



New Paradigms in Contemporary Romanian Literary Studies (I)

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This article introduces the first part of the New Paradigms in Contemporary Romanian Literary Studies collective work that Revista Transilvania has set to publish in order to get a better picture on contemporary local literary research. Emanuel Modoc and Ștefan Baghiu argue that there is a paradigm shift at the beginning of the 2000s in Romanian literary theory and literary criticism that has its effects on today's literary research, and describe the use of quantitative methods, World Literature concepts and transnational studies perspectives in several new research published by young scholars such as Emanuel Modoc, Daiana Gărdan, Ovio Olaru and Snejana Ung.

Keywords: Romanian contemporary literary studies, new paradigms



The very short history of the most recent academic interests of the youngest Romanian researchers can be traced back to the early 2000s. Most of the developments proposed within the present issue can be considered emanations of studies published in Romania during the last twenty years, which in turn absorbed Western academic trends in an effort to both synchronize the Romanian Post-Communist academe with the rest of the world and to reopen for critical debate some key theoretical, critical and historiographical events. This is perhaps the main reason for which most of the contributors to the recent important collective work of *Romanian Literature as World Literature*¹ are representative for the generation of scholars that made their debut in the early 2000s.

In order to illustrate this first paradigm shift, Claudiu Turcuș touched upon this very transformation

of Romanian research in an exhaustive overview on the critical debuts of the 2000s². Turcuș boils the central subjects of the volumes in question (all of them based on PhD theses finalized in the late 90s and early 2000s) down to three main categories: 1. the reassessment of forgotten/mystified critical concepts, 2. the ideological shift in contemporary critical discourse and 3. the fascination for Western literary theory (Turcuș 2009: 70). In the case of the first category, studies authored during the 2000s by Andrei Terian³ or Adrian Tudurachi⁴ can be invoked, whereas volumes signed by Alexandru Matei⁵ and Paul Cernat⁶ can be prescribed to the second. As for the third category, it is best illustrated through studies by Mihaela Ūrsa⁷ and Adrian Lăcătuș⁸. All these three categories, however, contour a number of critical “trends” in the Romanian Humanities that continue well into the 2010s, with

studies belonging to Teodora Dumitru⁹, Andreea Mironescu¹⁰ (corresponding to the the first category), Alex Goldiș¹¹, Mihai Iovănel¹² or George Neagoe¹³ (for the second category) and Adriana Stan¹⁴ or Delia Ungureanu¹⁵ (for the third category).

Alongside these categories, however, a fourth one makes itself clear, aiming at recontextualizing the Romanian aesthetical and critical canon, often reinforced by recalibrating and (re)canonizing attempts. To these categories belong studies such as Dragoș Varga's¹⁶ and Radu Vancu's¹⁷ (published in the 2000s), as well as those authored by Doris Mironescu¹⁸ and Cosmin Borza¹⁹ (published after 2010). All these critical volumes point towards an obvious paradigm shift that should naturally awake the interest of contemporary academic research, one that detaches itself from mere aesthetic and axiological concerns and makes room for metacritical, metatheoretical and metaideological reflections.

Another volume should be mentioned among the previous conceptual and methodological developments on this theme, as it is unequivocally catalytic for the understanding of the most recent shifts in the Romanian academic research concerned with literary studies: Andrei Terian's 2013 study *Critica de export*²⁰. While the early critical reception of this volume is an interesting subject in and of itself, it nonetheless marked a turning point concerning not only the critical approaches themselves, but also in terms of how young Romanian researchers manage their own scientific findings in the field. By moving away from journalistic criticism, *Critica de export* marked the beginning of the reconfiguration of the very *locus* in which the young Romanian researchers chose, in the last five years or so, to develop and publish their research, as Adriana Stan puts it: "Attracted by European funding, but also limited by the ever constricting parameters of an academic CV, what was not long ago called (and not without a certain aura) 'criticism' gave way to the need to reinventing itself as 'research', applying for grants and learning the language of 'international scientific impact' as they go"²¹. Thus, more than a typical case of adapting and synchronizing to wider transnational trends, the recent developments of Romanian literary studies are decisively informed by the shift from the local to the global (or, at the very least, to the so-called glocal).

So, what will happen next? What are the post-2020 literary studies in Romania starting to look like? These are the questions which we try to address in this issue of *Revista Transilvania* as we collect a series of critical "previews" provided by PhD candidates who use the most recent developments in the field of literary studies (from transnational and translation studies to Digital Humanities, quantitative analysis and interactive narratology) as their starting points

in order to propose new ways of reading Romanian literature within the framework of world literature. With the aforementioned paradigm shift in literary research serving as background, the themes addressed in the following articles, as well as the theoretical and methodological frameworks put to use seek to offer a symptomatic and representative account of the latest trends in contemporary academic research. By employing recent concepts of Western theory, the transnational approaches gathered in this thematic issue point toward the integration of specific Romanian cultural phenomena into a broader, global network.

Daiana Gărdan's paper, *Novels as Big Data: A Genre-Centric Approach to the Romanian Novel (1900-1940)*²², builds upon the theories advanced by international scholars such as Franco Moretti and Matthew L. Jockers in order to investigate the evolutionary trajectory of the early modern Romanian novel from a perspective centered on genre development and the socio-cultural mechanisms underpinning the autochthonous privileging of certain subgenres over others. Her investigation seeks to reveal not only the applicability of quantitative approaches to Romanian literary phenomena, but also to address the urgent need for the development of more pertinent lexicographical instruments that can provide better (and more) metadata for further explorations. Somewhat similarly, Ovio Olaru's interests in his article, titled *What is Digital Humanities and What's It Doing in Romanian Departments*²³, follow the question of the applicability of digital methods of distant reading and computational analysis, all the while providing evidence of the host of possibilities offered by digital tools in the approach of global literary phenomena, even in the context of the more modest means of the Romanian culture in what concerns digitalized resources and corpuses.

The next two papers seek to provide an analysis of the different mechanisms that provided the groundwork for the transnational bonds between Eastern and Central European literatures. In *The Literature About Former Yugoslavia in the Paradigm of World Literature*²⁴, Snejana Ung offers a highly detailed account on how the very figure of Yugoslavia is codified within East-Central European literatures and the consequence of these instances of inter-literary negotiations within the framework of world literature while, finally, in his paper, *Configurations of Transnationalism in East-Central European Avant-Gardes*²⁵, Emanuel Modoc attempts to decode the apparent contradictions between the peripheral position of East-Central European avant-gardes and the active transnational networks established in this geocultural space in the first half of the twentieth century. The studies put together in the present thematic segment of the journal issue are both illustrative for the expansion of Romanian literary studies into the international academic circuit and



symptomatic for the shift towards a more decentralized reflection on the position of local literary phenomena in the context of World Literature.

Note:

1. Mircea Martin, Christian Moraru, Andrei Terian (eds.), *Romanian Literature as World Literature*, New York: Bloomsbury, 2018.
2. Claudiu Turcuș, “Ce s-a întâmplat (în ultimii 10 ani) cu literatura tânără. Note pe marginea unor cărți”, in Alex Goldiș (Ed.), “Bilanțul douămiismului”, *Vatra*, 3 (2019): 69-79.
3. Andrei Terian, *G. Călinescu. A cincea esență*, București: Cartea Românească, 2009.
4. Adrian Tudurachi, *Destinul precar al ideilor literare*, Cluj-Napoca: Limes, 2006.
5. Alexandru Matei, *Ultimele zile din viața literaturii*, București: Cartea Românească, 2008.
6. Paul Cernat, *Avangarda românească și complexul periferiei*, București: Cartea Românească, 2007.
7. Mihaela Ursa, *Scritopia sau ficționalizarea subiectului auctorial în discursul teoretic*, Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 2005.
8. Adrian Lăcătuș, *Modernitatea conservatoare*, Brașov: Universitatea Transilvania, 2009.
9. Teodora Dumitru, *Modernitatea politică și literară în gândirea lui E. Lovinescu*, București: Muzeul Literaturii Române, 2016.
10. Andreea Mironescu, *Afacerea clasicilor. Paul Zarifopol și critica modernității*, București: Tracus Arte, 2014.
11. Alex Goldiș, *Critica în tranșee: de la realismul socialist la autonomia esteticului*, București: Cartea Românească, 2011.
12. Mihai Iovănel, *Evreul improbabil: Mihail Sebastian, o monografie ideologică*, București: Cartea Românească, 2012.
13. George Neagoe, *Asul de pică: Ștefan Aug. Doinaș*, București: Cartea Românească, 2013.
14. Adriana Stan, *Bastionul lingvistic. O istorie comparată a structuralismului în România*, București: Muzeul Literaturii Române, 2017.
15. Delia Ungureanu, *From Paris to Tlön: Surrealism as World*, New York: Bloomsbury, 2017.
16. Dragoș Varga, *Radu Stanca: sentimentul estetic al finței*, Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2005.
17. Radu Vancu, *Mircea Ivănescu. Poezia discreției absolute*, București: Vinea, 2007.
18. Doris Mironescu, *Viața lui M. Blecher. Împotriva biografiei*, Iași: Timpul, 2011.
19. Cosmin Borza, *Marin Sorescu. Singur printre canonici*, București: Art, 2014.
20. Andrei Terian, *Critica de export*, București: Muzeul Literaturii Române, 2013.
21. Adriana Stan, *Surse, resurse și burse*, în *Vatra*, nr. 11-12, 2014, p. 76.
22. Daiana Gârdan. “Novels as Big Data. A Genre-Centric Approach to the Romanian Novel (1900-1940)”.

Transilvania, 5-6 (2019), p. 24.

23. Ovio Olaru. “What is Digital Humanities and What’s It Doing in Romanian Departments?”. *Transilvania*, 5-6 (2019), p. 30.

24. Snejana Ung. “The Literature About the Former Yugoslavia in the Paradigm of World Literature”. *Transilvania*, 5-6 (2019), p. 38.

25. Emanuel Modoc. “Configurations of Transnationalism in East-Central European Avant-Gardes”. *Transilvania*, 5-6 (2019), p. 17.

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