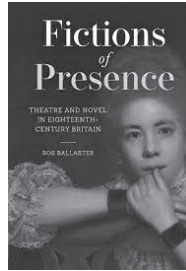


Book Reviews

Ros Ballaster, *Fictions of Presence: Theatre and Novel in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, London, The Boydell Press, 2020



By-now-traditional accounts of the rise of the English novel, spurred by Ian Watt's 1957 seminal foray into the emergent conventions of formal realism, have tried to validate the idea that fictional narratives authored by Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding accommodated the birth of novelistic subjectivity in ways that both grasped and propelled the surge of individualism in eighteenth-century culture. This model of narrativized selfhood – whose consistency is partly derived, as novel theorist Marina MacKay has recently shown, from Watt's own search for patterns of coherent subjectivity capable of withstanding the disruptive pull of history in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War (*Ian Watt. The Novel and the Wartime Critic* 2018, 137) – has nonetheless invited multiple reassessments, not least on account of his crediting a rather narrow canon of male authors with “inventing” the novel, while patently ignoring precursor women writers.

To such feminist critiques – voiced, for instance, by Jane Spencer in *The Rise of the Woman Novelist* (1986), or by Leah Orr in *Novel Ventures: Fiction and Print Culture in England, 1690–1730* (2017) – are added partial or full-fledged amendments. Studies that revisit Watt's idea according to which the growing tide of individualism was disruptive of communal relations

or solidarities include Nancy Armstrong's illuminating analysis, in *How Novels Think: The Limits of Individualism from 1719 to 1900* (2005), of the blended dynamic of self-making and unmaking. This, Armstrong claims, is a dynamic that recognizes not only the interplay between the individual's antipodal positions of “narrating subject” and “object of narration”, but also the “mutually constitutive relationship between novelists and their protagonists during the period when [...] novels were acquiring the power to endow their readers with individuality as well” (3).

Foremost in this series of fresh approaches to the novel is a study that Ros Ballaster, Professor of Eighteenth-Century Studies at Oxford University, published in 1998. Her *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* demonstrates the obsolescence and even insufficiency of Watt's explanatory account of the birth of the novel as a genre committed exclusively to fulfilling a “realist teleology” (11). Watt's theory sought to universalize a generically male middle-class mindset and sensibility, but obscured the potential of fantasy or romance fictions to render present female desire. What this, however, meant was that it now became the “feminist critic's job [...] to discover and uncover” such a teleological model's “strategies of concealment” (22).

In Ros Ballaster's latest study, entitled *Fictions of Presence: Theatre and Novel in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (2020), the literary historian's task remains consistent with this focus on presentification as the disclosure of that which is hidden. At stake is the process of uncovering the effects of *presence* as a precondition of and medium for aesthetic experience. Published, like

Watt's study, at a time of crisis (albeit one that, because of the enforced lockdowns, has simply exacerbated the need for relationality by exposing the alienating threat of individualism), Ballaster's examination of the manifold pathways connecting the theatre and the novel in Georgian England amounts to nothing short of a tectonic shift in eighteenth-century studies.

The Oxonian scholar draws on the so-called affective turn in the humanities, while also capitalizing upon the distributive potential of Deleuzian/Latourian assemblages and upon the insights of cognitive narratology. Her meticulous attention detects the richly intricate transmedialities that enabled countless intercommunications between "stage" and "page" in the eighteenth century. This perspective lithely expands the investigative aim beyond formalist genealogies of the novel. In fact, the novel, as Ballaster argues, did not supersede the theatre but evolved in tandem with it, both acting as rival "vehicle[s] for the transmission of story" (3).

Coupled with this emphasis on the interlaced simultaneity of forms, genres and modes of narrative is Ballaster's critique of the criterion of representation. This, as seen above, served as the backbone of Watt's thesis about the concurrent rise of liberal subjectivity and the realist framework of novelistic narrative. As rival "spaces of literature" (to evoke Maurice Blanchot's term), theatre and novel vied, in Augustan culture, not for representing selves (characters) to others (spectators, readers) but for presenting (or, rather, presentifying) others to the self as part of the elusive yet vital experience of art.

In Ballaster's view, literature houses life, it offers hospitality to being. It conjures

the co-presence of self and other, whether one speaks about the mounted performance of a play attended by multitudes or the experience of reading its script in solitude, or the reverse, about the solitary immersion of an individual reader in the fictional world of a novel or its publicly performed reading. In fact, as the theorist shows, "to feel 'present' and to feel the 'presence' of others are profoundly interconnected" (14). It is not a question of the self appropriating otherness, as in Watt's grand narrative of the novel's reinforcement of the premises of individualism, but of otherness opening up to a hospitable self: "The moments of presence produced through works of art [...] are not necessarily moments when the consumer of that work feels him or herself to be most alert and conscious of being, but rather when others seem to most fully occupy that consciousness: when presences are felt" (14). To put it differently, instead of a generic genealogy postulating the prevalence of the novel over the theatre, Ballaster proposes the scenario of an ecology of cognitive and emotional responses dispersed across their shared aesthetic space.

Imparting readers and theatre spectators a sense of "*being there*" while engaging with a written story or attending a play, the aesthetics of presence revealed by Ballaster in her study of eighteenth-century modes of literature supplements and, ultimately, supplants the need for a hermeneutic of meaning (19). The study deliberately assumes the thesis outlined by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht in *The Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (2004), according to which "presence-effects" are the result of ceaseless tides of "unconcealment and withdrawal" (19). Ballaster

consequently takes the pulse of eighteenth-century aesthetic beings by distributing her gaze at the “novel-theatre nexus” (5) along three interrelated tiers. These correspond to a triad of so-called fictional “persons,” comprising authors, characters and consumers (such as theatregoers or novel readers) (5).

The analysis of the presentification of author “persons” at the interface between dramatic and novelistic forms of fiction is magisterially conducted in the first section. This part of the study highlights the productive tensions generated by patterns of recognition and disavowal. Based on these patterns, writers like Eliza Haywood, Henry Fielding, Charlotte Lennox and Oliver Goldsmith engaged their authorial selves in the pursuit of presence even as this pursuit was sidetracked through acts of surrogacy, spectrality or downright absence. To start with, the chapter on Haywood addresses different modes of “owning and disowning” (116) and showcases the vulnerability her authorial presence conveys in response to the perils of patriarchy at large. Ontological frame-breaking devices also mark, in Ballaster’s view, Fielding’s “recurrent acts of ghosting and puppetry” (116). Deconstructing the image of an implied author who asserts his authority over the fictional text from the position of a quasi-omniscient narrator, this chapter innovatively speaks about Fielding’s relinquishment of authorial presence. By and large, this presence is threatened with “acts of ghosting, excommunication and vanishing by other presences (rivals for power in the playhouse, characters who refuse to submit to authorial management, inattentive or over-attentive audiences” (19). Similarly exposed to flickering ontologies are

Charlotte Lennox, who is shown to chase a “fantasy of independence” while remaining trapped within “networks of dependencies” on her characters, and Oliver Goldsmith, whose “authorial character” has a penchant for “dispersal and distribution along lines of kin and kind” (116).

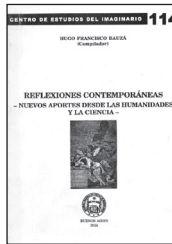
The second section, mapping the space occupied by stage and novel characters (even) beyond the frames of fictionality, is a comprehensive analysis of the way in which textual protagonists acquire a life that is downright hyperreal. Thus, narrative or dramatic “persons” such as Lady Townly in Colley Cibber’s *The Provok’d Husband* (1728), Pamela in Samuel Richardson’s epistolary novel of 1740, Ranger in Benjamin Hoadly’s *The Suspicious Husband* (1747), and Tristram Shandy in Sterne’s experimental novel of 1759-67 exhibit the sheer “portability of character across stage and page” (131). The third and final section, discussing the ways in which consumers (novel readers and theatre audiences) were “imagined as fictional presences at moments of the consumption of art work” (221), grasps the corrective impulses behind casting the somewhat anomalous figures of the “critic” and the mimic” as negative examples of art consumption. By miscalculating their distance from the fictional world, both the long-sighted critic and the myopic mimic fell short of acquiring sufficient degrees of liveness.

To conclude, in showing how various techniques levelled at forging the illusion of fictional presence boosted the appeal of aesthetic experience in eighteenth-century British culture, Ros Ballaster’s study essentially nuances our understanding of the novel as the preserve of emergent individualism by drawing attention to the

fact that the “desire to ‘be there’, if it means anything, means only this: the desire to be with others” (282). All in all, this “aesthetic of ‘being’” (17) may be said to foreground an all-too-modern impulse to share the privileged moments of intense consciousness afforded by works of art.

Carmen Borbély

Hugo Francisco Bauzá, *Reflexiones contemporaneas. Nuevos aportes desde las humanidades y la ciencia*, Centro de Estudios del Imaginario, Buenos Aires, 2014



As the reverse of the last century's atrocities, the 21st century's paradigm proposes recovering former values instead of destroying them (as the 20th century did). It is also the case of the present study. Edited by Hugo Francisco Bauzá, *Reflexiones contemporaneas-nuevos aportes desde las humanidades y la ciencia* is concerned with the study of the imaginary regarding a variety of topics: from the rise and fall of the great powers (Patricio Colombo Murúa, Laura Raunch) to finding a place for Romania between these essential events (Ioan-Aurel Pop); from attempts to connect the mythological imaginary to notable contemporary cultural practices or figures (Alcira A. Bonilla, Melina A. Varnavoglou, Hugo Francisco Bauzá) to the prerequisite of an interdisciplinary approach (Luis A. Vedia, Héctor A. Palma).

In the context of classical praxis in the modern world, in “La imagen del

muerto. Memoria e inclusion en la comunidad moral,” Bonilla claims that communitarian universal ethics have to replace the actual ethical system which tends to preclude some aspects of the reality such as excluding the dead ones from collective memory. Thus, a distinction between communitarian and communitarianism is required since history has shown us how the *-isms* transformed themselves into *extremisms*.

Concerning this topic, Jean-Pierre Vernant's claims are the primary sources in Bonilla's assertions. Regardless of the *medium*, the image represents something: besides the form of the image, it also has a function. *Soma*, or the representations of the gods of the Greeks marks the beginning of representation as a form of remembrance for the no longer alive. In the meantime, this indicates that idealization through anthropomorphizing becomes the main pillar in excluding the rest of the people, this leading to compromising the tenets of objective representation.

Later, the way in which the victims of Argentina's dictatorial regime are perceived enhances a relative disaffection regarding the status of the dead ones in the contemporary social imaginary. Bonilla claims that this exclusion implies the tradition of the *somas*. But, besides that, the contemporary theories of the affect show that disaffection results from living in such an environment.

The resemanticization of mythology in Albert Camus seems proximal to the contemporary imaginary. Since the human is always trapped in existential problems, Bauzá's essays explain how a mythological return represents a solution in Camusian thought. Thus, taking archetypal figures and deconstructing their preestablished

meaning has a great effect on understanding the 20th-century imaginary. For Bauzá, the Promethean figure in Camus's version is symptomatic. One can surpass their condition, but fundamentalisms must be avoided since those may lead to utopianisms like those of the totalitarian regime which sacrificed a whole century in order to accomplish their utopian ideas. But, since one has to face the context of a dismantled Europe, Camusian vitalism, exposed by the figure of Sisyphus might provide solutions: what might appear as a nonsense, like Sisyphus's punishment, is actually a model standing for how human should take over their own destiny to experience their freedom. These reflections on morality as a common ground cannot be classified under a single defining paradigm, these are neither wholly existentialist, nor wholly agnostic. This consolidates the protean dimension of Camusian thought. Nevertheless, as Bauzá accurately claims, Camus is an organic intellectual, which is why *before* reading Camus and *after* reading Camus are opposite instances, an aspect which asserts his status of as great a thinker as Dostoyevsky or Shakespeare.

The study also provides an outlook on the evolution of great cultural powers. Colombo Murúa's commemorative essay: "Maquiavelo a través de los siglos. A 500 años de la escritura de *El Príncipe*" focuses on the evolution of the Roman Empire from the Fall of Constantinople to the cultural climax of Florentine Renaissance. Since the Renaissance is fundamentally a renaissance of ancient Greek values, the importance of reflection on the matrix of the Renaissance's culture is self-evident.

Besides the return to the ancient Greek values, what this study proposes

is an interdisciplinary approach to the imaginary. The last essays explaining and exemplifying some epistemological metaphors are illustrative in this way. Since the autonomy that literature has assumed throughout times expands the discrepancy between its discipline and that of others, it may be difficult to add literature to this interdisciplinary approach, but as the authors of these essays demonstrate, it is not impossible. However, it does not seem that literature will be released from its marginal status, at least not yet.

Adnana Hales

Bianca Bican, Ioana Bican, Ștefan Oltean,
Falii, rupturi, discontinuități,
Cluj-Napoca, Presa
Universitară Clujeană,
2019



Fissures, Ruptures, Discontinuities is a book that brings together the articles of doctoral students who participated in the interdisciplinary conference organized by the doctoral school of Babeș-Bolyai University on May 12-13, 2017. The book is structured in two parts, the first including language studies and the second, literary approaches. Various topics are debated in this collective book, from the birth of metaphor and the first translations into Romanian, to theories about Performance and philosophies related to time and memory.

Among the studies of linguistics and grammar written in the first part of the

book, Simona Pop's work stands out due to its polemical and innovative character. In the text "Relația dintre predicat și subiect" [The relation between predicate and subject], the doctoral student from Cluj addresses an extremely discussed issue, the answer to which varies depending on the focus of each researcher. In this article, Simona Pop states that the subject is more important than the predicate, because it is the superordinate term. This is justified by the desinences of person and number that the subject imposes on the predicate. Arguing her position, the doctoral student appeals to several grammars, with which she argues, bringing her own counter-arguments. Combating Valeria Guțu Romalo's theory that states that there is a relation of interdependence between the two terms, because both the subject and the predicate impose particularities of expression on each other and the subjective sentence is clearly subordinated, Simona Pop delimits the subject from subjective and argues that the subject is a part of the sentence that shapes the essence of the statement and that in the case of subjective subordinates, their failure to fit into a clear type was not achieved, thus leading to a compromise solution. As in this case, Simona Pop does not agree with the statement of Corneliu Dumitriu, who sees the relation between the two terms as a relation of inertia, for example the statement "rains", in which the subject is completely missing. The doctoral student states that this is a subject 0, which exists and which imposes, in this case as well, particularities of the predicate.

Another text from the first part of the volume which stands out for its historical and analytical character is the work "Episodul Țăranului de la Dunăre din Ceasornicul Dom-

nilor" [The Peasant's Episode from the Danube from the Lord's Clock] and its translation by Nicolae Costin, made by Andrei Iulian Din. The text mentioned above represents a hybrid that the scholar and philosopher Antonio de Guevara made, combining the texts from the life of Mark Antony with the *Clock of Lords*. The old document serves as a moral doctrine (Christian, with humanistic nuances) applicable in various circumstances of life, therefore, a textbook that can be used as a "guide in everyday life."

What interests Andrei Iulian Din is the way in which the old scholar, Nicolae Costin, manages to translate and adapt the text, the document being the first literary and cult work translated into Romanian. Faced with a difficult task, the translator ends up changing the form and content of the text in order to successfully render its meaning. Costin uses literary techniques, making the text easier to read and eliminating elements that could harm the society in which he lives. Many exclamatory statements were translated in such a way that there was no need to use the exclamation mark. Words like "senate" or "law" are taken over into Romanian, and thus the scholar has enriched the vocabulary. Andrei Iulian Din states that the approach taken by Nicolae Costin contributed to the first stage of modernization of the Romanian language.

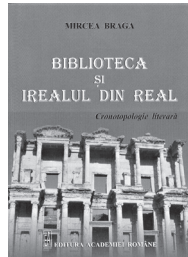
Another interesting text, from the second part of the book, is Marius Popa's analysis of the collection of short stories *Frumoasele străine* [Beautiful Foreigners] by Mircea Cărtărescu. The doctoral student states that the volume is full of irony, which gives it a comic character. Marius Popa sees this nuance as a revisitation of Caragiale. According to the doctoral student from Cluj, Cărtărescu combines a high, intellectual lexicon with

an everyday language, and thus a playful dimension is created, full of ironies. In this sense, Cărtărescu uses antiphrasis, playful translations, ironic oxymorons, hyperboles, etc. Sometimes the comic derives from the wrong pronunciation of the author's name, Cărtănescu. Also through these techniques, Cărtărescu brings a critique to the Romanian cultural institutions and to the critics who are not able to understand his work.

Fissures, Ruptures, Discontinuities is a collective volume that captures the doctoral students' various fields of interest and the current research directions in linguistics and literature. As the title suggests, the book is a mosaic of themes that do not intersect at all, the transition between them being a passage over fissures and ruptures, in an approach full of discontinuities.

Gheorghe Andreica

Mircea Braga, *Biblioteca și irealul din real. Cronotopologie literară*, București, Editura Ideea Europeană, 2020



The most recent study published by Mircea Braga, *Biblioteca și irealul din real. Cronotopologie literară* [*The Library and the Unreality of Reality. Literary Chronotopology*], continues the ideas that *Ultima frontieră* [*The Last Frontier*] outlined. To be more precise, the book is interested in reading, objectifying it through the image of the library. Starting from Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of chronotope, Mircea Braga discusses in more than twenty chapters, the

images of the library as chronotope-gofer. This spatial metaphor reveals a way to represent the idea of a primary space divided into the so-called "chronotopic units" that include events, characters, feelings, dreams, objects, decorative elements and so on. Thus, the Library (with capital letters) could become, through various (non) canonical texts, "when the main character, when the secondary one, when simply an object that centres the interest of some characters" (13).

Most studies published in the volume represent, in fact, close readings (in Gerard Genette's sense) applied to some texts (usually novels translated into Romanian, but not only) that are more or less known. In this sense, the author emphasizes some aspects, scenes or simply ideas from these works that other interpretations ignore. Thus, he reveals "the library of fakes" or non-existent books from *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, the ambiguous sense of the library in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (its association with the safe box, a symbol of secrecy and treasury at the same time), or the role and the hallucinogenic function that the library receives in Don Quixote's story. This one plays an essential role, because it represents a kind of "birth certificate" for literary critics. Of course, not only canonical works are taken into consideration. An impressive "catalogue" of books from different spaces and periods completes the list of "fames" in order to understand the movements of the literary field. That is what happens, for example, in texts such as Mikkel Birkegaard's *The Library of Shadows*, Allison Hoover Bartlett's *The Man who Loved Books Too Much*, Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*, Rabih Alameddine's *An Unnecessary Woman*, Andrei Codrescu's

The Poetry Lesson, Elias Canetti's *The Blinding*, Carlos María Domínguez's *The House of Paper*, Borges's *The Congress*, Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, Vintilă Horia's short stories (*Aventură sub lună* [*Adventure under the Moon*] or *Salvarea de ostrogoți* [*The Escape from Ostrogoths*]) and others.

Beyond all these examples of literary hermeneutics, the study evokes some essential aspects or moments in the cultural and "institutionalized" history of libraries and, obviously, books. Without approaching the events diachronically, because this is not the author's purpose, he restitutes and integrates in his work the birth and the dynamics of the library as cultural establishment, starting from translations and the circulation of texts in Muslim world, to the imitation of this model by Europe later, and up to poor mechanism of the library as an institution, especially in Romanian culture, due to the fact that, metaphorically or not, it represents the (concrete and abstract) idea of partialism. Moreover, Mircea Braga mentions and also pays attention to the effervescence of the religions of the book, namely the idea of writing in Judeo-Christian culture and its reinterpretations in the Cabbala, but also some Greek, Roman or Egyptian patron deities of the Arts, being associated at the same time with Logos.

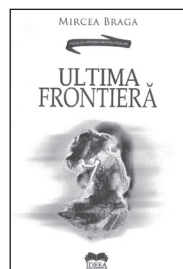
All these arguments allow the author to form some definitions of the library, depending on the context and the point of view of the reader/ historian. He starts from the etymological meaning (namely the furniture dedicated to books) and finishes with the historical perspective that emphasizes its dependence from space. In Mircea Braga's words, "the library claims

the right to be a collection of books, of volumes (what a word!), of manuscripts, therefore of highly specialized paper objects (parchments, papyrus). Again, spaces in space" (21).

In conclusion, in the most recent study Mircea Braga has published, the author believes that "humanity structures a part of its sense through the library" (222). Overall, his work is a demonstration of the ontological sense of reading. Even if the author intended to catch a few glimpses from a huge gallery of libraries, he ended up outlining a portrait of the Library.

Ioana Pavel

Mircea Braga, *Ultima frontieră. Elemente de teoria lecturii*, București, Editura Ideea Europeană, 2018



Constantly interested in dynamics of cultural and literary ideas, Mircea Braga's book *Ultima frontieră. Elemente de teoria lecturii* [*The Last Frontier. Aspects on Theory of Reading*] (2018) confirms his concern in literary theory or hermeneutics. These two directions could be seen in all his works, starting from studies dedicated to Romanian literature in the interwar period to the (more recent) books focused on literary and philosophical ideas: *Sincronism și tradiție* [*Synchronism and Tradition*] (1972), *Vasile Voiculescu* (2002), *Geografii instabile* [*Unstable Geographies*] (2010) – to name but a few.

The study is divided into three sections, following the introduction that emphasizes five types of “reading codes”: ordinary reading, expert’s reading (always methodologically oriented), adequacy to object by history and literary critics, the encyclopaedic code and, last but not least, the ontological code (including ethics or religious nuances). This last code seems to be the most important one, because it involves not only the perception of the world, but also knowledge as educational support. The first chapter, “On dynamic of theoretical alignment”, investigates some authors (Immanuel Kant, Theodor Adorno, H.R. Jauss, Wolfgang Iser, Umberto Eco and Matei Călinescu), permanently connected to the theory of reading. Thus, some of their most well-known texts (such as *Aesthetic Theory* – Adorno, *Aesthetic experience and literary hermeneutics* – Jauss, *The Act of Reading* – Iser, *Rereading* – Matei Călinescu and so on) shape a theoretical background that may enable a reconstruction of different aspects strongly connected to reading, namely the reader and his role in interpretation, the (phenomenological) effect of reading, the Model Reader, re-reading as a function of cultural man, etc.

The second part, “On the Diagram of Actuality or the Panorama of Vanities,” contains the author’s perspectives on questions that have destabilized the Romanian literary field. In this chapter, Mircea Braga investigates subjects such as national identity, the connection between literature and ideology (including political correctness blamed for the “weak thought” metamorphosed into “sick thought”) during the communist and contemporary period, interferences between genres and species (an example of exceeding borders, in fact,

illustrated by historical works, travel notes, memories, diaries, correspondence), the generational approach in Romanian literary history, the absence of reading in the postmodern era or the demarcations of the new generation of Romanian writers.

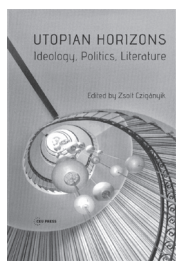
The last section, entitled “The Reading Code – Suggestion of Cultural Meeting”, analyses Romanian authors through different, previously invoked reading codes. In the first five subchapters of this part, the author’s main interests are the Romanian literature before the mid twentieth century, discussing the idea of numerical identity in Mihai Eminescu’s work, the “shadow” understood as social and mental behaviour in I.L. Caragiale’s texts, the relation between mythology, religion and truth in Vasile Voiculescu’s poetry, the mythical structure of Mateiu Caragiale’s novel *Craii de Curtea-Veche* [*The Old Court Rakes*] and the cultural code of reading, identified in Liliana Danciu’s work *Romanul din roman*. Noaptea de Sânziene de Mircea Eliade [*The Novel in the Novel*. *The Forbidden Forest by Mircea Eliade*]. The last six subsections are mostly dedicated to literature during the communist period. In this sense, Mircea Braga develops an anagogic reading practised in Vintilă Horia’s novel *O femeie pentru Apocalips* [*A Woman for Apocalypse*], published in 1968 in France and translated into Romanian in 2007. The author also investigates the aphoristic dimensions of Ștefan Augustin Doinaș’s poetry, the problem of truth and entropy in D.R. Popescu’s short stories and especially in his novel *Călugărul Filippo Lippi și călugărița Lucrezia Buti* [*The Monk Filippo Lippi and the Nun Lucrezia Buti*], Mircea Ivănescu and Ileana Mălăncioiu’s poetry and, not least, *Geniul inimii* [*Genius of the Heart*], Aura Christi’s

so-called “novel in verse”. This subchapter about the intersections of the worlds in her work represents, in fact, Mircea Braga’s preface of the novel published in 2017.

All in all, Mircea Braga’s study remains a compulsory reference for researchers interested in Romanian literature and different kinds of debates on literary themes. It could also be a main point of interest for the specialists dedicated to the theories of reading.

Ioana Pavel

Zsolt Czigányik (ed.),
*Utopian Horizons:
Ideology, Politics,
Literature*, Budapest,
New York, Central
European University
Press, 2017



The timing of this skilfully put together volume on utopianism and utopian studies, edited by Zsolt Czigányik, is great considering the scholars’ growing interest in the subject. *Utopian Horizons: Ideology, Politics, Literature*, was published in 2017, just a year after the five-hundred anniversary of Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516). This text, which represents the starting point of a fascinating quest for finding and overcoming the limits of human intellect and imagination, has nowadays acquired the value of an archetypal concept that endeavours to explain the ability of alternatively rethinking humanity.

This whole system of thinking was always situated at the fine line between

imaginary literature and social sciences. What this specific study articulates is that there is not only one side of utopia, since it is a much broader concept that we sometimes care to realise. The interdisciplinarity of this book is given by the distinct fields in which its authors operate and it implies that “the structure of this volume is meant to reflect clearly both logical configurations of the problems arising when one tries to discover modern utopianism” (p. 10). The diversity of theoretical approaches in this volume manage to explain what utopianism is, both literally and politically.

The study is split into two parts, each dedicated to one aspect of theoretical approaches. Part one of the volume, *Utopia with a Political Focus*, draws attention to ideology and social studies, where the authors discuss the relationship between utopia and ideology, the mechanism that turns utopia into dystopia, the bridge between political utopia and the philosophical one, anarcho-democratic and liberal socialist ideas in Central Europe, and a very interesting case study on George Orwell and Soviet Studies. The second part of the book, *Utopia with a Literary Focus*, targets the implications of utopianism in literature, treating subject matters such as: Marxist utopianism and Modern Irish Drama, civil religion as utopian ideology, negative Utopia in Central Europe, Huxley’s Peace Pamphlet in pre-war Hungary, representations of cataclysmic New York in film and a political-theoretical reading of *A Song of Ice and Fire*. All those approaches regarding the subject of utopianism, found in literature, politics and ideology, showcase the fact that this specific volume “concerns itself primarily with the interactions of the literary element and utopian

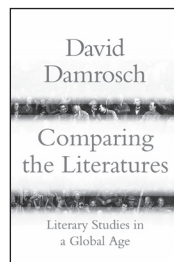
political theory, which focuses on the social, political and economic aspects of how human life could be better” (p. 5)

Even if the book is structured in two parts, each dedicated to one branch of utopian studies, it does not mean that one deals exclusively with matters of political and ideological concern and the other focuses only on literary utopianism. Rather, what we see in this study is how the two theoretical sides of the concept communicate and depend on each other, because, as the reader will notice while pursuing the text, even if the author begins his statement from one position, he will slowly migrate and have to incorporate in the discourse concepts claimed by the other theoretical approach.

What makes this study such a unique reading on the subject of utopia is established in its purpose of reuniting the two perspectives, aiming, as the editor informs us, at “taking a step further on the road to understanding the complex and controversial nature of utopia” (p. 15). It brings together innovative theoretical approaches and practical applications of the utopian studies on neglected Central European ideologies and texts, in order to show the complexity of the fascinating genre and its infinite possibility of envisioning, through both literary and political lenses, improved realities.

Diana Capotă

David Damrosch,
*Comparing the Literatures.
Literary Studies in a
Global Age*, Princeton
University Press, 2020



No other discipline thrived under a state of permanent crisis as comparative literature has. Since its first manifestations, comparative literature could not really find a room of its own, torn between the many subfields of national literary studies and literary theory, always borrowing methods and adapting to the fast pace of cultural, ideological, and industrial developments across countries and continents. Few critical inquiries have managed to present the troubled, yet highly productive relation between comparative literature as a discipline in its own right and related discourses of humanities (such as cultural studies, post-colonial studies, or various literary theories) as engagingly as American professor David Damrosch has in his latest contribution to the field of comparative and world literature – *Comparing the Literatures. Literary Studies in a Global Age*, published by Princeton University Press in 2020.

The aforementioned volume is a manifold, erudite study on the old and the new challenges of comparative literature. Damrosch's book is as much a matured and homogenous result of his later research and teaching activity (his many projects, lectures, and academic papers offer a good testimony of what a complex and multilayered work these kinds of inquiries rely on), as it is a compelling new approach to an already hyper-discussed topic – the strained

condition of comparative literature. The volume is built around one overarching question: what is the actual role of comparative literature in the global age? or, in David Damrosch's own words: "how should we go about plying the comparatist's trade today? (...) what tools do we need to have in our toolboxes today?"

Organized in a very accessible manner, the book consists of eight well-individualized chapters completed by a stimulating introduction and some even more thought-provoking conclusions that target the multifaceted aspects of this particular discipline's evolution, from its origins to the present day. The author places comparative literature's origins in the works and lives of humanists such as Johann Gottfried Herder, Germaine de Staël, Hutcheson Macaulay Posnett, Hugo Meltzl and some others. In the very first chapter of his book, Damrosch offers a panoramic, yet critical view of both the biography and the works of these authors and activists in the field of literatures and arts. Another topic that the author addresses in the early part of this book refers to the contributions of exiles, tracing back some figures that changed, whether willingly and unwillingly, the very dynamics between national literatures and the broader space of international, even global, market (as is the case of Hu Shih, for instance). A bridge between the first part of the book (the first four chapters), that has a rather descriptive, pedagogical character, and the second part (the last four chapters) where Damrosch's voice is more actively engaged, the fourth chapter targets the relation between comparative literature and literary theory over the time and brings insightful considerations on what went both well and wrong and what could and

should scholars of this discipline further do or do better: "Given the many varieties of theory, what each of us need to know is not a set theoretical canon but how best to use whichever theories are most suited for the question we want to ask. Used badly, a theoretical lens may distort as much as it reveals". His rereading of theorists such as Paul de Man represent much-needed enlargements of the alternative discourses about this kind of international stars that dominated the arena in the past decades.

The last part of the book makes numerous arguments on how comparatists need to recalibrate their ways of comparing. Focusing on problems such as translation and untranslatability, location and dislocations of literatures and related meta-discourses, canonicity and postcanonicity, David Damrosch, in his quest of rendering "an anatomy of comparison, a disciplinary poetics", invites all scholars invested in this particular field to further, more productive, more engaged collaborations that shall trespass ideological, national and methodological boundaries (yet preserving each one's specificity and utility) that could benefit both their micro-specialization and the broader discourse of comparative literature.

Daiana Gărdan

Roderick A. Ferguson,
One-Dimensional Queer,
 Cambridge, Polity Press,
 2018



Published in 2018, *One-Dimensional Queer* is a study that explores the multi-layered and complex nature of the Gay Liberation movement, focusing on the relation between its development and the neoliberal system's responses that often fails to acknowledge the depth of the underlying issues of black queers, lower social class queers, drag queens or transgender people.

Queer studies or LGBT studies is an academic field which focuses on sexuality, gender, and identity issues, as well as on the history of queer people, from sociological, economic, and political points of view. The author of this volume is a Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Yale University, Connecticut and has previously published several works in the domain of queer studies and queer theory. In an earlier book, titled *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Colour Critique* (2004), Ferguson explores the concept of queer of colour critique, including it in an intersectional framework and challenging the homogenous regulation of race, gender and class by the state. In *One-Dimensional Queer*, he continues his research, but this time, however, he directs his critiques specifically to the homogeneity of thought forced upon the gay liberation movement through its incorporation into the mainstream. The book starts with the recalling

of the Stonewall riots in 1969 and the first chapter goes on to argue the multidimensionality of the event and of the gay liberation attempts in the sixties and seventies. First, I will analyse chapter one in order to assert the diversity which defined the gay liberation movement at its inception. This will be the stepping stone towards the better understanding of the following chapters, which clarify how the movement's efforts were impaired over time through its absorption by neoliberalism.

The Stonewall rebellion is considered one of the pivotal events of the 20th century American history that helped define the gay rights movement. Yet, according to Ferguson, it was and continues to be interpreted through a homogenous approach. The riots were a phenomenon commonly understood as a series of spontaneous demonstrations by members of the gay (LGBT) community in response to a police raid, but the author argues that perceiving the events as a unidirectional matter obscures their intersectional aspect. He brings up the writings of Sylvia Rivera, a Latinx transgender rights activist, who reports that on that night, the crowd did not consist of gay rights activists alone, as there were also anti-capitalistic, anti-racist and feminist movements that were involved. Merle Woo, an Asian American lesbian activist who states that the Stonewall confrontations did not stand exclusively against sexual discrimination, supports her claim – they challenged the oppression of women, of the working class – they contested the patriarchal system.

The author continues to elaborate his argument by reviewing articles and speeches made by several activists or political parties in the sixties and seventies. The Black

Panther party, an anti-racist political organization founded in 1966, has served as a fundamental model for fighting against the oppressive, discriminatory system. Ferguson then mentions a perfect example to illustrate the argument – the Weinstein Hall protests. At that time, the New York University was hosting a large community of queer and transgender people, hence when the University questioned the “morality” of homosexuality, those concerned were naturally revolted. They ended up occupying Weinstein Hall for three days as a form of protest, only to become victims of a violent police raid. This event, the author states, is highly reminiscent of the anti-racist fashion of rebelling against institutional injustice. Thus, the American academic succeeds to tear down the false conception according to which queer history is separate from black activism, class struggles, and feminist issues. He proceeds to strengthen his case as he affirms that the homogenization of the gay rights movement does not only ignore the implication of other discriminated groups, but fails to recognize certain members of its own community, i.e. people of colour, queer women, drag queens, transgender, intersex, lower-class people. Instead, as it becomes mainstream and conforms to the requirements of capitalism, it weakens other voices, other point of views, and highlights only the white, male queer experience. Ferguson opposes this tradition and urges the reader to assume an intersectional approach. In the following chapter, he demonstrates the ways in which queer politics entered a process of de-politicization and ended up as a singular, separate construct of the neoliberal market.

Roderick Ferguson argues at the end of chapter one that “for gay rights to

advance an argument of singularity and the uniformity of queer struggles, it had to disappear trans and queer of colour activism as linchpins between a variety of political struggles” (p. 57). This quote implies that in a system in which patriarchal, heteronormative, cisgender values are in power, a gay emancipation that would consist of “alterities”, of anything other than a white, male person would not be accepted. The gay liberation groups started criticizing and disengaging themselves from other organizations such as the Black Panthers, accusing them of homophobia. Quarrels relating to transphobia, lesbophobia and discrimination of drag queens started inside the groups as well, leading to their dissolution, i.e. STAR in 1973. Such demoralizing conflicts rendered the queer community more vulnerable and more desperate in its fight for gay rights. Liberal capitalism stepped in to grant them this wish. Several gay activists were asserting the idea that capitalism is the only way that queerness can obtain its liberation. The author explains that by successfully integrating queerness into the free market, the capitalist agenda proceeded to make harmful changes into the urban areas. In Chapter three, the reader learns about the gentrification and of the city, of the areas that were previously dominated by diverse groups of people (LGBTQ, working class, people of colour). The state started destroying the “spaces of contact” in an attempt to disperse them, to create a division between discriminated groups so that intersectional activism would not be possible.

A quotation of Walter Benjamin is the figure that opens up the fourth chapter, which is arguably the most poignant one in this book, arguing that the “states

of emergency” are not really an exception to the norm, but rather the rule. Ferguson further builds on Benjamin’s ideas and explores the context of state and institutional systematic violence against minorities and socially-vulnerable people, as violence became a usual, unexceptional phenomenon in the United States of America (racial, sexual, class exploitation). The scholar ties this idea with the previous critique of the one-dimensional politics assumed by political bodies by bringing the example of *DeGraffenreid v General Motors*: Five black women sued General Motors only to be revealed later that the company has not hired any black women until 1964, and fired all of them in 1970. However, this case received a superficial treatment, as the court was debating whether the cause was related to race or gender discrimination, blatantly affirming that they will not be considering both.

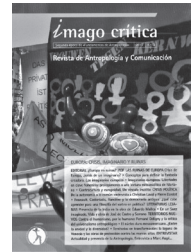
Roderick Ferguson’s *One-Dimensional Queer* is a work that warns its readers against limiting their thoughts to unidimensional ideas, which can lead to extremism, nationalism, and even fascism. It is a great introductory book to queer studies due to its clear and accessible style. The author does not only provide a history of the gay liberation movement, but manages to give pertinent, insightful observations and examples to support his arguments. However, this study is relevant not only to the queer theory field, but to cultural studies in general, as it does not fail to draw attention towards the importance of more conscious politics, that pays attention to every group of people.

Although the author researches the history of queerness in the American space only, it can be argued that his study

is relevant to the European and, especially, the East-Central European territory as well. Ferguson’s study can be read as a guidebook for understanding transnational political and sociological struggles. Given the rise in power of several far-right parties across East-Central Europe in the past few years, *One-Dimensional Queer* serves as an inclusive, welcoming form of escapism and wisdom.

Mihaela Ceban

Imago critica. Revista de Antropología y Comunicación, no. 6, *The Crisis of Europe, the Crisis of an Imaginary*, 2017



The idea put forth in this issue of the *Imago critica* journal is that, throughout history, the European idea-image has not ceased to play the role of an important political project whenever an established power aimed to create a transnational union or federation incorporating various territories and institutions. Begun after 1945, the creation of a unity or a great European community is nowadays a chaotic evolution, punctuated by disappointments, drifts or blockages. Thus, the European construction risks remaining a project that is perhaps too rational, too institutionalized, much too procedural.

To solve this crisis, the European construction needs to demand and set in motion imaginaries that involve certain forms of adhesion. The hypothesis debated

in this study involves updating the issue of political imaginaries, which are psychic, individual and collective matrices that involve processes of transformation of some institutions and representations.

In its form of mythical storytelling, the imaginary acts as a performative tool that encourages and legitimizes various changes in society. In the absence of a unifying and justifying political image, any political project remains an elitist initiative, disconnected from the reality of the nations involved.

In order to develop, any political construction needs both rational (legal) arguments and the adherence of its members, determined by the use of the imaginary.

The political adventure of Europe, this entity that is still difficult to define, in turn needs an imaginary, like any nation-state. Through the imaginary, Europe builds its own identity. Also, the mythical narrative is called to provide answers to questions related to forms of power, its origin and collective purposes that simply evade objective and rational determinations. Thus, at least two consistent and functional mythical phyla are outlined, that of territoriality, which draws the identity cartography of a people, and that of sovereignty, relating to the birth of power and its expression. Both find in the mythical imaginary a fruitful matrix, at least in the case of all pre-democratic societies. In the case of Europe, these two forms available to the imaginary, one is typical for a deficit and the other typical for a saturated and overloaded form. In short, the people of Europe inherit two imaginary matrices that turn out to be out of sync with their needs and expectations, at least for now.

One of the founding myths of a political entity concerns its territory and its

representation. Any kind of political unity is based on a cartography that ensures well-drawn boundaries. One of the weaknesses of Europe's representation stems from the fact that Europe does not correspond to a clearly delimited space. In a way, the spatial imaginary prevents Europe from having its own identity.

Even if today's Europe suffers from a deficit of geographical imaginary, it still has, well embedded in its memory, an over-determined political and historical myth. Still, paradoxically, its symbolic and mythical consistency shatters expectations and inhibits adhesion.

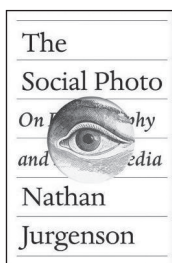
The current situation of Europe, as a unit made up of several nation-states, is inseparable, in terms of collective memory, from the recognition of the great mythical constructs illustrated by the successive monarchies and empires of Europe. From several points of view, these regimes maintain adhesion forces, which is the necessary mold for the establishment of political images. Therefore, the Empire has a complex political form that allows original configurations, efficient and strongly imbued with the imaginary. Imperial imaginary could allow the unblocking of images or symbolic schemes that could draw a new horizon. Despite these fragile signs and credible reasons, we can believe, however, that the imperial imaginary remains far too laden with painful memories and can only be marginally reevaluated by some supporters of the critical currents of European democracies.

In conclusion, the current crisis in Europe could come, among other things, from a maladaptation of the imagination of the peoples of Europe. On the one hand, it lacks a minimal spatial imaginary, due to

a political geography outlined from several incomplete and uncertain points of view. On the other hand, it is marked and haunted, historically, by a hypertrophied myth of imperial sovereignty that could serve as a performative matrix for a new supranational configuration, but whose past leaves nations, in this democratic era, prey to hesitations and fear. In short, Europe is still evolving between too little geographical imagery and too much historical imagery.

Ioana Lung

Nathan Jurgenson,
*The Social Photo: On
Photography and Social
Media*, London, Verso
Books, 2019



Nathan Jurgenson is a young theorist and sociologist engaged in theories about social media and the internet. As it can be found on his official website, one of Jurgenson's main aims is to demonstrate how the internet is not a "separate virtual sphere or cyber space", but a place which is "embodied, material, and real". In *The Social Photo: On Photography and Social Media*, the author pursues this task by demonstrating how the "social photo", or the photography present on social media, is not a perversion of the art of photography as many contemporary accounts would suggest, but a completely new and valid medium, with its own logic and reasoning, a part of the activity of photographing. As Jurgenson himself states at the beginning

of the book "We have conceptual tools to help understand these changes."

The volume is split into two long essays instead of chapters: "Documentary Vision" and "Real Life". In order to trace this ambitious act of going against the grain of theories which claim that social media degraded photography, in the first essay, the author contextualizes amateur photography, the selfie and the day to day photos that we take with our smartphones instead of cameras, within the bigger picture of the history of photography, while in the second essay, the social photo (and especially the selfie) is framed within the area of current media theory. By touching on various subjects, such as: the link between vintage filters and nostalgia, the evolution of the object of photography, the marginalization of amateur photography in the academia, the difference between the subject of traditional photography and the subject of the current, social photography, the shaping of our identity and privacy, and other topics; Jurgenson draws a few main conclusions.

First of all, the ephemerality of photography and its basic or minor character is seen as a quality, not a critique. The photography present on social media is not aimed at documenting only special moments or, drawing from Roland Barthes, at freezing a moment in time and contemplating its death. With the rise of applications such as Snapchat, photography becomes much more ephemeral, we now take an image, but tomorrow it might be gone forever and this is not something to mourn, but a symptom of a change that needs to be understood, according to the author. Jurgenson admits that the social media images are mostly amateurish and do not capture anything important or relevant at all, but,

he argues, the act itself of taking a photograph has become much more important than the subject of the image, or, to put it in other words, image becomes a type of speech, we communicate through images and it is not relevant if they preserve anything or not. "Thinking about ephemeral photography and social media more generally lead quickly to the basic conceptual work in this book, describing a style of image-making and circulation as a social photography that is more like speaking than recording." When taking about the selfie, Jurgenson ventures to argue how it is shaping our identity and the view about oneself, but also how it interacts with privacy, for example. "To see through the logic of images, to consider how we speak with them and build the self through the audience they garner and the status they can afford, is also to describe digital connection as something potentially intimate and as real as writing instead of as a venture into some virtual plane." Of course, there are many more interesting points made along the book, the two mentioned here being just a little more present than the others in my opinion.

In my life up to this point, the occasions when I managed to take a photograph by using something else than a smartphone were sparse. Not much of a selfie person, there was a time when I used to have a kind of personal journal on Instagram and the images varied and were connected by elements only known to me, but subject to the view of the public in the form of followers. Coming from this background, it can be said that I am more anchored in the "social photo" than any other type of photography, therefore, this volume quickly attracted me in order to better

understand how this type of image functions, but also to legitimize my own use of it. As stated even from the beginning, Jurgenson goes against the dismissal of this type of photography and makes many valid points to sustain his perspective, as it can be seen in the two examples above. Despite the fact that there are many references to a vast area of theorists and philosophers such as Roland Barthes, Walter Benjamin, Jean Baudrillard, and Michel Foucault, among many others, the language used in the two essays is fairly easy to understand and makes for a quick read.

Although there are a lot of valid points to consider and further investigate, the volume is nowhere near perfect and fails in some areas. One of the primary concerns that stuck me was the fact that Jurgenson spends much too little time to show how we are used and controlled by the social photo in the form of advertisement campaigns, corporate propaganda, fake news and such topics. It can be argued that the author had to praise his subject to be able to go against the theories that dismiss it, but the dangers that are surrounding the "social photo" are too many and too relevant for our present to be ignored. At times, I also found the topics addressed to be too many and too vast, and because of this the book loses some of its coherence and might seem disorganized or sketchy. I believe it would have made for a slightly better volume overall if there were less topics addressed, but in further detail and with the dangers they imply discussed as well.

This being said, I would still recommend the volume to anyone interested in better understanding what happens with photography in our age and why it is still relevant in this form. After all, we

all contribute to the “social photo” in one way or another. Even if Nathan Jurgenson is maybe a little too praiseful, the book is worth reading at least for its challenging premise and for the interesting insights that can be taken while wandering among the too many for its own good themes and subjects.

Raul Starcz

Mădălina Lascu, *Imaginea oraşului în avangarda românească*, Bucureşti, Editura Tracus Arte, 2020



Mădălina Lascu, a bibliographer with the Rare Books and Manuscripts Department of the Romanian Academy Library, has carried out numerous researches in the field of the historical avant-garde, as well as on M. Blecher or Tristan Tzara (*Tristan Tzara – Corespondență de familie*, 2019). *The Image of the City in Romanian Avant-Garde*, her latest volume, is dedicated to the relations between the visual arts, especially the painting from the Romanian area, but not only, and the avant-garde literary text.

The author reviews 230 works by great Italian artists such as Umberto Boccioni, Luigi Rusolo, and Gino Severini, French artists like Georges Braque, Albert Gleizes, and Robert Delaunay, Czech artists like Vincenc Beneš and Borhumil Kubišta, Germans such as Ludwig Meidner, E. L. Kirchner and the list goes on. In the last

chapter, which targets Romanian artists, Lascu exhibits the works of Romanian artists such as Victor Brauner, Marcel Iancu, Corneliu Mihăiescu, Arthur Segal or M.H. Maxy, but also the great poems of Ilarie Voronca, Ion Vineanu and Tristan Tzara, who laid the foundations of the Romanian Dada Movement. The presentation of the Western predecessors from whose art the Romanian avant-garde was inspired has special significance. An additional argument would be the fact that a large part of those who would become top Romanian avant-garde artists spent years studying abroad or undertaking initiatory journeys in the western space. Thus, it is understood as a natural phenomenon of the adaptation of the Romanian avant-garde to the European modernity of that period. One can observe the writer's selective choosing of the paintings pertaining to the avant-garde of the first half of the twentieth century, especially the interwar period, until the end of 1947.

Mădălina Lascu's book refers to one of the preferred topoi of artists belonging to this trend: the urban space, the avant-garde artistic universe being a metropolitan one, accommodating a new cosmopolitan modernity, and offering a broad vision of the features of the futuristic city. In this way, the old themes of art, inspired by rural life, such as plows, oxen, fields and forests, are replaced by modern city themes such as buildings, boulevards, train stations, cars, locomotives, trams, elements that give some dynamism to the urban setting. The analysis goes beyond the title, providing a consistent investigation of European avant-garde productions. In addition, it contextualizes the subject, offering a synthesis of the entire avant-garde movement and its manifestation in Romania.

The first chapter of the work examines the representation of the metropolis in the European avant-garde – in Futurism, Cubism, Expressionism, Dadaism and Surrealism – focusing on the three urban centers which had a major impact on these artistic movements: Paris, New York and Berlin. The second chapter considers the programmatic texts of the Romanian avant-garde, analyzing not only their vision of the city's representation, but also the Romanian context and the authors' artworks, including their sources of inspiration: the Futurist and especially the Dadaist manifestos. The third chapter, the most consistent, addresses the theme stated in the title, referring to the way in which urban elements are represented in avant-garde poetry and painting in Romania.

The main merit of the book lies in the interpretation of the literary text in relation to the other arts, thus following the synthetic spirit of the artistic image. The muse city is humanized by the geometry of the sidewalks and pavements, "the inflexible syntax of the city, the symmetrical and hard intervention of the engineer" and by poetry which, as shown by Ilarie Voronca, becomes "universally human, poetry-poetry, poetry-cement, poetry drawing, creative engineer, living organism simply integrated between natural phenomena." In the same vein, Lascu also talks about the phenomenon of pictopoetry, an invention of the painter Victor Brauner and the poet Ilarie Voronca, defined by a curt expression: "Pictopoetry is not poetry / Pictopoetry is not painting / Pictopoetry is pictopoetry". Thus, the literary text is compared, in multiple hypostases, with the sound arts, in relation to film and drawing, to sculpture and, especially, to painting.

In this way, Mădălina Lascu demonstrates her valuable knowledge of the avant-garde movement and captures the urban reality of the avant-gardes with great irony, the metropolis representing an aspiration of the artist that is nonetheless contradicted by the still patriarchal aspect of the city.

Tamara Sas

Mircea Muthu, *Liviu Rebreanu sau paradoxul organicului*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Școala Ardeleană, 2020



For Liviu Rebreanu, "the novel gives life a pattern which contains its dynamism and fluidity". The organic, as an ontologically central and life structuring energy, translated as the "relationship between man and land", is equally central in Liviu Rebreanu's thought and lifework: for him, it is the existential and aesthetic mode of being, a quasi-mythical and inevitable life-force. It is no surprise then, that the main or healthy aesthetic project would be imitating this *élan vital* in literature. There is however a highly intriguing paradox buried beneath his pages: Mircea Muthu, in his new and definitive edition of *Liviu Rebreanu, or the paradox of the organic*, a collection of interwoven essays discussing the main overarching ideas of the writer's corpus, shows us that "the prose of Rebreanu, as well as his theory, illustrates the the paradox of the organic felt and wanted

as something eternal, yet mined by a drama which belongs to the modern society itself”.

Mircea Muthu sets out a mission, one of explaining and synthetising the thought of Rebreanu in a clear and concise manner (which is well achieved, only within 12 chapters). This is admittedly not a monoton, linear task of processing his texts, since Rebreanu, as Muthu writes it, „was not a theorist in a strict sense”. Though, we can identify certain implicit and explicit trajectories of thought, and follow them through. From the outlining of the above mentioned aesthetic program, for Muthu it logically follows that Rebreanu’s theory is a mimetic one, imitating the life structuring and equally ontological, biologic and aesthetic organic: it is life thematized by the movements of the soul, by the famous “Voice of the land”, the land which contains one’s destiny, and by which one defines themselves, and its imitation of being in its totality. It is not a task of grasping the “extensive totality” of being, but (borrowing György Lukács’ term) its “intensive totality”. The medium of each specific form of art establishes certain strict laws that allow the work of art to adequately present the whole world of humanity from a specific standpoint. For this reason, such works of art allow us to comprehend the universal aspects of our existence and to consciously participate in the collective life of humanity. Transferred to fiction, reality (organicity) shapes literature after the attributes of the live organism, which evolves by the virtue of characteristic laws. *Literature means the creation of real humans and real life.*

For it can’t attempt to reach the longitude of extensive totality (an epos),

Rebreanu shows us instead the ideal prototype/type, like the character Ion. The prototype transforms the expressions of the absolute in art, and concretizes the organic in a specific (aesthetic) way. Rebreanu’s realism then is the “realism of the essences”: not the realism of a cold or distant rationality, but the realism of the mode of being, the realism of certain “great collectively lived experiences”. Mircea Muthu writes “Rebreanu does not have opinions, but general ideas, which covers life in every dimension” – in his work *Răscoală* each and every hero is right in their own way. In order to achieve grasping being in its total form, Rebreanu applies a totalizing composition in his works: that means stylization and high concentration (as his writing process), but more importantly the usage of a loop-like, cyclical architecture. The birth of the novel *Ion* was embodied by a process with two acts: the alienation of the self, and the reintegration of the self. Rebreanu ascends and descends the individual, writing them into a dramatic “wheel of life”.

Here, we can see the parallels with Lukács’ thought: if we imagine the everyday life like big river, then science and art are like the superior forms of reception and reproduction of reality. The reader of the novels *Ion* and *Răscoală* then leaves from the world of fiction and enters into the real world. Fiction enters in reality and vice-versa – it works as a metronome, writes Mircea Muthu, and like loop: “the novel, like spheroid body, ends just like how it began” – we can talk about two partially overlapping dimensions, the biographic and the mythical, where the latter absorbs the former, without cancelling it, without making it a mythical time. We can better describe the novel as horizontality’s

meeting point with verticality: the partial superposition of epical symmetries above the abyssal structures. As Muthu writes, “the characters of Rebreanu go forward with their backs ahead”.

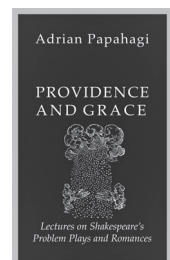
Death and love are important and interwoven categories in the writings of Rebreanu, which tie together the unity of the Universe, its circular nature, and the individual. Love is a vital instinct which governs humanity – it’s an *Erdegeist*, so to speak. Love “is a transfiguring experience by which the unity of the Universe reveals itself”. It can be substituted with faith. Death, on the other hand is a complete closure. In the shadow of such eerie end, in the face of uncertainty, Rebreanu embraces withdrawal into the self. Man is but a point without a goal. Man is isolated and alone: when the unity of the universe is lost with death, the unity of the self is reassured.

The paradox of the organic is similar: due to the advancement of capitalism, its abstract-instrumental language, the rise of the “new man” and the surge of “tomorrow’s world”, the wars and crises of the modern society, the writer retreats once again and reaffirms on the theoretic level the validity of the organic – in the age of a great loss of equilibrium, societal disintegration, Rebreanu can only return in theorem to the concept of totality, through the organic. Petre Petre or Miron Iuga can no longer endure the decentralized movements of the crowd. The gestures, words and eveniments are circling around an Event and a collective destiny. In chapter 9 of *Răscoală* we meet with the central Voice of the Land, as well as the anarchic social explosion. In *Gorilă*, the man-land relation is countered, progressively neutralized by the emerging “world of tomorrow”.

Thus we arrive at the end of the book, where after the synthesis of theoretical underpinnings, which consist the book’s core, we arrive to a humbler, yet just as important part. In the closing chapters, Mircea Muthu enumerates the critical editions and studies of Rebreanu’s work and life. What is his importance today? How should we relate to him? What is he to the future? In this book very much worth reading we get to know that his opus is not strictly about literature. “It has without a doubt a moral, civic, maybe even an ethico-philosophic exemplarity”, Muthu quotes Mihai Sin. “*Liviu Rebreanu repeats the destiny of our great classics, for that he remains our contemporary*” is how Mircea Muthu finishes his project. As a man who saw his own poetic descend, Liviu Rebreanu and the destiny of the paradoxical organic concept may show us how we too will relate with art against the fast disintegrating world. This book opens up an original point of view engaging with regards to engaging with Rebreanu.

János Tamás

Adrian Papahagi, *Providence and Grace. Lectures on Shakespeare’s Problem Plays and Romances*, Ed. Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 2020



As a year which heralded an extended period in which websites were to become the predominant medium for art and culture, 2020 has already garnered the grim

reputation of a moment that many might deem “dystopian”. *Providence and Grace. Lectures on Shakespeare’s Problem Plays and Romances* (Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2020), the latest volume written by Adrian Papahagi, casts a more luminous veneer over this generalized ontological “murk”. A large-scale project, the book has its conceptual roots in the online lectures delivered by the author at the Faculty of Letters of Babeş-Bolyai University between the months of March and June 2020.

Centered around the two concepts put forward by the title, providence and grace, the chapters all coalesce as an interwoven system of analytical theorizations based on seven Shakespearean comedies and problem plays: *Troilus and Cressida*, *All’s Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, *Pericles*, *Prince of Tyre*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter’s Tale* and *The Tempest*. From the outset, it should be noted that our main focus will lie with the outlining of some of the stylistic artifices which bedeck the volume, rather than with an analysis of its conceptual infrastructure.

Adrian Papahagi transforms the plodding tempo of a university semester into that of a veritable *bildungsroman*, intertwining the thematic strand of Shakespearean theater with its inherent lifelike sharpness. Thus, the volume implicitly cultivates the inner framework of a meta-story. Building upon this tangent, a unique element that could have enhanced the veracity of the volume’s attempted tone would have been the sequential addition of the transcribed debates between the professor and his students, along with some screenshots.

Overall, the volume is a thematic *potpourri*, whose central arguments

follow both the archetypal imagery of the “damned character” typology (Angelo and Caliban) and that of the “savior” (Vicentio and Prospero). The symbolic abundance of the book is also emboldened through the author’s supplementary use of various critical sources that have discussed and dissected Shakespeare’s comedies over the years (among which are counted the more prestigious names of Northrop Frye, Howard Felperin, Philip Edwards, W.B. Thorne, Harold Bloom and many others).

A chapter which stands apart is the one which discusses *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*. The author’s theorization that birth, death and rebirth are symbols whose function is always structured around antinomies is outlined in this segment. In addition to his statement, the author inserts a “blueprint” that approaches the theme of the play through the prism of a quest (p. 115). The labyrinthine interpretation he proposes begins with a so-called initial quest (whose roots start from a dichotomy of vice and virtue), that is then transmuted into a quest of maturity – determined by the antithesis of life and death – and which eventually evolves into yet another typology of quest, characterized by rediscovery, atonement, resurrection. The author states that, compared to other plays, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* is not impeccable (neither in content, nor in style), but what impresses is the demonstration that such a work, possessing a seemingly simple story at its base, can reveal many redeeming idiosyncrasies when put under the magnifying glass of a critical approach.

Adrian Papahagi’s volume is not limited to ruminations on the themes of the seven pieces, but is articulated following the same conceptual vein – for example,

when discussing the divergent concept of so-called “sexual nausea”, which the author identifies as a scourge that first emerges in *Hamlet*. Extrapolating this analogy in the context which saw the publication of the volume, we can afford to speculate that in the midst of our own contemporary time of “contagion”, eventual solace might yet be found through the twin remedy proposed by Shakespearean drama, namely that of providence and grace. If Shakespeare can be interpreted through a post-modernist lens, while keeping intact the symbols of Greek tragedy which underline his works, then it is also certain that the “virtual / real” antinomy embedded in a course dedicated to his figure can constitute the bulk of a precise and erudite tome – a protean feasibility which the present volume assuredly validates.

Ana-Maria Parasca

PoliFemo, no. 7-8,
*Immagini delle lingue e
delle identità minoritarie*,
Liguori Editore, 2014



This issue of the *PoliFemo* Journal, edited by the International Association of Comparative Literature, tackles marginalized languages in Europe. The first language that caught my attention and brought me back when I was a student at the Faculty of Letters, studying Norwegian, was the Swedish spoken by people

in Finland, discussed in an article entitled *Mumminspråk* or *The Moomins' Language*. But why would you name an article after a cartoon?

The *Moomins* are fictional characters with hippopotamus-like aspects, created by Tove Jansson, a Swedish-speaking Finnish author. These little *trolls* as they were originally created, played a very important role for the author, who supposedly tried to picture the whole family, living a bohemian life in a utopia, a world open to future change. Yet again, this takes us back to the past during the Nordic Crusades, where the Swedes, alongside the Danes, conquered every land which they thought was filled with heathens, one of which was Finland. In the early 20th century Finland was under the reign of the Russian Tsarist Empire, a period when Tove Jansson spent her life. The *Moomins* appeared in the late 1940s as a book and a comic book series, which portrayed a perfect place (utopia) where the author *sought refuge*, because in that world there were no wars and no conflicts.

At present, Finland has Swedish as a compulsory language in schools. After the 1950s, Tove fought for her Swedish language to survive. The Finns took the Moomin as their own, even though the characters speak Swedish. This shows some kind of acceptance for the existence of those people who represent only a small percentage.

Another interesting article in this journal is the article about the Irish language, focusing on how it slowly got marginalized in its own country, even though it is a UNESCO treasure. This article has the role of an epilogue because it is written in a different pattern, unlike the other ones. It

debates the main theme of this magazine, the minority of a language.

To begin with a little bit of history, presented by the author in the article, the Gaelic language (the mother tongue of the Irish) was first formed after the Viking and Norman invasion during the 9th and 12th centuries, later in history the English language slowly starting to displace Irish in Ireland, because Gaelic was considered the language of the illiterate. In today's world, fewer people can read, write or even speak Irish. The author says that only a few children can read and write in Irish, whether it's in school or at home. Irish used to be a romantic language with Nordic influences, even though the English writers have a different opinion due to the ongoing conflict between the two nations. It is suggested and strongly recommended by the government that the Irish people should start studying their mother tongue again, but even the Irish author says, indirectly, that it is pointless. As a conclusion, on one hand, I believe that if we look everywhere around the globe, at any country, we can see that conflicts between (two or more) different nations and cultures may always bring sudden changes in society.

Titus-Dumitru Cozma

PoliFemo, no.11-12,
Letteratura e arti,
Liguori Editore, 2016



The *PoliFemo* journal, a publication born under the patronage of the International Association of Comparative Literature, proposes in this issue (11-12/2016) a series of articles focused on the osmotic relationship between literature and art. I will be dwelling on three out of those ten articles written in English, French and Italian.

The first is Barbara Miceli's "Sylvia Plath beyond the Confessional Poetry: A Close Reading of the Poem *On the Decline of Oracles*". The poems of Sylvia Plath are usually classified as confessional poetry, a genre characterized by the use of the first-person, with a given narrative structure and centered on the poet's personal experiences. However, as noted by the author of this essay, this categorization is rather restrictive. After an attentive and detail-oriented reading of the poem "*On the Decline of Oracles*", Barbara Miceli attempts and succeeds at demonstrating that a part of Sylvia Plath's creations extends itself to the realm of the ekphrasis. According to the definition given by Murray Krieger in his book *Ekphrasis – The Illusion of the Natural Sign*, we can define ekphrasis as an emulation of the verbal components, generated by the visual component. In other words, it "is the act of speaking to, about, or for a work of visual or plastic art". Plath's poem "On the Decline of Oracles" is, in fact, an

ekphrasis of Giorgio De Chirico's painting *L'Enigma dell'oracolo* ornamented in baroque style, with references taken from Greek mythology and elements from the American culture, but, at the same time, it manages to keep a tight connection with her own biography. Grounded in a typical confessional theme – her father's death –, the poem acquires new facets when placed in this complex context, the emphasis being shifted to the subjective pain experienced by Sylvia Plath after her father's demise, as well as to the marks that this event has carved in her deeper self. This relationship between the poem and the painting is not a perfect reflection. Instead, it represents a mere departure point in this path towards self-knowing. In fact, the relationship between Plath's poetry and the confessional movement is not a perfect overlap, but rather an extension and a fluidization of the genre.

The theme of Jorge Diego Sanchez's essay "Ahkram Khan's DESH: Tales of Fluidity and Resistance beyond Britain and Bangladesh" revolves around identity. Akram Khan, in his first solo show "DESH", aims at expressing his cultural identity and proposes an honest speech towards a better understanding for intercultural relations. The essay offers, in the first place, a theoretical perspective about the "concept of identity in the space of the diaspora", seen from the perspective of the postcolonial cultural studies and, secondly, it provides examples of the metaphorical elements used by Akram Khan in his DESH choreography. These ancestral elements, water, earth, fire and air, are the ones establishing the connection between the artist and his origins, obviously having as well a cathartic effect created by

the feeling of retrieving one's own identity. Akram Khan, born and raised in UK by his parents, both immigrants from Bangladesh, presents himself as a citizen of an intercultural world, a world that has its own dynamics, "a collaborative space where contact of cultures involves conflict, encounter and negotiation of new fluid identities constantly in the making". Sanchez sees in this artistic endeavor a detachment from the neocolonial stereotypes that lead somehow to a derisory representation of South Asian art in our Europe-centric culture, and he highlights the lack of studies about the artistic possibilities of dance in the sphere of social studies.

In his essay "Early American Literature meets Classic Hollywood: The Scarlet Letter", John Price attempts to display the relation between Classic Hollywood and Early American Literature, and the way in which these movements influenced the later development of cinematography and, respectively, of the typical American literary voices. Although these two currents are not temporarily overlapping, they share a number of similarities. None of them can be placed in strict temporal limits, but both can be defined as two innovative eras. Classic Hollywood has boosted the birth of a universal cinematic speech, whereas Early American Literature represents the birth of American voices in literature. Still, these differences are somewhat external and, apart from a few stylistic similarities, I believe that they do not overlap, regardless of the author's efforts to prove otherwise. On one hand, we have Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Melville and Hawthorne, and on the other, Edwin Porter, G.W. Griffith and Josef von Sternberg (to list only those mentioned by John Pierce). The difference

could not be any greater! Moreover, this moment of supposed junction chosen by the author – the 1937 screening of Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter* (directed by Robert G. Vignola) –, as can be observed after a more attentive analysis, does not even seem to be part of the Classic Hollywood, not by means of a retrospective glance, but rather by placing it in the very context in which it appeared, in relation to the remaining Hollywood productions from the same period. Besides this, another problem of this essay lies on the following question: What's the good of creating a theoretical proximity between these two currents? Especially by juxtaposing those two examples? If we consider these two periods as processes *per se*, we can observe that the relations are far more complex than the ones John Price indicates.

Cezar Braşoveanu

Ioan Pop-Curşeu,
Ştefana Pop-Curşeu,
*Iconografia vrăjitoriei
în arta religioasă
românească. Eseu de
antropologie vizuală*,
Cluj-Napoca, Şcoala
Ardeleană, 2020



L'iconographie de la sorcellerie dans l'art religieux roumain. *Essai d'anthropologie visuelle* (Maison d'édition Şcoala Ardeleană, 2020) réunit les résultats d'un projet de recherche signé par Ştefana et Ioan Pop-Curşeu. Présenté comme un essai anthropologique, le volume présente les significations eschatologiques du Jugement dernier

peint sur les édifices religieux roumains. Les signataires exploitent toutes les catégories de documents qui ont contribué à l'horizon de création de cette iconographie et construisent une perspective typologique de la sorcellerie. La démarche couvre les représentations des peintres roumains entre les XVII^e-XIX^e siècles et dégage les structures imaginaires de l'enfer dans 182 occurrences visuelles analysées.

L'approche commence par une analyse des représentations collectives sur la justice divine. Le volume met en exergue un examen critique interdisciplinaire qui déconstruit les stéréotypes culturels concernant la stigmatisation de la sorcellerie. Cette analyse repose sur les matrices narratives des récits qui ont influencé la création des fresques et surtout sur les biographies des muralistes. Allant dans les détails, Ştefana et Ioan Pop-Curşeu dégagent dans les premiers chapitres le schéma des catégories des vices de la morale chrétienne utilisant comme angle d'approche les douanes du Jugement dernier. Ensuite, les auteurs démontrent qu'autant les sources textuelles et celles judiciaires ont créé un horizon de perception commun, adapté au contexte des commanditaires. La biographie des peintres s'avère donc essentielle, car les muralistes roumains ont introduit dans leurs œuvres des innovations paradoxales, choquantes, donnant une image de ce qu'étaient les méfaits dans l'éthique chrétienne de l'époque.

En général, Ştefana et Ioan Pop-Curşeu analysent judicieusement les effets interprétatifs des lectures à travers les textes, les actes juridiques et les récits thématiques parcourus. D'abord, la littérature sur le thème du Jugement dernier occupe une place importante : des chansons,

des légendes et des ballades roumaines, concordent avec les correspondances pans-laves, scandinaves ou bien occidentales. De plus, les photographies insérées dans le volume servent comme support d'accompagnement dans la recherche, si méthodiquement structurée.

Après une série d'images et peintres inventoriés, les auteurs retournent au dessein de leur démarche : l'intérêt herméneutique que la sorcellerie peut avoir dans la recherche. De multiples dérivés ont apparues, chacune selon la pratique consacrée à l'enchantement. En d'autres termes, cette complexité de pratiques qui émerge d'une spiritualité décadente se révèle prolifique au niveau terminologique. C'est ainsi que maléfices ont déployé toute une série de sortilèges : « la personne qui donne en grains », « l'avorteuse », pour n'en citer que quelques-unes.

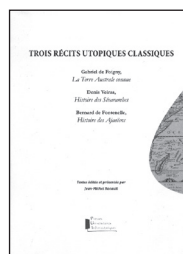
La sorcellerie trouve, donc, sa place principale dans cet hybride des croyances, duquel les auteurs tracent la ligne théorique des topos favorables aux manifestations. Ainsi, dans les zones montagneuses les femmes sorcières ont entrepris cette activité comme une forme de résistance aux rigueurs religieuses. D'autre part, au niveau des occurrences, on apprend qu'en Roumanie la crédulité archaïque semble s'être étendue aux plaines et qu'il y avait une activité remarquable dans la région Oltenia où les statistiques prouvent la prédilection des événements de ce type. Finalement, les recherches linguistiques démontrent une affinité pour concentrer l'attention aux occurrences féminines qui surpassent largement celles masculines. En plus de cela, les 35 variétés terminologiques, les graphiques, les analyses statistiques, notamment la mise à l'échelle

multidimensionnelle (MDS) – toutes construisent un contexte de recherche à caractère de patrimoine.

En conclusion, l'iconographie roumaine s'ouvre aux perspectives comparatistes actuelles. Grâce au volume, ce sujet, encore en train de se démanteler, s'aligne à la panoplie eschatologique comme un tableau des pratiques antichrétiennes, transformant la thématique de la sorcellerie en un partage de savoirs.

Ion Pițoiu

Jean-Michel Racault
(ed.), *Trois récits
utopiques classiques,*
Presses Universitaires
Indianocéaniques,
Université de la
Réunion, 2020



Le recueil *Trois récits utopiques classiques* de Jean-Michel Racault (Presses Universitaires Indianocéaniques, Université de la Réunion, 2020) a pour objectif de « réunir en un seul volume de dimensions raisonnables trois œuvres majeures de l'histoire de la pensée politique sous l'Ancien Régime représentatives de ce que l'on a appelé parfois 'l'utopie louis-quatorzienne' : *La Terre Australe connue* de Foigny, *l'Histoire des Sévarambes de Veiras*, *l'Histoire des Ajaoiens de Fontenelle* ». (p. 7)

Épreuve d'érudition, l'ouvrage a une structure très complexe ; il comprend un « Avant-propos » général intitulé *Voyages imaginaires aux Antipodes et fictions théologico-politiques de l'Âge Classique* et où les lecteurs retrouvent une synthèse de l'histoire

de l'« utopie narrative » ; il y est question du schéma qui est à la base de ce genre littéraire, « les invariants littéraires », le lieu auquel les utopies font appel – « la destination doit être infiniment lointaine, presque inaccessible, mais 'presque' seulement, afin de respecter la règle de vraisemblance, et surtout existante ou du moins plausible, quoique difficilement vérifiable *in situ* » (p. 11) –, d'un bref rappel des « bases théologico-politiques de l'utopie narrative classique » et des « principes généraux d'édition des œuvres ». De plus, chaque texte est précédé par une sorte de préface – « *La Terre Australe connue* de Gabriel Foigny ou un voyage de l'homme pécheur au pays des Déistes », « Pouvoir et croyance chez les Sévarambes : la religion comme imposture, l'imposture comme religion », « De l'athéisme comme religion d'État (et de certaines conséquences et in conséquences) : pour une réinterprétation de l'*Histoire des Ajaoïens* » – où l'auteur analyse les particularités de chaque utopie tout en établissant une perspective comparatiste entre les trois récits pris en compte :

« De même que celui de Foigny, le livre de Veiras se présente non pas comme un roman, ce qu'il est bien en réalité, mais comme une relation de voyage, censée authentique, offrant la représentation complète d'une société imaginaire 'autre', symétrique à celles de l'Europe, mais fondée sur des principes opposés tels que l'égalité naturelle entre les individus, l'organisation collective de la vie quotidienne, le communisme économique, la conformité à la nature, à la raison et à la justice, toutes caractéristiques déjà rencontrées dans l'utopie de Foigny. Toutefois il en diffère radicalement par l'importance qu'il accorde à l'État [...], à la science politique,

aux conditions psychologiques et anthropologiques de l'exercice du pouvoir ». (p. 193-194)

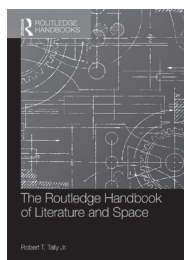
On remarque également le soin pour les lecteurs ; à maintes reprises l'auteur explique les principes d'édition et la variante retenue, les changements apportés au texte d'origine dans le but de le rendre plus compréhensif et, en outre, il offre des « Mappemondes et cartes » qu'il commente, ainsi que trois index : « Index des noms de personnes », « Index des lieux » et « Index des titres ».

Retraçant l'histoire d'un genre littéraire, l'utopie narrative classique, le livre de Jean-Michel Racault montre que les « trois récits utopiques » qu'il présente et commente dépassent les frontières de leur siècle ; ceux-ci connaissent une large réception et participe à la littérature de toutes les époques : « abondamment imitées et traduites, elles ont également été des jalons importants dans l'évolution du roman français et même européen » (p. 7).

L'originalité de l'ouvrage *Trois récits utopiques classiques* de Jean-Michel Racault est de démontrer l'actualité des textes de la fin du XVII^e siècle – début du XVIII^e siècle puisque notre société ne cesse de s'interroger sur le meilleur monde possible et sur la nature des gens. Le désir de notre société d'aller à la découverte d'autrui est à retrouver dans les utopies classiques où autrui constitue à la fois un objectif et une illusion.

Anamaria Lupan

Robert T. Tally Jr., *The Routledge Handbook of Literature and Space*, New York, Routledge, 2017



The Routledge Handbook of Literature and Space is a collection of thirty-two essays, with an introduction by Robert T. Tally Jr. It represents an invaluable resource for those coming to consider the field of spatial studies for the first time due to the multitude of approaches on literature and space.

One of the tenets of this handbook represents the spatial turn. In the introduction, Tally remarks that “space and spatiality, as time and temporality, have always been part of literature and literary studies”, but it was not until the mid-twentieth century that the element of space and geography reasserted themselves. The nineteenth-century was dominated by a discourse of time and history, while spatiality played a subordinate role, but in the last few decades, the situation changed, and matters of space, place, and mapping were at the forefront of critical discussions of literature.

The handbook presents a wide range of spatial literary studies thanks to contributions from scholars, belonging to various fields such as geography, comparative studies, and spatial theory. Since some of the authors’ articles focus on space, while others on the relationship between text and the spaces of the outside world, Tally tries to convey some sense of cohesion between the essays by grouping them into five parts, as follows: “Spatial theory and practice”, “Critical methodologies”, “Worksites”,

“Cities and the geography of urban experience” and “Maps, territories, readings”.

The first part contains six chapters/essays and represents an introduction covering the development of literary spatial theory since the 1960s. Across these essays, the authors ground their arguments, in theory, to present how specific areas have evolved. Some of the theorists mentioned are Edward Soja, Martin Heidegger, Walter Benjamin, Franco Moretti, Henri Lefebvre.

In the first essay, Marc Brosseau, trying new approaches in the field of literary geography, suggests that the reader should distance himself from “the stability and closure of the written text” and regard the text as an event. He also makes a distinction between “imaginary geographies”, “imaginative geographies”, and “geographical imaginaries”. In “Critical literary geography”, Andrew Thacker claims that space and geography shape literary forms. Thus, textual spaces – a combination of literary forms and social spaces, is seen as a crucial component of the practice of critical literary geography because it traces issues of representation and power. Neal Alexander argues in “Senses of Place” that the concept refers to “how our five senses apprehend and interpret the physical world of places, people and things”; the designation of the place being a result of the usage of the five senses. The link between space and philosophy is presented in the essay “Invention of space”, as Tom Conley analyses Gilles Deleuze’s *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie*. In “Phenomenology, place and the spatial turn”, Eric Pietro discusses “the multiplicity and variety of place representations in literature” to show that creating place is a technique. “Spatializing practices at intersections” turns our attention again toward the spatial turn that the author

demonstrates it helps us to comprehend better where things take place.

The second part comprises seven diverse essays, varying from new theoretical approaches to new methodologies such as “neogeography”, digital literary cartographies, and “sound and rhythm” studies. An aspect becomes clear in this second part of the handbook; the spatial turn proves beneficial not only for literary studies but also for geography.

Balancing between theoretical discourses and concrete literary examples, the articles from the second part, address several different aspects. From Google Maps, which brought numerous internet-based literary maps and data presenting regions from all around the world, to the usage of literary cartography projects to remap and reimagine British Romanticism or to the genre of survey literature, these articles prove that combined the study of literature, geography, and space know no boundaries.

The third part comprises, yet again, seven essays, but proves to be the soul of this handbook as this section deals with atopias, heterotopias, dreams and memories, islands, and spatiality of city neighborhoods. In “Atopia/ Non-place”, Siobhan Carroll considers that by traversing the earth, humans had put an end to the possibility of finding a utopia, so what remains for exploration are atopias and non-places. Carroll also outlines the distinctions between natural and manmade atopias, considering that further consideration should be given to the man-made atopias. Amanda Dennis analyses in her essay about heterotopies the works of Foucault, Beckett, and Calvino, viewing the space of literature as a heterotopia, a world within another where one might find privacy. Islands provide the literary geographer

with a rich set of themes for analysis. Characterized by “imperialist fantasies and by more open-ended explorations of difference”, James Kneale considers that the islands can be analyzed through three significant characteristics: “possession, separation, and transformation”.

The six essays in part four focus on the investigation of the real and fictional spatialities of London, Johannesburg, Toronto, and Greenwich Village. In the analysis of urban experience, the reader stumbles upon the characteristics of the “city-novel”, namely the reference to the real city, spatial distances between places, linguistic differences, and various contexts of the time. An analysis on Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*, centered around the question if Moll Flanders has any chance of surviving on Robinson’s island, makes the subject of Emmanuelle Peraldo’s essay. The exploration of West 10th Street in the heart of Greenwich Village by Tobin Elayne represents a nostalgic scenario due to the incapacity to revive its literary past. In the last chapter/ essay, Jean-Francois Duclos draws our attention to the individual in the urban environment and how “the follower” is different from Baudelaire’s flâneur because he uses “the crowd to singularize the existence of one person.”

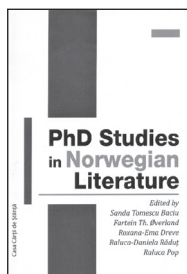
The final part, devoted to cartography and mapping, is at the same time the least cohesive of the book. In the six articles, the reader comes across a series of themes: the evolution from the spatial to the affective (Russel West-Pavlov), the reconsideration of the historical significance of the environmental determinism of the nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries (Rebecca Walsh). By looking at the works of Spanish explorers in the “Indies” in the 1500s, Ricardo

Padrón discovered that verbal mapping was used by those who had no access to world maps; they could visualize the regions and images as recorded by the Spanish travelers. Charles Travis returns to James Joyce's *Ulysses* with a fresh look at its chronotopography through Joyce's interpretations of *The Odyssey*. By examining the works of the Latin Americans who visited the People's Republic of China in the 1950s, Rosario Hubert makes us aware of the new spatial perspectives on the Chinese Communist Party. There is also a section dedicated to Natalie Barney's literary activism, whose purpose was to create a place for "the expression of female sexuality, a geospace and a literary space for the recognition of female literary production" (p. 357).

The Routledge Handbook of Literature and Space is a welcomed addition to the field of knowledge, as its valuable insights can help students learn about the spatial turn, space, and literature.

Maria Chirilă

Sanda Tomescu Baci, Fartein Th. Øverland, Roxana-Ema Dreve, *PhD Studies in Norwegian Literature*, Editura Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, 2020



Recently, to mark a decade of doctoral studies, the Norwegian Language and Literature Department published a volume containing some interesting papers. The volume entitled *Literary Studies in Norwegian Literature* collects a part of

the research work undertaken by the PhD students specializing in Norwegian studies under the supervision of Professor Sanda Tomescu at the doctoral school of Linguistic and Literary Studies, the Faculty of Letters of Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca.

The PhD students have written a series of scientific papers that address a variety of topics, starting with Jan Erik Vold's literature and ending with the issue of immigrant identity. We will make a brief review of the studies, and then we will focus our attention specifically on three articles. Raluca-Daniela Răduț defines the concept of *nyenkelhet* (new simplicity). She works on Jan Erik Vold's poem called "Bo på Briskeby Blues" ("Living in Briskeby Blues"). The study highlights the way the poet writes about simple things, about everyday life. It is also interesting to note how Knut Hamsun's work was received in the Romanian press compared to the international one. Diana Lățug writes about this comparative analysis. Anamaria Babiaș Ciobanu makes a close-reading of Fosse's *And We'll Never be Parted* play. She interprets its space-time and the inseparable connections between the characters. Norwegian literature has undergone changes over the years, being influenced by the social-political context. There has been a trend of multicultural rewriting of Norse mythology in contemporary Norwegian literature. Cristina Vișovan observed the phenomenon and gives us more details about it. Ștefana Popa also talks about another characteristic of recent Norwegian literature. The author notices the recurrence of the father figure appears in the prose of the 2000s. It is fascinating how Norwegian writers have managed to givenew meaning

to a famous literary motif. The father is no longer just an authoritarian character. He has feelings. As we have seen, the field of literature is full of news. Ovio Olaru's work continues in the same direction, presenting a successful novel subgenre of the late 20th century called *Scandinavian Noir*. Readers are interested in reading crime fiction novels, written from a police detective's point of view.

It takes a lot of courage to leave your homeland and move to a foreign country in search of a better future. Immigrants arriving in a new environment face different problems of adaptation, language culture etc. In this context, they wonder what their identity is. They do not want to give up their roots, but at the same time they want to integrate in the new places. Ioana-Andreea Mureșan talks about the multicultural identity of immigrants. No one understands the concept of identity better than immigrants. The notion of identity is used to describe the idea of belonging, it is a way of defining ourselves. We all have different cultural backgrounds depending on where we were born, the traditions and customs of the environment in which we live, the education we received and, of course, we are influenced by the people we come in contact with. Identity is not a finite concept, it is constantly evolving. It cannot be divided, immigrants belong to several cultures. Immigrants belonging to more than one culture have a complex identity.

Andra Rus proposes another topic: how the senses and experiences activate the image of a place, of a person in Lars Saabye Christensen's novel entitled *Beatles*. The author shows how the smell of apples triggers the main character Kim Karlsen's memories of Nina. One day Kim steals an

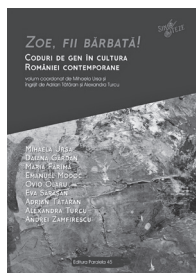
apple and gives it to Nina. She bites the apple and then Kim and Nina kiss. The apple always reactivates this image of the kiss with Nina. The places of Oslo are defined in terms of those lived by Kim. Andra Rus classifies them into protective and alienating places. Kim's room will always be a protective place, while the asylum in which he had to stay is an alienating place.

We all know Henrik Ibsen's work, but we don't know how it was received in Romania. Gianina Druță does research and presents us with relevant information. For the first time in our country, a play by Ibsen was played in Iași. State Dragomir is the one who campaigned for the introduction of Ibsen's plays in the repertoire of the National Theatre in Iași. He had the most important role in promoting Iași as a cultural city at the end of the 19th century, the beginning of the 20th century. He also changes the way actors played, approaching roles from a philosophical perspective.

The volume published by the members of the Norwegian Language and Literature Department proposes some innovative research that is worth reading and analyzing in greater depth.

Emanuela-Patricia Ardelean

Mihaela Ursa, Alexandra Turcu, Adrian Tătăran (eds.), *Zoe, fii bărbată! Coduri de gen în cultura României contemporane*, Pitești, Paralela 45, 2019



When it comes to feminism, the key-concepts and the debates regarding the topic have always been controversial, especially in the Eastern European background. Many women and men avoid declaring themselves as feminists mostly because they do not want to be considered owners of radical points of view. The intellectual Romanian woman is still struggling with various forms of *masculine domination*, as Pierre Bourdieu would highlight, given the patriarchal and elitist atmosphere of the Romanian cultural stage.

Published in 2019 at Paralela 45 Publishing House, *Zoe, be a man! Gender Codes in Contemporary Romanian Culture* undertakes a fresh feminist analysis of various topics in the Romanian literary theory field. Nine different authors offer a variety of interpretative methods and discuss the feminist paradigm from a practical and explicit point of view. The authors focus not only on Romanian literature, but on some other forms of art as well, such as local music, plastic art and many more. Thus, each study manages to approach the feminist situation in Romania from a different point of view.

Alexandra Turcu focuses on the Romanian space by trying to reveal the degree to which the Romanian discourse on art senses the characteristics of this concept. She examines the reactions concerning

a well-known art exhibition, *Woman, All Too Woman*, which was on display at the Timișoara Museum of Art.

In the second chapter, Mihaela Ursa, the volume's main editor, speaks about gender codes when it comes to teaching literature in Romania. Her research points to a particular clash between the neo-Liberal politics of literature and the neo-Marxist urgencies deconstructing it in Romania. The professor also suggests that teenagers, especially young girls, should start reading literature from other geographical spaces, in order to broaden their horizon when it comes to the gender issues in literature.

Ovio Olaru takes a closer look at how the gender issues are discussed by the poetic generation of the 2000s. His paper aims to analyze how the female body became a highly sexualized object for the performative act. The proliferation of misogynistic views, discrimination and sexism are just a few aspects that Olaru highlights in his study.

Daiana Gărdan manages to show in her paper the impact of novels written by women for the evolution of the modern Romanian novel. The researcher presents macroanalytic instruments, such as graphs and statistics, to expose how the female writers are treated in the Romanian space. Many priceless works are excluded from the canon and from the school's curriculum, which means that their literature is considered unimportant or even inferior.

In his paper called "Anarchy and Women's Emancipation," Adrian Tătăran discusses the ambiguous approach that the *classical* male anarchists theorists had in regard to feminism in general and the re-discovery of anarchism by feminists and its re-emergence as a radical feminist practice.

“What is being written to children? A Macroanalysis of Contemporary Romanian Children’s Literature in the Age of Political Correctness” is an essential part of the book, because Eva Sărășan, the researcher, presents a microanalysis of Romanian contemporary literature for youngsters, making use of her experience as a librarian. She also presents a series of statistics, underlining the fact that there are twice as many female writers as male writers in the children’s section.

Emanuel Modoc continues the volume on the same side of youth literature, taking as an object of his analysis *The Girls’ Book*, published in the communist era. The volume was dedicated to the civic education of young Romanian girls, which leaves space for exploring gender relationships under the communist system. The essay also shows the communist perspective on feminism and how it was taught to young girls, shaped in perceptions of maternity, femininity and gender relations.

In her paper, “Musical nomadism – from Archaic to Surrealism: Ada Milea and DakhaBrakha,” Maria Fărîmă analyses two original contemporary musical phenomena from Eastern Europe: Ada Milea, from Romania, and DakhaBrakha band, from Ukraine. The research examines different representations of femininity through the iconic images of these two artists. Their performative appearance speaks for itself and highlights the fact that the visual representation of a female artist can go beyond vulgarity and consumerism.

Finally yet importantly, Andrei Zamfirescu ends the volume with his study called “Demonizations and Idealizations of Femininity in the European Middle Ages,” which is an analysis of different feminine

representations, such as fairies, witches and other creatures that were portrayed in the medieval cultural imaginary. His mythological approach successfully completes the volume and brings forward a topic that was not discussed in the previous pages.

All these being considered, *Zoe, Be a Man!* stands out through its fresh approach to the feminist problem in the Romanian space. The diversity of the topics chosen by its authors manages to highlight different perspectives on the debated issue. Thereby, the book portrays in detail the feminine figure throughout history and its mutations, depending on the political regime or social-political events. Moreover, the volume functions as a helpful introduction to the problematic aspect of being a Romanian female writer, in a society that is dominated by patriarchal elitism. Even though some may consider the volume and its theoretical approach too technical, intended only for specialized readers, I believe that it can be read by anyone who wishes to understand how feminism works in our Eastern European space.

Maria Bucșea