency.

3. An Outline of the Nineteenth-Century Romanian Corpus: Mimesis

The year 1835 marked a high point for the appearance of *Crusoe's* story in Romanian. It was not Defoe's text but Campe's adaptation that first reached Romanians. The translator, Vasile Drăghici – a Moldavian writer granted the title of boyar later in life – had been working on it ever since 1817, but it was only in 1835 that he plucked up the courage to finally print it. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Romanian state was barely in the making (it consisted of two principalities – Moldavia and Wallachia – which united in 1859). Moreover, at the time of the first translation of *Robinson Crusoe* (i.e., 1835), the Romanian language was still in the process of settling down and texts were written in Cyrillic (the Latin alphabet was introduced in the United Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia only in 1862).

Therefore, the 1835 edition – written in Cyrillic – is the one introducing *Crusoe* to the Romanian readers. It is highly readable – when transliterated – and extremely interesting from a paratextual point of view, as it contains a variety of elements (a dedication, a foreword, a translator's note, two illustrations, 19 encyclopaedic notes) which testify to the great responsibility the translator felt he had as an educator. The translator-turned-editor takes a lot of time to hone his message about the role of duty, moderation, and frugality in one's life. Behind his occasionally prescriptive tone, there is a paideia-like vision of upbringing and cultural training in the widest sense possible.

In all the other versions published in the nineteenth century the dual addressee is preserved and the concern to appeal to the parent as well as to the child-reader remains a must in both text and paratext. The translator's primary role was to instruct and to provide (some knowledge) rather than offer a dramatic story or insights into the characters' behaviour.

Translation thus proved vital in building a national language and literature while enjoying high status, especially when undertaken by prominent figures in public culture. Just like nineteenth-century British literary translators (described by Pym), Romanian translators were “either authors in their own right or were attached to writerly institutions, mainly manifested in small periodicals, where they operated as cultural intermediaries on more than one level” (Pym, 2000, p. 73). Just like the French and other nations in Europe, Romanians thought it right to translate Campe’s version alongside Defoe’s.

The renderings of Crusoe’s story in this period seem to exhibit what may be called “liberal norms” with respect to text integrality. While Drăghici’s text is markedly imitative of Campe’s style, all the others are not necessarily stylistically imitative, yet they are in terms of the message they are supposed to convey, as translators tend to reiterate the same sermon in both text and paratext, hoping the readers would react mimetically.

4. An Outline of the Twentieth-Century Romanian Corpus: Synopsis/ Meiosis

Petru Comarnescu’s version (first published in 1943, then revised quite a few times) is the first complete translation and by far the most reprinted version in the Romanian translation history of *Robinson Crusoe* (at least 20 times so far, by our count). His rendering is largely non-imitative, as he strives for a text which reads as naturally as possible. His is without a doubt what can be termed a *canonical translation*⁵. On the other hand, mention must be made of the fact that the wavering status of Daniel Defoe in the Romanian literary polysystem and the claws of censorship coerced Comarnescu (an art critic and a journalist) into presenting Defoe in rather unflattering terms in his translator’s notes and rephrasing parts of his translation several times, in order to suit the ideology of the time.

This century, like the one before, continues to see anonymous translations and the practice of translating Defoe’s text directly continues to go along with translating adaptations of Defoe’s text. If in the nineteenth century, it was Campe’s version that reigned supreme, in the twentieth, there is Paul Reboux’s version (another example of the French influence on the reception of Crusoe in Romania). Reboux’s reworking of Defoe’s text caught the attention of J. Leonard, who transposed it into Romanian in 1937.

The twentieth century could be characterized by *synopsis* (abridgement being the prevalent translation strategy), but also by *meiosis* (understatement being the main litotic mechanism translators resorted to, especially during the Communist era, i.e., 1947–1989).

5. An Outline of the Twenty-First-Century Romanian Corpus: Anthesis/ Telesis

The historical (political) reasons are definitely a major factor impacting retranslation. We refer especially to the communist period in Romania (1947–1989), with its inherent censorship, and the post-revolutionary age (1989–2000), with its legal vacuum and its self-regulating relaxation that encouraged dubious experiments in (re)translation and a soaring rate of retranslations due, to a large extent, to copyright issues, which, in time, took care of themselves.

One of the paradoxes of retranslation in Romania is the fact that communist editions continue to be found side by side with new editions. This happens because older translations

⁵ See, for instance, Antoine Berman’s *Pour une critique des traductions*: “...une *traduction canonique* [...] va s’imposer et parfois arrêter pour longtemps le cycle des retraductions.” [A canonic translation will impose itself and sometimes interrupt the cycle of retranslations for a long period of time.] (Berman, 1995, p. 75, translation and emphasis mine). No other Romanian version of *Robinson Crusoe* appeared after Comarnescu’s 1943 text (revised in the 1960s) until the 1990s.

are generally considered more expressive. Işıklar Kocak and Erkul Yağcı's description of the Turkish situation happens to perfectly fit the Romanian situation, too.

The reasons why old translations are sought after is the fact that they were translated by writer-translators who had a perfect command of Turkish. Old translators tried to create more natural translations. Therefore, these translations are read as fluently as they were written in Turkish. But in contemporary translations, the originality of the work is preserved as far as possible according to the standards of the translation industry in the world. This results in problems especially in fluency. (Kocak & Yağcı, 2019, p. 138)

It is why Petru Comarnescu's version is still reedited today.

As surprising as it might seem, anonymous translations and translated adaptations are still common in the twenty-first century. Deanna McFadden's retelling was translated in 2013 by Răzvan Năstase, and Ian Graham's reworking was translated by Mirella Acsente in 2015.

The dawn of the century does point to a sort of *anthesis* (should we take the b(l)ooming publishing industry into account). Didactic imperatives of all sorts (e.g. inclusion in the recommended bibliography for schoolchildren) have been instrumental in shaping an immediate necessity topos which triggered an unprecedented editorial engagement. Most of the new versions were apparently translated for purely commercial reasons, with little regard for accuracy or for the original author's image in the target culture. Thus, the truth of the matter is that the increase in retranslation (as far as *Robinson Crusoe* is concerned) is not as much the result of the increase of a renewed interest in Defoe's works as the mercantilist logic of editorial marketing.

We observe, on the other hand, a dramatic change in terms of "translator profile" (i.e., the language teacher slowly but surely taking the place of the typical translator for children, who historically used to be either an unknown – anonymous – or a well-known penman), which is a first step towards *telesis* (reaching desired ends by applying programmatic effort into developing the area of (translated) children's literature, rather than leaving it completely to randomness or consumerism).

6. Transnational Approach: Comparison with France and Moldova

The reason we chose to compare the reception in Romanian with that in Moldova and France has to do with the following facts: on the one hand, due to France being a cultural role model for Romania for centuries, the situation in France was bound to influence the reception in Romania; on the other hand, Moldova, as former Romanian territory, with Romanian as the official language, was bound, in turn, to be influenced by the Romanian reception of *Robinson Crusoe*.

In France, *Robinson Crusoe* was translated very soon after the original text was published (namely, in 1720–1721). In the eighteenth century, a lot of adaptations (including Campe's, in 1785, by A. S. D'Arnex) appear on the market, competing with translations proper. The nineteenth century stands out from a paratextual point of view, with editions which lay emphasis on explanatory prefaces. In 1836, Pétrus Borel comes with a new version, one which would subsequently be reedited dozens of times. The preferred illustrator was, statistically speaking, J. J. Grandville (about a quarter of the books). Nowadays we notice a tendency towards full text versions (which is present in Romania, too), while coexisting with adaptations for very young readers (3 and up).

In 1940, 1955, and 1970, when Moldova was still part of the Soviet Union, three Romanian versions appeared (in Cyrillic). The 1940 and 1955 translations are anonymous, but

the one published in 1970 (and reedited in 1976) is attributed to Raisa Lungu. Another thing the Romanian and the Moldovan reception have in common is the fact that they shared some versions: for example, Petru Comarnescu's was issued by publishers from Kishinev: Litera Internațional (1997, 2002) and Prut Internațional (2008, 2021); also, Irina Chirica's text was issued in Kishinev before it was issued in Romania (2018, 2022); before Irina Chirica, in 2011 Alexandra Fenoghen produced a new version for Moldova, for the same publisher (ARC, Kishinev).

7. The Romanian State of Facts. Analysis

When it comes to the issue at hand (i.e., the (re)translation history of *Robinson Crusoe* in Romania(n), while also reflecting, to a considerable extent, the retranslation phenomenon in Romania in general), we may point out several types of *mimesis*/ mimeticism, as shown in the figure below:

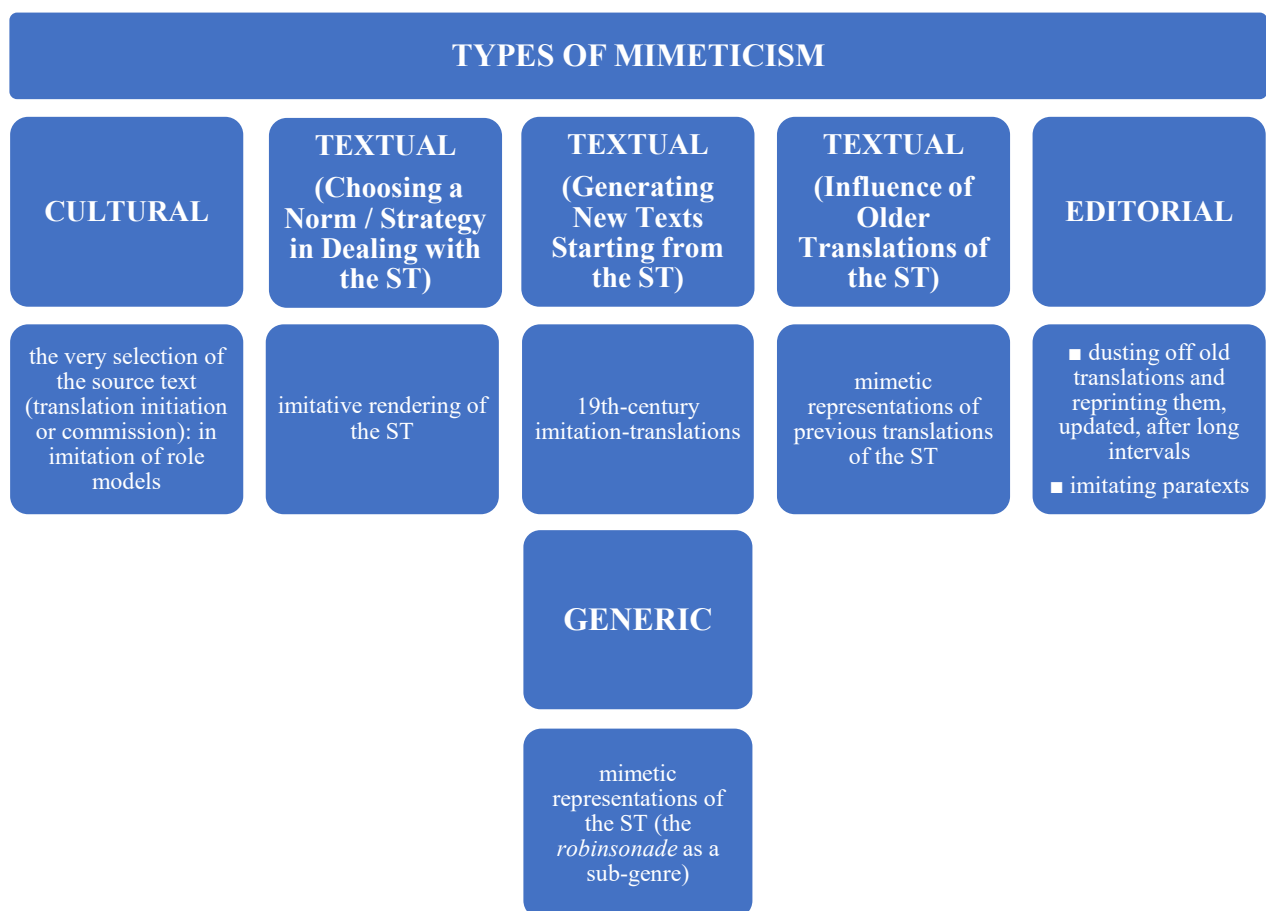


Figure 3. *Types of Mimeticism Characterising the Reception of Robinson Crusoe in Romania*

Mimeticism may be identified at three levels; cultural, textual, and editorial. First of all, the very selection of the text to be translated (i.e., Daniel Defoe's novel) is mimetic, in that Romanians have always tried to align their literary trends with those of Western European countries. In 1835, especially, when *Robinson Crusoe* appeared for the first time in Romanian, the Romanian literary language was still very much in the making. With a literature of its own waiting to be established, Romania could initially do nothing but look to older ones for ready-

made models. It was mimesis that ensured cultural survival. For centuries, the French polysystem (given the common lineage from the Romance languages) and the German polysystem (given the vicinity of the Austro-Hungarian empire, later Austria-Hungary) were beacons throughout the nineteenth century for the Romanian authorities and men of culture. With little to no knowledge of English, they imported every single English and American classic via indirect translation, based on French (occasionally German) intermediate versions. The French had translated *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) soon after the publication of the original (1720–1721), then Joachim Heinrich Campe's *Robinson der Jüngere, zur angenehmen und nützlichen Unterhaltung für Kinder* [The new Robinson Crusoe: Designed for youth] (1779) was turned into French as early as 1785. Vasile Drăghici's rendition of Campe's rewriting (which he started in 1817 and ultimately printed in 1835) was definitely the result of the Franco-German ascendancy.

There are several types of textual mimeticism identifiable in the Romanian translation history of *Robinson Crusoe*. One of them regards choosing the norm or global strategy in dealing with this source text [henceforth ST] which is Robinson Crusoe's tale. As it happens in a retranslation series, some of the versions represent the source text "imitatively" – sometimes only at the macro-level, with titles, section divisions, and integrity of the source text maintained as such; at other times, at micro-linguistic level as well, "notably through the presence of ST words and phrases in the TT" – as put by Siobhan Brownlie (2003, p. 122). This choice, largely corresponding to *adequacy* in Gideon Toury's description of the "initial norm" (1995), or to Lawrence Venuti's *foreignization* (1995), is reflected in a quarter (i.e., a total of 9 texts) of the 36 Romanian versions of *Robinson Crusoe* we were able to identify. At other times, *mimesis* applies only structurally to parts of the text. For instance, in most of the renderings examined in this study, chapter titles are translated in an imitative manner, while section divisions are retained.

Another instance of textual mimeticism has to do with generating new texts due to the impetus given by Crusoe's story to creativity in both translators and authors. Nineteenth-century Romania was characterized to the extreme by "literary bulimia" (Van Tieghem, 1969, p. 162), which implied indiscriminately devouring literary works – especially translated from or via French – in an effort to recuperate centuries-long lagging. In order to counteract the aimlessness of this endeavour, Romanian men of culture (like Titu Maiorescu⁶ or Mihail Kogălniceanu⁷) tried to impose a series of doctrines and guiding selection principles; they also urged Romanian authors to get involved in translation and draw inspiration from it. As a result, all nineteenth-century Romanian belletrists were also occasional translators, which was doubly beneficial: they facilitated access to world literature thereby educating the large public while also honing their own linguistic and literary skills. Conversely, this also allowed for laxity in translation, with very thin boundaries between translation proper and imitation. As a matter of fact, writers-turned-translators delighted in openly admitting that the source texts they relied on incited them to also improvise while translating.⁸ In awe with the source text, they used to let their imagination run wild and occasionally departed from the original's letter and added (descriptive or explicative) passages of their own, only to go back to the source and pick the story up where they left off. Nowadays, such "imitations" are considered, along with adaptations, to illustrate peripheral forms of translation (see Levițchi, 1975), yet back then they

⁶ Titu Maiorescu (1840–1917) was a Romanian literary critic and politician with an instrumental role in the advancement of Romanian culture in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

⁷ Mihail Kogălniceanu (1817–1891) was a Romanian politician, lawyer, historian, and publicist, one of the most influential public figures of his age.

⁸ Poet Alexandru Macedonski (1854–1920), for example, accompanies his translation of Poe's *Metzengerstein* (1887) with the following subtitle: "jumătate tradusă, jumătate imitată" [half translated, half imitated]. Playwright I. L. Caragiale (1852–1912) too produces "imitations" when translating some of Poe's and Perrault's texts.

were considered the norm. Imitative passages can be found in some of Romanian versions of *Robinson Crusoe* published in the nineteenth century (e.g., Barbu Marian's version, published in 1899), as well as in the twentieth (e.g., Sarina Cassvan-Pas' version, published in the 1920s; Moș Ene [pseudonym of Mihail Drumeș]'s 1942 version).

In parallel, another phenomenon was starting to take place: as in many other parts of Europe, a series of reworkings of Crusoe's story appeared, a kind of archontic literature enjoying tremendous popularity. The Romanians, too, have had their own share of robinsonades (e.g., Ion Gorun's *Robinson în Țara Românească (povestire din zilele noastre)* [Robinson in Wallachia. A contemporary story], published in 1904 by "Carol Göbl" Graphic Arts Institute in Bucharest – whose protagonist, Nechifor Pădureleanu, rediscovers himself while rediscovering nature – not on an island, but in an isolated village). Such examples are included under the "generic mimeticism" branch of textual mimeticism.

Yet another illustration of textual mimeticism has to do with parasitising older versions of the ST. With translation ethics virtually non-existent in the nineteenth century, it is no wonder that some of the Romanian versions contain discernible echoes from previous translations (be they in Romanian or in French⁹), which the translators must have consulted. While we cannot speak of plagiarism *per se*, the occasional evidence of retranslations being influenced by previous translations – labelled by Brownlie (2006) as the "haunting" of later retranslations by earlier ones – could be classified as a form of mimeticism, especially when it occurs at the level of layout, not only of the individual phrase.

Lastly, a type of mimeticism we call "editorial" refers to the publishers' habit of dusting old versions off (versions which fared well and aspired to canonicity), updating them (primarily from the point of view of language, register, and style) and bringing them to light again, after half a century, a century, or more. The revitalised versions may or may not acknowledge the first translator's work, depending on the respective translator's symbolic capital: if the latter is convincing enough, the new version flaunts the translator's name; if otherwise, the editor takes over and the translator's name is often downgraded or altogether overlooked. In France, for instance, Pétrus Borel's translation of *Robinson Crusoe* was first published in 1836, then reprinted (slightly or heavily revised) 40 times since. In Romania, Petru Comarnescu's 1943 translation has gone through myriads of transformations (some operated by the translator himself who, depending on the fluctuations in the political regime, rephrased his text to suit the ideology of the time; others operated by editors and publishers after the book market liberalisation which took place in the 1990s – see, for instance, Lucian Pricop's 2017 version, which reproduces *ad litteram* most of Comarnescu's text).

Another type of editorial mimeticism refers to the way publishers saw fit to imitate previous translations of *Robinson Crusoe* from a paratextual point of view. As we have shown in a previous study (see Hăisan, 2024), when translated into Romanian in the nineteenth century, *Robinson Crusoe* would usually be accompanied by prefaces (with an intrinsically pedagogical and ideological design) which predictably do some (or all) of the following:

- offer biographic information on the author (e.g. explain the nobiliary particle *de* in Defoe's name by exposing it as a fraud; dwell in highly derogatory terms on Defoe's failure as a merchant)
- discuss the book at issue (e.g. speak about the enormous success of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*)

⁹ See, for instance, the Romanian version of *Robinson Crusoe* printed (by all accounts) in 1899 in Craiova, by Ralian and Ignat Samitca Institute (anonymous translator), which contains some French names (such as *Jacquot*) and certain turns of phrases which point to French calques, thus to the influence of a French intermediate version.

- quote from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Émile* (1762) and other authors/philosophers in order to validate *Crusoe* as a fundamental book for children
- present *Robinson Crusoe* as a book written in a style which appeals to both children and grown-ups
- introduce the book as a cautionary tale from which the reader should learn an important lesson regarding austerity in lifestyle and obedience to (parental) authority.

By contrast, the paratext of the Romanian versions published in the twentieth and twenty-first century (with an intrinsically hermeneutical and commercial design) usually does the following:

- put things in perspective (e.g. focus on Defoe as a versatile, prolific writer, and a founding father of the English novel; outline Defoe's place in English literature as well as in world literature; outline *Robinson Crusoe*'s place among Defoe's other works; explain the book's message in terms of colonialism, not only as a survival story)
- briefly describe previous translations and underline the merits of the latest version.

The covers and illustrations of many Romanian versions of Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* also point to mimesis, to varying degrees. 33 out of 36 covers show *Crusoe* on his island, while the illustrations inside the book exhibit similar styles in 26 of the volumes. Moreover, the 1899? Samitca version of *Robinson Crusoe* contains some illustrations which bear the signature "F. Schirato '99" along pictures which purportedly reproduce (or imitate) German graphic artist Ludwig Berwald.

8. Conclusions

After studying the retranslation series of *Robinson Crusoe*'s story in Romania and contrasting it with the one in France and in the Republic of Moldova, we have become more aware than ever that "causes of translation coexist, interact, fuse and merge with each other in complex ways which are open only to probabilistic explanation" (O'Driscoll, 2011, p. 19). Nevertheless, we will present our tentative conclusions below, in tabular form.

First, we will outline the main reasons behind retranslating *Robinson Crusoe* for Romanian children.

Period	Main Reason behind Retranslation	Commentary
the nineteenth century:	linguistic change	Throughout the nineteenth century, the Romanian language went through dramatic transformations (gradually adopting the Latin alphabet, yet with lingering intrusions of Cyrillic script; numerous – and often contradictory – orthographic and grammatical amendments; various calques of other languages; the Latinistic trend etc.), which is why it would be safe to say that retranslation in this period was triggered by linguistic change.
the twentieth century:	ideological change	The successive political regimes and which characterise twentieth-century Romania (e.g. a constitutional monarchy in the former half of the century, then a communist state – between 1947 and 1989 – followed by democracy) had a great impact on the Romanian

		translators and translations. Our in-depth analysis of the <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> editions published in this period reveals the ascendancy ideology had on how translators dealt with issues such as slavery or economic independence. Ideological change would thus be the main factor setting retranslation off.
the twenty-first century:	corrective change	During the last 30 years, the desire to retranslate sprang (should we leave purely commercial reasons aside) from the desire to complete or correct previous versions. In his 2017 translation (reedited in 2018 and 2022), for instance, Lucian Pricop ends his translator's preface with the following words: "This new Romanian version – the first complete translation of the novel – offers the reader the chance to consider another interpretive logic which needs to take into account the enthusiastic and emphatic tone in those paragraphs of the castaway's which are full of theological accumulation and interpretation." ¹⁰ (Pricop, 2017, p. 9, our translation). We are therefore considering corrective change as the main factor characterising the last decades.

Table 2. *Main Reasons behind Retranslation*

Secondly, we will look into the ways in which retranslation has redefined *Robinson Crusoe* across the centuries, by going back to Keymer's 2007 quotation.

Period	Genres to which <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> was Assimilated	Commentary
the nineteenth century:	▪ religious parable (focusing on sin, atonement, and redemption, as well as the sanctity of parenthood and the momentousness of parental authority in one's education) ▪ cautionary tale	Presenting Robinson Crusoe as a religious parable or a cautionary tale implied the expectation that the reader should behave mimetically (not as the Crusoe at the beginning of the story – a rebel and a "sinner" – but rather as the Crusoe towards the end of the first series of adventures – repentant, more tolerant, and also thrifter).
the twentieth century:	▪ a myth of economic individualism ▪ an allegory of political defeat ▪ tribute to hard work (with tinges of socialist labor morality).	The political side of Robinson Crusoe, reinterpreted so as to suit Communist ideology, was favoured over other aspects of the book; besides <i>synopsis</i> (abridgement being the prevalent translation strategy), we may also speak of <i>meiosis</i> (understatement being the main litotic mechanism translators resorted to, especially during the Communist era, i.e., 1947–1989).
the twenty-first century:	▪ an exotic adventure story ▪ a survival story	There is considerable openness to presenting and interpreting Crusoe's story

¹⁰ Original source text: "Această nouă versiune în limba română – prima traducere integrală a romanului – oferind cititorului șansa intrării într-o altă logică interpretativă care trebuie să țină cont de tonul însuflețit și emfatic din paragrafele de acumulări și interpretări teologice ale naufragiatului."

	▪ a study of solitary consciousness ▪ a buildingsroman ▪ an ecological tale (about the healing power of nature) ▪ a story with a moral about political correctness ▪ a travel diary	as a variety of genres at once, sometimes going against “the happy end feature of the Robinson myth established by Daniel Defoe” (Băgiu, 2024, p. 143). It is why we proposed <i>anthesis</i> [opening (of a flower)] as a metaphor subsuming all these possible interpretations.

Table 3. *Ways in Which Retranslation Has Redefined Robinson Crusoe (Genre-wise)*

Lastly, we attempt to map the fluctuations in the relationship between the two basic purposes modulating (translated) children’s literature (*to teach* and *to entertain*).

Period	Relationship between Teaching and Entertaining	Commentary
the nineteenth century:	<i>to teach</i> ► <i>to entertain</i>	Teaching was priority, the young readers were supposed to learn something from this parable.
the twentieth century:	<i>to teach</i> + <i>to entertain</i>	Pedagogy and leisure seemed to be more or less on an equal footing, complementing each other.
the twenty-first century:	<i>to teach</i> ◀ <i>to entertain</i>	The entertainment factor prevails over didacticism.

Table 4. *The Relationship between the two Basic Purposes Modulating (Translated) Children’s Literature (To Teach & To Entertain)*

In Romania, just like everywhere in Europe, there are more and more national prizes for children’s literature but also for translated children’s literature. There is also the EFFORT project (European Framework for Translation) trying to regulate literary translation evaluation, and a lot of effort is being put into creating coherent, useful, attractive series and collections of (translated) children’s literature.

If translation quality prevailed over mercantilism and the topos of immediate necessity, it would pave the way towards *telesis*. Hopefully, the recent proliferation in retranslation (which occasionally verges on nimiety) will gradually move towards *telesis* (if intelligently planned and directed). Notwithstanding, judging by our case-study alone (which we contrasted with the situation in the Republic of Moldova and in France, for a transnational approach), the future of children’s literature in translation is likely to be bright.

References:

- Băgiu, L. V. (2024). Fațete ale unor naufragii: Civilizația salvatoare [Facets of some wrecks: The saving civilization]. *Incursiuni în imaginar*, 15(2), 243–270. <https://doi.org/10.29302/InImag.2024.15.2.9>
- Berman, A. (1995). *Pour une critique des traductions: John Donne* [Toward a critique of translations: John Donne]. Gallimard.

- Bibliothèque nationale de France. (n.d.). *Catalogue général de la Bibliothèque nationale de France* [General catalogue of the National Library of France]. <https://www.bnf.fr/en/bibliotheque-nationale-de-france-catalogue-general>
- Brownlie, S. (2003). Investigating explanations of translational phenomena: A case for multiple causality. *Target*, 15(1), 111–152.
- Brownlie, S. (2006). Narrative theory and retranslation theory. *Across Languages and Cultures*, 7(2), 145–170.
- Campe, J. H. (1779). *Robinson der Jüngere, zur angenehmen und nützlichen Unterhaltung für Kinder* [The new Robinson Crusoe for the pleasant and useful entertainment of children]. Bonn.
- Campe, J. H. (1785). *Le Nouveau Robinson Crusoe, pour servir à l'amusement et à l'instruction des enfants* [The new Robinson Crusoe, for the entertainment and instruction of children] (A.-S. D'Arnex, Trans.). Poinçon.
- Defoe, D. (1719). *The life and surprising adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York, mariner*. W. Taylor.
- Defoe, D. (1835). *Robinson Crusoe sau întâmplările cele minunate a unui tânăr* [Robinson Crusoe or the wonderful happenings of a young man] (V. Drăghici, Trans.). Tipografia Albinei.
- Defoé, D. (1836). *Robinson Crusoe* (P. Borel, Trans.). F. Borel et A. de Varenne.
- Defoe, D. (1899?). *Aventurile lui Robinson Crusoe* [The adventures of Robinson Crusoe]. Institutul de Editură Ralian și Ignat Samitca.
- De Foe, D. (1899). *Aventurile lui Robinson Crusoe* [The adventures of Robinson Crusoe] (B. Marian, Trans.). Editura Tipografiei Adeverul.
- Defoe, D. (192?). *Robinson Crusoe* (S. Cassvan-Pas, Trans.). Socec.
- Defoe, D. (1942). *Robinson Crusoe* (Moș Ene [M. Drumeș], Trans.). Bucur Ciobanul.
- De Foe, D. (1943). *Robinson Crusoe* (R. R. Rosetti, Trans.). Cartea Românească. (Original work published 1900)
- Defoe, D. (1943). *Viața și nemaipomenitele aventuri ale lui Robinson Crusoe* [The life and extraordinary adventures of Robinson Crusoe] (P. Comarnescu, Trans.; M. Petrașcu, Illus.). Editura Ziarului "Universul".
- Defoe, D. (1945). *Viața și aventurile lui Robinson Crusoe* [The life and adventures of Robinson Crusoe] (A. Lascarov-Moldovanu, Trans.). Cugetarea Georgescu Delafras.
- Defoe, D. (1970). *Viața și nemaipomenitele aventuri ale lui Robinson Crusoe* [The life and extraordinary adventures of Robinson Crusoe] (R. Lungu, Trans.). Lumina.
- Defoe, D. (2002). *Robinson Crusoe* (A. Dicu, Trans.). Corint Junior.
- Defoe, D. (2007). *Robinson Crusoe* (M. Kis, Trans.). Steaua Nordului.
- Defoe, D. (2008). *Robinson Crusoe* (C. Nicolaescu, Trans.). Iulian Junior.

- Defoe, D. (2008). *Robinson Crusoe* (A. Petrea, Trans.). Flamingo GD.
- Defoe, D. (2011). *Robinson Crusoe* (A. Fenoghen, Trans.). ARC.
- Defoe, D. (2017). *Robinson Crusoe* (L. Pricop, Trans.). Cartex.
- Defoe, D. (2018). *Viața și aventurile lui Robinson Crusoe* [The life and adventures of Robinson Crusoe] (A. L. Brebeanu, Trans.). MondoRo.
- Defoe, D. (2019). *Robinson Crusoe* (A. Florescu, Trans.). Aramis. (Original work published 2018)
- Defoe, D. (2022). *Robinson Crusoe* (I. Chirica, Trans.; M. Bacinschi, Illustr.). ARC.
- Defoe, D. (2023). *Robinson Crusoe* (L. Moise, Trans.). Astro.
- Dimitriu, R. (2006). From Robinson Crusoe to Robinson in Wallachia: The intricacies of the reception process. In A. Pym, M. Shlesinger, & Z. Jettmarová (Eds.), *Sociocultural aspects of translating and interpreting* (pp. 73–82). John Benjamins.
- Foe, D. (1908). *Robinson Crusoe, călătorii* [Robinson Crusoe, Travels]. Editura Librăriei Leon Alcalay.
- Girard, R. (2001). *I see Satan fall like lightning*. Orbis Books.
- Girard, R. (2017). *Evolution and conversion: Dialogues on the origins of culture*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Hăisan, D. (2024). Allographic paratext and Robinson Crusoe in translation: Priming nineteenth-century Romanian readership. *Philologica Jassyensia*, 20(1), 223–238. <https://doi.org/10.60133/PJ.2024.1.16>
- Hobsbawm, E. (1994). *The age of extremes: The short twentieth century, 1914–1991*. Abacus.
- Işıklar Kocak, M., & Erkul Yağcı, A. S. (2019). Readers and retranslation: Transformation in readers' habituses in Turkey from the 1930s to the 2010s. In Ö. B. Albachten & Ş. T. Gürçağlar (Eds.), *Perspectives on retranslation: Ideology, paratexts, methods* (pp. 129–147). Routledge.
- Jones, M. H. (1997). *The beginning translator's workbook: Or the ABCs of French to English translation*. University Press of America.
- Keymer, T. (2007). Introduction. In D. Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (pp. xii–xxxix). Oxford University Press.
- Levițchi, L. (1975). *Îndrumar pentru traducătorii din limba engleză în limba română* [Guide for translators from English into Romanian]. Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică.
- National Library of the Republic of Moldova. (n.d.). *Online public access catalogue*. <http://catalog.bnrm.md/opac>
- O'Driscoll, K. (2011). *Retranslation through the centuries: Jules Verne in English*. Peter Lang.
- Palumbo, G. (2009). *Key terms in translation studies*. Continuum.

- Potolsky, M. (2006). *Mimesis*. Taylor & Francis.
- Pricop, L. (2017). Cel mai romanesc jurnal de călătorie [The most novelistic travel journal]. In D. Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (pp. 7–9). Cartex 2000.
- Pym, A. (2000). Late Victorian to the present. In P. France (Ed.), *The Oxford guide to literature in English translation* (pp. 73–81). Oxford University Press.
- Razumovskaya, V. A. (2018). Translatability of *Robinson Crusoe*: 300 Years Adventure in Time and Space. *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities and Social Sciences* no. 2 (pp. 814-822).
- Romanian Academy Library. (n.d.). *Library catalogue*. <https://biblacad.ro/>
- Shuttleworth, M., & Cowie, M. (2014). *Dictionary of translation studies* (Rev. ed.). Routledge. (Original work published 1997)
- Stevenson, D. (2011). History of children's and young adult literature. In S. A. Wolf, K. Coats, P. Enciso, & C. A. Jenkins (Eds.), *Handbook of research on children's and young adult literature* (pp. 179–193). Routledge.
- Taivalkoski-Shilov, K. (2015). Friday in Finnish: A Character's and (Re)Translators' Voices in Six Finnish Retranslations of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. *Target* no. 27 (1) (pp. 58-74). <https://doi.org/10.1075/target.27.1.03tai>
- Van Tieghem, P. (1969). *Le romantisme dans la littérature européenne* [Romanticism in European literature]. Albin Michel.
- Venuti, L. (1995). *The translator's invisibility: A history of translation*. Routledge.

TRANSLATORS' DIARIES AS SEMINAL ROMANIAN TEXTS ON TRANSLATION: A STUDY OF ANTOANETA RALIAN'S AND IRINA MAVRODIN'S WORKS¹

Ana-Magdalena PETRARU
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, Romania

email: alina.petraru@gmail.com

Abstract

In the larger context of the Romanian discourse on translation supported by texts of theorists and practitioners, this paper focuses on the memoirs of two great translators, namely Antoaneta Ralian from English (*Amintirile unei nonagenare: Călătoriile mele, scriitorii mei* [Memories of a nonagenarian: My travels, my writers], 2014) and Irina Mavrodin from French (*Despre traducere: Literal și în toate sensurile* [On translation: literally and in all senses], 2006). Our aim is to show how their insights are valuable to anyone interested in (literary) translation as the two figures have massively contributed to the field ever since the communist period. Thus, we will begin by grasping at the genre and methodologies, and then proceed to Ralian's and Mavrodin's works, properly contextualizing them with the help of (academic) criticism, as well as interviews and articles in the cultural media. Our aim is to distinguish various and varied stances which afford several approaches to translation, in general and the literary genres in their reception process, in particular.

Keywords: literary translation; translator's diaries; theory vs. practice; travelogue.

1. Introduction

The paper aims at accounting for the diaristic works of two reputed translators and practitioners, Antoaneta Ralian and Irina Mavrodin and their impact on the field and its stakeholders; so, we will further present some definitions and reflections on diaries and their importance in translation.

Autobiographies are a part of the heritage which allows researchers placement on such an axiological coordinate with respect to their works based on Philippe Lejeune's views applied systematically to the study of the genre (Costin, 2023, p. 93). The French critic also confirmed "that the most important outcome of any voyage of exploration is not so much knowledge of the Other as new insight into ourselves" (Popkin, 2009, p. 2). There is difficulty in the definition of the genre which comprises autobiographies, diaries and memoirs, particularly regarding 17th-18th century works (Gorovei, 2023, p. 33). They all take us on a trip down the memory lane towards a remembrance of things past; here, we (in)voluntarily grasp matters in a more or less chronological manner in which we are devoured like sons and daughters of (father) time in a labyrinthine memory palace.

¹ Article History: Received: 15.11.2025. Accepted: 05.02.2026. Published: 15.05.2026. Acknowledgement: This project is supported by a grant of the Ministry of Education, CCCDI - UEFISCDI, project code PN-IV-P2-2.1-TE-2023-0768 within PNCDI IV, contract no. 79TE/03.01.2025.

Encyclopaedias on Translation Studies such as Baker's or Shuttleworth's do not offer entries for translators' diaries and research in the field is scarce despite their undeniable value for theorists and practitioners with respect to challenges in decision making, strategies, methodologies, ambiguity, etc. The few studies available so far advise on diaries in translation education at tertiary level where various retrospection and introspection methods were employed to help students in their learning process, when translating, thus contributing to the reflective and self-analysis dimension (Pappel & Falk, 2012). Such learners' diaries which may come as "unstructured" reflections are also deemed helpful for beginner students in the acquisition of theoretical translation concepts, when applying procedures, solving problems and choosing certain strategies (Erakovic, 2013). Diary-based studies also give insights into deepening the understanding of self-translation and censorship in the case of authors that translate their works themselves and are marked by certain ideologies in their subjectivity (Kovacevic, 2015).

It is our belief that translators' diaries assess personal and professional development, may show patterns and their authors' frustration and satisfaction regarding outcomes; sometimes, such an emotional response may even occur in the re-edition of a translation (as we will further see in the case of Antoaneta Ralian). We adhere to general postulates in Translation Studies scholarship, namely that "to translate is to invent for the foreign text to new readerships who are aware that their interest in the translation is shared by other readers, foreign and domestic—even when those interests are incommensurable (Venuti, 2000, p. 482). We also agree with the fact that the cultural dimension leads to the (re)interpretation and reinvention of literary texts, among others (Venuti, 2000, p. 470).

In what follows, we will expand on the cultural context, the emotional responses and professional development entailed by the translator's job as reflected in the diaristic experience. Their cognitive processes are definitely at play, yet translation strategies are briefly mentioned, and they could be further developed in more applied studies in which functionalist approaches, in general and Christiane Nord's model (1991), in particular could be used for the analysis of parallel texts in Romanian and other languages. With respect to methods, we have already chosen the texts to study and interviews that mirror the translator's reflections in them, quintessentially provided to the readers by cultural magazines. Regarding longitudinal studies, we will show what translators in their diaries revealed in terms of constraints and practices from communist to post-communist years. We considered comparative studies, qualitative analysis and mixed methods to a certain extent as our purpose is to account for original features in these texts, we deem seminal for Romanian Translation Studies. A view we agree on in scholarly research in our country is that "translation is not a neutral conduit but an active participant in the creation of culture" (Pașcalău, 2025, p. 211). It has been so since the beginning of writing on Romanian soil and, as part of the reception process, translation as product had its importance stressed on; it is enough to recall deacon Coresi's considerations in the preface to *Întrebare creștinească* [A Christian inquiry] (1559) where he argued that translating the work was seminal for everybody to find out about Romanians as Christians; in addition, he underlined that a couple of words in our language are better than thousands in a foreign language that cannot be understood by people (Lungu Badea, 2005, p. 145).

We do not consider diaries to be paratextual elements in the sense given by Gérard Genette (1997) who includes forewords, afterwords, footnotes, endnotes and translator's notes in this category, but distinctive individual texts. They are a living proof of Venuti's (2008) translator invisibility, not marking translations proper, but accounting for the laboratory of creation where the professionals guided by St. Jerome give insights on their work. Unbiased by their feminine voices, the diaries which will be discussed below show experiences in translation against the background of a patriarchal society. Meaning is negotiated, and

alternative solutions for instances of equivalence are provided in cases of retranslation. Censorship is also a factor of the political context in communist Romania, a time of cultural resistance through reading of translated works where interpretive decisions were made based on context and experience. In a way, it can be argued that through translators' diaries, the target texts acquire a sixth sense, where the world of literature is enriched with interpretation through the process of translation. A similar view is held regarding the interpretation of literature, deemed invisible and whose 'unsaid' meanings can surface when correctly received, i.e. through the lenses of genre variety leading to the multiplication of reception/ reader-response procedures (Nicolaescu, 2023, p. 81).

2. Antoaneta Ralian and her Memoirs, *Amintirile unei nonagenare* (2014)

Antoaneta Ralian (1924–2015) is one of our most reputed translators, known for her approximately 125 works (novels, short stories, plays) she rendered from the English language into Romanian. She has been subject to previous research and translator portraits in which it was assessed that she spent approximately 60 years of her life engaged in the activity blessed by St. Jerome, working nine hours a day and following the model imposed by Jean Delisle (1999) which was related to her biography that allowed economy of means and simplicity of expression (Hăisan, 2019, p. 83). She translated English classics such as Ch. Dickens, D. Defoe, N. Hawthorne, Th. Hardy, O. Wilde and others, modernist authors (D.H. Lawrence, J. Joyce, A. Huxley) and more recent ones, i.e., S. Rushdie, Ch. Frazier, E.L. Doctorow, among many others. Apart from British and American writers, she translated Indian authors (Anita Desai, Amos Tutuola) or Romanian ones who wrote in English (Radu Florescu, Petru Popescu, Alex. Leo Șerban). Although most of her works are translations from English into Romanian, she also carried out translations from Italian (*Pinocchio* and a play by Pasolini) and French (a novel by Alexandre Dumas-fils in the 1990s). More or less exhaustive lists are provided in previous translator portraits, see, for instance, Hăisan, 2019, pp. 84-87. As we will see when we examine her diary, she collaborated closely with authors like the Irish British Iris Murdoch or the Canadian American Saul Bellow.

Antoaneta Ralian's thoughts on translation were made public via interviews in cultural magazines (*România literară*, *Observator cultural*) and volumes (i.e. Radu Paraschivescu, *Toamna decanei. Convorbiri cu Antoaneta Ralian* [The dean's autumn: Conversations with Antoaneta Ralian], 2011; *Nu cred în sfârșitul lumii: Articole, amintiri, interviuri* [I don't believe in the end of the world: Articles, memories, interviews], volume edited by Marius Chivu, 2016). She spoke about the fact that she neither had a mentor, nor she saw the usefulness of one; she believed that one needed to be gifted for the job, have an inner calling for it, learned much on editing and translation from Frida Papadache at Univers Publishing House whom she argued with and praised for the "superb" talent despite the predilection for archaisms. She retranslated Joyce arguing that Frida Papadache's version of *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* was close to a fairytale and Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, claiming that Vera Călin was not receptive enough to the writer's subtleties in her version (Șimonca, 2014). When asked about the main condition of a translator, she answered that talent was a must, along with love for literature and the feeling for the text and subtext where creation was needed. She has translated two books a year since she started working and has not stopped when she retired. She viewed translation as an escape that allowed her to lose herself. She put passion in her work, holidays included (Șimonca, 2015). Moreover, she did not believe in a theory of translation and the artistic act. When asked to talk about her translations, she avoided 'dissecting' and 'anatomizing' the act of translation or quoting theorists. For her, the artistic

act was a mystery, so she never taught courses in the field (Ralian, 2016, pp. 184-185), it was like an enigma that needed solving (p. 216).

Her memoirs, *Amintirile unei nonagenare* [Memories of a nonagenarian] (2014) are a mix of literary comments, autobiography and travelogue, a delight for Translation Studies in its cultural dimension. Previous research exploring her memoirs focused on the travels and TS, translation being itself a journey, transforming the translator and bringing languages, cultures and people together (Bădulescu, 2015, p. 103). The volume is also discussed along with Petre Solomon's memoirs in academia, and it was argued that the two translators were a closed community within the larger one of writers, speaking about visits they made and the personal relationships they had with the contemporary authors they translated which seem fictional sometimes (Doboş, 2022, p. 525).

Any lecture notes on A. Ralian's diary would start with her foreword which reads as follows: "In a book I translated, an old character feels so anonymous and inconsistent that he steps firmly on snow to convince himself he exists, then turns his head to see his footsteps as if they were proofs of his existence. I, too, still believe that I exist (*cogito ergo sum*)"² (Ralian, 2014, p. 9, our translation). She also spoke about the love for her husband in the unpublished work, "1949 – Jurnalul unei femei măritate"/ [Diary of a married woman] from which an excerpt is published in the preamble to the edition of *Amintirile unei nonagenare*/ [Memories of a nonagenarian] (2014).

The travelogue contains entries about Dresden which she viewed as a 20th century Pompei, when she accompanied her husband in his business trip (he was a journalist for AGERPRES); Vienna, regarded as the first waltz (her first contact with the Western world in the 60s) which shocked her due to the city's abundance that contrasted with the impoverished communist Romania; London, where it was hard to be intelligent in English: for two weeks, in 1973, she was invited by the British Council at the recommendation of the British Embassy of Bucharest as reward for her many translations from English literature; she had a busy schedule and no one appointed to accompany her because she knew the language; she saw G. B. Shaw's *The Philanderer* (Ro: *Afemeiatul, Craiul*), "academically performed as in the author's time"³ (Ralian, 2014, p. 30, our translation). She fell asleep during the performance and was woken up by the noises on the stage. She had no idea of what was going on, so she dared not comment on the staging, only other members of the audience carefully watching everything around her (Ralian, 2014, p. 30). When asked what writers she would like to meet, she asked for Iris Murdoch who was living in Oxford with her husband, the critic John Bayley. A. Ralian had just finished translating one of Murdoch's novels, *A Word Child* (Ro: *Vlăstarul cuvintelor*) and they met in a pub. The translator was planning to speak to her about the early philosophical essays influenced by J. P. Sartre and S. Weil, Murdoch's turn to the symbolic realism and the Buddhist touch of her latest novels. They became friends and wrote to each other, paying one another visits for the following 25 years (Ralian, 2014, pp. 31-32). She enjoyed Christmas on British soil whereas Bucharest was left in the dark and deprived of the Christian holiday. London seemed permanent and unchanged to her (Ralian, 2014, p. 33). Three members of the Writers' Union, Romania, arrived to participate in a symposium on "Literature in Translation" organized by the Centre of Great Britain – East Europe and the School of Slavonic and Eastern European Studies affiliated to the London University. Pious Romanian translators recall "the pilgrimages" to the houses of Dickens, Thackeray, Virginia Woolf or the house of *The Old Curiosity Shop* that still ran as Dickens described it. The conference venue was the Senate Hall

² Original source text: "Într-o carte pe care am tradus-o, un personaj bătrân se simte atât de anonim și de inconsistent, încât, ca să se convingă că există, calcă adânc în straturile de zăpadă, apoi întoarce capul să-și vadă urmele, ca pe niște dovezi că da, există. Eu sunt convinsă că încă exist (*cogito ergo sum*)".

³ Original source text: "Jucată academic, ca pe vremea lui Bernard Shaw".

of the University of London, seminar room 330 decorated with posters and “belle epoque” reproductions. Translators, editors, writers and journalists from six countries were present: Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland, Romania and Hungary, the lecturers from the School of South European Studies, other specialists, writers and translators from UK.

The aim was to discuss less-known literatures and the attitude towards translations in England and participating countries. The focus was on the English reception of translations, in general and of those from Eastern European countries, in particular, the role of translated literature in these countries and their contribution to the cultural heritage of world culture, along with the inevitable economic coordinates entailed by financing the activity of publishing translations (Ralian, 2014, pp. 37-39). She also talked about conference exhibits, English translations from books belonging to participating countries: versions from Eminescu, Caragiale (*Schițe/ Sketches*), poems by Arghezi, Rebreanu’s *Ion/ Ion* and *Răscoala/ The Uprising*, verses by Ștefan Augustin Doinaș, and Marin Sorescu, *Antologie de poezie românească/ An Anthology of Contemporary Romanian Poetry* translated by Brenda Walker and Andrea Deletant. Denis Deletant, lecturer of Romanian at the School of Eastern European Studies, gave an overview of translations from Romanian into English since 1854 when an anthology by E.C. Grenville Murray came out, *Doine – or the National Songs and Legends of Roumania*, followed by a nicely illustrated volume, *Rouman Anthology* by Henry Stangley which brought together 45 poems by Alecsandri, Bolintineanu, Gr. Alexandrescu, Bolliac, Heliade Rădulescu, etc.; in 1881, *Roumanian Fairy Tales and Legends* compiled by E. B. Mawer came out. The Romanian novel would be known on English soil after World War I when Lucy Byng translated *Viața la țară/ Love in the Countryside* (1926) and Alice Wise, *Pădurea spânzuraților/ The Forest of the Hanged* (1930). The latter was so successful that a version was reproduced by editor Peter Owen in 1967 (Ralian, 2014, pp. 39-40). According to Ralian, the translations from Eminescu by Sylvia Pankhurst and I.O. Stefanovic were “less qualitative”; the prefacer, G.B. Shaw, would express his doubts on the translation, as well. This would only be remedied by the English versions of Eminescu’s poems by Leon Levițchi, Andrei Bantaș and Corneliu Popescu published in our country.

After World War II and in the last decades, translations from Romanian literature became more frequent despite the gaps in the information process, selection, transposition and reception which the hosting institution in London underlined. For better information regarding Romanian literature and the relation to England, the Romanian delegation (Andrei Bantaș, the poet Liliana Ursu and A. Ralian) gave editors for consultation and publication excerpts translated into English from the works of contemporary poets and novelists. A. Ralian complains that it was a fiasco because of the authors she had to promote, excerpts from a novel by Corneliu Leu on Vlad Țepeș (portrayed as non-Dracula), a novel by Dinu Săraru and another one by Aurel Mihale. No publishing house showed any interest in contemporary Romanian literature. There were also meetings at the ‘Poetry Society’ with English writers published in Romanian translation (Ralian, 2014, pp. 40-41).

London also seemed familiar to A. Ralian due to various translations she carried out in which the city was outlined, i.e., D. Defoe’s *Journal of the Plague Year* or Galsworthy’s *End of the Chapter*. This also holds true for other geographical spaces in their sacred dimension as our historian of religions, Mircea Eliade labelled them. For instance, the house in Menton where Katherine Mansfield spent time when she was ill equally drew attention to the translator since she rendered into Romanian the author’s diary and some of her short stories (Ralian, 2014, pp. 43-44). Sometimes translations entail paranormal activity or simply eerie coincidences, notes A. Ralian: when she translated a brochure on Israel for touristic propaganda, she chose to visit the country instead of being paid for her work; on her trip, she met a male cousin on business in the area which she found weird (Ralian, 2014, pp. 47-48);

other relatives brag about the number of books A. Ralian translated, a female cousin from New York speaking about 50 translations to the neighbours, whereas, in 2014, when her memories came out, they totalled 117 (Ralian, 2014, p. 51).

Moreover, she was lucky enough to listen to lectures by her most favorite writers, John Barth, William Gas, Donald Barthelme, Thomas Pynchon or Robert Coover, among other postmodernist figures she was introduced to via a seminar group led by an Italian Americanist, Sergio Perosa (Ralian, 2014, p. 98). In this context, apart from the friendship with Iris Murdoch, she also brings into play the “subtle”, “melancholic” “very English” poet Alan Brownjohn whose poetry she translated for *România literară* (Ralian, 2014, p. 99) and the poet, pianist and painter Brenda Walker whom she rendered into Romanian, too (Ralian, 2014, p. 100). She translated and interviewed Saul Bellow who had a Romanian wife and visited our country in the communist years. A. Ralian talks about the erudition she felt attracted to in his writings which she tried to transpose in the Romanian versions, the cynical humour (especially in *Ravelstein*) in which two grumpy old men resemble Muppets characters, the untranslatable wordplay (Damocles’s sword, Deimoclis in English and Democlistir in Romanian, along with the “hermeneutics” in the source text that became ‘hormoneuți’ in the target language) (Ralian, 2014, pp. 115-116). An author she was profoundly touched by was Raymond Federman due to his narrative technique that included the creation process, the (un)making of a book (Ralian, 2014, p. 119); the author’s books she translated only came out after the fall of the communist regime in our country: *The Twofold Vibration. Smiles on Washington Square / Îndoita vibrație. Zâmbete în Washington Square* in 1989 and *Celor pe care i-ar putea interesa/ To Whom It May Concern* in 2000. With respect to Amos Oz, whose *To Know a Woman/ Să cunoști o femeie* was known to Romanian readers thanks to A. Ralian’s translation, the nonagenarian argues that the translator always has the tendency to identify the main character of the novel with the author, to detect autobiographical elements in his or her portrait and torments (Ralian, 2014, pp. 126-127). A. Ralian acknowledges the “manicheist intoxication of socialist realism”⁴ (Ralian, 2014, p. 129, our translation). In her questioning of the characters in the novels she translated (referring to Amos Oz’s Yoel, his positive or negative dimension of victim or victimizer) (Ralian, 2014, p. 129). She also collaborated with other translators when she rendered poetry into Romanian, namely Ted Hughes’s work she “roughly” translated into our language as white verse, whilst Vasile Nicolescu, who was responsible for the General Direction of Publishing Houses for the Ministry of Culture in the 1970s, came with the final touch and rhythm (Ralian, 2014, p. 132).

She spoke about herself as translator and the author’s otherness at conferences considering the latter to be the neighbour the former needed to love; A. Ralian felt there was double duality regarding the translator who represented the author in translation, reproduced or recreated him or her in another language. The nonagenarian rejected the Italian label, *traduttore-traditore*, she had no translation models for her work lacking fixed methods and recipes that might be used again. Only the identification with the author is required, his or her appropriation, the attempt to see through his or her eyes, think and feel the same which is only partially achievable, of course. The nonagenarian felt she should have appropriated Victorian decency and modern indecency, Galsworthy’s geometrical narrative, Iris Murdoch’s cerebrality or Katherine Mansfield’s suavity. Such chameleonic traits are impossible despite a translator’s flexibility (Ralian, 2014, pp. 149-150). She only tried to understand the authors to translate similarly to the actor acting in a play written for the stage by the playwright or the musician who is guided by the conductor obeying the composer. The book to translate and the dictionary used play a major part; there is a *ghost-story* type of communication in the case of

⁴ Original source text: “reminiscențele maniheiste ale intoxicației cu realism socialist”.

classics and an active communication in the case of modern writers. The translator's role is passive in his/ her subordination to the author and A. Ralian did all she could to show friendship to the authors translated, grasp what was specific to them, fluency and brightness meant to bring successful translations for target readers. Sometimes writers disappoint in their boring solutions, upsetting repetitions, confusions and contradictions such as the oxymoronic Henry Miller. There is a constant critic in the person of the translator leading to a duality in which the author is also present, a love triangle, yet no alterity of the essence (Ralian, 2014, pp. 151-152).

A. Ralian began working as editor for Univers Publishing House in 1958 as head of the department of English and American literature. She was also part of several committees engaged in censorship before 1989 where she had to deal with (philosophical, religious, literary) books considered to be subversive by Ceaușescu's regime, i.e. contravening communist or socialist ideals and encouraging capitalism. She deleted words or used periphrases in excerpts that might have offended the ruler and his wife who were travelling around the world and lacked culture. A fragment from Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* was omitted because of a traveling sailor and his monkey, another one from Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* which alluded to same sex love was rewritten to convey a Platonic relationship, and an essay from Bellow's *Humboldt's Gift* was not included in the translation because it argued that socialism might bore individuals (Ionescu, 2014, pp. 146-147).

If, among other things, eliminating erotic passages from works during the communist years was a must, preserving overt sexual language in translation became a habit she had to acquire after 1989 when she rendered not only Henry Miller's works into Romanian, but also Lawrence Durrell's or D.H. Lawrence's (Ralian, 2014, pp. 154-155) through 'naked words' (Ralian, 2014, p. 156). Despite their strong erotic stance, Miller's novels had to be kept away from being labelled as vulgar or pornographic and the poetic character of descriptions, the philosophical stream and the amplitude of life and art philosophies had to be transposed in translation in a variety of registers, argues A. Ralian (2014, p. 158).

Sometimes reedited versions bring benefits to translators whose job is a poorly paid one. This is what happened with translations sold via kiosks accompanied by newspapers in our country, a phenomenon that A. Ralian was also part of, yet she refused half of the sum she considered too high for D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover/ Amantul doamnei Chatterley*. She only felt sorry for her choice when she saw the cover of the book which harmed the reputation of the author by sending a wrong message to the readers (Ralian, 2014, p. 185).

3. Irina Mavrodin and her Work, *Despre traducere. Literal și în toate sensurile* (2006)

Irina Mavrodin (1929–2012) was a translator, poet, essayist who taught French literature at the University of Bucharest and Craiova and is reputed for her seminal contributions to the field of translation and literary studies. She translated major French (and Romanian) authors (Marcel Proust, Albert Camus, Gustave Flaubert, Stendhal, André Gide, Emil Cioran, Gaston Bachelard, Jean Cocteau), was a prominent figure in promoting French culture in Romania and viceversa and was awarded several prizes for her poetry and essays (*Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres* by France in 1992, Writers' Union Prize for translations in 1982 and 1985).

Her works have been analyzed by scholars in the field who emphasized Irina Mavrodin's recurrent ideas illustrated by practice, spread over a couple of decades (in essays, reviews, paratexts, volumes), mainly viewing translation as an endless climbing of a mountain mirrored by theory and poetics bridging researchers and practitioners, the specialized and the general public (Constantinescu, 2017, p. 63). Several of I. Mavrodin's principles were outlined by research: the theory on translation is supported by practice and feeds on it; translation is

artistic creation, a plural reading and any translation expresses the translator with respect to his/ her cultural mentality, horizon of expectations, individual and collective sensibility; a translation becomes old fashioned in time and literary translations can be viewed as an open series which is never final; the use of archaisms in translation is a delicate operation which may lead to connotational disasters when mismanaged; these archaisms can be translated through archaizing words or syntactic structures and, for the translation of a dialect, the solution is to use words and structures to suggest it, not an already existent dialect in the target language; in the case of a text that produces culture shock through its stylistic devices and syntactic structures, the translator shall force the target language to renew and explore its virtues; if the original text contains mistakes and instances of negligence, footnotes may be added in the translation; verses shall observe prosody in translation despite the Romanian tradition in the field as French tradition allows to give up prosody and this solution means a new reading and meeting a new horizon of expectations; in translating Dada poetry, literalness may be the proper and only solution (Constantinescu, 2017, pp. 57-58).

She has helped researchers and practitioners understand the triangle mechanism of reading-translating and (re)writing of a text (Constantinovici, 2017, p. 67), and the reader and creator of literature with exercise in the technique and art of interpreting a translation, gauge its grammatical, stylistic and semantic stances (p. 68). This holds true for both literary translations and others, her principles leaving a mark on previous attendants to her workshops that practice translation as a side-job, “to breathe fresh air” (Roşioru, 2018).

Generally speaking, *Despre traducere. Literal şi în toate sensurile* [On translation, literally and in all senses] (2006) is more philosophical than A. Ralian’s previously outlined work. In the argument, I. Mavrodin debates on the ambiguity of the term “translation” used in various fields, a *passé-partout* term depending on the one bringing it into play; in her situation, it is related to poetics and her practice as translator in the field of literary translation. We could even distinguish research questions: Is the literary translator an author? What kind of author? How is his status different from the author translated? Is the translator an author, simply a craftsman (Ro: *artizan*) or worse, a mechanical figure that only transcribes the original work? Is the translation a work in itself and how is its status different from the original? Which are the criteria that afford us to set all these differences? To which extent is literary translation a spontaneous act pertaining to inspiration and talent? Or is it an act that can be controlled, made better (Ro: *perfectibil*) through theory and practice (Ro. *practico-teorie* as Jean Ricardou coined it for literary theory) elaborated by the translator considering that practice creates theory and theory guides practice? (Mavrodin, 2006, pp. 4-6)

On translation in the writer’s daily life, I. Mavrodin often asks herself why she translated so many books and continues to do so. Her activity as translator and author are viewed as equally important. She prefers the fragmentary amount of knowledge she has access to so as to uncover new facets of translation every time. This is no translator’s manual (i.e., a didactic and systematic overview of the process). She speaks of an abyss (Ro: *prăpastie*) between a writer and a literary translator that is no author him/herself. The writer seeks his/ her strongest motivations to act as writer in the original work, and not in translation, the latter supporting his/ her endeavour, drawing a parallel territory for action which maintains the writer in a transient area which could be compared to the daily exercise of a pianist or violinist. Is the writer preparing for the language s/he is to translate into by playing with it? By translating, is s/he achieving a new (type of) reading, allowing him/ her to “taste” or understand the text only to go deeper into it? For a writer, translation is a means to stay in contact with the greatest spirits of world literature and daily absorb great artistic energies. Furthermore, a writer should not be trapped in the act of translation, but control it, turn it into a mechanism that should take off towards “literary space”, i.e. one’s own work. When controlled, daily translation may

become a ritualistic gesture allowing one to enter 'the making of a work' (see Proust). Translation cannot prevent the exertion of a major auctorial act (of writing one's original work). The non-writer becomes 'writer' and 'creator' through his/ her translated work (Mavrodin, 2006, pp. 8-10).

For her, living the game as creator requires caution and she has theory to back it up. She enjoys it as literary and Translation Studies theorists do, similarly to writers and poets meditating on their own work. However, how should one call those mimicking the game? (The) Impostors? Are they compilers, plagiarizers, imitators pretending to play a game that is unknown to them? Lacking vocation, they displease readers. There are strict rules to translation as in chess; literary theory and Translation Studies thus afford a controlled infinity of possibilities. One needs to clearly define one's operational concepts (pertaining to the "game"). Can "amazement" (Ro: *uimirea*) be defined or conceptualized? The translator is both free and imprisoned in the intertextuality s/he operates with, and which is inherited from the past and adapted to present needs. Coherence and rigour are close to mathematics in artistic awareness (Mavrodin, 2006, pp. 11-12).

Regarding the dilemmas of the translator-author, drawing on her translation from Ricoeur's *La métaphore vive/ The Rule of Metaphor (Metafora vie*, Univers, 1985), she recalls a passage on translation which talked about the literary use of words consisting of the game of interpretative possibilities residing in the enunciation. The meaning of words needs to be grasped every time without the support of an acquired stability. The experience of translation is similar, showing us the sentence is not a mosaic, but an organism. To translate is to invent an identic constellation in which every word is supported by the others and benefits from the familiarity of the entire language. So, the translator needs to seek a proper solution, and incompetence could be fatal (a bad translation of a medical prescription can be catastrophic for the patient). In poetry, translation may be a pretext starting from the original for a new text with bad results for the (idea of) translation. Some poems need to be translated *ad litteram* so as not to falsify their original poeticity (Mavrodin, 2006, pp. 14-15).

Unlike A. Ralian who completely rejected theory, I. Mavrodin referred to herself as a translator in need of theoretical frameworks starting from her own practice, denying that a literary translation would ever be the result of applied theory; if theory applies to what is general, translation is built as a result of a series of actions, specific solutions which shed light on its creative and artistic dimension. Mavrodin strongly believed that her practice-theory was changing and legitimising itself inductively and deductively along with every new text translated. Translation may apply a plural reading theory, given the consistent materiality owing to the multiple choices incurred by language and writing. There is difficulty in maintaining ambiguity and properly translating authors like Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Char or Michaux and the translator may need to invent or create an isomorphic text from the original, and bring it to the surface hermeneutically. Yet, the role of hermeneutics here may be overrated: when there is maximum poeticity, i.e., ambiguity involved, the endeavour requires a plurisemantic textual apparatus with several readings, not only one as in the case of scientific texts (Mavrodin, 2006, pp. 20-21).

She also complained about translators not being mentioned in most reviews of translated works published in cultural magazines, relating this to the condition of the translator as servant (Latin *ancilla, ancillaris*) and his or her work, a second text, an approach she labelled as 'terrorist' leading to disappointment, discouragement and ultimately abandonment of a being that is regarded as a machine or robot. She recommends the French model that prints the translator's name on the book cover alongside with that of the author, wondering whether in our country ignorance or commercial criteria guided a different choice. I. Mavrodin argues this

against the background of the poor pay (Mavrodin, 2006, pp. 23-24) which A. Ralian also frowned upon in her writings and (radio) interviews (Ralian, 2021).

A test for the translator of literature is to see if s/he loses his or her innocence as s/he advances in the process, gaining the 'science' of it and becoming more and more aware of what s/he is doing; the reader needs to be made familiar with the translation, not distanced from it (in the Translation Studies logic of foreignizing versus domesticating) and neologisms have to be avoided; Proust is a good instance to be provided here, according to Mavrodin, because it forced the Romanian sentences to strange labyrinthic turns and even shocked French readers (Mavrodin, 2006, pp. 26-27). With respect to Stendhal, she argued that a translation should not be embellished, which is a matter of paradigm shift, anyway, particularly since local colour is scarce in *Le rouge et le noir/ Roșu și negru/ The Red and the Black* (pp. 29-30).

For I. Mavrodin, the relationship between an author and his or her translator was an impossible one meant for failure, where compromise was king because the relativity of translation pertaining to the different structure of languages and their sonority; in the same hermeneutic stance, it is argued that the author does not let the translator do his/ her job, constantly perturbing him/ her via translation and its linguistic and literary system which can only result in failure; furthermore, the translator's role is not to answer the questions of the reader, explaining what the author meant in the source text, but should only question the text to translate (Mavrodin, 2006, pp. 32-34).

If the original text is reality and translation just a sensible appearance pretending to be real, a beautiful illusion that works for a while then needs replacing by another one, self-translation implies more freedom and one is tempted to rewrite the text, making the original a simple pretext, only a bilingual edition limiting this (pp. 38-39); I. Mavrodin gave the examples of Cioran and Beckett whose entire works could be regarded as a great act of self-translation (p. 40) similar to recent research on contemporary writers drawing on her where bilingualism had a say (e.g. Eiben on Dumitru Tsepeneag and Felicia Mihali, 2017, p. 151).

The duty and work of a writer are those of a translator, too, argued I. Mavrodin, departing from Proust (Mavrodin, 2006, p. 46), an author first translated in periodicals from the editions of works published during his life and then from various posthumous editions of an original that constantly circulated until a complete edition came out (Constantinescu, 2020, p. 388); the amateur is no match to the true artist who stands out and goes beyond the ordinary through a rapport of analogy similarly to causality in the world of science (Mavrodin, 2006, p. 48). When translating a masterpiece (like *Du côté de chez Swann/ În căutarea timpului pierdut. Swann/ Remembrance of Things Past. Swann's Way*), one enters another type of knowledge which is an immediate one, acutely sensorial and global, feeling the resistance of the material, successive steps in which the treacherous 'feeling of the language' is of no use; there are slippery grounds, nauseous perfumes, the translator breathes like an asthmatic, there is torment and ecstasy in every sentence, measurement by a grammatical compass until the spirit breaks towards the understanding of the text. For I. Mavrodin, Proust's masterpiece is an encounter with perfection which equals a fight against heterogeneity, something exhaustive meant to unify what is real (Mavrodin, 2006, pp. 77-78).

For translation to work as form of reciprocal knowledge and overcome the centre-margin/ periphery complex (which leads to either overvaluing or undervaluing), it needs to be come out at a (reputed) publishing house and be disseminated in the receiving cultural space, conditions that are difficult to fulfil for a minor culture and language like the Romanian one; the centre reflects its image in the periphery or margin from the perspective of translation, roles that can change, the margin challenging the centre (Mavrodin, 2006, pp. 49-50) in various theories, the Polysystem one, included.

Patience is key for the artist and the translator, it neighbours monotony which has its artistic specificity, too; in his/ her patience, a translator needs to be close to infinity yet know when to stop without questioning the reason why. Drawing on Flaubert's work whose torments are well known (Fr: *les affres du style*), Mavrodin assesses that paradox between freedom and patience is required by the modern translator caught in-between other issues of alterity and otherness (Mavrodin, 2006, pp. 90-91).

Talking less than Ralian about her travels in her work, Mavrodin nonetheless accounts for a French-Romanian festival she went to in Bretagne that was meant to show our art under all its shapes in France. The author mentions the visits she paid to libraries, bookshops, schools that were interested in Romania despite not being familiar with our major writers (Eminescu, Caragiale, Creangă, Sadoveanu, Arghezi, Țepeneag, etc.). She wondered whether the phenomenon was related to a late translation of Romanian authors in France that were mainly distributed in our country and not the French cultural space or others, an inconvenient truth that needed accepting (Mavrodin, 2006, pp. 100-101).

I. Mavrodin also speaks about a restricted zone that has been gradually conquered since 2000, Romanian literature creating a discourse it lacked before through translations from Henry Miller and Sade; if A. Ralian translated the former by disinhibiting herself and France classicised and studied the latter, I. Mavrodin would turn down a translation from a popular contemporary French author because of its explicit register despite the challenge (Mavrodin, 2006, pp. 107-108). She compares the translation of Caragiale's plays into French with the invention of a new language, an achievement by Monica Lovinescu and Eugene Ionescu's version where adaptation was needed (Mavrodin, 2006, pp. 126-127). Overcoming the postulate of untranslatability, we are left with translatability which is required by text pragmatics in the case of poetry, as well, a rare and felicitous instance being Marin Sorescu's *Hârtie/ L'ouragan de papier* rendered in French by Alain Bousquet, claims I. Mavrodin (Mavrodin, 2006, p. 142).

4. Conclusion

Antoaneta Ralian and Irina Mavrodin whose contribution to literary translation in our country stands out as major achievement for the reception of English and French culture, respectively, were very different in style and some of their reflections on the translation process. The former travelled much and rejected theory, the latter was also an academic and embraced it, linking it to practice and continuing professional development. Their translations and thought on the topic continue to inspire researchers and practitioners, hence the large number of studies published on them. If A. Ralian believed that the translator was a representative of the author in translation who needed recreation in the target text, a neighbour to love, appropriate and see the world through his or her eyes, for I. Mavrodin, the translator had to be a (meta)author, a poetician in a special relation with the source and target texts, an ingenious strategist of the translation's reception s/he circulated. Moreover, with respect to the relation(ship)s with authors, A. Ralian had the possibility to meet many of the ones she translated and benefit from their expertise, unlike I. Mavrodin who spoke of voices past whose remembrance is only available to us and their translators through memoirs, notes, etc. (as in the case of Proust and classics). When traveling to fairs abroad, her experience was close to culture shock, the French-Romanian connection leaving her a bitter taste. The translator's invisibility, as argued by Venuti in theory, is something that marked both A. Ralian and I. Mavrodin; if the former acted under the influence of censorship and became visible during the communist years when she deleted passages from the authors she rendered into Romanian (Thackeray, Lawrence, Joyce), the latter recommended for the translator to be visible in the sense of his/

her presence on the translated book's cover (following the French model) and in cultural periodicals in reviews of translations. The translator's invisibility in such magazines would only discourage practitioners whose work is viewed as automatic in the era of machine translation and AI. Last but not least, if Ralian acknowledged she had to disinhibit herself to translate the highly explicit content in Henry Miller's novels, Mavrodin, despite the challenge such an endeavour would entail, refused to render into Romanian such a work from French due to the overt sexual language in it.

References:

- Bădulescu, D. (2015). Travelling between languages and cultures: In memoriam Antoaneta Ralian. *Linguaculture*, 6(2), 99–105. <https://journal.linguaculture.ro/index.php/home/article/view/72/60>
- Constantinescu, M. (2020). Despre retraducere din perspectiva unei istorii a traducerilor [On retranslation from the perspective of a history of translations]. *Perspectivă și Problemele Integrării în Spațiul European al Cercetării și Educației*, 7(2), 386–391.
- Constantinescu, M. (2017). Reflecția traductologică mavrodiniană: Între practico-teoria traducerii și poetica/poietica traducerii [Mavrodin's translational reflection: Between the practico-theory of translation and the poetics/poetics of translation]. In G. Badea-Lungu & N. Obrocea (Eds.), *Studii de traductologie românească. I. Discurs traductiv, discurs metatraductiv* (pp. 52–66). Editura Universității de Vest.
- Constantinovici, S. (2017). Irina Mavrodin. În căutarea traducerii perfecte [Irina Mavrodin: In search of the perfect translation]. In G. Badea-Lungu & N. Obrocea (Eds.), *Studii de traductologie românească. I. Discurs traductiv, discurs metatraductiv* (pp. 67–87). Editura Universității de Vest.
- Coresi, D. (1559). *Întrebare creștinească* [A Christian inquiry]. Coresi.
- Costin, C. (2023). O mitologie personală a scrisului: Jurnalul lui Jeni Acterian [A personal mythology of writing: Jeni Acterian's diary]. In C. Dram (Ed.), *Literatură memorialistică* (pp. 75–94). Editura Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza.
- Doboș, D. (2022). Amintirile traducătorilor: Petre Solomon și Antoaneta Ralian [Translators' memories: Petre Solomon and Antoaneta Ralian]. In O. Ichim (Ed.), *Provocări trecute și prezente în evoluția limbii, literaturii și culturii române* (pp. 515–528). Editura Universității de Vest.
- Eiben, I. N. (2017). *Sur une visibilité de l'autotraducteur: Dumitru Tsepeneag et Felicia Mihali* [On the visibility of the self-translator: Dumitru Tsepeneag and Felicia Mihali]. Editura Universității de Vest.
- Erakovic, B. (2013). The role of translation diaries in the acquisition of theoretical translation concepts at the beginner level. *Professional Communication and Translation Studies*, 6(1-2), 149–156. https://sc.upt.ro/images/cwattachments/118_3f59dd2697d460965421a3fbe805c619.pdf
- Genette, G. (2017). *Paratexts: Thresholds of interpretation* (J. E. Lewin, Trans.; R. Macksey, Foreword). Cambridge University Press.

- Gorovei, Ș. S. (2003). Pre-memorialiști, pseudo-memorialiști [Pre-memorialists, pseudo-memorialists]. In B. Crețu, O. Ichim, & M.-R. Clim (Eds.), *Memorialistica românească: Între documentul istoric și obiectul estetic* (pp. 33–57). Editura Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza.
- Hăisan, D. (2019). Portret de traducător: Antoaneta Ralian/Portrait de traducteur: Antoaneta Ralian. [Portrait of a translator: Antoaneta Ralian]. In *Atelier de traduction*, hors série: *O sută de ani de traduceri în limba română/Cent ans de traductions en langue roumaine* (pp. 73–92). Editura Universității Ștefan cel Mare.
- Ionescu, A. (2014). *Romanian Joyce: From hostility to hospitality*. Peter Lang.
- Kovačević, B. (2015). *(Self)translation and censorship: A study based on diaries of Jasmina Tešanović* [Doctoral dissertation]. Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona. <https://aplicaciones.ciencia.gob.es/teseo/#/tesis/O394361/detalle>
- Lejeune, P. (2009). *On diary* (J. D. Popkin & J. Rak, Eds.; K. Durnin, Trans.). University of Hawaii Press.
- Lungu Badea, G. (2005). *Tendințe în cercetarea traductologică*. Editura Universității de Vest.
- Mavrodin, I. (2006). *Despre traducere: Literal și în toate sensurile* [On translation, literally and in all senses]. Scrisul Românesc.
- Nicolaescu, C. (2023). The invisible world of literature and its interpretation. *Cogito – Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, 1, 181–189. <https://www.cceol.com/search/article-detail?id=1193404>
- Nord, C. (1991) *Text Analysis in Translation. Theory, Method, and Didactic Application of a Model for Translation-Oriented Text Analysis* (C. Nord & P. Sparrow, Trans.). Rodopi.
- Pappel, T., & Falk T. (2012). Study diaries in translation education at Tallinn University. *Eesti Rakenduslingvistika Ühingu aastaraamat* [Yearbook of the Estonian Association for Applied Linguistics], 8, 185–194. <https://www.cceol.com/search/viewpdf?id=254083>
- Paraschivescu, R. (2011). *Toamna decanei: Convorbiri cu Antoaneta Ralian* [The dean's autumn: Conversations with Antoaneta Ralian]. Humanitas.
- Pașcalău, R. (2025). Translation – A bridge between cultures in transition. *Incursiuni în imaginar*, 16(2), 209–223. <https://doi.org/10.29302/InImag.2025.16.2.10>
- Radio România Cultural. (2021, October 12). *Antoaneta Ralian. Traducerea ca artă* [Antoaneta Ralian. Translation as art]. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dm9tzemDdJk&t=978s>
- Ralian, A. (2016). *Nu cred în sfârșitul lumii: Articole, amintiri, interviuri* [I don't believe in the end of the world: Articles, memories, interviews]. Editura Art.
- Ralian, A. (2014). *Amintirile unei nonagenare: călătoriile mele, scriitorii mei* [Memories of a nonagenarian: My travels, my writers]. Humanitas.
- Roșioru, M. (2018, September 30). *Întoarcerea traducătorului* [The translator's return]. Roșioru.ro. <https://rosioru.ro/2018/09/30/intoarcerea-traducatorului/>
- Șimonca, O. (2015, October 27). *Toată literatura lumii este una pregnant erotică: Interviu cu Antoaneta Ralian, realizat în 2005* [All the world's literature is intensely erotic: Interview with Antoaneta Ralian, realized in 2005].

Ralian]. *Observator cultural*, (800). <https://www.observatorcultural.ro/articol/toata-literatura-lumii-este-una-pregnant-erotica-interviu-cu-antoaneta-ralian-realizat-in-2005/>

Șimonca, O. (2014, May 15). *Visez foarte mult și foarte frumos: Interviu cu Antoaneta Ralian* [I dream a lot and very beautifully: Interview with Antoaneta Ralian]. *Observator cultural*, (722). <https://www.observatorcultural.ro/articol/visez-foarte-mult-si-foarte-frumos-interviu-cu-antoaneta-ralian-2/>

Venuti, L. (2008). *The translator's invisibility: A history of translation*. Routledge.

Venuti, L. (2000). Translation, community, utopia. In L. Venuti (Ed.), *The translation studies reader*, pp. 468–488. Routledge.

TECHNICAL TRANSLATION PEDAGOGY IN ROMANIAN UNIVERSITIES: SURVEY EVIDENCE ON COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNOLOGY USE¹

Daniel DEJICA,
West University of Timișoara, Romania

e-mail: daniel.dejica@upt.ro

Patricia Cornelia GRIGORAȘ,
West University of Timișoara, Romania

e-mail: patricia.grigoras@e-uvt.ro

Abstract

This article offers an examination of current pedagogical practices in technical translation training in Romania, situating them within a consolidated theoretical framework that integrates genre-based approaches, competence development models, and technology-mediated professional workflows. While recent scholarship has clarified the conceptual distinctiveness of technical translation by emphasising the functional, procedural and risk-sensitive characteristics of technical genres, far less is known about how these insights are operationalised in the classroom. Addressing this gap, the study draws on empirical evidence collected through a national survey of 23 university translation lecturers affiliated with six Romanian institutions to map teaching methods, technology and AI integration, perceived student competencies, and curriculum–industry alignment. Methodologically, the research employs a structured questionnaire combining closed and open items, thus enabling both descriptive quantification of prevailing tendencies and qualitative interpretation of lecturers’ reflective accounts. The findings reveal a pedagogical landscape that has largely shifted towards practice-oriented and interaction-driven instruction, with project-based learning, case studies, workshops and guided group activities emerging as central methods. However, despite this generally practice-aligned orientation, the systematic use of authentic, workflow-based translation projects remains uneven, suggesting that conceptual acceptance of genre-anchored pedagogy does not always translate into full curricular implementation. Technology integration is widespread, particularly with machine translation systems, terminology tools and CAT environments, and lecturers consistently adopt a reflective rather than substitutional stance towards artificial intelligence. AI tools are predominantly used to foster analytical judgement, comparative evaluation and post-editing competence—reinforcing the human translator’s role as responsible decision-maker—while concerns related to licensing costs and institutional infrastructure continue to limit full incorporation of quality-assurance and project-management applications. With respect to student performance, respondents converge on a cluster of persistent difficulties that closely mirror the communicative and cognitive demands of technical genres: terminological accuracy and consistency, domain knowledge, contextual adaptation and revision competence. These challenges confirm the need to treat terminology governance, research strategies and revision workflows not as ancillary skills, but as core components of technical translation competence. Curriculum alignment with professional expectations is generally perceived as moderate, with local efforts towards industry engagement hindered by episodic collaboration and resource constraints. Taken together, the results delineate a field in transition: lecturers demonstrate strong awareness of contemporary theoretical developments and recognise the necessity of genre-anchored,

¹ Article History: Received: 28.01.2026. Accepted: 01.02.2026. Published: 15.05.2026. No funding was received either for the research presented in the article or for the creation of the article.

competence-driven and technology-aware training, yet institutional conditions, assessment traditions and infrastructural limitations constrain full realisation of these principles. By placing new empirical evidence in dialogue with an established conceptual trajectory, the study contributes not only to documenting current pedagogical practices but also to consolidating a coherent research programme in technical translation pedagogy. It concludes with structural recommendations for strengthening genre-task alignment, integrating revision-centred assessment, scaffolding competence development and institutionalising reflective technology use, thereby supporting the long-term maturation of technical translation education within Romanian higher education and beyond.

Keywords: technical translation; translation pedagogy; translator competence; CAT/QA tools; curriculum–industry alignment.

1. Introduction

Over the past years, research in specialised (LSP) translation has shown that technical translation is most productively defined not by domain labels alone, but by its genre ecology and functional orientation (Dejica, 2020; Dejica, in press–a). Technical texts—such as manuals, specifications, operating procedures or technical bulletins—are characterised by a strong task-directed logic, usability constraints and risk-sensitive communicative purposes, which distinguish them fundamentally from scientific genres oriented toward epistemic knowledge construction and disciplinary argumentation. This genre-based distinction has contributed to clearer conceptual delimitation within LSP translation and has had direct implications for training, assessment and research design (Dejica, in press–b; Dejica, in press–c).

In parallel with this conceptual consolidation, the professional environments in which technical translators operate have become profoundly technology-mediated. Contemporary technical translation is performed within complex tool ecologies that combine CAT environments, terminology management systems, automated quality-assurance applications, machine translation and, increasingly, AI- and LLM-assisted drafting and post-editing. In response to these developments, a practice-oriented research agenda has argued that technology should be treated as an explicit analytical variable, that genre-anchored translation tasks represent the most appropriate unit for both research and training, and that quality assessment must extend beyond linguistic equivalence to include usability, consistency and risk management (Dejica, in press–b; Dejica, in press–c; Stiegelbauer, 2025).

While these theoretical and methodological advances have clarified what technical translation *is* and how it *functions* in professional settings, less empirical attention has been devoted to how these insights are actually operationalised in translation classrooms. Previous meta-analyses of Romanian doctoral research have shown a persistent dominance of text-centred and contrastive approaches, alongside limited engagement with technology-mediated practices and genre-level pedagogy (Dejica, Pungă, Badea & Vilceanu, 2022). More recent work on curriculum development and competence-based training has outlined directions for modernising translation programmes, particularly through the EMT and PACTE frameworks, project-based learning and the gradual integration of digital tools and AI (Grigoraş & Dejica 2025, Dejica, in press–b). However, these studies have largely operated at a conceptual or programmatic level, leaving a gap regarding lecturers' current practices, perceptions and constraints.

The present article is designed to complete and connect this line of research by introducing empirical evidence from a national survey (Appendix A) of translation lecturers in

Romania. It builds directly on the genre-based delimitation of technical translation and on the concept of the multidimensional translator (Dejica & Dejica-Carțiș, 2020), extending these frameworks into the domain of pedagogy. At the same time, it operationalises the practice-oriented research principles proposed for technical translation—most notably the treatment of technology and AI as design variables—within the context of teaching and curriculum alignment. In doing so, it complements earlier conceptual work with data-driven insights and aligns methodologically with the scenario-based approach developed for both technical and scientific translation research (Dejica, in press–b; Dejica, in press–c).

Drawing on responses from 23 translation lecturers across six Romanian universities, the study explores how technical translation is currently taught, how digital tools and AI are integrated and critically framed, where lecturers locate persistent student difficulties, and how they assess the alignment between curricula and professional realities. By examining these dimensions together, the article aims to bridge the gap between established theoretical frameworks, emerging technological practices and everyday pedagogical decision-making.

Ultimately, this contribution seeks to reposition technical translation pedagogy within a coherent research continuum: from conceptual delimitation and competence modelling to empirical classroom evidence and scenario-level recommendations. In this sense, the article adds new data to the field (Gerzymisch-Arbogast, 2008) and consolidates and completes an existing research trajectory focused on the systematic, genre-anchored and technology-aware development of technical or specialized translation as both a professional practice and an academic discipline.

2. Conceptual Background

This study approaches technical translation through a genre-based lens that foregrounds communicative purpose, recurrent text types and the functional constraints of professional documentation (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993; Trosborg, 2000). Prior work has argued that technical texts form a coherent genre ecology oriented toward operational use, procedural clarity and functional adequacy, with translation decisions evaluated against usability, consistency and risk management rather than sentence-level equivalence alone (Dejica, 2020, Dejica, in press–a). Within this perspective, genre-task alignment becomes a central pedagogical principle: competence development should be organised around recurring communicative functions—procedural description, warning and compliance, parameter specification, troubleshooting—so that students experience terminological propagation, cross-text consistency and iterative revision across documentation sets (Dejica, in press–b).

The competence architecture that sustains such training is captured by established frameworks (PACTE, 2003; EMT, 2022) and by the multidimensional translator model, which integrates linguistic-textual abilities with thematic literacy, strategic decision-making, technology use, workflow coordination, quality assurance and professional responsibility (Dejica & Dejica-Carțiș, 2020). In technical contexts, translators are expected to operate in collaborative tool ecologies, interact with subject-matter experts and ensure coherence across multilingual documentation, which means pedagogy must cultivate not only textual skills but also process awareness, tool literacy and accountability. Consequently, effective curricula mobilise project- and scenario-based learning designs that stage authentic tasks and professional workflows rather than isolated exercises, enabling students to internalise revision as a core competence and to connect terminological governance with downstream effects on users and systems (Dejica, in press–b).

Because contemporary practice is technology-mediated by default, the framework adopted here treats digital tools—notably CAT environments, translation memories, termbases,

automated QA and MT/LLM systems—as explicit design variables in both research and teaching. The didactic aim is not tool operation per se, but the cultivation of analytical judgement through tasks such as instrumented post-editing, output comparison and error-typology analysis, where students calibrate decisions against function, audience and risk. This requires institutions to create conditions for reflective integration—licensed access, staff development, and curricular flexibility aligned with recognised competence descriptors—so that technology can be leveraged to strengthen, rather than displace, human agency and responsibility in technical translation.

Anchored in these premises, the present article mobilises a consolidated conceptual triad—genre, competence and technology—as the analytical scaffold for interpreting current pedagogical practices reported by Romanian lecturers. The goal is to observe how these principles are enacted in classrooms, how lecturers negotiate tool-rich workflows and assessment, and where structural tensions persist between conceptual intent and institutional realities (Dejica, Pungă, Badea & Vilceanu, 2022).

The genre–competence–technology orientation has also generated follow-up LSP translation research in our environment. Current projects examine website localisation (Mali & Dejica, 2025), post-editing and assessment in medical translation (Kovács & Dejica, 2025), and linguistic/translation issues in environmental sustainability (Sburlea & Dejica, 2024), thereby implementing the directions formulated in our doctoral meta-study and practice-oriented framework (technology as an explicit variable; genre-task alignment; QA-centred evaluation). Together, these projects demonstrate the translation of recommendations into research design and help consolidate a national evidence base for specialised-translation pedagogy.

3. Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive, survey-based research design (Appendix A) in order to capture current pedagogical practices, technological orientations and curricular perceptions among university-level lecturers involved in technical translation training. This approach is consistent with established methodological recommendations in Translation Studies for exploratory and diagnostic investigations aimed at mapping practices, identifying research tendencies and informing pedagogical development (Williams & Chesterman, 2002; Vandepitte, 2008).

3.1. Research Instrument

Data were collected through a structured online questionnaire entitled *Teaching technical translation in a digital world* (Appendix A), specifically designed to investigate the relationship between pedagogical practices, technology integration and perceived competence development in technical translation courses. The questionnaire was developed in accordance with survey research principles, prioritising clarity, neutrality and respondent efficiency, and was distributed electronically via Google Forms, a platform chosen for its accessibility and data-collection efficiency (Wellington, 2015).

The instrument comprised six thematically organised sections: (1) professional and demographic profile; (2) pedagogical approaches and teaching methods; (3) integration of digital tools and AI; (4) student competencies and professional development; (5) curriculum development and institutional factors; and (6) additional qualitative insights and recommendations. The questionnaire combined Likert-scale items, multiple-choice and ranking questions, as well as open-ended prompts, allowing for both quantitative mapping of

tendencies and the collection of richer, reflective responses. The overall structure followed standard guidance to position closed questions before open prompts in order to sustain engagement and response quality (Neuman, 2021).

3.2. Participants and Data Collection

The target group consisted of university lecturers teaching technical or specialised translation in Romanian higher-education institutions. Participants were recruited digitally, primarily via email, which enabled the extension of the geographical scope beyond local institutional settings. A total of 23 valid responses were obtained from lecturers affiliated with six universities, geographically distributed across five Romanian cities (Alba Iulia, Cluj-Napoca, Constanța, Oradea, and Timișoara), with two institutions based in Timișoara.

The respondent group included university assistants, lecturers and full professors, with teaching experience ranging from early-career to over fifteen years of academic practice. A substantial proportion of respondents also reported professional translation experience, providing an empirically relevant perspective on the relationship between academic training and market expectations. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about data confidentiality and ethical use in accordance with GDPR requirements, as outlined in the introductory section of the questionnaire.

3.3. Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis combined descriptive quantitative techniques with qualitative thematic interpretation. Closed-ended questions were analysed using frequency and distribution measures in order to identify dominant pedagogical approaches, patterns of technology and AI integration, and perceived strengths and weaknesses in student competence development and curricula. Open-ended responses were subjected to qualitative content analysis, allowing recurrent themes, concerns and recommendations to emerge inductively.

Interpretation of the results followed an abductive logic, whereby observed patterns were related back to established theoretical constructs in genre studies, competence frameworks and practice-oriented translation research (Dejica, in press–b). This dual analytical strategy supports data triangulation and enables the results to be discussed not as isolated survey findings, but as empirically grounded indicators situated within the broader conceptual landscape outlined in Section 2.

By combining methodological transparency with theoretical anchoring, this design ensures that the findings can both inform local curriculum development and contribute to the cumulative, comparative study of technical translation pedagogy in digitally mediated educational contexts.

4. Results and findings

This section presents the main findings of the survey, organised thematically around pedagogical practices, technology and AI integration, student competence development, and curriculum–industry alignment. The analysis integrates interpretation at each stage, relating observed patterns to genre-based and competence-oriented perspectives on technical translation training.

4.1. Pedagogical Approaches and Assessment Practices

The results (Table 1) indicate that technical translation teaching in Romanian universities is predominantly practice-oriented, yet uneven in terms of task authenticity and assessment design. A strong majority of respondents report using project-based learning, case-study approaches and translation workshops as core teaching methods. These approaches are frequently complemented by group discussions and problem-based activities, suggesting a general shift away from exclusively lecture-based instruction. At the same time, traditional lectures and textbooks remain present, typically framed as moderately effective when working with Generation Z students.

Interactive methods are widely integrated, with most lecturers reporting frequent or systematic use of collaborative tasks. However, the incorporation of authentic, real-world translation projects—such as client-simulated assignments or industry-driven workflows—appears less systematic. While many lecturers recognise their pedagogical value, such projects are often used only occasionally, indicating structural or institutional constraints rather than conceptual resistance.

Assessment practices reflect this hybrid pedagogical landscape. Project-based and portfolio-based evaluation methods are widely used, yet traditional written examinations continue to coexist with performance-oriented assessment. Peer evaluation and assessment based on real-world translation assignments are reported less frequently, despite their relevance for professional preparation. This combination suggests that, although pedagogy is increasingly practice-driven, assessment has not fully shifted toward genre-task and workflow-based criteria, which are central to technical translation competence.

Table 1.

Predominant pedagogical and assessment practices (n = 23)

Dimension	Most frequently reported practices
Teaching methods	Project-based learning; case studies; translation workshops; group discussions
Use of interactive methods	Frequent or systematic integration
Authentic projects	Occasional to frequent, but not systematic
Assessment	Project-based and portfolio-based, combined with traditional exams

Overall, these findings point to a pedagogical orientation that aligns conceptually with genre-based training, but that still requires stronger alignment between teaching methods, assessment formats and professional task structures.

4.2. Technology and AI Integration in Technical Translation Courses

Technology is firmly embedded in current teaching practices. More than half of the respondents report extensive integration of digital tools, while nearly all others indicate moderate integration. Machine translation engines and terminology management tools are the most widely used technologies, followed by CAT tools and AI-based translation systems. By contrast, quality-assurance tools, project-management software and post-editing-specific applications are reported far less frequently, despite their centrality in professional technical translation workflows.

Lecturers' attitudes toward AI are notably nuanced. The vast majority describe AI as a valuable tool requiring careful integration, and only isolated responses frame it as a potential threat or adopt a neutral stance. In terms of pedagogical strategy, respondents tend to favour either extensive integration accompanied by critical analysis or cautious, limited integration, with explicit emphasis on helping students understand both the affordances and limitations of AI-generated output. Avoidance of AI is exceptional rather than typical.

The results are presented in Table 2 and suggest that AI is not treated as a shortcut or productivity enhancer in isolation, but as a didactic object through which analytical, revision and decision-making skills can be developed. Lecturers report using AI to foster post-editing strategies, comparative analysis and critical evaluation, thereby reinforcing the human translator's role in ensuring quality and responsibility.

Table 2.

Technology and AI integration patterns

Aspect	Dominant tendency
Overall technology integration	Extensive or moderate
Most used tools	MT engines; terminology databases; CAT tools
AI perception	Valuable tool requiring careful integration
AI pedagogical approach	Extensive integration with critical analysis or cautious integration

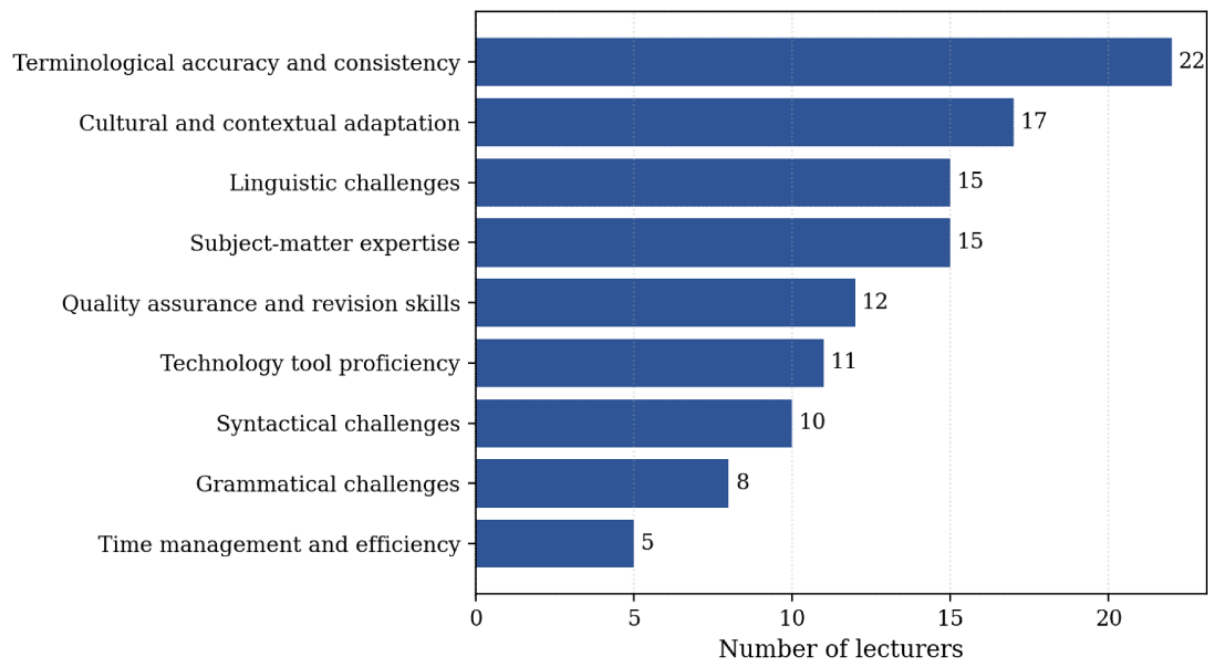
Despite this positive orientation, respondents consistently identify licensing costs as the main barrier to deeper or more systematic technology integration, followed by limited institutional resources and the rapid pace of technological change. This highlights the role of infrastructural and governance factors in shaping pedagogical possibilities.

4.3. Student Competencies and Recurrent Difficulties

Lecturers' assessments of student performance reveal a profile that is broadly consistent with the communicative demands of technical genres (Figure 1). Most respondents describe students' comprehension of technical texts as adequate with guidance, while a smaller proportion consider it good. Notably, no respondents report excellent independent comprehension, suggesting that technical texts continue to pose significant cognitive and linguistic challenges.

When asked to identify specific student difficulties, respondents converge strongly on terminological accuracy and consistency, which emerges as the most frequently reported challenge. This is followed by difficulties related to cultural and contextual adaptation, linguistic and syntactic complexity, subject-matter knowledge, quality-assurance and revision skills and technology tool proficiency. Challenges related to syntax, grammar or time management and efficiency are also reported, though less prominently than terminology- and knowledge-related issues.

Figure 1.
Most frequently reported student difficulties in technical translation (n=23)



These difficulties map closely onto the defining features of technical genres, where meaning is tightly coupled with procedural logic, parameter stability and user safety. The findings therefore reinforce the argument that technical translation training must prioritise terminology governance, revision workflows and domain research skills, rather than focusing predominantly on sentence-level equivalence.

4.4. Curriculum Alignment and Institutional Constraints

Perceptions of curriculum alignment with industry demands are mixed but informative. Most respondents rate alignment as good with minor adjustments needed or moderate with significant gaps, while only a small number describe curricula as fully aligned or in need of substantial overhaul. This distribution suggests a general awareness of professional requirements, coupled with uncertainty regarding the sufficiency of existing programme structures.

Collaboration with the translation industry is reported to occur periodically, most often through guest lectures, workshops or internships, but rarely as sustained, curriculum-embedded partnerships. Respondents identify several obstacles to closer collaboration, including time constraints, limited institutional support and difficulties in securing long-term industry engagement.

Taken together, these findings indicate that pedagogical intent and conceptual awareness are not the primary limiting factors in technical translation education. Instead, challenges arise from institutional conditions, resource allocation and the complexity of integrating rapidly evolving technologies into stable curricular frameworks.

Overall, the results depict a pedagogical landscape that is conceptually aligned with contemporary views of technical translation as a genre-anchored, technology-mediated practice, yet constrained in its full implementation by assessment traditions, infrastructural limitations and uneven access to professional workflows. These tensions provide the basis for

the discussion in the next section, where the findings are interpreted through competence frameworks and translated into scenario-level recommendations for course and programme design.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a technical translation pedagogy that is broadly aligned with contemporary theoretical models yet characterised by structural tensions that shape how these models are operationalised in practice. When interpreted through the genre-based, competence-oriented and technology-aware framework outlined in Sections 1 and 2, the results help clarify not only *what* lecturers are currently doing, but *why* certain pedagogical configurations remain partial or uneven.

A first major insight concerns the relationship between genre awareness and pedagogical practice. The widespread use of project-based learning, translation workshops and case-study approaches indicates that technical translation is no longer treated as a purely text-centred activity, but rather as a situated practice embedded in professional scenarios. This tendency is consistent with the genre-based delimitation of technical translation as a form of action-oriented communication in which clarity, procedural logic and functional adequacy are central (Dejica, 2020, Dejica, in press–a). However, the limited and non-systematic use of authentic, real-world translation projects suggests that genre awareness is often enacted at an abstract or simulated level, rather than through sustained engagement with full documentation sets, tool-mediated workflows and client constraints. In this sense, pedagogy has incorporated the *principle* of genre-orientation, but not always its full operational consequences.

This partial implementation becomes particularly visible in assessment practices. Although project- and portfolio-based assessment is common, these formats coexist with traditional written examinations that are only loosely connected to genre-task performance. From a genre-anchored perspective, this coexistence points to an unresolved tension between institutional assessment traditions and the functional evaluation criteria required by technical genres. Earlier research has argued that technical translation quality is inseparable from terminological consistency, usability and revision processes (Dejica, in press–b); the present findings suggest that these dimensions are not yet consistently embedded as explicit assessment criteria, thus limiting the pedagogical impact of practice-oriented teaching methods.

A second key dimension illuminated by the results is the role of technology and AI as pedagogical variables. The strong presence of MT engines, terminology databases and CAT tools in teaching indicates that lecturers recognise technology as an intrinsic component of technical translation competence. More importantly, lecturers' predominantly cautious yet engaged stance toward AI aligns closely with recent arguments that automation should be framed neither as a threat nor as a shortcut, but as a means for developing analytical judgement and revision competence (Dejica & Dejica-Carțiș, 2020; Dejica, in press–b). The fact that most respondents favour either critically framed AI integration or carefully limited use suggests a high degree of pedagogical reflexivity.

At the same time, the comparatively low uptake of QA tools, project-management applications and post-editing-specific workflows reveals an uneven representation of professional practice. Technical translation in industrial settings is increasingly governed by standardised QA profiles, automated checks and coordinated workflows across teams and languages. The reduced visibility of these tools in the classroom can therefore be interpreted not as a conceptual oversight, but as the effect of institutional constraints, notably licensing costs and limited infrastructural support. This finding corroborates earlier observations on the misalignment between academic environments and professional translation ecosystems,

particularly in contexts where material resources and institutional policies limit experimentation (Dejica, Pungă, Badea & Vilceanu, 2022).

A third area of discussion concerns student competence development. The difficulties identified by lecturers—terminological accuracy, contextual adaptation, subject-matter knowledge and revision skills—map directly onto the core demands of technical genres. Unlike literary or general pragmatic translation, technical translation places a premium on conceptual precision, stable reference and procedural coherence. The fact that students rarely achieve independent comprehension of technical texts without guidance suggests that current curricula may underestimate the cognitive load and domain-specific literacy required by technical genres. This observation reinforces arguments that technical translation training must foreground domain research strategies, terminology governance and revision workflows as central learning outcomes, rather than treating them as ancillary skills.

From a competence-based perspective, these results also highlight the continued relevance of the multidimensional translator model, which integrates linguistic, thematic, technological and professional dimensions (Dejica & Dejica-Carțiș, 2020). Students' recurring difficulties do not stem from language competence alone, but from the interaction between language, knowledge, tools and quality constraints. Consequently, effective pedagogy must design learning activities that deliberately combine these dimensions, for instance by embedding terminology management and QA checks within genre-specific translation tasks.

Finally, the findings on curriculum alignment and institutional conditions underscore the importance of viewing translation pedagogy as part of a broader organisational ecology. Lecturers' assessments of partial alignment with industry needs, coupled with episodic rather than systematic industry collaboration, suggest that pedagogical innovation cannot rely solely on individual initiative. As argued in earlier framework-driven research, curriculum development in technical translation requires coordinated action across programme design, institutional policy and external partnerships (Dejica, *in press-b*). Without stable access to professional tools, sustained collaboration with industry partners and regular curricular updating cycles, even theoretically informed pedagogy risks remaining fragmented.

Taken together, the discussion shows that the current state of technical translation teaching in Romania reflects a transitional phase. Conceptual clarity regarding genre, competence and technology has largely been achieved, and lecturers demonstrate a high degree of awareness and adaptability. What remains unresolved are the structural mechanisms that would enable these principles to be implemented consistently and at scale. By situating empirical findings within a coherent conceptual lineage, the present study confirms, extends and completes earlier research, while also preparing the ground for the scenario-level pedagogical recommendations outlined in the following section.

6. Pedagogical and Curricular Recommendations

The findings discussed in the previous sections point toward a set of pedagogical and curricular adjustments that are best formulated not as prescriptive checklists, but as structural orientations anchored in genre theory, competence frameworks and technology-mediated professional practice. These recommendations are intended to support the systematic alignment of technical translation programmes with the communicative, technological and institutional realities identified by lecturers.

At the pedagogical level, a primary recommendation concerns the systematic anchoring of teaching and assessment in genre-based translation tasks. While project-oriented instruction is already widely practised, its impact can be enhanced by organising courses around recurring communicative functions characteristic of technical documentation—such as procedural

description, warning and compliance, parameter specification and troubleshooting—rather than around isolated text excerpts. Embedding these genre tasks within extended documentation sets allows students to experience terminological propagation, cross-text consistency and revision cycles, which are central to technical translation quality (Dejica, 2020; Trosborg, 2000; Dejica, in press–a). Assessment criteria should be explicitly derived from these genre functions and should foreground usability, terminological coherence and revision accuracy alongside linguistic adequacy.

A closely related recommendation concerns the explicit integration of revision and quality-assurance practices into teaching. The prominence of revision-related difficulties reported by lecturers suggests that revision is still insufficiently conceptualised as a core competence. Technical translation courses should therefore incorporate staged workflows that include self-revision, peer revision and tool-assisted QA, using simplified but representative professional protocols. Such designs resonate with the competence-based view of translation as a coordinated, goal-driven activity (PACTE, 2003; Dejica & Dejica-Carțiș, 2020) and help students internalise responsibility for downstream communicative effects.

In relation to technology and AI, the results support a model of guided, reflective integration rather than uncritical adoption or avoidance. Lecturers' cautious engagement with AI aligns with recent arguments that AI-assisted translation environments can serve as powerful learning tools when embedded in analytically framed tasks, such as post-editing, output comparison and error typology analysis. Pedagogically, this implies designing learning activities in which AI and MT outputs are treated as *objects of evaluation* rather than as default solutions. Such activities can foster strategic competence, critical awareness and ethical judgement, reinforcing the human translator's role as guarantor of quality and accountability.

At the curricular level, the variability observed in curriculum–industry alignment highlights the need for programme-wide coherence and institutional support. Curriculum design should ensure that competence development is progressive and cumulative, with terminology management, tool literacy and genre awareness revisited across semesters rather than confined to single courses. Aligning learning outcomes with internationally recognised frameworks such as EMT can facilitate this coherence, while also supporting programme transparency and comparability. Equally important is the creation of conditions that enable lecturers to implement these designs, including access to licensed tools, opportunities for continuous professional development and flexible curricular structures capable of accommodating technological change.

Industry collaboration emerges as another strategic area for development. Rather than relying exclusively on episodic guest lectures or internships, programmes may benefit from modular forms of collaboration, such as co-designed project briefs, anonymised real-world documentation sets or joint evaluation rubrics. Such mechanisms can strengthen the ecological connection between academia and professional practice without compromising academic autonomy, and they align with the view of translation as a situated social practice involving multiple agents and responsibilities (Dejica & Dejica-Carțiș, 2020).

Taken together, these recommendations advocate a shift from isolated pedagogical innovations toward integrated curricular ecosystems in which genre knowledge, competence development and technology mediation mutually reinforce one another. In continuity with previous framework-driven research in technical and scientific translation (Dejica, 2020; Dejica, in press–a; Dejica, in press–b), the present study shows that Romanian technical translation education has largely adopted the underlying principles of this model. The challenge ahead lies in consolidating these principles institutionally, ensuring that they can be implemented consistently and sustainably across programmes.

7. Conclusion

This article has examined the current state of technical translation pedagogy in Romanian higher education through the lens of genre-based theory, competence frameworks and technology-mediated translation practice. By drawing on empirical evidence from a national survey of translation lecturers, the study has sought to complement and complete existing conceptual research by grounding it in classroom realities, institutional conditions and lecturers' professional judgement.

The findings indicate that technical translation teaching has undergone a substantial shift toward practice-oriented and technology-aware approaches. Project-based learning, workshops and interactive methods are now firmly embedded in instructional practice, and lecturers display a high degree of reflexivity in their engagement with digital tools and AI-assisted translation. Rather than framing AI as either a threat or a solution in itself, respondents predominantly approach it as a pedagogical resource that can support the development of analytical, revision and decision-making skills. This orientation confirms the relevance of earlier arguments advocating the explicit treatment of technology as a shaping variable in technical translation research and training (Dejica, *in press-b*; Dejica & Dejica-Cartiș, 2020).

At the same time, the study reveals structural tensions that limit the full realisation of these principles. Authentic genre-based workflows, systematic revision protocols and QA-centred assessment remain unevenly implemented, often constrained by institutional assessment traditions, limited access to licensed tools and fragmented industry collaboration. Student difficulties—particularly in terminology management, domain knowledge and revision—further underscore the need to treat technical translation competence as a multidimensional construct that integrates language, knowledge, technology and responsibility. From this perspective, the results reinforce the value of a genre-anchored and competence-driven pedagogical model, while also highlighting the importance of curricular coherence and institutional support.

By situating these empirical insights within a broader research trajectory on technical and scientific translation, the article demonstrates how conceptual delimitation, research-agenda setting and pedagogical implementation can be brought into productive dialogue. In this sense, the study does not merely describe current practices, but contributes to the consolidation of technical translation pedagogy as a research-informed and professionally grounded field within Translation Studies.

Several limitations of the study should be acknowledged. First, the dataset is limited in size and scope, reflecting the responses of 23 lecturers within a single national context. While the sample includes a range of institutions, academic ranks and professional backgrounds, the findings cannot be generalised without caution to other educational systems or cultural settings. Second, the study relies on self-reported data, which capture perceptions and declared practices rather than directly observed classroom behaviour or learning outcomes. Third, the focus on lecturers' perspectives means that student experiences and industry evaluations are not addressed directly, although they are indirectly reflected through reported difficulties and alignment assessments.

These limitations point to clear avenues for further research. Future studies could extend the present design through multi-stakeholder triangulation, combining lecturer surveys with student performance data, classroom observation, corpus-based analysis of student translations and interviews with industry partners. Comparative studies across national or institutional contexts would also help test the robustness and transferability of the pedagogical

orientations identified here. Such extensions would further strengthen the empirical foundation for genre-anchored, technology-aware technical translation training.

In conclusion, the present article confirms that Romanian technical translation education is situated at a moment of conceptual maturity but structural transition. Lecturers have largely internalised contemporary theoretical insights, yet their consistent implementation depends on curricular, institutional and infrastructural conditions. Addressing these conditions is essential if technical translation training is to fully respond to the evolving demands of professional practice and to sustain its development as a rigorous and socially relevant component of Translation Studies.

References:

- Bhatia, V. K. (1993). *Analysing genre*. Longman.
- Dejica, D. (2020). Understanding technical and scientific translation: A genre-based approach. *Scientific Bulletin of the Politehnica University of Timișoara, Transactions on Modern Languages*, 19(1–2), 56–66.
- Dejica, D. (In press–a). Technical and scientific translation. In *International Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* (3rd ed.). Elsevier.
- Dejica, D. (In press–b). Research avenues in technical translation: A framework for developing a practice-oriented research agenda. In H. Pârlog (Ed.), *British and American Studies* (Vol. XXXII). Editura Universității de Vest din Timișoara.
- Dejica, D. (In press–c). Conceptual foundations and research scenarios in scientific translation. *Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies*, 9(1).
- Dejica, D., Pungă, L., Badea, G., & Vilceanu, T. (2022). Cercetarea traductologică doctorală din România. In M. Constantinescu, D. Dejica & T. Vilceanu (Coords.), *O istorie a traducerilor în limba română (secolul al XX-lea)* (Vol. II, pp. 2008–2019). Editura Academiei Române.
- Dejica, D., & Dejica-Carțiș, A. (2020). The multidimensional translator: Roles and responsibilities. In D. Dejica, C. Eugeni & A. Dejica-Carțiș (Eds.), *Translation studies and information technology: New pathways for researchers, teachers and professionals* (pp. 45–57). Editura Politehnica.
- EMT. (2022). *EMT competence framework*. European Commission. https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-11/emt_competence_fw_2022_en.pdf
- Gerzymisch-Arbogast, H. (2008). Fundamentals of LSP translation. In H. Gerzymisch-Arbogast, G. Budin, & G. Hofer (Eds.), *LSP translation scenarios: Selected contributions to the EU Marie Curie Conference Vienna 2007* (*MuTra Journal*, Vol. 02, pp. 7–64). ATRC Group.
- Grigoraș, P., & Dejica, D. (2025). Bridging knowledge and practice: Pedagogical strategies and research directions for technical translation in the digital age. *Studii de Știință și Cultură*, 21(3), 147–158.
- Kovacs, Z., & Dejica, D. (2025). Medical translation in the age of neural machine translation: Standards, assessment models, and Romanian perspectives. *Analele Universității Ovidius din Constanța. Seria Filologie*, XXXVI(2), 912–926.

- Mali, I., & Dejica, D. (2025). Localization in the Romanian context: Addressing research deficits and advancing linguistic and cultural adaptation. *Analele Universității Ovidius din Constanța. Seria Filologie*, XXXVI(1), 431–454.
- Neuman, W. L. (2021). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (8th ed.). Pearson.
- PACTE Group. (2003). Building a translation competence model. In F. Alves (Ed.), *Triangulating translation: Perspectives in process-oriented research* (pp. 43–66). John Benjamins.
- Sburlea, N.-M., & Dejica, D. (2024). Transformative translation: Empowering environmental discourse through linguistic innovation and sustainable translations. In V. Bevanda (Ed.), *10th international scientific conference ERAZ 2024 – conference proceedings* (pp. 511–518). <https://doi.org/10.31410/ERAZ.2024.511>
- Stiegelbauer, L.-R. (2025). AI and multilingual communication: Accuracy, trust and linguistic equity in higher education and healthcare. *Incursiuni în Imaginar*, 16(1), 339–358. <https://doi.org/10.29302/InImag.2025.161.14.pdf>
- Swales, J. M. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge University Press.
- Trosborg, A. (2000). Text and genre analysis for translators: Structure, content and function of the model. In C. Schäffner (Ed.), *Current issues in language and society*, (Vol. 7, pp. 229–244). Multilingual Matters.
- Vandepitte, S. (2008). Remapping translation studies: Towards a translation studies ontology. *Meta*, 53(3), 569–588.
- Wellington, J. (2015). *Educational research: Contemporary issues and practical approaches* (2nd ed.). Bloomsbury Academic.
- Williams, J., & Chesterman, A. (2002). *The map: A beginner's guide to doing research in Translation Studies*. St. Jerome Publishing.

Appendix A. Survey Instrument — Teaching technical translation in a digital world

Target group: University translation lecturers (Romania)

Mode: Google Forms

Estimated time: ~10 minutes

Geographic coverage: Alba Iulia; Cluj-Napoca; Constanța; Oradea; Timișoara

Participating universities: “1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia; Babeș-Bolyai University;

Ovidius University of Constanța; Partium Christian University Oradea; Politehnica University

Timișoara; West University of Timișoara

Number of participants: 23

INTRODUCTION & CONSENT

This study aims to bridge the gap between academic training and professional practice in technical translation, contributing to doctoral research that formulates practical recommendations for curricula, teaching methods and program design. Participation is voluntary, responses are confidential and used only for research in compliance with GDPR. By proceeding, respondents confirmed informed consent. The instrument comprises 6 sections.

SECTION 1 — PROFESSIONAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

1. Which is your current academic position?
2. How long have you been teaching technical/specialized translation at the university level?
3. Do you have professional translation experience?
4. Current institutional affiliation. (Open-ended)
5. Educational background (degree, graduation year, university). (Open-ended)

SECTION 2 — PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES AND TEACHING METHODS

- 2.1 Pedagogical approaches used (multiple choice)
- 2.2 Effectiveness of traditional methods
- 2.3 Frequency of interactive method use
- 2.4 Use of gamification
- 2.5 Use of authentic translation projects
- 2.6 Frequency of feedback
- 2.7 Assessment methods
- 2.8 Primary teaching challenges

SECTION 3 — TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION AND DIGITAL TOOLS

- 3.1 Extent of technology integration
- 3.2 Digital tools used (multiple choice)
- 3.3 Student comfort with technology
- 3.4 Perception of AI in translation education
- 3.5 Approach to AI integration
- 3.6 Objectives when using AI
- 3.7 Ways of keeping teaching current with technological changes

SECTION 4 — STUDENT COMPETENCIES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 Students' comprehension of technical texts
- 4.2 Challenges students encounter (multiple choice)
- 4.3 Student engagement with feedback
- 4.4 Skills developed in courses
- 4.5 Translation competencies developed (multiple choice)
- 4.6 Methods facilitating professional development
- 4.7 Obstacles to pursuing a career in technical translation
- 4.8 Usefulness of technical resources

- 4.9 Emerging trends students should know
- 4.10 Advice for students (Open-ended)

SECTION 5 — CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

- 5.1 Alignment between curriculum and industry demands
- 5.2 Challenges in curriculum development
- 5.3 Frequency of curriculum updates
- 5.4 Effectiveness of technology integration
- 5.5 Barriers to integrating more technology
- 5.6 Collaboration with translation labour market
- 5.7 Obstacles to industry collaboration
- 5.8 Preparedness to teach technical translation
- 5.9 Beneficial professional development
- 5.10 Measures of program success
- 5.11 Curricular changes needed
- 5.12 Ways universities can prepare students (multiple choice)
- 5.13 Adequacy of university conditions
- 5.14 Improvements needed (Open-ended)

SECTION 6 — ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS (all open-ended)

- 6.1 Additional insights
- 6.2 Recommendations for improvement
- 6.3 Trends impacting translation education
- 6.4 Advice for lecturers updating curricula
- 6.5 Advice for students

Linguistics

**BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN DIGITAL HUMANITIES AND NATURAL
LANGUAGE PROCESSING: TEXT CLEANING AND NLP ACCURACY
EVALUATION OF A SAMPLE OF 20TH CENTURY ROMANIAN NOVELS¹**

Bogdan VĂTAVU

Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Faculty of Letters and Arts, Romania

e-mail: bogdan.vatavu@ulbsibiu.ro

David MORARIU

Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Faculty of Letters and Arts, Romania

e-mail: david.morariu@ulbsibiu.ro

Abstract

Although Digital Humanities (DH) and Natural Language Processing (NLP) share common ground, the two academic communities around these disciplines rarely benefit from each other. This study aims to bridge the gap between the two fields of study, by attempting to establish whether off-the-shelf NLP tools are suitable for analysing DH-oriented textual corpora. Our case study focuses on *The Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel (DMRN)*, a digital archive which includes most of the novels in Romanian literature up until 1947. Currently, the archive is composed of more than 1200 digital files in the PDF format, derived from their original print editions. An optical character recognition (OCR) layer has also been added in the process, which opens the possibility of applying NLP techniques to these texts. On the other hand, OCRed texts are notoriously difficult to process, being laden with spelling errors and a significant amount of noise. Our case study had two main objectives: 1) to devise an automated method for cleaning the large quantities of OCRed literary texts found in the archive DMRN, in order to (2) analyse the texts by means of NLP with two of the currently available off-the-shelf models, namely *spaCy* and *Stanza*. The sample of our study consists of 15 novels published between 1933 and 1947. The extracted texts have been cleaned by employing a custom Python script and further sampled for NLP tasks such as tokenization, part of speech tagging and lemmatization. We then assessed the accuracy of the results of each separate task through manual validation. Overall, our methodology has proven to be efficient and time-saving with regard to the automatic cleaning process, but also satisfactory in what concerns the accuracy percentages of the performed NLP tasks.

Keywords: computational linguistics; part of speech tagging; lemmatization; natural language processing; digital humanities; Romanian language corpus; Romanian literary texts.

¹Article History: Received: 29.12.2025. Accepted: 12.03.2026. Published: 15.05.2026. No funding was received either for the research presented in the article or for the creation of the article.

1. Introduction

The digital turn in the humanities has produced impressive quantities of text to be mined and distantly read². However, while digitization has indeed provided access to entire corpora of digital texts, the task of analyzing this huge amount of data by computational means has proved to be less straightforward. This is especially true when dealing with digital versions of older print materials, the conversion process being famously error-prone, also adding a lot of noise to the finished digital objects. In order to perform analyses on these texts, they need to be cleaned and to undergo noise removal (the removal of superfluous elements in the text, such as paratextual elements or page numbers). Further issues arise when tools not specifically designed for the digital humanities are employed to this end. Some questions emerge, such as: are these tools suitable for the job? Are they accurate? Moreover, similar research communities, in spite of the many commonalities, often pursue divergent research agendas. This is precisely the case with the Digital Humanities (DH) and Natural Language Processing (NLP) communities, which rarely gain from each other's advancements, despite the obvious overlaps, as McGillivray, Poibeau and Fabo (2020) have observed. In this study we aim to develop a methodology that bridges the gap between the two neighbouring disciplines by testing how off-the-shelf tools designed for NLP fare on a corpus of Romanian literary texts compiled for DH applications.

The purpose of the experiment in this article is, therefore, two-fold: (1) to devise an automated method for cleaning the large quantities of OCR'd literary texts found in the archive *The Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel* (Baghiu et al., 2019a; from now on, DMRN) (2) to assess the accuracy of two of the currently available off-the-shelf NLP models. The texts in this digital collection range from the early 19th century to 1947, and are all written in the Romanian language. This fact alone poses notable problems in terms of both cleaning and processing since, during this period of Romanian history, typography (i.e. the technical aspects of printing), language and writing have undergone significant changes. With this in mind, and knowing the limitations of the tools at hand, we concentrated our efforts on the novels printed between 1933 and 1947 (Baghiu et al., 2021; from now on DMRN III). The literary texts in this period are edited in a rather consistent manner, the script employed is Latin³ and, most importantly, the orthography and language of these documents are more uniform and stable than in previous periods. This makes them better candidates for analysis, as the language employed in them is closer to the language in the corpora used for the training of the language models tested here. Therefore, our aim is first to develop a cleaning methodology that is applicable to the entire DMRN archive, and second to test the accuracy of some of the available off-the-shelf language models (trained on contemporary Romanian language corpora), on a sample extracted from several mid-20th century literary texts.

For the purpose of this experiment, we employed two of the most popular NLP software libraries for the Python programming language: *spaCy*, a commercial open-source software library, specifically its large language model for Romanian⁴; and *Stanza*, an open-source toolkit supporting 66 human languages, that was deployed here with its default model for Romanian, which was trained on the RRT corpus.⁵

² Already far from being a methodological novelty in contemporary research, the “distant reading” approach that Franco Moretti (2005) has pioneered in literary studies has to be perceived, as the theorist himself states, as a “reductive” and detail-removing, yet pattern- and cluster-generating method.

³ Older texts in the collection are written in Cyrillic and transitional scripts.

⁴ See Ines Montani et al. (2023). For the Romanian language model, see the *spaCy* models documentation (Explosion, n.d.-a).

⁵ See Qi et al. (2020). For the Romanian language model employed here, see the *Stanza* model performance (Stanford NLP Group, n.d.-b).

2. The State of the Art in Romanian DH and NLP

Digital Humanities (DH) is a relatively new research method in Romania. In the past decade, numerous calls in the direction of adopting this methodology have been made (Goldiș, 2014; Patraș et al., 2019; Pojoga et al., 2019). Nevertheless, as Ovio Olaru has noticed, “the introduction of Digital Humanities (DH) in Romania seems to focus more on the conceptual background of digital culture and on clichés about the emergence of a post-hermeneutical age in literary theory than on actual DH practices.” (Olaru, 2019, p. 30)

If we were to broadly categorize the contributions of the last few years that can be included in the DH paradigm, or that relate to it in one way or another, we would contend that these generally fit into one of these three categories: 1) studies that theoretically and culturally advocate for the adoption of computational analysis of texts with all its challenges⁶; 2) contributions that somehow capitalize on the metatextual dimension of this paradigm, by providing an overview of the digital tools and software that can be used for literary texts in general and for literary texts in Romanian in particular (Ciorogar & Modoc, 2019); 3) studies that exploit these tools by using them in text analyses on digital archives and corpora. Even though, at least in the early years, as it has already been noted, the contributions classifiable in the first two categories outnumbered those qualifying for the third, this gap has lately increasingly narrowed. One of the reasons for this is that in the field of literary studies, there are indeed few studies that employ the methods of DH and computational linguistics to draw broad conclusions regarding a certain corpus of texts. From stylometric analyses on corpora of Romanian novels (Modoc & Gârdan, 2020) to network representations of character interactions in canonical novels (Pojoga et al., 2020), but also sentiment analysis in canonical literary works (Gavrilă et al., 2021) and representations of entirely literary and cultural phenomena, such as the “avant-garde networks of East-Central Europe” (Modoc, 2020), the studies that focus on DH tools in action have mainly relied on the discrepancy between the perspectives favouring the literary canon and the approaches aiming for comprehensive analysis of literary corpora.⁷ There are also insights that value the implications of DH in the didactic process, such as developing interactive platforms featuring a database of Shakespeare’s works, for instance (Nicolaescu & Mihai, 2014).

Finally, the statistical analyses and the quantitative surveys are also worth mentioning. Some thematic and special issues have gathered over the past several years many articles that consider Romanian literature through numbers. Editorial projects that include *The Culture of Translation in Romania* (Sass et al., 2018), which comprises a section specifically addressing quantitative studies⁸, *Ruralism and Literature in Romania* (Baghiu et al., 2019b; Borza, 2019; Gârdan, 2019), but also thematic issues such as “Literature between Canon and Archive. New Distant Reading Approaches to the Study of the Novel”⁹ or “Distant Reading – o nouă

⁶ In addition to the already mentioned studies, we may also add the following: Ursa (2015), Bălici (2018), Bălici (2019), Ciorogar et al. (2019), Gârdan and Modoc (2020).

⁷ In this context, we should also mention studies such as those by Popescu and Dinu (2008) and Dinu and Sulea (2012). While the first one discusses, from the perspective of computational stylistics, “function words frequencies” as “style markers”, the latter addresses “stylome”, “authorship attribution” and “pastiche detection” from the perspective of computational linguistics and in relation to the texts and style of Mateiu Caragiale, by using “the frequency rankings of stopwords”.

⁸ The first section of the volume, “General Analysis and Quantitative Studies” gathers contributions that approach literary and translation studies by using quantitative analysis methods and tools. More specifically, the contributions address the avant-garde in the Romanian cultural space, the translation of novels in Romania during the communist regime and poetry translations in Romanian periodicals between 1990 and 2015 (Baghiu, 2018; Modoc, 2018; Pojoga, 2018).

⁹ This thematic issue of the *Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory* (2020) has featured articles that addressed, in addition to the studies already mentioned on stylometry and the character network, “the Romanian translations of

paradigmă de cercetare teoretică?” [Distant Reading – A new theoretical research paradigm?] ¹⁰ have reinforced the DH method in Romanian literary studies and have also proposed comprehensive analyses on large corpora.

However, the lack of tools for Romanian texts or even the lack of clean corpora continues to be recurrent statements in DH studies. Whether one ends up having to do “a very close distant-reading” (Gârdan, 2018) or having to use secondary data, there are still a number of trade-offs that DH studies so far reveal. For instance, although impressive from the point of view of the methods and the tools employed, Neagu et al.’s (2020) research uses secondary data (*The Chronology of the Romanian Literary Life*) – and not the actual literary production – to draw otherwise very interesting conclusions regarding the post-war Romanian literary landscape.

A few articles do focus on corpus creation and text cleaning, but they mainly stem from the area of linguistics and the NLP community. Busuioc and Caragea (2019), for instance, describe their efforts to build a corpus that will be utilized for the second edition of *The Dictionary of the Romanian Language*, which also includes literary texts from the 16th to the 20th century. They also provide details regarding the tools and steps taken in cleaning and tagging their corpus for further analysis. Fewer articles deal with the evaluation of the accuracy of Romanian NLP language models (such as those employed here), or the retraining of these for better results. In this respect, the most thorough evaluation of retrained Romanian language models, on a corpus that also includes literary texts can be found in Vasile Păiș et al.’s study (2021). ¹¹ Moreover, there are some other studies addressing language processing, Romanian language corpora building and annotation projects that are also part of an emerging research field. Mainly, all of them focus on the popularization of some research projects ¹², Romanian corpora and resources such as “The Reference Corpus of the Contemporary Romanian Language (CoRoLa)” (Mititelu et al., 2014) – described by the authors as “the largest publicly available corpus of Romanian”, comprising more than 1.250.000.000 tokens, a corpus that also contains oral materials and whose written texts are all “automatically sentence-split, tokenized, part-of-speech tagged, lemmatized” –, “Linguistic Linked Open Data (LLOD)” and resources available for the Romanian language, as “The Romanian wordnet” and “The Romanian Reference Treebank” (Barbu Mititelu et al., 2020, pp. 32–33). Among these resources, the last mentioned is the most relevant for our study, since both *spaCy* and *Stanza*, i.e. their models for Romanian, have been trained on “RoRefTrees” – the treebank that is annotated in “Universal Dependencies format”.

With regard to the Universal Dependencies (UD) ¹³ for Romanian and the list of morphological tags, out of all 17 universal POS categories, the “UD Romanian RRT” lists 16 of them, from *ADJ* to *X* ¹⁴, and out of the 9524 sentences, 1818 are extracted from literary texts, which is a relevant aspect considering our sample. Finally, since we have tested the accuracies of both *spaCy* and *Stanza* for sentence segmentation, POS tagging and lemmatization, i.e. the “morpho-syntactic” and “lexical linguistic features” (Ion et al., 2018), we should also mention

Shakespeare’s Bawdy Puns” and thematic lexical analyses on “work”, “travel” and “affective geography” in the Romanian novels.

¹⁰ This collection of texts proposes a mixed theoretical and practical/applied approach to the DH paradigm (Goldiș & Modoc, 2020).

¹¹ Neagu et al. (2020) have also retrained a language model for their analysis.

¹² For an overview of several recent Romanian language projects of the Romanian Academy, including projects on spoken Romanian, but also on the transliteration from the Cyrillic to the Latin script, see Tufiş and Dan (2018).

¹³ “Universal Dependencies (UD) is a framework for consistent annotation of grammar (parts of speech, morphological features, and syntactic dependencies) across different human languages” (Universal Dependencies, n.d.-c). For the UD used in this article, see the UD for Romanian (Universal Dependencies, n.d.-b).

¹⁴ The entire list of UPOS includes: “ADJ, ADP, AUX, CCONJ, DET, INTJ, NOUN, NUM, PART, PRON, PUNCT, SCONJ, VERB, X”, while the number of “lemmas” tagged as “particles”, “pronouns”, “determiners”, “auxiliaries” adds up to 124.

that the RRT treebank was, as specified in the description, manually annotated with respect to POS, while lemmas were automatically annotated.

This being the state of the art in DH in Romania and in the relevant NLP area of research, we consider the present study to be a necessary contribution to the field, not necessarily in itself, but rather through the pathways it opens for further investigation of corpora of OCRed texts by natural language processing.

3. The Corpus: Compilation, Sampling and Methodology

The corpus we used for this analysis is part of the archive that resulted from the *Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel* (DMRN) research project. The aim of the project was to digitize all the Romanian novels published between 1845 and 1947. The justification for this temporal delimitation, but also for the three functional intervals – 1845-1900 (DMRN I), 1901-1932 (DMRN II) and 1933-1947 (DMRN III) – is to be found in some aspects of the historical and political background that directly influenced novel production. The analogue tool used by the DMRN research team in the pre-digitization stage was *Dicționarul Cronologic al Romanului Românesc de la Origini până la 1989* [The chronological dictionary of the Romanian novel from origins to 1989] (Istrate et al., 2004; from now on CDRN), which also lists 1845 as the year of publication of the first Romanian novel. Moreover, the other time frames reflect the quantitative trends¹⁵ of the novel and provide coherence for *distant reading* and statistical analyses. For this reason, an experiment such as ours also carries broader historical and cultural significance. The development of a methodology for automated text cleaning, together with the assessment of the accuracy of two currently available off-the-shelf NLP models, facilitates access to large-scale, exhaustive analyses that can address “the great unread” (Cohen, 2002, p. 23) of Romanian literature. In this context, preparing digital texts for complex automated analyses constitutes an essential preliminary stage for future studies that will examine the DMRN from a diachronic perspective on the Romanian language, as well as from the viewpoints of literary history and cultural studies. Moreover, such an experimental study implicitly advocates for recognizing the value of literary works as components of cultural heritage. This perspective follows the recent analysis by Terian and Baghiu (2025), which examines the link between literary heritage and cultural heritage, using the DMRN as a case study.

Quantitatively, the DMRN archive comprises more than 1200 digitized novels and represents, therefore, one of the most relevant archives for the digital analysis of literary texts written in Romanian.¹⁶ Regarding the conversion¹⁷ of analogue texts into digital texts, the research team has used *CZUR ET16* and *CZUR Aura* scanners, which were also provided with page tools and OCR engines. The OCRization has been completely inefficient for the 19th-century novels written in transitional script, while for the other novels in the archive there were several factors influencing the accuracy of OCR, that we identified while working on this study and which are listed below. In fact, since they relate both to the scanning process and to the typographic and layout peculiarities, these factors have also influenced us to a considerable extent in defining the number of texts and the time frame we have chosen to analyse and to select the corpus for NLP.

¹⁵ In addition to historical delimitations, there are those related to variations in the novelistic production, such as the “boom” starting in 1933, which was a landmark in the setting up of the archive (see Terian, 2019).

¹⁶ The series of research projects aimed at digitizing the Romanian novel also includes projects such as Roxana Patraș, Ioana Galleron, Lucreția Pascariu, Alexandra Olteanu, Ioana Lionte, Camelia Grădinaru (2020), *HAIRO: Corpus de romane haiducești (1850-1950)*.

¹⁷ The digitization team describes the whole process in detail in Coroian-Goldiș et al. (2019).

The factors related to scanning *per se* include the non-recognition of the last characters at the end of the line in the case of books with too narrow page margins, which could not be properly scanned or standardized in the pre-processing operations. In addition, there were books whose binding prevented the scanning of linearly positioned pages at a 180-degree angle, the rows being skewed very close to the inner page margins. Last but not least, there are also some novels (or fragments of novels) with less satisfactory OCR, due to the scanners' light not being adapted to the type of paper (to glossy paper, for example). Beyond the scanning process, the OCR was also influenced by some factors related to typesetting and page design. The images on the page in the children's novels influence the quality of the OCR as they affect the text layout. The drop caps also reduce its recognition and the accuracy of OCR in nearby characters. The spacing between paragraphs and, even more, the noise are mostly misrecognized and incorrectly linked to certain characters or punctuation. Library stamps or other notations on the pages (which include the page header designs being incorrectly recognized as text lines) contribute with more noise and are embedded in the text of the novels. In addition, many of the ellipses have a negative effect on OCR, especially for characters on the line they occur on. Generally, low quality OCR, even in small percentages at the level of entire documents, is found culpable for significant error rates on downstream NLP tasks, as Mieskes and Schmunk (2019) have observed.

Mainly by noting that the level of OCR accuracy is not satisfactory with novels written in the 19th century, due to the transitional script, but also due to the overall aspect of the scanned pages and the noise that affected the OCR, we have decided – as we have already mentioned – to focus on the last part of the DMRN archive, i.e., the DMRN III, which includes novels published between 1933 and 1947. We have also opted for this time frame because the scope of this study is to pilot a series of studies aiming to optimize the automated cleaning process and the NLP analysis for the 19th century and early 20th century novels that are part of the DMRN archive. Quantitatively, taking into account that these 15 years amass – at the scale of the archive – more than 700 digitalized novels (60% of the total), we have decided to sample this segment of the archive. However, we consider that this sample is representative for the entire DMRN III digital collection.

More precisely, out of this archive of 715 novels¹⁸ we have sampled a number of 15 texts¹⁹, which have become the dataset of our experiment. The method employed here was *stratified random sampling*.²⁰ The rationale at the basis of establishing the strata was the coverage of the entire 15-year period of DMRN III. Therefore, we have written a Python script which made the random selection of one text per year. A different, and possibly better approach in establishing the strata for the sampling would have been to classify the texts according to the quality of the OCR (a limit which we acknowledge below), but this was beyond the possibilities of such a small research team. Nevertheless, our method resulted in what we consider to be a balanced corpus, comprised of both low-quality prints (which usually result in low quality OCR texts), and some better-quality ones. Also, from the standpoint of the literary subgenres found in the archive and according to the subgenre labels listed in *CDRN*, our texts

¹⁸ This total number of novels represents, according to *CDRN*, approximately 80% of the novel production between 1933 and 1947.

¹⁹ The texts sampled for our analysis are, in chronological order: Jean Bart, *Europolis* (1933); Damian Stănoiu, *Parada norocului* [The parade of fortune] (1934); Take, *Nunta Lizetii* [Lizeta's wedding] (1935); Ariana Del-Vet, *Două lumi* [Two worlds] (1936); Ioan Missir, *Fata moartă* [The dead girl] (1937); G. M. Amza, & Al. Bilciurescu, *Vampirul* [The vampire] (1938); Eugeniu Est, *Zaza* (1939); Liviu Rebreanu, *Amândoi* [Both of them] (1940); Ilie Anesiea, *Zmeu de mare* [Sea dragon], vol. I (1941); D. V. Barnoschi, *Stăvilare. Se alege apele* [Floodgates. The waters clear] (1942); Cezar Petrescu, *1907*, vol. III, *Pământ, mormânt...* [Land, grave...] (1943); Mircea Streinul, *Băieți de fată* [Illegitimate sons] (1944); Mihail Florescu, *Voluntarii* [The volunteers], vol. I, *Spre Spania* [Toward Spain] (1945); Octav Dessila, *Porți fără număr* [Unnumbered gates], vol. II (1946); Sandra Cotovu, *Vijelie* [Storm] (1947).

²⁰ For the various sampling techniques employed in NLP, see Xiao (2010, pp. 151–153).

cover a wide range: the “social novel” (2), “sentimental novel” (2) and the “sensation novel” (2), while the other nine texts are classified in *CDRN* as “family”, “war”, “noir”, “detective”, “children and young adult”, “uprising”, “political” “slum” and “erotic” novels. Based on the overview table set up by Andrei Terian et al. (2021), with regard to the diversity of novelistic subgenres in the DMRN archive, the texts we have sampled comprise about 50% of all the subgenres recorded in the table. Moreover, some of them, i.e. the “family”, “political” and “slum” novels, comprise subgenres that do not amount to more than 2% and which, according to the same quantitative analysis, have undergone a significant decline compared to previous decades.

An editorial overview on the randomly selected texts represents another important aspect to be discussed, since our study is also reliant on the quality of the prints, as we have already stated. Considering that the mapping of novelistic “production centres” (Morariu et al., 2021) has already revealed the supremacy of Bucharest as the publishing centre where 92% (Morariu et al., 2021, p. 36) of the novels in the DMRN archive released between 1933 and 1947 were published, it was not surprising to find that – apart from *Băieți de fată* [Illegitimate sons] (1944) by Mircea Streinul – which was printed in Craiova, at the ABC Publishing House, all the other 14 texts were published by Bucharest publishing houses. However, the fact that Craiova is listed as the city of publication for one of the selected novels is particularly important, as Craiova only accounts for less than 10% of the Romanian editorial output of the period (while Bucharest accounts for roughly 90%). Yet, against this obvious geographical clustering around the capital city, only Cartea Românească publishing house occurs three times in the list of the 15 selected novels, alongside publishers such as Adevărul, Universala Alcalay, Scânteia and so on.

Two more remarks are needed concerning the relevance of our dataset sample. The first one refers to the fact that all the scanned versions we have worked with from the DMRN archive are digital reproductions of the first editions. This is important for the purpose of our analysis, which is strongly centered on developing a cleaning methodology and testing the accuracy of the *spaCy* and *Stanza* models on the novels published during the 15 years we have selected and on the Romanian language of that time. The second remark concerns the authors of our texts and their level of popularity in the book market at the time, but also their general status in Romanian literature on a broader temporal axis. More precisely, the list of authors in our sample is quite diverse, when placed on an axis from “hypercanonical” (Damrosch, 2006) and “prolific” to non-canonical writers²¹, including authors such as Liviu Rebreanu, who belongs to the “hypercanonical group” of Romanian authors, but also Cezar Petrescu, Damian Stănoiu and Mircea Streinul – all of them competing for the leading position in the ranking of the most prolific authors – to Jean Bart and Octav Dessila – who emerge on the literary map of the time as “pioneers”, from both a thematic and a narratological perspective. Finally, it includes such authors as Take, Ariana Del-Vet, Ioan Missir and Ilie Anesiea, who have not only authored one single novel each in the entire DMRN archive (1845-1947), but who have always been considered as non-canonical. Bearing these considerations in mind – although our research does not advance hypotheses, nor objectives related to computational stylistics, or to the way the peculiarities of an author’s literary style might impact the accuracy of OCR (especially in the realm of punctuation) – we argue that our sample is definitely representative at the scale of the entire digital collection.

²¹ For a comprehensive discussion on categorisation as well as concepts, methodology and quantitative data, see Morariu et al. (2021, pp. 36–37).

3.1. Text Extraction and Cleaning

In order to perform NLP tasks on our corpus, we needed to extract the OCR'd text from the PDF files. The tool employed for this task was the command-line utility *pdftotext*, part of the *poppler-utils* package in Fedora Linux (Poppler, n.d.). The output was a batch of 15 text files, in UTF-8 encoding.

Our next task was making these text files suitable for natural language processing. With the greater objective in mind – specifically, performing NLP on the entire DMRN archive – we developed a methodology for a largely automatic cleaning process²² that we can ultimately apply to greater quantities of PDF files. Some cleaning tasks could not be automated and were consequently performed manually. In any case, these do not involve a significant workload and are in accordance with our general objective of cleaning the entire DMRN archive in a timely and effective manner. In the next paragraphs, we detail the entire procedure.

The first step in this process is commonly called *text sectioning* by NLP specialists, and it involves removing the undesirable parts of a digital text (Palmer, 2010, p. 10). In practice, this means discarding such elements as page breaks, page numbers, soft hyphens²³, various page decorations and section markers (such as “***”), along with elements of paratext such as the name of the author or the title of the novel in the header section, prefaces, title pages etc. For this purpose, we have written a *Python* script which employs *Regular Expressions* (RegEx) to automatically remove most of the above enumerated items. The script was highly successful in eliminating page breaks (U+000C); page numbers; soft hyphens (U+00AD) and any remaining hard hyphens; rows of text which only contained newline characters (U+000A), or rows formed only of a single character (generally noise produced during OCR); page decorations that were rendered as sequences of uninterrupted graphic characters during OCR; Roman numerals used for chapter numbering, section breaks and the spaces before punctuation marks, which seem to have been used by certain publishers at the time.²⁴

The same script was only moderately successful in removing the name of the author and the title of the novel from the header section of the novels where such elements were present. Many names and titles in our sample dataset (and in the DMRN archive) contain Romanian special letters, such as ș, ț, ă, î, â. These letters are very often rendered by OCR engines as graphically similar Unicode characters. In our case, they were usually rendered as their Basic Latin Unicode block equivalents. This situation makes find and replace operations significantly difficult. Therefore, in order to increase the accuracy of the method, we have applied normalization²⁵ to the matched strings and encoded all of them in the ASCII character set, so that all special characters in Romanian were rendered as basic Latin characters. As a result, the *RegEx* employed was more adept at matching the names of authors and novels from the stem of each individual text in our sample. Nevertheless, the aesthetic decisions of the publishers (e.g.: spacing each individual letter in the header section) and subpar OCR, which frequently misidentifies characters in person names, has hampered the performance of the script in this regard.

²² Cleaning a corpus of texts can mean very different things, from producing exact copies of the original document, to “the omission of data irrelevant to the intended use of the corpus”. In this article we employ this last meaning, as listed by Prinsloo et al. (2022, p. 166).

²³ Hard hyphens, which are employed (like soft hyphens) to separate words on two different lines of text, were dealt with by *pdftotext*, in the process of text extraction. The tool also unites the lines of text that were separated in this manner.

²⁴ However, there are also some aspects that affected the post-OCR operations and the cleaning process that we noticed once we ran the script. The removal of page numbers and the removal of paratextual elements were not automatically done when the last line on the page ended with a split word, since replacing the hyphen caused the syllables of that word to be merged with the page number, author’s name or title. Moreover, having the titles in the page header written in a different font or with larger spaces between characters has also prevented their removal in the automatic cleaning process.

²⁵ For a definition of normalization, see the *Unicode normalization FAQ* (Unicode, n.d.).

As for the actual text of the novels, we restricted our interventions to the minimum, keeping intact the spelling employed at the time. The only exception made concerns the apostrophe, which was used, based on the linguistic rules in effect before the 1953 spelling reform (Vintilă-Rădulescu et al., 2021, p. 56), to indicate the dropping of certain sounds or syllables and their omission. It is also well known that in contemporary Romanian the hyphen has largely taken over the role of the apostrophe (Vintilă-Rădulescu et al., 2021, p. 56). Replacing all apostrophes in our texts with hyphens seemed to be an intervention worth making, as it improved accuracy in POS tagging in our preliminary tests. Also, this change does not affect the lexical and syntactical integrity of the texts in our corpus.²⁶

With regard to the manual cleaning tasks that we have already mentioned, they may be classified based on the frequency with which they have been performed in texts as follows. First of all, we have manually removed the titles from the header section which, due to the printers' aesthetic choices, were overlooked by the *Regex*. This intervention has been required in 10 out of the total of 15 texts from our sample, but we should also mention that the titles occurred irregularly throughout the text, leading us to conclude that the *Regex* employed has removed at least some of these paratextual elements. Two relevant examples for this trend of misidentifying the titles of texts are provided by the novels *Vampirul* [The vampire] (1938) by G. M. Amza and Al. Bilciurescu and *Zaza* (1939) by Eugeniu Est, whose titles are both written in spaced capital letters: "V A M P I R U L" and "Z A Z A". The same intervention was carried out for authors whose names were also manually removed if they had not been matched by our script and for the Roman numerals indicating the chapters (and even for the word "chapter" if it was used with the numbers). Finally, our manual cleaning also included some minor interventions whenever the page numbers were merged with words separated at the end of the line (as a result of the automated removal of hard hyphens). Even though we have not performed any intervention on the texts themselves, we have noticed some recurrent errors that we also intend to remove through automatic cleaning, so that we can reproduce the entire process for a larger amount of documents, as already mentioned. One of these errors occurs in most situations where the hard hyphen precedes the third person singular masculine form of the pronominal clitic ("î"), which is misidentified as numeral 1 ("1").

After this step, we employed a regular expression in a Python script to eliminate all the newline characters in the sample texts, which seemed to improve the accuracy of the NLP tasks in our preliminary tests. The end result was a batch of 15 text files, each one of them a single line of uninterrupted Unicode characters.

3.2. NLP Accuracy Evaluation

Next on our list was assessing the accuracy of some off-the-shelf NLP Romanian language models. Since this operation is manual and time consuming – and taking into account the fact that the research team is formed only of the authors of this article themselves – we proceeded to sample our text files to produce a manageable dataset. In order to obtain a representative sample, we again employed *stratified sampling*. The text files were consequently split into three sections, beginning, middle and end, based on the number of sentences in each of them. This step therefore coincided with the first NLP task we had in mind, which was sentence segmentation. From each of the aforementioned sections we randomly extracted 10 sentences, which amounted to 30 sentences/text. This process was performed with both *spaCy*

²⁶ With the exception of the many phrases in French, which were somewhat abundant in the literary texts of the period. Being that the NLP tasks we wanted to perform are specifically targeted at the Romanian language, we considered that the alterations produced in this instance do not affect the scientific value of our experiment.

and *Stanza*, resulting in two CSVfiles,²⁷ each containing 450 sentences, which were then manually assessed for accuracy.

The total number of tokens in both CSV files amounted to 14.845 (7.130 in the *spaCy* corpus and 7.715 in *Stanza*'s). Manually evaluating the accuracy of each one of them for the tasks we had in mind – namely OCR, part-of-speech tagging (POS) and lemmatization – was therefore beyond the possibilities of our small team. Consequently, a similar process of sampling as the one previously mentioned was carried out (extracting 15 sentences/text), resulting in a total of 7.599 tokens, split between 30 individual CSV files, two for each of the selected novels (with outputs from *spaCy* and *Stanza*, respectively). We, therefore, established our two datasets, on which we performed the already stated NLP tasks.

With regard to sentence segmentation, both models have yielded similar results, as can be seen in *Table 1*. *spaCy* scores an average accuracy of 87,38%, the lowest percentage being 66,67 for the novel *Vijelie* (1947) by Sandra Cotovu – the most recently published novel in our sample –, while two novels, *Două lumi* [Two worlds] (1936) by Ariana Del-Vet and *Porți fără număr* [Unnumbered gates], vol. II (1946) by Octav Dessila scored the maximum percentage. The entire series of errors we have noticed when manually validating the sentence segmentation could be discussed as OCR and punctuation errors as well as errors relating to the transition from direct to indirect speech. In fact, these types of errors are connected, since the low accuracy of the OCR affects the recognition of punctuation. More precisely, there are many examples of noise leading to mis-segmentation, as in those cases where the OCR detected periods within the sentence and, as a result, the segmentation was done right in the middle of the sentence. There were also cases of other punctuation marks – such as commas – or of other diacritical marks being misidentified as periods and, consequently, leading to the same errors. Moreover, *spaCy*, as well as *Stanza*, has also segmented sentences consisting only of punctuation marks such as ellipses or brackets.

Title	Author	Publication year	spaCy	Stanza
Europolis	Jean Bart	1933	76,67%	93,33%
Parada norocului	Damian Stănoiu	1934	83,33%	90,00%
Nunta Lizetii	Take	1935	96,67%	96,67%
Două lumi	Ariana Del-Vet	1936	100,00%	93,33%
Fata moartă	Ioan Missir	1937	86,67%	90,00%
Vampirul	G. M. Amza, Al. Bilciurescu	1938	90,00%	86,67%
Zaza	Eugeniu Est	1939	86,67%	93,33%
Amândoi	Liviu Rebreanu	1940	90,00%	83,33%
Zmeu de mare, vol. I	Ilie Anesia	1941	73,33%	73,33%
1907, vol. III, Pământ, mormânt...	Cezar Petrescu	1943	93,33%	83,33%
Stăvilare. Se aleg apele	D. V. Barnoschi	1943	76,67%	93,33%

²⁷ A Comma-Separated Values (CSV) file is a simple text file format used to store tabular data, where each value in a row is separated by a comma.

Băieți de fată	Mircea Streinul	1944	93,33%	83,33%
Voluntarii, vol. I Spre Spania	Mihail Florescu	1945	86,67%	90,00%
Porți fără număr, vol. II	Octav Dessila	1946	100,00%	90,00%
Vijelie	Sandra Cotovu	1947	66,67%	80,00%
Average total			87,38%	87,62%

Table 1. Sentence segmentation

Also, with respect to punctuation,²⁸ two other aspects that have led to errors in sentence segmentation using *spaCy* should be pointed out. Firstly, the case of ellipses deserves a separate discussion, considering the frequency of their occurrence in literary texts. The issue that affects OCR is that, due to their role (i.e., to mark an “interruption” of discourse), ellipses can also occur within the same sentence²⁹ as in: “my dad hit me... with his whip... accidentally...”³⁰. This is a very confusing scenario for automatic segmentation. Similarly, the colon also requires further clarification, since one of its prevalent roles in literary texts involves the transition from direct to indirect speech (Graur, 2009, p. 38). In other words, it is quite obvious that the automatic segmentation reveals this ambiguity caused by colons introducing additional information within the same sentence and all the cases where the same punctuation mark was used to indicate the transition from indirect to direct speech. On the other hand, *Stanza* scores an average accuracy of 87,62%, which is very similar to the average percentage provided by *spaCy*. In addition to the error patterns, we have already highlighted in the case of *spaCy*, *Stanza* has also attested that sentence segmentation is sensitive to the quality of the OCR and the resulting noise. More specifically, a large amount of our invalidated results features instances of misidentification and confusion between punctuation marks (even the end-of-line hyphen being misidentified as period).

As for the accuracy of OCR, POS tagging and lemmatization, it should be noted that we have invalidated both POS tagging and lemmatization every time we have invalidated the OCR (i.e. we dismissed the correct matches as serendipitous). However, all the other cases of errors or ambiguity have highlighted some aspects regarding the limitations of these morphological and lexical taggings. Before listing some representative categories for these errors we have encountered, it may be worth adding that the “Statistics of UD Romanian RRT”, i.e., the Universal Dependencies Romanian Reference Treebank, section comprises further considerations related to “the 10 most frequent ambiguous lemmas” and “the 10 most frequent ambiguous types”, and also a list of examples, for all the POS tags.³¹ The first category (which numbers, nevertheless, only a few errors) can be attributed to the morphological and lexical incompatibility between the contemporary Romanian treebank (RRT) and the vocabulary used in the novels from our sample which includes archaic, vernacular or non-standard variants of some words. For instance, the use of the popular future tense in Romanian – „am să viu” (I will

²⁸ The difficulties that punctuation poses in sentence segmentation make the topic of David Palmer’s study on “Tokenisation and Sentence Segmentation”, which addresses, among other issues and challenges in the development of algorithms, the four types of “dependencies” that should be considered – “language dependence”, “character-set dependence”, “application dependence” and “corpus dependence” –, but also the way a language’s punctuation system influences the delineation of sentence boundaries. Moreover, the problematic aspect of punctuation in Romanian is that, as Nunberg (1990, p. 9) stresses with respect to English, there is a lack of studies addressing this issue, i.e. the “punctuation system” in use, not only from a normative point of view, but also from a “descriptive” one.

²⁹ As outlined in Hanu et al.’s (2018, p. 99) statistical and corpus-based study on Romanian orthographic and punctuation systems, Alexandru Graur (2009, p. 39) also addresses the relative placement of ellipses.

³⁰ “M-a lovit tata... din greșeală... cu cravașa”. Our translation from *Zmeu de mare*, vol. I (1941) by Ilie Anesiea, 13.

³¹ See the ambiguous lemmas and the ambiguous types for each POS tag separately in *Statistics of UD Romanian RRT* (Universal Dependencies, n.d.-a).

come) –, „viu” being a popular version for the verb „a veni” (to come), leads to *Stanza*’s tagging of this token as *ADJ*, considering the homonymy with the masculine singular form of the adjective „viu” (alive). Related to these confusions, we should also mention the errors we encountered when validating the *AUX* and *VERB* tags in *spaCy*, since it listed as *AUX* many other verbs besides the three lemmas – “avea, fi, vrea” – which were tagged as *AUX*, when they were not tagged as *VERB*. Moreover, there are also some confusions of POS tags caused by morphological homonymy, concerning the coordinating conjunction „iar” (an adversative conjunction tagged only as *ADV*, since it figures only in the list of “10 most frequent *ADV* lemmas and types” in the treebank statistics), or some *PROPN* tagged as *NOUNs* or *ADJs*, as “Lina” or “Roza”, which also occur as adjective (the former) or common noun (the latter) in Romanian. We should also mention some similar cases of verbal forms, such as “*trebue” (“trebuie” – must), “*înnăbușe” (“a înăbuși” – to smother), “*înnoate” (“a înota” – to swim), “*mângâe” (“a mângâia” – to caress), or adverbial forms, as “*alaltăer” (“alaltăieri” – the day before yesterday), to mention just a few, which yield errors of lemmatization due to misspelling³² or incorrect grammar. Last but not least, grammatical conversion also leads to a series of errors in POS tagging, to which we should add several examples of grammatical gender and number confusions – “avere” (fortune) with the lemma “*averă”; “petale” (petals) – “*petal”; “cucoane” (ladies) – “*cucoan” – and other inconsistencies between some articulated and unarticulated nouns or different parts of speech – “cafenea” (café) – “*cafene”; “frumoasele” (the beauties) – “*frumoas”, “cafeaua” (the coffee) – “*cafeau”, “dânsul” (he as Romanian polite pronoun) – “*dâns”.

4. Results

The results of this manual evaluation enabled us to draw some initial conclusions regarding the performance of the *spaCy* and *Stanza* models for Romanian and see whether there are any correlations between OCR accuracy and the success rate of POS tagging and lemmatization. We will first outline these conclusions separately for each model, followed by some conclusions drawn from a comparative analysis of the results.

The method employed for the evaluation of the different NLP tasks, as well as for the performance of the OCR engine, is accuracy: manually validating *true positives* and *false positives* in our corpus. We agree that employing *F-Score* would have been a much more reliable measurement method for the accuracy of the OCR.³³ Nevertheless, this method necessitates what NLP practitioners call a *gold standard*, a manually annotated corpus against which one can evaluate accuracy. Nevertheless, in DH, as McGillivray, Poibeau and Fabo (2020, para. 37) have observed, “there are no gold standards in the same sense intended in NLP”. Creating such a gold standard, whether possible or not, was in any case beyond the scope and possibilities of this small research team. For this reason, we settled for the less-than-optimal method of measuring basic accuracy, a considerable limitation of our study, to which we will return in the following sections. OCR accuracy here should therefore only be taken into account with regard to our corpus, and not for the entire DMRN III archive.

As detailed in the previous section, in terms of segmentation, any of the two models seem to be equally accurate on our samples. Surprisingly for us, sentence boundary detection was actually more challenging for the tested language models than the more specialized tasks

³² There are also instances of correct recognition of lemmas despite misspellings. See the example of the noun “femeia” (the woman), misspelled “femeiea”, for which the lemma provided was “femeiee”, with the correct unarticulated forms being identified.

³³ For example, Păiș et al. (2021, pp. 337–338) have used *F-Score* to measure the performance of *tokenization* and *sentence boundary* detection, and basic accuracy for POS and lemmatization.

of POS tagging and lemmatization. Given the literary character of our corpus, we expected the former to be more difficult and error-prone for the off-the-shelf models employed here. But our experiment actually shows that the apparently simpler task of sentence segmentation poses specific difficulties when it comes to literary texts. This result is also in accordance with other studies, which remark on the general low performance of sentence segmentation on otherwise good quality OCRred text, if punctuation is misrecognized or supplemented by OCR noise (Van Strien et al., 2020, p. 488).

On the other hand, POS tagging and lemmatization have proved to be surprisingly good, especially with *Stanza*. As shown in *Tables 2* and *3*, *Stanza* outperforms *spaCy* at POS tagging for all the texts in our corpus (if one counts the greyed-out areas in the table). *spaCy* does seem to occasionally perform better than *Stanza* at lemmatizing (in 4 distinct cases), but overall *Stanza* does the better job at this task, as well, in 11 out of our total of 15 samples. *Stanza* also barely yields percentages lower than 90 on our corpus of texts, which makes it the better candidate of the two for future DH research on the DMRN III archive.

Title	Author	Publication year	No. of tokens	OCR	POS	Lemma
Europolis	Jean Bart	1933	156	98,72%	88,46%	94,23%
Parada norocului	Damian Stănoiu	1934	220	97,27%	86,64%	88,48%
Nunta Lizetii	Take	1935	263	99,62%	91,57%	94,64%
Două lumi	Ariana Del-Vet	1936	241	99,59%	86,72%	96,27%
Fata moartă	Ioan Missir	1937	247	93,93%	87,45%	89,88%
Vampirul	G. M. Amza Al. Bilciurescu	1938	256	97,66%	90,23%	92,58%
Zaza	Eugeniu Est	1939	77	98,70%	87,01%	92,21%
Amândoi	Liviu Rebreanu	1940	234	99,57%	91,45%	92,74%
Zmeu de mare, vol. I	Ilie Anesiea	1941	137	90,51%	80,15%	84,56%
Stăvilare. Se aleg apele	D. V. Barnoschi	1942	186	98,39%	95,70%	93,55%
1907, vol. III, Pământ, mormânt...	Cezar Petrescu	1943	132	99,24%	81,82%	85,61%
Băieți de fată	Mircea Streinul	1944	166	96,39%	80,12%	87,95%

Voluntarii, vol. I Spre Spania	Mihail Florescu	1945	186	99,46%	93,01%	94,09%
Porți fără număr, vol. II	Octav Dessila	1946	175	82,86%	67,24%	71,84%
Vijelie	Sandra Cotovu	1947	187	94,65%	85,03%	86,63%
Tokens total and accuracy averages:			2863	96,61%	86,80%	90,16%

Table 2. *Accuracies spaCy (punctuation not included). Grey cells show where this model outperformed the other.*

Title	Author	Publication year	No. of tokens	OCR	POS	Lemma
Europolis	Jean Bart	1933	188	96,28%	93,62%	89,36%
Parada norocului	Damian Stănoiu	1934	243	99,18%	95,88%	94,65%
Nunta Lizetii	Take	1935	201	98,51%	96,52%	95,52%
Două lumi	Ariana Del-Vet	1936	186	97,31%	94,62%	92,47%
Fata moartă	Ioan Missir	1937	208	92,31%	91,35%	89,42%
Vampirul	G. M. Amza Al. Bilciurescu	1938	268	97,76%	95,15%	94,03%
Zaza	Eugeniu Est	1939	111	99,10%	90,99%	93,69%
Amândoi	Liviu Rebreanu	1940	237	96,20%	94,51%	94,09%
Zmeu de mare, vol. I	Ilie Anesiea	1941	153	94,12%	90,20%	90,85%
Stăvilare. Se aleg apele	D. V. Barnoschi	1942	304	97,37%	96,05%	93,42%
1907, vol. III, Pământ, mormânt...	Cezar Petrescu	1943	150	96,00%	90,67%	89,33%
Băieți de fată	Mircea Streinul	1944	214	98,60%	93,93%	92,52%
Voluntarii, vol. I Spre Spania	Mihail Florescu	1945	203	98,52%	96,06%	95,07%
Porți fără număr, vol. II	Octav Dessila	1946	290	93,79%	91,03%	91,38%

Vijelie	Sandra Cotovu	1947	254	95,67%	92,91%	92,52%
Tokens total and accuracy averages:				3210	96,67%	93,80%

Table 3. *Accuracies Stanza (punctuation not included). Grey cells show where this model outperformed the other.*

As for any correlations between poor OCR and low NLP performance, things are not that straightforward. *spaCy*, again, fares worse in this respect than *Stanza*. Some of our most accurate samples in terms of OCR do not always yield good percentages on downstream NLP tasks. For example, *1907, vol. III, Pământ, mormânt..., Parada norocului, Băieți de fată*, all score high on OCR accuracy in our *spaCy* corpus (above 95%). Nevertheless, their accuracy scores for POS tagging and lemmatization are below their respective averages in the same corpus. The same phenomenon is not as easily discernible in *Stanza*'s operation, due to better overall performance. Still, we should point out that *Europolis, 1907, vol. III, Pământ, mormânt...* and *Vijelie*, which have all fared well on OCR accuracy (above 95%), have nevertheless scored less than the total averages on POS tagging and lemmatization.³⁴ However, one should take into account the fact that, in the case of *Stanza*, the difference between OCR percentages and POS and lemma percentages is at most under 7 points, in each of the texts in its associated corpus. *spaCy*, on the other hand, produces discrepancies of up to almost 18 percentage points between OCR accuracy and the accuracy of the performed NLP tasks. Generally, as Van Strien et al. (2020) have shown, if OCR accuracy percentages are above 80% (ideally 90%), the results of certain NLP tasks are not significantly inaccurate. Likewise, Strange et al. (2014, para. 52), although not particularly concerned about NLP, conclude that cleaning an OCR corpus is “desirable but not essential”. Therefore, it remains to be seen whether OCR accuracy is below the mentioned thresholds at the level of the entire DMRN III archive. However, within the limits of our accuracy measurements, both off-the-shelf models tested here performed reasonably well with *Stanza* being, as we have seen, more reliable in its correlations between the quality of the OCR and the performance of its functions.

5. Limits

In the course of our experiment, we have identified certain limits to our methodology:

1. In regard to the initial sampling of the DMRN III digital archive, possibly a more representative sample of the archive should have taken into account the quality of the OCR for each individual file. Since at the level of the entire archive, this certainly influences the quality of NLP, a prior evaluation of each entry on the basis of a scale (from very good, to bad OCR) would have provided more adequate *strata* for our sampling. This, however, was beyond the possibilities of our small research team.
2. One major limitation of the present study is the absence of a *gold standard*, greatly felt in measuring the quality of the OCR of our samples. Our accuracy measurements in this sector are therefore not very trustworthy, these samples being too small for general assessments.³⁵ Given the magnitude of the DMRN archive and the diversity of the original print editions (and also the amount of manual labor involved), it is hard to

³⁴ Also, *Zaza*, which scored 99.10% accuracy in the OCR department in this corpus, acquired only 90.99% at POS tagging.

³⁵ Although the overall OCR accuracy percentages in both our corpora (*spaCy*'s and *Stanza*'s, respectively) are almost identical – which might suggest that the measurements taken are accurate –, we would like to point the reader to the accuracy scores for *Porți fără număr, vol. II*: 82,86% in the *spaCy* corpus, and 93,79% in *Stanza*'s. This variation can only be explained by the insufficient size of our sample and statistical chance.

believe that such a gold standard could ultimately be elaborated. Any other effort at performing NLP on this digital archive should therefore consider parcelling the texts on grounds of structural similarity, or limiting the selection to a few titles, so that accuracy assessments become feasible.

3. Upon cleaning, the hyphens employed to separate words on two different rows of texts were automatically removed. Still, some of these hyphens were certainly part of compound words, which were not excepted during the cleaning process. The number of such situations is not negligible, as Palmer (2010, p. 18) observes, quoting a study which states that up to 5% of the compound words occurred on different rows in an English language corpus.
4. Text segmentation in some cases has outputted punctuation as independent sentences (e.g. “”), “...”). This has reduced the number of tokens available for analysis in those particular cases. At any rate, we have decided not to replace the said ‘sentences’ with other randomly sampled sentences, since the number of tokens per sentence is rather a question of the author’s style, as one can observe in Cezar Petrescu’s case, where the small number of tokens is explained by the author’s austere style of narration and dialogue, employing sequences of very short sentences.
5. A somewhat minor limitation, but one which might influence to a certain degree the accuracy of NLP tools employed on texts in the DMRN archive are the fairly frequent phrases or expressions in languages other than Romanian (mainly French, but also German and other languages of circulation), which were commonplace in the literary texts of the era. In theory, this limitation could be overcome by employing language identification NLP models.³⁶ In practice, the success of this method is highly dependent on OCR performance on multilingual texts.
6. There are, as we have already pointed out, significant discrepancies between the POS tags adopted by the Universal Dependencies framework (and employed by both *spaCy* and *Stanza*) and some questionable or even ambiguous aspects of the Romanian morphology. A more fitting evaluation should rather concentrate on the morphological analysis that these tools provide, than on POS tagging. This is nonetheless more time consuming, and beyond the possibilities of our research team.

6. Further Improvements and Conclusions

Certain aspects of the cleaning process could be improved. The most error prone step in our automatic cleaning process is the removal of the author’s name and the novel’s title from the header section in some of the documents in the DMRN archive. A better *RegEx*, one that matches the searched patterns even when the characters in the expressions are separated by any number of spaces (as was often the case with our sample documents), should improve cleaning in this regard. Also, employing such Python libraries as *difflib* (Python Software Foundation, n.d.) to match similar sequences of text, based on a similarity score of 0.7 or greater, definitely increases the success rate of removing those header section elements where the OCR engine misidentified some characters, as we demonstrated in a study that we ran after performing the evaluation done here (Vătavu & Morariu, 2024, p. 68).

As for the accuracy of the NLP, some improvement in this sector should theoretically be conceivable. One possibility is completely redoing the OCR of the entire DMRN archive, perhaps by training an open-source OCR engine (such as *Tesseract*) on the documents in the archive specifically. This, however, would prove very resource intensive and most probably

³⁶ Both *Stanza* (Stanford NLP Group, n.d.-a) and *spaCy* (Explosion, n.d.-b) are equipped for such tasks.

yield negligible returns in terms of better accuracy. Post-OCR correction should therefore be more adequate in this respect. Nevertheless, if we entirely exclude manual correction, solutions thus far have rarely proved significantly successful. Génèreux and Spano (2015) have employed NLP in attempting to clean a German language corpus through both edit distance and string approximation. The results were “not so good”, in the authors’ own words. On the contrary, their methods in fact inserted new errors into the OCRed text. More successful in their attempts were Kim et al. (2021), who trained a transformer model on a corpus where OCR errors were manually tagged, then used this model to correct impressive amounts of literary texts. Although this method has also inserted errors into the texts themselves, the corrected errors were six times as many as those introduced.³⁷

From our own observations, certain improvements in the accuracy of the NLP might be gained from specifically training the language models employed in this experiment on manually corrected samples extracted from the DMRN archive. This should yield better results in some of the instances where the orthography and spelling of the time have prevented the language models employed by us from accurately tagging and lemmatizing certain tokens (both words and punctuation). Nevertheless, these instances are not that numerous.

Our experiment, while having certain limitations, has turned out to be successful in many regards. First, our automatic cleaning method has proven quite adept at text sectioning. Although it did not eliminate altogether the need for further manual cleaning, we estimate that it certainly saves significant amounts of time-consuming manual labour. Furthermore, the cleaning script also delivers more suitable text files for downstream NLP tasks. As for our secondary objective, our tests prove that, despite the fact that the texts in our corpus are written in mid-20th century Romanian – including all the lexical, grammatical and orthographic aspects, the accuracy percentages that *Stanza* and *spaCy* have scored for POS tagging and lemmatization are satisfactory overall. However, *Stanza*’s performance at the time the research unfolded was significantly better, which makes it the more appropriate candidate for more extensive studies on the DMRN digital archive. Sentence segmentation, on the other hand, did not go as well as expected, and should probably be considered with more care and scepticism in future NLP analyses of the DMRN archive. Nonetheless, our methodology shows that new research avenues are possible and advisable, and that the gap observed by McGillivray, Poibeau and Fabo (2020) between the DH and NLP communities can be successfully bridged. We consider that our experience regarding the use of NLP tools to perform analyses on corpora specifically compiled for the digital humanities is valuable not only for studies that focus on Romanian literary texts from the 20th century, but also for any other DH studies that concentrate on non-English corpora.

References:

- Amza, G. M., & Bilciurescu, A. (1938). *Vampirul* [The vampire]. Editura Librăriei Principele Mircea.
- Anesica, I. (1941). *Zmeu de mare* [Sea dragon] (vol. 1). Tip. Vremea.
- Baghiu, Ș. (2018). Strong domination and subtle dispersion: A distant reading of novel translation in communist Romania (1944–1989). In M. Sass, Ș. Baghiu & V. Pojoga (Eds.), *The culture of translation in Romania* (pp. 65–87). Peter Lang.

³⁷ The method employed by Kim et al. also corrects the “intentional misspellings in dialogue”. But, as the authors argue, “much of them may actually improve downstream NLP tasks even if the new words may be against the author’s original intentions”.

- Baghiu, Ș., Pojoga, V., Bâlici, M., Chiorean, M., Ciorogar, A., Codină-Brenda, J., Crăciun, B., Farmatu, T., Mîrț, A., Morariu, D., Olaru, O., Rădescu, C., Savin, A., Stanislav, C., Stoica, A.-M., Strugari, N., Terian, A., Ung, S., Vancu, R., ... Văsieș, A. (2021). *Muzeul digital al romanului românesc: 1933–1947* [The digital museum of the Romanian novel: 1933–1947] [Data set]. Complexul Național Muzeal ASTRA. <https://revistatransilvania.ro/mdrr>
- Baghiu, Ș., Pojoga, V., Borza, C., Coroian-Goldiș, A., Gârdan, D., Modoc, E., Susarenco, T., Vancu, R., & Varga, D. (2019a). *Muzeul digital al romanului românesc: Secolul al XIX-lea* [The digital museum of the Romanian novel: The 19th century] [Data set]. Complexul Național Muzeal ASTRA. <https://revistatransilvania.ro/mdrr>
- Baghiu, Ș., Pojoga, V., & Sass, M. (Eds.). (2019b). *Ruralism and literature in Romania*. Peter Lang.
- Bart J. (1933). *Europolis*. Editura Adeverul.
- Bâlici, M. (2018). The emergence of quantitative studies: Actual functionalities and the Romanian case. *Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory*, 4(2), 54–71.
- Bâlici, M. (2019). Studii cantitative recente în spațiul românesc. Între analiză instituțională și problema traducerilor [Recent quantitative studies in Romania: Between institutional analysis and the topic of translation]. *Transilvania*, 2, 11–18.
- Barbu Mititelu, V., Irimia, E., & Tufiș, D. (2014). CoRoLa—The Reference Corpus of Contemporary Romanian Language. In N. Calzolari, K. Choukri, T. Declerck, H. Loftsson, B. Maegaard, J. Mariani, A. Moreno, J. Odijk & S. Piperidis (Eds), *Proceedings of the Ninth International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC'14)*, 1235–1239. European Language Resources Association (ELRA). http://www.lrec-conf.org/proceedings/lrec2014/pdf/360_Paper.pdf
- Barbu Mititelu, V., Irimia, E., Păiș, V., Avram, A.-M., Mitrofan, M., & Curea, E. (2020). Romanian resources in linguistic linked open data format. *The 15th International Conference on Linguistic Resources and Tools for Natural Language Processing*, 29–40.
- Barnoschi, D. V. (1942). *Stăvilare. Se alege apele* [Floodgates. The waters clear]. Editura Națională Gh. Mecu.
- Borza, C. (2019). How to populate a country: A quantitative analysis of the rural novel from Romania (1900–2000). In Ș. Baghiu, V. Pojoga, & M. Sass (Eds), *Ruralism and literature in Romania* (pp. 21–39). Peter Lang.
- Busuioc, M., & Caragea, D. (2019). ROMTEXT: Flux de obținere și tratare a textelor [Romtext: Flow for electronic texts' generation and treatment]. *Studii și Cercetări Lingvistice*, 70(1), 118–123. Scopus.
- Ciorogar, A., & Modoc, E. (2019, February 8). Analiza computațională în cadrul studiilor literare românești [Computational analysis in Romanian literary studies]. *Observator Cultural*, 981. <https://www.observatorcultural.ro/articol/analiza-computationala-in-cadrul-studiilor-literare-romanesti/>
- Ciorogar, A., Modoc, E., Goldiș, A., Mudure, M., & Ursa, M. (2019, January). Studiile cantitative și provocările lor [Quantitative studies and their challenges]. *Cultura*, 1(597), 33–39.
- Cohen, M. (2002). *The sentimental education of the novel* (2nd. ed.). Princeton University Press.

- Coroian-Goldiș, A., Gârdan, D., Morariu, D., Borza, C., Modoc, E., & Susarenco, T. (2019). Arhivele romanului românesc și posibilități de digitizare [The archives of the Romanian novel and digitization possibilities]. *Revista Transilvania*, 10, 1–8.
- Cotovu, S. (1947). *Vijelie* [Storm]. Editura Casa Școalelor.
- Damrosch, D. (2006). World literature in a postcanonical, hypercanonical age. In H. Saussy (Ed.), *Comparative literature in an age of globalization* (pp. 43–53). Johns Hopkins University Press. https://www.academia.edu/download/38530018/WL_in_a_Postcanonical_Age.pdf
- Del-Vet, A. (1936). *Două lumi* [Two worlds]. Editura Librăria Academică.
- Dessila, O. (1946). *Porți fără număr* [Unnumbered gates] (vol. 2). Editura Cartea Românească.
- Dinu, L. P., Niculae, V., & Sulea, M.-O. (2012). Pastiche detection based on stopword rankings: Exposing impersonators of a Romanian writer. In E. Fitzpatrick, J. Bachenko & T. Fornaciari (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Workshop on Computational Approaches to Deception Detection*, 72–77. Association for Computational Linguistics. <https://aclanthology.org/W12-0411>
- Est, E. (1939). *Zaza*. Editura Țicu I. Eșanu.
- Explosion. (n.d.-a). *Models and Languages*. <https://spaCy.io/usage/models>
- Explosion. (n.d.-b). *Multi-language*. <https://spaCy.io/models/xx>.
- Florescu, M. (1945). *Voluntarii* [The volunteers]: vol. 1. *Spre Spania* [Toward Spain]. Editura Scânteia.
- Gârdan, D. (2018). Mapping emotions in the Romanian erotic novel of the interwar period: Canonical affect and popular sensibility. *Dacoromania Litteraria*, 5(1), 101–114.
- Gârdan, D. (2019). Interstitial spatiality in the Romanian novel of the interwar period: Mute rurality and subverted urbanity. In Ș. Baghiu, V. Pojoga & M. Sass (Eds.), *Ruralism and literature in Romania* (pp. 69–80). Peter Lang.
- Gârdan, D., & Modoc, E. (2020). Mapping literature through quantitative instruments: The case of current Romanian literary studies. *Interlitteraria*, 25(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.12697/IL.2020.25.1.6>
- Gavrilă, V., Băjenaru, L., Dobre, C., & Tomescu, M. (2021). Towards the development of a Romanian lexicon for the analysis of emotions in the literary works of canonical authors. *Studies in Informatics and Control*, 30(2), 111–120. <https://doi.org/10.24846/v30i2y202110>
- Généreux, M., & Spano, D. (2015). NLP challenges in dealing with OCR-ed documents of derogated quality. *Workshop Proceedings 'Replicability and Reproducibility in Natural Language Processing: Adaptive Methods, Resources and Software' at IJCAI 2015*, 6. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281112670_NLP_challenges_in_dealing_with_OCRed_documents_of_derogated_quality
- Goldiș, A. (2014). Digital humanities – o nouă paradigmă teoretică? [Digital humanities – A new theoretical paradigm?]. *Revista Transilvania*, 12, 1–4.

- Goldiș, A., & Modoc, E. (2020). Distant Reading – o nouă paradigmă de cercetare literară? [Distant reading – A new literary research paradigm?]. *Revista Vatra*, 8–9, 44–121.
- Graur, A. (2009). *Mic tratat de ortografie* [Brief orthography treatise] (L. Groza, Ed.). Humanitas.
- Hanu, B., Vlad, A., & Mitrea, A. (2018). Aspects revealing the orthography and punctuation impact in printed Romanian: A literary corpus based study. *2018 International Conference on Communications (COMM)*, 95–100. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICComm.2018.8484819>
- Ion, R., Irimia, E., & Barbu Mititelu, V. (2018). Ensemble Romanian dependency parsing with neural networks. *Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC 2018)*, 1574–1579.
- Istrate, I., Milea, I., Modola, D., Pop, A., Popa, M., Sasu, A., Stan, E., Tașcu, V., & Vartic, M. (2004). *Dicționarul cronologic al romanului românesc de la origini până la 1989: DCRR* [The chronological dictionary of the Romanian novel from its origins to 1989]. Editura Academiei Române.
- Kim, A., Pethe, C., Inoue, N., & Skiena, S. (2021). Cleaning dirty books: Post-OCR processing for previously scanned texts. *Findings of the Association for Computational Linguistics, Findings of ACL: EMNLP 2021*, 4217–4226. Association for Computational Linguistics.
- McGillivray, B., Poibeau, T., & Fabo, P. R. (2020). Digital humanities and natural language processing: “Je t’aime... Moi non plus”. *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, 14(2). <https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.55816>
- Mieskes, M., & Schmunk, S. (2019). OCR quality and NLP preprocessing. In A. Axelrod, D. Yang, R. Cunha, S. Shaikh & Z. Waseem (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 2019 Workshop on Widening NLP* (pp. 102–105). Association for Computational Linguistics. <https://aclanthology.org/W19-3633>
- Missir, I. (1937). *Fata moartă* [The dead girl]. Editura Cartea Românească.
- Modoc, E. (2018). Traveling avant-gardes: The case of futurism in Romania. In Ș. Baghiu, V. Pojoga & M. Sass (Eds), *The culture of translation in Romania* (pp. 47–65). Peter Lang.
- Modoc, E. (2020). *Internaționala periferiilor: Rețeaua avangardelor din Europa Centrală și de Est* [The international of peripheries: Avant-garde networks of East-Central Europe]. Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române.
- Modoc, E., & Gârdan, D. (2020). Style at the scale of the canon: A stylometric analysis of 100 Romanian novels published between 1920 and 1940. *Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory*, 6(2), 48–63. <https://doi.org/10.24193/mjcst.2020.10.03>
- Montani, I., Honnibal, M., Honnibal, M., Boyd, A., Van Landeghem, S., & Peters, H. (2023). Explosion/spaCy: V3.7.2: Fixes for APIs and requirements (Version v3.7.2) [Computer software]. *Zenodo*. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10009823>
- Morariu, D., Stoica, A.-M., Farmatu, T., Vancu, R., & Varga, D. (2021). Poli de producție ai romanului românesc (1933-1947): Rețele editoriale și forme de canonizare [Production centers of the Romanian novel (1933-1947): Editorial networks and forms of canonization]. *Revista Transilvania*, 9, 35–42. <https://doi.org/10.51391/trva.2021.09.05>
- Moretti, F. (2005). *Graphs, maps, trees: Abstract models for a literary history*. Verso.

- Neagu, L. M., Dascalu, M., Trausanmatu, S., Simion, E., & Chisu, L. (2020). Automated modeling of Romanian literary trends in history using topics over time and co-occurrences. *Proceedings of the 16th International Scientific Conference 'eLearning and Software for Education' Bucharest, April 30 - May 1, 2020*, 151–158. <https://doi.org/10.12753/2066-026X-20-019>
- Nicolaescu, M., & Mihai, A. (2014). Teaching digital humanities in Romania. *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, 16(5). <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2497>
- Nunberg, G. (1990). *The linguistics of punctuation*. Center for the Study of Language and Information.
- Olaru, O. (2019). What is digital humanities and what's it doing in Romanian departments? *Revista Transilvania*, 2019(5–6), 30–37.
- Păiș, V., Ion, R., Avram, M., Mitrofan, M., & Tufiș, D. (2021). In-depth evaluation of Romanian natural language processing pipelines. *Romanian Journal of Information Science and Technology*, 24(4), 384–401.
- Palmer, D. D. (2010). Text preprocessing. In N. Indurkha & F. J. Damerau, *Handbook of natural language processing* (2nd ed., pp. 9–30). Chapman and Hall/CRC.
- Patraș, R., Galleron, I., Grădinaru, C., Lionte, I., & Pascaru, L. (2019). The splendors and mist(eries) of Romanian digital literary studies: A state-of-the-art just before Horizons 2020 closes off. *Hermeneia*, 23, 207–222.
- Patraș, R., Galleron, I., Pascariu, L., Olteanu, A., Lionte, I., & Grădinaru, C. (2020). *HAIRO: corpus de romane haiducești (1850-1950)* [HAIRO: Corpus of hajduk novels (1850-1950)] [Data set]. <https://www.nakala.fr/page/collection/11280/51a881d1>
- Petrescu, C. (1943). 1907: vol. 3. *Pământ, mormânt...* [Land, grave...]. Cugetarea – Georgescu Delafras.
- Pojoga, V. (2018). A survey of poetry translations in Romanian periodicals (1990–2015). In M. Sass, Ș. Baghiu & V. Pojoga (Eds), *The culture of translation in Romania* (pp. 99–121). Peter Lang.
- Pojoga, V., Baghiu, Ș., Modoc, E., Gârdan, D., & Coroian Goldiș, A. (2019). Tehnici digitale pentru analiza romanului românesc [Digital tools for the analysis of the Romanian novel]. *Revista Transilvania*, 10, 9–16. <https://revistatransilvania.ro/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/02.Vlad-Pojoga-Stefan-Baghiu-Emanuel-Modoc-Daiana-Gardan-Andreea-Coroian-Goldis.pdf>
- Pojoga, V., Neagu, L. M., & Dascalu, M. (2020). The character network in Liviu Rebreanu's *Ion*: A quantitative analysis of dialogue. *Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory*, 6(2), 23.
- Popescu, M., & Dinu, L. P. (2008). Rank distance as a stylistic similarity. In D. Scott & H. Uszkoreit (Eds), *Coling 2008: Companion volume: Posters* (pp. 91–94). Coling 2008 Organizing Committee. <https://aclanthology.org/C08-2023>
- Poppler (n.d.) [Computer software]. <https://poppler.freedesktop.org/>
- Prinsloo, D., Taljard, E., & Goosen, M. (2022). Optical character recognition and text cleaning in the indigenous South African languages. *Stellenbosch Papers in Linguistics Plus*, 64, 165–187. <https://doi.org/10.5842/64-1-867>

- Python Software Foundation. (n.d.). *difflib – Helpers for computing deltas*. <https://docs.python.org/3/library/difflib.html>
- Qi, P., Zhang, Y., Zhang, Y., Bolton, J., & Manning, C. D. (2020). Stanza: A python natural language processing toolkit for many human languages. In A. Celikyilmaz & T.-H. Wen (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 58th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics: System Demonstrations* (pp. 101–108). <https://doi.org/10.18653/v1/2020.acl-demos.14>
- Rebreanu, L. (1940). *Amândoi* [Both of them]. Editura Socec & Co.
- Sass, M., Baghiu, Ș., & Pojoga, V. (2018). *The culture of translation in Romania*. Peter Lang.
- Stanford NLP Group. (n.d.-a). *Language identification*. <https://stanfordnlp.github.io/stanza/langid.html>
- Stanford NLP Group. (n.d.-b). *Model performance*. <https://stanfordnlp.github.io/stanza/performance.html>
- Stănoiu, D. (1934). *Parada norocului* [The parade of fortune]. Editura Librăriei Universala Alcalay & Co.
- Strange, C., McNamara, D., Wodak, J., & Wood, I. (2014). Mining for the meanings of a murder: The impact of OCR quality on the use of digitized historical newspapers. *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, 8(1). <https://digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/8/1/000168/000168.html>
- Streinu, M. (1944). *Băieți de fată* [Illegitimate sons]. Editura ABC.
- Take. (1935). *Nunta Lizetii* [Lizeta's wedding]. Editura Cartea Românească.
- Terian, A., Baghiu, Ș. (2025). Digitising literary heritage: Some lessons from the Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel. In T. Lähdesmäki, J. Turunen, A. Terian & R. Garcia-Bardidia (Eds.), *Engaging communities in cultural heritage* (pp. 113-127). Routledge.
- Terian, A. (2019). Big numbers: A quantitative analysis of the development of the novel in Romania. *Transylvanian Review*, XXVIII (Suppl. 1), 55–74.
- Terian, A., Farmatu, T., Borza, C., Varga, D., Văsieș, A., & Morariu, D. (2021). Genurile romanului românesc (1933-1947). O analiză cantitativă [The genres of the Romanian novel (1933-1947): A quantitative analysis]. *Transilvania*, 9, 43–54. <https://doi.org/10.51391/trva.2021.09.06>
- Tușiș, D., & Dan, C. (2018). A bird's-eye view of language processing projects at the Romanian Academy. In N. C. (Conference chair), K. Choukri, C. Cieri, T. Declerck, S. Goggi, K. Hasida, H. Isahara, B. Maegaard, J. Mariani, H. Mazo, A. Moreno, J. Odijk, S. Piperidis & T. Tokunaga (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eleventh International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC 2018)*. European Language Resources Association (ELRA).
- Unicode. (n.d.). *Unicode normalization FAQ*. <https://unicode.org/faq/normalization.html>
- Universal Dependencies. (n.d.-a). *Statistics of UD Romanian RRT*. https://universaldependencies.org/treebanks/ro_rrt/index.html#statistics-of-ud-romanian-rrt
- Universal Dependencies. (n.d.-b). *UD for Romanian*. <https://universaldependencies.org/ro/index.html>

- Universal Dependencies. (n.d.-c). *Universal Dependencies*. <https://universaldependencies.org/>
- Ursa, M. (2015). Is Romanian culture ready for the digital turn?. *Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory*, 1, 80–97.
- Van Strien, D., Beelen, K., Ardanuy, M., Hosseini, K., McGillivray, B., & Colavizza, G. (2020). Assessing the impact of OCR quality on downstream NLP tasks. *Proceedings of the 12th International Conference on Agents and Artificial Intelligence*, 484–496. <https://doi.org/10.5220/0009169004840496>
- Vătavu, B., & Morariu, D. (2024). Enhancing usability of digital collections: Accuracy assessment and OCR post-correction of the Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel. *Transilvania*, 10, 66–75. <https://doi.org/10.51391/trva.2024.10.08>
- Vintilă-Rădulescu, I., Rădulescu Sala, M., & Aranghelovici, C. (2021). *Dicționarul ortografic, ortoepic și morfologic al limbii române: DOOM* (Ediția a 3-a revăzută și adăugită) [Orthographic, orthoepic and morphological dictionary of the Romanian language. Revised and updated, 3rd Edition]. Univers Enciclopedic Gold.
- Xiao, R. (2010). Corpus creation. In N. Indurkha & F. J. Damerau (Eds), *Handbook of natural language processing* (2nd ed., pp. 147–165). Chapman and Hall/CRC.

A FOCUS ON THE ENGLISH AND ROMANIAN LEXICONS: THE CASE OF COGNATES¹

Raluca-Andreea PETRUȘ
West University of Timișoara, Romania

e-mail: raluca.petrus@e-uvt.ro

Abstract

In terms of language acquisition and use, cognates are linguistic elements that pose difficulties for language learners and are an essential theoretical category to include in teaching processes. Through a qualitative descriptive approach, this article defines and illustrates the various types of cognates and proposes a classification of cognates into three categories (proper, partial, and deceptive), exemplifying the linguistic concept by focusing on two languages: English, a Germanic language, and Romanian, a Romance language, through targeted sampling. This article precedes an applied linguistics study on the challenges posed by deceptive cognates, particularly in the field of translation, as identified in the TERRA corpus (Translation Error Analysis).

Keywords: deceptive cognates; lexicology; partial cognates; cognates proper; semantics.

1. Introduction

In linguistics and language acquisition studies, *cognates* (from the Latin term *cognatus*) represent a theoretical category that poses both opportunities and difficulties for learners of new languages. Broadly speaking, cognates are words with a common etymology in different languages, i.e., words that share phonetic and orthographic similarities, and may or may not have similar meanings (Crystal, 2008; Sabino, 2016). For instance, the Latin word *animal* gave *animal* in English and *animal* in Romanian: the two words share phonetic, orthographic, and semantic traits. However, the evolution of the Latin word *libraria* resulted in semantic discrepancies between English and Romanian. *Library* in English and *librărie* in Romanian differ drastically in terms of semantics: the English word *library* and the Romanian word *librărie* have different meanings. In Romanian, the English word *library* translates into *biblioteca*, whereas *librărie* means *bookshop*. This type of uneven semantic correspondence is a consequence of how etyma (words/morphemes from which other words are formed in languages; word ancestors) have developed within languages over time, independent of how a word with the same etymology evolves in another language, through processes such as the extension and narrowing of meaning (Frătilă, 2011).

Thus, cognate word pairs with a common word ancestor (called an *etymon*, pl. *etyma*) are similar in form (phonetic, orthographic) but, in terms of semantics, may or may not have the same significance, as a result of diachronic change. Although they may be similar in spelling, the difficulty for learners of multiple languages arises from the connections between similar words in the different languages they aim to learn and utilize. Speakers make

¹ Article History: Received: 12.01.2026. Accepted: 25.02.2026. Published: 15.05.2026. ACKNOWLEDGMENT: The publication of this article was supported by the West University of Timișoara with funding from the Start Grant project.

associations between words in their native language (L1) and words in other languages (L2, L3) based on the principle of analogy. When learning two or more languages simultaneously, students often draw analogies between the lexicons and grammatical structures of the studied languages, which may ease language acquisition or hinder it, especially when etyma have developed differently in semantics across the target languages.

In the field of contrastive linguistics, Rod Ellis and Gary Barkhuizen (2005) indicate that learning another language is directly affected by one's skills in their native or L2 language: "Already learned habits interfere with the learning of new habits as a result of proactive inhibition. Thus, the challenge facing L2 learners [...] is to overcome the interference of L1 habits" (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 54). When code-switching or communicating in their non-native language, learners make assumptions about the meaning of words, connecting a similarly spelled word to what they presume is of a similar/exact meaning. According to Liliana Tronea-Ghindel (2024), "cognate words can ease the second language acquisition process due to the similarities between cognates in [the] native and second language" (2024, pp. 572-573). However, in some cases, although the words share a common etymology and a similar form, their meanings differ entirely, posing challenges for learners. Cognates have a decisive role in vocabulary acquisition and language teaching and learning, as observed by Manuel Rubén Chacón Beltrán (2006), Javad Gholami, Parviz Alavinia, and Siros Izadpanah (2015), Silvia Aguinaga Echeverría (2017), Agnieszka Otwinowska (2016), Levent Uzun (2024), and Liliana Tronea-Ghindel (2024). Given that cognates are key elements in language development and acquisition, reviewing their types, differences, and similarities is a focus of interest.

In tertiary education, in the case of English language acquisition in Philology, Romanian students learn about this linguistic concept during their first year of Bachelor's studies, for instance, in Contemporary English Classes at the West University of Timișoara. As students improve their English language proficiency and considering that their background in language acquisition varies, students learn to communicate *in English* and *about* the English language, acquiring theoretical and practical concepts in linguistics, including introductory notions on the topic of Lexicology, the development of the English lexicon, word formation processes, word meaning, multi-word units, and English lexical strata (Frățilă, 2011). At this point, students are instructed to properly use and understand the concept of cognates and their various types, despite semantic shifts that may have occurred during their diachronic evolution. A particular problem is the category of deceptive cognates, which will be discussed throughout this article as part of the cognate categories in applied linguistics and lexicology. To contribute to scholarly work on cognates, the present article analyses current research on the topic to clarify theoretical concepts and provide clear examples of cognates to use in English language learning and teaching processes. The current article precedes an ongoing practical-based research study on English-Romanian cognates in English-Romanian and Romanian-English translation studies, which will investigate cognate use and cognate familiarity in English and Romanian across a broader corpus of texts, the TERRA corpus (Translation Error Analysis), aiming to identify the impact of cognate instruction and its correlations on appropriate cognate use and accurate student translations.

2. Theoretical Framework: Defining Cognates – Towards A Typology of Cognates and Their Definitions

On the topic of cognates, scholars have proposed various definitions, classifications, and examples, traced their linguistic origins and current use, and drawn parallels between languages from the different language families' branches. For instance, Marilei Amadeu Sabino (2016) explains cognates in terms of the semantics of the Latin term and the importance

of etymology. According to Sabino, the Latin word *cognatu(m)* signifies “the junction of cum [=with] and nātus [=born], meaning therefore ‘born together’, or ‘belonging to the same lineage, family parentage’” (Sabino, 2016, p. 746). Grzegorz Kondrak also emphasizes the importance of shared etymology in the case of cognates. He claims that cognates are “words in related languages that have developed from the same ancestor word” (Kondrak, 2001, p.1). Uban et al. (2025) also contribute to these definitions and provide a similar theoretical perspective, indicating that the words in one’s native language, A, and the words in language B represent cognates, meaning “words that derive from the same etymon in language C” (Uban et al., 2025, p. 15310). Clémentine Fourrier and Syrielle Montariol define cognates, indicating that they “are words which descend from the same ancestor word (their proto-form) belonging to a shared common direct parent language” (2022, p. 97). In addition, David Crystal (2008) also distinguishes a cognate as “a linguistic form which is historically derived from the same source as another language/form” (2008, p. 83). Thus, a recurrent observation stands out: for two words to belong to the linguistic category of cognates, they must share common word etymology, through what is known as a word ancestor, i.e., an etymon.

As cognates are linguistic elements that share common word etymology, the relationships established between L1 and L2 differ in terms of semantics. In terms of typology, cognate word categories are classified based on a set of criteria, with the following elements considered: orthography, phonetics, and semantics. To offer an overview of the different types of cognate categories, this article will rely on research authored by Victoria Abou-Khalil, Brendan Flanagan, & Hiroaki Ogata (2018), Silvia Aguinaga Echeverría (2017), Ruslan Mitkov, Viktor Pekar, Dimitar Blagoev, & Andrea Mulloni (2007), Manuel Rubén Chacón Beltrán (2006), and Levent Uzun (2024), who classify cognates into various categories, which will be explained below.

For instance, Victoria Abou-Khalil, Brendan Flanagan, and Hiroaki Ogata (2018) discuss the importance of cognates in the teaching and learning process, classifying them into the following subtypes: true friends, false friends, and partial false friends. They claim the existence of true friends, false friends, and partial false friends in relation to the languages L1 speakers want to learn, and that false friends constitute one linguistic type that poses difficulties for learners. In their assertion, true friends are cognate words in L1 and L2 that exhibit similarities in orthography, phonetics, and semantics (p. 1). False friends (the second category) represent words in L1 and L2 that share similar orthography and pronunciation but have different, deceptive meanings (p. 2). The authors indicate the existence of a third type, partial false friends, in which words in L1 and L2 share meanings in some contexts but differ in others (p. 2), thus, explicit contexts are essential in the translation process, for instance, as context dictates the cognate equivalents in the target language (TL). In the context of polysemantic words, the authors describe that context is extremely important with respect to the category of partial false friends (pp. 1-3).

In an applied linguistics study on students’ ability to recognize cognates, researcher Silvia Aguinaga Echeverría (2017) also provides categories of cognates and highlights the existence of false friends/false cognates and the different types of non-false cognates, mentioning the following categories: identical, similar, and partial cognates. Identical cognates, she explains, are words in L1 and L2 that exhibit orthographic equivalence. Similar cognates share orthography but, as she indicates, may differ by one or two consecutive letters in spelling. Partial cognates are the third category identified by Silvia Aguinaga Echeverría (2017), who defines them as L1 and L2 cognates that share two or more letters (consecutive or non-consecutive) in their written forms (p. 29). Thus, her proposed category focuses on the form of cognates, providing rules for classifying these words based on their spelling.

Ruslan Mitkov, Viktor Pekar, Dimitar Blagoev, and Andrea Mulloni (2007) underscore the importance of cognates in language acquisition studies, translation, and lexicography, and note the existence of cognates and false friends (or *faux amis*). While building on previous studies of cognates, the authors emphasize the importance of considering the semantics of cognates alongside orthographic and phonetic similarities, noting that false friends pose difficulties for students and warrant attention in Natural Language Processing (NLP) research and teaching. To explain, cognates, in their assertion, represent words in different languages with similar meaning and spelling. In contrast, false friends, or *faux amis*, represent “pairs of non-equivalent expressions that have etymologically motivated similarity in their orthography” (Mitkov et al., 2007, p. 31), a fact that causes learners to make mistakes in their pursuit of language acquisition and communicative uses. As false friends represent a distinct category of cognate words, in which meaning is deceptive and may mislead polyglots, the researchers also highlight their importance in translation studies. Considering the fact that false friends represent pairs of orthographically similar but semantically different words across languages, they are, therefore, a key aspect to consider in the context of translation equivalence and non-equivalence (p. 44). In their assertion, false friends are “words that have etymologically motivated similarities of their orthography, but whose meanings have diverged so much that they are not translationally equivalent” (p. 44).

Manuel Rubén Chacón Beltrán (2006) also distinguishes between true friends (also called true cognate words) and false friends concerning the classification of cognates. In his research, Beltrán (2006) emphasizes the importance of studying cognate words and the difficulties these pose for language learners. Beltrán (2006) classifies cognate words into true cognates and false friends, while assigning notable importance to the latter, which he further divides into two categories. As he explains, true cognates are words in different languages that share orthography and meaning, whereas false friends are words that share orthography but differ in terms of semantics. False friends, he describes, can be split into two categories: total false friends and partially deceptive false friends. Total false friends represent cognate words with different meanings. In contrast, partially deceptive false friends represent words that share/ are similar in one meaning, but are misleading in another sense, a consequence of polysemous words (Beltrán, 2006, p. 32).

Levent Uzun (2024) also discusses cognate classifications, identifying three categories of cognate words: true, partial, and false cognates. In his assertion, cognates can be split into the following typology: true cognates (also called full cognates), partial cognates (semi-cognates), and false cognates (also known as false friends). In this classification, the researcher considers the criteria of etymology, orthography, and semantics and indicates that true cognates (or full cognates) are words that share similar spellings in distinct languages. The second type, partial cognates (or semi-cognates), can be defined as “words that share a common root but have different meanings in different languages” (Uzun, 2024, p. 4) as a result of extension or narrowing of meaning. False cognates or false friends (the third type) share similar spellings but have different meanings in two different languages.

Considering the theories and cognate typologies presented above, it is indicated that cognates represent etymologically related words that mainly share orthographic features and, depending on the cognate type, they may have similar, partial, and different meanings in different languages. As such, etymology, form, and meaning are core elements mentioned by previous research in linguistics, where the importance of cognates is highlighted in the study of cognate words, language acquisition, translation studies, and NLP. Research on the topic of cognates classifies them into distinct categories, often relying on typologies such as: *true friends vs. false friends* (see Beltrán, 2006; Mitkov, Pekar, Blagoev, & Mulloni, 2007; Abou-Khalil, Flanagan, & Ogata, 2018), *true cognates vs. false cognates* (see Beltrán, 2006; Uzun,

2024), and adding a third category where true and false cognates/true or false friends are intertwined: *partially deceptive false friends* (Beltrán, 2006), *partial false friends* (Abou-Khalil, Flanagan, & Ogata, 2018), and *partial cognates* (Echeverría, 2017; Uzun, 2024).

3. Methodology

This article reviews the literature on cognates as linguistic elements, an essential theoretical category for teaching and, often, a source of errors observed in student translations. Through a qualitative descriptive approach, the article reviewed scholarly works on cognates by examining relevant research on the topic of cognates (historical and applied linguistics, lexicology, and language acquisition). As the article proposed to describe and outline cognate types and establish correspondences between the Latin etyma, i.e., the original word-ancestors, and their current development in English and Romanian cognate words by depicting similarities and differences in terms of meaning, pronunciation, and spelling, it indicates different typologies in terms of cognate categorizations, demonstrating the current terminology on the topic of cognates.

In addition to synthesizing relevant work on cognates and their categories, the article proposes to align itself to a typology relevant to the study and teaching of cognate words, as applied to English and Romanian, addressing one of the challenges encountered by Romanian students who learn English as a second language, with a focus on translation studies (Cozma & Dejica-Cartiș, 2013, p. 896): the improper use of lexico-semantic translation equivalents (non-equivalents). As translations represent “the factual transformation of the source text into the target language, with emphasis on linguistic precision and cultural nuances” (Pașcalău, Stiegelbauer, & Pantea, 2025, p. 148), appropriateness in terms of register (Mureșan & Șerban, 2023), and translation quality assessment (self-reflection), the duty of the language user and translator is so mediate among these factors and render the appropriate form, meaning, and effect in the target language. To enable effective student translations, instructors ought to develop five broad competence types discussed by Mihaela Cozma (2019): linguistic knowledge, cultural adequacy, discursal adequacy, methodological ability, and professional expertise (Cozma, 2019, p. 87). Cognates are included in the first type, i.e., *linguistic knowledge*, as translation errors often occur due to errors concerning partial or deceptive cognates. In this sense, it is important to discuss cognates as theoretical linguistic elements, distinguishing cognate types, and explaining their use in real-world class-based practice, considering their etymology, form, and meaning.

In the case of cognates, given their role in language learning and acquisition studies, it is necessary to note that they may either ease or complicate language learning, as spelling and meaning pose challenges, as indicated by Manuel Rubén Chacón Beltrán (2006), Javad Gholami, Parviz Alavinia, and Siros Izadpanah (2015), Silvia Aguinaga Echeverría (2017), Agnieszka Otwinowska (2016), Levent Uzun (2024), and Liliana Tronea-Ghindel (2024). To address this fact, the article employs a targeted sampling approach, providing relevant and seminar-based examples for each cognate type, indicating their Latin etyma in order to showcase etymological interconnections, providing the readership with the English and Romanian cognate words in current use, and focusing on their spelling and on semantic similarity or divergence (semantic divergence).

Building upon research on the topic of cognates, classifications, and evaluating the criteria of etymology, orthography, and semantics (Beltrán, 2006; Echeverría, 2017; Mitkov, Pekar, Blagoev, & Mulloni, 2007; Abou-Khalil, Flanagan, & Ogata, 2018; Uzun, 2024), the article highlights the need to maintain the classification of cognates into three types: cognates proper, partial cognates, and deceptive cognates. Through the method of targeted sampling, the

article aims to illustrate the aforementioned categorization by explaining relevant English-Romanian cognate words, as observed during Lexicology seminars taught to Romanian students studying English as a foreign language. To elaborate on cognate categories, in the classification below, proper, partial, and deceptive cognates share a common word ancestor, the etymon. In terms of orthography and meaning, *cognates proper* are words with a similar spelling and the same meaning in L1 and L2. *Partial cognates* have similar spelling, one shared meaning, and at least one different meaning. *Deceptive cognates* are words with similar spelling, but which differ entirely in their semantics, having different meanings. By looking at word semantics, the following table gives examples of how meaning is shared or not concerning cognates in English and Romanian:

Cognate Types. The Case of English and Romanian				
English Cognate	Romanian Cognate	Cognate Type	Meaning	Observations on the English-Romanian Cognate Pairs
<i>animal</i>	<i>animal</i>	cognates proper	identical meaning	En. <i>animal</i> and Ro. <i>animal</i> have an identical meaning.
<i>memory</i>	<i>memorie/ amintire</i>	partial cognates	shared & additional meaning	En. <i>memory</i> and Ro. <i>memorie</i> have a shared meaning, but En. <i>memory</i> can also mean <i>amintire</i> in Romanian.
<i>commodity</i>	<i>comoditate</i>	deceptive cognates	different meaning	<i>Commodity</i> and <i>comoditate</i> have different meanings: in English, <i>commodity</i> means <i>goods, belongings</i> , while in Romanian, <i>comoditate</i> means <i>starea de a fi comod</i> .

Table 1. *Cognates proper, partial cognates, and deceptive cognates*

4. Shared Latin Etyma: The Case of English and Romanian Cognates

This article explores the relationships between English-Romanian cognates with common Latin etyma, identifying and illustrating cognates from all three categories indicated in the table above: *cognates proper*, *partial cognates*, and *deceptive cognates*. For context, Romanian is a direct descendant of Latin, while English is a Germanic language that Latin has influenced throughout the centuries. To contextualize, the English lexicon developed decisively during the following stages: Old English (450-1066), Middle English (1066-1500), Early Modern English (1500-1800), and Modern English (1800 - onwards). In the early period, English developed from Germanic tribes, Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, and was heavily influenced by the Roman conquest, the Vikings' Old Norse, and then by the Norman conquest. Loredana Frăţilă explains the context of the Old English period, indicating that,

The first Old English (OE) manuscripts were nothing more than a few inscriptions, unable to offer much information about the characteristics of the language, brought by the Anglo-Saxons in the fifth and the sixth centuries. Only after the arrival of the Christian missionaries from Rome (587), did the literary age modestly begin, with a number of glossaries of words from Latin and their translation in OE, and a few inscriptions and poems (Frăţilă, 2011, p. 17).

In terms of the Latin influence on the English language, Albert Baugh and Thomas Cable (1993) also stress the importance of the Roman conquest and the impact of Latin on early

English and the development of the language, as follows: “The Roman Christianizing of Britain in 597 brought England into contact with Latin civilization and made significant additions to our vocabulary” (p. 1). Since then, the English language has evolved gradually and, in the contemporary era, English has become an international lingua franca. In terms of speakers, Statista provides recent figures on the topic of English speakers, published in 2025, where English is present at the top of the worldwide chart, with approximately 1,53 billion speakers of English in 2025, followed by Mandarin Chinese, with 1,18 billion, Hindi with 609 million, and Spanish with 558.5 million speakers worldwide (Statista, 2025). The statistics include both native speakers and L2 or L3 learners of English.

While English is spoken by billions worldwide, Romanian is spoken by millions, predominantly in mainland Romania and Moldova, and with high concentrations of speakers in Western Europe. Romanian, on the other hand, is spoken by 28 million people, native Romanians and L2/L3 learners of Romanian (TVRinfo, 2022). Today, 29 million speakers of Romanian (Trandabăţ, Rehm, & Uszkoreit, 2012, p. 2), where at least 25 million are native speakers of Romanian (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2009). Romanian is a Romance language formed through the intertwining of the Dacian population and the Roman conquerors, thus, through a Romanization process which took place in the first centuries AD. Early trade and the Roman Conquest led to the development of Romanian from Vulgar Latin (Latin vulgaris; limba latină comună, non-standard). Today, it is recognized as a Romance language, surrounded by Slavic languages in the Eastern part of the European continent.

Alexandru Rosetti’s observation explains the spread of the Romanian language and the Daco-Romanian linguistic development and continuity: “Romanian is the Latin language spoken uninterruptedly in the Eastern Roman Empire, which includes the Romanised Danubian provinces (Dacia, South Pannonia, Dardania, Upper and Lower Moesia), from the penetration of Latin into these provinces until nowadays” (Rosetti, 1985, p. 75). Due to Romanian emigration waves emerging especially post-1989, Rosetti’s observation can be extended to today’s language reach, considering that the Romanian language is being spoken further than these aforementioned borders indicated by Rosetti: studies indicate that the Romanian diaspora comprises around 4-5 million Romanians, who live abroad and communicate in their native language (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2025; Dumitrescu, 2025).

In terms of English spread and English proficiency levels among Romanians, it is relevant to mention that in an *English First English Proficiency Index test* (EF Education First, 2025), which included 2.2 million test takers, a number of 123 countries, 54% of the respondents were women, while 46% were men. The average age of the respondents was 26. Users of English were ranked according to proficiency bands: very high, high, moderate, low, and very low. In the 2025 EP EPI, Romania is classified as having a very high level of English proficiency and English use. Romanian speakers of English rank 11th among 123 countries included in the test and maintain the same rank in Europe, where the Netherlands, Croatia, and Austria rank first in the English Proficiency hierarchy.

Although the two languages differ in genealogy and the number of worldwide speakers, for instance, English and Romanian share several similarities, one of which is a common set of words of Latin origin, i.e., cognates, words that developed differently in the two languages. Considering that cognates indicate etymologically moderated similarities in the shape of a common etymon (word ancestor), it is notable to mention that the Latin etyma do suffer semantic changes throughout time, as they develop differently across languages. Thus, a change in meaning may occur across the different languages in which a particular etymon has developed over time, and, as shown above, this development may maintain semantic similarities or may trigger uneven semantic correspondences, as seen, for instance, in the case of partial and deceptive cognates. As presented before, in terms of semantics, cognates can be

classified into three categories: 1. cognates proper (identical in meaning), 2. partial cognates (share partial meanings with their L1, L2, or L3 counterparts), 3. deceptive cognates (the cognate words have different meanings).

To ensure a clear understanding of cognates and their proper use, language users should consult both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, especially during translation processes, so as to convey the appropriate meaning of the source text into the translated text, avoiding lexico-semantic alterations (Cozma, 2010, p. 65), i.e., non-equivalents which, in turn, distort the meaning of the translated text, rendering it ineffective and inaccurate. Suggestions for English dictionaries include *the Cambridge Dictionary*, *the Oxford English Dictionary*, and *the Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, all of which are available online. For Romanian, language users should consult *Dicționarul Explicativ al Limbii Române* (2016) or its online version, *DEX Online* (dexionline.ro), for both language acquisition and translation endeavors. Additionally, to track the etymology of words and avoid errors regarding the aforementioned types of cognates, language users and researchers could consult etymological dictionaries, such as *A Copious and Critical English-Latin Dictionary* (Smith & Hall, 1871), the *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the Other Italic Languages* (de Vaan, 2008), *An Etymological Dictionary of the Latin Language* (Valpy, 2018), and *An Etymological Dictionary of the Romanian language* (Paliga, 2024). Online sources are also available, including *Etymonline.com* (n.d.) and the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Glare, 1968), and the *American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots* (n.d.), including the latter's *Appendix* (The American Heritage Dictionary Indo-European Roots Appendix, n.d.).

As the article proposes a descriptive qualitative approach to the study of cognates and brings a contribution to the scholarly research on English-Romanian cognate use and meanings, the following sections provide the readership with relevant English-Romanian cognates in each of the three aforementioned categories: cognates proper, partial cognates, and deceptive cognates. Due to the typology of partial and deceptive cognates, there is a necessity to devote special attention to illustrating the semantic similarities, respectively, the semantic divergence occurring between word pairs in English and Romanian. Thus, for partial and deceptive cognates, the article provides original explanations in both languages, mentioning language traps and lexical translation errors. The words included throughout this research were selected through the targeted sampling method, resulting in a series of samples discussed in theoretical and practical contexts in Lexicology classes for L1 Romanian speakers and for L2 and L3 English speakers (first-year Bachelor students). As the English-Romanian cognate words were purposefully selected, allowing for an in-depth detailed of each selected case, it is notable to mention that the tables of contents presented in this article (Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4) are not exhaustive and will be further developed in ongoing research projects, through sample-based corpus research, particularly with respect to the translation errors made by EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students regarding the category of partial and deceptive English and Romanian cognates (the TERRA corpus).

In this sense, for the first category, the table below lists a series of English and Romanian *cognates proper*, i.e., words in different languages with a common Latin etymon and identical meanings, arranged in alphabetical order. In the first column, readers will observe that the table lists the original Latin etyma, the ancestor-words of the selected cognates proper. In the following columns, the table presents the English and Romanian cognates derived from Latin ancestral words. The table also notes that cognates exhibit minor or no formal changes in word spelling, as illustrated in English and Romanian. In this case, language users associate words in their native language (L1) and words in other languages (L2, L3) based on the principle of analogy: as this category of cognates highlights formal and semantic similarity, the words are easily recognizable for EFL students. As depicted below, it is worth noting that the

semantic values of the English and Romanian cognates are shared and preserve the meanings of the original Latin etyma.

Cognates Proper - Cognate Type Category 1			
Latin Etymon	English Cognate	Romanian Cognate	Spelling
<i>animalis</i>	<i>animal</i>	<i>animal</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>accidens</i>	<i>accident</i>	<i>accident</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>campus</i>	<i>campus</i>	<i>campus</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>causa</i>	<i>cause</i>	<i>cauză</i>	<i>minor changes</i>
<i>documentum</i>	<i>document</i>	<i>document</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>elementum</i>	<i>element</i>	<i>element</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>error</i>	<i>error</i>	<i>eroare</i>	<i>minor changes</i>
<i>forma</i>	<i>form</i>	<i>formă</i>	<i>minor changes</i>
<i>fragmentum</i>	<i>fragment</i>	<i>fragment</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>importans</i>	<i>important</i>	<i>important</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>index</i>	<i>index</i>	<i>index</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>officialis</i>	<i>official</i>	<i>official</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>opinion</i>	<i>opinion</i>	<i>opinie</i>	<i>minor changes</i>
<i>methodus</i>	<i>method</i>	<i>metodă</i>	<i>minor changes</i>
<i>naturalis</i>	<i>natural</i>	<i>natural</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>perfectus</i>	<i>perfect</i>	<i>perfect</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>proba</i>	<i>probe</i>	<i>probă</i>	<i>minor changes</i>
<i>publicus</i>	<i>public</i>	<i>public</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>sensus</i>	<i>sense</i>	<i>sens</i>	<i>minor changes</i>
<i>universalis</i>	<i>universal</i>	<i>universal</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>textus</i>	<i>text</i>	<i>text</i>	<i>no changes</i>
<i>virus</i>	<i>virus</i>	<i>virus</i>	<i>no changes</i>

Table 2. *Cognates Proper (English and Romanian)*

For the second category, the table below lists a series of *partial cognates* in English and Romanian, arranged alphabetically. Partial cognates represent words in distinct languages, words with a common Latin etymon, similar spelling, one shared meaning, and additional meaning(s) across languages. As in the previous example, the table includes the original Latin etyma and the present-day English and Romanian cognates that they developed into. In contrast to the previous table, which illustrates English-Romanian cognates proper, the table below includes mentions concerning the shared meaning of the cognates and the additional meanings in English and Romanian. As explained previously, due to the fact that over time the Latin etymon acquires new meanings in the languages in which it develops, and due to processes such as extension or narrowing of meaning (Frăţilă, 2011), semantic differences or semantic overlap can occur between cognates in languages such as English and Romanian, as illustrated below.

Partial Cognates - Cognate Type Category 2				
Latin Etymon	English Cognate	Romanian Cognate	Shared Meaning	Additional Meaning
<i>arrestare</i>	<i>arrest</i>	<i>arrest</i>	<i>to detain legally</i>	<i>En. stop - (heart) arrest, while Ro. stop cardiac</i>
<i>character</i>	<i>character</i>	<i>caracter</i>	<i>symbol/letter; behavioral traits</i>	<i>En. character = person (fictional or non-fictional); Ro. personaj</i>
<i>data</i>	<i>date</i>	<i>dată</i>	<i>calendar day</i>	<i>En. date = Ro. întâlnire; En. date = Ro. curmală (fruit)</i>
<i>figura</i>	<i>figure</i>	<i>figură</i>	<i>symbol, figure of speech</i>	<i>En. figure = Ro. cifră; En. figure (body figure, aspect) = Ro. figură (En. face); Ro. o figură (fam.) = En. a real character/ En. a piece of work; En. figure (see key figure) = Ro. persoană importantă</i>
<i>ordinem</i>	<i>order</i>	<i>ordin</i>	<i>command/ request</i>	<i>En. order = Ro. ordine (sequence) En. order = Ro. comandă (a customer's order of goods)</i>
<i>motionem</i>	<i>motion</i>	<i>moțiune</i>	<i>formal proposal (governmental/ parliamentary motions)</i>	<i>En. movement (see motion pictures = films) – Ro. mișcare</i>
<i>maior</i>	<i>major</i>	<i>major</i>	<i>important, effective</i>	<i>En. major = Ro. specializare (studies)</i>
<i>memoria</i>	<i>memory</i>	<i>memorie</i>	<i>faculty of remembering</i>	<i>En. memory = Ro. amintire (recollection of someone or something, remembrance)</i>
<i>sententia</i>	<i>sentence</i>	<i>sentință</i>	<i>statement of authority, judgment</i>	<i>En. sentence – Ro. propoziție (grammatical unit)</i>
<i>terminus</i>	<i>term</i>	<i>termen</i>	<i>deadline, a period of time</i>	<i>En. term = Ro. semestru (academic semester)</i>

Table 3. English and Romanian Partial Cognates

The table below lists a series of *deceptive cognates* in English and Romanian to illustrate the typology of this third category: words in different languages that share a common Latin etymon, similar spellings, but different meanings. Table 4 identifies deceptive cognates as words in different languages that share a common ancestor (in this case, Latin), have similar or identical spellings, but differ in meaning across languages, as indicated by their present-day usage. To highlight these distinctions, the table illustrates the semantic differences between English and Romanian cognates, presenting descriptions, translations, and synonyms for the selected English-Romanian word pairs that share a common ancestor word, i.e., a common etymon. Notably, partial cognates, exemplified in Table 3, and deceptive cognates, shown below, constitute an issue in language acquisition and translation studies due to their misleading written form and either partial differences in meaning (as in the case of partial cognates) or different meanings (as in the case of deceptive cognates). Table 4 aims to provide a descriptive comparison of English and Romanian deceptive cognates to highlight the importance of lexical accuracy in language acquisition and translation studies.

Deceptive Cognates - Cognate Type Category 3			
Latin Etymon	English Cognate	Romanian Cognate	The Different Meanings of the English and Romanian Cognates
<i>actualis</i>	<i>actual</i>	<i>actual</i>	<i>En. actual = existing in fact, authentic</i> ≠ <i>Ro. current, care există sau se petrece în prezent; de actualitate</i>
<i>commoditas</i>	<i>commodity</i>	<i>comoditate</i>	<i>En. = goods, belongings</i> ≠ <i>Ro. starea de a fi comod, confortabil</i>
<i>genialis</i>	<i>genial</i>	<i>genial</i>	<i>En. = pleasant, friendly</i> ≠ <i>Ro. highly intelligent (genius)</i>
<i>miseria</i>	<i>misery</i>	<i>mizerie</i>	<i>En. = condition/ state of grievous affliction, misfortune, profound unhappiness</i> ≠ <i>Ro. sărăcie extremă, aspect care denotă mizerie, dezordine, sărăcie</i>
<i>evenire</i>	<i>eventually</i>	<i>eventual</i>	<i>En. finally</i> ≠ <i>Ro. possibly</i>
<i>petroleum</i>	<i>petrol</i>	<i>petrol</i>	<i>En. petrol (gasoline) = Ro. benzină</i> ≠ <i>Ro. petrol = En. petroleum, crude oil</i>
<i>enervare</i>	<i>to enervate</i>	<i>a enerva</i>	<i>En. to weaken someone, to be drained of vitality/energy</i> ≠ <i>Ro. to annoy/stress someone</i>
<i>libraria</i>	<i>library</i>	<i>librărie</i>	<i>En. library = Ro. bibliotecă</i> ≠ <i>Ro. librărie = En. bookshop</i>
<i>sensibilis</i>	<i>sensible</i>	<i>sensibil</i>	<i>En. reasonable, having good judgement</i> ≠ <i>Ro. persoană care resimte puternic la factori externi, simțitor</i>
<i>sympathia</i>	<i>sympathy</i>	<i>simpatie</i>	<i>En. a feeling of understanding and caring for others, compassion/pity</i> ≠ <i>Ro. afinitate pe care cineva o simte față de o altă persoană (En. fondness towards someone)</i>

Table 4. English and Romanian Deceptive Cognates

5. Conclusion

Considering the important impact of cognates in learning foreign languages, as observed by Beltrán (2006), Gholami, Alavinia, and Izadpanah (2015), Aguinaga Echeverría (2017), Otwinowska (2016), Uzun (2024), and Tronea-Ghindel (2024), it is evident that there is a considerable need for the correct use of linguistic terminology and a classification of cognates. As researchers employ different terminology when dealing with cognates, classifications include word ancestry, form (phonetic/orthographic), and semantics. Classifications may vary, including *true friends* vs. *false friends* (see Beltrán 2006; Mitkov, Pekar, Blagoev, & Mulloni, 2007; Abou-Khalil, Flanagan, & Ogata, 2018), *true cognates* vs. *false cognates* (see Beltrán, 2006; Uzun, 2024), and adding a third category where true and false cognates/true or false friends are intertwined: *partially deceptive false friends* (Beltrán, 2006), *partial false friends* (Abou-Khalil, Flanagan, & Ogata 2018), and *partial cognates* (Aguinaga Echeverría, 2017; Uzun, 2024).

Upon reviewing research on cognates and building on these observations, a similar categorization into three subtypes is indicated: cognates proper, partial cognates, and deceptive cognates, with particular emphasis on the importance of semantic similarity or difference. The article identified, in short, cognates can be simply defined as words in different languages

which can be very similar in form (spelling and/or pronunciation included), but, in terms of semantics, may be: identical in meaning, such as the case of cognates proper), partially identical in meaning (partial cognates), or different in terms of meaning, such as the case of deceptive cognates. As such, the proposed terminology and classification can provide a comprehensive framework for classifying the linguistic concept of cognates, helping language users investigate the various relations that can be established between ancestor words that have developed in diverse languages and have adapted in form, pronunciation, and meaning. The current study aimed to explain and categorize the concept of cognates, contributing illustrative correspondences between English and Romanian cognates.

To address the limitations of this article and to indicate future research directions, it is necessary to highlight the importance of conducting a more extensive investigation of partial cognates and deceptive cognates, the two cognate subtypes that pose challenges for Romanian students of English. To address this limitation, the present research will be developed and continued in a subsequent study that aims to collect data on incorrect translations and their suitable equivalents, as observed in the Translation Error Analysis corpus (TERRA), which currently comprises 55 texts translated from English into Romanian. The study will investigate cognate use and cognate familiarity in English and Romanian across a broader corpus of texts, aiming to identify the impact of cognate instruction and its correlations on proper cognate use and accurate translation.

References:

- Abou-Khalil, V., Flanagan, B., & Ogata, H. (2018). Learning false friends across contexts. *Companion proceedings of the 8th international conference on learning analytics & knowledge (LAK18)*. Kyoto University.
- Aguinaga Echeverría, S. (2017). All cognates are not created equal: Variation in cognate recognition and applications for second language acquisition. *RAEL: Revista Electrónica de Lingüística Aplicada*, 16(1), 23–42.
- Baugh, A. C., & Cable, T. (1993). *A history of the English language*. Routledge.
- Beltrán, M. R. C. (2006). Towards a typological classification of false friends (Spanish-English). *Revista Española de Lingüística Aplicada*, 19, 29–40.
- Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d.). *Cambridge dictionary*. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>
- Cozma, M. (2010). Semantic peculiarities in the legal discourse: A translation-oriented approach. *Professional Communication and Translation Studies*, 3(1–2), 61–66. <https://doi.org/10.59168/SFZJ3629>
- Cozma, M. (2019). Translation errors across genres: A research perspective. *Romanian Journal of English Studies*, 16(1), 84–91. <https://doi.org/10.1515/rjes-2019-0011>
- Cozma, M., & Dejica-Cartiș, D. (2013). A psychological approach to professional translator education. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 84, 895–899. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.06.669>
- Crystal, D. (2008). *A dictionary of linguistics and phonetics* (6th ed.). Blackwell.

- de Vaan, M. (2008). *Etymological dictionary of Latin and the other Italic languages*. Brill.
- Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române (DEX). (2016). *Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române* [The explanatory dictionary of the Romanian language] (3rd ed.). Univers Enciclopedic.
- Dumitrescu, R. (2025). Roughly 24% of Romanians lived abroad in 2024, according to Alpha Bank analysis. *Romanian Insider*. <https://www.romania-insider.com/romanians-lived-abroad-2024-alpha-bank-analysis>
- EF Education First. (2025). *EF English proficiency index: A ranking of 123 countries and regions by English skills*. <https://www.ef.com/epi/>
- Ellis, R., & Barkhuizen, G. (2005). *Analysing learner language*. Oxford University Press.
- Etymonline. (n.d.). *Online etymology dictionary*. <https://www.etymonline.com/>
- Fourrier, C., & Montariol, S. (2022). Caveats of measuring semantic change of cognates and borrowings using multilingual word embeddings. In *Proceedings of the 3rd international workshop on computational approaches to historical language change (LChange'22)* (pp. 97–112). <https://doi.org/10.18653/v1/2022.lchange-1.10>
- Frățilă, L. (2011). *Words about words: An introduction to English lexicology*. Editura Universității de Vest.
- Gholami, J., Alavinia, P., & Izadpanah, S. (2015). The use of cognate words and interlingual homographs to investigate cross-linguistics in second language processing in Iran. *Sino-US English Teaching*, 12(6), 448–456.
- Glare, P. G. W. (Ed.). (1968). *Oxford Latin dictionary*. Oxford University Press.
- Institutul Național de Statistică. (2009). *Anuar statistic 2009* [Statistical yearbook 2009]. http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/Anuar%20statistic/02/02%20Populatie_en.pdf
- Institutul Național de Statistică. (2025). *România în cifre: Breviar statistic* [Romania in figures: Statistical abstract]. https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/romania_in_cifre_2025.pdf
- Kondrak, G. (2001). Identifying cognates by phonetic and semantic similarity. In *Proceedings of the second meeting of the North American chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics on language technologies (NAACL '01)* (pp. 1–8). Association for Computational Linguistics. <https://doi.org/10.3115/1073336.1073350>
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). *Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>
- Mitkov, R., Pekar, V., Blagoev, D., & Mulloni, A. (2007). Methods for extracting and classifying pairs of cognates and false friends. *Machine Translation*, 21(1), 29–53. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10590-007-9011-2>
- Mureșan, V., & Șerban, A. (2023). Building translation competence through diary studies: At the crossroads of students' reflection and imagination. *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai Philologia*, 68(1), 233–248. <https://doi.org/10.24193/subbphilo.2023.1.13>
- Otwinowska, A. (2016). *Cognate vocabulary in language acquisition and use: Attitudes, awareness, activation*. Multilingual Matters.

- Oxford English Dictionary. (n.d.). *Oxford English dictionary*. <https://www.oed.com/>
- Paliga, S. (2024). *An etymological dictionary of the Romanian language*. Peter Lang.
- Pașcalău, R., Stiegelbauer, L.-R., & Pantea, D. M. (2025). Understanding the translation workflow. *Studii de Știință și Cultură*, 21(1), 146–154.
- Rosetti, A. (1986). *Istoria limbii române, I: De la origini până la începutul secolului al XVII-lea* [History of the Romanian language, I: From origins to the beginning of the 17th century]. Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România.
- Sabino, M. A. (2016). False cognates and deceptive cognates: Issues to build special dictionaries. In *Proceedings of the XVII EURALEX international congress: Lexicography and linguistic diversity* (pp. 746–755). Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi University Press.
- Smith, W., & Hall, T. D. (1871). *A copious and critical English–Latin dictionary*. Harper & Brothers.
- Statista. (2025). *The most spoken languages worldwide*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/266808/the-most-spoken-languages-worldwide/>
- The American Heritage Dictionary of Indo-European Roots. (n.d.). *Indo-European roots appendix*. <https://www.ahdictionary.com/word/indoeurop.html>
- Trandabăț, D., Rehm, G., & Uszkoreit, H. (2012). *The Romanian language in the digital age*. Springer.
- Tronea-Ghindel, L. (2024). False friends in the Romanian and English languages: A comparative survey. *Analele Universității din Craiova, Seria Științe Filologice, Limbi Străine Aplicate*, 1(1), 572–578. <https://doi.org/10.52744/AUCSFLSA.2024.01.59>
- TVRinfo. (2022, August 31). 28 de milioane de oameni vorbesc limba română, iar în unele țări este studiată ca limbă străină [28 million people speak the Romanian language, and in some countries it is studied as a foreign language]. https://tvrinfo.ro/28-de-milioane-de-oameni-vorbesc-limba-romana-iar-in-unele-ari-este-studiata-ca-limba-straina_913105/
- Uban, A. S., Dinu, L. P., Iordache, I.-B., Georgescu, S., & Vlad, C. (2025). Friend or foe? A computational investigation of semantic false friends across Romance languages. In *Proceedings of the 2025 conference on empirical methods in natural language processing* (pp. 15309–15323). <https://doi.org/10.18653/v1/2025.emnlp-main.773>
- Uzun, L. (2024). We have a lot in common: Cognate words. *European Journal of Education*, 59(3). <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12675>
- Valpy, F. E. J. (2010). *An etymological dictionary of the Latin language*. Qontro Legacy.

PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE IN LEARNING ROMANIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: A CASE-STUDY ANALYSIS OF FOREIGN STUDENTS' INTERPRETATION OF CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURES¹

Gabriel-Dan BĂRBULEȚ

1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania

e-mail: gabriel.barbulet@uab.ro

Andra-Iulia Ursa

1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania

e-mail: andra.ursa@uab.ro

Abstract

This study examines how international students of Romanian as a foreign language interpret conversational implicatures, with the aim of assessing their developing pragmatic competence. Although Romanian has gained visibility as a target language for academic mobility, little research has explored how learners navigate its pragmatic norms, particularly those involving indirect meaning. The study adopts a case-study methodology and analyzes learner responses to six Romanian conversational scenarios designed to elicit interpretations of Quantity, Relation, Manner, and politeness-based implicatures, alongside two culturally specific forms frequently encountered in everyday interaction. Data was collected from written interpretations and follow-up clarifications, then qualitatively coded for accuracy, partial accuracy, and misinterpretation. The results show consistent difficulty with indirect refusals, deliberate vagueness, and culturally marked irony, while more straightforward Quantity implicatures were interpreted with relative success. Learners with greater exposure to informal Romanian demonstrated clearer sensitivity to speaker intention. This finding suggests that pragmatic development correlates with contact outside formal instruction. The findings highlight the need for explicit pragmatic teaching in Romanian language education and show how targeted scenario-based tasks can support learners in recognizing implicit meaning. The study contributes empirical evidence to the growing literature on pragmatics in less commonly taught languages and offers pedagogical insights for instructors working with international students.

Keywords: conversational implicature; pragmatic competence; Romanian as a foreign language; intercultural pragmatics; case study; language acquisition.

1. Introduction

The acquisition of pragmatic competence has become a central concern in second-language research, as successful communication depends not only on grammatical accuracy but also on the ability to interpret implicit meaning in context. A key component of this

¹ Article History: Received: 02.01.2026. Accepted: 07.01.2026. Published: 15.05.2026. No funding was received either for the research presented in the article or for the creation of the article.

competence is the interpretation of conversational implicatures, which are inferences drawn from what speakers imply by what they explicitly state, following the Cooperative Principle formulated by Grice (1975). While the study of implicature has been widely developed in languages such as English, Japanese, and Spanish, the pragmatic acquisition of the Romanian language remains underexplored (Cojocaru, 2021), despite growing interest in Romanian as a target language for academic mobility and migration.

Research in second-language pragmatics has shown that learners often struggle with implicatures because their interpretation requires sensitivity to cultural norms, contextual cues, and speaker intention (Taguchi, 2005). These challenges become more pronounced when learners have limited exposure to authentic interaction outside the classroom, which makes it more difficult to improve the listening skills of our students. Among the challenges we can mention students' fear of not understanding the meaning of all the words they hear, their varied levels of background knowledge, as well as the cultural shock they may experience, which often places them in a position where holding attention becomes difficult (Badea & Iridon, 2024). In instructional settings, pragmatic features are often simplified or omitted, reducing opportunities for learners to encounter implicit meaning in natural contexts (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013). Studies have also demonstrated that L1 pragmatic transfer plays a significant role in shaping learners' interpretations, sometimes facilitating understanding but often leading to misalignment with target-language norms (Kasper & Rose, 2002). For languages with less documented pragmatic conventions, such as Romanian, the risk of misinterpretation is even higher, as learners may rely heavily on their own cultural inferencing strategies.

Romanian presents difficulties due to its indirectness patterns, culturally specific forms of irony, and frequent use of diminutives to signal stance or politeness. These features can easily be misinterpreted by learners without sustained exposure. Existing studies on Romanian as a foreign language have focused predominantly on grammar and vocabulary development, leaving pragmatic interpretation largely unaddressed (Cojocaru, 2021). As a result, there is limited empirical evidence on how international students understand implicature in everyday Romanian communication and how their interpretations reflect broader patterns of pragmatic development.

The present study addresses this gap by analyzing how international learners interpret six Romanian conversational implicatures across different communicative domains. Using a case-study design, it investigates which implicatures are most accessible, which present consistent difficulty, and how learners draw on contextual and cultural knowledge during interpretation. The goal is to provide a nuanced account of pragmatic development in Romanian as a foreign language and to offer pedagogical insights that can support more effective teaching of implicit meaning.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Design

The study follows a qualitative case-study design, selected for its ability to capture how learners interpret implicatures in real time and to document the reasoning processes behind their interpretations. Case studies enable fine-grained analysis of individual responses and are appropriate for exploratory research in pragmatics, where meaning depends heavily on contextual inference and culturally shaped expectations (Yin, 2018). This design is consistent with established approaches in L2 pragmatics, which emphasize the importance of detailed, context-sensitive observation when examining learners' inferential processes (Kasper & Dahl, 2008). By using a small set of targeted tasks and analyzing the interpretations produced, the

study offers insight into how international students engage with Romanian pragmatic norms and how accurately they derive implicit meaning in everyday scenarios.

2.2. Participants

Participants were international students enrolled in Romanian as a foreign language at a Romanian university. All were adults who volunteered to participate. Their linguistic backgrounds included English, French, Arabic, Chinese and Turkish, and their Romanian study ranged from three months to two years. Variation in L1 background and proficiency is known to influence pragmatic performance, especially in tasks involving inference and cultural knowledge (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013). Proficiency levels were assessed through institutional placement tests and ranged from A2 to B2. This diversity provided a meaningful basis for examining cross-linguistic and cross-cultural differences in interpreting Romanian implicatures.

2.3. Data Collection

Data was collected through six conversational scenarios constructed to elicit interpretations of Romanian conversational implicatures. Four scenarios targeted standard Gricean categories—Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner (Grice, 1975)—while two additional tasks reflected culturally specific Romanian pragmatic features such as irony expressed through stance and the interpersonal use of diminutives. Each scenario contained a short dialogue followed by an interpretive question asking students to explain the speaker's intended meaning. Learners first submitted written interpretations individually during a supervised session. Optional follow-up interviews were then conducted with consenting participants to clarify ambiguous responses and better understand the inferential paths behind their interpretations. This two-stage method aligns with recommended procedures in pragmatics research, where written tasks provide controlled elicitation and interviews offer insight into reasoning and awareness (Taguchi, 2015). Below is a brief outline of the six case-study scenarios:

Case-study scenario 1: Quantity scenario (underinforming): A student asks a colleague, “Ai reușit să citești tot articolul?” and receives the reply “Am citit câteva pagini.” The implicature suggests partial completion, not full reading.

Case-study scenario 2: Quality scenario (overstatement): A friend reacts to a cold room with “Da, sigur, e ca în Sahara,” signalling irony rather than literal comparison.

Case-study scenario 3: Relation scenario (topic shift): After being asked whether they will attend a meeting, a colleague replies, “Am foarte mult de lucru azi,” implying non-attendance without stating it explicitly.

Case-study scenario 4: Manner scenario (deliberate vagueness): In response to “Cum ți s-a părut examenul?” someone answers “A fost... interesant,” using ambiguity to soften a negative evaluation.

Case-study scenario 1: Culturally specific scenario - irony in everyday politeness: “Ai venit devreme ca de obicei” said to someone consistently late. The meaning depends heavily on Romanian pragmatic norms of teasing and mild irony.

Case-study scenario 1: Culturally specific scenario - diminutives expressing stance: A host saying “Îți fac o cafeluță?” signals hospitality and warmth, not a literal tiny coffee.

These examples were selected to reflect both universal implicature types and culturally embedded Romanian pragmatic cues documented in studies of Eastern European discourse style.

2.4. Analytical Procedure

A qualitative coding framework was applied to classify each interpretation as accurate, partially accurate, or misinterpreted, based on alignment with the intended pragmatic meaning. This coding approach draws on established methods for analyzing learners’ interpretations of implicature (Taguchi, 2005; Taguchi, 2013). Accurate interpretations captured both the literal message and the speaker’s intended meaning. Partially accurate ones identified some contextual cues but misread the pragmatic force. Misinterpretations relied on literal readings or reflected L1 pragmatic transfer—an issue well documented in cross-cultural pragmatics (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Following coding, thematic analysis identified recurrent patterns, including: preference for literal interpretation even at higher proficiency levels, reliance on L1-based inferencing strategies, sensitivity to marked tone or stance, and frequent uncertainty around Romanian irony and diminutives. Interview data was used to clarify ambiguous cases and confirm the rationale behind learners’ interpretive choices.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

The study received ethical approval from the host institution. Participants provided informed consent, were assured of anonymity, and were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequences. All data was anonymized during transcription, and no identifying information was retained. Participation had no connection to academic grading or course evaluation.

3. Results

Overall, the results show substantial variation in learners’ ability to interpret conversational implicatures in Romanian. Performance was strongly mediated by cultural familiarity, length of exposure to Romanian outside the classroom, and the degree of similarity between Romanian pragmatic cues and those of the learners’ L1s. Learners interpreted Quantity-based implicatures with the highest accuracy, while culturally marked irony and diminutives generated the most consistent misunderstandings. These findings align with previous evidence that implicature comprehension is sensitive to both linguistic proficiency and sociocultural experience (Taguchi, 2005; Taguchi, 2013).

3.1. Example 1: Quantity-Based Implicature (“underinforming”)

Scenario: When asked, “Ai reușit să citești tot articolul?”, the response “Am citit câteva pagini” implies incomplete task completion, relying on Grice’s Quantity maxim (Grice, 1975).

Students’ interpretations of quantity-based implicatures revealed varying levels of pragmatic accuracy. In the most successful cases, learners produced accurate interpretations

such as “He read only part of the article, not everything,” correctly inferring the implicature that the action was incomplete. Some responses were only partially accurate, for example “He read some pages, maybe he will finish later,” which captured the idea of partial completion but introduced an additional assumption not warranted by the context. Other interpretations reflected a clear misunderstanding of the implicature. For instance, responses such as “He read enough pages to answer the question” suggested that learners interpreted the statement as conveying sufficiency, thereby missing the intended pragmatic meaning. Most learners (approximately two-thirds) correctly identified the implicature of partial completion. Students with English or French L1s recognized the pattern more readily, likely due to exposure to similar indirect expressions in their languages (Kasper & Rose, 2002).

Misinterpretations occurred when learners focused on the literal meaning, as opposed to inferential gap. A few interpreted the response as intentionally vague politeness. This suggests emerging difficulty distinguishing informational implicatures from politeness strategies, a pattern also observed in other L2 pragmatics studies (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013).

3.2. Example 2: Politeness-Driven Indirect Refusal

Scenario: To the invitation “Vii la şedinţă?”, the reply “Am foarte mult de lucru azi” implies a refusal without explicit rejection.

Cultural expectations surrounding refusals played a significant role in learners’ pragmatic interpretation. In Romanian workplace and academic contexts, speakers avoid direct refusals, relying on indirect strategies to mitigate a potential threat and maintain harmony. Learners who were unfamiliar with this norm struggled to recognize indirect responses as refusals, interpreting them instead as neutral statements or background information.

Clear patterns of first-language (L1) transfer emerged across learner groups. Arabic-speaking learners tended to interpret the responses accurately, likely because indirect refusal strategies are also common in Arabic pragmatic conventions. Their familiarity with such indirectness appeared to facilitate successful pragmatic inference. In contrast, many Chinese-speaking participants interpreted similar responses as purely descriptive—for example, understanding statements such as “He is busy” as factual information rather than as an implicit refusal. This tendency aligns with documented difficulties among learners whose L1 employs different refusal strategies, particularly in interpreting relevance-based implicatures in a second language (Lee, 2016). Accurate interpretations captured both the workload explanation and the implied decline. Misinterpretations maintained a literal reading, indicating difficulty connecting the relevance cue (Relation maxim) to conversational intention.

3.3. Example 3: Relation Implicature in a Classroom Context

Scenario: Asked whether they will attend a class, a student replies, “Nu ştiu dacă termin proiectul la timp.”

Students’ ability to track topic relevance: Accurate interpreters recognized the reply as a conditional refusal: attendance depends on project completion. However, some participants treated the statement as irrelevant or off-topic, failing to link the workload to class attendance.

Misalignment between textual cues and intended meaning: Several learners, particularly beginners, interpreted the statement as a request for help with the project. This reflects a documented tendency for L2 learners to overextend cooperative interpretations when discourse markers are ambiguous (Taguchi, 2011).

3.4. Example 4: Manner Implicature (“deliberate vagueness”)

Scenario: In response to “Cum ți s-a părut examenul?”, someone says, “A fost... interesant.”

Learners experienced difficulty interpreting vagueness as a strategic pragmatic choice. In many cases, they assumed that the speaker was truly unsure or intentionally neutral, instead of recognizing vagueness as a device used to soften negative evaluation or criticism. This tendency led to misinterpretations in which learners failed to infer the speaker’s underlying stance, as seen in the examples “He found it interesting” or “He doesn’t want to talk about it”. Only a minority recognized that deliberate vagueness in Romanian may function as polite mitigation. This connects with earlier research showing that non-literal evaluative language is particularly challenging for L2 learners (Schauer, 2009).

3.5. Example 5: Romanian Culturally Marked Implicature (irony/diminutives)

Scenario: “Ai venit devreme ca de obicei” said to a student who is consistently late; or hospitality diminutives like “Îți fac o cafeluță?”

Romanian uses irony and diminutives not only for humor or affection but also for social alignment and stance. Learners with limited cultural exposure often took these phrases literally. Less than one-third correctly identified the ironic rebuke in “Ai venit devreme ca de obicei.”, showing a high misinterpretation rate. Also, we noticed a state of confusion among the participants, triggered by the use of diminutives. Some students expected a physically small coffee. Others interpreted the form as infantilizing or impolite. Students unfamiliar with the pragmatic load of Romanian diminutives tended to interpret affective forms lexically rather than pragmatically. This difficulty aligns with findings that culturally saturated pragmatic markers require prolonged exposure before learners recognize their interactional function (Kecskes, 2014).

3.6. Example 6: Overstatement/Hyperbolic Implicature in Daily Speech

Scenario: “E ca în Sahara aici” said in a cold room.

Students showed a clear tendency to interpret exaggeration in a literal manner rather than as a pragmatic cue. In particular, hyperbolic implicatures were misunderstood by approximately half of the learners, indicating limited sensitivity to non-literal meaning. A common pattern of misinterpretation involved treating exaggerated statements as straightforward factual descriptions. For example, when presented with an utterance such as “The room is hot,” some learners interpreted it literally and inferred meanings such as “Maybe the heating is broken,” instead of recognizing the intended exaggeration or implicature.

A comparison across first-language (L1) groups revealed noticeable differences in pragmatic interpretation. Learners with English and French as their L1 demonstrated greater success in recognizing ironic and hyperbolic meanings. This advantage is likely attributable to their more frequent exposure to hyperbolic expressions and irony in everyday discourse in their native languages, which may facilitate the transfer of pragmatic awareness to the second language. Learners from cultures where irony is less conventional in daily interaction (e.g., Chinese, Turkish) showed more literal interpretations, consistent with cross-cultural irony research (Gibbs & Colston, 2012).

3.7. Cross-Example Patterns

Across all six scenarios, several consistent patterns emerged in learners' interpretation of implicatures. The easiest implicatures for participants to understand were quantity-based implicatures and straightforward relevance implicatures, which tended to rely on relatively transparent contextual cues and predictable conversational expectations. In contrast, the most challenging cases involved Romanian-specific pragmatic phenomena, particularly irony, diminutives, and deliberate vagueness. These implicatures required a deeper awareness of culturally embedded meanings and indirect communicative strategies, which many learners had not yet fully developed.

Learners' level of exposure to the target language played an essential role in pragmatic performance. Those who engaged in daily interaction outside the classroom—such as through living with Romanian-speaking roommates or using Romanian regularly in the workplace—consistently performed better on implicature interpretation tasks. This finding supports previous research emphasizing the importance of authentic input and real-world interaction in the development of pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013).

Successful interpreters across scenarios demonstrated a common set of strategies. They paid close attention to contextual cues, showed sensitivity to speaker intention, and displayed an awareness of politeness conventions and stance markers. They were also able to move beyond strictly literal interpretations and adjust their understanding when the context signaled a non-literal or pragmatic meaning. These strategies reflect cognitive patterns identified in earlier work on L2 pragmatic inference (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Taguchi, 2015).

4. Discussion

The results of the study confirm broader findings in L2 pragmatic acquisition: learners' ability to interpret conversational implicatures is shaped by linguistic proficiency, cultural familiarity, and the degree to which L1 pragmatic norms align with those of the target language (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Taguchi, 2005). The high accuracy rates for Quantity-based implicatures and the comparatively low performance on culturally marked irony and diminutives reflect a pattern observed across multiple languages, where universal implicature types are learned earlier and more reliably than culture-bound ones (Taguchi, 2013).

Romanian pragmatics presents several characteristics that complicate implicature interpretation for international learners. These include the pervasive use of diminutives to express interpersonal stance, the subtlety of everyday irony, and the preference for indirectness in refusals or criticism. Such norms require sensitivity not only to linguistic form but also to contextual affect, relational positioning, and culturally embedded expectations of politeness. Similar challenges have been documented in languages where stance and relational work are encoded through morpho-pragmatic markers, such as Japanese honorifics or Spanish diminutives (Pizziconi, 2011; García & Placencia, 2011). Romanian fits this pattern: learners often misread diminutives literally and fail to recognize irony as a pragmatic cue rather than a stylistic flourish. The results therefore highlight how cultural knowledge is indispensable for interpreting the full pragmatic force of Romanian speech acts—knowledge that learners typically acquire slowly without sustained immersion.

The data also reinforces the strong effects of L1 pragmatic transfer, especially in scenarios involving indirect refusals and relevance-based implicatures. Arabic-speaking learners outperformed other groups on indirect refusals due to parallel conventions in their L1 cultures—a trend consistent with earlier studies showing that transfer can facilitate

performance when L1 and L2 share pragmatic norms (Al-Khatib, 2006). In contrast, Chinese-speaking learners tended toward literal interpretations, aligning with findings that Mandarin relies less on certain forms of hyperbole or conversational irony in daily interaction (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998). These patterns illustrate that pragmatic transfer is not inherently positive or negative; rather, its impact depends on the degree of structural and cultural congruence between the two languages.

Learners with greater exposure to Romanian outside the classroom consistently achieved higher interpretation accuracy, especially for culturally dependent scenarios. This supports prior research indicating that classroom instruction alone, particularly when grammatically oriented, does not provide sufficient pragmatic input (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013). Because many Romanian language programs prioritize grammar and vocabulary development, pragmatic learning often occurs incidentally or remains unaddressed. The interviews revealed that learners with Romanian roommates or work interactions encountered irony, diminutives, and indirect criticism more frequently, which accelerated their pragmatic sensitivity.

The findings suggest several pedagogical approaches that could enhance learners' interpretive competence. Studies have shown that direct explanation of implicature types and cultural norms improves comprehension (Tateyama, 2001). Therefore, Romanian instructors could incorporate metapragmatic discussions of irony, stance, and indirectness. Moreover, reflective exercises where learners compare Romanian norms to those of their L1 can help them understand transfer effects and avoid literal readings. The six tasks used in this study function as effective teaching tools. Similar scenarios—drawn from Romanian daily life—can train learners to identify implicit meaning and shift from lexical to inferential processing. Also, classroom activities involving Romanian TV clips, podcasts, or recorded conversations would provide richer pragmatic models, echoing recommendations in L2 pragmatics research (Taguchi, 2015).

The overall pattern aligns with research on other languages showing that implicature comprehension develops gradually and is influenced by both cognitive processing load and sociocultural familiarity. For instance, Taguchi (2005) found that Japanese EFL learners struggle more with irony and indirect refusal than with Quantity implicatures. Roever (2004) similarly reported lower success rates on culturally embedded implicatures among learners of English and German.

Spanish L2 studies also note difficulty with diminutives and socially indexed markers, which parallels the challenges Romanian learners faced in this study (García & Placencia, 2011). These cross-linguistic parallels reinforce the conclusion that Romanian-specific pragmatic norms—while distinctive in form—fit into a broader pattern of late-acquired, high-variability pragmatic features. Taken together, the findings show that while learners can reliably interpret straightforward implicatures, Romanian's culturally grounded pragmatic resources (irony, diminutives, strategic vagueness) require targeted pedagogical intervention and sustained exposure to authentic interaction.

5. Conclusions

This case-study investigation offers a detailed perspective on how international learners interpret conversational implicatures in Romanian, highlighting patterns that might be overlooked in larger quantitative designs. By examining individual reasoning across six scenarios, the study shows how learners draw on linguistic knowledge, cultural familiarity and inferential strategies when attempting to recover implicit meaning. These insights underscore the complexity of Romanian pragmatic acquisition and demonstrate that challenges arise not only from limited proficiency but also from the distinctiveness of Romanian pragmatic norms,

particularly in the use of irony, diminutives and strategic vagueness. The findings carry practical implications for Romanian language pedagogy. Learners benefit from explicit attention to pragmatic meaning and from instructional practices that foreground speaker intention, contextual inference and sociocultural expectations. Integrating scenario-based tasks, metapragmatic reflection and exposure to authentic communicative input can help learners move beyond literal interpretations and develop a more nuanced understanding of how implicit meaning functions in Romanian interaction. Such measures are especially valuable given that classroom instruction often prioritizes grammatical and lexical development, while pragmatic competence develops unevenly without deliberate support. Several limitations must be acknowledged. The sample size was modest, and participants differed considerably in linguistic background and exposure, which restricts generalizability. The study also captures a single moment in learners' development; without longitudinal tracking, it cannot show how interpretive abilities evolve with increased proficiency or immersion. Despite these constraints, the analysis provides a meaningful foundation for future work.

Further research should follow learners over time to trace developmental trajectories and identify which aspects of Romanian pragmatics stabilize early and which require prolonged exposure. Prosody-based implicatures, such as those signaled through intonation or emphasis, also merit closer examination, given their central role in Romanian irony and stance. Finally, expanding the analytical scope to multimodal cues, including gestures and facial expression, would offer a more comprehensive understanding of how learners interpret implicit meaning in real-world interaction.

References:

- Al-Khatib, M. (2006). The pragmatics of invitation making and acceptance in Jordanian society. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 38(1), 190–210.
- Badea, M., & Iridon, C. (2024). Challenges of improving listening skills in teaching Romanian as a foreign language: A case study. *Journal of Linguistic and Intercultural Education – JoLIE*, 17(1), 7-19. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.29302/jolie.2024.17.1.1>
- Bardovi-Harlig, K. (2013). Developing L2 pragmatics. *Language Learning*, 63(S1), 68–86.
- Cojocaru, V. (2021). The use of discourse markers by foreign students learning Romanian. *Revista Română de Lingvistică*, 66(4), 335–343.
- Gao, G., & Ting-Toomey, S. (1998). *Communicating effectively with the Chinese*. Sage.
- García, C., & Placencia, M. E. (2011). *Estudios de variación pragmática en español*. Dunken.
- Gibbs, R. W., & Colston, H. L. (2012). *Interpreting figurative meaning*. Cambridge University Press.
- Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 3: Speech Acts* (pp. 41–58). Academic Press.
- Kasper, G., & Dahl, M. (2008). *Research methods in interlanguage pragmatics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kasper, G., & Rose, K. R. (2002). *Pragmatic development in a second language*. Blackwell.

- Keckes, I. (2014). *Intercultural pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.
- Lee, C. (2016). Understanding refusal style and pragmatic competence of teenage Cantonese English learners in refusals: An exploratory study. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 13(2), 195–226. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ip-2016-0010>
- Pizziconi, B. (2011). Japanese honorifics: The cultural specificity of a universal mechanism. In S. Mills & D. Z. Kádár (Eds.), *Politeness in East Asia: Theory and practice* (pp. 45–70). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511977886.005>
- Roever, C. (2004). Difficulty and practicality in tests of interlanguage pragmatics. In D. Boxer & A. Cohen (Eds.), *Studying speaking to inform language learning* (pp. 283–301). Multilingual Matters.
- Schauer, G. (2009). *Interlanguage pragmatic development: The study abroad context*. Continuum.
- Taguchi, N. (2005). Comprehending implied meaning in English as a foreign language. *The Modern Language Journal*, 89(4), 543–562.
- Taguchi, N. (2011). The effect of L2 proficiency and study-abroad experience on pragmatic comprehension. *Language Learning*, 61(3), 904–939. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2011.00633.x>
- Taguchi, N. (2015). *Developing interactional competence in a Japanese study abroad context*. Multilingual Matters.
- Tateyama, Y. (2001). Explicit and implicit teaching of pragmatic routines: Japanese sumimasen. In K. R. Rose and G. Kasper (Eds.), *Pragmatics in language teaching*, (pp. 200–222). Cambridge University Press.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*. Sage.

History

ABAFI AIGNER LAJOS AND THE SECRET SOCIETIES IN BANAT IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 18TH CENTURY¹

Attila VARGA

The Romanian Academy, *George Barițiu* Institute of History, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

e-mail: atyvarga@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study analyses the contributions of Abafi Aigner Lajos, one of the most significant figures in Central European Masonic historiography, to our understanding of Masonic lodges and secret societies in the Banat region during the second half of the 18th century. Although Abafi is internationally recognised, he remains relatively unknown in Romanian historiography, primarily due to the inaccessibility of his seminal works, which are written in Hungarian and German. This article emphasises the pivotal role he played in exploiting the Old Archives of Hungarian Freemasonry, which were subsequently destroyed, and the significance of his methodology, which was grounded in primary sources. Drawing on Abafi's research, the paper distinguishes clearly between Masonic lodges and secret societies, demonstrating that the latter often pursued radical political objectives that were distinct from the philanthropic and cultural ideals of Freemasonry. A case study of Timișoara reveals the coexistence and rivalry between the Masonic lodge *Zu den 3 weissen Lilien* [At the three white lilies] and societies such as the Rosicrucians, the Illuminati and the Order of the Rose in a context marked by the Enlightenment, urbanisation and profound social transformation. The research emphasises the significance of Freemasonry and secret societies as catalysts for modernity and societal change in the Banat region during the Enlightenment era.

Keywords: Abafi Lajos; Corvin Mátyás Masonic Lodge; Secret Societies; Elites; Banat; Enlightenment.

1. A Renowned Historian of Freemasonry from Central Europe

Although he is considered by Central European historians to be the most renowned historian of Freemasonry in the second half of the 19th century, Abafi Aigner Lajos remains virtually unknown in our country. While his value and work are undoubtedly beyond dispute, Abafi Aigner Lajos has yet to capture the hearts of those passionate about the past realities of Freemasonry in the western part of the country.

This disarming aspect can be explained, firstly, by the fact that his seminal works, primarily published in Hungarian and German towards the end of the Romantic era, have never been translated into Romanian. Consequently, Romanian historians (both Masons and non-Masons) have been unable to use his pertinent judgements and the valuable historical

¹ Article History: Received: 20.12.2025. Accepted: 28.02.2026. Published: 15.05.2026. No funding was received either for the research presented in the article or for the creation of the article.

information he personally extracted from the Old Archives of Hungarian Freemasonry in their efforts to reconstruct the history of the lodges in Banat and Transylvania.

Fortunately, this initiative gained considerable momentum, particularly following the fall of the infamous regime, when the elimination of censorship enabled specialists to address topics that had previously been considered taboo.

No documents related to the Age of Enlightenment have currently been preserved in the Historical Archives of Hungarian Freemasonry. Historian Abafi Aigner Lajos was the last person to study them in their original form. He transcribed and translated some of these documents in full so that he could use them in his valuable monographs on the history of Hungarian Freemasonry from the 18th century to the first half of the 19th century (Abafi, 1890).

The privilege of owning over 10,000 pages of original Masonic archive documents can be explained by an unusual fact: the renowned Hungarian historian was a descendant of Aigner Ferencz Ádám, a man of culture who personally collected and cared for Hungarian Masonic documents in the 18th century in order to preserve them in the best possible conditions.

Later, the Festetics family, a noble clan, took over these historical sources and stored them in their castle at Dég². This is how it became known to contemporaries as the “Old Archives of Hungarian Freemasonry”: Dégi Levéltár³. But who was Abafi Aigner Lajos, whose life was closely linked to the history of Hungarian Freemasonry from its earliest days until the Romantic era dawned?

The renowned scholar was born in Iacea Mare, a village in the former Torontal County (now Timiș County), on 11 February 1840. Between 1850 and 1853, he attended the Stieber Commercial School in Timișoara. Passionate about books, he worked as a bookseller for 14 years until the end of the Austro-Hungarian Dualism, travelling extensively to Pozsony, Pest and numerous German cities. Between 1868 and 1896, he managed to establish a bookshop in the Hungarian capital, which quickly gained a reputation for selling high-quality books.

He became involved with Freemasonry through his friendship with one of the leading figures of the Hungarian 1848 generation: General István Türr. At his suggestion, on 23 February 1871, Abafi Aigner Lajos was initiated into the famous Pest lodge Corvin Mátyás, which operated under the Grand Orient of Hungary. Shortly after joining the lodge, he took over its library, bringing with him the most important publications he had collected while travelling through Europe.

The renowned historian was recognised for his merits and enjoyed a meteoric rise within Pestan's workshop. On 31 May 1871, he received a salary increase and became a journeyman, and on 17 November 1871, he was awarded the rank of Master (Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár, 1871–1886). Furthermore, between 1883 and 1885, he was elected Venerable Master of the Corvin Mátyás Lodge. He was extremely active within Hungarian Freemasonry, constantly advocating for the unification of the two obediences (the Hungarian Grand Orient and the Hungarian Grand Lodge of the Johannite Rite). This event took place on 21 March 1886, marking the birth of the Hungarian Symbolic Grand Lodge, which still exists today.

In both Masonic and secular circles, Abafi Aigner Lajos quickly gained a reputation as a great publicist. He was highly appreciated for his quality articles, which delighted his contemporaries with their depth and erudition, but especially with the meticulousness that could only be fully demonstrated by a historian and researcher of great value.

² The castle in Dég was built between 1810 and 1815 at the behest of Count Antal Festetics. Pollack Mihály was chosen as the architect for this project. This splendid classical-style building housed many of the brothers' possessions, as well as the Old Archives of the Order for a long time.

³ The Old Archive of Hungarian Freemasonry (Dégi Levéltár) was mainly destroyed during World War II. During the war, German and Russian troops stationed in the castle in Dég converted the building into a field hospital. A major fire broke out in the castle in 1945, destroying most of the documents.

In 1882, Abafi came into possession of the Old Archives of Hungarian Freemasonry. The 10.000-page collection of documents provided him with material for a series of intelligent articles, which he published in leading magazines of the time.⁴ However, his most intense editorial activity took place at the *Hajnal* magazine, where he was initially appointed associate editor in 1877, before being elected sole editor three years later. Following the unification of the two major Hungarian denominations in 1886, Abafi Aigner Lajos collaborated with the renowned Budapest historian and journalist Gelléri Mór on editing the aforementioned magazine.⁵

In addition to his works on the history of Hungarian Freemasonry⁶, also made a name for himself in literature, becoming a member of the renowned Petőfi Society in 1876⁷. Two years later, he established the National Society of Hungarian Booksellers in Budapest and launched an intensive programme to publish the finest manuscripts from across the country.

He edited around 3.500 manuscripts until his death in Budapest⁸ on 19 June 1909. He gained fame over time thanks to his books on the history of Hungarian Freemasonry. His publications on Hungarian literature and folklore⁹ also established him as a highly prestigious scholar in the eyes of his contemporaries, someone who knew how to value historical sources and references — the only things capable of helping to reconstruct the realities of the past in a truly professional manner.

As a historian of Freemasonry, Abafi Aigner Lajos was the first Central European scholar, as early as the end of the 19th century, to propose the study of this subject based on a rigorous methodology founded on the use of primary archival sources. By studying these sources meticulously, he demonstrated that a comprehensive understanding of the history of Freemasonry and secret societies is essential for grasping the full picture of a given era.

Over a century ago, he recognised the extraordinary importance of this topic in the context of a nation's history. However, he also recognised that many dilettantes, through their superficiality, ignorance or narrow-mindedness, would only harm this field of research. His testament to posterity is therefore extremely significant. History is an ongoing process of research and discovery.

At the same time, it is also the most beautiful adventure a scholar can embark on. Until you find satisfaction in the act of acquiring knowledge itself, you must learn to search long and hard. Then, you must understand what you have found and preserve the treasures you have discovered carefully. When the time is right, you can pass these on to others, opening up new

⁴ These are the journals: *Hajnal* [Dawn], *Világosság* [Light], *Hazánk*, [Our Homeland] *Zirkel* [Compass], and *Bauhütte* [Masonic lodge].

⁵ He was born in Apátfalva on 14 January 1854 and died in Budapest on 1 September 1915. He studied in Szarvas and Szeged, and was initiated into Freemasonry in 1879 at the Könyves Kálmán Lodge. Between 1887 and 1888, he edited the magazines *Hajnal* and *Orient* together with Abafi Aigner Lajos. In 1889, he was one of the founders of the Demokrácia Lodge, and he remained a member until his death.

⁶ Of his many publications on Freemasonry, two stand out as they provide a unique perspective on the lodges and secret societies of Hungary, Transylvania and the Banat region. See *A magyar testőrök és a szabadkőművesség* [The Hungarian guardians and freemasonry], (1881); *Titkos társulatok Temesvárott a mult században* [Secret societies in Timișoara in the last century], (1896).

⁷ The Petőfi Society operated in Budapest from 1876 to 1944. Its founding members were prominent figures in Hungarian literary life, including: Balázs Sándor, Éjszaki Károly, Komócsy József and Szana Tamás, among others. The society aimed to promote the cult of Petőfi Sándor, the great Hungarian poet of the 1848 Revolution, as well as spreading Hungarian literature as widely as possible. The society's first meeting took place on 1 January 1876, with the renowned writer Jókai Mór being elected as its inaugural president.

⁸ In the last years of his life, his health deteriorated significantly due to his intensive work schedule. He gradually gave up the book trade, one of his great passions, which resulted in a considerable decrease in his income. In 1899, he was forced by circumstances to accept the position of Chief Inspector of Hungarian Libraries and Museums. This intense activity in the secular sphere took up much of his time, and his illness also played a part in his decision to end his life on 10 October 1900.

⁹ See: *A Magyar népdalról* (1872) [On the Hungarian folk song], *Mikes Kelemen* (1872), *Fessler Ignác Aurél* (1878).

horizons. Only in this way is history not just a story. It is an instrument of knowledge that helps you see the future because you had the wisdom to understand your past.

2. Masonic Lodge vs. Secret Society

In his research on 18th century Freemasonry (Abafi, 1884), Abafi Aigner Lajos clearly distinguishes between the Masonic Lodge and the secret society, emphasising that the two should not be confused.

From his point of view, the secret societies that operated in Banat during the second half of the Enlightenment were independent of the Masonic Order. They were often established for political reasons by people who had withdrawn from Freemasonry because they had failed to fulfil the expectations that had led them to join. Most of these people had hoped to learn the secrets of alchemy that so many people coveted, such as the elixir of life, the ability to turn metals into gold and communicate with spirits.

At that time, secret societies targeted the existing political order and fundraising in particular. To succeed in their planned endeavours, they lured potential followers with a mirage that former Freemasons knew how to make almost irresistible. They were invited to join an organisation that was presented as a preparatory antechamber for the great secrets of Freemasons and alchemists.

In such a place, the initiators adopted conduct similar to that of some symbols in a Masonic workshop. They sought to foster a sense of solidarity akin to that found within a Masonic lodge. This was all the more important given that they were part of an anarchist movement based on ambitious ideals, such as the overthrow of the Habsburg monarchy, the establishment of a republic or a federation, and the attainment of social rights, which were denied to most of them at the time (Abafi, 1884, pp. 515-520).

In his analysis of Banat as a case study, Abafi Aigner Lajos emphasises that, contrary to expectations, an important Masonic lodge called *Zu den 3 weissen Lilien* [At the three white lilies] operated in Timișoara in this province in the second half of the 18th century, as did three rival secret societies. These societies generated significant social activity, polarising prominent figures from both the cultural-political and ecclesiastical spheres.

The Masonic Lodge *Zu den 3 weissen Lilien* [At the three white lilies] was founded by members of the middle classes. Conclusive data on its activities only dates from 1782 onwards. The following list of members shows that during this period the lodge was led by the third Venerable Master. As the first two Venerable Masters only remained in office for a few years, it is highly likely that the Timișoara workshop began its activities in the early 1770s.¹⁰

The lodge was founded by József Sauvegne, a merchant, who is known to have left Timișoara in 1782 and moved to Fiume. Following his departure, the following individuals became involved in managing the workshop: Eckhard Frigyes, a nobleman and Venerable from Kanizsa; Barth János György, the first supervisor; Heigl Ferenc, the second supervisor and a merchant from Timișoara; Kirchgeher Engelbert, the orator and a timber control office official in his secular life; and Wreden Ferencz, the treasurer.¹¹

They advocated that all their efforts should focus on philanthropy, sound morals and avoiding vices; leading an irreproachable lifestyle; and, above all, free thinking and promoting culture (Abafi, 1884, pp. 515–520). Brother Seipp Kristóf Lajos, born in Worms in 1748, was a well-known actor who travelled all over the world and excelled in this regard. He worked in Erfurt in 1768, in Hungary from 1774, and in Sibiu from 1783, finally moving to Timișoara.

¹⁰ See *Titkos társulatok Temesvárott a múlt században* [Secret societies in Timișoara in the last century] (1884).

¹¹ Old Ritual for the Reception in the Lodge “The Three White Lilies – Vivat Concordia et Lux” in Timișoara: Reception of an Apprentice, Moral Instruction for Apprentices, Catechism of the Fellow Crafts, Catechism of the Masters.

He seems to have been highly appreciated here for his plays performed in a secular environment, where he managed to win over the audience (Abafi, 1884, pp. 515-520).

Until 1786, the brothers in Timișoara were the only ones who could carry out the activity of enlightening the masses through culture. However, for unknown reasons, the Grand Master, Count Pálffy Károly, requested the closure of the lodge that year. It is known only that the members intended to send a memorandum to Emperor Joseph II — who was also a Freemason — but Count Pálffy thwarted their initiative.

During the reign of Leopold II, who was also a Freemason (Abafi, 1884, pp. 515–520), the Timișoara lodge received approval to resume its activities. Court Chancellor János Márton Loebel asked the brothers in Timișoara to start working again, having mediated this request with the higher authorities in Vienna (Abafi, 1884, pp. 515–520). The Timișoara lodge resumed its activities, but unfortunately not for long. According to a contemporary source, the workshop had fallen dormant by 1793 (Abafi, 1884, pp. 515–520).

The reasons why the lodge ceased its activities in the Banat region are also unknown. However, what is certain is that against the backdrop of the void left by the renowned Timișoara workshop, the Rosicrucian Order, as well as the Order of the Illuminati and the controversial Order of the Rose, consolidated their positions in the province.

As early as 1772, the Rosicrucians managed to establish a Circle in Timișoara. After the Zu den 3 weissen Lilien lodge fell dormant, some of its members joined the Rosicrucian Circle. They were accepted in exchange for the fees they paid upon being initiated into the first three degrees. According to a document from that period, Baron Miksa József Linden, an administrative advisor, paid 80 francs for the first degree and 60 francs for the next two after only six months.

As with the Masonic workshop, the Rosicrucian circle generated considerable excitement within the community. Only the Order of the Illuminati, which had gained fame as an anarchist society seeking to overthrow the state order and penetrate the main leadership positions within the empire, surpassed it in prestige.

According to a letter dated 31 July 1786, the Illuminati had spread their activities throughout the province, infiltrating all existing lodges. During that period, the Illuminati were the most feared secret society. In order to federalise the Empire, they intended to increase their power by undermining the Masonic lodges and subjugating them (Rudolf & Varga, 2013, pp. 77–90).

Similarly, the Order of the Rose sought to completely disrupt contemporary thinking. The secret police of the time constantly sought to obtain detailed information about this secret society, infiltrating its ranks with their most skilled spies. This secret society was founded by an extremely controversial figure of the time, the Jesuit Grossinger Ferencz Rudolf.

He was born in Komárom on 20 September 1752. In the baptismal register, he is listed as Grossinger Ferencz Máté, the son of Grossinger Ferencz, who was a town councillor and a butcher (Szinnyei, 1909). His grandfather, Grossinger Keresztély, was born in Königsbrunn, Austria.

His nephew, Grossinger Ferencz Rudolf¹¹, attended the Jesuit secondary school in Komárom. He then joined the Jesuit order and went on to study philosophy in Győr and

¹¹ He carried out impressive journalistic work throughout his life, and his writings served as essential reading for members of the order: *Freimüthiger Briefwechsel zwischen zwei teutschen Reichsständen, über Bayerns gegenwärtige Angelegenheiten* 1778 [Frank correspondence between two estates of the German Empire, Concerning Bavaria's current affairs] (1778); *Die Souverain, oder die ersten Haupt- und Grundgesetze einer monarchischen Staats* [The Sovereign, or the first principal and fundamental laws of a monarchical state] (1780); *De religiosis ordinibus et eorum reformatione liber singularis, quem e germanico in latinum traduxit, suisque auxit animadversionibus* [A treatise on religious orders and their reform, which he translated from German into Latin and augmented with his own observations] (1781); *Allgemeines Tolarenz- und Religionssystem für alle Staaten und Völker in der Welt Leipzig* [General system of tolerance and religion for all states and

Nagyszombat. He proved to be an exceptional student and learned several languages: Italian, French, German and Latin.

Following the abolition of the Jesuit order in Hungary, he moved to Vienna and became a court secretary by decree of Empress Maria Theresa on 4 October 1777. Later, during the reign of Joseph II, he fled to Oberndorf am Main, Frankfurt, Leipzig, Halle and Berlin. He was imprisoned in 1788 for inciting the Hungarians to rebel against the Empire.

The secret society of the Rose, founded around 1786, was modelled on the Jesuit order. At city level, members met in a place known as the Circle, which bore the symbolic name of “The Rose of the Place”. Several such “roses” were subordinate to the authority of the “Basic Rose”, believed to be coordinated by a certain Henriette Rosenwald. However, this was a fictional character; according to the secret police, Grossinger Ferencz Rudolf himself exercised all the authority of the Order, forcing all members of the “local Rose” to donate two francs per month to a common fund. Each of these donors was known as a “Rose”, and their secret meetings were referred to as “Walks”.

Admission to the Order was by recommendation and required the payment of a fee, followed by a detailed presentation of activities carried out up to that point, the purchase of a symbol and a membership diploma. The order’s activities were governed by a set of rules finalised on 1 May 1786. The Order also established a branch in Timișoara which operated without interruption until 1789 when the authorities intervened, outraged by the radical ideas that its members were propagating within the community, including rebellion against tyranny, the abolition of priestly celibacy and monastic orders, criticism of the papacy and promotion of polygamy.

It is all the more interesting to note that the members of the order who embraced these eccentric ideas were leading figures in clerical life in Banat and beyond: Orthodox Bishop Petru Petrovici¹², Canon of Cenad Vuko-Branco Pál, Transylvanian Bishop Gherasim Adamovici¹³, the bishop of Vârșeț Sakabent Joanovics. Joining these societies was a way for figures from the cultural and religious spheres to protest against an authoritarian regime that did not meet the expectations of a growing social class who had begun to sympathise with the ideas of the time.

During the second half of the Enlightenment period, Freemasonry and other imitative secret societies attracted many followers because they consolidated urban, cultured groups that were outside traditional structures. Here, fraternal equality was encouraged, meaning that people were judged on their own merits regardless of their name, status or circumstances (Nicoară, 2005, p. 256). The significant changes that took place in the community can also be seen as an explanation for the fact that Freemasonry and secret societies managed to establish themselves firmly in Timișoara, gaining numerous adherents.

peoples in the world] (1784); *Päbstengeschichte im Grundrisse. Göttingen und Offenbach* [History of the Popes in Outline. Göttingen and Offenbach] (1784); *Die Kirche und der Staat, ihre beiderseitige Pflicht, Macht und Gränzen* [The church and the state, their mutual duties, power, and limits] (1784); *Jus publicum Hungariae unica complexum deissertatione* [The public law of Hungary presented in a single comprehensive dissertation] (1786); *Statistik aller katholischen geistlichen Reichsstifter in Deutschland* [Statistics of all catholic ecclesiastical imperial estates in Germany] (1786); *Ungarisches allgem. Staats- und Regimentsrecht* [Hungarian General Constitutional and Administrative Law] (1786); *Ein Handvoll Schurkereien und Thorheiten aus dem Tagebuche eines Reisenden Engländers* [A handful of rogueries and follies from the diary of a travelling Englishman] (1786).

¹² He served as bishop of Arad between 1783 and 1786.

¹³ He was the [Orthodox bishop of Transylvania](#) between 1789 and 1794. He was of Serbian ethnicity and came to Transylvania to be installed as Orthodox bishop in [Rășinari](#). In March 1792, together with the [united](#) bishop [Ioan Bob](#), he submitted to Emperor [Leopold II](#) the extended version of the memorandum [The petition of the Romanians of Transylvania], which demanded that [the Romanians](#) in the province no longer be considered “tolerated” and that they have political, economic, and religious rights equal to those of the privileged classes (nobles, [Saxons](#), and [Szeklers](#)).

In 1781, Timișoara was granted the privileged status of Free Royal City by Emperor Joseph II in a diploma that was renewed in 1790 by Emperor Leopold II. This status brought a number of advantages to the city, including being removed from the jurisdiction of the county re-established in 1780; the right to send its own representatives to the local parliament; the election of its own magistrates and jurors; the collection of customs duties on the entry and exit of goods; the organisation of annual or weekly fairs; its own budget of revenues and expenditures; exemption from tax obligations; and its own coat of arms (Munteanu & Munteanu, 2002).

In addition, German and Swabian colonisation contributed to the development of crafts, trade and industry. In other words, this led to the accelerated development of urban activities and the consolidation of a middle class in society, as reflected in the composition of lodges and secret societies.

These elite groups came to consider themselves the guardians of a truth capable of ensuring the good of humanity by reconciling modern values with traditional ones through the ideals they upheld (Nicoară, 2005, p. 256). This is why they are so important for understanding the specific nature of that era, an idea also supported by Abafi Aigner Lajos, known as the “Father of the History of Modern Hungarian Freemasonry”.

References:

- Abafi, L. (1872). *Mikes Kelemen*. Aigner Lajos.
- Abafi, L. (1878). *Fessler Ignác Aurél*. Aigner Lajos.
- Abafi, L. (1881). A magyar testőrök és a szabadkőművesség [The Hungarian guardians and Freemasonry]. *Koszorú*, II.
- Abafi, L. (1884). *Titkos társulatok Temesvárott a mult században* [Secret societies in Timișoara in the last century]. *Történelmi Tár* [Historical Treasury], 7(3), 513–592.
- Abafi, L. (1890). *Geschichte der Freimaurerei in Österreich-Ungarn* [The history of freemasonry in Austria-Hungary] (Vols. 1–4). Ludwig Aigner.
- Abafi, L. (1896). *A szabadkőművesség és az uralkodóház* [Freemasonry and the Ruling House]. Aigner Lajos.
- Abafi, L. (1900). *A szabadkőművesség története Magyarországon* [The history of Freemasonry in Hungary]. Schmidl H. Könyvnyomdája.
- Grossing, F. R. (1778). *Freimüthiger Briefwechsel zwischen zwei teutschen Reichsständen, über Bayerns gegenwärtige Angelegenheiten* [Frank correspondence between two estates of the German Empire, concerning Bavaria's current affairs].
- Grossing, F. R. (1784a). *Päbstengeschichte im Grundrisse. Göttingen und Offenbach* [History of the Popes in Outline. Göttingen and Offenbach]. Johann Christian Dieterich förlag.
- Grossing, F. R. (1784b). *Die Kirche und der Staat, ihre beiderseitige Pflicht, Macht und Gränzen* [The Church and the State, Their Mutual Duties, Power, and Limits].
- Grossing, F. R. (1786a). *Jus publicum Hungariae unica complexum deissertatione* [The public law of Hungary presented in a single comprehensive dissertation].
- Grossing, F. R. (1786b). *Statistik aller katholischen geistlichen Reichsstifter in Deutschland* [Statistics of all catholic ecclesiastical imperial estates in Germany]. Gebauer förlag.
- Grossing, F. R. (1786c). *Ungarisches allgem. Staats- und Regimentsrecht* [Hungarian General Constitutional and Administrative Law]. Wucherer förlag.

- Grossing, F. R. (1786d). *Ein Handvoll Schurkereien und Thorheiten aus dem Tagebuche eines Reisenden Engländer* [A handful of rogueries and follies from the diary of a travelling Englishman].
- Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár [Hungarian National Archives]. (1871–1886). *A Szabadkőműves Szervezetek Levéltára. Magyarország Nagy Oriense Nagypáholy, „Corvin Mátyás” páholy* [Hungarian archives of Masonic organizations. Grand Orient of Hungary Grand Lodge, “Matthias Corvinus” Lodge]. Budapest.
- Osterwald, P. (1784). *De religiosis ordinibus et eorum reformatione liber singularis, quem e germanico Religionssystem für alle Staaten und Völker in der Welt Leipzig* [General system of tolerance and religion for all states and peoples in the world. Leipzig].
- Szinnyei, J. (1909). *Magyar írók élete és munkái* [The lives and works of Hungarian writers]. Hornyánszky Viktor Könyvkiadóhivatal.
- Munteanu, I., & Munteanu, R. (2002). *Timișoara: Monografie* [Timișoara: Monograph]. Mirton.
- Nicoară, S. (2005). *O istorie a secularizării: De la Cetatea lui Dumnezeu la cetatea oamenilor (sec. XIV–XVIII)* [A history of secularization: From the City of God to the City of Men (14th–18th centuries)]. Accent.
- Varga, A., & Cristian, R. (2013). *The Illuminati, Transylvanian Freemasonry and the project of Hungary's federalization at the end of the eighteenth century*. In C. Popa-Gorjanu & L. Stanciu (Eds.), *Transylvania in the eighteenth century: Aspects of regional identity* (pp. 77–90). Mega Publishing House.

THE 25TH OF MARCH 1821 ON THE POLITICAL AGENDA OF THE HELLENIC UNION OF ROMANIA¹

Ela COSMA

The Romanian Academy, *George Barițiu* Institute of History, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

e-mail: ela_cosma@yahoo.com

Abstract

The study discusses the celebrations of Greece's main national day (25 March 1821) among the Greeks living in present day Romania, organized in the Hellenic Communities affiliated to the Hellenic Union of Romania, as reflected in the pages of the bilingual periodical, *Ελπίς/Speranța* (Elpis/Speranța) [Hope]. After a short introduction (1), we present: the Hellenic Union of Romania, its territorial communities and presidents (2), drafting the portraits of *kyrios* Savas Tsokaridis (1934-2023), president of the Association of the Hellenic Community in București (3), and *kyria* Eleni Idu (1941-2022), founding president of the Hellenic Community in Cluj-Napoca (4). Then we turn to: the celebration of the main national day of Greece as reflected in *Ελπίς/Speranța* (5), eventually insisting on the political agenda of the 25th March 1821 in Romania and Greece, namely on the Hellenic Communities from Romania (6), as well as the Romanian and Greek highest-ranking politicians (7) celebrating the 25th March 1821. We conclude our study with a few final remarks (8), regarding both Romania's domestic policy of observing the rights of its national minorities (including the Greek minority) and the good example offered by Greece in protecting its Greek diaspora.

Keywords: celebration of the 25th of March 1821; Hellenic Union of Romania; Hellenic Communities in Romania; *Ελπίς/Speranța* (Elpis/Speranța) periodical; political agenda.

1. Introduction

Defined by Nicolae Mihai (2014) as “an affective construct”² born in the dawn of modernity, which helps the individual to build the relationship with his nation, each and every *national day* becomes a form of public manifestation, taking shape and symbolic dimension in the collective mind, and adopting a certain pattern, with common ritual elements (Bălinișteanu, 2026). Approaching *Nașterea sărbătorilor naționale la români* [The birth of national holidays among the Romanians], in a case study based on archive documents revealing the historically first Romanian national day, *24 ianuarie. Propagandă și “mise en scène” în spațiul urban din Oltenia (1864-1867)* [The 24th January. Propaganda and mise en scène in the urban space of Oltenia (1864-1867)], the cited historian shows how the Romanians have built their relations with power during the last two centuries by means of the national days of 24 January and 10 May. As exercises in national solidarity and public memory, as well as sites of encounter between propaganda and emotion, the various celebrations of national festivities across different Romanian regimes (from the princely and monarchical periods to the communist and post-communist eras), these collective local practices gained importance and marked the memory of the Romanians' modern nation (Mihai, 2014, pp. 59-69).

¹ Article History: Received: 31.12.2025. Accepted: 02.02.2026. Published: 15.05.2026. No funding was received either for the research presented in the article or for the creation of the article.

² Original source text: “un construct de tip afectiv”.

Drawing a parallel with the main national day of 25 March 1821³, celebrated by the Greeks living today inside and outside of Greece, our analysis focuses on the significant historical turning point which shaped the modern and contemporary Greek nation. By continuing the presentation of the Greek revolution (1821-1829) in the pages of the periodical of the Hellenic Union of Romania, *Ελπίς/Speranța* [Hope], we aim to show in this study how the main national day of Greece, celebrating the “immortal” 25th March 1821 and the “glorious years” (*χρονία δοξασμένα*), is praised not only in the song of Grigoris Bithikotsis or Giorgos Dalaras, *Να ’τανε το εικοσι ένα* [If only it were ’21 again], in Greece and in the Hellenic diaspora all over the world, but especially among the Greeks living in nowadays Romania.

The methodological frame of the study is based on a solid empirical documentation offered by the mentioned journal, counting numerous cultural events organised yearly on this occasion by the Hellenic Communities pertaining to the Hellenic Union of Romania. The commemorative practices and places regarding the Greek and Romanian heroes of 1821 are also to be analysed in detail.

The organizations of the Greek national minority in Romania and short biographies of the local leaders Savas Tsokaridis and Eleni Idu, presidents of the Hellenic Communities from București and Cluj-Napoca, complete the picture and the political agenda of the celebrated Greek national day.

Moreover, besides the analytical and descriptive methods, our approach involves the discourse analysis of the political speeches and the communication style of high-ranking statemen and politicians from Hellada and Romania, as well as certain Greek concepts and their meanings attached to the 1821 revolution for Ellada’s liberty and independence, which have imposed themselves in Europe’s long-term history.

2. The Hellenic Union of Romania, its Territorial Communities and Presidents

The Greek population in Romania—numbering 2,086 individuals at the 2021 census, compared with 3,668 in 2011; 6,472 in 2002; 3,940 in 1992; 6,262 in 1977; 9,088 in 1966; 11,166 in 1956; and 23,161 in 1930, according to data from the Romanian National Institute of Statistics (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2011, 2021)—is organized within the Hellenic Union of Romania (Uniunea Elenă din România).

Founded right after the fall of Ceaușescu and the communism in Romania, on 28 December 1989, the Hellenic Union is one of the 18 organizations of the national minorities officially recognized in Romania’s Parliament. Thus, the organizations of the national minorities represented in the Chamber of Deputies in Romania’s Parliament are: 1. the Association League of Albanians from Romania, 2. the Union of Armenians from Romania, 3. the Bulgarian Union Banat-Romania, 4. the Union of Croats from Romania, 5. the Hellenic Union of Romania, 6. the Federation of the Jewish Communities in Romania, 7. the Democratic Forum of Germans in Romania, 8. the Association of Italians of Romania, 9. the Association of Macedonians in Romania, 10. the Union of Poles of Romania Dom Polski, 11. the Social-Democratic Party of the Roma from Romania, 12. the Community of Lipovan Russians in Romania, 13. the Cultural Union of Ruthenians of Romania, 14. the Union of Serbs of Romania, 15. the Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tatars of Romania, 16. the Turkish Democratic Union of Romania, 17. the Democratic Union of Slovaks and Czechs of Romania, 18. the Union of the Ukrainians of Romania (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2004b, p. 23).

³ The Hellenic Republic has two national days, celebrating the outburst of the liberty revolution on 25 March 1821 and *To μεγάλο ΌΧΙ* [The Great NO] of 28 October 1940.

The founding president of the Hellenic Union, Sotiris Fotopolos (1937-2008), was also the deputy of the Greek minority between 2000-2008, while the current president Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol is its deputy since 2008. The first deputies of the Hellenic Union in the Chamber of Deputies of the Romanian Parliament had been Anton Nicolau from Prahova (during the legislatures 1990-1992, 1992-1996), Gherasim Gazi from Iași (1996-2000), followed by the above-mentioned presidents Sotiris Fotopolos from București (2000-2004, 2004 - 5 August 2008) and Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, deputy of București (since 8 September 2008), Galați (2008-2012), Prahova (2012-2016), deputy of the Hellenic Union (2016-2020, 2020-present) (Camera Deputaților, 2016).

Nowadays the Hellenic Union of Romania includes 24 territorial communities with over 10,000 members (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2025), Romanian citizens of Greek descent (a third of its members) and Philhellenic Romanians (two thirds).

The largest Greek Community on Romanian territory is, of course, the branch of the Hellenic Union founded in București, as soon as 10 January 1990. However the Hellenic Community in București acquired legal personality only in 2002. Since April 1990 the first Greek language courses, held by Pagona Mularidis-Georgescu, were organized in București. The first chosen president, George Moularidis, was followed at the head of the București Community by Aristotel Ioanidis. The latter formed in October 1994 a new association of the Greeks, with legal status, namely the Hellenic Community Orfeus in București. On the other hand, the București Community of the Hellenic Union continued its activity under the interim management of Pagona Mularidis-Georgescu, until new elections took place in 1997, when Savas Tsokaridis was elected president of the (main) Association of the Hellenic Community in București. But in 2006, Savas Tsokaridis followed by a part of the Association members separated themselves from the Hellenic Union of Romania, too (Institutul pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, n.d.).

3. Kyrios Savas Tsokaridis (1934-2023), President of the Association of the Hellenic Community in București

While the first president of the Hellenic Union of Romania, Sotiris Fotopolos, inaugurated and led the political life of the Greek national minority after 1989, the activities developed by the president of the Association of the Hellenic Community in București, Savas Tsokaridis, aimed mainly to promote the Neogreek culture and language (as a mother tongue) in Romania. The latter authored a handbook of Neogreek for the primary school grades I-II, as well as a handbook of Romanian language for Hellenophones (Tsokaridis, 2003a; Tsokaridis, 2003b).

Professor Apostolos Patelakis, fine connoisseur of the complicated historical events and of the relevant personalities among the Greek communist refugees in Romania, published in *Ελπίς* an impressive obituary *În memoria profesorului Savas Tsokaridis (1934-2023)* [In memory of professor Savas Tsokaridis (1934-2023)] (Patelakis, 2023, pp. 74-78), from which we extract the following biographical notes.

Born in a poor peasant family (with six children) on 15 March 1934, in the village of Notia, Greece, near the North Macedonian border, in 1947 little Savas and his family were sent by the Greek Communist Party (KKE, Κομμουνιστικό Κόμματος της Ελλάδας) to Bulkjes in socialist Yugoslavia. The Greek colony of Bulkjes was dissolved in 1949, so Savas and one of his sisters moved to Wroclaw in South-Western Poland. When his father, Haralambos, died in 1948 fighting for the EAM (Εθνικό Απελευθερωτικό Μέτωπο, National Liberation Front), Savas Tsokaridis, who was only 14, started to work at the printing house of the KKE.

In 1952-1953 Savas was sent, together with his party comrade Agoritsa Zurgopoulou, his future wife, to Romania, to the secret School of the Communist Party in Breaza. Here he met for the first time many of the Greek party leaders in exile. After completing his studies, the KKE assigned him to Hunedoara, where there was a large Greek community of approximately 850 people, most of whom worked at the Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej metallurgical plant. Savas Tsokaridis, too, worked in the industrial city Hunedoara, first as an electrician, later as an accountant, becoming in 1953 a full member of the KKE, responsible with the cultural problems. According to the deal extant between the Romanian Workers' Party (PRM, Partidul Muncitoresc Român), which ruled Romania in the Stalinist Period, and the KKE, the Greek communists could be admitted to the PRM upon their request, which happened to Savas in 1955.

After attending between 1956-1958 the courses of the superior school of the Working Youth Union (UTM, Uniunea Tineretului Muncitoresc) in Braşov, in 1958 Savas received the much-coveted PRM membership card. So in 1959 he moved to Suceava as a party activist, joined by Agoritsa, whom he married the same year. For about ten years, the Tsokaridis family lived in Suceava, where the two children (Lambis and Elly/Elisavet) were born. In parallel, Savas graduated from the part-time department of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University in Iaşi (1962-1968).

Apostolos Patelakis explains the disagreements created in 1960-1963 between the PRM, who had become increasingly distant from Moscow, and the Greek communists, who openly supported Moscow. For this reason the PMR revoked the Romanian citizenship of the Greek immigrants, while the Greek party members (like Savas) were excluded from the PRM.

In 1968 the KKE from Romania broke into two rival parties, the inner-KKE (led by Partsalidis) and the external-KKE (led by Koliyannis). Tsokaridis was on the side of the former. The inner-KKE sent him to Bucureşti, where he eventually moved permanently together with his wife and children in 1970. After the fall of the military dictatorship in Greece (1967-1974), the former Greek immigrants from Romania could finally return to their homeland, as both Greek communist parties also did. Yet Savas Tsokaridis remained in Bucureşti, where his children attended higher schools with good results (in 1985 Lambis graduated from the Polytechnic Institute and Elly from the Faculty of Dentistry in Bucureşti).

SAVAS TSORAKIDIS



Image 1. *Kyrios* Savas Tsokaridis (1934-2023), President of the Association of the Hellenic Community București (Patelakis, 2023, p. 78).

Savas became a correspondent of the *Αυγή* [Dawn], the newspaper edited since 1974 by the inner-KKE. He was for many years a teacher of Neogreek language at several high-schools in București. On political level he was elected secretary of the București organization of the inner-KKE and president of the Association of the Greek Political Emigrants, supporting especially the students enrolled in the organization Rigas Feraios of the inner-KKE, who held Romanian state scholarships during the communist period.

Immediately after the Romanian revolution of 21-22 December 1989, on 28 December the representatives of the Greeks from Romania founded in București the Hellenic Union, with branches all over the country. Savas Tsokaridis became for many years the president of the Association of the Hellenic Community in București and the editor-in-chief of the periodical of the Hellenic Union, *Ελπίς/Speranța* [Hope]. A few years after the death of his wife Agoritsa (2017), Savas Tsokaridis passed away on 2 October 2023, at the age of 90 (Patelakis, 2023, pp. 74-78).

4. *Kyria* Eleni Idu (1941-2022), Founding President of the Hellenic Community in Cluj-Napoca

I am myself, as a Romanian, a member of the Hellenic Community in Cluj-Napoca since 2004, and this paper (part of a book that I am writing⁴) is dedicated to *kyria* Eleni Idu (30 March 1941 - 22 February 2022), founding president of our community (1998-2022).

Eleni Zoï was born on 30 March 1941, in Epirus (Greece). After the Second World War, in 1947-1948, as a 6–7-year-old girl, daughter of a communist prisoner, she had to escape

⁴ The book approaches *Minoritatea națională elenă din România și revista “Ελπίς”, 1993-2023* [The Hellenic national minority in Romania and the periodical “Ελπίς”, 1993-2023].

from her homeland, accompanied by her older sister, Maria. Led by their grandmother through the mountains, but only unto the Greek state borders, Eleni and Maria suddenly found themselves orphans and refugees, heading to the countries of the socialist bloc.

With the assistance of the International Red Cross and the Romanian Red Cross—both involved for different reasons—the two young girls crossed Bulgaria and arrived in Romania. There, the sisters were separated once again: Maria was sent to Oradea, while Eleni was taken to the children's colony in Tulgheș, Harghita County. Here she attended the primary school (with a few classes in Greek mother tongue) and the secondary school (in Romanian).

During high school, she moved to Craiova and, after successfully passing the entrance examination to the Faculty of Geography at the University of Cluj, she settled in this Transylvanian city, where she remained for the rest of her life. She married her fellow student Petru Idu, who later became a respected researcher and professor of geography. For many years, Eleni Idu was a dedicated and much-loved geography teacher at several schools in Cluj County and the city of Cluj, until her retirement.

Just like many of her Greek companions, before the Romanian Revolution of 21-22 December 1989 Eleni Idu was considered a “stateless person” (*cetățean apatrid*) with no citizenship, rejected by capitalist Greece and excluded from political rights by socialist Romania. After the falling of communism (1989), she eagerly acquired first her Romanian citizenship, and later her Greek citizenship (Cosma, 2022a, pp. 36-39).

Kyria Eleni Idu, native speaker of Neo-Hellenic, was her entire life a model citizen, devoted to both her ungrateful countries: motherland Greece and land of adoption Romania. In Greece, her “*Patrida*” (that she spelled and wrote always with capital letters), she searched for her roots and, after decades, she found her old father alive. Then she used to visit Maria, who is still living in Athens today. In Romania, the land of her soul (*țară de suflet*), she lived, loved, and worked, devoting her boundless care to her family—her daughter Alina and her grandson Alexis—as well as to her pupils and, above all, to the Hellenic Community in Cluj-Napoca. Founded by her in 1998, the community gradually took shape as a close-knit family united by a shared sense of Greek identity and feeling.

Last but not least, *kyria* Eleni Idu was and remained, in words and deeds, a true Romanian patriot, a Romanian nationalist of the noblest and most sentimental kind. She taught us the Greek anthem of liberty, *Σὲ γνωρίζω ἀπὸ τὴν κόψη* [I recognize you by the sharpness / of the sword], on Dionysios Solomos's lyrics (1823). We always sang it standing up, yet never by itself, but always accompanied, with hand on heart, by the call in the verses of Andrei Mureșanu (1848), *Deșteaptă-te, române!* [Wake up, Romanian!], the Romanian national anthem. Year after year we celebrated the Greek heroes of the unforgettable 1821, but it was *kyria* Eleni who also opened our souls, with reverence, towards our great Romanian poets Mihai Eminescu (whom we celebrated on every 15 January) and Ioan Alexandru (whom she knew, loved and recited with his *Imnele* [Hymns]). At the festivals and conferences of the national minorities in Cluj, it was more than once that *kyria* Eleni Idu took a stand and took over *de facto* the offices not honored by the Romanian authorities, who were absent, literally and figuratively.

This pronounced civic and patriotic sense of hers had exclusively positive valences, manifesting itself as dignity, pride and pure love for the two homelands, the Greek and the Romanian one, without ever offending or hurting the feelings of those of another language and nationality. In all the situations of her life, to which I bore witness, *kyria* Eleni Idu, founding president of the Hellenic Community in Cluj, was and remained *O grecoaică adevărată, o româncă patrioată: ELENI IDU (30 martie 1941 - 22 februarie 2022) / Μια πραγματική Ελληνίδα, μια Ρουμάννα πατριώτισσα: ΕΛΕΝΗ ΪΝΤΟΥ (30 Μαρτίου 1941 - 22 Φεβρουαρίου*

2022) [A real Greek woman, a true Romanian patriot: Eleni Idu, 20 March 1941 – 22 February 2022] (Cosma, 2022a, pp. 36-39; Cosma, 2022b, pp. 1029-1057).

On 30 March 2021 *kyria* Eleni celebrated her 80th birthday. Not long after that she started her journey among the stars on a beautiful winter day, on 22 February 2022 (Cosma, 2022b, pp. 1029-1057). It was only two days before the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. God spared the former Greek colony girl, born during wartime, to die of a broken heart caused by the new warmakers' evil spirit and lack of humanity and love to the people. All these, she (who used to be called by her nearest and dearest with the affectionate nickname *Sofoklidi*) has fully offered her entire life to everybody who knew her.⁵

Kyria Eleni Zoï Idu's destiny and life story very much resemble to those of her generation fellows, refugee orphans from Greece and colony children in Romania, who became high educated adults and some of them even founding presidents of the Hellenic Union and its communities: Sotiris Fotopolos (1937-2008) in București, Marica Koza Pieptu (1927-2013) in Iași. They belong to the last wave of Greeks who came to Romania and settled down here, however not as collonists or merchants (like their ancestors in antiquity, in medieval and modern times), but as stateless political immigrants, welcomed and cherrished by their adoptive country.

Only recently a light was finally thrown upon this last Greek wave to Romania (Chisacof, 2016, pp. 34-35). Implacable history and dramatical individual biographies are also interwoven, for the first time, in the canvas of a unique book, written by the already mentioned Romanian Greek author, Apostolos Patelakis, and published in 2017, describing *Războiul civil din Grecia (1946-1949) și emigranții politici greci în România (1948-1982)* [The civil war in Greece, 1946-1949, and the Greek political emigrants in Romania, 1948-1982] (Patelakis, 2017).

In an extended and methodologically solid study of imagology, Gabriela Boangiu also approached *Povestirea vieții – Identitate și alteritate pe parcursul războiului civil elen din 1946-1949* [The Life Story – Identity and alterity during the Hellenic civil war of 1946-1949] (Boangiu, 2017, pp. 23-51). The case studies presented by the mentioned author represent valuable ethnological documents comprising several fascinating "small stories" (*istorii mărunte*) of oral history regarding our topic. Namely, the respondents interviewed by G. Boangiu were originally from Greece: Zoe Tomescu's mother, Costas Ivanilis and Eleni Ciuciu (Țiuțiu), married Elena Radu, who - as children of socialist and communist parents who had been arrested and persecuted during the Greek civil war of 1946-1949 - were forced to leave their homeland. Eleni Ciuciu and her sister, coming from a Vlach mountain village of the Epirus, were saved (just like *kyria* Eleni Idu) by the International Red Cross, which they considered to be "father and mother for us" (*Crucea Roșie a fost tată și mamă pentru noi*), too. After crossing Albania and Yugoslavia, the little Aromanian (*Cincar*) girls arrived to Romania, being received in Arad and in the sanatory and colony for Greek children from Sinaia. Eleni Ciuciu followed a professional school and later she had a good place to work at the Romanian Railways (CFR, *Căile Ferate Române*) (Boangiu, 2017, pp. 31-34, 37-45).

⁵ I wrote in my book: "With love, I dedicate this book to *kyria* Eleni Idu, president of the Hellenic Community in Cluj, my second mother in... Romanian spirituality" (Cosma, 2014, p. 5).



Images 2-4. Kyria Eleni Zoï Idu (1941-2022), founding president of the Hellenic Community Cluj.
Photos: *Ελπίς/Speranța*, January-March 2022, pp. 36-37.

5. The celebration of the 25th March 1821 reflected in *Ελπίς/Speranța*, periodical of the Hellenic Union of Romania

Over the last three decades, the Hellenic Union of Romania has sustained both morally and, in most of the cases, financially (from the budget allocated to the Greek minority by the Romanian state), by means of intensive cultural and publishing activities, the aim of promoting the Neo-Hellenic mother tongue, Orthodoxy, Hellenic culture and civilization, Greek traditions and customs.

The most important and very active Greek periodicals and publishing houses reflecting the cultural policy of the Hellenic Union are: 1. its periodical *Ελπίδα/Speranța* [Hope] (1993/1997-2004), renamed *Ελπίς/Speranța* (2004-2023); 2. Editura Omonia, the publishing house founded by director Elena Lazăr (in 1991), with an impressive portfolio of hundreds of belletristic, cultural and historical translations published so far; 3. the UER Press, the very publishing house of the Hellenic Union (since 2009); 4. *Studii bizantine* [Byzantine studies], a specialized journal edited by the Byzantine Cultural Society (*Societatea Culturală Bizantină*) in collaboration with the Hellenic Union of Romania (2010-2018) (Cosma, 2021, pp. 377-392).

The celebration of 25 March 1821 is reflected either in special journal issues (as those of March 2003 and March 2004, almost integrally dedicated to this national day), or in numerous accounts and encomiastical articles, sending greetings and wishes in the typically Greek way: "Happy birthday,

Greece!” (Χρόνια πολλά, Ελλάδα!). Over time the periodical's issues have been published bilingual in Greek and Romanian (initially on separate pages, later in two columns on page). The more and more accurate and suggestive translations were carried out, among others, by Evanthia Papaefthymiou, Edith Uncu, Marina Patelakis.

In the January-March 2023 issue, Mariana Alecu, editor-in-chief of *Ελπίς/Speranța*, synthesized the events organized by the Hellenic Union and by its territorial communities from Romania, marking the usual celebration of the main National Day of Greece in an ordinary, not anniversary year. The activities unfolded by the Hellenic Union included various Greek music and dance shows and performances, book presentations, concerts, exhibitions of paintings etc. Most of these events were coordinated by the president of the Hellenic Union, Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, and many of them (especially those in București, Drăgășani, Iași, Secu) were attended by the Greek ambassador in Romania, Sofia Grammata, too.

For instance, on 9 March 2023, the 11th edition of the “Greek Wave”, the already established exhibition of 25 Romanian and Greek painters, took place in the Romanian capital city, involving the Hellenic Union and its partners, among which the Romanian National Library. The Greek and Romanian heroes fallen in the battle of Drăgășani in 1821 were commemorated, on 12 March, by more than 130 people, in the presence of D.G. Zisopol, S. Grammata and the presidents and members of 9 Hellenic communities. On 18 March, the territorial communities of the Greeks from Bârlad, Iași, Piatra Neamț, Onești, Prahova, Roman, were invited to the Moldavian Secu Monastery (in the Neamț county), where they participated to a *Te Deum* held by the abbot of the mentioned monastery, archimandrite Vichentie Amariei. The traditional extraordinary concert of the Philharmonic Paul Constantinescu, which took place in Ploiești on 23 March, was inaugurated by a speech of Dimitrios Karakonstantis, counselor of the Hellenic Embassy in Romania. On 25 March, the Hellenic Union and the Greek Embassy celebrated the National Day of Greece by a *Te Deum* held in the Church Bunavestire [Annunciation] in București (Alec, 2023a, pp. 5-9; Alecu, 2023b, pp. 40-41, 46).

In the same year, the local communities of the Hellenic Union of Romania also organized, on their own, a range of cultural and artistic events in Bârlad, Brașov, București, Craiova, Galați, Iași, Pitești, Ploiești, Târgoviște, Turnu Severin (Alec, 2023b, pp. 22-52).

6. The Hellenic Communities from Romania celebrating the 25th March 1821

As already mentioned, commendatory articles were published in *Ελπίς* each year on the occasion of 25 March by the leading staff of the Hellenic Union. Such are the message of 2003 sent by Sotiris Fotopolos, deputy and president of the Hellenic Union of Romania, *Μήνυμα του Προέδρου της Ένωσης Ελλήνων Ρουμανίας με την ευκαιρία της 25ης Μαρτίου* / *Mesajul Președintelui Uniunii Elene din România cu ocazia Zilei Naționale a Greciei* [Message of the president of the Hellenic Union of Romania on the occasion of the national day of Greece] (Fotopolos, March 2003, p. 2), or the speech delivered, on the occasion of celebrating 200 years since the beginning of the Greek revolution, by Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, president and deputy of the Hellenic Union of Romania, at the inauguration (on 23 June 2021) of the exhibition of portraits entitled *Personalități grecești care au jucat un rol important în istoria românilor, din antichitate până în zilele noastre* / *Ελληνικές προσωπικότητες που διαδραμάτιζαν σημαντικό ρόλο στην ιστορία των Ρουμάνων, από την αρχαιότητα έως και σήμερα* [Greek personalities that played an important part in the Romanians' history since antiquity until nowadays] (Zisopol, April-June 2021, 31-32).

Anniversary articles were published in *Ελπίδα* or *Ελπίς* by the presidents and members of all Hellenic Communities from Romania, too (Institutul pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 1990).

Many articles from București were written by the journal editors (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2003, pp. 7-10; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2009b, p. 3; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2010b, pp. 8-9), by the editor-in-chief Mariana Alecu (Alec, 2010a, p. 9; Alecu, 2010b, pp. 3-5; Alecu, 2013, pp. 5-6; Alecu, 2014, pp. 6-7; Alecu, 2018a, pp. 28, 31; April-June 2018, pp. 20-21; Alecu, 2019a, pp. 25-

28; Alecu, 2019c, pp. 104-105), but also by Savas Tsokaridis (Tsokaridis, 2004, pp. 10-11), Vasile Calcandi – expressing *Σκέψεις τις παραμονές της μεγάλης εορτής του ελληνικού λαού την Επειτειό της Επανάστασης του 1821* / *Gânduri în preajma marii sărbători a poporului elen la aniversarea Revoluției pentru Independență de la 1821* [Thoughts about the the Hellenic people's great celebration at the anniversary of the revolution for independence in 1821] (Calcandi, 2004, pp. 12-13), Ana Nicola (2004, p. 13), Maria Mihelis (Mihelis, 2004, pp. 13-14), Olimpia Bâdea (Bâdea, 2007, pp. 14-15).

The articles coming from the Hellenic Community in Bârlad were signed by Afrodita Tereza Siriopol and Oltea Rășcanu-Gramaticu, who prebeted *Σελίδες της ιστορίας μας* / *Pagini ale istoriei noastre* [Pages of our history], by Gabriela Bucătaru, but also by the editors of *Ελπίς* (Siriopol, Rășcanu-Gramaticu, 2007, pp. 19-20; Bucătaru, 2016, p. 20; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2009b, pp. 2-3; Alecu, 2014, p. 8).

The very active Hellenic Community in Brașov was led by Vasilis Karalis (1994), Adelina Pitulice Vasilatos (1995-2001) and Lemonița Chiriac (since 2002). Articles sent to *Ελπίς* were written by president Lemonița Chiriac, who also contributed to the publication of the periodical as a translator (using the pen name Lemonia Chiriac Gousopoulou); further authors from Brașov were Elpida Dracopol and school teacher Alina Lazăr (Chiriac, Dracopol, 2004, pp. 19-20; Lazăr, 2006, pp. 11-12). The celebrations of the 25th March were usually held at the famous Cultural Center Reduta in Brașov (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2010b, pp. 9-10; Alecu, 2018, pp. 28-29; Alecu, 2019b, p. 32).

From the Hellenic Community Brăila, led by presidents Vasilis Barzoukas (1990-1993), Alekos Neofitos (1993-1999), Nikolaos Saridakis (1999-2007), Haralambis Karavias (since 2007), beautiful articles were published on *Η 25η Μαρτίου 2003 στη Βραϊλα* / *25 Martie 2003 la Brăila* [The 25th March 2003 in Brăila] by the president (signing with his Romanian name) Nicolae Saridache (Saridache, 2003, pp. 12-13; Saridache, 2004a, pp. 14-16; Saridache, 2004b, pp. 46-48) and Veronica Macri (Macri, 2019, pp. 13-15).

Σκέψεις για την επανάσταση του 1821 / *Gânduri despre revoluția din 1821* [Thoughts about the revolution of 1821] were sent from the Hellenic Community Calafat by president Elena Cornelia Lungu (Lungu, 2004, pp. 22-23). Further articles were dedicated to the *Η ιέρη ημέρα της 25ης Μαρτίου στην Ελληνική Κοινότητα Καλαφάτ* / *Sfânta zi de 25 Martie la Comunitatea Elenă din Calafat* [Holy day of 25 March in the Hellenic Community in Calafat], joined by the traditional greeting “La mulți ani, Grecia! / Χρόνια πολλά, Ελλάδα!” [Happy birthday, Ellada!] (Hellenic Community Calafat, 2004, pp. 56-57; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2009b, pp. 2-3; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2010b, pp. 10-11; Alecu, 2013, pp. 5-6).

From Cluj-Napoca, the founding president Eleni Zoï Idu (1998-2022) and the vice-president Alice Tokalakis (until 2022), as well as the new president Daniel Mocanu (since February 2022) also sent reports on the cultural events developed by the Hellenic Community Cluj during *Η εορτή της ελληνικής άνοιξης* / *Sărbătoarea primăverii elene* [The celebration of the Hellenic spring], which were generally presented in the journal column *Δin viața comunităților/ Από τη ζωή την κοινοτήτων* (From the life of the communities) (Zoï Idu, 2004, pp. 21-22; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2010b, pp. 5-6; Alecu, 2010b, p. 5; Alecu, 2013, p. 7; Alecu, 2018b, pp. 20-21; Alecu, 2019a, p. 30).

Further articles were published on *Ziua Națională a Greciei* / *Εθνική Επετειός της 25ης Μαρτίου* [The national day of Greece, 25 March] by the Hellenic Community in Constanța, led by its president Anton Hiropedi (1997-2010) (Hellenic Community Constanța, 2009, p. 3; Alecu, 2013, p. 5; Alecu, 2018b, pp. 20-21, 21-22; Alecu, 2019a, pp. 28-29; Hellenic Community Constanța, 2023, p. 30).

Ion Vasoyanis from the Hellenic Community of Craiova sent in 2007 a text about how *Οι Έλληνες της Κραγιόβα εόρτασαν την Εθνική Επετειό της Ελλάδας* / *Grecii din Craiova sărbătoresc Ziua Națională a Greciei* [The Greeks from Craiova celebrate the national day of Greece] (Vasoyanis, January-February-March 2007, p. 22), to which other unsigned articles were added (Comunitatea Elenă din Craiova, 2004, p. 51; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2009b, pp. 2-3; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2010b, p. 10; Alecu, 2013, pp. 5-6; Comunitatea Elenă din Craiova, 2013, p. 23; Alecu, 2018b, pp. 20-21; Alecu, 2019a, p. 30).

The Hellenic Community in Galați, together with its president Dimitrios Zamfiropol (since 1991) and Carmen-Pinelopi Papadatu, also greeted *Ο εορτασμός της Εθνικής Επετειός της Ελλάδας στην Ελληνική Κοινότητα Γαλατσίου* / *Ziua Republicii Elene la Galați* [The celebration of the Hellenic

Republic in Galați], expressing *Σκέψεις και συναισθήματα με το ιστορικό γεγονός της 25ης Μαρτίου 1821 / Gânduri și sentimente pentru 25 Martie 1821* [Thoughts and feelings regarding the 25th March 1821] (Papadatu, 2003, pp. 13-14; Zamfiropol, 2004a, pp. 16-17; Zamfiropol, 2004b, pp. 42-46; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2009b, p. 2; Alecu, 2010b, pp. 4-5; Alecu, 2018b, pp. 20-21; Alecu, 2019a, p. 30).

President Călina Bucur of the Hellenic Community Giurgiu presented the local celebrations of the 25th March in 2003, as well (Bucur, 2003, p. 16).

The strong Hellenic Community from Iași, with its remarkable presidents: profesor Andreas Rados (1990-1992) and Marica Pieptu Koza (after 1992), envisaged the numerous commemorative places situated in the county seat Iași and in the surroundings reminding of the fights and battles fought during the first stage of the Greek revolution on Moldavian land (the Church Trei Ierarhi [Three Hierarchs] and the Monastery Galata in Iași, the Monastery Secu), in articles written by Nicoleta Baciupendus, Cristina Ioanidis and, of course, by the latest president Marieta Alexandrescu (Baciupendus, 2003, pp. 15; Ioanidis, 2004, pp. 48-49; Alecu, 2013, p. 7; Alecu, 2014, p. 8; Alexandrescu, 2016, p. 17; Alecu, 2018b, pp. 20-21; Alecu, 2019a, p. 28).

The village Izvoarele (Tulcea county) has an important Greek minority, characterized by well-preserved folk customs. The Hellenic Community in Izvoarele unfolded several cultural events dedicated to the main national day of Ellada (Niculache, 2003, p. 15; Alecu, 2013, p. 7). The president of the Hellenic Community Izvoarele, school teacher Ion Niculache, has also authored a monography dedicated to *Grecii în Dobrogea de Nord: Comuna Izvoarele, județul Tulcea* [The Greeks in Northern Dobrogea. Communal residence Izvoarele, Tulcea county] (Niculache, 2011).

The Hellenic Community Onești (Bacău county), led for short time periods by Simos Luliadis, Maria Mațuka, Iannis Rallis, Vasilis Gourzanopoulos and Takis Kiriakopoulos, was very active over time by organizing *Ο εορτασμός της Εθνικής Επετείου της Ελλάδας στην Ελληνική Κοινότητα Ονέστι / Sărbătorirea aniversării naționale a Eladei la Comunitatea Elenă din Onești* [The celebration of the national anniversary of Ellada in the Hellenic Community in Onești] (Hellenic Community Onești, 2004, p. 58; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2010b, p. 11; Alecu, 2013, p. 7; Alecu, 2018b, p. 20-21; Alecu, 2019a, p. 29).

From the range of presidents leading the Hellenic Community Piatra Neamț: Nicolae Pavlidis (1990-1992), Nicolae Vițu (1947-2021; president between 1992-1996 and since 2004), Iulian Cârstoiu (1996-2003), Filippos Panaiotidis (interim president 2003-2004), it was Iulian Cârstoiu and Nicolae Vițu, who highlighted in their articles *Την σημαντικότερη εορτή της Ελλάδας / Cea mai importantă sărbătoare a Greciei* [Ellada's most important celebration] (Cârstoiu, 2003, p. 16; Vițu, 2007, pp. 10-12; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2010b, p. 9).

At the same time, president Mihaela Maria Cernătescu (since 1994) and member Noni Bachide-Pană of the Hellenic Community Pitești sent their messages and greetings of *La mulți ani, Grecia! / Χρόνια πολλά, Ελλάδα!* [Happy birthday, Ellada!], as well as their *Σκέψεις και συναισθήματα που μας εμπνέει το ιστορικό γεγονός της 25ης Μαρτίου / Gânduri și sentimente pe care ni le trezesc evenimentele istorice ale zilei de 25 Martie, Ziua Națională a Greciei* [Thoughts and feelings inspired by the historical events of the day of 25 March, the national day of Ellada] (Cernătescu, 2003, pp. 14-15; Cernătescu, 2004a, pp. 20-21; Cernătescu, 2004b, pp. 53-54; Cernătescu Paticu, Bachide-Pană, 2007, p. 18; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2009b, p. 4; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2010b, p. 11; Alecu, 2014, p. 8; Alecu, 2018b, pp. 20-21; Alecu, 2019a, p. 29).

The Hellenic Community Prahova in Ploiești, led by its presidents poet Lambros Ziogas (1990-1996), doctor Anton Nicolau (1996-2001), engineer Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol (since 2001), published in the pages of *Ελπίς/Speranța* several news and articles. Among these, we notice the rather philosophical urge stated by Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, *Να μην ξεχνάμε το παρελθόν μας για να χτίσουμε το μέλλον και να μην ξεχνάμε το μέλλον για να ζήσουμε στο παρόν / Să nu ne uităm trecutul pentru a clădi viitorul și să nu uităm viitorul pentru a trăi în prezent* [Let us not forget our past in order to build a future and let us not forget the future in order to live in the present] (Zisopol, 2004, pp. 17-19). Further articles from

Ploiești were written by Mariana Alecu, Ștefania Vasile (Alecu, 2010b, pp. 3-5; Alecu, 2013, p. 6; Alecu, 2018b, p. 20-21; Vasile, 2018, p. 22; Alecu, 2019a, pp. 27, 30; Alecu, 2019c, pp. 104-105).

The long serving founding president of the Hellenic Community Roman (Neamț county) organized in 1990, engineer Boris Cepalis (1930-2021), published in the periodical of the Hellenic Union a couple of encomiastic texts reflecting *Η 25η Μαρτίου απέβη Εθνική Επέτειος της Ελλάδας / 25 Martie 1821, devenită Ziua Națională a Greciei* [25 March 1821, which became the National Day of Greece] (Cepalis, 2004, pp. 24-25; Cepalis, 2007, pp. 12-13).

The Hellenic Community Sulina (Tulcea county), from the mouth of the Danube River, led by the women presidents Irina Rădeanu (1997-2005) and Ecaterina Gheorghe Dracopoulo (after 2005), as well as the Hellenic Community Tulcea, represented by the same president Ecaterina Gheorghe-Dracopoulo (Ekaterini Gheorghe) and by Athena Felea, celebrated *Με τη σκέψη και την καρδιά μας στην Εθνική Επέτειο της Ελλάδας / Gând și suflet de Ziua Națională a Greciei* [Thoughts and feelings on the National Day of Greece] (Gheorghe, 2003, p. 16; Gheorghe, 2004, pp. 23-24; Felea, 2004, pp. 52-53; Gheorghe-Dracopoulo, 2007, pp. 21-22).

Hrisoula Cotenescu, the long-lived president of the Hellenic Community Târgoviște (since April 1990), also praised several times *25η Μαρτίου στην Ελληνική Κοινότητα Ταργκόβιστε / Ziua de 25 Martie la Comunitatea Elenă din Târgoviște* [The day of 25 March in the Hellenic Community in Târgoviște] (Cotenescu, 2004, pp. 54-55; Cotenescu, 2007a, pp. 15-16; Cotenescu, 2007b, pp. 21-22; Alecu, 2010a, p. 9; Alecu, April-June 2018, pp. 20-21; Alecu, 2019a, pp. 28-29).

Finally, from the Hellenic Community in Drobeta Turnu Severin, Irina Popescu and president Paula Scalcău evoked the *Ελληνική άνοιξη στο Τούρνου Σεβερίν / Primăvara Elenă la Turnu Severin* [Hellenic spring in Turnu Severin] (Popescu, 2004, pp. 57-58; Scalcău, 2007, pp. 17-18; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2009b, p. 4; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2010b, p. 10; Alecu, 2018b, pp. 20-21; Alecu, 2019a, pp. 29-30). Moreover, the contributions brought by the young school teacher of history Paula Scalcău to the knowledge of the Hellenic minority on Romanian territory regard the well-received volumes *Grecii din România* [The Greeks from Romania] and *Elenismul în România* [The Hellenism in Romania], as well as a recent supplementary textbook for the study of *Istoria și tradițiile minorității elene din România / Ιστορία και παραδόσεις της ελληνικής μειονότητας στη Ρουμανία* [The history and traditions of the Hellenic minority from Romania] (Scalcău, 2003; Scalcău, 2006; Scalcău, 2023).

7. Political Agenda of the 25th March 1821 in Romania and Greece

The political agenda of the Hellenic officials from Romania and Greece highlights the anniversary moment, too. *Ελπίς* published the festive messages or articles of the Hellenic Union's presidents Sotiris Fotopolos (Fotopolos, 2004, pp. 1-2; Fotopolos, 2006, pp. 11-12; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2007a, second cover and p. 1; Fotopolos, 2007, pp. 13-14; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2007b, p. 3) and PhD engineer Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol (Zisopol, 2009, p. 1; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2018b, p. 4; Zisopol, 2019, p. 3-4; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021b, pp. 3-4; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2022c, pp. 6-8; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2022e, pp. 17-18; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2023b, pp. 3-4).

The issue of January-March 2021 of the much mentioned periodical also conveyed the message of the president of Romania, Klaus Werner Johannis, addressed to the *Romanian citizens of Greek ethnicity*, on the occasion of the bicentennial of the Greek independence (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021d, p. 10). In 2022, the Romanian Department of Culture, Cults and National Minorities, represented by presidential counselor Sergiu Nistor, as well as Livia Neculai, expert of the Romanian Ministry for National Education, also sent messages on the occasion of celebrating the national day of the Hellenic Republic, as reported by the editors

of the Romanian Greeks' periodical (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2022b, pp. 3-4, 14, 16; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2022e, pp. 8-13).

High ranking Greek statesmen also addressed to the Hellenic diaspora on the occasion of 25 March 1821. The messages were signed by the presidents of the Republic of Greece Konstantinos Stefanopoulos (Stefanopoulos, 2003, p. 1; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2004a, p. 59-61), Karolos Papoulias (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2006, p. 1; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2007a, p. 1; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2009c, p. 5; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2010a, p. 1; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2013, p. 1; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2014, p. 1), Prokopios Pavlopoulos (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2018a, p. 1-3; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2019a, p. 1-3) and Katerina Sakellaropoulou, the first woman president of Greece (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2020, p. 1-2; Sakellaropoulou, 2021, p. 1-2; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2022a, p. 1-3; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2023a, p. 1-2).

In an article dedicated to Katerina Sakellaropoulou, the Romanian-Greek historian Apostolos Patelakis outlined the biographical and political profile of the first woman president of the Hellenic Republic. At prime minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis's proposal, she was elected for a five-year mandate by the Greek Parliament on 20 January 2020, with 261 votes out of 300. Born in Thessaloniki (on 30 May 1956), *kyria* Ekaterini Sakellaropoulou is politically independent (not affiliated with any party) and she fulfilled the function of the president of the State Council of Greece (2018-2020). Thus, she became the 13th president of the Hellenic Republic and its 8th president after the restoration of democracy in the country in 1974 (Patelakis, 2020, 82-83).

In president Stefanopoulos's words (2003), on 25 March the Greeks all around the world celebrate, together with the Orthodox Feast of the Annunciation (Ευαγγελισμός της θεοτόκου),

the immortal generation of the year 1821 which assumed, with abnegation, any sacrifice for the people's liberation, after the long night of slavery that lasted for four centuries (Stefanopoulos, 2003, p. 1, our translation).⁶

A simple message to the Greek diaspora on the importance of 25 March means, sometimes, initiating a real national strategy. President of Greece Prokopios Pavlopoulos turned the 2019 anniversary of "our people's *Resurrection*" ("Ανάσταση" του Γένους μας) into "a permanent source of learning and national inspiration for each Greek". He drew out 6 force-ideas that crossed the history up to the present (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2019a, pp. 1-3):

1. although the 1821 "national uprising of the Greeks" (*Εθνεγερσία των Ελλήνων*) broke out in an unpropitious political moment,
2. yet, influenced by the American and French revolutions (of 1776 and 1789),
3. it grounded on the tight connections between the Greeks from Greece and those from diaspora, while numerous historical personalities (Adamantios Koraïs, Rigas Feraios, Ioannis Kapodistrias) and especially the Greek expats in Odessa, Vienna, Sankt Petersburg, Paris, Belgrade, Trieste and in several further diaspora communities enrolled in the fight for liberty;
4. therefore, the example of the 1821 forerunners must inspire both "us, the Greeks living in the country, and you, the Greeks living anywhere on the earth", in order to promote the motherland's interests in "the long term future of Greece and of our great European Family";

⁶ Original source text: "η αθάνατη γενιά του '21 που, με ανιδιοτέλεια, ανέλαβε κάθε θυσία για την απελευθέρωση του έθνους, μετά τη μακρά νύχτα της σκλαβιάς που διήρκεσε τέσσερις αιώνες / generația nemuritoare a anului 1821 care, cu abnegație, și-a asumat orice sacrificiu pentru eliberarea neamului, după lunga noapte de sclavie care a durat patru secole".

5. quoting the poet Andreas Kalvos (*Ode of Samos*): “Liberty needs Virtue and Courage”, the president of Greece called for “fulfilling the mission we have towards our Motherland and History”;

6. nowadays Greece, “a pillar of peace and security in the Balkans and South-Eastern Mediterranean”, aspires to contribute “to constructing a Europe of federal type, on terms of representative democracy and respect for the state of law”.

Then president Prokopios Pavlopoulos defined 4 principles that govern today Greece’s international behaviour regarding its problematic neighbours, as the country refuses to admit the “limited sovereignty” of Cyprus and conditions its own support for the adhesion to the European Union of Turkey, North Macedonia and Albania by observing the borders, the international treaties and the rights of the national Greek minorities living in the respective countries (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2019a, pp. 1-3).

Ελπίς also hosted greetings sent by remarkable Philhellenic Romanian personalities. Let us mention only the extremely interesting interview, which the often cited philo-Romanian professor Apostolos Patelakis from Thessaloniki had with the Transylvanian poet Ion Brad (1929-2019), Romania’s ambassador in Greece for 9 years (1973-1982), who later translated and edited a comprehensive anthology of *Poeți greci contemporani* [Contemporary Greek poets] (Patelakis, 2013, pp. 36-38).

In 2021, when Greece and its diaspora all over the world celebrated 200 years from the Greek revolution for independence, in spite of the Covid pandemic, the periodical of the Hellenic Union of Romania issued a special number in January-March 2021, which was almost entirely dedicated to the bicentennial anniversary. The front cover of *Ελπίς/Speranța* presented the usual wishes: *Χρόνια πολλά, Ελλάδα!* / *La mulți ani, Grecia!* [Happy Birthday, Ellada!], placed beneath the logo of the Hellenic Union and the number 200, whose last two digits were drawn in such a way as to suggest the infinity sign (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021a, front cover).



Image 5. *Ελπίς/Speranța*, January-March 2021, front cover.

Out of the 112 pages of this anniversary issue, almost a half of them present official messages and a large range of activities marking the national day of Greece (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021a, pp. 1-2; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021b, pp. 3-4; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021c, pp. 5-9; Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021d, pp. 10-21; Alecu, 2021a, pp. 40-65; Alecu, 2021b, pp. 66-70, 88; Alecu, 2021c, pp. 100-112). The messages were addressed by the president of Romania, Klaus Werner Iohannis (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021d, p. 10); the general secretary of the General Secretariat of Public Diplomacy and Hellenic Diaspora, Ioannis Chrissoulakis (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021d, p. 11); the ambassador of the Hellenic Republic in Romania, Sofia Grammata (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021d, pp. 12-14); the undersecretary of state from the Department for Interethnic Relations of the Romanian Government, Ahmet Aledin (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021d, pp. 14-15); the senior counselor at the Romanian Ministry of Culture, Aurora Caravasile (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021d, pp. 16-17); the mayor of Asprogyros (Greece), Nikolaos Meletiou (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021d, pp. 17-18); the journalist from the Greek radio and television ERT – “Voice of Greece” (*Ελληνική Ραδιοτηλεόραση* – “*Φωνή της Ελλάδας*”), Athanasios Houpis (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021d, pp. 19-20); the rector of the University of Piraeus, Angelos Kotios (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021d, pp. 20-21).

At the bicentenary of the Greek revolution of 1821, on 23 February 2021, the Greek ambassador in București, Sofia Grammata, joined by the president of the Hellenic Union of Romania, Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, paid a visit to the Hellenic Community in Iași, led by Marieta Alexandrescu (Coman & Vulpescu, 2021, pp. 49-50; Alecu, 2021b, pp. 66-67).

On the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the Greek revolution and of the 140th anniversary of bilateral Greek-Romanian diplomatic relations, on 18 March 2021 the Greek Embassy in București organized a special event. Speeches were held by Sofia Grammata (the Greek ambassador in Romania), Bogdan Aurescu (Romanian minister of Foreign Affairs), Tudor Dinu (professor and head of the Department for Neogreek Language at the University in București), Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol (president of and parliamentary deputy for the Hellenic Union), Claudiu Năsui (Romanian minister of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Youth), Pantelis Giannoulis (head of the Economy and Trade Bureau of the Hellenic Embassy), Christodoulos Seferis (head of the Bilateral Greek-Romanian Chamber of Commerce), Antonis Giokas (manager of the Black Sea Suppliers), Georgios Athanasopoulos (vicedirector of the Vista Bank), Michalis Trakadas (general director of the Cables-Icme Ecab), Christos Gonis (representing Chipta Romania), Nikos Koliopoulos (CEO of the Hellenic Business Center Property Development), Georgios Sofanos (representing Sof Medica), Haris Teocharis (Greek minister of Tourism) (Konstantelou, 2021, pp. 68-70).

In the same winter and spring of 2021, the intense activities carried out by the president and deputy of the Hellenic Union, Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, regarded further preparations for celebrating the bicentennial of the Greek revolution of 1821. Thus, on 7 January, president Zisopol met Ambassador Sofia Grammata, debating the program of events to be dedicated to the national day of Ellada. On 10 January, under his editorship, the album, celebrating 200 years since the beginning of *Revoluția greacă pe pământ românesc / Η Ελληνική επανάσταση στις Ρουμανικές Ηγεμονίες* [The Greek Revolution in the Romanian Principalities], was ready for printing. Between 8 February - 22 March, the Hellenic Union promoted a feature film, *Revoluția Elenă pe pământ românesc* [The Hellenic Revolution in the Romanian Lands], created on the idea of Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, who also presented it in the television show *Kalimera*, on 8 February. On 24 February, president Zisopol together with ambassador Grammata paid a visit to Iași, laying flower bouquets at the Trei Ierarhi [Three hierarchs] Church - the place where the Greek revolution had begun and where the first headquarters of Alexandros Ypsilantis had been established (later the Etairist headquarters were moved to the Monastery Galata in the same city). On 27 February in Iași, the president of the Hellenic Union of Romania and the president of the Hellenic Community in Iași, Marieta Alexandrescu, hosted an online symposium on *The Beginnings of the Greek Revolution of Liberation*. On 17 and 24 March, deputy D.G. Zisopol presented in the Chamber of Deputies of the Romanian Parliament in București his own political statement, as well as the message of the president of Greece, Katerina Sakellaropolou, regarding the bicentennial anniversary of the National Day of Greece. On 18, 24 and 25 March, he participated on further Romanian and Greek television shows, promoting the celebration of 200 years since the beginning of the Greek revolution of 1821. Deputy D.G. Zisopol agreed with the mayor Daniel Nicodim of Ploiești (18 March) to have, on 25 March 2021, the buildings situated on the central avenue of the respective locality illuminated in white and blue; on the night of 25/26 March, the building of the Romanian Parliament in București was also illuminated in the colors of the Hellenic flag, as a symbolic sign of friendship between Romania and Greece. On 21 and 23 March, president Dragoș Zisopol visited Drăgășani, joined by high-ranking Romanian and Greek politicians. On 25 March, flowers bouquets were layed by president Dragoș Zisopol at the statue of Rigas Velesinlis, at the Greek Church Buna Vestire [Annunciation] in București, where he also attended the *Te Deum* held for the Greek heroes fallen in the revolution. On 25 March in

Câmpina and on 27 March in Brăila, the president of the Hellenic Union of Romania took part in the cultural events organized by the Hellenic Communities Prahova and Brăila, by the mayor of Brăila, Viorel Marian Dragomir, and by Nicușor Ciocan, prefect of the Brăila county. On the last-mentioned day of 27 March, deputy Zisopol attended the anniversary *Te Deum* held in the Greek church from Galați. (Alec, 2021c, pp. 100-101, 105, 108-112).

In 2022, the president and parliamentary deputy of the Hellenic Union of Romania, Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, participated, on 19 March, in the commemoration of the Greek heroes fallen in 1821 in the battle of Drăgășani. According to the agreement realised with the City Hall from Ploiești, on 22 March a 70 square meter Hellenic flag was raised on the building of the Prahova Prefecture in Ploiești. Under the aegis of the Hellenic Union, coordinated by president Zisopol himself, a tribute concert of classical music, sustained by the Ploiești Philharmonic Paul Constantinescu and conducted by Anastasios Symeonidis, was organized in the C.A. Rosetti Hall of Romania's Parliament Palace in București on 25 March 2022. This event was attended by several diplomats and consuls of Greece, Cyprus, Slovenia, Portugal, Germany, Montenegro, Austria, Ireland, Spain, Great Britain, Italy, Slovakia, Hungary, Estonia etc. (Alec, 2021c, pp. 146, 148-149). Ambassador Sofia Grammata and counselor for Education Katerina Makrogiannaki, from the Embassy of Greece in București, also sent messages to the Hellenic Union of Romania on celebrating the 25th of March (Alec, 2022a, pp. 5-6; Alec, 2022b, p.15).

Finally, in 2023, on 26 February the president of the Hellenic Union of Romania, Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, and Marieta Alexandrescu, vicepresident of the Hellenic Union and president of the Hellenic Community in Iași, laid flowers at the Church Trei Ierarhi in the former capital of Moldavia, where the Philiki Etairia had started its rebellion in 1821. On 12 March, D.G. Zisopol, joined by the Greek ambassador Sofia Grammata paid the usual March visit to Drăgășani. On 14 March, the parliament deputy Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol made a political statement in the session of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies, on the National Day of Greece. On 18 March, the president of the Hellenic Union, along with presidents and members of the Hellenic Communities from Bârlad, Iași, Onești, Piatra Neamț, Prahova and Roman made another visit to the Secu Monastery, laying wreaths for the heroes fallen in 1821. On 23 March, the great concert of the Paul Constantinescu Philharmonic took place in Ploiești. On 26 March, president Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol attended, in București, the *Te Deum* held in the Church Bunavestire and the symphonic concert organized at the Romanian Athenaeum, where the youth symphony orchestra from Thessaloniki performed. On 28 March, the volume written by Roderick Beaton, *The Greeks, a Global History* (2023), and translated into Romanian by Livia Szasz, was presented by Constantin Bălăceanu Stolnici, member of the Romanian Academy. On 30 March, president Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol ended the celebrations of the National Day of Greece by a lecture organized in the middle of the Hellenic Community in Onești (Alec, 2023c, pp. 83, 86-89).

8. Final Remarks

Few European countries (if any) could be so proud as Romania of their domestic policy of observing the rights of their national minorities. The above shown example of the Hellenic Union's Greeks from Romania, who represent but one of the 18 national minorities supported by the Romanian state with school, church and cultural programmes unfolded in their own mother tongue, is illustrative for a successful country strategy in dealing with national minorities.

On the other hand, during the current period of migrations, another good example for a country protecting its own conationals from abroad is offered by Greece. The latter is

intensively sustaining and officially defending the Greek diaspora by any means, and even by special created agencies, like the World Hellenic Interparliamentary Association (*Παγκόσμια Διακοινοβουλευτική Ένωση Ελληνισμού*, PaDEE).

During the 10th general assembly meeting of 20-23 July 2015 in Athens, Romanian deputy Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, member of the PaDEE's board of directors (*Διοικητικού Συμβουλίου*), presented the Hellenic Union as a good model to be followed by the politicians of the Greek diaspora, pointing out the organization's values and main activities of promoting the Hellenism. The special achievements of the Hellenic Union of Romania include: 1. the first Olympic Contest of Hellenism in the world, initiated by the Hellenic Union and organised, under the aegis of the Romanian and Greek Parliaments, between 10-14 September 2014; 2. introducing in schools from Romania of the regular study of the Neo-Greek language as mother tongue and as modern language; 3. promoting the Hellenism in mass media (tourism, cultural products etc.); 4. organising the 15th edition (in 2015) of the Festival of Hellenism in Romania, and others (Alecă, 2015, pp. 6-8).

Due to the consolidated position and role played by the Hellenic Union of Romania, its president Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol has been recently re-elected by the general assembly of the PaDEE in the board of directors of the World Hellenic Interparliamentary Association (2021).

The World Hellenic Interparliamentary Association (*Παγκόσμια Διακοινοβουλευτική Ένωση Ελληνισμού*, PaDEE) is an apolitical organism created in 1996, including parliamentarians of Greek descent from the Hellenic diaspora. In 2005 the Hellenic organization PaDEE was recognized by law as a legal entity. Nowadays PaDEE counts 85 members from all over the world (USA, Australia, Canada, Germany, Romania, South Africa, Switzerland, Zimbabwe etc.). Its main goal is to consolidate the relations of friendship and cooperation between Greece and the members' countries. The board (council) of directors of the World Hellenic Interparliamentary Association is chosen for two years by the general assembly. A report of the meeting of the general assembly of PaDEE, which took place online, on 9 April 2021 (during the pandemic), was delivered, in form of a political statement, in the Romanian Chamber of Deputies by Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, president and deputy of the Hellenic Union, on 5 May 2021 (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2021e, pp. 94-95).

The achievements of the Hellenic Union of Romania have no precedence, indeed, and no term of comparison in further countries with Greek diaspora, while the exceptional situation can surely be explained by the extremely favorable state policy, even unique in Europe and in the world, promoted by our country, Romania, towards its national minorities. In fact, the long history of *140 de ani de la stabilirea relațiilor diplomatice româno-elene (1880-2020) / 140 χρόνια από την εγκαθίδρυση ρουμανο-ελληνικών διπλωματικών σχέσεων (1880-2020)* [140 years since the establishment of the Romanian-Greek diplomatic relations (1880-2020)], revealed by Florin Stan and Apostolos Patelakis in their latest book, speaks for itself about the excellent political and diplomatic mutual connections between the Romanian and Greek states (Stan & Patelakis, 2020).

We notice that in the current political and cultural language, used either by organizations or by representatives of the Greeks living today in Greece, Romania or elsewhere, *Hellenism* (*Ελληνισμός*) is not at all defined, as the European non-Greeks have learned at school, as regarding the study or imitation of ancient Greek culture during and after antiquity. In fact, the native Greeks of today perceive Hellenism as a range of permanent and updated values, principles, ideas, with a pronounced ethnic and national character, guiding the modern and contemporary Greek (Hellenic) way of life.

This is a beautiful declaration of membership to the modern and contemporary Greek nation. But there is a dark side of the moon, too. In Greece, Hellenism also includes the language community of all Greek (Hellenic) speaking individuals, regardless of their mother

tongue and of their not officially recognised nationality: Aromanians/Vlachs, Macedonians/Slavs, Arvanites/Albanians and others. Thus, modern and contemporary Greece has turned the important cultural vector of Hellenism into a tool of linguistic and ethnic oppression for non-Greek national identities and national minorities.

Apparently, further words of Neo-Hellenic etymology like *patriots* (πατριώτης) and *patrída* (πατρίδα) seem to become senseless in the age of globalization. And yet, the Greeks' unfatigable cult of heroes (ἥρωες) and martyrs (μάρτυρας), as well as the vividly assumed celebrations of the national day of Greece on 25 March stand for and prove not only the humanity's strong need of faith, but also the meaningful power of nations and national identities in Europe and all around the world (Cosma, 2022b, pp. 1029-1057).

In the end, let us quote from the Hellenic Union's message of 2009, giving voice both to the typical Greek philosophical question on the sense of national celebrations in the nowadays world, and to a proper answer:

The Greek Nobel Prize laureate Giorgos Seferis⁷ was asking himself: "What are poets doing in an ungrateful world?". To the same effect, someone might ask: "What sense can national anniversaries still have in a world continually heading for globalization?" National anniversaries are indispensable, because they are feasts of faith, so useful not only to the nations celebrating them, but also to the history itself. The national celebrations get a much more general sense if they surpass the national frames, turning into manifestations with ample vibration, essentially contributing to man's education for the better. (Uniunea Elenă din România, 2009a, p. 1.)⁸

References:

- Alecu, M. (2010a, January–March). La mulți ani, Grecia! / Χρόνια πολλά, Ελλάδα! [Happy birthday, Ellada!]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 5–9.
- Alecu, M. (2010b, April–June). 25 Martie, sărbătoarea națională a Greciei / 25 Μαρτίου, εθνική εορτή της Ελλάδας [25 March, the National Day of Greece]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 3–5.
- Alecu, M. (2013, January–March). La mulți ani, Grecia! / Χρόνια πολλά, Ελλάδα! [Happy birthday, Ellada!]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 5–7.
- Alecu, M. (2014, January–March). Ziua Națională a Greciei – 25 Martie / Εθνική Επέτειος της Ελλάδας [The National Day of Greece – 25 March]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 6–8.

⁷ The Greek national poet Giorgos Seferis (1900-1971) was awarded the prestigious Nobel Prize for Literature in 1963. The Nobel Prize jury justified this choice due to the poet's "eminent lyrical writing, inspired by a deep feeling for the Hellenic world of culture".

⁸ Original source text: "Ο βραβευμένος με Νόμπελ, ο Έλληνας Γιώργος Σεφέρης, ρώτησε: Τι αναζητούν οι ποιητές σε έναν αχάριστο κόσμο;» Στο ίδιο πνεύμα, θα μπορούσε κανείς να ρωτήσει: 'Ποιο είναι το νόημα των εθνικών επετείων σε έναν κόσμο που κινείται συνεχώς προς την παγκοσμιοποίηση'; Οι εθνικές επέτειοι είναι απαραίτητες επειδή αποτελούν εορτασμούς πίστης, ωφέλιμες τόσο για τα έθνη που τις γιορτάζουν όσο και για την ίδια την ιστορία. Οι εθνικές εορτές αποκτούν πολύ γενικότερο νόημα αν υπερβούν το εθνικό πλαίσιο, μετατρέποντάς τες σε γεγονότα με ευρεία απήχηση που συμβάλλουν ουσιαστικά στη διαπαιδαγώγηση του ανθρώπου προς το καλύτερο. / Laureatul premiului Nobel, grecul Giorgios Seferis, se întreba: 'Ce caută poezii într-o lume nerecunoscătoare?' În același sens, cineva ar putea întreba: 'Ce rost mai au aniversările naționale într-o lume ce continuu se îndreaptă spre globalizare?' Aniversările naționale sunt indispensabile pentru că sunt sărbători ale credinței, de folos atât națiunilor ce le sărbătorească și istoriei în sine. Sărbătorile naționale capătă un sens mult mai general dacă depășesc cadrul național, transformându-se în manifestări cu ample rezonanțe care contribuie esențial la educarea omului în bine.

- Alecu, M. (2015, July–September). A X-a Adunare Generală a Uniunii Mondiale Interparlamentare, 20–23 iulie 2015, Atena / Η δέκατη Γενική Συνέλευση της Παγκόσμιας Διακοινοβουλευτικής Ένωσης του Ελληνισμού [The 10th General Assembly of the Interparliamentary World Union, 20–23 July 2015, Athens]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 6–8.
- Alecu, M. (2018a, January–March). Alte evenimente / Άλλες εκδηλώσεις [Other events]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 28, 31.
- Alecu, M. (2018b, April–June). Din viața comunităților / Από τη ζωή των κοινοτήτων [From the communities' life]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 20–29.
- Alecu, M. (2019a, January–March). Ziua Națională a Greciei / Εθνική Επέτειος της 25ης Μαρτίου [The National Day of Greece, 25 March]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 25–30.
- Alecu, M. (2019b, January–March). Serbarea Zilei Naționale a Greciei – Centrul Cultural Reduta – 15 martie / Η Εθνική Επέτειος της Ελλάδας [The celebration of the National Day of Greece – Cultural Center Reduta – 15 March]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 32.
- Alecu, M. (2019c, January–March). Din activitatea deputatului Uniunii Elene din România, dr. ing. Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol / Από την ατζέντα του Βουλευτή της Ένωσης Ελλήνων Ρουμανίας, Δρ. μηχ. Ντράγκος Γκαμπριέλ Ζησόπουλος [From the activity of the deputy of the Hellenic Union of Romania, Eng. Dr. Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 104–105.
- Alecu, M. (2021a, January–March). Din viața comunităților / Από τη ζωή των κοινοτήτων [From the life of the communities]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 40–65.
- Alecu, M. (2021b, January–March). Vizită cu semnificație istorică în municipiul Iași / Ιστορικά σημαντική επίσκεψη στο Ιάσιο [A visit with historical relevance to Iași]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 66–67.
- Alecu, M. (2021c, January–March). Din activitatea deputatului Uniunii Elene din România, dr. ing. Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol / Από την ατζέντα του Βουλευτή της Ένωσης Ελλήνων Ρουμανίας, Δρ. μηχ. Ντράγκος Γκαμπριέλ Ζησόπουλος [From the activity of the deputy of the Hellenic Union of Romania, Eng. Dr. Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 101–112.
- Alecu, M. (2022a, January–March). Mesajul E.S. doamnei Sofia Grammata, ambasadorul Republicii Elene în România / Μήνυμα Α.Ε. Σοφίας Γραμμάτα, Πρέσβη της Ελλάδας στη Ρουμανία [Message of Her Excellency Mrs. Sofia Grammata, Ambassador of the Hellenic Republic in Romania]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 5–6.
- Alecu, M. (2022b, January–March). Mesajul doamnei Katerina Makrogiannaki, coordonator al educației – Ambasada București / Μήνυμα από την κυρία Κατερίνα Μακρογιαννάκη, Συντονίστρια Εκπαίδευσης – Πρεσβεία Βουκουρεστίου [Message of Mrs. Katerina Makrogiannaki, Education Coordinator at the Embassy in Bucharest]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 15.
- Alecu, M. (2022c, January–March). Din activitatea deputatului Uniunii Elene din România, dr. ing. Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol / Από την ατζέντα του Βουλευτή της Ένωσης Ελλήνων Ρουμανίας, Δρ. μηχ. Ντράγκος Γκαμπριέλ Ζησόπουλος [From the activity of the deputy of the Hellenic Union of Romania, Eng. Dr. Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 131–151.
- Alecu, M. (2023a, January–March). Ziua Națională a Republicii Elene – 25 martie / Η Εθνική Επέτειος της Ελληνικής Δημοκρατίας – 25 Μαρτίου [The national day of the Hellenic Republic – 25 March]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 5–9.

- Alecu, M. (2023b, January–March). Din viața comunităților / Από τη ζωή των κοινοτήτων [From the life of the communities]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 22–52.
- Alecu, M. (2023c, January–March). Din activitatea deputatului Uniunii Elene din România, dr. ing. Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol / Από την ατζέντα του Βουλευτή της Ένωσης Ελλήνων Ρουμανίας, Δρ. μηχ. Ντράγκος Γκαμπριέλ Ζησόπουλος [From the activity of the deputy of the Hellenic Union of Romania, Eng. Dr. Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 75–89.
- Alecu, M. (2023, April–June). Noutăți din Grecia și din diaspora elenă: Revoluția greacă din 1821 și grecii Americii / Νέα από την Ελλάδα και την ελληνική διασπορά. Η Ελληνική Επανάσταση του 1821 και οι Έλληνες της Αμερικής [News from Greece and the Hellenic diaspora: The Greek Revolution of 1821 and Greek Americans]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 72–73.
- Alexandrescu, M. (2016, April–June). Alte evenimente. Iași / Άλλες εκδηλώσεις. Το Ιάσιο [Other events. Iași]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 17.
- Baciu-Pendus, N. (2003, March). Drum de suflet la Mănăstirea Secu [A spiritual journey to Secu Monastery]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 10–15.
- Bălinișteanu, O. (2026, January 23). 24 ianuarie, prima sărbătoare națională a românilor. Interviu cu istoricul Nicolae Mihai [24 January, the first national day of the Romanians. Interview with historian Nicolae Mihai]. Ziarul Lumina. <https://ziarulumina.ro/educatie-si-cultura/interviu/24-ianuarie-prima-sarbatoare-nationala-a-romanilor-203451.html>
- Bâdea, O. (2007, January–March). O εορτασμός της Εθνικής Επετείου της Ελλάδας στα περιφερειακά παραρτήματα της Ένωσης / Sărbătorirea Zilei Naționale a Greciei la filialele teritoriale ale Uniunii. Filiala București a Uniunii Elene [Celebration of Greece's national day at the Union's regional branches. The Bucharest branch of the Hellenic Union]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 14–15.
- Beaton, R. (2023). *Grecii: O istorie globală* [The Greeks: A global history]. Editura Trei.
- Boangiu, G. (2017). Povestirea vieții – Identitate și alteritate pe parcursul războiului civil elen din 1946–1949 [Life narratives – Identity and alterity during the Hellenic Civil War, 1946–1949]. *Incursiuni în imaginar*, 8(1), 23–51.
- Bucătaru, G. (2016, April–June). Alte evenimente / Άλλες εκδηλώσεις [Other events]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 20.
- Bucur, C. (2003, March). Comunitatea Elenă Giurgiu / Ελληνική Κοινότητα Giurgiu [The Hellenic Community in Giurgiu]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 16.
- Calcandi, V. (2004, March). Gânduri în preajma marii sărbători a poporului elen la aniversarea Revoluției pentru Independență de la 1821 / Σκέψεις τις παραμονές της μεγάλης εορτής του ελληνικού λαού την επέτειο της Επανάστασης του 1821 [Reflections on the eve of the Greek people's great national holiday, marking the anniversary of the 1821 War of Independence]. *Ελπίδα*, 12–13.
- Camera Deputaților. (2016). *Uniunea Elenă din România – legislaturi* [Hellenic Union of Romania – legislative terms]. <http://www.cdep.ro/pls/parlam/structura2015.fp?idp=23&cam=2&leg=2016>

- Cârstoiu, I. (2003, March). Comunitatea Elenă Piatra Neamț / Ελληνική Κοινότητα Piatra Neamț [The Hellenic Community in Piatra Neamț]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 16.
- Cepalis, B. (2004, March). 25 Martie 1821, devenită Ziua Națională a Greciei / Η 25η Μαρτίου απέβη Εθνική Επέτειος της Ελλάδας [25 March 1821, which became the National Day of Greece]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 24–25.
- Cepalis, B. (2007, January–March). Sărbătoare istorică și spiritual / Ιστορική και πνευματική εορτή [Historical and spiritual celebration]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 12–13.
- Cernătescu, M. M. (2003, March). Ziua Națională la Comunitatea Elenă Pitești / Ο εορτασμός της Εθνικής Επετείου της Ελλάδας στην Ελληνική Κοινότητα Πιτεστίου [The national day in the Hellenic Community in Pitești]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 14–15.
- Cernătescu, M. M. (2004a, March). Gânduri și sentimente pe care ni le trezesc evenimentele istorice ale zilei de 25 Martie, Ziua Națională a Greciei / Σκέψεις και συναισθήματα που μας εμπνέει το ιστορικό γεγονός της 25ης Μαρτίου [Thoughts and feelings inspired by the historical events of 25 March, the National Day of Greece]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 20–21.
- Cernătescu, M. M. (2004b, April–June). Ziua Națională a Greciei la Comunitatea Elenă Pitești / Η Εθνική Επέτειος της Ελλάδας στην Ελληνική Κοινότητα Πιτεστίου [The National Day of Greece at the Hellenic Community in Pitești]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 53–54.
- Cernătescu Paticu, M., & Bachide-Pană, N. (2007, January–March). Cea de-a 186-a aniversare a Zilei Naționale a Eladei / Η 186η Εθνική Επέτειος της Ελλάδας [The 186th anniversary of Greece's national day]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 18.
- Chiriac, L., & Dracopol, E. (2004, March). Sfântă sărbătoare și bucurie / Ιερή χαρά και γλέντι [A sacred celebration and joy]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 19–20.
- Coman, F., & Vulpescu, B. (2021, January–March). Vizita doamnei ambasador / Η επίσκεψη της κυρίας Πρέσβη [The visit of the Ambassador]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 49–50.
- Comunitatea Elenă din Calafat. (2004, April–June). Η ιερή ημέρα της 25ης Μαρτίου στην Ελληνική Κοινότητα Καλαφάτ / Sfânta zi de 25 Martie la Comunitatea Elenă din Calafat [The holy day of 25 March in the Hellenic Community in Calafat]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 56–57.
- Comunitatea Elenă din Constanța. (2009, March–May). Din viața comunităților / Από τη ζωή των κοινοτήτων μας [From the life of our communities]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 3.
- Comunitatea Elenă din Constanța. (2023, January–March). Rămas bun, domnule Anton Hiropedi! / Καλό παράδεισο, κύριε Άντον Χιροπέδι! [Farewell, Mr. Anton Hiropedi!]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 30.
- Comunitatea Elenă din Craiova. (2004, April–June). 25η Μαρτίου στην Ελληνική Κοινότητα Κραϊόβας / 25 Martie la Comunitatea Elenă din Craiova [25 March in the Hellenic Community in Craiova]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 51.
- Comunitatea Elenă din Craiova. (2013, January–March). C. E. / E. K. Craiova [The Hellenic Community in Craiova]. *Ελπίς*, 23.
- Comunitatea Elenă din Onești. (2004, April–June). Ο εορτασμός της Εθνικής Επετείου της Ελλάδας στην Ελληνική Κοινότητα Ονέστι / Sărbătorirea Aniversării Naționale a Eladei la Comunitatea

- Elenă din Onești [Celebration of Greece's national anniversary in the Hellenic Community in Onești]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 58.
- Cosma, E. (2014). *Austrian Consular Representative Offices in Moldavia, Wallachia and Serbia (1782-1848)*. Editura Argonaut/Symphologic Publishing.
- Cosma, E. (2021). Uniunea Elenă din România (UER) și publicațiile sale: Trei decenii de intensă publicistică româno-elenă (1991–2021) [The Hellenic Union of Romania (UER) and its publications: Three decades of intensive Romanian–Hellenic publishing (1991–2021)]. *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie George Barițiu din Cluj. Series Historica*, 60, 377–392.
- Cosma, E. (2022a, January–March). O grecoaică adevărată, o româncă patriotă: Eleni Idu (30 martie 1941–22 februarie 2022) / Μια πραγματική Ελληνίδα, μια Ρουμάννα πατριώτισσα: Ελένη Ίντου (30 Μαρτίου 1941–22 Φεβρουαρίου 2022) [A true Greek woman, a devoted Romanian patriot: Eleni Idu (30 March 1941–22 February 2022)]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 36–39.
- Cosma, E. (2022b). *Despre rostul patriotismului în lumea de azi: Grecii din România și sărbătoarea lor națională (25 martie 1821)* [About patriotism and its meaning today. The Greeks in Romania and their national day, 25 March 1821]. In I. Bolovan & M. G. Ciot (Eds.), *Românii și România în context european: Istorie și diplomatie: Omagiu profesorului Vasile Pușcaș la împlinirea vârstei de 70 de ani* [The Romanians and Romania in a European context: History and diplomacy: Homage to professor Vasile Pușcaș turning 70] (pp. 1029-1057). Editura Centrul de Studii Transilvane.
- Cotenescu, H. (2004, April–June). Ziua de 25 Martie la Comunitatea Elenă din Târgoviște / 25η Μαρτίου στην Ελληνική Κοινότητα Τάργκοβιστε [25 March in the Hellenic Community in Târgoviște]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 54–55.
- Cotenescu, H. (2007a, January–March). Ziua Națională a Eladei / Η Εθνική Επέτειος της Ελλάδας [The National Day of Greece]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 15–16.
- Cotenescu, H. (2007b, January–March). Gând și suflet de Ziua Națională a Greciei / Με τη σκέψη και την καρδιά μας στην Εθνική Επέτειο της Ελλάδας [With our thoughts and hearts on the National Day of Greece]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 21–22.
- Felea, A. (2004, April–June). 25 Martie la Comunitatea Elenă Tulcea / 25η Μαρτίου στην Ελληνική Κοινότητα Τούλτσεα [25 March in the Hellenic Community in Tulcea]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 52–53.
- Fotopolos, S. (2003, March). Μήνυμα του Προέδρου της Ένωσης Ελλήνων Ρουμανίας με την ευκαιρία της 25ης Μαρτίου / Mesajul Președintelui Uniunii Elene din România cu ocazia Zilei Naționale a Greciei [Message of the president of the Hellenic Union of Romania on Greece's national day]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 2.
- Fotopolos, S. (2004, March). Το μήνυμα που απηύθυνε ο Πρόεδρος και Βουλευτής της Ένωσης Ελλήνων Ρουμανίας με την ευκαιρία της 25ης Μαρτίου – Εθνική Επέτειος της Ελλάδας / Mesajul Președintelui și Deputatului Uniunii Elene din România cu prilejul Zilei Naționale a Eladei – 25 Martie [Message of the president and member of parliament of the Hellenic Union of Romania on Greece's national day – 25 March]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 1–2.
- Fotopolos, S. (2006, November–December). 25 Μαρτίου 1821 / 25 martie 1821 [25 March 1821]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 11–12.

- Fotopolos, S. (2007, January–March). Στο Δραγάτσάνι εορτάστηκε η Εθνική Επέτειος της Ελλάδας / La Drăgășani s-a sărbătorit Ziua Națională a Eladei [The National Day of Greece was celebrated in Drăgășani]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 13–14.
- Gheorghe, E. (March 2003). *Ελληνική Κοινότητα Tulcea / Comunitatea Elenă Tulcea* [Hellenic Community Tulcea]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 16.
- Gheorghe, E. (2004, March). Σκέψεις σχετικά με την 25η Μαρτίου, Εθνική Επέτειος της Ελλάδας / Gânduri referitoare la Ziua Națională a Greciei – ziua de 25 Martie [Thoughts on Greece's national day – 25 March]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 23–24.
- Gheorghe-Dracopulo, E. (2007, January–March). Με τη σκέψη και την καρδιά μας στην Εθνική Επέτειο της Ελλάδας / Gând și suflet de Ziua Națională a Greciei [With our thoughts and hearts on the National Day of Greece]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 21–22.
- Institutul Național de Statistică. (2011). *Recensământul populației și locuințelor. Volumul II: Populația stabilă (rezidentă) – structura etnică și confesională* [Population and housing census. Volume II: Stable (resident) population – ethnic and confessional structure]. <http://www.recensamantromania.ro/noutati/volumul-ii-populatia-stabila-rezidenta-structura-etnica-si-confesionala/>
- Institutul Național de Statistică. (2021). *Recensământul populației și locuințelor. Rezultate definitive: Caracteristici etno-culturale și demografice* [Population and housing census. Final results: Ethno-cultural and demographic characteristics]. <https://www.recensamantromania.ro/rezultate-rpl-2021/rezultate-definitive/>
- Institutul pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale. (n.d.). *Minoritatea elenă 1990* [The Hellenic minority in 1990]. <https://ispmn.gov.ro/node/minoritatea-elen-1990>
- Ioanidis, C. (2004, April–June). 25η Μαρτίου - συγκινήσεις και συναισθήματα / 25 Martie – emoții și simțiri [25 March – Emotions and feelings]. *Ελπίδα/Speranța*, 48–49.
- Konstantelou, I. (2021, January–March). Eveniment organizat de Ambasada Republicii Elene în România / Εκδήλωση της Ελληνικής Πρεσβείας στη Ρουμανία [Event organized by the Embassy of the Hellenic Republic in Romania]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 68–70.
- Lazăr, A. (2006, November–December). Μπρασόβ – 25 Μαρτίου 2006, ο εορτασμός της Εθνικής Επετείου των Ελλήνων απανταχού της γης / Brașov – 25 martie 2006, ziua națională a grecilor de pretutindeni [Brașov – 25 March 2006, the National Day of Greeks worldwide]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 11–12.
- Lungu, E. C. (2004, March). Σκέψεις για την επανάσταση του 1821 / Gânduri despre revoluția din 1821 [Thoughts on the Revolution of 1821]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 22–23.
- Macri, V. (2019, April–June). Din viața comunităților – Ziua Națională a Greciei, 25 Martie / Από τη ζωή των κοινοτήτων μας – Εθνική Εορτή της Ελλάδας, 25η Μαρτίου [From the life of the communities – The National Day of Greece, 25 March]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 13–15.
- Mihai, N. (2014). Nașterea sărbătorilor naționale la români. 24 ianuarie. Propagandă și „mise en scène” în spațiul urban din Oltenia (1864–1867) [The emergence of national holidays among Romanians: 24 January. Propaganda and “mise en scène” in the urban space of Oltenia (1864–1867)]. *Anuarul Institutului de Cercetări Socio-Umane C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor*, 15, 59–69.

- Mihelis, M. (2004, March). Η 25η Μαρτίου 1821 / 25 martie 1821 [25 March 1821]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 13–14.
- Nicola, A. (2004, March). Σκέψεις και συναισθήματα που μας εμπνέει το ιστορικό γεγονός της 25ης Μαρτίου 1821 / Gânduri și sentimente care inspiră privind evenimentul istoric din 25 martie 1821 [Thoughts and feelings inspired by the historical event of 25 March 1821]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 13.
- Niculache, I. (2003, March). Η 25η Μαρτίου – μεγάλη εορτή για τους Έλληνες της Κοινότητας Izvoarele / 25 Martie – o mare sărbătoare pentru grecii din Comunitatea Izvoarele [25 March – A major celebration for the Greeks of the Izvoarele community]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 15.
- Niculache, I. (2011). *Grecii în Dobrogea de Nord: Comuna Izvoarele, județul Tulcea* [The Greeks in Northern Dobrogea: Communal residence Izvoarele, Tulcea county]. UER Press.
- Papadatu, C.-P. (2003, March). Ο εορτασμός της Εθνικής Επετείου της Ελλάδας στην Ελληνική Κοινότητα Γαλατσίου / Ziua Republicii Elene la Galați [The National Day of the Hellenic Republic in Galați]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 13–14.
- Patelakis, A. (2013, July–September). Interviu. Poetul-diplomat Ion Brad / Συνέντευξη. Ο ποιητής-διπλωμάτης Ion Brad [Interview. The diplomat-poet Ion Brad]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 36–38.
- Patelakis, A. (2017). *Războiul civil din Grecia (1946–1949) și emigranții politici greci în România (1948–1982)* [The civil war in Greece (1946–1949) and the Greek political emigrants in Romania (1948–1982)]. Editura Cetatea de Scaun.
- Patelakis, A. (2020, January–March). Doamna Ekaterini Sakellaropoulou, prima femeie președinte a Greciei / Η κυρία Αικατερίνη Σακελλαροπούλου, η πρώτη γυναίκα πρόεδρος της Ελλάδας [Mrs. Katerina Sakellaropoulou, the first woman president of Greece]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 82–83.
- Patelakis, A. (2023, October–December). În memoria profesorului Savas Tsokaridis (1934–2023) / Στη μνήμη του Καθηγητή Σάββα Τσοκαρίδη (1934–2023) [In memory of Professor Savas Tsokaridis (1934–2023)]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 74–78.
- Popescu, I. (2004, April–June). Ελληνική Κοινότητα Τούρνου Σεβερίν / Comunitatea Elenă Turnu Severin [The Hellenic Community in Turnu Severin]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 57–58.
- Sakellaropoulou, K. (2021, January–March). Μήνυμα της Προέδρου της Δημοκρατίας Κατερίνας Σακελλαροπούλου προς τον απόδημο ελληνισμό, με την ευκαιρία της Εθνικής Επετείου – της 25ης Μαρτίου 2021 / Mesajul E.S. doamnei Katerina Sakellaropoulou, președintele Republicii Elene, către grecii din diaspora, cu ocazia Zilei Naționale – 25 martie 2021 [Message of Her Excellency Mrs. Katerina Sakellaropoulou, President of the Hellenic Republic, to Greeks abroad, on the occasion of the national day – 25 March 2021]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 1–2.
- Saridache, N. (2003, March). Η 25η Μαρτίου 2003 στη Βραϊλα / 25 Martie 2003 la Brăila [25 March 2003 in Brăila]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 12–13.
- Saridache, N. (2004a, March). 25η Μαρτίου – Εθνική Επέτειος της γενέτειράς μας / 25 Martie – Ziua națională a patriei noastre de origine [25 March – The national day of our homeland]. *Ελπίδα*, 14–16.

- Saridache, N. (2004b, April–June). Γιορτή στην Ελληνική Κοινότητα Βραΐλας / Sărbătoarea la Comunitatea Elenă din Brăila [Celebration in the Hellenic Community in Brăila]. *Ελπίδα*, 46–48.
- Scalcău, P. (2003). *Grecii din România* [The Greeks from Romania]. Editura Omonia.
- Scalcău, P. (2006). *Elenismul în România* [The Hellenism in Romania]. Editura Omonia.
- Scalcău, P. (2007, January–March). Ελληνική άνοιξη στο Τούρνου Σεβερίν / Primăvara elenă la Turnu Severin [Hellenic spring in Turnu Severin]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 17–18.
- Scalcău, P. (2023). *Istoria și tradițiile minorității elene din România / Ιστορία και παραδόσεις της ελληνικής μειονότητας στη Ρουμανία* [The history and traditions of the Hellenic minority from Romania]. Proiect cofinanțat din Fondul Social European prin Programul Operațional Capital Uman 2014-2020. [Project co-financed by the European Social Fund through the Human Capital Operational Programme 2014–2020].
- Siriopol, A. T., & Rășcanu-Gramaticu, O. (2007, January–March). Σελίδες της ιστορίας μας / Pagini ale istoriei noastre [Pages from our history]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 19–20.
- Stan, F., & Patelakis, A. (2020). *140 de ani de la stabilirea relațiilor diplomatice româno-elene (1880-2020) / 140 χρόνια από την εγκαθίδρυση ρουμανο-ελληνικών διπλωματικών σχέσεων (1880-2020)* [140 years since the establishment of the Romanian-Greek diplomatic relations, 1880-2020]. UER Press.
- Stefanopoulos, K. (2003, March). 25η Μαρτίου – Εθνική Επέτειος της Ελλάδας / 25 Martie, Ziua Națională a Eladei [25 March, the National Day of Greece]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 1.
- Tsokaridis, S. (2003a). *Învăț grecește: Manual de limba neogreacă, clasele I-II / Μαθαίνω Ελληνικά. Εγχειρίδιο νεοελληνικής γλώσσας* [I am learning Greek: Textbook of Neogreek language, grades I-II]. Uniunea Elenă din România [The Hellenic Union of Romania].
- Tsokaridis, S. (2003b). *Gramatica limbii române: Manual pentru elenofonii care învață limba română / Γραμματική της ρουμανικής γλώσσας. Εγχειρίδιο για ελληνόφωνους που δηδασκονται τη ρουμανικής γλώσσας* [Grammar of the Romanian language: Textbook for the Hellenophones learning the Romanian language]. Editura Libripres.
- Tsokaridis, S. (2004, March). Η 183η Εθνική Επέτειος της Ελλάδας / A 183-a Zi Națională a Greciei [The 183rd National Day of Greece]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 10–11.
- Uniunea Elenă din România. (2003, March). Ο εορτασμός της Εθνικής Επετείου της Ελλάδας στην Ελληνική Κοινότητα Βουκουρεστίου / Ziua Națională a Eladei sărbătorită la București [The National Day of Greece celebrated in Bucharest]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 7–10.
- Uniunea Elenă din România. (2004a, April–June). Mesaje primite de Uniunea Elenă cu ocazia Zilei Naționale a Greciei [Messages received by the Hellenic Union on the occasion of Greece's national day]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 59–61.
- Uniunea Elenă din România. (2004b, November–December). Sunt reprezentate în Camera Deputaților organizațiile minorităților naționale / Εκπροσωπούνται στη Βουλή οι οργανώσεις των εθνικών μειονοτήτων [In the Chamber of Deputies the organizations of the national minorities are represented]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 23.

- Uniunea Elenă din România. (2006, January–March). Μήνυμα του Προέδρου της Ελληνικής Δημοκρατίας, κ. Καρόλου Παπούλια, με την ευκαιρία της Εθνικής Επετείου της 25ης Μαρτίου 1821 / Mesajul Președintelui Republicii Elene, dl. Karolos Papoulias, cu prilejul Zilei Naționale – 25 Martie 1821 [Message of the President of the Hellenic Republic, Karolos Papoulias, on the occasion of the national day – 25 March 1821]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 1.
- Uniunea Elenă din România. (2007a, January–March). Μήνυμα του Προέδρου και Βουλευτή της Ένωσης Ελλήνων Ρουμανίας με την ευκαιρία της 25ης Μαρτίου – Εθνική Επέτειος της Ελλάδας, προς την Ελλάδα, τους απόδημους Έλληνες όπου γης, τα μέλη και τους φιλέλληνες της Ένωσης / Mesajul Președintelui și Deputatului Uniunii Elene din România cu prilejul Zilei Naționale a Greciei – 25 Martie, adresat Greciei și diasporei elene de pretutindeni, membrilor Uniunii Elene din România și filoelenilor [Message of the president and member of parliament of the Hellenic Union of Romania on the occasion of Greece's national day – 25 March, addressed to Greece, the Greek diaspora worldwide, members of the Hellenic Union of Romania, and Philhellenes]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, cover (inner) and 1.
- Uniunea Elenă din România. (2007b, December). Η 25η Μαρτίου – ο πρώτος εορτασμός μαζί κάτω από τη σημαία της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης / 25 Martie – prima aniversare sub steagul Uniunii Europene. Drăgășani [25 March – The first anniversary celebrated under the flag of the European Union. Drăgășani]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 3.
- Uniunea Elenă din România. (2009a, March–May). Mesajul Uniunii Elene din România cu prilejul Zilei Naționale a Greciei – 25 martie 1821 / Μήνυμα της Ένωσης Ελλήνων Ρουμανίας με την ευκαιρία της 25ης Μαρτίου 1821, Εθνικής Επετείου της Ελλάδας [Message of the Hellenic Union of Romania on Greece's national day – 25 March 1821]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 1.
- Uniunea Elenă din România. (2009b, March–May). Din viața comunităților / Από τη ζωή των κοινοτήτων μας [From the life of our communities]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 2–4.
- Uniunea Elenă din România. (2009c, March–May). Noutăți din Grecia și din diaspora elenă / Νέα από την Ελλάδα και την Ελληνική Διασπορά [News from Greece and the Hellenic diaspora]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 5.
- Uniunea Elenă din România. (2010a, January–March). Mesajul Președintelui Republicii Elene, dl. Karolos Papoulias, către grecii din străinătate cu ocazia sărbătoririi zilei de 25 Martie / Μήνυμα του Προέδρου της Ελληνικής Δημοκρατίας, κ. Καρόλου Παπούλια, προς τους Έλληνες του εξωτερικού με την ευκαιρία της επετείου της 25ης Μαρτίου [Message of the President of the Hellenic Republic, Karolos Papoulias, to Greeks abroad on the anniversary of 25 March]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 1.
- Uniunea Elenă din România. (2010b, January–March). La mulți ani, Grecia! / Χρόνια πολλά, Ελλάδα! [Happy national day, Greece!]. *Ελπίς*, 5–11.
- Uniunea Elenă din România. (2013, January–March). Mesajul Președintelui Republicii Elene către grecii de pretutindeni cu ocazia Zilei Naționale a Greciei – 25 martie / Μήνυμα του Προέδρου της Δημοκρατίας προς τους απανταχού Έλληνες για την Εθνική Επέτειο της 25ης Μαρτίου [Message of the President of the Hellenic Republic to Greeks worldwide on Greece's national day – 25 March]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 1.
- Uniunea Elenă din România. (2014, January–March). Mesajul Președintelui Republicii, domnul Karolos Papoulias, cu ocazia sărbătoririi Zilei Naționale – 25 Martie / Μήνυμα του Προέδρου της Δημοκρατίας, κ. Καρόλου Παπούλια, επ' ευκαιρία της Εθνικής Εορτής της 25ης Μαρτίου

[Message of the President of the Republic, Karolos Papoulias, on the national day – 25 March]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 1.

Uniunea Elenă din România. (2018a, January–March). Mesajul Președintelui Republicii Elene, domnul Prokopios Pavlopoulos, către elenii din străinătate cu ocazia Sărbătorii Naționale din 25 Martie / Μήνυμα του Προέδρου της Ελληνικής Δημοκρατίας, κ. Προκοπίου Παυλόπουλου, προς τον απόδημο ελληνισμό με την ευκαιρία της Εθνικής Επετείου της 25ης Μαρτίου [Message of the President of the Hellenic Republic, Prokopios Pavlopoulos, to Greeks abroad on the national day – 25 March]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 1–3.

Uniunea Elenă din România. (2018b, January–March). Mesajul domnului Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, președintele și deputatul Uniunii Elene din România, adresat grecilor și filoelenilor cu prilejul Zilei Naționale a Republicii Elene – 25 martie 1821 / Μήνυμα του κυρίου Ντράγος Γκαμπριέλ Ζισόπολ, προέδρου και βουλευτή της Ένωσης Ελλήνων Ρουμανίας, απευθυνόμενο στους Έλληνες και στους φιλέλληνες για την Εθνική Επέτειο της Ελλάδας – 25ης Μαρτίου 1821 [Message of Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, President and Member of Parliament of the Hellenic Union of Romania, addressed to Greeks and Philhellenes on the national day of the Hellenic Republic – 25 March 1821]. *Ελπίς*, 4.

Uniunea Elenă din România. (2019a, January–March). Mesajul Președintelui Republicii Elene, domnul Prokopios Pavlopoulos, către diasporă, cu ocazia Zilei Naționale a Greciei – 25 Martie / Μήνυμα του Προέδρου της Ελληνικής Δημοκρατίας, κ. Προκοπίου Παυλόπουλου, προς τον απόδημο ελληνισμό με την ευκαιρία της Εθνικής Εορτής της 25ης Μαρτίου [Message of the President of the Hellenic Republic, Prokopios Pavlopoulos, to the diaspora on Greece's national day – 25 March]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 1–3.

Uniunea Elenă din România. (2019b, April–June). Mesajul Președintelui Uniunii Elene din România, domnul Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, cu ocazia Zilei Naționale a Greciei – 25 Martie 1821 / Μήνυμα του Προέδρου της Ένωσης Ελλήνων Ρουμανίας, κυρίου Ντράγος Γκαμπριέλ Ζισόπολ, επί την ευκαιρία της Εθνικής Επετείου της Ελλάδας – 25ης Μαρτίου 1821 [Message of the President of the Hellenic Union of Romania, Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, on Greece's national day – 25 March 1821]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 3–4.

Uniunea Elenă din România. (2020, January–March). Mesajul Președintelui Republicii Elene, doamna Katerina Sakellaropoulou, către diasporă, cu ocazia sărbătoririi Zilei Naționale – 25 Martie / Μήνυμα της Προέδρου της Ελληνικής Δημοκρατίας, Κατερίνας Σακελλαροπούλου, προς τον απόδημο ελληνισμό με την ευκαιρία της Εθνικής Εορτής της 25ης Μαρτίου [Message of the President of the Hellenic Republic, Katerina Sakellaropoulou, to the diaspora on the national day – 25 March]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 1–2.

Uniunea Elenă din România. (2021a, January–March). Mesajul E.S. Președintelui Republicii Elene, doamna Katerina Sakellaropoulou, către diasporă, cu ocazia sărbătoririi Zilei Naționale – 25 Martie / Μήνυμα της Προέδρου της Ελληνικής Δημοκρατίας, Κατερίνας Σακελλαροπούλου, προς τον απόδημο ελληνισμό με την ευκαιρία της Εθνικής Εορτής της 25ης Μαρτίου [Message of Her Excellency, the President of the Hellenic Republic, Katerina Sakellaropoulou, to Greeks abroad on the national day – 25 March]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 1–2.

Uniunea Elenă din România. (2021b, January–March). Ziua Națională a Republicii Elene. 200 de ani de la declanșarea Revoluției elene din anul 1821. Mesajul Președintelui Uniunii Elene din România, domnul Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol / Η Ημέρα του Ευαγγελισμού – Εθνική Επέτειος της Ελληνικής Δημοκρατίας – 25 Μαρτίου 2021. 200 χρόνια από το ξέσπασμα της Ελληνικής Επανάστασης. Μήνυμα του Προέδρου της Ένωσης Ελλήνων Ρουμανίας, κυρίου Ντράγος Γκαμπριέλ Ζισόπουλου [The national day of the Hellenic Republic. 200 years since the

outbreak of the Hellenic Revolution of 1821. Message of the President of the Hellenic Union of Romania, Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 3–4.

Uniunea Elenă din România. (2021c, January–March). 25 martie, ziua națională a Republicii Elene. 200 de ani de la izbucnirea Revoluției din 1821 / 25 Μαρτίου, εθνική επέτειος της Ελληνικής Δημοκρατίας. 200 χρόνια από το ξέσπασμα της Επανάστασης του 1821 [25 March, national day of the Hellenic Republic. 200 years since the outbreak of the Revolution of 1821]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 5–9.

Uniunea Elenă din România. (2021d, January–March). Mesaje oficiale adresate cu ocazia Zilei Naționale a Republicii Elene / Επίσημα μηνύματα με την ευκαιρία της Εθνικής Επετείου της Ελληνικής Δημοκρατίας [Official messages delivered on the national day of the Hellenic Republic]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 10–21.

Uniunea Elenă din România. (2021e, April–June). Uniunea Mondială Interparlamentară a Elenismului / Παγκόσμια Διακοινοβουλευτική Ένωση Ελληνισμού [Interparliamentary World Union of Hellenism]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 94–95.

Uniunea Elenă din România. (2021f, February 10). *Revoluția elenă pe pământ românesc – partea întâi* [The Hellenic Revolution in the Romanian lands – first part]. [Video]. Youtube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXh8dt_0Ouw

Uniunea Elenă din România. (2021g, February 23). *Revoluția Elenă pe pământ românesc – partea a doua* [The Hellenic Revolution in the Romanian lands – second part]. [Video]. Youtube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pAfRTn0jxC0>

Uniunea Elenă din România. (2021h, March 09). *Revoluția Elenă pe pământ românesc – partea a treia* [The Hellenic Revolution in the Romanian lands – third part]. [Video]. Youtube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VBpo6Bgz-c>

Uniunea Elenă din România. (2021i, March 24). *Revoluția Elenă pe pământ românesc – partea a patra* [The Hellenic Revolution in the Romanian lands – third part]. [Video]. Youtube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3Cewdbom_E

Uniunea Elenă din România. (2022a, January–March). Mesajul E.S. doamna Katerina Sakellaropoulou, Președintele Republicii Elene, către diaspora, cu ocazia Zilei Naționale – 25 Martie / Μήνυμα της Προέδρου της Ελληνικής Δημοκρατίας, Κατερίνας Σακελλαροπούλου, προς τον απόδημο ελληνισμό με την ευκαιρία της Εθνικής Εορτής της 25ης Μαρτίου [Message of Her Excellency Katerina Sakellaropoulou, President of the Hellenic Republic, to the Greek diaspora on the national day – 25 March]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 1–3.

Uniunea Elenă din România. (2022b, January–March). Mesaje oficiale ale reprezentanților instituțiilor române / Επίσημα μηνύματα εκπροσώπων ρουμανικών θεσμών [Official messages from representatives of Romanian institutions]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 3–4, 14, 16.

Uniunea Elenă din România. (2022c, January–March). Ziua Națională a Republicii Elene, 25 martie 1821. Mesajul Uniunii Elene din România / Εθνική Επέτειος της Ελληνικής Δημοκρατίας, 25 Μαρτίου 1821. Μήνυμα της Ελληνικής Ένωσης Ρουμανίας [The national day of the Hellenic Republic, 25 March 1821. Message of the Hellenic Union of Romania]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 6–8.

Uniunea Elenă din România. (2022d, January–March). Ziua Națională a Republicii Elene / Εθνική Επέτειος της Ελληνικής Δημοκρατίας [The national day of the Hellenic Republic]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 8–13.

- Uniunea Elenă din România. (2022e, January–March). Mesajul domnului Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, președintele Uniunii Elene din România / Μήνυμα του Προέδρου της Ένωσης Ελλήνων Ρουμανίας, κυρίου Ντράγος Γκαμπριέλ Ζισόπουλου [Message of Mr. Dragoș Gabriel Zisopol, President of the Hellenic Union of Romania]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 17–18.
- Uniunea Elenă din România. (2023a, January–March). Mesajul Președintei Republicii Elene, Katerina Sakellaropoulou, către diaspora elenă, cu ocazia sărbătorii naționale – 25 Martie / Μήνυμα της Προέδρου της Ελληνικής Δημοκρατίας, Κατερίνας Σακελλαροπούλου, προς τον απόδημο ελληνισμό με την ευκαιρία της Εθνικής Εορτής της 25ης Μαρτίου [Message of the President of the Hellenic Republic, Katerina Sakellaropoulou, to the Greek diaspora on the national day – 25 March]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 1–2.
- Uniunea Elenă din România. (2023b, January–March). Mesajul Uniunii Elene din România – Ziua Națională a Republicii Elene, 25 martie / Το μήνυμα της Ελληνικής Ένωσης Ρουμανίας για την Εθνική Επέτειο της Ελληνικής Δημοκρατίας, 25 Μαρτίου [Message of the Hellenic Union of Romania on the national day of the Hellenic Republic – 25 March]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 3–4.
- Uniunea Elenă din România. (2025). *Cine suntem?* [Who are we?]. <https://uniunea-elena.ro/>
- Vasile, Ș. (2018, April–June). Din viața comunităților / Από τη ζωή των κοινοτήτων [From the life of the communities]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 22.
- Vasoyanis, I. (2007, January–March). Οι Έλληνες της Κραϊόβα εόρτασαν την Εθνική Επέτειο της Ελλάδας / Grecii din Craiova sărbătoresc Ziua Națională a Greciei [The Greeks of Craiova celebrate Greece's national day]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 22.
- Vițu, N. (2007, January–March). Την σημαντικότερη εορτή της Ελλάδας / Cea mai importantă sărbătoare a Greciei [Greece's most important national celebration]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 10–12.
- Zamfiropol, D. (2004a, March). Σκέψεις και συναισθήματα με το ιστορικό γεγονός της 25ης Μαρτίου 1821 / Gânduri și sentimente pentru 25 Martie 1821 [Thoughts and feelings regarding 25 March 1821]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 7.
- Zamfiropol, D. (2004b, April–June). Ο εορτασμός της 25ης Μαρτίου 1821 – Εθνική Επέτειος της Ελλάδας στην Ελληνική Κοινότητα Γαλατσίου / Sărbătorirea zilei de 25 Martie – Ziua Națională a Eladei, la Comunitatea Elenă din Galați [Celebration of 25 March—the National Day of Greece—in the Hellenic Community in Galați]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 42–46.
- Zisopol, D. G. (2004, March). Να μην ξεχνάμε το παρελθόν μας για να χτίσουμε το μέλλον και να μην ξεχνάμε το μέλλον για να ζήσουμε στο παρόν / Să nu ne uităm trecutul pentru a clădi viitorul și să nu uităm viitorul pentru a trăi în prezent [Let us not forget our past in order to build the future, nor forget the future in order to live in the present]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 17–19.
- Zisopol, D. G. (2009, March–May). Mesajul Uniunii Elene din România cu prilejul Zilei Naționale a Eladei – 25 martie 1821 / Μήνυμα της Ένωσης Ελλήνων Ρουμανίας με την ευκαιρία της 25ης Μαρτίου 1821, Εθνικής Επετείου της Ελλάδας [Message of the Hellenic Union of Romania on the occasion of Greece's national day—25 March 1821]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 1.
- Zisopol, D. G. (2019, January–March). Mesajul Uniunii Elene din România cu ocazia Zilei Naționale a Greciei – 25 Martie / Το μήνυμα της Ένωσης Ελλήνων Ρουμανίας επί την ευκαιρία της

Εθνικής Επετείου της Ελλάδας – 25η Μαρτίου [Message of the Hellenic Union of Romania the National Day of Greece—25 March]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 4.

Zisopol, D. G. (2021, April–June). Expoziția „Personalități grecești care au jucat un rol important în istoria românilor, din antichitate până în zilele noastre” / Η έκθεση με τίτλο «Ελληνικές προσωπικότητες που διαδραμάτισαν σημαντικό ρόλο στην ιστορία των Ρουμάνων, από την αρχαιότητα έως και σήμερα» [Exhibition “Greek personalities who played an important role in the history of the Romanians, from antiquity to the present day”]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 31–32.

Zoï Idu, E. (2004, March). Η εορτή της ελληνικής άνοιξης / Sărbătoarea primăverii elene [The celebration of the Hellenic spring]. *Ελπίδα / Speranța*, 21–22.

Zoï Idu, E. (2022, January–March). Rugămintе / Παράκληση [Prayer]; Iarna / Χειμώνας [Winter]; Primăvara / Άνοιξη [Spring]; Vara / Καλοκαίρι [Summer]; Iarna / Χειμώνας [Winter II] (Trans. to Modern Greek by E. Uncu) [Poems]. *Ελπίς / Speranța*, 40–42.

Book reviews

**NOVEL APPROACHES TO RESEARCH IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS
AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION: INSIGHTS FROM TEODORA
POPESCU'S WORK¹**

Maria-Crina HERȚEG

1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania

e-mail: crina.herteg@uab.ro

Abstract

The book *Research in applied linguistics and language education: Design, methods and analysis* authored by Teodora Popescu focuses on research methodology in applied linguistics and language education. It was designed for MA students, PhD students and early-career researchers who are striving to craft a career in applied linguistics and language education. The book provides the readers with a coherent overview of methods, approaches and theories pertaining to applied linguistics and language education. Conceived in a very systematic and user-friendly manner, the book guides the users throughout the entire research process.

Keywords: applied linguistics; methods; approaches; research; language education.

Teodora Popescu's book titled *Research in applied linguistics and language education: Design, methods and analysis*, comprises six parts and is divided into nine chapters. The book addresses to a large variety of researchers and practitioners who conduct research in applied linguistics and language education. It is a user-friendly book which perfectly combines and complements theory and practice, it enriches the theory in the field and showcases the author's broad expertise in applied and theoretical linguistics as well as in language education.

Teodora Popescu clarifies theoretical aspects pertaining to applied linguistics and language education and proposes practical tasks which call forth the application of key theoretical concepts. The book is a well-crafted incursion into applied linguistics, capturing its evolution, representatives, ideologies. Teodora Popescu designed the book as a tool to be used systematically by researchers and practitioners, it was not intended for a one-time use, its richness of ideas, insights, inputs turn the book into a long-term guide in conducting scientific research. It enlightens users and empowers them with tools, knowledge, methods. In this way, junior researchers and not only learn how to connect the components of a research paper coherently and to ensure its fluidity, while manipulating rigorously large datasets in order to produce an insightful interpretation of the results. The practical tasks the author proposes at the end of each chapter helps users operationalise and plan their research.

In Chapter 1 "Fundamentals of Research in Applied Linguistics and Language Education" the author aims to define language education and situate research within applied linguistics, language teaching and learning. In this vein, language is analysed both as a system and as practice.

Chapter 2 "Research Questions, Hypotheses and Methodological Foundations" underscore the importance of the research questions and theoretical framework both for the structure and the contents

¹ Article History: Received: 14.02.2026. Accepted: 27.02.2026. Published: 15.05.2026. No funding was received either for the research presented in the article or for the creation of the article.

of a research paper. The robustness of the research questions impacts on the validity and the reliability of the research output. Junior researchers find out the types of research questions and methods they can adopt in their research endeavour and how they can relate the research question with the methods in order to craft and elaborate the research proposal. Furthermore, they find out how to connect the purpose of the research question with the purpose of their research and how to conduct qualitative and quantitative research. The author provides examples of research questions and accompanies them by explanations. Building on the idea that the research question and the theoretical framework represent the lynchpin of a research proposal, the chapter provides researchers and practitioners with insights into how to craft a research paper. The identification and the filling of the research gap also represent important strengths of the research endeavour.

From the section “Ensuring Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness” readers find out what is qualitative research and the role of variables in conducting qualitative research. The section further develops the constructs encompassed in qualitative analysis: validity, reliability, trustworthiness.

In brief, this chapter presents the stages in writing a research proposal from research question to analysis. Additionally, it places emphasis on the literature review and highlights its crucial role in crafting a research paper.

Chapter 3 “Ethics, Consent, Privacy and Research Protocols” tackles the importance of ethics in conducting research in linguistics and language education. It further highlights that ethics shapes the validity of the research activity. The author pays heed to digital ethics explaining that even if online platforms are easily accessible nowadays, users are expected to request consent before using the content available online. As the author highlights, data collection also raises ethical issues. Popescu (2025) analyses academic integrity and its core components: authorship, originality, data integrity, transparency. The author examines the way in which Scopus and Web of Science indexed journals address these issues together with the importance of the peer review in the publication process and the application of COPE guidelines by journals. The author raises awareness of predatory journals which have increase in number, in the chase to make profit they prioritise quantity over quality. The author lists the elements which led to the identification of a predatory journal and provides useful pieces of advice in the choice of the publication outlets. Popescu lists all the elements which ensure the reliability of a publication and the avoidance of plagiarism.

In chapter 4 “Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches”, Popescu (2025) tackles quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods in linguistics and language education. The author underlines the importance of aligning the selection of methods with the research questions, stating that methods must be strongly related to the research question. Popescu (2025) enumerates the types of research questions and the methods which can be adopted on the basis of the research question type.

Chapter 5 “Mixed Methods and Digital Methodologies” opens with establishing the principles and the designs of mixed methods and it highlights the importance of integrating qualitative and quantitative data. The author advises researchers in which stage of research this integration can occur. This discussion builds on the author’s earlier work on the use of AI tools in writing instruction, where the analysis combined different forms of evidence, such as revision data, error types, and changes in essay quality, to evaluate the pedagogical impact of AI-assisted feedback (Popescu, 2024). A special section is allotted to corpus-based research in which the author lists the types of corpora which can be used in linguistic and pedagogic research. As corpora and corpus-based research are gaining more and more terrain in linguistic and pedagogic research Popescu (2025) examines the types of analyses which can be conducted with corpora as well as the most important software tools available for linguistic and pedagogical research. Additionally, the author enumerates the software tools for data collection, platforms and apps which can be used for language learning, identifying strengths and weaknesses and the types of activities they are suited to. In a myriad of digital tools, platforms and apps the author’s insight and analytical presentation provides helpful guidelines.

Chapter 6 “Analysing Data and Ensuring Rigour” provides insights into descriptive statistics, t-texts, ANOVA, as well as the ways of presenting data. The author lists the principles which guide and accompany data presentation and the types of presentation which align with qualitative, quantitative and mixed analyses. Chapter 6 also touches upon conveying the results of the research to the readers. The selection of the data presentation is made in line with the type of methods adopted by the author.

In order to ensure the presentation of the findings, the authors must apply principles such as rigour, accuracy both in the presentation and in throughout the research endeavour.

Chapter 7 represents the final stage of the research: the publication and all the aspects entailed by the publication of a research proposal. Junior researchers find out how to write a research proposal, as well as the structure that the papers in applied linguistics adopt. Popescu (2025) insists on the elements which ensure the clarity and the coherence of a research paper ranging from the choice of tenses to lexical choices. The chapter further delves into issues related to ethical writing, plagiarism, referencing.

Part VI “Applications, Case Studies, and Future Directions” stands out as the practically oriented part of Popescu’s book, and it illustrates the connection between theory and practice through case studies.

Chapter 8 “Practical Applications and Case Studies” singles out as the most as the most practice-focused contribution in the book authored by Popescu. It proposes the analysis of case studies which pertain to different research strands, and which are carefully selected by the author with focus on the importance of context in the interpretation of cognitive phenomena.

Chapter 9 “Language Education in Transition: Navigating Challenges and Opportunities Ahead” projects a forward-looking perspective on language education. This outlook is consistent with the author’s earlier work on intercultural training for underrepresented university students (Popescu, 2023), which emphasises the need for inclusive and adaptive educational practices in response to changing academic contexts. The chapter examines the way in which language education is changing in response to globalisation and migration. It further observes the growing role of technology on language education as well as emerging trends in language education.

In brief, the book presents all the transformative stages which shape research and covers all the stages of a research process.

References:

- Popescu, T. (2023). Intercultural training for underrepresented university students. *Journal of Linguistic and Intercultural Education - JoLIE*, 16(1), 109–125. <https://doi.org/10.29302/jolie.2023.16.1.7>
- Popescu, T. (2024). Transforming academic writing with AI: Tools for effective learning. *Journal of Linguistic and Intercultural Education – JoLIE*, 17(3), 139–158. <https://doi.org/10.29302/jolie.2024.17.3.8>
- Popescu, T. (2025). *Research in applied linguistics and language education: Design, methods and analysis*. Presa Universitară Clujeană.

VICTORIA S.-M. (2025). *RODICA BRAGA – ÎNTRE CONFESIUNE ȘI AUTOFICTIUNE* [RODICA BRAGA – BETWEEN CONFESSION AND AUTOFICTION]¹

Bianca-Maria BUCUR

1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania

e-mail: bianca.tincu@uab.ro

Abstract

This book review examines Sorina-Maria Victoria's critical study, *Rodica Braga – Între Confesiune și Autoficțiune* [Rodica Braga – Between confession and autofiction]. The volume proposes a sustained rethinking of how literary identity can be approached in literature. Focusing on a study grounded in interdisciplinary hermeneutics, the review foregrounds the author's methodological choices, theoretical innovations, and contribution to current debates on self-writing. Sorina-Maria Victoria approaches Rodica Braga's literature through an identity-centered hermeneutics that foregrounds the dynamic interplay between confession and autofiction. The review highlights the volume's central contribution: a coherent interdisciplinary interpretive framework that reads Rodica Braga's poetry and prose as a unified project of self-writing.

Keywords: Romanian literature; interdisciplinary criticism; autofiction; identity; self-writing.

Sorina-Maria Victoria, in the volume *Rodica Braga — Between Confession and Autofiction* (2025) offers an ambitious critical study which proposes a coherent and persuasive interpretive key for reading Rodica Braga's poetry and prose². Appearing at a symbolic moment that marks more than half a century of Rodica Braga's continuous literary activity, the study responds to a genuine critical necessity. The volume derives from a doctoral research project whose scope extends well beyond the conventional frameworks of literary history. Its guiding premise is both corrective and reconstructive: although Rodica Braga's literature has been acknowledged by Romanian critics, it has never benefited from a sustained, methodologically unified critical analysis. Sorina-Maria Victoria's study directly addresses this gap, offering the first comprehensive attempt to read Rodica Braga's literature.

The volume is organized according to a clear and well-defined structure, and the author explicitly rejects monographic ambitions in favor of a thematic and conceptual investigation centered on identity and self-representation. This methodological choice is effective, allowing the analysis to move fluidly between poetry and prose while maintaining a coherent theoretical framework. At the core of the study lies a compelling interpretive thesis: Rodica Braga's writing cannot be adequately understood without acknowledging the connection between life and literature that shapes her literary activity. In Rodica Braga's literature, writing functions

¹ Article History: Received: 03.01.2026. Accepted: 25.01.2026. Published: 15.05.2026. No funding was received either for the research presented in the article or for the creation of the article.

² Rodica Braga was a prolific writer born in 1938 in Alba Iulia. Known for her significant contributions in the literary field, she was a member of the Writers' Union of Romania, Sibiu subsidiary, and earned various distinctions, such as the Debut Prize for the novel *The Sand of Memory* (1978), the National Prize for Children's literature in 1986, the OPERA OMNIA prize in 2005, and the Book of the Year Prize for the novel *Adagio* (2007). Her writing style is best recognized for the innovative perspectives it expresses through autofiction.

not as representation, but as self-constitution. Literature does not reflect a pre-existing identity; it actively produces, interrogates, and reshapes it. Drawing extensively on Rodica Braga's own interviews, essays, and poetic statements, the author foregrounds the writer's artistic credo: writing as a form of self-creation, where the self is fragmented and reconstructed. This perspective allows Victoria to reconceptualize the relationship between confession and autofiction. Rather than treating them as opposites, the study frames them as interdependent strategies within a unified poetics of self-writing. The study convincingly argues that Rodica Braga does not merely write about herself, nor does she simply transpose autobiographical facts into fiction. Instead, she engages in a complex process of self-writing that oscillates between confession and autofiction, a practice that becomes the defining feature of her literary style.

One of the study's major strengths lies in its careful conceptual work. The author does not take terms such as *autobiography*, *confession*, or *autofiction* for granted. Instead, she reconstructs their theoretical genealogies, situating them within both international literary theory and Romanian critical discourse.

The theoretical architecture of the volume is deliberately interdisciplinary. The author constructs her analytical framework at the intersection of literary theory, philosophy, linguistics, phenomenology, and the theory of the imaginary. Canonical reflections on narrative identity, selfhood, and authorship are mobilized not as abstract references but as functional interpretive tools. Notably, the study avoids allegiance to a single theoretical paradigm. Instead, it advances a layered methodology in which concepts such as self-referentiality, biography, and symbolic identity interact dynamically. References to scholars such as Dominique Combe, Käte Hamburger, Susan S. Lanser, Michael Riffaterre, Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, James Olney, and Leonor Arfuch are integrated meaningfully into the analytical framework.

The study is divided into three major sections, preceded by a theoretically oriented introductory chapter. This structure reflects the author's commitment to methodological transparency. The reader is guided step by step from conceptual clarification to *close reading* analysis, ensuring that interpretive claims are consistently grounded in both theory and textual evidence. The first chapter provides a necessary contextual framework, outlines key moments in Rodica Braga's literary evolution, and situates her within the broader Romanian cultural landscape. Particularly valuable is the discussion of Braga's deliberate refusal to affiliate herself with literary groups, movements, or generational labels. The book persuasively argues that this stance is not merely a biographical curiosity but a reflection of a deeper aesthetic and ethical position: the writer's belief in creative autonomy and resistance to externally imposed classifications. Rather than emphasizing socio-political contexts, the chapter focuses on recurring autobiographical motifs and existential concerns that cut across Braga's work. This approach reinforces the central thesis that her writing is governed more by an ongoing process of interior exploration than by historical moments.

The second part of the chapter investigates central theoretical concepts, providing a foundation for the analyses that follow. Here, the author addresses the problem of the literary self, the instability of the narrative subject, and the interpretive challenges posed by texts that blur the boundaries between reality and fiction. The discussion of autofiction is particularly nuanced, highlighting its hybrid status and its capacity to generate interpretive ambiguity.

One of the most original contributions of the volume is its reconceptualization of poetry as a legitimate space of autofictional practice. Challenging the critical tendency to restrict autofiction to prose, Victoria demonstrates that Braga's poetry operates through comparable mechanisms of identity construction. To describe this mode of writing, the author introduces the concept of *egographic discourse*: a form of lyric expression in which the poetic "I" is pragmatically aligned with the authorial self. The analysis begins from Braga's own assertion

that, in poetry, she exposes herself entirely, presenting the poem as a space of radical interiority. The author concludes: Rodica Braga succeeds in creating a type of poetry that interrogates the self, a unifying thread present throughout all her volumes. The recurring metaphor of her poetic creation is this lucid contemplation of the spectacle of her own interiority³ (Victoria, 2025, p. 20 – my translation).

The third chapter shifts the focus to Rodica Braga's prose, described as fundamentally autoreferential. Through a diachronic approach, the author traces the evolution of the writer's narrative strategies, identifying persistent patterns and significant changes in the representation of selfhood. One of the most compelling aspects of this chapter is the analysis of Braga's preference for homodiegetic narration, interior monologue, and introspective discourse. Plot-driven narration is consistently subordinated to psychological and existential exploration. Events are less important for their factual sequence than for their capacity to generate reflection and self-analysis. The book offers particularly insightful readings of Braga's short prose, emphasizing the role of space and time as identity-shaping categories. These elements are shown to function not merely as narrative settings but as symbolic coordinates through which the self is constructed and interrogated. Characters emerge as fictional doubles of the author, embodying alternative versions of the same existential core. The interpretation of *Anul 2000: Simple Exerciții de Sinceritate* [The year 2000: Simple exercises of sincerity] is especially noteworthy. Analyzed as a pseudo-journal, the text becomes a testing ground for autofictional strategies, where linguistic choices reveal the connections between confession and fictionalization. The interdisciplinary turn toward linguistic analysis enriches the study, demonstrating the author's methodological versatility, drawing on concepts from linguistics and the work of linguists and philosophers such as David Kaplan, Charles Sanders Pierce, Bertrand Russell, Hans Reichenbach, Thomas Nagel, and John McDowell.

The study *Rodica Braga — Between Confession and Autofiction* represents a substantial contribution to Romanian literary studies and to broader discussions of self-writing in contemporary literature. Its most outstanding achievement lies in its ability to synthesize theoretical framework with textual analysis. The study succeeds in demonstrating that Rodica Braga's literature constitutes a coherent identity project, a sustained exploration of the self through literary means, as the author states:

Rodica Braga's works oscillate between two poles — confession and autofiction. This is precisely what we set out to demonstrate. The title and central hypothesis of this study initially emerged from the writer's own confessions and reflections. The phrase *between confession and autofiction* finds its justification in the countless statements she has made across various forms — interviews, essays, poems, and novels⁴ (Victoria, 2025, p. 274 – my translation).

By framing her work as a continuous oscillation between confession and autofiction, the study provides a conceptual model that can be extended beyond Braga's writing to other authors engaged in similar practices of self-representation.

If one were to suggest a limitation, it might be that the study's strong focus on identity occasionally overshadows other possible interpretive angles, such as ethical, feminist, or intertextual perspectives. However, this is less a shortcoming than a reflection of the author's

³ Original text: "Rodica Braga reușește să creeze o poezie de interogare a sinelui, urmărind acest fir unificator în toate volumele sale, metafora obsedantă a creației sale în versuri fiind acea lucidă contemplare a spectacolului propriei interiorități."

⁴ Original text: "Creațiile scriitoarei Rodica Braga pendulează între doi poli – confesiune și autoficțiune. Este ceea ce ne-am propus să demonstrăm. Ideea titlului și ipoteza acestei lucrări au decurs, într-o primă fază a cercetării, din mărturisirile și opiniile scriitoarei. Sintagma între confesiune și autoficțiune își află explicația în nenumărate opinii exprimate în diverse întruchipări – interviuri, eseuri, poezii, romane."

deliberate critical choice. The study does not claim to be comprehensive; on the contrary, it explicitly presents itself as one possible reading key among others, as Victoria explains:

Rodica Braga (re-)writes herself. From one end to the other of her creative output, oscillating between self-revelation and self-camouflage, between confession and autofiction, the writer Rodica Braga identifies with the very act of writing. This is the central thesis of the present study and what we set out to demonstrate; yet, fully aware of the complexity of the subject and the wide range of possible interpretive approaches, we consider this study an open-ended effort, an attempt to formulate working hypotheses that may inspire further avenues of research⁵ (Victoria, 2025, p. 23 – my translation).

In this sense, the study functions not only as a critical interpretation but also as an invitation to read Rodica Braga's texts with renewed attention and to pursue further research inspired by the questions it raises.

In a nutshell, through its conceptual and methodological framework and interpretive coherence, the study *Rodica Braga — Between Confession and Autofiction* stands as an achievement that redefines the critical reception of the Romanian writer Rodica Braga and advances innovative perspectives on literary self-representation. By rethinking the connections between confession and fiction, subject and discourse, life and text, this study establishes itself as an essential reference for scholars interested in autofiction, identity, and the dynamics of self-writing in modern and contemporary literature.

References:

- Victoria, S.-M. (2025). *Rodica Braga – între confesiune și autoficțiune* [Rodica Braga – Between confession and autofiction]. Presa Universitară Clujeană Publishing House.
- Braga, R. (1978). *The Sand of Memory* [Nisipul memoriei]. Dacia Publishing House.
- Braga, R. (2005). *Anul 2000. Simple exerciții de sinceritate* [The year 2000: Simple exercises of sincerity]. Dacia Publishing House.
- Braga, R. (2007). *Adagio*. Dacia Publishing House.

⁵ Original source text: "Rodica Braga se (de-/ re-)scrie pe sine. De la un capăt la celălalt al creației sale, pendulând între autodezvăluire și auto-camuflare, între confesiune și autoficțiune, scriitoarea Rodica Braga se identifică cu actul scriptural. Aceasta este teza prezentei lucrări și ceea ce ne propunem să demonstrăm, însă, conștientizând complexitatea subiectului și gama variată a registrelor interpretative, considerăm prezentul studiu un demers perfectibil și o încercare de a formula ipoteze de lucru deschise unor noi direcții de cercetare."

THE CHILD'S VOICE IN MIGRATION LITERATURE: ON MIGUEL GANE'S *CÂND O SĂ TE FACI MARE* / *CUANDO SEAS MAYOR*¹

Maria BÎSCAL (OPREA)

1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba-Iulia, Romania

e-mail: moprea09@yahoo.com

Abstract

This article examines *Când o să te faci mare* / *Cuando seas mayor* [When you grow up] the debut novel of Spanish-language writer Miguel Gane, through the lens of child-centered migration narratives. The text offers an autobiographical portrayal of a Romanian boy's emigration to Spain and the emotional, linguistic, and cultural tensions that shape his formative years. Structured as a sequence of episodic fragments, the novel foregrounds the child's voice - fragile yet lucid - as a narrative instrument that renders the affective dimensions of uprooting, socioeconomic precarity, and identity reconstruction. Gane's use of lyrical language, confessional tone, and symbolic anonymity (the nameless village, child, and parents) emphasizes migration as both a social condition and an inner process of loss and adaptation. Positioned within contemporary literature of the Romanian diaspora, the novel reveals the child's oscillation between vulnerability and resilience, highlighting how memory, familial bonds, and the search for belonging constitute the core of the migrant experience. Through this perspective, the study underscores the originality of Gane's contribution to migration literature and the significance of childhood as a site of both trauma and transformation.

Keywords: migration literature; child narrator; Romanian diaspora; liminality; cultural adaptation.

Când o să te faci mare / *Cuando seas mayor* [When you grow up] is the first novel by Miguel Gane, a contemporary Spanish-language writer of Romanian origin and one of the best-selling authors of recent years. In 2017, Gane was nominated for Spain's National Poetry Prize, and in 2020 his third book, *La piel en los labios* [My skin on your lips], became the best-selling poetry volume in Spain, remaining for five months among the top titles in *El Cultural*. His poetry books have sold tens of thousands of copies in Spain and Latin America. His debut poetry collection, *Con tal de verte volar* [As long as you fly], published in 2016, has reached eighteen editions to date. The novel *Cuando seas mayor*, written in Spanish in 2019 and published in Romanian translation in 2025 by Alice Books in Bucharest, has enjoyed significant success both in Spanish and Romanian literary culture. A parallel can be drawn with *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*, as it "demonstrates the story's ability to convey emotion and generate empathy, thereby reinforcing the relevance of literature as a tool for reflecting on historical traumas." (Marchedon, 2025, p. 103)².

¹ Article History: Received: 13.12.2025. Accepted: 08.01.2026. Published: 15.05.2026. No funding was received either for the research presented in the article or for the creation of the article.

² Original text: „demonstrează capacitatea poveștii de a transmite emoții și de a genera empatie, consolidând relevanța literaturii ca instrument de reflecție asupra traumelor istorice”. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of the original texts are my own.

Când o să te faci mare is a narrative with a strong autobiographical dimension, recounting the story of a boy who emigrates to Spain at the age of nine with his parents and follows a difficult trajectory marked by the uprooting from his rural childhood and the challenges of integration into Spanish society. The novel opens with the depiction of a Christmas morning when the child discovers with disappointment that his long-desired gift is missing: “I did not understand what I had done so wrong for Santa Claus to ignore my letter” (Gane, 2025, p. 14)³, neither did his parents receive anything. After dinner, he overhears their heated discussions and learns they no longer have firewood or money. The child’s inadvertent breaking of a water jug further fuels their conflict. The small joys of childhood alternate with deeply felt hardships: his mother’s emergency hospitalization, periods of food scarcity, a teacher’s rigidity, the thrill of first love, his attempts to earn money by doing classmates’ homework, and the humiliating punishment imposed by the school principal, who fails to recognize that he is merely “a child playing at being an adult because he has no choice.” (p. 153)⁴.

With great maturity, the child understands that poverty compels his family to leave for Spain. The apartment in Madrid, furnished with items salvaged from dumpsters, becomes their new home. His father works on a construction site, the boy attends a day center designed to facilitate integration, and his mother works as a live-in domestic employee in a wealthy household until she is falsely accused of stealing jewelry.

The child’s affective experiences form the connective tissue of the text. He oscillates between spontaneous moments of enthusiasm, such as embracing a stranger simply because he speaks his mother tongue, and the simple pleasures of tasting yogurt, having access to hot water, or owning a mobile phone. At the same time, the stigma of being an immigrant, internalized from an early age, prevents him from feeling accepted, and he comes to believe that he never will be among Spanish children. The narrative unfolds through a succession of traumatic episodes: the boy’s fear of encountering other children, the shame of not understanding them, and an all-encompassing fear—of looking, of speaking, of living, and of being separated from his parents. The pejorative “ru-ma-no,” uttered by Spanish children, becomes the first Spanish word he learns. He goes to school “with a heavy heart” (p. 262)⁵, as he watches his parents repeatedly fail to find work.

He begins sixth grade in early autumn and immediately observes the significant differences between the Romanian and Spanish education systems. He becomes aware that he can already speak Spanish without mentally translating from Romanian, although he still feels “the weight of the syllables on his tongue, the tip of his tongue brushing against his teeth” (p. 275)⁶. This moment marks his rebirth, and when his classmates applaud him, he realizes that he has finally been accepted. His friendship with Martín, one of his new classmates, allows him to join a new circle of friends and he gradually comes to accept the nickname he is given: “Ruma,” derived from *rumano*, which he embraces just “as one accepts certain things simply in order to feel a sense of belonging” (p. 279)⁷. His joy is rapidly overshadowed by the fear of losing his mother, who goes missing during the terrorist attack which took place in the city. He is provided with a sense of security, something he had never felt before, only when the entire family finally receives residence documents, ending their fear of illegality in Spain.

The boy eventually earns a scholarship to study law, and the university campus evokes, one last time, memories of his childhood, of the village and of the people he imagines would

³ Original text: „Nu înțelegeam ce făcusem atât de rău încât Moș Crăciun să nu țină cont de scrisoarea mea”.

⁴ Original text: „un copil care face pe adultul pentru că nu are de ales”.

⁵ Original text: „cu moartea în suflet”.

⁶ Original text: „greutatea silabelor pe limbă, vârful limbii lovind dinții”.

⁷ Original text: „așa cum accepți anumite chestii numai pentru a simți că aparții unui loc.”

be proud of his achievements. Now, arrived at maturity, he embraces this new identity, even as he grieves the loss of his language, his name, and the sense of stability he once knew. The novel's final sentence reiterates its central leitmotif—the words spoken by his parents during times of struggle: “When you grow up, you will understand why we left the village” (p. 333)⁸.

The novel illustrates how events are imprinted on a child's consciousness. The sense of “home” is constructed through memories and the presence, real or imagined, of the mother, “the most important person” (p. 26)⁹ in his life, from whom he always had something to learn. The child's recollections exude an authentic joy, experienced “in the midst of endless love and simple things” (p. 34)¹⁰. His mother appears almost from another dimension: “She was immersed in a world of her own, in which no one else existed” (p. 95)¹¹.

The novel consists of 62 chapters that interweave the innocent narrative voice with nuanced analysis of uprootedness. The child's liminal condition between Romania and Spain foregrounds the literary function of the child's perspective. He senses the tension between his parents and expresses a desire to reconcile them, perceiving himself as “the only link between them” (p. 49)¹². He internalizes their outbursts without resentment.

A discreet lyricism emerges from the innovative figurative language, metaphors, and repetitions that capture the child's perception of the world: “For they loved each other, they loved each other deeply” (p. 50)¹³; the child's despair in the face of suffering: “I don't want her to die. I don't want her to die” (p. 51)¹⁴; the fragility of family relationships and the role he feels he must play in maintaining cohesion within the fractured emotional universe of his home: “I was the small point of connection between them” (p. 49)¹⁵. All of these elements underscore the hyperbolic perception of reality characteristic of childhood.

The narrative structure is largely episodic, yet it is held together by an identity-centered thread that traces the protagonist's childhood experiences. Neither the village nor the boy or his parents are given names. Their identities remain deliberately symbolic: the migrant child and the migrant parents. Rather than reconstructing the past as a coherent whole, the narrator relives it, with each fragment marking a return to a specific emotional state. The narrative does not unfold in a strictly chronological manner but is instead composed of fragments, confessions, brief reflections, and short monologic passages, each functioning as a self-contained poetic narrative moment. Cohesion is achieved through a lyrical narrative voice and a set of recurring motifs that reflect socioeconomic precarity and the condition of the immigrant: “Mother, why are these people giving us food? We have food” (p. 229)¹⁶. The narrative explores the tension between childhood and growth, the relationship with parents, and the search for meaning in conditions of uprootedness. This sense of displacement is poignantly expressed in the child's observation, “Mother, there are no mountains or beautiful trees here,” to which the mother responds, “That's how it is, child; we must adjust” (p. 229)¹⁷. The loss of home and the need to adapt to a new culture are further articulated in the anxious question, “Mother, how will we learn Spanish?” (p. 229)¹⁸. These moments foreground the experience of a fractured identity and the gradual process through which the self is reconstructed.

⁸ Original text: „Când o să te faci mare, o să înțelegi de ce am plecat din sat.”

⁹ Original text: „cea mai importantă persoană.”

¹⁰ Original text: „în mijlocul dragostei nesfârșite și a lucrurilor simple.”

¹¹ Original text: „Era adâncită într-o lume din care nimeni nu mai făcea parte.”

¹² Original text: „singura legătură dintre ei.”

¹³ Original text: „Căci se iubeau, se iubeau mult”.

¹⁴ Original text: „Nu vreau să moară. Nu vreau să moară.”

¹⁵ Original text: „Eu eram micul punct de legătură dintre ei”.

¹⁶ Original text: „Mamă, de ce ne dau mâncare oamenii ăștia? Că avem ce mânca.”

¹⁷ Original text: „Mamă, aici nu sunt munți și copaci frumoși. Asta e, copile, trebuie să ne adaptăm.”

¹⁸ Original text: „Mamă, cum vom învăța să vorbim spaniola?”

In Gane's novel, migration is driven by economic necessity, a phenomenon characteristic of the Romanian diaspora in recent decades. The family's relocation from Romania to Spain unfolds gradually; the trauma is primarily emotional. The child experiences the loss of language, precarious living conditions, and social shame as formative moments in his integration into Spanish society.

The novel's originality within migration literature lies in its use of a child's voice—fragile yet lucid—through which both the child's own experiences and those of the adults are observed and interpreted. By engaging with themes recurrent in contemporary prose, the novel aligns itself with works that construct a realist vision of the family as a space for critical reflection. As in the work of Florian Zeller, where the family, traditionally conceived as a space of safety, becomes the stage of complete vulnerability (Nanu, 2025, p. 229)¹⁹ M. Gane likewise warns that, in the context of migration, the family—long associated with security and stability—comes to be reconfigured as the site of a profound and pervasive vulnerability. Gane's narrative stands out for its portrayal of a child caught in the very process of growing up, one that coincides with the painful and laborious experience of uprooting.

References:

- Gane, M. (2025). *Când o să te faci mare* [*When you grow up*]. Alice Books.
- Marchedon, R. (2025). Traumă și suferință între pagină și ecran – *Băiatul cu pijamale în dungi* [Trauma and suffering between the page and the screen – *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*]. *Incursiuni în Imaginar*, 16(2), 93–115. <https://doi.org/10.29302/InImag.2025.16.2.4>
- Nanu, P. (2025). Teatrul lui Florian Zeller [Florian Zeller's theatre: An aesthetics of loss and confusion]. *Incursiuni în Imaginar*, 16(2), 326–336. <https://doi.org/10.29302/InImag.2025.16.2.16>

¹⁹ Original text: „Familia, acest spațiu tradițional al siguranței, devine scena vulnerabilității depline.”

Restitutio

RESTITUTIO (3): DOCTORANZII PROFESORULUI MIRCEA POPA. DOSAR DE STUDIU¹

RESTITUTIO (3): PROFESSOR MIRCEA POPA'S DOCTORAL STUDENTS. STUDY FILE

Lucian Vasile BÂGIU

Universitatea 1 Decembrie 1918 din Alba Iulia, România
1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania

e-mail: lucian_bagiu@yahoo.com

Abstract

The study file presents the activity of the doctoral supervisor, Prof. Mircea Popa, within the Doctoral School of Philology of IOSUD-Alba Iulia. The thirty-five doctoral theses defended under his coordination during the period 05.03.2005-03.12.2021 are listed in chronological order, and the twenty one volumes authored by former doctoral students resulting later from the publication of some of these theses are also identified. For each doctoral student, the occupation and current place of work are indicated, as well as the email address. The thirty-nine academics who have acted as referees within the thesis defense committees are also listed, with their professional affiliation and number of participations. The statistical distribution of former doctoral students by occupation and geographical location is conclusively and succinctly presented, and the number of citations in Google Academic of four of the published volumes of theses is recorded. Last but not least, nine of the doctoral supervisor's reviews are reproduced, later published as critical references or prefaces in the aforementioned volumes. In the second part, fifteen other doctoral theses are presented, with the same structural approach, for which Professor Mircea Popa acted as a referent between 03.10.2008-29.09.2017, theses coordinated by his colleagues from the Doctoral School. One such report is also reproduced.

Keywords: Alba Iulia; Philology; PhD public defense reports; PhD supervision; PhD thesis.

Rezumat

Dosarul de studiu prezintă sintetic activitatea conducătorului de doctorat prof. univ. dr. Mircea Popa în cadrul Școlii Doctorale de Filologie a IOSUD-Alba Iulia. Sunt enumerate în ordine cronologică cele treizeci și cinci de teze de doctorat susținute sub coordonarea domniei sale în perioada 05.03.2005 și 03.12.2021, fiind identificate și cele douăzeci și unu de volume de autor ale foștilor doctoranzi rezultate ulterior prin publicarea unora dintre aceste teze. În cazul fiecărui doctorand este indicată ocupația și locul de muncă actual, precum și adresa de email. De asemenea sunt enumerați cei treizeci și nouă de universitari care au activat ca referenți în cadrul comisiilor de susținere a tezelor, cu afilierea profesională și numărul de participări. Concluziv și succint se prezintă statistic distribuția foștilor doctoranzi ca ocupație și localizare geografică și se consemnează numărul de citări în Google Academic a patru dintre volumele publicate ale tezelor. Nu în ultimul rând sunt reproduse nouă din referatele

¹ Article History: Received: 21.10.2025. Accepted: 28.10.2025. Published: 15.05.2026. No funding was received either for the research presented in the article or for the creation of the article.

conducătorului de doctorat, publicate ulterior ca referință critică sau prefață în volumele amintite. În cea de a doua parte sunt prezentate, cu aceeași abordare structurală, alte cincisprezece teze de doctorat la susținerea cărora profesorul Mircea Popa a activat ca referent în perioada 03.10.2008-29.09.2017, teze coordonate de colegii domniei sale de Școala Doctorală. Este reprodus de asemenea un astfel de referat.

Cuvinte-cheie: Alba Iulia; conducere doctorală; filologie; referate susținere doctorat; teze de doctorat.

Școala Doctorală de Filologie din cadrul IOSUD-UAB a fost înființată prin OM 3868/17.05.2004. Aceasta a fost posibil întrucât trei universitari titulari ai Catedrei de Limba și literatura română a Universității „1 Decembrie 1918” din Alba Iulia au fost numiți conducători de doctorat la acel moment: prof. univ. dr. Mircea Braga (OM 3867/17.05.2004), prof. univ. dr. Constantin Cubleşan (OM 3867/17.05.2004), prof. univ. dr. Mircea Popa (OM 3855/17.05.2004), iar un an mai târziu prof. univ. dr. Ion Buzași (OM 4807/17.08.2005)². Anterior, începând cu anul 1994, profesorul Mircea Popa fusese conducător de doctorat în cadrul Institutului de Lingvistică și Istorie Literară „Sextil Pușcariu” din Cluj-Napoca și la Universitatea „Babeș-Bolyai” din Cluj-Napoca.

Între 05.03.2005 și 03.12.2021 au susținut teza de doctorat, sub coordonarea profesorului Mircea Popa, în cadrul Școlii Doctorale de Filologie a IOSUD-UAB următorii treizeci și cinci de doctoranzi³:

- 05.03.2005, Călina Paliciuc, *Receptarea romanului englez în presa interbelică din România* [The reception of the English novel in the interwar press in Romania]; publicată: Călina Paliciuc, *Receptarea romanului englez presa interbelică din România* [The reception of the English novel in the interwar press in Romania], Arad, Editura Universității „Aurel Vlaicu”, 2006, 269 p., ISBN (10) 973-752-050-5; (13) 978-973-752-050-0.

Lector universitar, Universitatea „Aurel Vlaicu”, Arad

calinapaliciuc@yahoo.com

- Iunie 2005, Indrieș Magdalena (1964-2020), *Interesul pentru literatura clasică și învățământul clasicist în Transilvania (de la 1919 - până azi)* [Interest in classical literature and classicist education in Transylvania (from 1919 - until today)]; publicată: Indrieș Magdalena, *Patriae et scientiae sacrum* [Sacred to the country and science], Editura Universității din Oradea, 2008, 348 p., ISBN 978-973-759-526-3.

Lector universitar, Universitatea din Oradea

- 07.07.2005, Dana Florina Sala, *Configurații ale mitului lui Narcis în literatura română* [Configurations of the myth of Narcissus in Romanian literature]; publicată: Dana Sala, *Abisurile oglindirii. Configurații ale mitului lui Narcis în literatura română* [The abysses of mirroring. Configurations of the myth of Narcissus in Romanian literature], Cluj-Napoca, Limes, 2007, 244 p., ISBN 978-973-726-203-5.

<https://scholar.google.com/scholar?oi=bibs&hl=ro&cites=9569807834056904777>

Conferențiar universitar, Universitatea din Oradea

dsala@uoradea.ro, danafsala@gmail.com

² Vezi https://www.uab.ro/media/documente/RAPORT_DE_AUTOEVALUARE_ANUL_2016_.pdf

³ Vezi <http://doctorate.uab.ro/index.php?pagina=pg&id=109&l=ro>

- 20.05.2008, Monica Ștefan (Grosu), *Petru Comarnescu: monografie* [Petru Comarnescu: monograph]; publicată: Monica Grosu, *Petru Comarnescu. Un neliniștit în secolul său. Studiu monografic* [Petru Comarnescu. A restless man in his century. Monographic study], Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2008, 273 p., ISBN 978-973-133-328-1.
Profesor de limba și literatura română, Colegiul Național „Lucian Blaga” Sebeș, Jud. Alba
https://scholar.google.com/scholar?cites=6890749931704330556&as_sdt=2005&scioldt=0,5&hl=ro
monica76grosu@yahoo.com
- 10.06.2008, Claudia Crișan (Oancea Raica), *Cultură și literatură în presa blăjeană interbelică* [Culture and literature in the interwar press of Blaj]; publicată: Claudia Oancea-Raica, *Cultură și literatură în presa blăjeană interbelică* [Culture and literature in the interwar press of Blaj], Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 2010, 381 p. (Doctoralia), ISBN 978-973-35-2503-5.
Profesor de limba și literatura română, [Colegiul Național „Inochentie Micu Clain”](#), Blaj, Jud. Alba
crisanclaud@yahoo.com
- Octombrie 2008, Claudia Florina Doroftei, *Carte și lectură publică în Bihor, secolele XIX - XX (1848 - 1918)* [Books and public reading in Bihor, 19th - 20th centuries (1848 - 1918)]; publicată: Claudia Florina Pop, *Carte și lectură publică în Bihor, secolele XIX-XX (1848-1918)* [Books and public reading in Bihor, 19th - 20th centuries (1848 - 1918)], Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2021, 218 p., ISBN 978-606-37-1061-2, E-Book ISBN 978-606-37-1060-5.
Conferențiar universitar, Universitatea din Oradea, Departamentul pentru Pregătirea Personalului Didactic
cfdpop@uoradea.ro, doroftei_claudia@yahoo.com
- 2008, Olga Elena Oprea (Morar), *Literatura română pentru copii în perioada interbelică* [Romanian children's literature in the interwar period]; publicată: Olga Morar, *Literatura română pentru copii până la 1940* [Romanian children's literature until 1940], Cluj-Napoca, Editura Argonaut, 2009, 288 p., ISBN 978-973-109-192-1.
Profesor de limba și literatura română, Colegiul Tehnic Turda
- 2008, Maria Vaida, *Gheorghe Pituș sau Ochiul și noaptea. Studiu monografic* [Gheorghe Pituș or the Eye and the Night. Monographic study]; publicată: Maria Vaida, *Gheorghe Pituș sau Ochiul și noaptea* [Gheorghe Pituș or the Eye and the Night], Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, 2009, 367 p., ISBN 978-973-133-468-4; Maria Vaida, *Gheorghe Pituș sau Ochiul și noaptea* [Gheorghe Pituș or the Eye and the Night], Ediția a II-a revizuită și adăugită, Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, 2022, 443 p., ISBN 9786061719747.
Profesor de limba și literatura română, Liceul de Arte Plastice „Romulus Ladea”, Cluj-Napoca
- 04.06.2009, Carmen Mogoșiu, *Mihai Eminescu în literatura maghiară* [Mihai Eminescu in Hungarian literature];
Profesor de limba germană, Liceul Tehnologic Sebeș, Jud. Alba
- 26.06.2009, Simona Maria Pop, *Adrian Marino: portret în evantai. Monografie* [Adrian Marino: portrait in a fan. Monograph]; publicată: Simona Maria Pop, *Adrian Marino. Vârstele devenirii* [Adrian Marino. The Ages of Becoming], Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 2010, 392 p., ISBN 978-973-35-2498-4; Simona Maria Pop, *Adrian Marino. Vârstele devenirii* [Adrian Marino. The Ages of Becoming], Ed. a 2-a, adăugită, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia XXI, 2010, 392 p., ISBN 978-606-8256-41-2.
https://scholar.google.com/scholar?cites=6100241760230023559&as_sdt=2005&scioldt=0,5&hl=ro

team leader și ofițer compliance la o firmă privată franceză

pop.simonamaria@yahoo.fr

- 09.06.2010, Raluca-Cristina-Rucsandra Voina (Lozbă), *Repere ale folcloristicii maramureșene* [Landmarks of Maramureș folklore]; Profesor titular de limba și literatura română, Colegiul Național „Dragoș Vodă”, Sighetu Marmăției, jud. Maramureș
lozba_raluca@yahoo.com
- 02.07.2010, Sanda-Valeria Moraru, *Literatura exilului românesc de expresie spaniolă: George Uscătescu* [Romanian exile Literature in Spanish: George Uscătescu]; publicată: Sanda-Valeria Moraru, *George Uscătescu – poet și eseist* [George Uscătescu – Poet and Essayist], Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2012, 406 p., ISBN 978-973-595-378-2.
<https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=IOp8v2wAAAAJ&hl=ro&oi=ao>
Conferențiar universitar de limba spaniolă, Universitatea „Babeș-Bolyai” Cluj-Napoca.
<https://lett.ubbcluj.ro/departamente/departamentul-de-limbi-si-literaturi-romanice/sanda-moraru/>
sanda.moraru@ubbcluj.ro
- 23.06.2010, Gheorghe Andrasciuc, *Alexandru Ivasiuc - studiu monografic* [Alexandru Ivasiuc - monographic study]; publicată: Gheorghe Andrasciuc, *Alexandru Ivasiuc sau „vocația speculației teoretice”* [Alexandru Ivasiuc or the „vocation of theoretical speculation”], Cluj-Napoca, Grinta, 2013, 429 p., ISBN 978-973-126-526-1.
Profesor titular de limba și literatura română, Colegiul Național „Dragoș Vodă”, Sighetu Marmăției, Jud. Maramureș
andrasciucgeorge@yahoo.com
- 26.11.2010, Elena-Nadia-Ramona Vesa, *Cornel Regman. Monografie literară* [Cornel Regman. Literary monograph]; publicată: Nadia Vesa, *Cornel Regman. Monografie literară* [Cornel Regman. Literary monograph], Cluj-Napoca, Editura Școala Ardeleană, 2015, 400 p., ISBN 978-606-8699-40-0, Volum câștigător al Concursului de debut al Filialei Cluj a Uniunii Scriitorilor, „Biblioteca tânărului scriitor”, nr. 27.
Profesor titular de limba și literatura română, Colegiul Național „Lucian Blaga” Sebeș, jud. Alba.
nadya_v29@yahoo.com
- 31.03.2011, Ionela-Simona Feier (Oprea), *Motive și realități românești în romanul francez până la 1918* [Romanian motifs and realities in the French novel until 1918]; publicată: Ionela Oprea, *Motive și realități românești în romanul francez* [Romanian motifs and realities in the French novel], Cluj-Napoca, casa Cărții de Știință, 2011, 269 p., ISBN 978-973-133-924-5.
ionelaoprea@yahoo.com
Profesor titular de limba și literatura română, Liceul de Muzică și Arte Plastice, Alba Iulia
- 20.05.2011, Enikő Szilaghi (Olcă), *Relații literare și culturale româno-maghiare în perioada interbelică* [Romanian-Hungarian literary and cultural relations in the interwar period]; publicată: Enikő Olcă, *Relații literare și culturale româno-maghiare în perioada interbelică* [Romanian-Hungarian literary and cultural relations in the interwar period], Ed. Dacia XXI, 2012, 520 p., ISBN 978-606-604-583-4.
Profesor de limba și literatura română la Școala Gimnazială „Mihail Kogălniceanu” Sebeș, jud. Alba.
olcar.eniko@yahoo.com
- 07.09.2012, Elena-Claudia Călinescu, *Jurnale intime feminine din perioada interbelică* [Women’s intimate diaries from the interwar period]; publicată: Elena-Claudia Anca,

Incursiuni în feminismul interbelic [Forays into interwar feminism], Cluj-Napoca, Editura Ecou, 2013, 382 p., ISBN: 978-973-8099-10-4.

Profesor de limba și literatura română, Colegiul National Pedagogic Regina Maria, Deva
ec_anca@yahoo.com

- 07.09.2012, Rodica Ioana Marian (Olah), *Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu. Privire monografică* [Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu. Monographic Overview]; Profesor de limba și literatura română, Liceul Tehnologic „Constantin Brâncuși”, Oradea, județul Bihor.
ioanarody@yahoo.com
- 11.09.2012, Liliana Miclăuș (Cristea), *Paul Goma. Disidentul emblematic* [Paul Goma. The emblematic dissident]; Profesor de limba și literatura română, Liceul cu Program Sportiv Sebeș, Jud. Alba
liana.cristea@yahoo.com
- 18.10.2012, Carmen-Georgeta Coman (Ardelean), *Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu în contextul romanului european* [Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu in the Context of the European Novel]; publicată: Carmen Georgeta Ardelean, *Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, „marea europeană” a literaturii române. Pledoarii* [Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, “The Great European” of Romanian Literature. Pleadings], Cluj-Napoca, Eikon, 2013, 234 p., ISBN 978-973-757-920-1.
Profesor titular de limba și literatura română, Liceul Pedagogic „Gh. Șincai” Zalău, Jud. Sălaj
http://www.uniuneascritorilor-filialacluj.ro/detalii_membrii_1070_ARDELEAN-Carmen-Georgeta.html
carmen_ardelean1@yahoo.com
- 09.07.2013, Paul-Virgil Nanu, *Aspecte ale receptării literaturii și culturii finlandeze în România* [Aspects of the reception of Finnish literature and culture in Romania]; publicată: Paul Nanu, *Literatura și cultura finlandeză. O perspectivă românească* [Finnish literature and culture. A Romanian perspective], Iași, Institutul European, 2015, 279 p., ISBN 978-606-24-0102-3.
Profesor universitar de limba franceză și limba română, Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918” Alba Iulia
paul_nanu@yahoo.com
- 19.09.2013, Felicia-Rita Sima (Tripa), *Tradițional și actual în colindatul hunedorean* [Traditional and current in Hunedoara carolling]; publicată: Felicia-Rita Sima, *Tradițional și actual în colindatul hunedorean* [Traditional and current in Hunedoara carolling], Cluj-Napoca, Editura Argonaut, 2015, 256 p., ISBN: 978-973-109-578-3.
Profesor de limba și literatura română, Colegiul National Pedagogic „Regina Maria”, Deva, jud. Hunedoara
fecitripa@yahoo.com
- 28.09.2013, Lacrima-Johanna Schuster (Bădescu), *Ana Blandiana. Studiu monografic* [Ana Blandiana. Monographic study]; profesor de limba și literatura română, Liceul German Sebeș, jud. Alba
lacrima_badescu@yahoo.com
- 26.10.2013, Melania-Elena Vrabie, *Memorialistica feminină a detenției comuniste* [Women’s memoirism of communist detention]; Profesor de limba și literatura română, Colegiul Tehnic „Constantin Brâncuși”, Petrila, Jud. Hunedoara
mell_aniya@yahoo.com

- 27.03.2014, Elena Gheorghiu, *Dimitrie Cantemir și Creanga de Aur. Ipoteze ale folclorului în opera cantemiriană* [Dimitrie Cantemir and the Golden Bough. Folklore Hypostases in Cantemir's Work]; profesor de limba și literatura română, Liceul Tehnologic, Sebeș, Jud. Alba
gheorghiu_elena_1212@yahoo.com
- 30.06.2015, Tiberiu Fărcaș, *Aspecte ale presei interbelice clujene* [Aspects of the interwar press in Cluj]; Redactor șef clujulcultural.ro, SC Platforma Media SRL, Cluj-Napoca
tibifarcash@yahoo.co.uk
- 25.11.2016, Mirela Alina Morar (Popa), *Polemicele lui E. Lovinescu* [E. Lovinescu's polemics]; publicată: Mirela Alina Popa, *Polemicele lui E. Lovinescu* [E. Lovinescu's polemics], Alba Iulia, Aeternitas, 2022, 441 p., ISBN 978-606-613-221-3. Profesor titular de limba franceză, Colegiul Național „Avram Iancu”, Câmpeni/ Școala Gimnazială Vidra, jud. Alba;
mirelamorar19@yahoo.com, mirelaalinapopa@yahoo.com
- 25.09.2019, Diana-Maria Danciu, *Proza lui Alexandru Ecovoiu* [The prose of Alexandru Ecovoiu]; specialist relații publice și comunicare la Netex Romania, Oradea, Jud. Bihor
danciudianamaria@gmail.com
- 26.09.2019, Alina-Maria Stoica (Modorcea), *Contribuții la o poetică a genului polițist – un gen literar neglijat* [Contributions to a poetics of the detective genre – a neglected literary genre]; profesor titular, limba și literatura română, Școala Gimnazială „Ion Gheorghe Duca”, Petroșani, județul Hunedoara; cadru didactic asociat la Universitatea din Petroșani, Facultatea de Științe Economice, Administrative și Sociale, Departamentul de Științe Socio-Umane
alina.modorcea@gmail.com
- 20.12.2019, Maria Daniela Balea (Andrasciuc), *Taras Șevcenko și Mihai Eminescu. Perspective comparative* [Taras Shevchenko and Mihai Eminescu. Comparative Perspectives];
danaandrasciuc@yahoo.com
Profesor titular de limba și literatura română, Colegiul Național „Dragoș Vodă”, Sighetu Marmăției, Jud. Maramureș
- 15.09.2020, Elena Teodora Săcărea (Coldea), *Eginald Norbert Schlattner - un destin emblematic al comunității germane din România* [Eginald Norbert Schlattner - an emblematic destiny of the German community in Romania] (vezi Săcărea (Coldea), 2018); profesor învățământ primar, Școala Primară Nou Săsesc, jud. Sibiu
mihaela_sacarea@yahoo.com
- 30.09.2020, Marinela Viorica Sabou (Țuculete), *Virgil Ierunca - studiu monografic* [Virgil Ierunca - monographic study]; publicată: Marinela Țuculete, *Virgil Ierunca și exilul românesc* [Virgil Ierunca and the Romanian exile], Alba Iulia, Aeternitas, 2023, 421 p., ISBN 978-606-613-238-1.
Profesor de limba și literatura română, Liceul cu Program Sportiv Alba Iulia
marinelatuculete@yahoo.com
- 24.09.2021, Sabina Larisa Marin (Oltean), *Ion Breazu - studiu monografic* [Ion Breazu - monographic study]; publicată: Sabina Larisa Oltean, *Ion Breazu* [Ion Breazu], Alba Iulia, Aeternitas, 2023, 319 p., ISBN 978-606-613-242-8.
Profesor de limba și literatura română, Liceul cu Program Sportiv Alba Iulia
llsdd2008@yahoo.com

- 28.09.2021, Diana Lora Pușcaș (Dinistrianu), *Octav Șuluțiu - studiu monografic* [Octav Șuluțiu - monographic study];
profesor titular de limba și literatura română, Liceul de Artă „Ioan Sima” Zalău, Jud. Sălaj
diana_dinistrianu@yahoo.com
- 27.09.2021/03.12.2021, Ramona Maria Moldovan (Trif), *Mircea Zăciu - studiu monografic* [Mircea Zăciu - monographic study];
profesor titular de limba și literatura română, Liceul Teoretic „Avram Iancu”, Cluj-Napoca
ramona_maria84@yahoo.com

În comisiile de susținere a 30 dintre tezele de doctorat profesorul Mircea Popa i-a avut alături pe următorii referenți:

prof. univ. dr. Ion Buzăși, Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918” din Alba Iulia – 14
prof. univ. dr. Iulian Boldea, Universitatea „Petru Maior” din Târgu Mureș – 7
prof. univ. dr. Gheorghe Glodeanu, Universitatea Tehnică din Cluj-Napoca, Centrul Universitar Nord din Baia Mare – 6
prof. univ. dr. Diana Câmpan, Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918” din Alba Iulia – 4
prof. univ. dr. Constantin Cubleşan, Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918” din Alba Iulia – 4
prof. univ. dr. Elena Abrudan, Universitatea „Babeș-Bolyai” din Cluj Napoca – 3
prof. univ. dr. Ioan Cuceu (1941-2023), Universitatea „Babeș-Bolyai” din Cluj-Napoca/
Institutul „Arhiva de Folclor”/ Academia de Folclor din Cluj-Napoca – 3
prof. univ. dr. Ilie Rad, Universitatea „Babeș-Bolyai” din Cluj-Napoca – 3
prof. univ. dr. Ioan Derșidan (1948-2022), Universitatea din Oradea – 2
prof. univ. dr. Ovidiu Moceanu, Universitatea „Transilvania” din Brașov – 2
prof. univ. dr. Mircea Muthu, Universitatea „Babeș-Bolyai” din Cluj-Napoca – 2
prof. univ. dr. Alexandru Ruja, Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara – 2
prof. univ. dr. Ana Selejan, Universitatea „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu – 2
prof. univ. dr. Vasile Spiridon, Universitatea „Vasile Alecsandri” din Bacău – 2
prof. univ. dr. Vasile Voia, Universitatea „Babeș-Bolyai” din Cluj-Napoca – 2
prof. univ. dr. Cornel Ungureanu, Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara – 2
prof. univ. dr. Dumitru Chioaru, Universitatea „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu
prof. univ. dr. Constantin Corniță, Universitatea de Nord din Baia Mare
prof. univ. dr. Vasile Fanache (1934-2013), Universitatea „Babeș-Bolyai”, Cluj-Napoca
prof. univ. dr. Ileana Ghemeș, Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918” din Alba Iulia
prof. univ. dr. Rudolf Gräf, Universitatea „Babeș-Bolyai” din Cluj-Napoca
prof. univ. dr. Gheorghe Manolache, Universitatea „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu
prof. univ. dr. Ilie Moise, Universitatea „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu
prof. univ. dr. Lucian Nastasă-Kovacs, Universitatea „Babeș Bolyai” din Cluj Napoca
prof. univ. dr. Antoaneta Olteanu, Universitatea din București
prof. univ. dr. Cseke Peter, Universitatea „Babeș Bolyai” din Cluj-Napoca
prof. univ. dr. Virgil Stanciu (1941-2023), Universitatea „Babeș-Bolyai” din Cluj-Napoca
prof. univ. dr. Mircea Tomuș (1934-2022), Universitatea „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu
prof. univ. dr. Marta Rodica Vartic, Universitatea „Babeș Bolyai” din Cluj-Napoca
conf. univ. dr. Georgeta Orian, Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918” din Alba Iulia – 4
conf. univ. dr. Diana Adamek, Universitatea „Babeș Bolyai” din Cluj-Napoca – 2
conf. univ. dr. Gheorghe Achim (1960-2021), Universitatea Tehnică din Cluj Napoca
Centrul Nord Baia Mare

conf. univ. dr. Dumitru-Mircea Buda (1982-2024), UMFST „George Emil Palade” din Târgu-Mureș
conf. univ. dr. Constantin Chevereșan (1947-2010), Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara
conf. univ. dr. Sunhild Galter, Universitatea „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu
conf. univ. dr. Maria-Gabriela Necheș, Universitatea „Dimitrie Cantemir” din București
conf. univ. dr. Marian Petcu, Universitatea din București
conf. univ. dr. Rodica Pioariu, Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918” din Alba Iulia
conf. univ. dr. Monica Ponta, Universitatea „Aurel Vlaicu” din Arad
conf. univ. dr. Dana Sala, Universitatea din Oradea
C. S. II dr. Ottmar Trașcă, Institutul de Istorie „George Barițiu” din Cluj Napoca

Între doctoranzii profesorului Mircea Popa regăsim: 26 de profesori din învățământul preuniversitar (de limba și literatura română – 23, de limba franceză – 1, de limba germană – 1, pentru învățământ primar - 1), din județul Alba (unsprezece), din județul Hunedoara (patru), din județul Cluj (trei), din județul Maramureș (trei) și câte unul din județele Bihor, Sălaj și Sibiu; șase universitari (din Oradea, Alba Iulia, Arad și Cluj-Napoca); un redactor, un specialist relații publice și comunicare. Consemnăm și două situații aparte, grăitoare în privința relației maestru-discipol. O doctorandă care în 2005 își susținea teza de doctorat sub coordonarea profesorului Mircea Popa, Dana Florina Sala, este invitată în 25.09.2019 pentru a fi referent, membru în comisia de susținere a unei alte teze coordonate de profesorul Mircea Popa. Un doctorand care în 09.07.2013 își susținea teza de doctorat sub coordonarea profesorului Mircea Popa, Paul-Virgil Nanu, devine în 03.12.2021 președinte al ultimei comisii de susținere a unei alte teze coordonate de profesorul Mircea Popa.

Douăzeci și una dintre tezele de doctorat au fost ulterior publicate în volum, conform Google Academic cartea semnată de Dana Sala consemnând patru citări, cea semnată de *Simona Maria Pop* – trei citări, iar cele aparținând Monicăi Grosu și Sandei-Valeria Moraru – câte o citare.

Redăm în continuare câteva dintre referatele întocmite de Prof. univ. dr. Mircea Popa la susținerea tezelor de doctorat coordonate de domnia sa (unele publicate ulterior, puse la dispoziție prin bunăvoința foștilor doctoranzi).

Referat

asupra tezei de doctorat *Petru Comarnescu – monografie* [Petru Comarnescu: monograph] de Monica Ștefan (Grosu), depusă spre a fi susținută la Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918” – Alba Iulia, 20.05.2008

Din excelenta generație de esești, poeți, prozatori, dramaturgi, critici și istorici literari, filosofi și memorialiști, afirmată atât de plenar după Primul Război Mondial și cunoscută în cultura noastră și sub numele de „generația 1927”, Petru Comarnescu se impune cu individualitatea sa distinctă. În timp ce mulți dintre cei împreună cu care se afirmase în acești ani, precum Mircea Eliade, Mircea Vulcănescu, Emil Cioran, Eugen Ionescu, Constantin Noica, Anton Galopentia, Mihail Sebastian, Ionel Jianu, Vasile Băncilă sau Dan Botta au beneficiat de exegeze, monografii sau de diverse studii recuperatoare, situația lui Petru Comarnescu, ca și dimensiunea traiectoriei spirituale marcată de el pe un segment impresionant din viața și cultura românească (din 1925, când se fixează debutul său în revista liceului Sf. Sava din capitală, sub semnătura Pan Cercetătorul și până când se stinge din viață, la 27 noiembrie 1970) nu a făcut încă obiectul unei cercetări de anvergură. E meritul tinerei profesoare Monica Grosu, absolventă a Universității din Timișoara, dar funcționând ca

profesoară la Colegiul „Lucian Blaga” din Sebeș, județul Alba, că și-a propus, și a și reușit să ducă la bun sfârșit acest incitant proiect, în condiții precare de documentare, dar cu o ambiție și o tenacitate demne de a fi luate în seamă, dacă socotim și prezența ei activă ca istoric și critic literar, comentator și eseist de vocație, în numeroase reviste din mai multe orașe ale țării, așa cum ne-o recomandă lista ei de lucrări, atașată la finalul acestui dosar.

În ciuda tinereții sale evidente, Monica Grosu se prezintă astăzi în fața noastră cu o lucrare remarcabilă din multe puncte de vedere, marcând, desigur, o primă etapă și cea mai importantă, în cercetarea și valorificarea operei acestui autor prolific, plin de eleganță și de intuiții neașteptate care și-a consumat inteligența, talentul și extraordinara mobilitate într-o mulțime de domenii, dând dovadă de o înzestrare artistică ieșită din comun. Eseist experimentat, estetician cu o cultură filosofică și literară dintre cele mai întinse, atras în egală măsură de fenomenul artelor plastice, dar și al muzicii sau al teatrului, Petru Comarnescu face, în cadrul generației sale, figura unui „homo novus”, aducând spiritul american liber, întrepid și neînhibat la noi acasă și constituind, vreme de câțiva ani, până nu va fi devansat de Mircea Eliade, un punct de referință important al generației, dacă nu chiar liderul acesteia, prin structura sa mobilă și capacitatea organizatorică salutară în închegarea rândurilor generației. Bătălia „generaționistă” din primul deceniu de după război lui i se datorează în mare măsură, ca și încercarea de autodefinire și personalizare a grupului „Criterion” prima formă de afirmare publică a acestei generații înzestrate. E primul său merit învederat. Cel de al doilea merit, și cel mai substanțial, este acela de a fi făcut racordul României la cultura și civilizația americană, aflată atunci într-un progres fără egal și care pentru români era cvasi-necunoscută. Sfârâmând inhibițiile tradiționale, dând la o parte barierele și tabuurile unei lumi agrarian-patriarhale, Petru Comarnescu a pus în fața tineretului din vremea sa alternativa americană la alternativa europeană, a deschis ochii românilor cu privire la civilizația industrialistă și tehnicizată a viitorului, spre zărilor unei democrații politice, economice și sociale care se baza pe inteligență, pe creativitate și competiție. Cele două cărți ale sale pe această temă, apărute la un interval de câțiva ani, pot fi socotite adevărate best-selluri românești, iar autorul lor un înnoitor și un mentor de prezent cultural atractiv. Meritul monografiei de față este tocmai acesta, de a fi pus în centrul dezbaterii sale cele două momente de mare efect ale tânărului Petru Comarnescu, momente care fac și obiectul primelor capitole consistente ale lucrării sale. „Americanismul” tânărului este apoi explicat printr-o atitudine consecventă, menită de a crea un adevărat curent de idei favorabil culturii americane, prin luări de poziții, conferințe, traduceri, popularizări de scriitori încă necunoscuți la noi, cum ar fi cazul lui Eugene O'Neill, înfăptuind astfel un admirabil rol de ambasador cultural, peste care nu se poate trece.

Cel de al treilea rol important pe care Petru Comarnescu l-a avut în epocă a fost acela de comentator, critic și istoric de artă, elemente ce conturează cea de a treia dimensiune spirituală a sa. Dacă în prezentarea celor două dimensiuni amintite la început, autoarea dă dovadă de o bună orientare critică și estetică, în acest domeniu s-ar putea invoca cu îndreptățire și o anumită înțelegere excesiv sentimentală a rolului îndeplinit de Petru Comarnescu în epocă. În acest caz s-ar fi dorit și o discuție mai extinsă asupra perioadei „proletcultiste” a criticului de artă Petru Comarnescu, a unei tendințe de șablonizare, de restrângere dogmatică a preocupărilor, tendință semnalată de altfel foarte acid și inclement de Dan C. Mihăilescu. Chiar dacă aprecierile critice ale acestuia sunt uneori excesive, ele au totuși meritul de a fi sesizat o latură mai puțin împlinită a carierei cultural-artistice a omului și comentatorului Petru Comarnescu, o tendință mai puțin respectabilă de a face rabat de calitate în favoarea conjuncturalului tezisat. Tentația inflaționistă și uzinală nu-l va scuti de anumite scăderi, care nu trebuie ignorate, precum cele ce le vom descoperi în scrieri de tipul monografiilor despre Octav Băncilă, Șirato, A. Baltazar, Benjamin Franklin, Lascăr Vorel, în traducerea cu toptanul de cărți sovietice, realizate credem de alții, dar semnate de el, cum ar fi cele ale lui N. Abalkin, O. Ciornâi, Ilya Ehrenburg, N. Gorceakov

sau G. I. Uspenski, unele dintre ele apărute în celebra editură „Cartea Rusă”. Participarea sa la „sovietizarea” culturii noastre, nu e prin urmare un moft, ci o crudă realitate la care eseistul americanizat e părtaş. În aceeași ordine de idei trebuiau emise câteva opinii clare cu privire la formația sa de popularizator și vulgarizator de cultură, în care rabatul de calitate este extraordinar de accentuat și care a avut un impact considerabil asupra operei sale luate ca întreg (amintim aici chiar articolele apărute în „Îndrumătorul cultural” sau în alte reviste de acest gen). Și, ca să epuizăm aici lista observațiilor și sugestiilor critice pe care le facem spre îmbunătățirea lucrării, în vederea publicării ei, sugerăm următoarele: listele bibliografice să fie alcătuite în ordine cronologică; înlăturarea numelui autorului din bibliografia personală; identificarea pseudonimului Erasm cu Petru Manoliu, p. 317; și îmbunătățirea listei de referințe prin consultarea „Revistei româno-americane” din 1946 – 1947, la care Comarnescu nu a fost numai colaborator, ci și redactor și membru de seamă al Asociației de prietenie „Amicii SUA”, dar și a seriei sale noi, de după 1989, unde vom întâlni mai multe articole despre Petru Comarnescu semnate de Nicolae Cârlan (*Ion Țuculescu și Petru Comarnescu la Muzeul Smithsonian din Washington*), Thomas A. Perry (*P. Comarnescu's contribution to Romanian – American Literary Relations*) sau cel al lui Valeriu Râpeanu intitulat *America văzută de Nicolae Iorga și Petru Comarnescu*.

Reîntorcându-ne la calitățile lucrării de față voim să subliniem în primul rând o bună împărțire a materialului pe capitole, fiecare capitol urmând să dea seama despre principalele direcții de manifestare ale publicistului și omului de artă Petru Comarnescu, acordându-i, atunci când e cazul chiar două secțiuni diferite (e cazul aprofundării relației lui cu lumea americană, când acest lucru e dezbătut în două capitole, „Cărțile americane și impactul lor în anii ‘30” și „Lumea americană în eseurile unui idealist lucid”). Ca o contrapondere la lumea americană, ar fi fost bine să fi inserat după acestea *Jurnalele călătoriei prin Europa*, care, în cadrul lucrării, formează capitolul IX. În orice caz, autoarea sesizează exact că vârful de lance al scrisului lui Petru Comarnescu îl constituie confesiunea și prin urmare jurnalul, structura chiar a unor cărți târzii fiind spartă de prezența unor jurnale, tipul de reportaj-eseu, remarcat de autoare, fiind în opinia sa chiar o descoperire a scriitorului. Sublinierea acestor structuri compozite, care adună în același text fizionomii, portrete, trăiri imediate, impresii, refugieri în trecut, subiecte de roman, de istorie a mentalităților, de imagologie și demografie, pasaje dialogate și savante incursiuni de istoria artei reușesc să-l impună pe Petru Comarnescu drept un diarist cu profil distinct la care informația de ordin documentar este una esențială. Pe lângă buna tratare a materiei trebuie să remarcăm calitățile stilului narativ, simplu, atractiv, neprețios, dar adecvat materiei tratate. Apreciem apoi efortul cercetătoarei de a ști să compună portretul de profunzime al tânărului și neliniștitului Petru Comarnescu, ale cărui linii esențiale pot detecta dincolo de demersul exegetic, urmând strâns linia evolutivă a principalelor etape ale creației sale. În dosul frazelor critice intuim de fiecare dată apetitul niciodată împlinit al lui Petru Comarnescu pentru luarea în posesie a cât mai multor lumi, a unei foame neostenite de cărți, de lecturi, de muzee, de opere de artă, de lucrări muzicale, a unui adevărat „*homo artisticus*”, captivat de fervoarea devastatoare, caldă și tensionantă, a unui spirit eruptiv și insațiabil, greu de stăpânit sau de redus la o singură dimensiune, – o trăsătură pe care o identificăm și la alți colegi de generație. De aici și teama „risipirii”, pe care o mărturisește în interviul ce i-l acordă lui Ion Biberi și care planează serios asupra scrisului său și de care el însuși este conștient. Totuși, avântul său proteic e slujit de prietenia confraternă a unor tovarăși de drum, în special a lui Ionel Jianu, cu care se aseamănă în multe privințe. Autoarea tezei de doctorat dă și un răspuns adecvat la problema formației unei elite românești de calitate, prin raportarea fiecărui membru al ei la un centru de referință internațional, în cazul său America, după cum în cazul lui Ionel Jianu Franța, obișnuindu-și apoi comilitonii să învețe a se afirma în public, ca echipă, eliminând timiditatea, tracul, angoasa singurătății. În cercetarea operei

sale, Monica Grosu se plasează în unghiul cel mai favorabil, contemplând și având întotdeauna sub ochi întregul, la care să poată face raportările necesare, în așa fel încât să nu dea impresia de facil, de zbor razant, ci de cuprindere metodică, la firul ierbii, a gestului artistic complex, cu insolitul și spectaculosul lui. Autoarea nu optează pentru dihotomia devenită clasică între viață și operă, ci își gândește cartea ca o raportare permanentă la structura de adâncime a unui studios, care se gândește pe sine armonizat cu semnele vremii sub imperativele omului clasic, în raport cu Binele și Frumosul, despre care meditează în scrierea sa *Kalokagathon*, ideal și simbol pentru cel care încearcă a trăi sub semnul artei.

Subliniind rolul scriitorului în trezirea interesului la noi și în Europa pentru opera lui Brâncuși sau Țuculescu, pentru valorile naționale perene (mănăstiri, Grigorescu, Luchian etc.), autoarea subliniază rolul important jucat în epocă de scrisul lui Petru Comarnescu și de puternica lui audiență peste hotare. Această primă realizare monografică asupra operei sale conferă Monicăi Grosu calitatea de exeget autentic, documentat, inspirat, cu un stil critic fără poticneli, fapt care ridică mult calitatea lucrării sale, însoțită de o amplă bibliografie a lucrărilor autorului și de una de referință, foarte bogată și bine selectată. Având în vedere toate aceste calități recomandăm lucrarea de față pentru susținerea publică și acordarea, cu îndreptățire, a titlului de doctor în filologie.

Referat

asupra tezei de doctorat semnată de Claudia Crișan (Oancea-Raica) cu titlul
Cultură și literatură în presa blăjeană interbelică [Culture and literature in the interwar press of Blaj] - 10.06.2008

Pentru orice cultură presa reprezintă factorul dinamic care mână înainte societatea. Cultura și literatura unei națiuni sunt strâns legate de presa națională, deoarece prin intermediul acesteia ajung în mâna cititorului (recte a poporului) creațiile de orice fel, pentru că presa este cea care găzduiește confruntările de idei, debaterile și programele unei generații, pentru că prin intermediul presei se face receptarea operelor literare de către public, pentru că prin presă se face informarea publicului și se realizează contactul real dintre elitele unei culturi și literaturi și consumatorul de cultură. Nici o societate nu mai poate fi înțeleasă astăzi fără instituțiile de comunicare care o reprezintă.

Incursiunile în trecutul cultural și literar al unei nații, prin cercetarea atentă a factorilor de presă care au consolidat ideile epocii sunt astăzi tot mai numeroase și primite cu mult interes de specialiști și de publicul larg cititor. Iată de ce ni se pare de mare însemnătate tema pe care și-a propus să o investigheze tânăra profesoară Claudia Crișan (Oancea-Raica), profesoară la Colegiul Național „Inochentie Micu Clain” din Blaj și absolventă a Universității noastre în seria 1999. Ea realizează astfel performanța de a fi prima dintre foștii studenți ai Universității noastre care își susține doctoratul la aceeași universitate la care a absolvit și care face parte din seria de masteranzi care au urmat o școală doctorală la Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918” din Alba Iulia. A fost o studentă merituoasă, după cum astăzi ilustrează cu demnitate învățământul liceal blăjean, prin faptul că și-a susținut de curând gradul didactic I și e prezentă, cu studii și articole, în cărți și reviste de specialitate, ilustrând ea însăși spiritul viu și dinamic al Blajului.

Căci fără doar și poate aplecarea asupra trecutului revuistic și cultural al Blajului este o provocare ce o onorează, dar care o și obligă în același timp, prin faptul că Blajul a fost și rămâne un factor de cultură de primul rang. A investiga, prin urmare, trecutul orașului care a produs în secolul al XVIII-lea marele reviriment cultural cunoscut sub numele de Școala Ardeleană, că a dat o pleiadă de cărturari iluștri în frunte cu Inocențiu Micu Klein, Samuil Micu, Gh. Șincai, Petru Maior și alții, că de aici s-a pornit marea mișcare de redeșteptare

națională ce a culminat cu formularea crezului național, prin *Supplexul* de la 1891 și că tot de aici a pornit iureșul revoluției de la 1848, înscriind Câmpia Libertății în șirul marilor monumente nemuritoare ale patriei, constituie fără îndoială repere de care doctoranda noastră a ținut seama pe tot parcursul lucrării sale. De aceea *Argumentul* său este și închinat „Micii Rome”, orașului legendă de pe Târnave căruia Eminescu i-a acordat întreg girul său sentimental și programatic. Legătura dintre Blajul secolului al XIX-lea și Blajul primei jumătăți a secolului al XX-lea (anii 1918-1944) s-a impus ca o constantă de seamă a lucrării, deoarece în lipsa generației luptătoare din perioada premergătoare Marii Uniri din 1918 nu se poate înțelege nici impetuoasa ecloziune de forțe culturale care au animat Blajul interbelic.

Autoarea a înțeles foarte bine acest mesaj al trecutului Blajului și, ca atare, își deschide lucrarea cu un capitol dedicat precursorilor presei blăjene, respectiv întemeietorului acestei prese, care nu este altul decât marele cărturar Timotei Cipariu. Se consideră chiar că ideea înființării unei presei naționale în Ardeal lui îi aparține, dar că, în lipsa condițiilor prielnice la Blaj, el a îndemnat pe prietenul său George Bariț să înceapă demersurile în acest sens la Brașov. Oricum ar fi, Blajul este cel de-al doilea oraș din Transilvania care își dobândește o presă proprie în limba națională, contribuind prin „Organul luminării”, scos în 1847, la pregătirea revoluției de la 1848, iar prin „Organul național” la răspândirea ideilor revoluției, ziarul fiind de fapt o cronică vie a evenimentelor memorabile de atunci, iar prin ziarul ce l-a continuat, „Învățătorul poporului”, un îndrumător pentru poporul român din Transilvania în perioada post-revoluționară. Faptul că aceste reviste sunt tipărite cu litere latine este un alt moment de rezonanță culturală națională pe care trebuie să-l consemnăm ca atare.

Efortul principal al autoarei lucrării de față se concentrează asupra perioadei interbelice, reprezentând, în concepția ei, efortul merituos al celei de a treia generații a Școlii Ardelene, după marii înaintași, generația revoluției și generația marilor împliniri sub raport literar. Căci, dacă cele dintâi generații de cărturari blăjeni au fost în mod fundamental scientiste, enciclopediste și filologice, acum efortul noilor generații se mută în plan estetic-literar, prin creatori care s-au adăpat la izvorul școlilor Blajului, și-au făcut ucenicia în presa blăjeană și au dus mai departe spiritul Blajului în mișcarea literară interbelică. E vorba de poeții Aron Cotruș, Teodor Mureșeanu și Iustin Ilieșiu, de prozatorii Ion Agârbiceanu, Pavel Dan și Alexandru Ciura, de eseistii, istorici și comentatori Ștefan Manciulea, Nicolae Comșa, Nicolae Albu, Zenovie Pâclișanu, Radu Brateș (Gh. I. Biriș), de importantul filosof Ioan Miclea, de folcloristul Traian Gherman, de omul de școală Toma Cocișiu etc. Toți aceștia au reprezentat noua pleiadă a culturii și literaturii blăjene, pleiadă pe care nici o antologie literară n-a putut cum să-i ocolească, dovadă ilustră fiind și antologia *Povestitori ai Ardealului*, realizată de Ion Breazu (și el originar dintr-un sat de lângă Blaj) și reluată într-o nouă formă de colegul Ion Buzăși. Acestor personalități „modelatoare” autoarea ar fi putut să le dedice un capitol concludiv în care toate firele acestei vaste și complicate rețele de vase comunicate s-ar fi putut reuni în mod spectaculos și extrem de ilustrativ.

Un moment important asupra căruia stăruie autoarea este acela al diversificării presei blăjene în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea. Dacă Cipariu ne oferise un model pentru presa politică și culturală, apoi pentru cea filologico-istorică, prin „Archivu”, cea de a doua jumătate a sec. al XIX-lea ne aduce presa pedagogică („Foaia scolastică”), muzicală („Muza română”) și economică („Economul”) și un model de „foaie bisericească-culturală” de tipul „Unirii”, care va rămâne de acum înainte predominant, atât în „Unirea poporului”, cât și în „Cultura creștină” și „Blajul”. Aceste trei reviste sunt cele care vor duce la apogeu revuistica blăjeană culturală, după ce anterior, în anii 1906-1914, încercase o interesantă experiență cu „Revista politică și literară”, care marchează racordul la sămănătorismul de dincolo de munți, dar și prezența în coloanele ei a două nume de rezonanță: Nichifor Crainic și Liviu Rebreanu (cu *Talerii*, revista blăjeană fiind a doua revistă din Transilvania după „Luceafărul” la care

marele prozator de mai târziu publică proză înainte de a trece munții), amândoi scriitorii amintiți aflându-se în etapa debutului.

Marile publicații blăjene sunt tratate monografic, cu o atentă survolare a fiecărui număr. Prin numeroasele exemple furnizate, autoarea reușește să ne ofere un ilustrativ tablou al preocupărilor elitelor publicistice blăjene în perioada interbelică, să ne dea măsura performanțelor obținute de acestea, nivelul ridicat la care se situa proza lui I. Agârbiceanu și Pavel Dan, poezia lui Cotruș și Teodor Murășanu, studiile și eseurile lui Radu Brateș, Ștefan Manciu, Coriolan Suciu, Ioan Mică. Poate că nu ar fi fost lipsită de interes și o mai intensă preocupare pentru scoaterea din uitare a unor nume ca I. M. Gârleanu, Aurel Ciato, I. Ioanaș, Simion I. Crișan în poezie, a lui Iosif E. Naghiu în publicistică, a lui Traian Gherman în folcloristică, a lui Toma Cocișiu în domeniul pedagogic, spre a oferi și zgomotul de fond necesar acompaniamentului general. Bine ilustrat, prin raportări minuțioase și permanente, este sectorul de traduceri și de prezențe străine în paginile revistelor blăjene, ceea ce ridică nivelul calității și al profesionalismului echipelor de redactori, propulsând pe autorii lor într-o zonă europeană mult mai largă. Sunt de semnalat aici câteva noutăți pe care autoarea le pune în evidență, întâia oară, cum ar fi relatarea vizitei făcute în România de către doi oameni de cultură suedezi, a filoromânului Charles Upton Clark sau Scotus Viator, a unor manifestări științifice închinare lui Goethe sau lui Mistral. Merită toată atenția și semnalarea prezenței unor turnee teatrale la Blaj sau a unor congrese cu rezonanțe naționale (Congresul Ligii Culturale, de exemplu). Poate că s-ar fi convenit să ne fi oferit mai multe detalii asupra sistării revistei „Unirea” în 1937.

Meritorii și cu multă grijă pentru detaliu sunt redactate capitolele consacrate presei manuscrise blăjene și apoi a revistelor școlare editate aici în perioada interbelică: „Mlădițe”, „Avânt tineresc”, „Răsai soare”, „Marianistul” sau „Tinerimea nouă”. Prezența lor în peisajul cultural al Blajului se explică prin grija pentru educația de bună calitate pe care școlile Blajului a oferit-o tinerei generații, dovadă de ce Nicolae Balotă și Corneliu Coposu sunt duși de către părinții lor la Blaj.

Analizele oferite de autoare sunt în general corecte și atent lucrate. Uneori apetența pentru detaliu încarcă prea mult textul, împânzindu-l cu citate excesive, dar faptul în sine are și meritul esențial de a ne oferi de la sursă, opinii pro și contra, prin redarea exactă a „foii de temperatură” a epocii. Prin masivul material pus în circulație de autoare pătrundem în lumea miraculoasă a presei interbelice, în zona de acțiune cea mai fierbinte a ei, semn că autoarea a înțeles să se pătrundă de pulsul febricitant și pasionant al multitudinii de probleme pe care aceasta le ridică.

Descrierea fenomenului cultural și revuistic se face cu atentă grijă de a ne comunica sensul exact al evenimentelor, comentariul său, participarea afectivă directă fiind bine strunită și cenzurată. Stilul este agreabil, lipsit de stridențe și de poticneli, iar bibliografia adusă la zi face de cele mai multe ori, raportările la realitatea circulației textelor de astăzi în ediții și resuscitări publicistice contemporane.

Abordând o temă de cercetare de maximă importanță cultural-literară, teza de doctorat a Clădiei Crișan (Oancea-Raica) reprezintă o meritorie contribuție de istoria presei, istoria ideilor, istoria culturii și literaturii românești din perioada interbelică. Ea vine să umple un gol adânc resimțit în istoriografia noastră literară actuală, aducând în dezbatere spiritul viu al unei demonstrații care invită la dialog și la cunoaștere reciprocă. Prin studiul ei atent și metodic Blajul de astăzi se „căfănește” din nou, fiind propulsat în realitatea faptică a timpului de față printr-o privire scormitoare și incitantă, care merge de fiecare dată la sursă. Iată de ce propunem spre susținerea publică teza Clădiei Crișan (Oancea-Raica) și opinăm cu toată convingerea pentru recunoașterea calităților lucrării de față în așa fel ca ea să aducă autoarei titlul deplin meritat de doctor în filologie.

Referat

asupra tezei de doctorat elaborată de doctoranda Pop Simona-Maria
cu titlul de *Adrian Marino – monografie* [Adrian Marino: monograph] – 26.06.2009

În istoria criticii și a comparativismului românesc din a doua jumătate a secolului al XX-lea, numele lui Adrian Marino s-a înscris ca un adevărat moment de referință. Nimeni n-a făcut pentru comparatistica românească din ultimii cinci zeci de ani mai mult decât el, nimeni n-a obținut atâtea succese pe plan național și internațional, nimeni n-a încercat cu mai multă obstinație decât el să revigoreze metoda și disciplina ca atare și să o îndrepte spre noi forme de abordare a fenomenelor literare, anexându-i cu fermitate teritoriul generos al criticii ideilor literare. Chiar dacă noua direcție n-a cunoscut încă mulți adepți și rezultatele acestui tip de demers n-au devenit încă spectaculoase, timpul nu a expirat încă și consecințele activității sale în acest domeniu pot să-și arate cu îndreptățire roadele. Marele său merit a fost că în plin regim comunist, de strictă supraveghere și cenzură ideologică și politică, el a creat o breșă de mari proporții în ceea ce privește dialogul culturii și literaturii noastre cu străinătatea, a impus valorile naționale peste hotare și a adus în țară suflul proaspăt al noilor tendințe și orientări în gândirea estetică și literară mondială, a creat un cadru propice schimbului liber de valori, dialogului de aleasă calitate cu cei mai de seamă reprezentanți ai scrisului literar planetar. Nici o altă revistă românească nu s-a ridicat la nivelul atins de „Cahiers roumains d'études littéraires”, care a reprezentat ani de zile cartea de vizită a scrisului românesc în fața străinătății, poarta prin care acesta a putut să-și afirme prezența sa benefică în concertul literaturilor și culturilor lumii. Un asemenea efort de promovare a valorilor naționale nu mai făcuse înaintea sa decât Bazil Munteanu, dar în alt context și cu alte resurse, de aceea efortul cu totul special al lui Adrian Marino de a forma în jurul lui o școală de tineri comparațiști trebuie apreciat ca atare.

Ca unul care am beneficiat, chiar de la începuturile afirmării mele literare, de sfaturile și îndrumarea apropiată a lui Adrian Marino, de prietenia și orientarea sa generoasă, prin îndemnuri și „comenzi” de colaborare la CREL, dar și în străinătate (mi-a cedat în acest sens mie invitația primită de dânsul de a colabora la un onorant proiect european intitulat „Bible de tous les temps”, inițiat de doi ași ai disciplinei, Yvon Beval și Dominique Bourel, în colaborare cu prestigioasa editură Beauchesne, prin colaborarea la volumul *Le siècle des Lumières et la Bible*, apărut în 1986 la Paris) m-am simțit dator să promovez acest act de restituire critică a impresionantei sale activități, oferind unui reprezentant al generației tinere șansa de a redescoperi și reexamina valoric activitatea unui om de cultură care a avut neșansa să traverseze cel puțin trei regimuri politice și să figureze printre proscriși regimului de teroare comunist. Misiunea de a realiza o asemenea complexă lucrare i-a revenit Simonei-Maria Pop, o înzestrată absolventă a Universității noastre, care s-a dovedit la înălțimea datoriei încredințate. Pe lângă faptul că a dat publicității o serie de studii și articole privind viața și activitatea lui Adrian Marino, ea ne oferă astăzi, sunt forma acestei lucrări de doctorat, o valoroasă încercare de examinare critică a operei importantului comparatist român. Teza de doctorat concepută de ea nu este o monografie în sensul clasic al cuvântului, ci o formă modernă de a organiza un material aparent dispersat oferindu-i coerență și consistență. Organizarea materialului pe capitole se face de fiecare dată în jurul unei idei directoare, în așa fel încât să lumineze cât mai bine intențiile criticului și comparatistului Marino și să servească intenționalității declarate a monografistei, aceea de a realiza un portret interior al omului de cultură Adrian Marino, în care liniile rigorismului și moralismului său structural să fie cât mai bine evidențiate. Adrian Marino este omul unei anumite formații și concepții despre viață și

societate, un cărturar benedictin în adevăratul sens al cuvântului, care se apără pe sine și valorile unei lumi dispărute prin actele de cultură pe care le întreprinde. „Supraviețuirea prin cultură” ar putea fi intenția declarată și ascunsă a acestui demers, care opune lumii totalitariste exemplele cele mai elocvente ale unui discurs liberal, fidel promovării libertății de spirit și de exprimare individuală. Idealurile unui om care a suferit timp de douăzeci de ani privațiunile cele mai aspre a cărei demnitate umană și conștiință spirituală a fost agresată, mutilată, asuprită, dar nu deformată, și care și-a păstrat cu stoicism și efort suprauman valorile democratice interioare ies cu claritate la lumină din paginile acestei cărți care vine să reașeze personalitatea profesorului de umanitarism care a fost Adrian Marino la locul ce i se cuvine în contextul luptei pentru modele și afirmare a spiritului creator din perioada comunistă. Căci nu trebuie să uităm nici o clipă faptul că Adrian Marino a încercat să ofere marii mase de critici îndoctrinați și aserviți regimului un model de a trăi în răspăr cu regimul, de a refuza înregimentarea oficială de slujbaș al statului, de a prefera statutul de marginal, de independent, chiar dacă independența lui era așa precum aceea a lui Moromete, una iluzorie. Macedonskianismul firii sale orgolioase și subiective își pune amprenta, așa cum bine arată autoarea într-un capitol final, asupra tuturor acțiunilor, inaugurate cu pompa declarativă aferentă, de prestigiosul critic și comparatist, căruia îi plăcea să aducă cu fiecare carte a sa un mic spectacol de inițiativă și originalitate, menit să-i apere unicitatea. Pentru a explica cât mai bine caracterul individualității creatoare a acestui spirit singuratic și singular în contextul cultural al epocii comuniste, autoarea așează în fruntea cărții sale un capitol edificator, cel cu privire la experiența gulagului comunist. El ține loc de biografie, căci din aceste rapoarte de securitate aflăm și reperele biografice care ne interesează și care pun în lumină un destin ultragiatic, la fel ca în cazul lui Macedonski. Figura de „ultragiat”, de „proscris” va fi apoi întreținută în tot restul vieții, ca un corolar al spiritului său de libertate. Frustrarea suferită prin interzicerea dreptului de semnătură timp de douăzeci de ani, cât a fost ținut departe de scris și de lumea literară, explică eferescența critică în care s-a lansat după eliberare, mulțimea și anvergura proiectelor, amplitudinea lor, tânărul Marino, așa cum arată autoarea, ajungând să redea un sens vieții sale „folosindu-se tocmai de acest sistem împotriva căruia luptase cu înverșunare... Scrierilor din domeniul criticii literare li se vor adăuga jurnale intelectuale sau cărțile despre Eliade și Etiemble, toate acestea fiind de fapt manifestări culturale independente și alternative culturii oficiale, așa cum vom demonstra în capitolele următoare”, spune autoarea la un moment dat.

Interpretarea dată de autoare ni se pare nu numai rezonabilă și plauzibilă, ci și corectă. Pentru Marino, fostul pușcăriaș al lagărelor comuniste, nu cultura și scriitorii oficiali contemporani puteau deveni obiect de studiu, ci mai degrabă acei scriitori și zone culturale, iluminismul, de pildă, care aminteau de climatul ideologic al epocii interbelice sau care puteau vorbi acum contemporanilor de alte tipuri ale libertății de creație, neinfluențate și nederijate de partid. În acest sens mergeau și primele sale cărți despre Macedonski, cartea despre *Introducerea în critica literară* din 1968, cărțile legate de *Critica ideilor literare* din 1973, cum ar fi *Modern, modernism, modernitate* (1969) și *Dicționar de idei literare* (1973), dar mai ales cartea contactelor cu Occidentul, adică școala unei noi democrații. Autoarea a intuit foarte bine misiunea „civilizatorie” și formativă a acestor scrieri, de aceea ele au făcut obiectul unei tratări amănunțite în capitolul al doilea al lucrării, intitulat *Jurnalul intelectual și aventura străinătății*, un capitol bine scris, beneficiind de identificarea acelor aspecte care se conformează programului său intelectual de recuperare a Europei, element de care fuseseră privați ani buni de la instaurarea Cortinei de Fier.

Recuperarea lui Mircea Eliade, cel mai important scriitor și om de cultură român din lumea occidentală va intra și ea în acest vast program de integrare europeană, pe care autorul l-a desăvârșit prin scrierile sale despre Europa, redactate după 1989 și căruia autoarea îi dedică

un important capitol al lucrării sale, inclusiv atașând aici reflecțiile autorului cu privire la cel de al treilea discurs, reflecții mărturisite în cartea de dialoguri cu Sorin Antohi.

Autoarea lucrării de față intuiește cu finețe schimbarea de paradigmă care s-a petrecut în viața și activitatea comparatistului Adrian Marino după 1989. Omul poate să iasă acum cu curaj în arenă, poate să reia legăturile cu Partidul Național Țărănesc, să participe alături de Doina Cornea la ședințele unui Forum Antitotalitar, poate interveni în presă cu articole privind tactica și strategia trecerii țării la democrație. Încet-încet, criticul și comparatistul părăsește lumea ideilor abstracte pentru a se dedica unor activități concrete, participă la ședințe ale Alianței Civice, la Memorialul Durerii de la Sighet, alături de oameni cu care dorește să reformeze societatea românească încă bolnavă de atâția ani de comunism. El descoperă acum un al treilea discurs pe care ar dori să-l promoveze, se afirmă tot mai mult ca ideolog și mai puțin ca și critic și istoric literar. Simona-Maria Pop analizează foarte bine această schimbare în capitolul destinat discuției despre vocația ideologică. Ieșirile sale în arenă sunt tot mai numeroase și mai tranșante, fapt care îl face să judece cu oarecare asprime poziția lui Noica față de liderii comuniști, lucru care v-a duce la „demascarea” lui Noica, dar și la polemica pornită de grupul de la Păltiniș, care v-a sări în apărarea maestrului lui. „Cearta intelectualilor” v-a forma obiectul altui capitol bine scris al acestei lucrări, care intenționează să ne restituie un Marino cât mai aproape de adevăr.

Un alt capitol important acordă Simona-Maria Pop recunoașterii publice de care s-a bucurat omul de cultură și comparatistul Marino. Momentul culminant îl constituie primirea premiului Herder și a Legiunii de onoare, fapt care ridică prestigiul scriitorului în ochii contemporanilor, chiar dacă refuzul de a intra într-o Academie care a mai păstrat în rândurile ei unele fosile comuniste poate contraria. Gestul este însă perfect motivat de linia de conduită pe care comparatistul o adoptase, crearea unei școli și a unor discipoli fiind de asemenea în firea lucrurilor, deoarece, fără să exagerăm deloc, omul de cultură clujean devenise cu adevărat un fel de spiritus rector al vieții literare, un formator de opinie, un maestru către care se îndreaptă privirile multor tineri care simt nevoia unor îndrumări. În special procesul alegerii este prezentat de autoare ca deosebit de favorabil unor astfel de opțiuni și clarificări poziționale.

Capitolul *Adrian Marino și critica de idei* readuce în atenție unul dintre idealurile cele mai importante ale comparatistului literar și modul în care și-a înțeles el misiunea în cadrul Asociației Internaționale sau Românești de Literatură Comparată (o sesiune omagială cu acest obiectiv, fiind organizată la un moment dat la Cluj prin strădania lui Paul Cornea) sau prin cărțile și contribuțiile pe care le-a realizat în acest domeniu, cel mai important de altfel din întreaga lui activitate. Cu multă pătrundere critică selectează autoarea toate acele componente ale conceptului marinist de literatură comparată, stăruind, prin analize convingătoare, și asupra modului cum l-a ilustrat în practică. Selecția lucrărilor de acest gen este operată prea tranșant de autoare, lăsând pe dinafară cărți importante care se subsumează genului, cum ar fi *Hermeneutica ideii de literatură* (1987), *Comparatisme et Theorie de la littérature* (Paris, 1988), *Tendences esthétiques* (Budapest, 1984) și, mai ales, *Biografia ideii de literatură*, un serial impresionant, care, alături de preocupările cu privire la istoria cenzurii a ocupat timpul comparatistului în ultimii ani.

Cu mult aplomb, acuitate și intuiție critică, autoarea lucrării de față rezolvă mai toate problemele importante care ar fi trebui rostite în legătură cu o operă atât de bogată și diversificată. Preocupată să descifreze resorturile cele mai intime ale personalității mariniene, să pătrundă în ascunzișurile laboratorului său intim, autoarea lucrării de față realizează multe pagini de pătrunzătoare analiză literară, pagini care nu se transformă însă în encomion și nici în exagerări egolare. Obiectivitatea și simțul critic domină cele mai multe pagini ale lucrării, într-o așa-zisă monografie în care domină stilul eseistic de bună calitate, cu percutante și frumoase caracterizări critice, cu asociații de bun gust, cu pagini de aleasă reconstituire

documentară (capitolul privind dosarul de securitate sau „aventura străinătății”), cu capitole care nu sufocă prin erudiție dar nici nu lasă impresia improvizației. Un stil critic plăcut și recomfortant îl însoțește pe cititor de-a lungul întregii lucrări, pe care subsemnatul o consideră de bună calitate, atât sub raportul informației istorico-literare, cât și în sectorul interpretării critice, autoarea găsiind de cuviință să ne ofere în final și un interesant portret al macedonskianismului structural al omului și scriitorului.

Având în vedere aceste calități, ca și efortul depus de scriitoare de a integra analizei sale și surse mai puțin accesibile, cum ar fi cele provenite din fondul arhivistic depus de scriitor la Biblioteca Central Universitară Lucian Blaga din Cluj-Napoca (fond pe baza căruia a construit subcapitolul relației sale cu Mircea Carp), țin să subliniez în final buna organizare a materialului critic cu care a operat, într-o echilibrată adecvare dintre analiză și sinteză, propun cu plăcere spre susținere publică teza de față și susțin cu îndreptățire ca autoarea ei să i se confere titlul de doctor în filologie.

Referat

asupra tezei de doctorat *Literatura exilului românesc de expresie spaniolă: George Uscătescu* [Romanian exile Literature in Spanish: George Uscătescu] de Sanda-Valeria Moraru, depusă spre a fi susținută la Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918”, 02.07.2010

Personalitatea complexă și generoasă a poetului și profesorului George Uscătescu aștepta de mai multă vreme să fie validată critic și referențial printr-o lucrare de anvergură. Aceasta, pentru că vorbind de el, vorbim implicit și de potențialitățile exilului românesc din lumea hispanică ce se cer corelate cu nivelul ideatic occidental al momentului. Este bine știut că Spania și țările latine din America de Sud au reprezentat ținte predilecte de refugiu pentru scriitorii români de diferite orientări, încurajați, mai ales, de toleranța acestor țări față de opțiunile ideologice de dreapta pe care mulți dintre acești refugiați le-au împărtășit, într-un fel sau altul în țară. Apoi, în Spania a funcționat și înainte de război un lectorat de limba română, transformat de Alexandru Busuiocanu într-un institut cultural de prim rang, iar prezența acolo a unor scriitori români de primă mărime, precum Aron Cotruș sau Vintilă Horia și a unui cerc românesc foarte activ patronat de Traian Popescu a făcut realmente din Spania un teren mult căutat de acțiune liberă și de exprimare a identității Celuilalt. A fost țara care i-a adunat la un loc pe români de certă valoare, ca Alexandru Ciorănescu, Alexandru Busuiocanu, Aron Cotruș, Pamfil Șeicaru, Horia Stamatu, Aurel Răuță, Alexandru Gregorian, Radu Enescu, Vintilă Horia, Ion Țolescu, Stelian Govora și alții mai mulți, hotărâți să deschidă în fața Europei o largă dezbatere cu privire la rolul și destinul pământului românesc, prin cărți și reviste cu mare ecou internațional.

În această campanie pro-românească s-a înscris, prin varii mijloace și posibilități de exprimare, întreaga activitate a profesorului și omului de cultură George Uscătescu, despre a cărui muncă pe tărâm literar și cultural dă seama lucrarea de față, pe care tânăra hispanistă Sanda-Valeria Moraru, cadru didactic la Universitatea „Babeș - Bolyai” din Cluj-Napoca, o consacră, cu mare rigurozitate și spirit critic, reconstituirii fidele a rolului jucat în această direcție de George Uscătescu. Chiar dacă autoarea și propune să surprindă doar două dintre domeniile în care profesorul George Uscătescu s-a manifestat cu rezultate dintre cele mai apreciable, poetul și eseistul, cartea poate fi considerată însă ca o veritabilă monografie cu caracter documentar și critic, deoarece multe dintre capitolele cărții verifică această aserțiune.

Lucrarea se și deschide cu un preambul deosebit de util, care pune în valoare rolul și locul lui George Uscătescu în cadrul exilului românesc din Spania, stabilind și coordonatele și direcțiile fertile pe care se mișcă programul său cultural, program conceput într-un sens foarte

larg și generos și căruia i-a acordat numeroși ani de sbucium și sacrificii materiale. Este valorificată cu acest prilej bogata moștenire literară rămasă de pe urma profesorului, prin reasezarea și redimensionare exactă a ariei sale de activitate și de plasare a eforturilor sale în cauza românească în cadrul mai larg ale tendințelor culturale și ideologice occidentale de după Cel de al Doilea Război Mondial, cu realitățile dure ale perioadei războiului rece și de înțelegere a stărilor de după Cortina de Fier. Autoarea are meritul de a fi subliniat caracterul dezinhibant și comprehensiv, sub zodia căruia se situează atitudinea lui George Uscătescu de cooperare cu autoritățile din țară, el numărându-se printre acei puțini români de mare talie intelectuală, care au păstrat raporturi cordiale cu țara, chiar în epoca de tristă aducere aminte, a deceniului satanic. A fost un mod mult mai maleabil și mai performant de a înțelege natura relațiilor cu țara de origine, atitudine soldată și cu numeroase rezultate benefice, de pe poziția ocupată de el în sistemul construcțiilor europene de la acea dată, putând să se implice cu o mai multă motivare în susținerea cauzei României. Stau mărturie în acest sens majoritatea studiilor, cărților și revistelor pe care le-a gândit și dirijat, în așa fel ca singura țară latină din Orient să-și găsească locul ce i se cuvine în comunitatea europeană. Autoarea deschide în acest sens o argumentată și documentată discuție asupra multitudinii proiectelor și instituțiilor în care a fost angrenat profesorul Uscătescu în anii cei mai fertili ai activității sale, precum și larga vizibilitate de care s-a bucurat. Profesor universitar la două dintre cele mai importante universități spaniole, urmaș la catedră a celebrului Eugenio D'Ors, profesor visiting la universități de prestigiu ca Buenos Aires, Strasbourg, Roma, Paris, Florența, Palermo, Modena, conferențiar apreciat mai pe toate meridianele lumii, George Uscătescu a impresionat prin capacitatea sa de a se plia pe marile subiecte ale istoriei momentului, de a da răspunsuri interesante la multe întrebări de istoria culturii, de politologie și pedagogie socială, de globalizare și strategie europeană, care frământau societatea occidentală din acel moment, cărțile sale cu subiect științific, istoric sau literar, bucurându-se de o reală primire de public. Lucrarea Sandei-Valeria Moraru are apoi meritul de a sublinia larga adeziune a intelectualului cult și rafinat la temele și problemele românești, intelectual care au avut marele merit de a ține Occidentul conectat la o largă rețea de informații, teme și probleme privitoare la cultura și istoria noastră națională, de a fi păstrat România, trecutul și viitorul ei, în vizorul forurilor academice și științifice ale lumii.

O activitate bogată și suficient de bine apreciată a desfășurat George Uscătescu în planul creației literare, în special în poezie, căreia autoarea îi acordă un spațiu privilegiat în economia cărții, respectiv o treime din întreaga întindere. Sunt puse la contribuție toate volumele poetului, de la cel de debut, „Thanatos”(1970), la „Dărmăt Ilion”(1972), „Melc sideral” (1974), „Memoria pădurii” (1977), „Millenarium” (1980), „Autobiografie” (1985), „Poezii” (1981) și „Poemas de la tierra perdida” (1991), tratate în funcție de temele predilecte și metaforele obsedante, cu un accent special privind puterea lor de expresivitate lirică. Iubirea, natura, exilul, dorul de țară, sfârșitul lumii, timpul, renașterea spirituală, critica regimului comunist, melancolia sau pesimismul, moartea, extazul spiritual etc. sunt numai din câteva axe de simetrie în jurul cărora se edifică un sistem liric axat în principal pe trăirea marilor experiențe existențiale ale veacului. Cum poezia sa a cunoscut și numeroase variante în limba română, autoarea are ocazia să pună alături versiunile românești cu cele spaniole, dublând comentariul estetic cu unul filologic, care să facă trimiteri la probleme de limbă, versificație și studiu de text, ceea ce este evident în folosul general al analizei critice. Poetul este după ea un argonaut spiritual cu vastă cultură, reînnoind teme antice și moderne, reînviind mituri și personaje mitologice, cărora le conferă o nouă perspectivă și conotație moral-filosofică, ceea ce accentuează perspectiva simbolic-umanistă a unei lumi și a unei umanități, traversată de amenințări și vicisitudini multiple, de provocări și seisme cărora autorul se simte îndreptățit să le dea un răspuns corespunzător cu viziunea sa de „desțărăt”, de ins lipsit de dulceața

pământului natal și de forța lui miraculoasă, anteică. O poezie de cadențe grave, orfice, și în același timp adoptând ceva din alura marilor imnuri inițiatice, urmând linia unei transcripții de sentimente în continuu dialog cu divinitatea, cu zeitățile de dincolo de lume, cu marile prefaceri ale timpului pe care îl parcurge. Solilocviul poetului e dublat de vocea interioară, pregnant interogativă a întâlnirilor poetului cu sufletul cetății, cu magica luminozitate a unui spațiu naturist ce se circumscrie cu gravitate cercurilor existențiale. Oscilând între opac și luminos, îmbrăcându-se în tonalități lirice foarte diverse, de la melcul adormit, ca simbol al hibernării și a acceptării resemnate a destinului, și de la dimensiunea crepuscular-agonică a ființei umane până la accentele critice ale universurilor carcerale din spațiul comunist, poezia lui George Uscătescu răspunde unei necesități stringente a sufletului românesc din exil, aflat în perioada unor refaceri spirituale liminare, cărora autoarea le dă și un posibil răspuns cu privire la valoarea acestei creații în contextul poeticității noastre moderne.

Un loc important acordă autoarea eseistului George Uscătescu, domeniu în care compatriotul nostru s-a ilustrat cu vădit aplomb și strălucire. Mulțimea de cărți publicate an de an, varietatea subiectelor și a formulilor de punere în pagină vădesc din plin apetitul dezbateriv al autorului, capacitatea sa de deschidere filosofică și spirituală, dorința de a se implica în dialogul de idei al timpului său, cu intenția sinceră de a oferi soluții și căi de abordare diverse și percutante. Pe unul dintre primele locuri se așează munca sa programatică de la revista „Destin”, una dintre cele mai bune și mai apreciate reviste românești din exil, ca și dorința lui de a pune în circulație o serie de mari personalități românești, precum Eminescu, Blaga, Brâncuși, Cantemir, Maiorescu, Pârvan, Luchian, Noica, Cioran, Titulescu ș.a., dar și a unor nume intrate demult în conștiința universalității, precum Cervantes, Columb, Sf. Francisc, Dante, Pirandello, Ezra Pound, Lorca etc., cărora le consacră eseuri pline de observații pertinente și de o ideatică substanțială. Opera sa eseistică ni se prezintă ca un dialog subtil de opțiuni între spiritualitatea românească și cea universală, ca o oază fertilă de convivialitate între componentele cele mai diverse ale geniului uman de pretutindeni, pe care autoarea le surprinde în dimensiunea lor exactă, cea mai favorabilă și cea mai atractivă. Situația elitelor românești din exil formează și ea obiectul unor analize temeinice, la fel ca intervențiile sale critice la adresa subculturii, a unor aspecte reprobabile ale bolșevismului și comunismului, a totalitarismului în general. Pentru a contura cât mai bine aria de interes a intelectualului nostru din Spania, autoarea aduce în discuție ideile sale privitoare la Uniunea Europeană sau cele legate de condiția exilatului și de problema libertății. Strâns legate de acestea sunt cele care vizează poziția sa privitoare la rolul civilizației și culturii în contextul progresului accentuat la omenirii, ceea ce pune în valoare apertura cu totul remarcabilă a preocupărilor sale de ordin politic, social, filosofic, estetic, cultural.

Personalitatea cu totul atractivă a autorului este conturată de autoare prin aducerea în discuție a lucrărilor sale special destinate dezbaterii problemelor României. În acest sens el este unul dintre puținii români din Occident care au consacrat o întreagă carte istoricului relațiilor dintre România și Spania, a modului în care cele două popoare și culturi se cunosc și se interferează de-a lungul timpului, contribuind în felul acesta la conturarea unui spațiu specific al latinității europene. Acest aspect este relevat și de corespondența sa, editată până acum, capitol care rotunjește prezentarea critică a activității sale multiple, pe care autoarea o scrutează cu antene sensibile, mereu gata să adauge o nouă trăsătură definitorie personalității atât de elocvente a harnicului nostru compatriot. O bibliografie bogată a operei încheie acest vizibil efort critic și documentar, în care teroarea nedisimulată a analizei se împletește cu năzuința spre construcția de sinteză, cu preocuparea vizibilă de a nu scăpa nici un aspect de detaliu, care ar putea modifica sau îmbunătăți optica generală prin care a fost privit scriitorul până acum. Scrisă cu vădită intenție de a face cunoscut publicului românesc cât mai multe din scrierile redactate în limba spaniolă ale autorului – multe dintre ele inaccesibile și e negăsit în

bibliotecile din țară -, lucrarea de față a Sandei-Valeria Moraru se impune prin seriozitatea construcției, prin grija meticuloasă cu care abordează și tratează subiectul, prin folosirea unei ample și cuprinzătoare bibliografii și, nu în ultimul rând, prin preocuparea pentru expresia critică și judecățile de valoare emise.

Importanța cărții de față constă în primul rând în contribuția esențială pe care lucrarea de față o aduce la o mai bună cunoaștere a exilului românesc. În al doilea rând, ea propune o interesantă și incitantă discuție asupra unei opere bogate și complexe, care înscrie, alături de efortul altor scriitori români de valoare ca Mircea Eliade, Eugen Ionescu, Emil Cioran, Aron Cotruș, Vintilă Horia sau Constantin Virgil Gheorghiu, o pagină de gândire și trăire românească, prin care încearcă să ofere propriul său răspuns la provocările secolului al XX-lea, la nivel global și regional. Autoarea conturează cu o reală plăcere analitică destinul unui intelectual român de aleasă stirpe, proiectat în spațiul unei Europe dezbinată și plină de contradicții, care reușește, grație culturii, formației enciclopedice și muncii sale tenace, să construiască acolo un univers românesc sui-generis, demn de un adevărat „spirit european”.

(publicat sub titlul *Cuvânt înainte* la vol. Sanda-Valeria Moraru, *George Uscătescu – poet și eseist*, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2012, 406 p., ISBN 978-973-595-378-2, p. 9-13.)

Referat

asupra tezei de doctorat *Cornel Regman. Monografie literară* [Cornel Regman. Literary monograph] de Elena-Nadia-Ramona Vesa, depusă spre a fi susținută la Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918” – Alba Iulia, 26.11.2010

Critica românească, s-a spus nu de puține ori la noi, este o creație a foiletonismului. Ca o confirmare a acestei aserțiuni poate fi invocată întreaga pleiadă de critici de la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea în începutul celui de al XX-lea, în frunte cu Ilarie Chendi, Ion Trivale, Mihail Dragomirescu, Nicolae Iorga, Eugen Lovinescu, dar și discipolii mentorului cenaclului „Sburătorul” din perioada interbelică, între care se numără nume de mare răsunet, precum Pompiliu Constantinescu, G. Călinescu, Șerban Cioculescu, Vladimir Streinu, Perpessicius, Felix Aderca etc. A devenit de notorietate faptul că până și tinerii intelectuali ardeleni, formați la școala de estetică și critică filosofică a Universității românești clujene mutată temporar la Sibiu, ai căror mentori au fost dascăli și comparațiști de renume ca D. Popovici, Liviu Rusu, Lucian Blaga sau D. D. Roșca, s-au simțit datori în 1943, cu puțin timp înainte de ieșirea din arenă a marelui îndrumător literar care a fost E. Lovinescu, să se afilieze direcției estetice reprezentate cu atâta strălucire de acest ilustru discipol maioreșcian. Printre semnatarii „Manifestului” de adeziune al Cercului Literar de la Sibiu din acel moment, au figurat intelectuali distinși ca Victor Iancu și Ovidiu Drimba sau tineri aflați în faza afirmării literare, ca Ion Negoitescu, Radu Stanca, Eugen Todoran, Ștefan Augustin Doinaș sau Cornel Regman, acesta din urmă ajuns mai târziu unul dintre numele de notorietate ale criticii românești de după cel de al Doilea Război Mondial.

Prezența sa activă în presa românească pe o perioadă de peste 50 de ani, numeroasele cărți și prefețe care i se datorează au determinat-o pe o remarcabilă absolventă a Universității din Alba Iulia, Nadia Vesa, să se consacre, cu o știință analitică demnă de apreciat, punerii în valoare a activității de critic și istoric literar a acestui demn reprezentant al Cercului Literar de la Sibiu, consacrându-i cea dintâi monografie critică de proporții. Apetitul critic al tinerei scriitoare poate fi constatat atât din parcurgerea lucrării de față, cât și din examinarea listei sale de lucrări, care consemnează participarea sa la numeroase simpozioane și reuniuni cu caracter

didactic sau literar, după cum prezența sa în coloanele unor reviste literare și culturale actuale a devenit un lucru obișnuit pentru cei care îi urmăresc cu interes scrisul.

Abordând cu seriozitate și diligență calitatea de autor de sinteze critice, autoarea a reușit să abordeze sistematic multiplele laturi și ipostaze ale personalității criticului analizat, încercând să cuprindă într-o imagine globală multitudinea preocupărilor scrisului acestuia, cu responsabilitate și seriozitate analitică, în așa fel încât să nu lase nimic pe dinafară din activitatea atât de bogată și de diversă a harnicului om de cultură care a fost Comet Regman. Pe lângă activitatea didactică presantă, pe care a depus-o în cadrul învățământului superior de la Constanța, Cornel Regman n-a abandonat nicio clipă principala sa preocupare de critic și foiletonist literar, activitate depusă cu o rară abnegație în paginile revistelor „Tomis” și „Viața românească”, încât numele lui nu poate fi omis din nicio listă privind principalii critici ai epocii.

Lucrarea de față a Nadiei Vesa ține cont de toate aceste considerente. Investigația ei dovedește o bună familiarizare cu subiectul abordat, dar și cu tendințele și curente de opinii ale epocii în care s-a format și în care și-a desfășurat activitatea Cornel Regman. Totodată, ea respectă cu mare strictețe etapele afirmării creatoare a criticului, știind să reconstituie, cu prestanță și grijă pentru adevăr, climatul socio-politic și științific pe care l-a traversat criticul, cu tributul plătit la un moment dat presiunii timpului (cum ar fi, de exemplu, activitatea de la „Almanahul literar” când s-a adăpostit sub pseudonimul Dan Costa). Structura lucrării pe care ne-o supune atenției este adecvată țelului principal urmărit de autoare, acela de a scoate în evidență preeminența calităților sale de critic literar. De aceea, renunță la procedeul obișnuit de a-și deschide lucrarea cu periplul biografic, preferând să considere acest capitol ca un aspect secundar al sistemului său de valori și să-l transfere spre sfârșitul lucrării, mediul formativ catalizator reprezentându-l tocmai atașamentul său ardent la programul și acțiunile Cercului Literar de la Sibiu. Așa se și explică interesul pe care-l dobândește în economia lucrării prezentarea „Revistei Cercului Literar” și a preocupărilor cerchiștilor, ca sens nobil urmărit de autor pe tot parcursul existenței sale.

Ca un corolar al acestui mod de a fi sunt degajate de către autoare și trăsăturile definitorii ale programului său de acțiune critică, expus cu competență și acribie profesională într-un capitol în care sunt decelate cele trei note distincte care-i vor însoți activitatea de acum înainte și din care nu lipsește caracterizarea esențială de „critic junimist”, pe care profilul său de bază o va încorpora, ca tipologie și mod de manifestare publică. Corelativă la „critică de atitudine” pe care o va îmbrățișa, se adaugă și trăsătura sa inerentă de a se apleca asupra scrisului colegilor săi din branșa critică, acordând „criticii criticii” un rol esențial de existență sub cupola artei valide din punct de vedere estetic și moral, de a sublinia nevoia ca arta literară să producă schimbări de mentalitate și de fortificare a inteligențelor prin acțiunea critică. Autoarea găsește că din această înclinare originară spre critica valorizatoare, care să excludă divagația și exagerările laudative, derivă și capacitatea criticului și exegetului Cornel Regman de a se afla mereu în plutonul fruntaș al criticii din anii după 1967, când debutează cu cartea *Cărți, autori, tendințe*. Rigoarea și simțul polemic vor deveni alte cerințe de bază ale intervențiilor sale și vor da măsura valorii de interpret inexpugnabil și a rolului de cronicar literar asumat cu inflexibilitate, maliție și inclemență doctrinară. Ni se pare apoi extrem de nimerit a-i judeca prestația în raport cu confrății săi cerchiști, dintre care patru vor opta și ei pentru analiza fenomenului literar. Între ei, Ion Negoitescu s-a aplecat cu precădere spre studii restitutive și de punere în valoare a laturii de modernitate a literaturii române; Eugen Todoran, impus ca exeget al lui Eminescu și Blaga; Nicolae Balotă, atras de studierea comparativă a literaturii noastre și Radu Enescu, preocupat mai degrabă de idei și ideologii literare europene decât neapărat de autori români din trecut. Locul special al lui Cornel Regman în această confrerie literară provine tocmai din faptul că e singurul dintre ei care își asumă, prin excelență, calitatea de mediator al valorilor actualității.

Partea de rezistență a lucrării monografice pe care o închină lui Cornel Regman trebuie s-o vedem înainte de toate în capitolele mediane ale lucrării, respectiv în trecerea atentă în revistă a activității de critic de întâmpinare a lui Cornel Regman și a preocupărilor sale majore, pe care autoarea le grupează în jurul unor tematici predilecte, cum ar fi: momente din evoluția poeziei românești, cronica prozei interbelice și postbelice, explorări și experimente, sancționarea unor năravuri literare condamnabile. Prin incursiuni avizate în trecutul poeziei noastre, cu popasuri semnificative ce au în vedere aportul poetic de substanță al lui Alecsandri, Bolintineanu sau Eminescu, Cornel Regman i se prezintă autoarei venind cu un bagaj remarcabil de sugestii și formulări critice în măsură să schimbe percepția contemporanilor asupra marilor clasici ai literaturii noastre, inclusiv asupra celor interbelici (Goga, Iosif, Bacovia, Barbu sau Blaga). Examinarea lui critică se apropie apoi tot mai mult de lotul poezilor contemporani, în rândul cărora sunt vizati Emil Botta, Dimov, Doinaș, Radu Stanca, Geo Dumitrescu, Gellu Naum, Virgil Mazilescu, Romulus Vulpescu, Ana Blandiana, Marin Sorescu, Dinescu, Verona, Bădescu, Adrian Popescu, Dinu Flămând, Adrian Păunescu, Ioan Alexandru, Ion Caraion, Brumaru, Tomozei, Grete Tartler, Constanța Buzea, Nina Cassian etc. și încă lista nu e terminată. La fel de comprehensiv este criticul în postura de examinator al prozei și criticii românești, încât sumarul cărților sale seamănă de aproape cu tabla de materii a unei istorii literare. Observația pe care am avea-o de făcut față de rezumatele foarte conștiințioase produse de autoare este că aceasta a respectat prea de aproape tratarea materiei în cauză pe baza cuprinsului volumelor semnate de autor și că nu a încercat o grupare a lor în funcție de criterii de afiliere mai largi: criteriul generaționist sau cel tematic, cel privind afinitățile structurale sau valorice, din care cauză asistăm uneori la o dispunere absolut aleatorie a comentariilor. Substanța critică devine pe alocuri difuză, prin repetiții sau prin folosirea abuzivă a citatelor și încercarea de a nu lăsa nimic pe dinafară. Totuși, se poate aprecia faptul că autoarea realizează performanța de a trece cu ușurință dintr-un plan în altul al manifestărilor sale critice, acoperind cu asupra de măsură toate genurile și manifestările literare ale autorilor inventariați de volumele concepute de autor. Demnă de relevat este apoi partea lucrării în care Nadia Vesa descoperă spiritul critic mefient, polemic, mușcător, ironic sau coroziv al „Mefistofelului” criticii românești, cum a fost botezat autorul volumului nastratinesc *Cică niște cronicari*, abundența metaforelor sale critice caracterizante, ce întrețin în permanență un „spectacol critic” regizat cu mare artă, în care autorul *Colocvialului* se complăce cu vădită și chiar sadică plăcere. Lupta lui cu mediocritățile, cu nonvalorile, cu veleitarii sau cu intrușii literari de orice fel generează acea stare de satisfacție și de confort intelectual pe care puține intervenții din epocă ți-o oferă. Avem de-a face astfel cu un „stil Regman”, inimitabil și bine pus în valoare de către autoarea lucrării, care trebuia să ducă în final și la un „portret” al criticului realizat cu artă acidă și cu o caligrafie inspirată. Niciun alt critic din epocă n-a avut ca el un mai împătimit cult al lucidității, o aspirație mai puternică către rigoarea conceptuală, dar și un mai acut simț de observație a anomaliilor literare, pe care să nu le lase nesancționate, spre menținerea stării de sănătate a unei literaturi. Observațiile sale ironice, adeseori cârcotașe și răutăcioase, provenind dintr-o bonomie structurală, dar și dintr-o „meteahnă temperamentală” sui-generis, conferă stilului său sarea și piperul unei inteligențe critice bazate pe persiflare și poftă de hârjoneală colegială. Că este așa, ne-o probează și volumul său de aforisme, ce oferă cititorului un adevărat răsfăț al bunului gust, o fizionomie studiată pe pamfletar și de sancționare atentă a derapajelor și scăpărilor de tot felul. În stilul moralistilor francezi arhicunoscuți, Cornel Regman încearcă să facă din literatură câmpul deschis al unor delicii literare provenind din prostia, din autosatisfacția și scorțoșenia unor ipochimeni care produc haz la fiecare declarație ineptă. Nadia Vesa se folosește de o pensetă cât se poate de performantă pentru a fixa în insectarul bolilor spiritului cât mai multe „cazuri” de hipertrofie ideatică, în așa fel încât să nu fie eludat în niciun fel sensul estetic și moral al operei, dar nici

lucrarea ironicului și ludicului, ca dovadă a punerii în valoare a plăcerii contemplative a nației, aplecarea spre a furniza fizionomii cât mai hilare, ce merge mână în mână cu apetitul său justițiar, de a sancționa prompt apariția „moftangiilor” literari. Apropierea de ironia bonomă și sfătoasă a lui Creangă sau de moralismul discret al lui Agârbiceanu l-a dus la redactarea unor monografii critice închinatelor acestor scriitori, aspect pus în evidență cu multă probitate și sânguincioasă demonstrație de către autoare. Interesul de a ne dezvălui cât mai exact sensurile reale ale operei autorului investigat se adaugă insistenței vizibile a acesteia pentru a sesiza elementele de construcție critică și arsenalul de mijloace pus în mișcare de critica regmaniană, pe care o studiază atent în diacronia și sincronia ei intrinsecă. Fiecare operă e judecată în funcție de finalitatea ei și de efectul pe care-l stârnește printre confrați, de relațiile și similitudinile pe care le creează, de suprafața pe care o ia în stăpânire.

Scrisă într-un stil agreabil, cu o bună stăpânire a instrumentarului critic folosit, Nadia Vesa realizează o adevărată monografie literară restitativă, demnă de a acoperi toate laturile unei activități critice respectabile, pusă timp de mai multe decenii în slujba literaturii românești responsabile, de calitate, încercând să îngroașe pe cât posibil lipsurile și insatisfacțiile sale estetice, făcând din critică o armă de luptă pentru calitate și responsabilitate critică, atât de greu escamotate în clipa de față de o critică literară encomiastică și prea puțin exigentă în fața nonvalorilor, diletanților și veleitarilor. De la Ilarie Chendi la Cornel Regman, acest tip de critică inclementă și distructivă, folosind din plin arsenalul ironiei și al limbajului savuros, persiflant, ne lipsește cel mai mult în clipa de față, poate cu o singură excepție onorabilă, cea a lui Alex Ștefănescu. De aceea, revenirea la Cornel Regman și la stilul său „bășcălios” de a produce texte critice ni se pare o ocazie nimerită pentru criticii actuali de a lua act de acest tip de critică „hâtră”, care ucide sau numai rănește cu blândețe și în șagă, apelând la argumente de bun simț. Pentru aceste motive, salutăm cu căldură apariția cărții de față!

(publicat ca *Prefață* la vol. Nadia Vesa, *Cornel Regman. Monografie literară*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Școala Ardeleană, 2015, 400 p., ISBN 978-606-8699-40-0, p. 5-9)

Referat

asupra tezei de doctorat *Relații literare și culturale româno-maghiare în perioada interbelică* [Romanian-Hungarian literary and cultural relations in the interwar period] de Enikő Szilághi (Olcă), depusă spre a fi susținută la Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918”

– Alba Iulia, 20.05.2011

Istoria relațiilor literare și culturale româno-maghiare este veche și are în urmă o cercetare sistematică de mulți ani, dacă avem în vedere importanțele bibliografii oferite domeniului de către Veress Endre (*Bibliografia româno-ungară*, I-III, 1931-1935) sau cele care i-au urmat, semnate de Gáldi László, Domokos Sámuel, Réthy Andor și Váczy Leona.

Așa cum bine a arătat autoarea, de-a lungul timpului din sânul celor două popoare s-au ivit cercetători, scriitori, traducători sau militanți pentru apropiere care au marcat tot atâtea momente de contacte fructuoase, de colaborare și cunoaștere reciprocă. Periodic, aceste eforturi, străduințe și rezultate benefice se cuvine să fie rememorate, ordonate și judecate valoric și interpretativ din unghiul de vedere al cercetătorului imparțial, reexaminarea critică având drept aliat timpul, cel care sedimentează și dă consistență oricăror fapte umane, în așa fel ca de experiența înaintașilor să profite din plin și generațiile clipei de față.

Lucrarea de față – la origine teza de doctorat al doamnei Szilághi (Olcă) Enikő - vine să răspundă tocmai unui atare deziderat, foarte necesar marcării stadiului actual al problemei și să repună pe tapet importanța unui act cultural cu semnificații mult mai extinse decât la prima privire, cu adânci implicații imagologice și de istorie a mentalităților, atrăgând atenția asupra

unui teren de cercetare important și fecund, tot mai neglijat în ultimii ani, datorită unei false înțelegeri a relațiilor reciproce, inflamate periodic și de luări de atitudine politică excesive.

Analizând cu obiectivitate și fără parti-priuri ce s-a întâmplat în acest domeniu în cei douăzeci de ani câți au trecut de la evenimentele din decembrie 1989, am putea conchide că, față de perioada anterioară stadiul relațiilor reciproce în loc să cunoască progrese semnificative a fost traversat dimpotrivă, de tendințe evidente de separatism, ignorare și ocultare reciprocă.

Dacă în perioada anterioară, cea comunistă, prezența reciprocă în revistele literare era bogată și concludentă, acum ea a dispărut aproape în întregime, cele două literaturi și culturi evoluând paralel, aproape fără linii, momente de interferență și sprijin reciproc. În aceeași măsură s-a micșorat vizibil și lotul de critici și istorici literari maghiari care se ocupă frecvent sau incidental de literatura română, după cum aproape că a dispărut total grupul scriitorilor și oamenilor de cultură români dedicați promovării și studierii acestor raporturi. Ultimul specialist român al domeniului, profesorul Gavril Scridon de la Cluj, autor al unei *Istории a literaturii maghiare din România*, sau încercatul traducător Gelu Păteanu sunt acum nume de domeniul trecutului, iar semnalele de înlocuire a lor sunt tot mai anemice. Cu regret trebuie să constatăm că în anii din urmă au dispărut din câmpul acestor preocupări nume importante de specialiști maghiari în domeniu, precum Jancsó Elemér, Engel Károly, Mózes Huba, Kakassi Endre, Marosi Péter, Beke György și a multor altora, lăsând terenul nefrecventat și tot mai arid (chiar dacă un Dávid Gyula sau Miskolczy Ambrus încearcă cu greu să facă față provocărilor).

Iată care au fost circumstanțele ce m-au determinat să încerc a reînvia tradiția de mare rezonanță spirituală a acestor raporturi, oferind unor studenți și doctoranzi de la Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918” din Alba Iulia șansa de a lucra în domeniu și de a reface, prin prezența lor activă și specializată, un câmp de activitate atractiv și departe de a-și fi epuizat încă toate posibilitățile. În consonanță cu această intenție, cu doi ani în urmă s-a susținut la Universitatea noastră o teză închinată receptării operei lui Eminescu în cadrul literaturii maghiare de către Carmen Mogoșiu, iar acum, iată, o temă cu deschidere generoasă, care analizează fenomenul literar în cea mai bogată și fertilă epocă de dezvoltare culturală din Transilvania, epoca interbelică.

Intitulată *Relații literare și culturale româno-maghiare în perioada interbelică*, lucrarea de față răspunde cu prisosință dezideratelor de la care au pornit intențiile noastre, autoarea punându-și în valoare atuurile cu care a plecat la drum: o bună cunoaștere a limbii și literaturii române și a celei maghiare, un salutar apetit de investigație documentară, o bună stăpânire a relației dintre analiză și sinteză, o atentă și chibzuită judecare a fenomenelor și faptelor de cultură abordate. Toate aceste calități i-au permis să efectueze un examen riguros și atent al perimetrului de observație stabilit, să realizeze identificarea și ordonarea materialului în funcție de câteva teme directoare clare, care au dus la amprentarea simpatetică și cu bune rezultate a epocii și a multitudinii de aspecte pe care aceasta le-a scos la iveală.

Pot să spun fără rezerve că istoria și critica românească nu dispune până la ora de față o lucrare de sinteză care să fi analizat cu mai multă sollicitudine și spirit de comprehensibilitate problematica complexă și uneori contradictorie a numeroaselor puncte de vedere emise, a mulțimii de inițiative și de soluții oferite, a disputelor sau a încercărilor de conciliere dintr-un sector sau altul, a evoluției literare comune dintr-o perioadă supusă fluctuațiilor, înnoirilor și integrării în ritmul de cultură european, cum ar fi spus D. Popovici.

Radiografierea fenomenului literar și cultural s-a făcut întotdeauna în cunoștință de cauză, mergându-se la surse, la cărțile fundamentale sau la presă, confruntând informațiile venite dintr-o parte, cu acelea obținute în cealaltă parte. Principiul de la care a pornit autoarea a fost acela de „audiatur et altera pars”, fapt care a scutit-o de a emite păreri greșite sau unilaterale. Dacă până la lucrarea de față, cercetătorii domeniului au forțat mai cu seamă nota națională în interpretarea și prezentarea faptelor, Olcar Enikő este prima care folosește o

informație venită din ambele surse, controlând și filtrând totul prin prisma unei judecăți nealterate și care nu poate fi suspectată de subiectivism sau de considerente de ordin etnic. Socot, prin urmare, că aceste două merite ale lucrării merită a fi subliniate de la început: cea dintâi vizând un efort de documentare cât mai larg și mai cuprinzător și cel de al doilea având în vedere bogăția și diversitatea materialului pe care a lucrat și care provine cu precădere din surse de documentare în limba maghiară.

Lucrarea de care vorbim nu ignoră nicio clipă raportările necesare la cadrul social și politic al epocii, la sublinierea factorilor speciali care au favorizat și întreținut climatul de idei al epocii. Astfel, un prim capitol ne pune în temă cu *Situația generală după Unirea din 1918*, când comunitatea maghiară din Transilvania s-a văzut pusă în situația de a accepta să funcționeze ca „minoritate”, într-un stat pe care l-a controlat în mod absolut până atunci. Autoarea subliniază că, în ciuda condițiilor politice schimbate, libertatea scrisului, a tiparului și a creației n-a fost știrbită, dimpotrivă s-au înregistrat chiar progrese în domeniul editării de carte și a numărului de ziare și reviste, că numărul societăților și asociațiilor literar-culturale a crescut simțitor, iar activitatea lor n-a suferit hiatusuri și impedimente. Manifestările cultural-literare au suplinat nu de puține ori simbolistica națională, care n-a fost deloc ocultată.

Cel mai important capitol al cărții este dedicat analizării bogăției de aspecte a modului în care comunitatea maghiară din Transilvania a înțeles să se integreze și să se acomodeze noii situații, fapt analizat la modul detaliat în capitolul *Aspecte ale conviețuirii româno-maghiare*. Pentru intelectualii maghiari ai epocii, cuvântul de ordine al zilei a fost cel de „conviețuire”, de „apropiere”, cuvânt absolut nou pe care comunitatea maghiară a trebuit să-l accepte și să-l conștientizeze și, pe deasupra, să-l facă funcțional într-o lume în care raportările la Budapesta nu mai erau absolut obligatorii. Situarea față de literatura și cultura românească impuneau acum alte criterii și normative de lucru, căci ele nu mai erau expresia unui negativism și respingeri „de plano”, ci trebuiau să tindă spre o colaborare și conlucrare bine înțeleasă. Aspectele conviețuirii au îmbrăcat foarte multe forme de exprimare și s-au tradus în mod practic prin : 1) inițierea de anchete culturale, anchete găzduite și inițiate de revistele „Napkelet”, „Tüz”, „Cele trei Crișuri”, „Ellenzék” și „Familia”; 2) prin editarea unor reviste bilingve sau plurilingve, cum au fost „Aurora” de la Oradea, „Culisele” și „Cultura” de la Cluj, „Banatul ” și „Limba română” de la Timișoara, acoperind și o largă arie de traduceri; 3) înființarea de societăți; 4) inițierea de turnee și conferințe; 4) acordarea de premii literare; și 5) apropieri artistice teatrale și muzicale. Tuturor acestor forme de colaborare, autoarea le acordă un spațiu generos, însoțit de numeroase exemple și situații concrete.

Între vizitele scriitorilor care au ținut ocupate rubricile de noutăți și evenimente literare ale multor ziare și reviste s-a numărat vizita lui Móricz Zsigmond din decembrie 1926 din Ardeal, urmată de tentativa eșuată a lui Babits Mihály din 1935 și călătoria în România și Transilvania a lui Németh László din 1935, soldată cu publicarea unor note de drum intitulate *Maghiarii în România*. Apariția lor a dat prilej la numeroase comentarii de-o parte și de alta și, dacă adăugăm și vizitele unor scriitori la Budapesta, cu ocazia congresului „PEN Club”-ului din 1931, când Victor Eftimiu și Emanoil Bucuța au fost oaspeții scriitorului Ludovic Hatvany, aceste întâlniri și-au avut rolul și scopul lor bine definit.

Tot în scopul cunoașterii reciproce, Nicolae Iorga a folosit prilejul cursurilor de vară de la Vălenii de Munte pentru a invita profesori și oameni de știință maghiari să se regăsească sub marea cupolă a culturii și științei spre a lua cunoștință împreună de stadiul cercetărilor și realizărilor din domeniul literaturii, istoriei și a altor științe umaniste, profesorul clujean Bitay Árpád numărându-se printre preferații săi.

Elocvente paragrafe a acordat autoarea unor comemorări și aniversări care au avut loc în acest răstimp, și care au dat naștere la mici festivități cu ecouri dintre cele mai puternice în presă și în mediile literare scriitoricești de ambele părți. Astfel, autoarea întreprinde atente

reconstituiri ale modului cum s-a desfășurat sărbătorirea a o sută de ani de la nașterea lui Petőfi Sándor în 1922 în țara noastră, subliniind importanța editării cu acest prilej a unei broșuri redactate de profesorul clujean Iosif Popovici și scoțând în evidență rolul important jucat de Octavian Goga cu acest prilej. Amănuntele pe care ni le oferă privitor la faptul că Octavian Goga și-a cerut în mod oficial scuze pentru faptul că actrița Tessitori Nóra a fost acuzată de poliția locală din Satu Mare pentru „iredentă”, cu ocazia recitării într-un astfel de cadru a unei poezii petőfiene, regretând totodată faptul că trupele maghiare în retragere au luat cu ei statuia poetului de la Sighișoara, promițând reinstalarea ei în cazul că va fi adusă din nou în țară - sunt de natură să contureze și mai elocvent rolul important al poetului Goga în menținerea unor bune raporturi de vecinătate și de normalizare a lor. Tot el este cel care a dus o campanie permanentă pentru păstrarea unei vii amintiri a poetului Ady Endre, atât prin ceea ce a făcut la Ciucea, cât și pentru evocarea moștenirii literare a poetului, ori de câte ori a avut prilejul, cum a fost și cazul cu serbările de la Zalău și Mecențiu din 1924, cu cele de la Oradea din 1925, prilejuite de serbarea lui Iosif Vulcan, apoi cu cele din 1929 și 1939, când s-au împlinit zece și respectiv douăzeci de ani de la moartea lui Ady, fapt remarcabil pentru atitudinea demnă și înaintată a poetului român. Același lucru se poate spune și despre sărbătorirea centenarului lui Jókai Mór, fapt care a condus la o mai bună cunoaștere printre români a scriitorului maghiar.

Problemei transilvanismului i se acordă un loc important în economia lucrării, dat fiind atât opiniile controversate cu privire la fenomen, cât și amplele discuții și dispute stârnite în epocă. Indiferent dacă partea română a contestat și respins fenomenul, important e faptul că în ansamblu discuțiile despre specificul local și național, despre componenta națională și europeană a fenomenului artistic s-a lăsat cu roade dintre cele mai palpabile în câmpul creațiilor literare sau a opiniilor teoretice, deoarece a stimulat, într-un fel, teoria „localismului creator”, susținută de gruparea „Thesis” de la Sibiu și de o serie de reviste regionale (lanuriști de la Mediaș, de exemplu).

Meritorii sunt investigațiile făcute de autoare în presa maghiară cu scopul de a contura mai bine activitatea revistelor și a grupărilor implicate în susținerea mișcării transilvaniste, cu evidențierea punctelor de vedere ale grupării „Helikon” și a revistei sale „Erdélyi Helikon”, ale revistei „Korunk” sau a celor de la „Erdélyi Fiatalok”, dar și a unor corifei și îndrumători locali, precum Kós Károly, Tamási Áron, László Dezső, Krenner Miklós, Vita Zsigmond, Keresztury Sándor și alții, dovedind o bună înțelegere a fenomenelor analizate și o vizibilă preocupare de adâncire a lucrurilor. Buna familiarizare cu opiniile vehiculate, inventarierea amănunțită a punctelor de vedere, încercarea de a stabili similitudini și paralelisme cu mișcarea literară românească ne determină să apreciem încă o dată efortul interpretativ făcut de autoare, capacitatea ei de a sesiza fenomenele de noutate și de construcție estetică.

Lucrarea semnată de Olcar Enikő ambiționează să epuizeze mai toate aspectele care privesc relațiile româno-maghiare din perioada interbelică. De aceea, ea vine să completeze seria acestor evenimente cu date legate de seratele literare pe teme comune, cu reuniuni de artiști și expoziții, cu sporirea numărului de traduceri, cu deschiderea de rubrici în revistele românești de la Cluj sau Oradea de tipul *Revista revistelor maghiare*, cu etalarea activității „Secției maghiare a PEN-Clubului Român”, sector în care aduce date deosebit de revelatoare. În aceeași măsură o interesează modul în care au interferat și au colaborat avangardele noastre sau au fost stimulate spectacolele teatrale de o parte sau de cealaltă. Faptul că Lucian Blaga a debutat în calitate de dramaturg pe scena unui teatru maghiar, că acest teatru a fost ajutat să funcționeze și să atingă parametri de calitate doriți prin sprijinul și intervenția directă a lui Octavian Goga este în măsură să sugereze multe lucruri, inclusiv acela că aria de acțiune a literaturii maghiare devine un câmp de afirmare europeană a valorilor românești și invers.

Numeroasele antologii care își fac apariția pe piață, multe dintre ele subvenționate și făcând parte dintr-un program limpede asumat de oameni responsabili, buni cunoscători ai

ambelor limbi și literaturi duce la concluzia fericită că niciodată n-am dispus de un arsenal de influență reciprocă mai bine pregătit și mai eficace decât în perioada interbelică.

Concluziile la care ajunge autoarea în capitolul final, ca și bibliografia bogată, exactă și minuțioasă, anexată la sfârșitul lucrării dovedește din plin munca temeinică și sistematică întreprinsă de autoare, deoarece bibliografia nu este în cazul ei nicidecum un mod de a-și impresiona cititorii, ci un instrument de lucru necesar pe care l-a stors la maximum. Desigur, câteva dintre capitole au o informație redusă la esență și s-ar putea la o adică mult amplifica, dar marele pas înainte făcut de autoare în direcția asimilării și interpretării istorico-estetice este evident și revelator.

Având în vedere capacitatea de documentare și interpretare obiectivă și atentă a materialului, noutatea și actualitatea temei abordate, nivelul ridicat de cunoștințe de care dă dovadă, ca și modul elegant și competent de organizare și punere în pagină a demersului său, lucrarea de față dovedește cu prisosință calitățile de istoric literar ale autoarei, putem vorbi în cazul de față de o lucrare care reprezintă cu demnitate domeniul căruia i se adresează.

(publicat ca *Prefață* la vol. *Enikő Olcar, Relații literare și culturale româno-maghiare în perioada interbelică*, Ed. Dacia XXI, 2012, 520 p., ISBN 978-606-604-583-4. p. 5-9)

Referat

asupra tezei de doctorat *Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu în contextul romanului european*
[Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu in the Context of the European Novel], de Carmen-Georgeta Coman (Ardelean), depusă spre a fi susținută la Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918”
– Alba Iulia, 18.10.2012

Numită de către cea mai mare parte a criticii românești drept „marea europeană”, Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu și-a înscris numele printre creatorii de roman cei mai valoroși pe care i-a dat România interbelică. Numele său a fost asociat de fiecare dată cu străluciți creatori europeni de opere romanești, ceea ce explică interesul autoarei cărții de față de a consacra un amplu studiu critic modului în care opera sa se integrează direcțiilor celor mai fecunde ale narativității epocii. E bine să precizez de la început că lucrarea semnată de Carmen Ardelean se înscrie în aria studiilor de literatură comparată, fiind concepută după tot tipicul unor astfel de întreprinderi, studii tot mai puțin abordate de către noile generații, care ocolesc cu oarecare reticență fenomenul literar comparat, dar pe care autoarea lucrării de față îl consideră esențial pentru o situație valorică cât mai exactă a prozatoarei noastre în raport cu nivelul de creație al epocii sale.

Îndrăgostită de proza scriitoarei, profesoara de la Zalău, Carmen Ardelean, mărturisește în *Argument* că vreme de 20 de ani a fost preocupată să dea răspuns la întrebarea: este Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu o scriitoare de valoare europeană sau nu. Pentru a da un răspuns cât mai complet și mai exact acestei esențiale probleme de situație valorică, ea a citit și recitat opera scriitoarei noastre în oglinzi paralele ale marilor creatori de roman european din perioada interbelică, asociind-o acelor creatori europeni care au adus vizibile inovații structurii și modalităților de abordare ale scrisului românesc. Pregătită să acorde analizei romanului produs de Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu lungi incursiuni de ordin strategic și conceptual, autoarea lucrării de față a simțit mai întâi datoria de a introduce subiectul în context, printr-o amplă și fecundă operație de descriere și situație a romanului european în raport cu inovațiile pe care el le-a înregistrat și le-a angajat de-a lungul timpului, prin opera unui Balzac, Proust, Gide, Colette, Virginia Woolf, dar și la lucrările speciale consacrate problemei, cum sunt cele semnate de Erich Auerbach, R.M. Albérès, E.M. Forster, Marthe Robert sau C. Booth până la

altele mult mai recente. Atenția autoarei se concentrează asupra acelor mari scriitori ai literaturii universale care au reprezentat tot atâtea momente importante în istoria dezvoltării și consolidării genului, determinând schimbări de gust și mentalitate. Sunt trecute rând pe rând în revistă toate inovațiile demne de a fi luat în seamă în materie de naratologie și viziune romanească, începând cu faza romanului clasic de tip Cervantes-Balzac-Dickens, continuând cu romanul naturalist al lui Zola, și cu noile achiziții ale modernității, impuse pe scena europeană de scriitori ca Proust, Gide, Joyce, și de aici la tentația romanului ciclic resimțită de un Roger Martin du Gard, de Romain Rolland, Galsworthy și de alții mai mulți, care, într-un fel sau altul, ar fi putut influența modul în care scriitorul secolului al XX-lea a conceput acțiunea, personajul și spațiul lui de manifestare. Nu sunt ignorate nici opiniile mai recente ale lui Kundera sau rolul jucat de psihoanaliză în aprofundarea reacțiilor psihologice ale personajului românesc, necesare pentru a pregăti intrarea în scenă a Hortensiei Papadat-Bengescu. Un întreg subcapitol trece în revistă mulțimea de asociații produse de criticii noștri pe tema aportului european al prozei sale, situând-o după părerea noastră, în chip exagerat și uneori nepotrivit în context, numai pentru a-i marca modernitatea. Astfel G. Topârceanu o pune sub semnul lui Ibsen, Mircea Zăciu o asociază lui Flaubert, Lautréamont, D'Annunzio și Zola, Anton Holban o compară cu Huxley și Thomas Mann, Mihail Sebastian cu Galsworthy, Edgar Papu cu George Eliot, după cum un număr și mai mare de critici (G. Călinescu, Liviu Petrescu, Ion Holban, S. Iosifescu, Liviu Leonte, C. Ciopraga, Perpessicius, N. Manolescu) o plasează în zona lui Proust sau a Virginiei Woolf și chiar a Nathalie Sarraute (C. Ciopraga). Mulțimea asociațiilor de acest tip ilustrează de fapt mai degrabă ezitarea și deruta comentatorilor în fața unei opere greu de redus la o singură *faculté maîtresse*, iar depășirea raportărilor dincolo de epoca interbelică nu mi se pare întotdeauna productivă, decât în măsura în care anticipările novatoare ale prozatoarei noastre au găsit teren deschis de manifestare. Prezența subcapitolului poate fi considerată funcțională doar într-o singură direcție: aceea de lua act de avatarurile unei modernități pronunțate, căreia epica substanțială a Hortensiei Papadat-Bengescu i se circumscrie printr-un grad ridicat de note definitorii.

Prin capitolul următor *Reflexivitate și autoreflexivitate*, autoarea operează o intrare mai fermă în miezul chestiunii, abordând o temă de discuție cu largi reverberații în epoca interbelică, legată de apariția unui întreg val de prozatoare feminine, care aduc în câmpul literar o notă de senzualitate, de pansexualism, de exhibare corporală și emoțională, cu vizibile repercusiuni în zona de schimbare a registrelor abordării realului. În acest context, autoarea revendică pentru scrisul feminin un spectru mai larg de particularități, în rândul cărora s-ar înscrie subiectivitatea, afectivitatea, autoreferențialitatea, instinctualitatea, confesiunea, lirismul, alternanța analiză-autoanaliză, dominantă psihologică, patologicul, excesul de atenție acordat stărilor sufletești, simțul acut al nuanțelor etc., în cadrul căreia orientări este adus în discuție rolul Hortensiei Papadat-Bengescu, alături de cel al Virginiei Woolf, prin vizibile asemănări între Mini din *Fecioare despletite* și Lily Briscoe și doamna Dalloway din romanul *Spre far* al Virginiei Woolf. Modificările de viziune în conceperea romanului, deschide autoarea sub semnul „poieticității” și al confesiunii, accentuând latura spectaculară a prozei Hortensiei Papadat-Bengescu, care deține secretul unei largi panoramări a observației faptelor de viață, spre a le oferi apoi „o mai adâncă înrădăcinare pe baricada vieții, apoi în materialul cel mai dens al adevărului”. Chestiunile de ordin teoretic n-au fost deloc ocolite de autoare, care a fost atentă la toate luările de poziție și ieșirile în presă pe această temă ale scriitoarei, aducând în discuție toate aceste amprentări ale artei sale, sub titlul atractiv de *Cui îi e frică de poetică?*. Nu de puține ori, opinia ei e întărită prin apelul la diferite nume care circulă în sfera momentului literar interbelic, prin acest gen de „descinderi” fiind stabilite mai exact preferințele de strategie epică la care apelează autoarea și, evident, consecințele lor în planul esteticii romanului.

Pentru situarea Hortensiei Papadat-Bengescu în contextul european al mișcărilor tectonice din zona romanului, autoarea produce o primă dovadă: paralela între scrisul romancierei noastre și cel al Simonei de Beauvoir (*Arabescurile amintirilor unor fete cuminți*), deși s-ar putea obiecta că perioadele de maximă audiență la public ale celor două scriitoare țin de două etape complet diferite. Analiza stilului interior al cărții *Amintirile unei fete cuminți* se lasă cu trimiteri masive la proza bengesciană, mai ales la *Carnetul zilelor pustii* din care s-a născut apoi *Balaurul*, în cazul romancierei noastre. Capitolul își dovedește până la urmă utilitatea lui în conturarea unui stil și a unui mod de lucru, așa cum l-a conceput scriitoarea noastră, accentul pe biologic și interesul pentru descifrarea tainelor vârstelor femeii (în special a Fetei, ca personaj care anunță nimfetele lui Nabokov), într-o evoluție a acesteia spre integrarea în „Cetatea vie”, în care sentimentul maleficului, amenințarea bolii și a morții, capătă întruchipări precise, constituindu-se în veritabile elemente de concepție artistică.

Un pas înainte spre extragerea a noi trăsături definitorii ale prozei papadatbengesciene îl face autoarea în subcapitolul *Florile vieții sau voluptatea autocontemplării*, în care operează o interesantă paralelă între personajul Laura din *Balaurul* și Rachel din *Călătorie în larg* de Virginia Woolf. Personajele sunt vizitate mai ales pe linia animalității funciare, a biologicului primar, a maladivului, dar și în depistarea și descrierea irizărilor secrete ale feminității, domenii în care cele două scriitoare au devenit maestre neîntrecute. Sunt surprinse aici cu acuitate motive muzicale și spațiale pregnante, precum cripta, corabia solitară, trenul groazei, mormântul singuratic etc., dezvoltate cu o retorică diferită de către cele două scriitoare, dar cu o finalitate asemănătoare. Aceste adevărate arpegii ale sufletului capătă contururi și mai vizibile în subcapitolul în care autoarea se apleacă asupra înțelesului de „trup sufletesc” la scriitoarea noastră și la Virginia Woolf, subcapitol devenit în ultimă instanță o pagină de ingenioasă analiză textuală, prin care tiparul de „erotism al sufletelor” primește emblemele individualității și metaforele inconștientului freudian, ilustrând prezența dublului și a alterității, marcând astfel o înțelegere cu totul specială a corporalității.

Pasul următor spre adevărata înțelegere a prozei scriitoarei ni-l oferă trecerea spre deslușirea formulelor predilecte ale construcției epice de mari dimensiuni preferate de scriitoarea noastră (*Arhitectura romanescă*), tot mai ferm atașată de tipul romanului-cronică sau de cel al romanului-ciclic, cel care pune la dispoziția creatorului de imagini șansa de a putea urmări evoluția unor personaje pe întinse suprafețe de timp și spațiu, permițându-ne să asistăm la înălțarea și decăderea lor, cu întreg spectrul de manifestări caracteristice. Sunt făcute aici interesante disocieri și delimitări conceptuale, privind atât pluralitatea formulelor generate de acest tip de roman, cât și marile realizări obținute în domeniu, inclusiv acele legate de ciclul pe care scriitoarea noastră îl destinează familiei Hallipilor. Ciclul va fi amănunțit disecat din mai multe unghiuri de vedere, ca, în final, construcția lui arhitectonică să fie mulată pe polifonia wagneriană, vizând obsesia Elenei Drăgănescu de a organiza în casa sa un concert nemaivăzut și nemaiauzit. Romanul este văzut și ca o parodie de „bestiar romanesc”, în care mai multe personaje capătă pe parcurs înfățișare de animal sau pasăre, de insectă sau târâtoare, de moluscă sau nevertebrate, ca o formă de caracterizare des uzitată de romancieră, apelul la metafore luate din lumea animală contribuind la o mai bună portretizare a personajului. Dacă aspectul de bestiar poate fi acceptat cu ușurință, mai delicat este cel de-al doilea element de departajare al romanului scriitoarei, prin plasarea lui sub unghiul de acțiune al „romanului picaresc”, personal, negăsind suficiente elemente pentru a motiva o atare clasificare, nici Ada Razu, nici Lică Trubadurul neîntrunind suficiente argumente pentru a le așeza sub semnul „picaro-ului”, chiar dacă putem depista și în cazul lor prezența în subsidiar a unui „drum ascuns”.

Dualitatea *spațiu închis/spațiu deschis* constituie pentru autoare o altă modalitate de pătrundere în universul epicii autoarei *Rădăcinilor*, identificând o mare varietate de toposuri temporale și spațiale, prin care autoarea *Fecioarelor despletite* își confirmă apetitul pentru

creația de tipuri și pentru polifonia mediilor. E un capitol dintre cele mai substanțiale, în care Carmen Ardelean are ocazia să își dovedească din plin calitatea de bună analistă, detectând cu finețe toate acele elemente categoriale pe care creatoarea Prundenilor le livrează în spațiul dialogurilor și monologurilor meșteșugite, dar și câmpurilor semantice cărora le dă viață. Între acestea ea distinge cu precădere *casa*, *salonul*, *spitalul*, *sanatoriul*, *cinematograful*, *mahalaua*, *strada*, *subsolul*, *tribunalul*, *castelul*, *muzeul*. Unele dintre ele sunt imperios legate de ideea de parvenire, de snobism și dandysm, ca fețe interpușe ale ambiției sociale, de respingere a situației marginale și a pledoariei pentru cucerirea spațiului central. În al doilea rând, ambiția de a locui în construcții impozante se conjugă cu nivelul de opulență al familiei, cu plasarea ei pe scară socială superioară, încât ambiția doctorului Walter de a poseda castelul Borodin și de a-l transforma într-o sală de muzeu permanent echivalează, în concepția lui, cu o adevărată reconstrucție de natură genealogică. Cu bune rezultate se soldează incursiunea pe care o face autoarea în „lumile” sociale de proveniență ale personajelor, reminiscențe ale unor etape legate de rădăcinile familiale care trimit la Tecuci sau Mizil, păstrându-se încă intacte, în ciuda aristocratismului și snobismului afișat al noilor generații, echivalând cu înrădăcinarea în metropolă și cu disprețul afișat față de trecutul incert, în timp ce noua bătălie se dă pentru a-și face un loc cât mai vizibil în noua configurație ramificată și stratificată a „Cetății Vii”, singura care poate redefini și blazona clanurile. Lupta ce se dă pentru păstrarea locului dobândit (Maxențiu), este dintre cele mai dure și adeseori recurgându-se la procedee neortodoxe, urcușul prin căsătorie e un procedeu la care lumea Hallipilor apelează în mod obișnuit, chiar când mezalianțele își spun până la urmă cuvântul (cazul Adei făinăreasa, al lui Lică Trubadurul sau al bunei Lina). Cu mijloace adecvate, autoarea selectează din vasta galerie de personaje, cărora scriitoarea le dă o identitate precisă, câteva figuri caracteristice, precum Nory Baldovin, pusă în relație cu Hans Castorp și Jacinto, ultimul fiind un personaj luat din romanul lui Eça de Queirós, *Orașul și Muntele*, vădind un real apetit pentru relaționări și inter-relaționări, care atestă capacitatea autoarei de a se mișca pe spații largi de cultură și a extinde mereu spațiul comparatistic, printr-o permanentă foame de deschidere critică, prin invocarea a noi și noi opere și personaje literare, văzute nu de puține ori din punctul de vedere al simbolisticii ascunse, al elementelor de noutate conceptuală și de tehnică narativă.

O mai acută situație a romanului bengescian în spațiul european, prin inserții și incizii speciale, menite a-i fixa și mai mult individualitatea, se produce în cel de al patrulea capitol, intitulat *Interferențe și pseudointerferențe europene*. În acest context, personajele bengesciene se umplu de noi disponibilități, vizând anexarea unor domenii de elitism intelectual, cum ar fi arta, muzica, psihologia, știința, spații de convergență sau de opoziție datorită cărora ele cresc în importanță. Cu această ocazie se realizează noi raportări semnificative, cum ar fi cele care iau în discuție romanele lui Knut Hamsun sau la Colette, depistându-se noi similitudini și afinități, precum simbolurile androgenității sau ale celor legate de bovarismul controlat, de „metafizica feminității” în genere, elemente certe de modernitate prin care corpul devine o „avangardă imaginară”, cum bine observă un comentator, estetică prin care prozatoarea noastră se înscrie în cercul cel mai stilat al prozatoarelor europene la modă. Un roman precum *Străina*, rămas neterminat, este pentru autoare un prilej binevenit de a sonda adâncurile psihologiei feminine în raport cu standardele europene ale noii orientări în vogă, oferindu-i ocazia de a sublinia contribuția substanțială a unei proze cu multiple ramificații și cu o mulțime de personaje-vector, a căror sinuoasă traiectorie valorizează stratificarea socială produsă de noua societate burgheză, de ambițiile și planurile ei monopoliste, prinse în caruselul unor esențiale schimbări ale raportului dintre rural și citadin, dintre gustul plebeu și cel rafinat al aristocrației noastre cultivată în Occident, plan în care „marea europeană” propune un adevărat tratat de remodelare a sensibilității și gustului, totodată cu procesul de rafinare a mijloacelor narative,

prin care ea se înscrie în lotul cel mai valoros al acestor „ambasadoare” de marcă ale romanului european din perioada interbelică.

Scrisă cu îndemănare, cu simțul acut al proporțiilor și cu conștiința clară a necesității unei noi valorizări și situări în context național și internațional a prozatoarei noastre, lucrarea pe care Carmen Ardelean o consacră prozei Hortensiei Papadat-Bengescu se constituie într-o veritabilă pledoarie (de altfel, ea își subintitulează cartea *Pledoarii*) pentru recunoașterea modernității acestei opere, pentru o cât mai bună plasare a sa în raport cu scrisul feminin european, prin sublinierea apăsată a coeficientului de noutate adus de ea în arta construcției, a viziunii și a tehnicii românești, prin care romanul perioadei interbelice s-a situat cu netăgăduită fermitate în fruntea schimbărilor de paradigmă literară. Prin acumulări succesive de argumente, prin deschiderea de la un capitol la altul de noi afinități și izvoare, Carmen Ardelean și-a nuanțat și adaptat pe parcurs analiza în funcție de sugestiile venite din partea unei bibliografii bogate, cu accentul pus pe demersul comparatist al textului, așa cum o creditează și bogata listă bibliografică, atașată la finele lucrării în cauză. Fără să aibă neapărat în vedere o detașare mai tranșantă față de unele opinii echivoce sau nu îndestul de credibile, flerul său critic o călăuzește însă cu succes spre a îmbrățișa și a scoate în evidență doar acele elemente ale analizei și construcției critice care comportă acreditări general valabile. În acest fel, atât textul cât și contextul concură în mod fericit la reliefaarea tezei de bază a acestei lucrări, aceea de a demonstra că prozatoarea noastră a dovedit o înzestrare specială, plină de forță, relief și inventivitate în dezvăluirea sufletului complex, greu perceptibil și descifrabil în nuanțele lui poliedrice, a marii lui bogății și răsfângeri policrome, fapt care o situează în mod indubitabil la nivel de egalitate cu celelalte mari creatoare de proză așa-zis „feminină” din epocă, contribuind în chip plener la diversificarea și înnoirea scrisului european din perioada interbelică. Prin caracterizări interesante, echilibrate și documentate, prin analize pătrunzătoare și convingătoare, lucrarea de față vine la momentul oportun pentru a deschide un proces în favoarea „marei europene” și a resuscita interesul actualității pentru opera sa cu resurse emoționale și estetice atât de puternice. Bine structurată sub raport ideatic, cu o metodologie clară și atractivă, dispunând de un stil agreabil și convingător, lucrarea semnată de Carmen Ardelean se constituie ca o veritabilă contribuție editorială demnă de luat în seamă. În redactarea ei, autoarea a dovedit cu prisosință că e capabilă să se strecoare cu abilitate și inteligență prin zone cuprinzând numeroase capcane și tentații de a se împotmoli în materia amorfă a atâtor *embarras de richesses*, că poate domina instinctul de diluție și de repetiție, că poate rămâne de fiecare dată în aria demonstrațiilor cu miză anticipată.

Carmen Ardelean este una dintre absolventele de Filologie care îndrăgește literatura, citește și recitește opera scriitorilor români din trecut sau din contemporaneitate, fiind adânc preocupată de modul în care scrierea literară a intrat în atenția omului modern și face parte din viața acestuia. Gândurile și reflecțiile ei literare răspund unei acute nevoi de limpezire interioară și acest mod de a dialoga cu cititorul contemporan poate fi surprins și în cronicile și articolele pe care le semnează lunar în revista „Caiete Silvane”. Sperăm ca prin cartea de față drumul ei spre public să intre într-o etapă nouă și mult mai fecundă.

(publicat ca recenzie cu titlul *Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, „marea europeană” a literaturii române de Carmen Georgeta Ardelean*, Caiete Silvane, nr. 108/ianuarie 2014, p. 10-13)

Referat

asupra tezei de doctorat *Tradițional și actual în colindatul hunedorean* [Traditional and current in Hunedoara carolling] de Felicia-Rita Sima (Tripa), depusă spre a fi susținută la Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918” – Alba Iulia, 19.09.2013

Valorizarea folclorului nostru tradițional este una dintre cele mai nobile și mai stringente îndatoriri ale tinerei generații, în condițiile în care acesta este tot mai amenințat cu dispariția și cu deformarea de tip manelist. În acest context, doamna profesoară Felicia Tripa din Deva și-a asumat o sarcină de cea mai mare însemnătate, făcând vizite repetate într-o serie de sate din ținutul Hunedoarei, pe care le-a ținut sub observație timp de câțiva ani. Alegerea subiectului, fixarea lotului de colaboratori, anchetele sociologice propriu zise s-au conturat de la sine, finalizându-se într-o lucrare de proporții care adună deopotrivă și rodul observațiilor și concluziilor sale cu privire la aceste vechi vetre folclorice, cât și o importantă culegere de colinde, deosebit de valoroasă prin ea însăși, într-o vreme în care interesul pentru cercetările antropologice și folclorice de acest gen au scăzut în intensitate.

Intitulată *Tradițional și actual în colindatul hunedorean*, cartea de față reprezintă o serioasă și documentată incursiune în zona cu cel mai ridicat coeficient de arhăitate, recte de autenticitate, într-un ținut al Transilvaniei recunoscut pentru vechimea, puritatea și conservatorismul lui, ținut adus în observația literară de frații Benjamin și Aron Densusianu, originari din străvechiul sat Densuș, devenit punct de reper pentru cercetarea obiceiurilor și vieții pastorale ale poporului român. Teritoriul în care autoarea își fixează aria de observație este destul de larg, constituind o arie de interferență între trei forme de relief de tip subcarpatic, dar care sunt dominate de același tipar mioritic de existență, prin predominarea păstoritului, a creșterii vitelor și a agriculturii montane. E vorba de Valea Mureșului cu centrul de anchetă Tătăraști, de ținutul Orăștiei cu centrul Boșorod și Țara Hațegului cu satul de observație Densuș. În acest fel, autoarea are posibilitatea să urmărească pe viu atât manifestările folclorice rituale, cât și diferențele, similitudinile și contaminările textuale și melodice colportate de indivizi singuratici, de meșteri instrumentiști sau de rapsozi ocazionali care îmbogățesc repertoriul local și-l supun influențelor înnoitoare.

Schema de studiu aleasă prevede așa cum era și firesc o explicitare amănunțită a fenomenului colindatului, cu incursiuni istorico-etnografice bogate, legate de tradiția religioasă și de moștenirea latină. Se insistă apoi asupra importanței sărbătorilor de iarnă și mai ales a celor două momente cruciale din viața tradițională românească, Crăciunul și Anul Nou, oferindu-ni-se și lămuriri suplimentare privind semnificația mitico-religioasă a celor două sărbători și a denumirii lor. Astfel, pentru termenul de Crăciun, autoarea ne oferă o largă paletă de interpretări oferite de numeroși studioși ai problemei, de la opinia că termenul provine din latină, la cei care fac referire la semnificația lui în albaneză sau sârbo-croată, unde se pune accent pe butucul de Crăciun, iar în alte părți pe bradul împodobit. Sunt reiterate și vechile legende de Crăciun în care sunt prezente și Crăciunesele, dar și cele legate de nașterea

Domnului, în care personajul dominant este Maica Domnului. O trimitere specială se face la tradițiile păgâne și la cele creștine, lămurindu-se chestiunile legate de opțiunea sărbătoririi Crăciunului la data de 25 decembrie a fiecărui an. Când privește vechimea obiceiului, sunt invocate anumite opinii ale călătorilor străini prin Țările Române, iar pentru stabilirea diferențelor se face referire la lucrarea lui Petru Caraman cu privire la *Colindatul la români, slavi și la alte popoare* și la culegerea lui Al. Stănciulescu-Bârda *Colinde din Transilvania*. Ca zonă de vecinătate este invocată Țara Loviștei de care s-a ocupat Constantin Mohanu, dar comparația se putea extinde și la zona Gurghiului, despre care echipa de cercetători de la Cluj a dat o amplă monografie; prezentarea colindatului din zonă aparținându-i lui Ion Taloș, cel care ne-a oferit recent o amplă prezentare a fenomenului. Capitolul introductiv se încheie cu

sublinierea caracterului creștin al colindelor și cu unele referințe la obiceiul perpetuării colindelor până la Anul Nou.

Pentru a focaliza subiectul într-un context mai adecvat, autoarea își propune să facă o serie de considerații asupra Satului tradițional și a rolului acestuia în viața tinerilor. Se deschide astfel o perspectivă mai amplă asupra obiceiurilor rituale de Crăciun, importante pentru colectivitatea sătească tocmai prin respectarea unor vechi tradiții creștinești, precum postul, spovedania și împărtășania, care conferă prin gradul sporit de religiozitate o cutumă de pioșenie și curățenie sufletească. Acest pasaj de trecere îi dă posibilitate autoarei să lege mai adânc obiceiurile de Crăciun de aspectele religioase ale vieții satului, perspectivă care se va menține ca viziune esențială pe tot parcursul lucrării. Pregătirea fizică și spirituală pentru evenimentele majore care se înregistrează la sfârșitul fiecărui an se constituie ca o normă morală de conduită a locuitorilor din zonă, pe care autoarea îl subliniază în mod deosebit. Se remarcă buna contextualizare a fenomenului prin invocarea implicării presei și a școlii în acest amplu proces de socializare și spiritualizare a comunităților rurale.

O atenție deosebită se acordă în lucrarea *Colindatului ca instituție tradițională*, cu care prilej asistăm la o descriere amănunțită a obiceiului. Precizările aduse de autoare privind ceata tinerilor neînsurați sau ceata junilor sau a flăcăilor își dobândesc justificare prin explicațiile aduse și prin stabilirea caracterului lor aparte, urmate de cele privind ceata adulților, ceata copiilor, iar, în unele cazuri, și de cete de fete și neveste. În primul caz avem de-a face cu o pregătire mult mai intensă și mai diferențială, deoarece pentru flăcăi colindatul de Crăciun are și un caracter de inițiere, în urma căreia ei vor intra într-o nouă unitate social-culturală diferențiată, atribuindu-se un nou statut etico-juridic de ordin comunitar (Rolul Vulcănescu). Sunt expuse aici informații foarte diverse, venite din surse bibliografice care au în vedere mai toate regiunile mai importante ale țării, de la cele furnizate de Tudor Pamfile, la Traian Herseni, Ilie Moise, Monica Brătulescu, Octavian Buhociu etc., dar ni s-ar fi părut necesar să găsim mai multe trimiteri la obiceiurile concrete din partea locului. Același lucru și cu privire la situația fenomenului colindatului în perioada comunistă, pentru care ar fi putut obține mai multe mărturii directe de la preoți, învățători și locuitori ai zonei, care ar fi putut să contureze un tablou mai amplu al restricțiilor și impedimentelor de tot și felul puse în fața celor care doreau să respecte tradiția din domeniu.

O intrare mai accentuată în fondul problemei se constată începând cu capitolul al IX-lea când referirile la tradiția locală încep să devină mai consistente. Ne întâlnim în consecință cu descrierea obiceiului colindatului cu duba, cu călușerii, cu colindatul cu măști. Intrarea în timpul consacrat obiceiurilor de iarnă provoacă o rupere mai accentuată de evenimentele anului trecut și adoptarea unor gesturi ceremoniale caracterizate prin exces alimentar, prin interes decorativ și prin dorința de comunicare cu semenii, iar colindatul îndeplinește la modul plural o astfel de menire. În Transilvania este foarte răspândit colindatul cu duba sau cu călușarii, semnificația sacră și profană a acestor obiceiuri fiind obiect de considerații multiple pentru autoare, chiar dacă, pe alocuri, explicațiile sale pot fi considerate exagerate, precum cele care se referă la faptul că „ritmul muzicii ar provoca fiori, atât în rândul adulților, cât și în cel al copiilor” sau că „râsul și teama” ar deveni „culmi de pendulare pentru cei prezenți”.

Principalelor modalități prin care satul tradițional întâmpină Crăciunul și Anul Nou găsim o amplă prezentare în capitolele speciale consacrate ceremonialului de iarnă. Avem de-a face cu o descriere amănunțită a obiceiului umblatului cu Steaua și cu Vifleimul, cele mai iubite și mai așteptate obiceiuri păstrate în satele noastre, autoarea insistând asupra acestor obiceiuri la nivel național, așa cum pot fi ele întâlnite din Muscel până în Bucovina și din Muntenia până în Transilvania peste tot putând constata o mare risipă de forme și mijloace de transpunere culturală cu numeroase referiri la atestările istorice mai importante. Între acestea, un loc important îl joacă „pițărâii”, respectiv ceata copiilor cărora le sunt destinate colăceii și

covrigeii numiți „pizărai”. Este o formă autentică de colindat românesc specifică zonei investigate, din care cauză prezentarea acestui obicei ridică mult importanța expunerii.

Cum se manifestă aceste colindături în zona specific delimitată de autoare aflăm în continuare din cuprinsul unor capitole special destinate prezentării lor, începând cu localitatea Tătăraști de pe Valea Mureșului. Informațiile sunt luate direct de la fața locului, prin intermediul lui Drăgan Mariș, născut și trăit în zonă. Informatorul are avantajul de a fi fost cântăreț în strana bisericii, astfel că el a devenit cu timpul unul dintre informatorii cei mai instruiți, putând oferi date dintre cele mai revelatoare asupra „tortoșagului dubei” și de modul în care acesta se manifestă.

Dovedind o bună pregătire în domeniu, autoarea insistă asupra regulilor de colindat încetățenite și a ritualului prin care erau omeniți. Acum, ea face raportări directe la informatori activi precum Igreț Petru sau Tripa Teofil, primul specialist în „mulțumiri”, cel de-al doilea în „strigarea colacului”, în versurile căruia intervenea cu propriile sale contribuții. Dacă până acum a insistat mai mult pe „tradițional” în obiceiul colindatului, în continuare autoarea ia în discuție cel de-al doilea termen al raportului dintre tradiție și inovație, emițând o serie de opinii binevenite asupra stadiului „actual” în colindul românesc din zonă, făcând utile precizări cu privire la îmbrăcămintea colindătorilor („cămașă albă, făcută din fir de bumbac, cu „beteală” de cânepă fără model”, cu cojoc alb și laibăr), la urările adresate gazdei, primirea darurilor, la marșul cu care ieșeau din casa colindată, pauza făcută în ziua de Crăciun, cu mersul la biserică și încheiatul la o anumită oră și casă, unde urma împărțitul darurilor între membrii cetei și jocul care se ținea la gazdă, acompaniat de „muzica” specifică: „colacii se tăiau, cârnații se frigeau, țuica se încălzea. Întreaga adunare se înfrupta cu aceste bunătăți”, în sunetul taragotului și al clarinetului. Pentru păstrarea nealterată a colindelor se întocmeau caiete speciale, cum este și cel „cu strigături de joc, zise și la dubă”, păstrat de unul din rudele autoarei, Tripa Teofil din Tătăraști.

Date la fel de exacte și amănunțite ne oferă autoarea și cu privire la „stelari”, cei care acolo „îmbină atât teatrul religios al irozilor, cât și cântecele de stea”. Și aici avem parte de o descriere detaliată a îmbrăcăminții purtată de stelari, descrierea „stelei” și obiceiul colindătorilor de a fi însoțiți de o „iapă”, un om din sat mai sărac care ducea sacul cu daruri. După salutul gazdelor, urma Nașterea și apoi „orațiile”, pe care autoarea ni le dă în întregime, la fel ca și repertoriul ce urmează, cu descrierea amănunțită a rolului fiecărei părți, colindători și colindați. Tot aici primim informații suplimentare despre arta culinară tradițională din zonă, cu aspecte privind zilele de post și de sărbătoare, cu detalii privind modul în care sunt preparați „pizăraii” și specificația că din meniul de post al zonei nu lipseau „brușii”, chisălița, laștele și scrobul, ultimul rezultat din prune uscate. Avem astfel o imagine completă asupra vieții țaranului român, deoarece informațiile au în vedere și zona satului Boșorod din ținutul Orăștiei. Aici, de pildă, printre mâncărurile de la gazdă colindătorii primeau mațe de oaie fripte, și se juca călușarul pentru „meniul” țaranului din perioada postului și preparatele pregătite pentru colindători, autoarea oferindu-ne date foarte precise de la un brutar de meserie. Interesant e faptul că astfel de ocazii festive sunt folosite în unele locuri și pentru diferite întreceri și încercări la care sunt supuși feciorii, cum ar fi acelea de crăpat lemne, de tăiat butuci, „să zmicure cucuruz”, „să deojdoace mazăre” etc., bogăția imaginației populare în astfel de situații fiind impresionantă.

Demne de toată atenția sunt apoi relatările despre modul în care sunt trăite sărbătorile de iarnă de către sătenii din Densuș. Aici caracteristică este „ceata cerbului” și însoțitorii lor „blojii”, adică măscăricii. Un alt obicei al locului era „aruncatul darurilor din corfă” și colinda la un ungur, dovadă integrarea lui în comunitate. Răsplata colindului era aici „un colac împletit, iar pe e o bucată de pecină și un litru sau o fele de vinars”. Colindatul se făcea aici în funcție de vârstă, dar predominant e colindatul „cu cerbul”, semnificând înnoirea, schimbarea,

„cerbașii” având propriul lor joc și interpretare. Și aici autoarea ne oferă date aparte despre mâncărurile specifice pentru purificarea organismului, date obținute direct de la informatori din zonă.

Lucrarea realizată de Felicia Tripa-Sima dobândește o importanță aparte prin bogata anexă oferită, care conține o impresionantă culegere de texte folclorice de aproape 500 de pagini, demnă a-i aduce, prin ea însăși, aprecierea unanimă a specialiștilor și nespecialiștilor. Culegerea se referă la toate cele trei sate-martor pomenite mai sus, prin care se reproduc 35 de piese din Tătărăști, 38 din Boșorod și 20 din Densuș. Ele sunt însoțite de o amplă analiză comparativă, intitulată *Studiu comparativ al obiceiurilor tradiționale din cele trei sate*, fiecare zonă beneficiind de informatori proprii. Textele sunt însoțite de note explicative privind sensul cuvintelor regionale și alte explicații de rigoare. La sfârșit, materialul beneficiază de tabele comparative privind temele și motivele colindelor și indicațiile de regie corespunzătoare. Printre categoriile propuse de autoare se numără: 1) colinde protocolare; 2) colinde cosmogonice; 3) colinde profesionale; 4) colinde despre flăcău și fată, iubiți și pețitori; 5) colinde familiale; 6) colinde despre curtea domnească; 7) colinde moralizatoare; 8) colinde biblice și apocrife; 9) colinde baladă (*Mireasa moartă*); 10) colinde satirice, la care se adaugă încă două tabele, unul cu „refrene” și altul cu „urări”, oferind astfel și o bază solidă pentru valorificare stilistică și chiar estetică a lor. După opinia mea ar fi fost de dorit mă privește aș fi dorit ca tipul de colind vizând „motivul Maicei bătrâne” sau al Mioriței să fi fost înfățișat și analizat separat, oferindu-li-se o tratare mai extinsă, deoarece în acest caz avem de-a face cu unele din cea mai ilustre capodopere ale folclorului românesc, iar categoria se susține de la sine prin frumusețe și varietate (vezi pentru aceasta și antologia închinată Mioriței de către Ion Filipciuc, dar și studiile semnate de Al. Husar, Petru Ursache sau Mariana Mincu).

Privită în ansamblu, lucrarea realizată cu dragoste și pricepere de Felicia Tripa este o construcție complexă și de mare însemnătate, care se înscrie în rândul celor mai avizate lucrări de acest gen realizate în ultimul timp. Partea teoretică și incursiunile în trecutul nostru folcloric sunt urmate de bogate pagini de analiză a fenomenului colindului astăzi, fenomen tratat comparativ și cu numeroase trimiteri la realitatea de după 2000 a satului românesc din zonele de comparație alese. Faptul că autoarea deține și unele caiete de colinde și texte populare moștenite din familie ridică mult calitatea interpretării și înlesnește raportările la realitățile folclorice dintr-o etapă istorică prezentă, caietul cu pricina servind ca o etapă intermediară dintre secolul al XIX-lea, cel al XX-lea și prezentul istoric actual. Mai ales completările aduse în partea finală a lucrării sunt concludente și ridică fără doar și poate calitatea generală a întreprinderii autoarei, care nu e lipsită de o blindare bibliografică pe măsură și nici de o parte ilustrativă deosebit de semnificativă. Chiar dacă declară că în anchetele sale nu s-a folosit de nici un chestionar (un asemenea chestionar a elaborat la un moment dat Ioan Mușlea cu titlul *Obiceiuri de Crăciun și Anul Nou*), materialul adunat în anexă este deosebit de revelator și valoros ca material de comparație pentru studii viitoare. Stilul și tratarea materialului folcloric cu care lucrează este agreabil, viu, și deosebit de atractiv. Suntem convinși că specialiștii în probleme de folclor, etnografie și antropologie vor putea beneficia de numeroasele sugestii, interpretări și de un material extrem de edificator pentru studiul vechilor credințe religioase la români, pe când lectorii iubitori de creații populare autentice vor putea savura frumusețea în sine a textelor populare, cu simbolistica și metaforistica lor extrem de bogată și de elocventă. Fiind vorba de o zonă foarte puțin atinsă de schimbările moderne, farmecul autentic al vorbirii și rostirii populare conține adevărate oaze de creație lirică autentică, pe care trăirea populară o ridică la rang de măiestrie și împlinire poetică remarcabilă.

Referat

asupra tezei de doctorat *Polemicile lui E. Lovinescu* E. Lovinescu's polemics] de Mirela Alina Morar (Popa), depusă spre a fi susținută la Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918” – Alba Iulia, 25.11.2016

Polemica se confundă adeseori cu spiritul critic și îl însoțește pe omul de cultură care își exercită meseria în acest domeniu de-a lungul întregii activități desfășurate de el, îi consolidează autoritatea și, dacă dovedește că are și talent în organizarea ieșirilor sale puse în slujba dezvăluirii adevărului, îi sporește audiența la public. Un critic face dovada că e viu, activ, receptiv la fixarea ierarhiilor literare și la curățirea atmosferei literare de prezența diletantismului, improvizațiilor și neaveniților, luptând în același timp pentru impunerea sau restabilirea adevărului cu privire la un fapt literar sau la o idee, dacă știe să mânuiască cu abilitate florea polemicii sau spada mai grea și mai distrugătoare a pamfletului. Opinia critică exprimată clar și tranșant, cu o tăietură polemică fermă dezvoltată chiar în pamflet, în împrejurări anumite, când viața literară le reclamă, e o formă de normalitate, de salubritate și igienizare a unei literaturi, de eliminare a excrescențelor, devierilor, falsurilor, greșelilor de tot felul și nu în ultimă instanță a imposturii culturale. În acest sens Tudor Arghezi afirma: „Pamfletul săvârșește pentru artă și compensațiile vieții o operă de înviorare. El poate fi ori bine scris, ori idiot scris. O lume medie nu există. Pamfletul bun este mai rar, ca o bună poezie. Pamfletul reprezintă totuși un remarcabil gen literar. (...) El reprezintă pumnul cel mai formidabil dat stupidității umane. În acest punct convenabil își moaie pamfletul pliscul otrăvit și ciocănește profund”.

O spune aceasta un maestru al pamfletului și al polemicilor literare, un scriitor care a ridicat pamfletul la culmea cea mai înaltă prin care s-a manifestat el în spațiul românesc de cultură. De pe un asemenea postament critic, făcând distincția cuvenită între polemică și pamflet, își desfășoară investigația sa privind arta polemică a lui E. Lovinescu autoarea lucrării de față, Mirela-Adina Popa, absolventă de frunte a Universității noastre, care, chiar dacă a îmbrățișat cu dignitate învățământul gimnazial, a purtat cu ea peste tot pe unde a trecut dragostea mărturisită pentru actul literar fecund, știut iar nu făcut. Activitatea sa didactică, dar și cea publicistică, e cu totul remarcabilă și încurajatoare, avându-și rădăcinile încă de pe băncile Universității, când, încă masterandă fiind, ea a simțit datoria de a se implica în procesul informativ al studenților, publicând două cărți și participând cu alte patru texte la mai multe seminare, scoțând de sub tipar un număr de opt articole. Această strădanie de perfecționare permanentă poate fi detectată și în pe care o discutăm acum, care dovedește cu prisosință vocația ei în domeniu, pasiunea pentru epuizarea documentară și cultul detaliului dus până în pânzele albe. Faptul a fost pus în evidență la lectura inițială, când autoarea ni s-a prezentat cu o lucrare mult prea extinsă, spre șase sute de pagini, material care ar fi putut fi folosit pentru alte două-trei lucrări auxiliare, inclusiv la o antologie a polemicii românești. Realizând ea însăși că dimensiunile primei forme pot s-o ducă spre diluarea obiectivelor principale ale lucrării sale, a restrâns investigația sa la nivelul canonic al demersului doctoral. Principalele probleme ridicate de arta polemică a lui E. Lovinescu au fost astfel mult mai bine conturate, fiind mai bine organizate, descrise și comentate. În consecință, lucrarea sa a reprezentat un mare pas înainte în cunoașterea activității de critic și istoric literar a lui E. Lovinescu, a rolului său de edificare a unei literaturi moderne, emancipate de clișee și tare ideologice și îndreptată în chip esențial în spre identificarea valorii estetice a acesteia, prin subsumarea demersului său critic unui mesaj evoluat, încastrat unui model accentuat modernist, în conformitate cu cerințele și normele scrisului european din acel stadiu de evoluție și afirmare. Asumarea unui asemenea rol îndrumător, criticul și istoricul literar E. Lovinescu l-a transformat în cele din urmă într-o

adevărată campanie, care și-a extins autoritatea în întreaga viață literară românească, prin intermediul revistei sale „Sburătorului” și al cenaclului condus de el în propria sa locuință din str. Câmpineanu nr. 40, populat de o adevărată „colivie de sburători”. După cenaclul Junimii și cel al „Vieții românești”, cel condus de Lovinescu a devenit repede un adevărat centru de promovare a literaturii de calitate, prin membrii lui de primă mână, precum Camil Petrescu, Ion Barbu, Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, Felix Aderca etc., așa cum bine subliniază autoarea. Nicio altă încercare de coagulare a forțelor literare naționale, indiferent că vin din partea generației 27, fie din acelea ale „Gândirii ” sau a avangardiștilor, n-a atins amploarea și a emergența acestui salutar cenaclu, și nici nu s-a bucurat de o atât de clară adeziune, fără de care literatura noastră interbelică nici nu se poate concepe. Vocea sa inconfundabilă, talentul caracterizator, pasiunea memorialistică și portretistică este pusă în valoare cu fiecare nou capitol de autoare, care știe să deceleze între fragmentul perisabil și arta perenă, punând la contribuție toate sursele principale care i-au stat la îndemână, apelând la presa timpului, la arhive și documente recent apărute, între care seria de *Agende* de la „Sburătorul” a reprezentat un reper de bază, deoarece în paginile lor, mărturia e directă, nudă, lipsită de precauții și circumstanțe de ordin personal. Strădania autoarei a fost aceea de a imprima reda opiniei critice lovinesciene forța ei percutantă, valorizatoare, căutată cu atâta obstinație de grupul de scriitori care îl înconjurau, dar și de cei aflați în afara perimetrului său de direcționare. Stând neclintit la datorie în tinda registraturii sale de observator și îndrumător literar, E. Lovinescu s-a impus fără îndoială ca principala voce critică a peisajului interbelic, încât fără prezența sa stimulatorie această fază literară și-ar pierde culoarea, autenticitatea și frumusețea. E explicabil de ce, chiar o grupare de oameni tineri precum cea ieșită din pulpana „Cercului literar” sibian, nășiți și direcționați de spiritele cele mai luminate și clarvăzătoare ale universității Ardealului, și-au îndreptat atenția tot spre criticul bucureștean, pe care și l-au asumat drept patron literar, manifestul lor în favoarea Ardealului estetic înscriind un moment de mare prețuire profesională, un omagiu de preț adusă marelui critic, respins tocmai în acei ani de la unul din fotoliile Academiei Române, pe care l-ar fi meritat cu prisosință, în comparație cu atâtea spirite obtuze sau neîmplinite creator pe care Iorga le-a propulsat acolo, numai pentru că au făcut cuvenitele reverențe prestigiului său cultural.

În aceste condiții e foarte firesc ca teza să se oprească în deschidere tocmai asupra peisajului literar de la începutul veacului al XX-lea, când tânărul Lovinescu întors de la studii literare de la Paris, aducea cu el „bomba modernistă”, care avea să exploateze în atmosfera dominată de dogmatismul sămănătorist și de infiltrațiile poporaniste sau socialiste, un punct evoluat și emancipat de elemente conjuncturale care dominau epoca. Prezentarea climatului cultural este făcută prin ample incursiuni și doctrinele dominate promovate de Iorga, Ibrăileanu și Mihail Dragomirescu, delimitându-se de eticismul, naționalismul și țărănismul celor dintâi sau de dogmatismul restrictiv promovat de cel de al treilea. Impunând în peisajul literar un mod aerisit, liber de constrângeri, bazat pe expresia vie și spontană, pe un impresionism critic asociaționist și caracterizant, gen Anatole France și Jules Lemaitre, E. Lovinescu a cucerit prin eleganță, sinceritate și spontaneitate stilistică încrederea unei întregi epoci. Etapa de început, cea a *Pașilor pe nisip* este bine surprinsă de autoare, ca și delimitările de rigoare față de tradițiile criticii românești de până atunci, prin impunerea atașantă a modernismului, prin lansarea în spațiul public a unor alte metode de valorizare decât cele uzitate până atunci, prin apelul la teoria mutațiilor estetice, la pledoaria pentru citadinism, sincronism, poezia subiectivă și romanul obiectiv, teorii care au prins teren foarte repede, mai ales că au fost susținute în planul creator de opere literare pilduitoare, prin aerul lor înnoitor și „diferențiator”, precum cele semnate de Liviu Rebreanu, Camil Petrescu, Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, Gh. Brăescu în proză și de Ion Barbu, Ion Minulescu, G. Bacovia, Camil Baltazar în poezie. Tot aici pot fi invocate direcțiile avangardiste pe care criticul sburătorist le promovează.

Tot în partea introductivă, autoarea face lungi și utile incursiuni în domeniul delimitărilor teoretice legate de înțelesurile terminologice privitoare la „policmică” și „pamflet”, apelând în acest sens la delimitările oferite de Tudor Arghezi sau Camil Petrescu pe teren românesc sau de doi critici francezi specializați (Paul-Louis Courier și Marc Angenot) și unul israelit (Marcelo Dască, nume care trădează o origine românească), dar și la cele două atitudini diferențiate prin care se delimitează „spiritul policmic” de „spiritul pamfletar”, sau „policmica de idei” față de „policmica de cuvinte”. O dată stabilite aceste coordonate, ea pășește pentru prima dată mai ferm pe tărâmul accidentat al criticii românești, acolo unde E. Lovinescu își dovedește ascendentul în raport cu Mihai Dragomirescu și N. Iorga. Intrăm propriu-zis prin capitoul al III-lea în domeniul ilustrărilor practice ale complexe campanii duse în epocă de E. Lovinescu cu idei și poncife anchilozate, lupta dintre revistele iorghiste, „Semănătorul”, „Cuget clar” sau „Neamul românesc” și pozițiile lui E. Lovinescu din *Pași pe nisip* și *Critice* luând înfățișări publice cât se poate de semnificative. În această conjunctură a performanțelor obținute tot mai vizibil de criticul sburătorist se situează și poziția lui față de opiniile critice ale lui Ibrăileanu sau Mihail Dragomirescu, aceste noi înfățișări la care recurge autoarea având rolul de a evidenția direcția bună în care se situează E. Lovinescu pe linia evoluției firești și a deschiderii europene necesare, de instituire a cadrului și de remodelare a condițiilor prin care literatura română să devină competitivă și sincronă cu acele curente de idei care și-au dovedit valabilitatea și ecoul favorabil la public, contribuind în subteran la afirmarea plenară a specificității fiecărei individualități literare. Polemicile dintre „Sburătorul” și „Falanga literară” devin alte modalități la care trebuie să recurgă autorul *Criticilor* pentru a scăpa generația patronată de el de influențe dogmatice și infirmități literare evidente. Ca o modalitate proprie de a-și susține programul modernist, Lovinescu promovează o nouă formulă de afirmare policmică combativă, *figurina*, dar și *portretul în aqua-forte*, printr-o artă specifică, în cadrul căreia caracterizările provenite din zona biograficului și portretisticii, să se îmbine cu epiteze corozive sau caustice în stare să demoleze sau să-și lichideze adversarii, îngropându-i sub o lavă de acumulări de epiteze caracterizante și o canonadă atent regizată de false calități, care se dovedesc iluzorii. Pamfletarul iese în această etapă mai bine în relief, prin aducerea în scenă a unor texte care îi privesc pe Radu Cosmin sau pe Alexe Procopovici, dar și pe D. Caracostea, un rival estetic mai sâcâitor și mai perfid. Acesta nu scapă ocazia, la fel ca și „prietenul” său Camil Petrescu, de a consacra personalității lovinesciene broșuri cu sens demolator evident, cum ar fi fascicola *Un mare critic român modernist-Domnul Eugeniu Lovinescu* (1927), încercare care nu și-a atins scopul, întorcându-se ca un bumerang împotriva celui care a declanșat atacul.

Cartea consacrată polemicilor lovinesciene oferă date foarte bogate și atent urmărite asupra tuturor ieșirilor sale polemice, din toate etapele de evoluție traversate, dovedind consecvență și fidelitate față de o cauză care i se pare prioritară. Nu ezită să se regăsească, la fel ca Sadoveanu, și în paginile revistelor de stânga socialiste, unde prezența sa aduce un spirit nou de combativitate și delimitare ideologică, pentru umanism și europeism. Teza de doctorat a Mirelei-Alina Popa este o lucrare demnă de toată atenție pentru nivelul actual al cunoașterii spațiului de confruntare al opiniilor epocii interbelice, în cadrul căreia poziția lui E. Lovinescu este definită ca un adevărat reper pentru rigorismul și corolarul moral reprezentat. Modelul și prototipul de scriitor pentru care „se bate” E. Lovinescu este unul definitoriu pentru epocă. Bătălia policmică în care se angajează se caracterizează printr-o suită de capitole care se integrează și se completează reciproc, și cu tot aspectul de ei de puzzle, cum pare a se reliefa pe alocuri, are decantări și susțineri semnificative, cu înaintări progresive, de ordin cronologic, aglutinator, dar și cu întoarceri și sublinieri, cu reveniri punctuale, într-un fel de hermeneutică ad-hoc, în așa fel încât să se degaje în final un portret al criticului sburătorist cât mai corect situat în raport cu timpul său și cu marii protagoniști ai criticii de îndrumare și de direcție din

epocă, statuia sa ieșind tot mai puternic în relief cu fiecare text prezentat și analizat. Aceasta și datorită faptului că autoarea are un deosebit cult al preciziei, a artei detaliului, cu accentul principal pus pe recuperarea de texte uitate sau neglijate, cu o artă bine estimată a citării, cu apelul la o argumentație venită din unghiuri de vedere foarte diferite completează în chip fericit informațiile conținute de recentele „Agende literare” ale criticului. Postumitatea sa critică dobândește astfel un nou nivel de înțelegere și manifestare publică, prin considerațiile livrate de tânăra lui interpretă. Apelând la o mulțime de metode și terapii de întâmpinare, cartea exprimă în cel mai înalt grad atașamentul special al autoarei față de subiectul său, poate ușor exagerat, care ar putea fi remediat în viitor. Deocamdată lucrarea semnată de Mirela-Alina Popa umple un gol în critica literară actuală, oferind exemplul unui adevărat mixaj de tehnici și metode literare, tematice, analitice, textualiste, ambalate într-un mod de prezentare obiectiv și plăcut, care invită la lectură și la reconstituirea cadrului interbelic, cu farmecul și particularitățile sale.

(publicat ca *Prefață* la vol. Mirela Alina Popa, *Polemicile lui E. Lovinescu*, Alba Iulia, Aeternitas, 2022, 441 p., ISBN 978-606-613-221-3, p. 9-13)

Profesorul Mircea Popa a activat și ca referent în comisiile de doctorat în filologie ale altor teze susținute în cadrul UAB. Pentru cele douăzeci și două de teze de doctorat susținute între 2005-2009 nu există date publice referitoare la componența comisiilor de susținere publică. Însă, între 03.10.2008-29.09.2017 îl regăsim pe profesorul Mircea Popa ca referent în cadrul a cincisprezece comisii de susținere a unor teze de doctorat coordonate de colegii domniei sale de Școală Doctorală în cadrul UAB: prof. univ. dr. Ion Buzași (nouă), prof. univ. dr. Constantin Cubleşan (șase).

Teze de doctorat coordonate de prof. univ. dr. Ion Buzași:

- 15.07.2010, Genoveva Militaru (Teișan), *Alexandru Ciura – studiu monografic* [Alexandru Ciura – monographic study];
Profesor de Limba și literatura română, Colegiul Tehnic Apulum, Alba Iulia
ginateisan@yahoo.com
- 31.03.2011, Georgeta Bădulescu (1965-2025), *Jurnalul literar românesc în perioada interbelică* [The Romanian literary journal in the interwar period];
Profesor de Limba și Literatura română, Liceul de Informatică Petroșani, jud. Hunedoara
- 18.11.2011, Carmen-Sorina Simu (Oltean), *Nicolae Steinhardt. Eseu monografic* [Nicolae Steinhardt. Monographic essay]; publicată: Carmen Sorina Oltean, *Nicolae Steinhardt* [Nicolae Steinhardt], Sibiu, CronoLogia, 2016, 270 p., ISBN 978-606-8661-25-4.
Profesor de Limba și Literatura română, Liceul Bănățean, Oțelu Roșu, jud. Caraș-Severin
oltlin76@yahoo.com
- 11.09.2012, Diana Elena Tocaciu, *Umanismul operei lui Ion Agârbiceanu* [The humanism of Ion Agârbiceanu's work];
Profesor de limba și literatura română, Școala cu Clasele I-VIII „Toma Cocișiu” Blaj, Jud. Alba
dianatocaciu@yahoo.com
- 16.11.2012, Maria Rodean, *Școlile Blajului în literatură* [Blaj Schools in Literature]; publicată: Maria Rodean, *Școlile Blajului în literatură* [Blaj Schools in Literature], Blaj, Buna Vestire, 2013, 271 p., ISBN 978-606-636-034-0.
Profesor de limba și literatura română/ limba franceză, Colegiul Tehnic „Victor Ungureanu” Câmpia Turzii, jud. Cluj
maria_rodean@yahoo.com
- 19.09.2014, Gloria-Casandra Străuț (Nițu), *Rituri de trecere în satul tradițional pădurenesc* [Rites of passage in the traditional forest village];

Profesor de limba și literatura română, Colegiul Național „Decebal” din Deva, Jud. Hunedoara

nitu.gloria@yahoo.it

- 26.09.2016, Ioana Cecilia Cosor (Botar), *Strategii de traducere și adaptare cu aplicație la basmele lui Charles Perrault* [Translation and adaptation strategies with application to Charles Perrault's fairy tales];
Traducător, Cluj-Napoca
ioana_buzgariu@yahoo.com
- 31.03.2017, Simona Oargă (Pintea), *Timotei Cipariu – scriitorul* [Timotei Cipariu – the writer];
Profesor de limba și literatura română, Liceul Teologic Greco-Catolic „Sf. Vasile cel Mare” Blaj, jud. Alba
s.pintea@yahoo.com
- 29.09.2017, Aurelia-Mariana Mărginean (Neagoie), *Etape în dezvoltarea folcloristicii blăjene* [Stages in the development of Blaj folklore];
profesor de limba și literatura română, Liceul Tehnologic „Timotei Cipariu”, Blaj, Jud. Alba
relineagoie@gmail.com

Teze de doctorat coordonate de prof. univ. dr. Constantin Cubleşan:

- 03.10.2008, Adina Laura Băcean, *Anișoara Odeanu. Studiu Monografic* [Anișoara Odeanu. Monographic Study] (confirmat prin OM 3030/13.01.2009⁴); publicată: Adina Laura Băcean, *Anișoara Odeanu – o viață trăită în legea artei* [Anișoara Odeanu – A Life Lived by The Law of Art], Editura Sfântul Ierarh Nicolae, 2009, ISBN 978-606-92097-6-9 (e-book).
<https://lectura.bibliotecadigitala.ro/?cat=117>
Profesor titular de Limba și literatura română, Școala Gimnazială Șandra, jud. Timiș
alaura2181@yahoo.com
- 26.11.2010, Rodica Potoceanu (Matiș) (1971-2013), *Viața lui Marin Preda* [The Life of Marin Preda]; publicată: Rodica Mătiș Potoceanu, *Viața lui Marin Preda* [The Life of Marin Preda], Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2014, 311 p., ISBN 978-606-17-0482-8.
Profesor – Limba și literatura română, Liceul Teoretic „Octavian Goga”, Huedin, Jud. Cluj
http://www.uniuneascriitorilor-filialacluj.ro/detalii_membrii_917_Rodica-POTOCEANU-MATIS.html
- 10.06.2011, Ionela Gafița (Cozmescu), *Ștefan Baciuc. Studiu monografic* [Ștefan Baciuc. Monographic Study];
Profesor titular – Limba și literatura română, Colegiul Național „David Prodan” Cugir, Jud. Alba
ionela_cozmescu@yahoo.com
- 06.09.2012, Alexandru Gruian, *Filip Brunea-Fox - reporterul cu ochi multipli* [Filip Brunea-Fox - The Reporter with Multiple Eyes];
Manager cultural, SC Cutty Sark SRL, Deva
gruiann@gmail.com
- 18.10.2012, Ana-Maria Prodan (Scheau), *Ștefan Bănuțescu - studiu monografic* [Ștefan Bănuțescu - Monographic Study];
Profesor limba engleză, Colegiul Economic „Dionisie Pop Martian” Alba Iulia
- 19.09.2014, Adriana-Marinela Ilin, *Teatrul „Mihai Eminescu” din Oravița – monografie* [The “Mihai Eminescu” Theatre in Oravița – Monograph]
Profesor titular de limba și literatura română, Șc. gen. cu cls. I-VIII Densuș, Jud. Hunedoara
adrianamarinela@yahoo.com

⁴ Vezi http://doctorate.uab.ro/upload/48_1002_3030_31.pdf

Între doctoranzii în privința cărora profesorul Mircea Popa a avut partea sa de contribuție, ca referent, în decernarea titlului de doctor în filologie regăsim: treisprezece profesori din învățământul preuniversitar (de limba și literatura română – 12, de limba engleză – 1), din județul Alba (șase), din județul Hunedoara (trei), din județul Cluj (doi) și câte unul din județele Caraș-Severin și Timiș; un manager cultural, un traducător. Patru dintre teze au fost ulterior publicate în volum.

Redăm în continuare unul dintre referatele întocmite de Prof. univ. dr. Mircea Popa ca referent la susținerea tezelor de doctorat coordonate de colegii de Școală Doctorală ai domniei sale.

Referat

asupra tezei de doctorat a Adinei Laura Băcean cu titlul *Anișoara Odeanu – studiu monografic* [Anișoara Odeanu. Monographic Study], avându-l drept conducător pe prof. univ. dr. Constantin Cubleşan, fiind numit ca referent prin decizia nr.1521/10.09.2008 a Universității „1 Decembrie 1918” din Alba Iulia.

Receptarea critică a Anișoarei Odeanu, scriitoare de proză psihologică din anturajul lui Camil Petrescu, cunoaște în ultimii ani o preocupare tot mai susținută. După ce în 1999, Gheorghe Luchescu de la Lugoj și-a susținut o teză de doctorat la Institutul de Lingvistică și Istorie Literară „Sextil Pușcariu” din Cluj-Napoca, teză publicată în 2001 la Editura Napoca Star din Cluj-Napoca, iată că acum o altă cercetătoare și masterandă a Universității noastre s-a lăsat antrenată într-o competiție asemănătoare. Și lucrurile probabil că nu se vor opri aici. Fenomenul în sine e salutar și nu poate decât să ne bucure, deoarece orice literatură care se respectă trebuie să pună la dispoziția cititorilor săi cel puțin două-trei monografii și interpretări critice cu privire la fiecare din scriitorii săi. În mod neîndoios asistăm astfel la creșterea capacității de reflecție critică, la înnoirea instrumentului critic, la diversificarea formulelor de abordare, la lărgirea ariei de investigație. Și lucrarea de față ilustrează cu prisosință dezideratul acesta, dovedind că autoarea ei, Adina Laura Băcean și-a construit cu minuțiozitate și inteligență propriul său discurs interpretativ, că nu s-a lăsat influențată de rețetele anterioare și că întreaga sa lucrare este nu numai credibilă, dar și atractivă și plină de pagini eseistice bine scrise, dovedind *in nuce* prezența unei reale înzestrări pentru practica criticii și istoriei literare.

Teza de doctorat a Adinei Laura Băcean se constituie înainte de toate ca un demers analitic și interpretativ centrat pe reconsiderarea operei scriitoarei bănățene, restrângând la minimum incursiunile biografice și aparatul critic al cărții. Alura lui degajată, eseistică, păstrează însă în permanență o relație privilegiată cu timpul istoric în care a evoluat scriitoarea (mai evazivă în ultimii ani), poate și din dorința de a transforma *cazul* Anișoarei Odeanu într-un fel de caz emblematic pentru scrisul feminin de la noi din perioada interbelică. Într-un amplu capitol de deschidere al lucrării, intitulat *Contextul cultural al devenirii artistice*, se fac ample trimiteri la tradiția scrisului feminin de la noi și se punctează principalele impedimente care au stat înaintea afirmării creatoare a acestei categorii sociale, dar și mutațiile suferite la noi în perioada interbelică, cu aducerea în prim plan a cinematografului și cu afirmarea unui model de feminitate agresivă reprezentată de Greta Garbo sau de alte actrițe faimoase care au impus modelul femeii de succes, a femeii emancipate, rafinate, culte, în stare să-i concureze la fiecare moment pe colegii bărbați. Născută într-o familie de profesori la Lugoj, adăpată de mică cu lecturi dintre cele mai diverse, stăpână pe tehnica exprimării literare, eleva Doina Peteanu, viitoarea scriitoare Anișoara Odeanu de mai târziu, a debutat în literatură la zece ani, cucerind apoi numeroase trofee la concursurile școlare ale Tinerimii artistice, ilustrându-se de mică ca o mică vedetă, ca o adevărată femeie vip, cum i-am spune astăzi. Idealul său social, deși era de

o frumusețe frapantă repede reperată, a fost acela de a nu depinde material de nimeni, încercând să trăiască din scris și din gazetărie. E drept că a avut întotdeauna în spate bărbați bine poziționați social care i-au făcut curte și s-au lăsat prinși în mrejele provocatoare, nonconformiste, a acestei dame de lux, cum am putea-o numi fără reținere, între ei numărându-se Camil Petrescu, Victor Popescu, fiul magnatului ziarului „Universul”, un tânăr neamț din anturajul noii puteri hitleriste care a dezamăgit-o profund sau doctorul Palatului, Crivetz, lângă care a optat să-și trăiască ultimii ani de viață, plecând cu el „în Lume”, înainte de a fi fost divorțat de soție. Retrasă în ultimii ani, ca simplă soție a acestuia, prin mai multe comune din Banat, cu tendința vădită de a i se șterge urmele, viața și activitatea ei intră realmente într-o grea zonă de umbră socială și artistică, la modă fiind cântecele heirupiste ale noii generații de comsomoliști și proletcultiști, cu care ea, o burgheză pur sânge, nu avea nimic de-a face, trăind o viață obscură și plină de privațiuni materiale, la limita suportabilului, într-o lume în care toate valorile în care a crezut și a crescut au fost anulate, iar rarele ei oaze de creație nu mai pot atinge nivelul anterior. Ultimii ani nu aduc mutații spectaculoase în profilul ei literar, dar imprimă o oarecare notă de diversitate.

Autoarea cărții de față sesizează cu îndreptățire toate aceste seisme, le înregistrează cu meticulozitate, dar accentul principal cade pe operă. Creația scriitoarei este citită cu ochi atent și scormonitor, chiar dacă nu întotdeauna suficient de critic, dar cu o anume prospețime analitică, care iese cu tărie în relief. E drept că uneori contextul judecății de valoare este destul de greu sesizabil din mulțimea de trimiteri și sentințe critice rostite de voci critice foarte diverse și adeseori inegale, în spatele cărora ține să-și păstreze obiectivitatea critică.

Partea de rezistență a lucrării e consacrată, așa după cum spuneam, analizării creației autoarei, analiză întreprinsă după următoarea schemă: mai întâi romanele, *Într-un cămin de domnișoare* și *Călător din noaptea de Ajun*, apoi nuvelistica, reprezentată de *Ciudata viață a poetului*, *Sub lumina verii* și *Nedumeririle lui Duduță*. Revine din nou la roman, concentrându-și atenția asupra celor două romane consacrate problemei intelectualului, *Legile jocului* și *Acele lucruri mari*, dar luând în discuție și cele două romane rămase inedite, *Simina și istoria* și *Katinka sau fantomele de la Valea Lungă*. Urmează la rând poezia, cu *Fata lui Codru Împărat*, *Moartea în cetate* și *Noaptea creației*, continuată cu poeziile inedite din *Ultimele nopți* sau cu „poemele de cultură generală”, cum le numește autoarea, și terminând cu publicistica. Deși paginile pe care le închină analizei operei nu sunt numeroase, ele sunt în general bine scrise și cu analize și ierarhizări exacte asupra valorii lor literare, în funcție de cele două teme esențiale, Moartea și Erosul. Se pot depista însă, pe alocuri caracterizări cu accente mai puțin strunite rațional cum ar fi: „Lirismul are suavitatea unei zile de primăvară în care ești invitat să iubești și să trăiești ca într-un cântec ancestral” sau „Vegetalul devine elementul simbol folosit ca printr-un descântec de readucere la simțire un iubit adormit în trăire și simțire” (p. 114). O relație bine pusă la punct funcționează între numărul de pagini acordat unei opere și importanța ei literară, volumului *Sub lumina verii* acordându-i-se doar un paragraf de exemplu, iar celor două romane *Simina și istoria* și *Katinka sau fantomele de la Valea Lungă*, trei pagini. Nici poezia nu reușește să configureze un univers liric aparte, iar autoarea dă peste tot dovadă de o bună priză în receptarea cât mai exactă a realității literare cu care se confruntă.

Registrul sensibilității critice al autoarei cunoaște un moment de vârf în discutarea publicisticii scriitoarei. Capitolul despre *Publicistică* mi se pare a fi unul dintre cele mai bune ale lucrării, mai ales că în abordarea ideilor literare ale scriitoarei Anișoara Odeanu, autoarea are ocazia să discute și alte probleme colaterale dar deosebit de importante care trimit relația scriitoarei cu contextul cultural al timpului său: relația ei privilegiată cu Banatul, cazul literaturii regionale, relația dintre literatura feminină și cea „masculină”, dar mai ales relația ei cu mișcarea legionară din România, domeniu în care autoarea aduce la suprafață noi documente și relaționări care mai de care mai interesante și mai binevenite. Un domeniu în care scriitoarea

mi se pare că realmente strălucește este cel al interviurilor, domeniu asupra căruia autoarea se apleacă cu multă înțelegere și putere de discernământ, analizând amănunțit cauzele și împrejurările care au condus-o la gazetărie și operând disocierile necesare. Punctul cel mai de jos al atitudinii greșite a scriitoarei a constituit-o fără îndoială observațiile neîntemeiate aduse scrisului lui Mihail Sebastian, unul dintre scriitorii care au salutat-o la debut și producerea broșurii *Un cuvânt poate ucide mii de vieți*, impregnat cu idei și sloganuri legionare, o carte scrisă la comandă pentru a-și rotunji veniturile materiale, într-un moment în care jurnalista se credea nedreptățită și de patronul său de la „Viața”, marele scriitor Liviu Rebreanu, așa cum rezultă din scrisoarea pe care Anișoara Odeanu i-a adresat-o în 1942 lui Liviu Rebreanu, scrisoare care a fost publicată în amintita carte a lui Gheorghe Luchescu, scrisoare din care se poate deduce deruta autoarei romanului *Simina și istoria*, accentuată și de o singurătate care o încolțește tot mai adânc, așa cum reiese din scrisorile către Cella Delavrancea. Recunoașterea ei în 1936 că noul roman *Călător din noaptea de Ajun* nu e la nivelul celui dintâi, e concludentă, ca și verdictul care și-l dă singură cu mare luciditate: „Cartea am scris-o. După asta s-ar putea să-mi însușesc o tehnică mai bună și să scriu romane impecabile. Dar carte scrisă cu suflet și cu sânge ca asta n-am să mai scriu. Nu se mai poate, Cella. Am început să privesc lucrurile altfel, nu mai am reacțiile acelea spontane, emotivitatea aceea pură. Totul se repetă și reacționez din ce în ce mai după șablon.”

Credem că aici ar fi trebuit să intervină mai pronunțat opiniile critice ale autoarei tezei de față, și să încerce să construiască un portret psihologic al scriitoarei, sesizând mai profund drama existențială prin care trecea, acea „voluptate a durerii”, a suferinței și singurătății care o va mâna în cele din urmă la sinucidere.

Dincolo de aceste elemente de roman trăit în surdină, cartea Adinei Laura Băcean e un vizibil pas înainte făcut în cunoașterea și aprofundarea critică a operei Anișoarei Odeanu (deși lipsa numelui lui Gh. Luchescu din capitolul *Receptare critică* nu mi se pare îndreptățită). Scrisă cu pasiune și dăruire, teza de doctorat despre Anișoara Odeanu corespunde din toate punctele de vedere exigențelor unei teze de doctorat, atacând cu acribie și seriozitate punctele cele mai nevralgice ale acestei opere și oferind, pe cât posibil, răspunsuri exacte și nuanțate. Buna plasare în context, investigarea de care se bucură fiecare compartiment al operei, încercarea de a depăși, prin trimiteri și referințe utile, cadrul strict al problemei și de a aduce argumente pentru o analiză modernă, viabilă sub raport valoric ne oferă garanția unei cercetări de bun augur, care trebuie apreciată ca atare. Având în vedere toate aceste merite ale lucrării de față, propunem ca ea să fie susținută în ședința publică și să aducă autoarei ei titlul de doctor în filologie, titlu pentru care o găsim perfect îndreptățită.

Activitatea domnului profesor Mircea Popa în cadrul Școlii Doctorale de Filologie a IOSUD-Alba Iulia pe parcursul a șaptesprezece ani, între 2004-2021 (de la 65 la aproape 83 de ani!), se relevă astfel a fi fost mai mult decât prielnică. Și datorită domniei sale a fost posibilă înființarea Școlii Doctorale și funcționarea sa ideală în anii de inițiere și de progres. Cel puțin 50 de intelectuali îi datorează, în parte, titlul de doctor în filologie, cercetările respective primind girul profesional al domniei sale. Douăzeci și cinci de volume au fost publicate ulterior. În mod deosebit remarcăm prezența a 39 de profesori doctori în filologie din învățământul preuniversitar, cărora li se adaugă șase universitari, sistemul educațional românesc (și nu numai!) beneficiind de experiența dobândită în cercetarea academică a titularilor de posturi, prin implicarea expertă, conștiincioasă și inepuizabilă a profesorului Mircea Popa.

Mulțumirile tuturor, domnule Profesor!

Referințe:

- Ardelean, C. G. (2013). *Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, „marea europeană” a literaturii române. Pledoarii*. [Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, “The Great European” of Romanian Literature. Pleadings]. Eikon.
- Băcean, A. L. (2009). *Anișoara Odeanu – o viață trăită în legea artei*. [Anișoara Odeanu – A Life Lived by The Law of Art]. Editura Sfântul Ierarh Nicolae. (e-book).
<https://lectura.bibliotecadigitala.ro/?cat=117>
- Grosu, M. (2008). *Petru Comarnescu. Un neliniștit în secolul său. Studiu monografic* [Petru Comarnescu. A restless man in his century. Monographic study]. Casa Cărții de Știință.
- *** (2023). *Mircea Popa. Repere astriste în cultura blăjeană*. [Mircea Popa. ASTRA landmarks in the culture of Blaj]. Ediție îngrijită de Claudia Oancea-Raica. Prefață de Ion Buzași. Postfață de Monica Grosu. Editura CronoLogia.
- Morar, O.; Vaida, M. (2009). *Mircea Popa la 70 de ani: biobibliografie* [Mircea Popa at 70: bio-bibliography]. Aeternitas.
- Moraru, S.-V. (2012). *George Uscătescu – poet și eseist* [George Uscătescu – poet and essayist]. Presa Universitară Clujeană.
- Oancea-Raica, C. (2010). *Cultură și literatură în presa blăjeană interbelică* [Culture and literature in the interwar press of Blaj]. Dacia.
- Olcă, E. (2012). *Relații literare și culturale româno-maghiare în perioada interbelică* [Romanian-Hungarian literary and cultural relations in the interwar period]. Dacia XXI.
- Orian, G. (2019). *In Honorem Mircea Popa 80* [In Honor of Mircea Popa 80]. Aeternitas.
- Săcărea (Coldea), E.T.M. (2018). Valențele proxemicii în romanul „Mănușile roșii” - influența spațiului carceral asupra personajului principal [Valences of Proxemics in the Novel “Red Gloves” - The Influence of the Carceral Space Upon the Main Character]. *Incursiuni în imaginar*, (9), 166-172. <https://doi.org/10.29302/InImag.2018.9.11>
- Popa, M. A. (2022). *Polemicile lui E. Lovinescu* [E. Lovinescu's polemics]. Aeternitas.
- Sima, F.-R. (2015). *Tradițional și actual în colindatul hunedorean* [Traditional and current in Hunedoara carolling]. Editura Argonaut.
- Vesa, N. (2015). *Cornel Regman. Monografie literară* [Cornel Regman. Literary monograph]. Editura Școala Ardeleană.

Sitografie:

<http://doctorate.uab.ro/index.php?pagina=pg&id=109&l=ro>, accesat 21.08.2025.

Contributors

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9609-2573>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/LVS-5290-2024>

<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=57248641000>

Gabriel Dan Bărbuleț, PhD, Habil., is Full Professor at *1 Decembrie 1918* University of Alba Iulia in Romania. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, he holds the administrative role of Dean of the Faculty of History, Letters, and Educational Sciences. His scholarly interests are broad and diverse, from Pragmatics, Semantics, English Syntax, English Methodology, to British and American Culture and Civilization. His doctoral dissertation, titled *Movie Talk: A Study of Slang in Prison Movies*, reflects his interest in the intersection of language, culture, and media. His wide-ranging expertise is reflected in his numerous publications in national and international journals and his active participation in various conferences. Dr. Bărbuleț is also a key member of several editorial boards for peer-reviewed journals. His contributions include work with international and domestic publications such as *The Journal of Linguistic and Intercultural Education - JoLie*, *Annales Universitatis Apulensis*, *Incursiuni in Imaginar*, *Buletinul Studentilor Si Masteranzilor Filologi*, and *Current and Future Perspectives on Teaching and Learning*. These roles reflect his commitment to advancing scholarly communication across various linguistic and cultural fields.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8588-8528>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/IXW-6007-2023>

<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=33667451800>

Lucian Vasile Băgiu, PhD, Habil. is a Senior lecturer (UK) / Associate professor (US) in Romanian and comparative literature at *1 Decembrie 1918* University of Alba Iulia, Romania and has been the journal manager of the *Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies*, Centre for Languages and Literature, Lund University, since October 2016. He received a PhD in Philology (Romanian literature) *magna cum laude* in 2006 from *Babes-Bolyai* University, Cluj-Napoca. He became a member of the Romanian Writers' Union in the same year. He has also occupied the position of lecturer of Romanian language at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim (2008-2011), Charles University in Prague (2012-2013), Lund University (2014-2017), and of tenured Senior Lecturer in Romanian Studies at Lund University (2020-2022). He is the author of several books on literary criticism, fiction, and language.

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-5742-2384>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/PCS-0763-2025>

Maria Oprea (Bîscal) is a PhD candidate at *1 Decembrie 1918* University of Alba Iulia, where she studies several of Liviu Rebreanu's novels from the perspective of affect theory. She graduated from the *Alecu Russo* State University of Bălți, Republic of Moldova. Currently, she is a teacher of Romanian language and literature at the *Regina Maria* National Pedagogical College in Deva. She has published articles in specialized academic journals and has participated in scientific conferences organized by *1 Decembrie 1918* University of Alba Iulia, *Vasile Goldiș* University of Arad, and the University for Continuing Education Krems (Austria).

<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-0344-9324>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/MDX-3849-2025>

Bianca Bucur (Tincu) is currently a Philology PhD student and Teaching Assistant at *1 Decembrie 1918* University of Alba Iulia. She graduated from the Faculty of Letters, Cluj-Napoca, in 2018, with a bachelor's degree in Philology and earned a master's degree in English language, literature and culture in the European context from the University of Alba Iulia. Her fields of interest include English literary studies, Modernism, Postmodernism, conceptual metaphors in literature, and everyday speech.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6898-2459>

<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=55573576500>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/AAR-8089-2021>

Ela Cosma, PhD Habil., is Senior Researcher I at *George Barițiu* Institute of History of the Romanian Academy in Cluj-Napoca/Romania. In 2000 she received her first PhD *magna cum laude* in Philology, specialization in Folklore, from the Faculty of Philology of the *Babeș-Bolyai* University in Cluj-Napoca, with a doctor paper on *Foundation in the Romanian Folk Culture* (published in 2000). In 2012 she received her second PhD *summa cum laude* in History, specialization Modern History, at the *George Barițiu* Institute of History in Cluj-Napoca, with the doctoral thesis *The 1848 Revolutions and the Habsburg Consular Agencies in the Danubian Principalities (Moldavia, Wallachia, Serbia)* (published in 2 volumes in Romanian, 2012-2013, and in English, 2015-2016). Her habilitation thesis, delivered in 2024 at the *George Barițiu* Institute of History of the Romanian Academy in Cluj-Napoca, was published recently under the title *Palaeography and Critical Editing of Documents. The Institute of History in Cluj, 1920-2024*. Ela Cosma's latest studies of ethnohistory and legal history are dedicated especially to the customary law *Jus Valachicum* in Central and Eastern Europe during medieval, early modern and modern history. In fact, all her published 14 monographs and 24 editions are based on the critical editing of ethno-historical sources using multiple languages and writings.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5074-5228>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/K-4639-2013>

<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=57194623783>

UEFISCDI ID (UEF-ID): U-1700-039C-8022

Daniel Dejica, PhD, habil., Professor in the Department of Communication and Foreign Languages and Dean of the Faculty of Communication Sciences, *Politehnica* University Timișoara. PhD supervisor, affiliated to the Doctoral School of Humanities, West University of Timișoara. Director of the Center for Advanced Translation Studies (PoliCAT) within *Politehnica* University Timișoara. His didactic and research interests include translation, discourse analysis, intercultural and interlinguistic communication. He was part of the Doctoral Studies Committee of the European Society for Translation Studies (2009-2018). He coordinates the Translation Studies book series within the Politehnica Publishing House, the Professional Communication and Translation Studies international conference, and is part of the editorial or scientific boards of numerous scientific journals. Together with Muguraș Constantinescu and Titela Vilceanu, he coordinates *A History of Translations in Romanian*, a series of volumes published by the Publishing House of the Romanian Academy. Personal website: <https://sites.google.com/view/daniel-dejica/> ; E-mail: daniel.dejica@upt.ro

<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-3989-6402>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/LLL-0327-2024>

Cornelia-Patricia Grigoraș is a PhD candidate at the Doctoral School of Humanities, West University of Timișoara. She is currently working on a comprehensive thesis that explores the field of teaching, learning, and practising technical translation in a digital world, focusing on providing valuable and practical insights for teachers, students, and professional translators alike. She is interested in innovative teaching methods for a digital-born generation. Her research area of interest is technical translation.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5533-1064>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/rid/AFC-3461-2022>

<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=57713356200>

Daniela Hăisan, PhD (Habil.) is Associate Professor of Linguistics and Translation at the Faculty of Letters and Sciences of Communication, *Ștefan cel Mare* University of Suceava, Romania. She is a board member of academic journals such as *Atelier de traduction*, *Concordia Discors* vs. *Discordia Concors*, *Messages, Sages and Ages*, *Meridian Critic*, *Anadiss*, *SUSh Scientific Proceedings* (*M. Nalbandyan* State University of Shirak, Armenia). She has been involved in research projects on Cultural Translation (2012–2016), Translation History (2019–2023), Creativity and Multimodality in

Translated Children's Books (since 2025). She has published three books on translation matters as well as sixty papers on various translation- or linguistics-related issues.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3929-0055>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/AAQ-3418-2020>

<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=57313230500>

Maria-Crina Herțeg is Associate Professor at *1 Decembrie 1918* University of Alba Iulia, Faculty of History, Letters and Educational Sciences where she teaches courses in Business English, Terminology, Corpus linguistics, Business translation and ESP.

Her research areas are clustered around the fields of Terminology, Business English, CMT, ESP, Corpus linguistics, Business translation. She has authored papers on these topics and has delivered presentations in national and international conferences. Dr. Herțeg has co-edited books with international publishers, together with Maria-Ionela Neagu she co-edited *Semiotic Approaches to Cultural Interactions. Images and Texts*, published with Peter Lang in 2025. Dr. Herțeg is a member of the editorial board of *The Journal of Linguistic and Intercultural Education – JoLIE*, the yearly publication of the Centre for Research and Innovation in Linguistic Education (CIEL).

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3409-8726>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/2343578>

<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=57468153900>

Corina Mariana Mitulescu, PhD, is a Lecturer (UK) / Assistant professor (US) in English and Spanish language, and Cultural Awareness at *Nicolae Balcescu* Land Forces Academy, in Sibiu, Romania, where she also serves as Vice Dean for International Relations. She holds a PhD in Philology (English literature), awarded *magna cum laude* in 2019 by *1 Decembrie 1918* University of Alba Iulia. A Fulbright alumna (Kent State University, OH, USA, 2021), she is also an active member of the *Romanian Association for American Studies*. Her scholarly interests include modernist literature, gender studies, historical fiction, military discourse and terminology, and media literacy. She is the author of several monographs in the fields of literature, gender studies, EFL didactics, and American culture and history, and her contributions to the discipline further include the translation of several novels from English into Romanian.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5941-2200>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/IAO-6861-2023>

<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=57200625552>

David Morariu is a PhD candidate at *Lucian Blaga* University of Sibiu and teaching assistant with the Department of Romance Studies, Faculty of Letters and Arts. His research interests include literary discourse analysis and the linguistic strategies of othering in the Romanian novel of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Drawing on frameworks such as corpus-assisted discourse studies, the discourse-historical approach and corpus-based literary onomastics, his doctoral research examines linguistic stereotyping and name-based discrimination of Roma characters in the Romanian novel published between 1845 and 1947. He was part of the digitization team for the research project *The Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel (1845-1947)* and has also been involved in other research projects focusing on emerging paradigms in teaching Romanian as a foreign language. He is currently a research assistant in the project *CORECON*, which examines the coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in Polish-, Romanian- and English-language media.

<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-9774-1469>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/PNF-3352-2026>

<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=57504315100>

Ioana Moroșan defended her PhD in 2023 with a dissertation in the sociology of literature on women's access to cultural and intellectual legitimation during the Socialist Realist era. Her research lies at the intersection of social history and literary studies, focusing on women's history, narratives of motherhood, and the representation of maternal experience in fiction and life writing. She examines the

historical, social, and literary construction of one of the most silenced figures in local history and literature – the mother. She also works in cultural journalism for the weekly magazine *Dilema*, and she is involved in research projects at the Institute for Literary History and Theory *G. Călinescu* (Romanian Academy), where she also edits *Synthesis*, the journal of comparative literature.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5621-7354>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/ABG-4212-2021>

<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=57502195200>

Cristina Mirela Nicolaescu is a Romanian national. She holds a professor position at the Department of Western Languages, *Yozgat-Bozok* University, in Turkey. She received a PhD in 2013 in Postmodern Fiction (American and Canadian literature) from the University of Bucharest, Romania. The research findings in the field of linguistics and English Literature have been presented in international conferences and symposia, some of them published as academic articles in journals. She authored a few books among which *English-Turkish Dictionary of Idiomatic Expressions and other Phrases for Literary Translations*, Blackswan Publishing Press, 2021, and *Technologies of Perspective on Contemporary Literary Texts*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, UK, 2022.

<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-7077-9255>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/PPZ-6658-2026>

<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=35177931900>

Ileana Alexandra Orlich is President's Professor of Comparative Literature and European Studies at the Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona. Her books include *Subversive Stages: Dramatic Transcreations in Pre- and Post- Communist Hungarian, Romanian and Bulgarian Theater* (2017); *Staging Stalinism in Post-Communism Romania* (2012); *Avant-gardism, Politics and the Limits of Interpretation in The (Ex)Centric Waste Land: Reading Gellu Naum's Zenobia* (2010); *Myth and Modernity in the Twentieth Century Romanian Novel* (2009); *Articulating Gender, Narrating the Nation: Allegorical Femininity in Romanian Fiction* (2004); *Silent Bodies: (Re)Discovering the Women of Romanian Short Fiction* (2002). Among her published translations are *Mara* (Ioan Slavici); *Ciuleandra* (Liviu Rebreanu); *Haia Sanis*; *Hanu Ancuței/Tales from Ancuta's Inn* (Mihail Sadoveanu); *Fecioarele despletite/The Disheveled Maidens*; *Concert din muzică de Bach/Concert of Music by Bach*; *Drumul ascuns/The Hidden Way* (Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu); *Tache de catifea/Velvet Tache* (Stefan Agopian); *Patul lui Procust/The Bed of Proustes* (Camil Petrescu); *Sărută-mă/ Kiss Me, Confessions of a Bare-Footed Leper* (Vlad Zografi). She also translated from Spanish and Russian theater and wrote stage adaptations for performances in Romania, France, and the United States. Orlich serves as Honorary Consul General of Romania in Arizona.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2969-7940>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/AAO-5614-2020>

<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=58046942600>

Ana-Magdalena Petraru, PhD, is lecturer in English at *Alexandru Ioan Cuza* University of Iasi, Romania, teaching general English and ESP (Theological English, Business English) to non-philological students since 2008 and Literature and Language courses to philological students from the Focsani extension of the Faculty of Letters since 2022. She received a PhD in Philology for a thesis on the reception of the English Canadian literature in Romania in 2011 from *Alexandru Ioan Cuza* University, Iasi. Between 2014-2015 she was a postdoctoral fellow at *Alexandru Ioan Cuza* University, Iasi working on the Romanian discourse on translation. She benefited from mobilities for researchers funded by UEFISCDI (KU Leuven, 2018, Dublin City University, 2024) and is currently a project member in a young teams/ TE project funded by UEFISCDI on Romanian Translation Studies. She is also the author of two books on Canadian literature in Romania and Translation Studies in our country.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6482-4189>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/HLH-7146-2023>

<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=58844737900>

Raluca-Andreea Petruș, PhD, is a Junior Lecturer at the West University of Timișoara (WUT), Romania, and has been a co-editor of the two academic journals, *Gender Studies* and the *Romanian Journal of English Studies*, WUT, since December 2023. She received a PhD in Philology (Japanese American Incarceration Literature) in 2023 from the West University of Timișoara, Romania. She is a member of three research centres based at the Faculty of Letters, History, Philosophy, and Theology: the *American Studies Centre (CSAM)*, the *Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies (CISG)*, and *CODHUS (Corpus Related Digital Approaches to Humanities Centre)*, and has been a Salzburg Research Fellow since September 2024. She is the author of *Civil Rights and Identity in Japanese American Incarceration Literature*, published in 2026 by Editura Universității de Vest, Timișoara.

<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-3277-2362>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/KYA-8800-2024>

<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=58980519700>

Cristina Ilea Rogojină is a Lecturer in the Department of Romanian Philology, Classical and Balkan Languages at the Faculty of Letters, Ovidius University of Constanța. She holds a PhD in Philology, awarded for her research on the anthroponymy of the Romanian folktale, a study that explores the intricate relationship between naming, language, identity, and traditional narrative structures. She graduated with a BA in Romanian and English Language and Literature, followed by an MA in Romanian Studies, both from the same institution. Her academic activity extends beyond teaching, encompassing research within the *Speculum* Research Centre of the Imaginary (Alba Iulia) and the Classical Studies Society (Dobrogea branch). She is the author of several articles and a book dedicated to character names and naming practices in the Romanian fairy-tale tradition. Her scholarly interests lie at the intersection of folklore, linguistic expression, and onomastics, with particular attention to naming as an expression of cultural imagination and narrative identity.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8389-9976>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/T-2077-2018>

<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=43462287500>

<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Annemarie-Sorescu-Marinkovic-2>

<https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=vK1bof8AAAAJ&hl=ro>

Annemarie Sorescu-Marinković, PhD, is a Principal Research Fellow at the Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Belgrade, Serbia. She received a PhD in Philology (Folklore) in 2010 from the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. She is an expert in Romance-speaking minority communities in the Balkans, and her current research interests encompass multilingualism, language contact, endangerment and revitalization, ecolinguistics, area studies. Her recent publications include the co-edited volumes *Boyash Studies: Researching 'Our People'* (Frank & Timme, 2021), *The Romance-Speaking Balkans: Language and the Politics of Identity* (Brill, 2022) and *Vulnerable and Endangered Languages in Europe* (Institute for Balkan Studies/ University of Belgrade, 2025), as well as the monograph *The Vlachs of Eastern Serbia: Language and Society* (Austrian Academy of Sciences, 2023), co-authored with Monica Huțanu.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9791-3540>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/PLM-4637-2026>

<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=57195960013>

Adriana Elena Stoican (PhD in Literary and Cultural Studies, University of Bucharest), lecturer is currently teaching English for Business Communication and Applied Modern Languages at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies. Her research interests include literature of Romanian diaspora, South-Asian American studies, transnationalism, Indian literature in English. Her articles and book chapters have appeared in prestigious academic journals and publications from Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Latvia, Romania, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and the United States of

America. She is the author of the books *Transcultural Encounters in South-Asian American Women's Fiction: Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2015) and *Transnational Itineraries in Indian Accounts of Uprooting by Women Writers. South Asian women authors who have experienced migration to the USA* (LIT Verlag, 2020).

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6664-1674>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/PHO-4824-2026>

<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=58770523800>

Wojciech Adam Świąch is an independent scholar. He has graduated in International Relations (specialization of European Studies) from the Jagiellonian University in Kraków (2004). He holds also a master's degree in law from the Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Kraków University (2016). He was awarded a PhD in Legal Sciences from the Faculty of Law, Administration and International Relations, the Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Kraków University in 2022 (subject of research: The Polish administration in Spisz and Orawa regions in the years 1920-1939 – problems and challenges of unification). He is mainly interested in the history (including legal history) of the Second Polish Republic and the Soviet Bloc, with a special focus on the Polish People's Republic (author of numerous publications on these issues). He has been working as a local government employee in Kraków since 2007.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6306-2781>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/GRS-7701-2022>

<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=59143489200>

Maria Szikszai, PhD, is an anthropologist and Habil. Associate Professor at the Hungarian Department of Linguistics and Ethnography-Anthropology, Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca. Her research areas encompass the Anthropology of Art, Sacred Art, the study of Swabians in Satu Mare, Romania, Anthropology of Writing, and more recently, Digital Culture. As part of her academic work, she has published seven books as a single author, most recently a book with Lexington Books in the United States (*Community Networks and Cultural Practices in Twentieth-Century Romania. Paper-Based Cultures in the Writings of a Catholic Priest*. Lexington Books, Lanham – Boulder – New York – London, 2023). She is also the editor and co-editor of 16 books and has published more than 30 studies in national and international journals and collective volumes.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2158-4338>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/JFJ-1671-2023>

<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=57211606656>

Andra-Iulia URSA, PhD, is a Senior Lecturer in Translation and Interpreting Studies at 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania. Her doctoral research focused on translation strategies for rendering James Joyce's modernist writing style into Romanian and was supervised by Prof. PhD Habil. Felix Narcis Nicolau. Her PhD dissertation was published in 2025 by Aeternitas Publishing House under the title *Aspects of James Joyce's Writing Style: Translations into Romanian*. Her research and publications address semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic strategies in the field of literary translation, untranslatability, translation and retranslation, world literature, and audiovisual translation. Her teaching activity focuses on BA-level courses in English Didactics, Translation Theory and Practice, Simultaneous and Consecutive Interpreting, English Syntax, Technical Translation, Literary Translation, and ESP (English for Law and English for Economics and Business). As part of her professional engagement, she contributes as an editorial board member for the *Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies*, the *Journal of Linguistic and Intercultural Education – JoLIE*, and *Incursions into the Imaginary*. She is a member of the Romanian Society for English and American Studies. She is also a certified translator of English and French and has fourteen years of experience working in the translation of legal and technical documents and interpreting for international conferences.

<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5334-4741>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/MGA-8872-2025>

Attila Varga holds a PhD in History. He is a researcher at *George Barițiu* History Institute of the Romanian Academy and an associate researcher at Oxford Brookes University (UK). His doctoral thesis focused on the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church, the state and Freemasonry in Banat and Hungary in the second half of the 19th century. He has written several books and studies on the history of elites in Banat, Transylvania and Central and Eastern Europe. Subsequently, his scientific activity focused on interdisciplinary research on topics of great interest, such as the history of freemasonry and secret societies in Romania, Hungary and Sweden, eugenics in Central and Northern Europe, film history, the history of computer science and nuclear energy, the transfer of computer and nuclear technology in communist Romania.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7997-5625>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/POV-1988-2026>

<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=58029299000>

Bogdan Vătavu, a Lecturer/Assistant Professor at *Lucian Blaga* University in Sibiu, teaches various disciplines in the field of Library and Information Science. He earned his PhD in History from *Babeș-Bolyai* University Cluj-Napoca, Romania, in 2019. His academic interests encompass social history, library and information science, and the digital humanities. His research focuses on topics such as the history of crime in Romania and its representations in popular culture, digital collections and text mining, and the state of Romanian librarianship. Additionally, he has experience as a librarian and has worked for several years at the *Octavian Goga* Cluj County Library.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9130-5592>

<https://www.webofscience.com/wos/author/record/OXA-8590-2025>

<https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=56670947800>

https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=TcC_g7wAAAAJ&hl=en

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Valentina-Zivkovic-2?ev=hdr_xprf

<https://enauka.gov.rs/cris/rp/rp03606/dspaceitems.html>

Valentina Živković, PhD, is a Principal Research Fellow at the Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Belgrade, Serbia. She received a PhD in History of Art in 2007 at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade (Serbia). She is an expert in Late Medieval and Early Modern art and devotion, cultural and religious ties between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Church, as well as cult of saints and healing power of miracle-working images. Her last two books explore testamentary legacies for the salvation of the soul, iconography, iconology and saints' veneration in Kotor, the city in the Southeastern Adriatic.