

Book Reviews

Hugo Francisco Bauzá, *Miradas sobre el suicidio*, Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2018



The ontological problem of death has been at the forefront of philosophical debates in humanists theoretical or theological endeavors, as well as in artistic and literary milieus. The vast amount of discourses dedicated to this specific spiritual concern and unavoidable condition has always been surrounded by a rather mystical aura, given the fact that cultural and religious imaginaries all over the world have dominated (in terms of influence) the affective construction that people, and, more importantly, artists and writers, have created, developed and taught over the generations in relation to the subject. This tendency however made it impossible to render a singular and generally accepted sociological circumscription of the concept of death.

There is little limitation however in the history of the humanities when it comes to the critical assumptions that have argued in favor of any one particular model of understanding the matters of death. From the ancient Roman and Greek cultures to the sociological agreements developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and to contemporary cultural studies, seeking answers to questions related to the meaning of life, the afterlife, or free will in ending one's own life has not only been a common practice among important thinkers, but

has also shaped the global imaginary of death as we now understand it.

Gathering the multiple theoretical frames and cultural directions that focus on the matter of death, in its plural manifestations (natural or accidental deaths, murders, suicides), in order to deliver a panoramic view of the death-related universal imaginary seems no less than a Sisyphian project, considering the great amount of data, as well as the almost infinite possibilities of interpretation on the subject. Such an ambitious endeavor is Francisco Bauzá's recent volume, entitled *Gazing Suicide (Miradas sobre el suicidio)*, which approaches suicide in its many forms of manifestation and understanding throughout human history.

Bauzá's volume is, as the authors himself states, the result of a biographical experience: at a young age he witnessed the suffering of a father who had lost a son that committed suicide. At this point, the author introduces personal considerations on suicide, interlinked with a great amount of philosophical assumptions. The aim of Bauzá's analytical endeavor is to present, with a personal touch, a series of cases of real or fictional suicide. I find it essential to mention that Bauzá's volume implies a personal selection, the author never once pretending to deliver either a complete, exhaustive index of suicidal typologies, or a set of theoretical premises and explanations of this phenomenon in the spirit of Émile Durkheim's contributions, for instance.

His rich history begins, as expected, within the frames of ancient philosophy and mythology. The key-concept of his discussions at this very point is the so-called state of *taedium vitae*, which translates as

extreme ennui, boredom, sickness of living, a concept that has travelled from very distant times to our contemporary culture. Bauzá, however, highlights the fact that for the ancient populations (especially governed by a mythical logic), committing suicide was often seen as a positive feature that revealed courage, strength and willpower.

Bauzá's reconstruction of the death-related imaginary, from its very origins to our contemporary times, gathers insights from various schools of thought. From stoics to Hindu religion, Freudianism, Russian realism, French existentialism or the artistic avant-gardes, every selected example is one that proves the author's vast knowledge of the topic. Notable are the chapters dedicated to Walter Benjamin, Dostoyevsky and the Dada artistic movement – biographical cases presented by Bauzá against their very specific historical and cultural backgrounds. The helpless situation of Walter Benjamin – overwhelmed by the ideological framework within which he activated as a philosopher, the concept of “logical suicide” as depicted by Dostoyevsky in his famous works, and the idea of a suicide as an artistic fashion turned into a mandatory gesture in the avant-garde group of young writers and painters are all worthy assumptions that can each open a very rewarding dialogue on transgressions from the real to the fictional realm.

A well-documented, ambitious volume, Hugo Bauzá's *Gazing Suicide* has, besides its theoretical potential for the imaginary studies fields, a fine and rare quality – a charismatic, catchy way of telling its stories. If anything, *Gazing suicide* is like a crime novel on the imaginary of death.

Daiana Gârdan

Horst Bredekamp,
Actul de imagine, trans.
Andrei Anastasescu,
Cluj-Napoca, Tact, 2018



The domain of visual representation has always been generous in terms of research material, but compiling a thorough analysis about the status of the image in the broader context of human development from its earliest stages all the way to contemporary controversies of our time can appear to be an impossible task. Horst Bredekamp manages to complete it in *Image Acts. A Systemic Approach to Visual Agency*, by developing his own conceptual system, which puts forward a new theory that revolutionized his field of expertise.

In the introductory part of his book, entitled “The Problematic Centrality of the Image”, the author debates the main reasons why images and the claims regularly advanced for their conception, their formation, their elaboration, and their power have become such persistent issues in our time. Among these, he mentions the *flood of images*, a concept that characterises our contemporaneity, the use of images in politics and their power to leave a mark in the collective memory of a nation, their military role, their contribution to science and the increasingly prominent legal status of the image.

In the following chapters, respectively “Origins and Concepts” and “Inherent Theory”, the author declares his intention to tackle this phenomenon from a chronological point of view. He looks retrospectively

at the theoretical history of the image as a fundamental concept that has often been treated with suspicion by theorists and insists on the fact that images are “an independent life force” that acts on humans in various ways and that possesses a duplicity (between the vivid and the lifeless) whose nature the author tries to expose.

Thusly, Horst Bredekamp makes a distinction between three classes of *Image Acts*: the Schematic, the Substitutive and the Intrinsic, explaining their expression in various works with the help of a plethora of examples drawn from art, science, nature and everyday life. Furthermore, he compiles a summary of the relations between the above named Image Acts, through a series of linked attributives designed as: *Category* (which represents the main sphere of action in which images are said to operate), *Medium* (a process or entity that disseminates the Image Act) and *Form* (the type of “image” cited in the text). Additionally, the three Image Acts are paired with a one-word summary in concordance with their mode of operating: the Schematic Image Act is defined as “life”, the Substitutive as “exchange” and the Intrinsic as “form.”

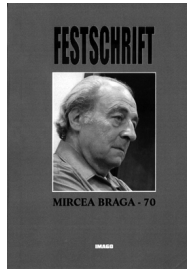
Another relation that is largely debated in the book is that of human agency relative to the Image Act. Bredekamp sets out to portray a life principle in images that may be conceived not as a direct extension of the human body or the society, but as a force emanating naturally from the image itself. This force, in his account, then turns and impacts both the body and the society. The author repeatedly invokes the ideas that images own intrinsic life, their own strength and right to life (in reference with Warburg's ideas regarding pathos in

images). The language of the book seeks to isolate what Bredekamp defines as “the self-sufficient” force of images as distinct from their use – what he defines as “image-autonomy.”

Ultimately, *Image Acts. A Systemic Approach to Visual Agency* puts forward a bold and innovative thesis that undoubtedly focuses on our contemporaneity and mainly on the political dimension in which the force of image discourse is illustrated explicitly with subjects such as war, communal symbols, the law and news photographs. For this reason, images cannot be seen as something independent from the human condition, although they possess a power of their own. Thereby, they work to constitute human reality and perception without being enforced by external laws or causes. In Bredekamp's own words, “[i]mages do not derive from reality. They are, rather, a form of its condition. Images, through their own potency, empower those enlightened observers who fully recognize this quality. Images are not passive. They are begetters of every sort of experience and action related to perception. This is the quintessence of image act.”

This book is surely a mandatory reading for scholars in the field of literature, art, history of visual representations or photography, as it offers a contextualized look at the major changes and events that contributed to defining the image as we know it today. Horst Bredekamp's socially and politically charged argument is trans-temporal, and so it can be seen as a potentially new philosophical approach to image agencies.

Gabriela Chiciudean,
Cristina Matilda
Vănoagă (eds.),
Festschrift Mircea Braga
80, Universitatea 1
Decembrie 1918 din
Alba Iulia, Editura
Aeternitas, 2018



Coordinated by Gabriela Chiciudean and Cristina Matilda Vănoagă, *Festschrift Mircea Braga 80* advocates the relevance of Mircea Braga's heritage to contemporary culture, while also tracing out his major influence in many other cultural lives. As it is indicated in the title, the volume's aim is to bring homage to Mircea Braga, a critic, historian and literary theorist.

Despite the eclectic structure of the volume, amassing the plurality of fields that are brought together in the essays, the volume is neatly rounded off. *Festschrift Mircea Braga 80* is structured in three parts: the revival of some key moments in Mircea Braga's cultural life, a series of essays, literary chronicles and studies dedicated to his figure and some translations and literary works. Different in their approaches, the contributions manage to emphasize the complexity, diversity and richness Mircea Braga's figure has developed in so many directions.

In the first article, Constantin Cubleșan shows how, during their college years, Mircea Braga stood out as the best in their group as regards the writing of essays and literary chronicles and how, later on, his organization skills and vast cultural knowledge propelled him to positions such as director of the National Theatre in Baia Mare or Sibiu.

Irina Petraș is interested in sketching the most relevant literary works of Mircea Braga. In order to get to know the universe of Mircea Braga's close literary relationships, Marcel Mureșeanu, Titu Popescu and Mircea Popa point out his kindness by recollecting some memorable memories they had experienced with him. Other names, such as: Ana Olos, Maria-Ana Tupan, Liliana Danciu, Maria Holhoș or Petru Adrian Danciu shed light on his magnificent teaching skills.

Another important part in this volume is concerned with a series of studies, essays and literary chronicles, exploring philosophical, ethical and aesthetic implications of issues Mircea Braga is preoccupied with. Alexandru Dobrescu identifies the imagination paradigms of novels by adopting a critical perspective, while Ionel Bușe focuses on Constantin Noica's approach regarding the European cultural morphology as a grammar of culture. Iulian Boldea analyzes Mircea Braga's studies of literary history, whereas Petre Isachi summarizes the most important aspects in *ECCE NIETZSCHE – Exercițiu de lectură hermeneutică* (Editura Academiei Române, București, 2015). George Manolache explores the good-evil dichotomy in culture as seen by Mircea Braga.

The emphasis moves to the theoretical area of the imaginary with Alin-Mihai Gherman's essay on Mihai Eminescu's religious inspiration in writing *Glossa*. Corin Braga's essay expounds the imaginary research from a neuroscience perspective, while Ovidiu Ivancu focuses on post-revolutionary human typologies. Rodica Gabriela Chira examines the way in which stories are seen from a cultural identity

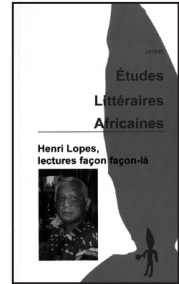
perspective, whilst Lucian Vasile Bâgiu and Paraschiva Bâgiu analyze the Indo-European roots of some Romanian words by comparing two studies based on the origin of the Romanian language. While Liliana Danciu's or Alina Bako's essays are focused on European history and literature from Mircea Eliade's perspective, Adina Curta and Sonia Elvireanu emphasize the analysis of two major books written by Mircea Braga, *Rătăcind prin canon* (Tipo Moldova, Iași, 2013) and *Despre ordinul suveran al receptării* (Sibiu, Imago, 2013). Gabriela Chiciudean explores in her study the space and characters in the novel of Meša Selimović, *Dervişul și moartea* (Leda, București, 2009).

The studies written by Aritina Micu and Ariana Covaci further analyze the spatial imaginary, as perceived by Panait Istrati or Sorin Titel, adding to an increasing number of researches that have addressed this aspect. The section closes with Mihaela Bal's and Lunel Cristian Florin's essays on F.M. Dostoievski's concept of laws and legislators and I. Sârbu's vision of Petrița city as an archetypal world.

The volume closes with a section dedicated to literary art and translations, dedicated to Mircea Braga by such names as: Aura Christi, Aurel Pantea, Cornel Niatea, Silviu Mihăilă, Ana Perena, Dana Radler and Cristina Matila Vănoagă. This praise is considerable deserved as this volume takes up many challenging topics and opens a broad path for further research for any reader interested in the figure of Mircea Braga.

Ana-Maria Parasca

*Études Littéraires
Africaines, n° 45, Henri
Lopes, lecture façon
façon-là, 2018*



Ces dernières années, on remarque dans les études littéraires une focalisation nouvelle sur des cultures qui ont souvent été traitées de marginales. *Études Littéraires Africaines* est l'une de telles revues internationales mettant en évidence l'actualité et la complexité des littératures africaines et orientales. Le numéro 45 / 2018 inclut ainsi un dossier d'études critiques consacrées à l'écrivain Henri Lopes, que viennent étoffer plusieurs volets critiques exposant diverses problématiques de la culture africaine.

Le premier volet de la revue inclut le dossier qui a au centre la figure d'Henri Lopes en tant qu'écrivain, mais aussi en tant qu'homme politique. Après une courte présentation biographique et une contextualisation de sa position d'écrivain africain qui se trouve dans un espace occidental, les articles poursuivent la nouveauté des problématiques exposées par l'auteur dans ses textes comme l'art et son engagement, le colonialisme ou la migration. Anthony Mangeon examine ainsi dans son article, « Un art du roman démocratique », le carrefour qui se creuse dans l'œuvre de Lopes entre les mouvements sociopolitiques et la forme romanesque. De son côté, Bernard Mouralis passe en revue le contexte social de l'Afrique des années 1960-1970, tout en investiguant les modalités par lesquelles le social est systématisé dans quelques

nouvelles de l'écrivain ; les constructions psychologiques des personnages sont, en effet, centrées autour d'une problématique historique. Dans la même direction d'un traitement des rapports entre histoire et fiction, impliquant aussi la question du colonialisme, Sylvère Mbondobari analyse « le métis » comme une caractéristique de l'œuvre d'Henri Lopes en l'interrogeant à deux niveaux : d'une part, le niveau biographique, par son lieu d'origine, et d'autre part, le plan littéraire, comme une caractéristique spécifique de ses romans. On y observe ainsi « les mécanismes les plus subtils de la société contemporaine » (p. 78). « Le personnage métis » occupe une place significative dans les romans de l'auteur africain vu que sa formation est intimement liée à l'influence du colonialisme sur la société africaine.

Le dossier contient aussi plusieurs articles qui explorent la position d'Henri Lopes dans la sphère du politique, mais également la façon dont on le perçoit sur un plan littéraire. Or ces deux champs interfèrent souvent. Comme la plupart des études à propos de la position d'Henri Lopes sur le plan culturel font aussi référence au colonialisme et, par défaut, à la décolonisation, la dernière section du dossier inclut aussi des articles qui interrogent la place de la théorie de la décolonisation dans le contexte littéraire actuel. Dans la même aire thématique, Adélia da Silva Mathias, dans son article « La formation de la pensée décoloniale », présente un bref excursus historique de la théorie de la décolonisation en soulignant trois aspects essentiels : la race, le racisme et la pensée liminaire qui est très présente dans les relectures de la colonisation. L'étude de Sarah Burnautzki (« Quelques observations

critiques ») insiste sur le problème racial, très présent dans les recherches, qui lorsque la discussion est posée en termes de différence, implique automatiquement un rapport d'inégalité. Les décolonisés recourent à la désobéissance épistémique pour changer la sémantique du débat, mais non sa nature ; ainsi, la pensée décoloniale a sa propre trajectoire théorique. En guise de conclusion, Sarah Burnautzki considère que cette question de la pensée décoloniale suppose des points de tension dans son parcours théorique, mais non dans son domaine pratique.

La revue présente aussi une section « Varias » qui réunit une série d'articles restant dans le même champ thématique – celui de la culture africaine – qu'ils abordent pourtant différemment. Marine Cellier consacre une étude à « l'imaginaire diasporique » dans quelques textes représentatifs par le biais de la théorie de « l'Atlantique noir » proposée par Paul Gilroy, comme espace de la diaspora noire. De son côté, Alioune Diaw analyse la manière dont l'écriture du voyage est conçue dans le roman *Dahij* de Felwine Sarr, à travers une formule scripturale qui devient plutôt une modalité d'analyse intérieure en rapport avec les éléments sociaux du monde oriental.

Par les thématiques abordées, les études réunies dans ce 45^e numéro de la revue *Études Littéraires Africaines* reconstruisent une autre image du contexte africain sur le plan littéraire international. Elles essayent ainsi, avec succès, d'accentuer l'actualité tout comme la complexité de la littérature africaine du XX^e siècle.

Denisa Bud

Adriana Georgescu, *La început a fost sfârșitul. Dictatura roșie la București*, traducere din franceză de Micaela Ghițescu, București, Humanitas, 2019



La collana *memorii | jurnale* della casa editrice Humanitas si arricchisce di un nuovo volume: *La început a fost sfârșitul. Dictatura roșie la București*, testimonianza di Adriana Georgescu, figura emblematica della resistenza antinazista e anticomunista romena.

Eccezionale nella sua cruda sinteticità *La început a fost sfârșitul* di A. Georgescu è stato pubblicato per la prima volta in Francia nel 1951 da Hachette. A firmare la traduzione in francese del testo fu Claude Pascal, pseudonimo dietro il quale si celava M. Lovinescu, che, nel marzo del 1991, a Parigi, scrisse il testo che sarebbe diventato l'introduzione al volume; poche pagine in cui era riuscita a sintetizzare la realtà degli esuli resistenti a Parigi e il desiderio di denuncia e rivalsa da cui scaturì il bisogno di scrivere, raccontare l'esperienza drammatica vissuta, in primis, da Adriana.

Il volume, apparso nella primavera del 2019, recupera integralmente il testo pubblicato per la prima volta da Humanitas nel 1992, accompagnato dalla sentita premessa redatta da M. Lovinescu. Non vi sono correzioni contenutistiche, gli interventi sul testo, minimi, sono limitati alla normalizzazione della grafia e alla correzione di alcuni refusi. Al testo pubblicato all'inizio degli anni Novanta sono state fatte due aggiunte degne di nota: il

breve ringraziamento dell'autrice, redatto per la seconda edizione del 1999 apparsa ad opera della Editura Fundației Culturale Memoria, e un dossier fotografico.

Scritto nella soffitta parigina in cui viveva la Lovinescu, spazio di confessioni e di elaborazione, in cui i ricordi della Georgescu si scontravano con il presente e confluivano sulla pagina in un'assordante denuncia, prima testimonianza di un'esperienza carcerale al di là del muro di silenzio eretto dai regimi comunisti, *La început a fost sfârșitul* ha una voce chiara, giornalistica.

M. Lovinescu racconta come le pagine scritte di getto dalla Georgescu finissero nel fuoco immediatamente dopo essere state tradotte in francese, come se la scrittura e la distruzione fisica del ricordo potessero liberarla da un fardello esperienziale che l'avrebbe accompagnata per il resto della sua esistenza. Proprio per questo motivo ci troviamo a confrontarci con una versione del testo "mediata", tradotta in lingua romena dal francese da M. Ghițescu.

Autrice e protagonista di questo volume è Adriana Georgescu: volontaria in ospedale, laureata in giurisprudenza, avvocato in erba, reporter, capoufficio del generale Rădescu, resistente antinazista e convinta anticomunista, detenuta politica, esule.

In poco meno di trecento pagine A. Georgescu condensa una sequenza significativa non solo della propria esistenza, ma anche della storia della propria patria. La sua testimonianza redatta con la limpidezza e la concisione tipica della scrittura giornalistica è caratterizzata dal rincorrersi continuo e costante di attimi, giornate, date definitive: momenti che hanno determinato il completo rovesciamento della sua esistenza.

La narrazione copre un lasso temporale di poco più di cinque anni, tuttavia il testo è stato organizzato in tre macrosequenze strutturalmente, cronologicamente e tematicamente identificabili. La prima parte *La început a fost sfârșitul* costituisce un incipit narrativo, l'inizio della fine, dall'estate del 1943 all'insediamento del governo Groza, da critico cinematografico ricercata dai nazisti a reporter politico e membro dell'ufficio di Rădescu. Fulcro della narrazione è *Subsemnata, declar...* in cui la Georgescu ricostruisce inchiesta e inscenamento del processo intentato contro l'organizzazione terroristica T (1945-1947), infine, in *Niciodată trandafirii nu au fost atât de albaștri*, l'autrice ricostruisce l'attività della rete anticomunista bucarestina (1947-1948).

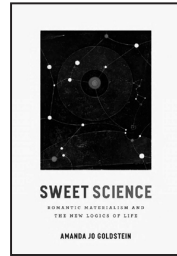
Perfetto esempio di quell'idea di autenticità, di veridicità, su cui si fonda la moderna memorialistica, il volume di memorie *La început a fost sfârșitul* costituisce un toccante esempio di trasposizione del vissuto traumatico. In bilico tra storia e memoria, tra documento e ricordo, tra giornale e diario, tra oggettività e soggettività, questa testimonianza diviene mezzo catartico, scrittura esperienziale dall'innegabile valore documentario, richiesta di guardare al di là della Cortina.

Arrestata, torturata, sopravvissuta, Adriana Georgescu, simbolo della lotta al comunismo, non rivendica l'eccezionalità della propria esperienza, ma, in un tentativo estremo, sceglie di usare ancora una volta, consapevolmente, la propria voce e la propria penna per combattere, per denunciare. Con la dignità che la contraddistingue, Adriana racconta l'indicibile, il proprio vissuto, non solo per esorcizzare le proprie paure, ma anche e soprattutto

come denuncia, come richiesta di presa di coscienza, come inno alla libertà.

Jessica Andreoli

Amanda Jo Goldstein,
*Sweet Science –
Romantic Materialism
and the New Logics of
Life*, Chicago Scholarship
Online, 2018



In her critical debut, Goldstein combines the poetic studies of Percy's "poetry of life" as well as William Blake's poetry of embryogenesis with the lives of impressive scientific figures such as Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, Erasmus Darwin and J.G. Herder. Moreover, she sheds light on Goethe's journals on Morphology, which helped her elaborate the first study on the materialist and mortal dimension of Romantic biopoetics, creating a parallel between Marx's future historical materialism and the materialism of nature espoused by Enlightenment thinkers.

In Goldstein's vision, biological life is dependent on mutual processes that give it a real and recognizable dimension, arguing against the belief that such life could be self-organized or independent. Poetry plays an essential role in the communication of empirical relationships, as demonstrated by her analysis of Lucretius's *De rerum natura*. The first part of the book concentrates on a concept that was encapsulated in William's Blake's phrase "sweet science". In order to introduce the reader and the researcher to the philosophical,

literary and disciplinary histories necessary for comprehending the argument of the study, Goldstein provides a series of examples such as: Harder's claim that "our whole life is, physiologically speaking, poetics" and Karl Marx's early praise of Lucretius for depicting the concept of "embodied time". This introduction masterfully describes the dimensions of Lucretian poetic materialism: the logic of associative emergence through which Lucretius upholds the notion of existence outside of theological organization, as well as the peculiar ways in which his text uses figurative expressions to capture the basic action and passion of matter.

One of the most skillfully researched chapters focuses on the meanings of material semiotics and figurations by using Goethe's poem "Permanence in Chance". A great part of this chapter pleads for the atomist sign in its mutual capacity of being a verbal figure as well as a sensation, eluding Paul de Man's distinction between allegory and symbol in Romantic figurations. The other part of this chapter explores the way in which semiotic and figurative strategies support Goethe experimental probings of what he called "tender Empiricism". By bringing a critique to the Kantian epistemology used by the Romantic poets to explain Romantic practices of aesthetic and scientific observation, Goethe re-signified "objectivity" to mean "a knower's vulnerability to transformation by the object under view".

The chapter that concentrates on Shelley's poem "The Mask of Anarchy" puts the value of "tender" and "sweet" poetic science to the test of material exploitation. Goldstein suggests that the poem presents the Waterloo Massacre

as an event of natural history because by naturalizing the disaster, natural history enables the poem to navigate between emotional communication and structural analysis. However, the poem seems to have a political dimension as well, by using a radical pedagogy as a means to make a point clear. Still, the poet uses this tradition in order to bring to light the great difference between embodied power and parliamentary freedom of speech.

All the book's chapters situate the Romantic poetic vision in and around the question of natural "life", alternating the materialisms of nature associated with Enlightenment science and the emergent nineteenth-century science of historical materialism. Goldstein's last chapter proves that Marx used a model of counter-disciplinary materialism that proposed figurative speech as a means to be used in history, biology and rhetoric.

By analyzing the influences and similarities of the poetics and the scientific theories described above, Goldstein's study reached its purpose in proposing a new vision of materialism and nature in both poetry and science. I would highly recommend this book for scholars in the fields of semiotics, philosophy, politics and English Literature as it offers a comprehensive picture of the way poetry and science can intersect and create a harmonious vision.

Gabriela Danilescu

Dan Gulea, *Nouă tipuri de lectură. Cu o excursie în critica (și teoria) literară*, București, Cartea Românească, 2018



Starting with the observation regarding today's critical tendencies of approaching literature from extratextual perspectives, which, implicitly, denounce the autonomy of the aesthetics promoted by (neo)modernist critique, Dan Gulea proposes nine such "alternatives" of reading, examining several Romanian writers from different literary periods, while also dealing with works of other universally acknowledged writers. The book's chapters are, however, essays and literary studies published in different literary magazines or on the author's personal blog in the period between 2007 and 2017.

In his *Argument*, the author pleads for the necessity of openness in the Romanian critical discourse towards mixed approaches, by bringing arguments from the so-called controversy at the end of the twentieth century between the literary critics Nicolae Manolescu (a neo-modernist critic and historian of literature) and Ion Bogdan Lefter (a postmodernist writer, literary critic and one of the promoters of postmodernism in Romanian literature), a dispute which illustrates the necessity of shifting the focus inside the sphere of Romanian literary criticism from the "autonomism" of the neo-modernists towards the multiple connections promoted by postmodernist critique. Thus, Dan Gulea lists several such possible openings

of critical discourse, which he claims he is going to handle in the following chapters: from psychoanalytical, literary, mythic-archetypal, biographical, ideological, imagological approach, to reading from the perspective of today's customs in text, queer studies, as well as the so-called non-textual approach. Although the purpose announces itself from the very beginning as a bold one, the essays themselves do not prove so valuable after all, if we take a look at the analysis of the texts and contexts of the targeted works of literature.

For example, the first chapter suggests that the reading of *Amintiri din copilărie* by Ion Creangă (prose writer from the second half of the 19th century, acclaimed for the aforementioned autobiographical work) should be done from a psychoanalytical perspective. Starting from the subtitle, *Livia Maiorescu & Alice Liddell*, the author compares the life and works of Ion Creangă with those of Lewis Carroll, trying to prove the similarities between the two. Furthermore, Gulea states that the universe of the *Amintiri* is a violent one par excellence, a hypothesis exemplified through a variety of quotes, reviewed in a shallow way, bringing nothing new compared to the already established literary studies of the likes of Dan Grădinaru or Valeriu Cristea. Later in the study, the author offers a long and unnecessary description of the life of Livia Maiorescu (the daughter of Titu Maiorescu, literary critic from the second half of the 19th century, the one who laid the actual foundation of Romanian literary critique) who, the author speculates, inspired Ion Creangă, although our author brings no valid arguments in this regard.

In the second chapter, the author proposes a *literal reading* of the poetry of

Bacovia. However, without settling on an exclusively literally reading, the analysis exhibits ideas already discussed regarding the symbolist poet, such as: the poetry of the loss of language; a world of bizarre creatures; the intertwining of the mineral layer with the vegetal one and so on. *The mythic-archetypal reading* brings into discussion *Străina*, the last novel of Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, a modernist writer of the interwar period. After a considerable descriptive section, the archetypal reading can be summed up to approaching the characters through the light of some animal symbols: the leopard and the horse, again insufficiently justified.

The biographical reading targets not the writer, but the character Mateiu Caragiale, an exponent of Decadentism in Romanian literary history, who appears in several novels which Gulea, again, summarizes. A few rewritings of *Craii de Curtea-Veche* are mentioned, and the so-called biographical reading can be summed up by Ion Vianu's affirmation from *Investigații mateine*, according to which, due to the relationship with his father, the writer would be emotionally undeveloped; hence, the projection of a decadent fictional universe.

The ideological reading is saved for the poet Ezra Pound, although the chapter is rather descriptive. The political context of the time is presented, following a discussion of Pound's poetry, which is not even partially analyzed through the ideological perspective. In the chapter *Fashion and Literature*, Gulea illustrates almost exclusively the importance of the monocle for the avant-garde artists, as well as the way they used to dress. *Queer studies* settles on *Vampirul* by Gherasim Luca, a poet and theorist of surrealism. According to

our author, the text would contain essential data about the Romanian surrealist group. The essay about *imagological reading* focuses on Mihail Șolohov, while *non-textual reading* explains the connections between the readymade and the poet Șerban Foarță, considered by Gulea as the very inventor of the readymade in Romanian literature. Without exemplifying another type of reading, the chapter *Note pentru o monografie: Mircea Cărtărescu* provides statistics regarding the recurrence of other writers' names in the poetry of Cărtărescu, one of the most important Romanian postmodernist authors, several notes about his poetry, as well as some reviews for the trilogy *Orbitorul* and the novel *Solenoid*.

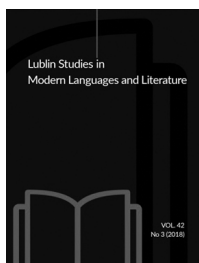
The last section of the volume returns to recent critical discourse, enthusiastically announced in the *Argument*, open to reviewing the Romanian literary canon from unique perspectives, such as: *O istorie literară a vinului în România* by Răzvan Voncu, *Istoria secretă a literaturii române* by Cornel Ungureanu, *Pași pe graniță* by Romanița Contantinescu and so on. The chapters of this section are no more than reviews of the mentioned literary studies.

The repeated incongruity between titles and the texts in themselves proves that the aims of the essays were different at the moment of their writing, thereupon the author launching the hypothesis of "new types of reading" in order to fit essays, reviews and literary studies in this category. Although his premises are indeed daring, even vital for contemporary literary research, the volume does not meet expectations because of the insufficiency of the argumentation and the deficient connections between information and analysis, the author lacking a taste for demonstrations and

value judgements. The texts, consisting in a large proportion of data already known to the authorized reader, address the large public especially.

Mia Biligan

Lublin Studies in Modern Languages and Literature, vol. 42, n° 3, « Penser l'eau dans les lettres belges francophones (1830-2017) », Lublin, Université Maria Curie-Skłodowska, 2018



Fondée en 1976, *Lublin Studies in Modern Languages and Literature* est une revue internationale à comité de lecture qui vise à publier des recherches littéraires et linguistiques, tout comme des études sur la traduction ou l'enseignement des langues étrangères modernes.

Le troisième numéro de la revue, publié par l'Université Maria Curie-Skłodowska, débute par une préface de Renata Bizek-Tatara, la coordonnatrice de ce volume, consacré à la représentation de l'eau chez les écrivains belges, car « partout à travers leurs œuvres, elle impose sa présence de sorte que nous pouvons avoir l'illusion de son omniprésence. Apparente ou clandestine, simple ou composée, elle irrigue la texture narrative de leurs ouvrages jusqu'à devenir leur substance de base, leur composante essentielle » (p. 1).

La publication de ce numéro représente, comme le souligne la coordinatrice,

« une première incursion » dans l'analyse des œuvres placées sous le signe aquatique, « étant donné que jusqu'à ce jour, il n'existe pas d'ouvrage consacré au thème de l'eau dans les lettres belges francophones » (p. 3).

Un premier article signé par Wiesław Mateusz Malinowski se focalise sur la poétique de Georges Rodenbach. Associée aux figures d'Ophélie et de Narcisse, l'eau devient dans son œuvre l'incarnation d'une séductrice *sui generis* qui attire ses contemplateurs dans les plus profondes méditations sur la vie intérieure. De son côté, Vincent Radermecker, dans une étude dédiée à Émile Verhaeren, Maurice Maeterlinck et Jean Louvet, voit des réminiscences chrétiennes dans l'association « eau / mort » toujours présente dans leurs écrits.

Le comité de rédaction a également retenu deux articles appartenant aux doctorants du Centre d'Études des Lettres Belges de Langue Française de l'Université Babeş-Bolyai de Cluj-Napoca. Daniela-Anastasia Pop se penche sur le roman *Madame Orpha* de Marie Gevers pour y examiner la symbolique de l'eau, en étroite relation avec la dimension autobiographique du texte, identifiant également certaines fonctions de cet élément, telles que « source de vie » ou « moyen de purification et centre de régénérescence ». Anamaria Lupan explore les essais yourcenariens pour y surprendre les multiples valences de l'eau : humaines et mythologiques, mais aussi des valeurs métaphoriques, voire philosophiques. Sous la plume de Marguerite Yourcenar, l'eau devient « une œuvre d'art », « un spectacle en soi », « une leçon de liberté », de « puissance

de l'adaptation », qui « invite à l'étonnement, au miracle de la vie ».

À son tour, Judyta Niedokos s'intéresse également aux différentes représentations de l'élément aquatique, mais son point de départ est l'univers théâtral de Michel de Ghelderode. L'eau devient un symbole ambivalent, menace et salut, les réflexions étant structurées autour de ces deux pôles qui sont constamment opposés.

Du théâtre au roman policier, Lilla Horányi poursuit cette approche des acceptions négatives de l'eau. Son étude, consacrée au roman *Long cours* de Georges Simenon, examine la manière dont l'écrivain belge enchaîne les images violentes de l'eau dans ce roman pour amplifier les sensations – de malaise, de froid, d'angoisse ou d'étouffement – et pour traduire l'échec de l'expérience exotique du héros.

Des fonctions similaires sont identifiées par Marie Giraud-Claude-Lafontaine à partir d'une analyse comparative entre *La neige était sale* de Georges Simenon et *Warna ou le poids de la neige* de Paul Willems. Aussi bien dans le roman que dans la pièce de théâtre, les métamorphoses de la neige transfigurent les effets dévastateurs d'une guerre sans fin. Même si la légère chute de flocons crée l'illusion de sérénité, la neige dure et sale suggère le désespoir, la culpabilité, l'abus, la violence, la souffrance.

Les diverses manifestations aquatiques, présentes dans beaucoup de pièces de théâtre willemsiennes, attirent l'attention de Renata Jakubczuk. Elle nous propose un regroupement thématique « allant de l'eau métonymique, en passant par l'eau métaphorique et symbolique, pour arriver à l'eau anthropomorphe ». Dans tous ces

cas, la conception dichotomique de l'eau reste évidente. Vue comme « un élément générateur et destructeur à la fois », elle peut devenir d'un « pur ... symbole de la liberté » et d'une « métaphore de l'amour et du bonheur », une eau « hostile et menaçante », donnant naissance au besoin d'isolement, à la solitude absolue et aux craintes les plus profondes.

Le cadre maritime est souvent intégré dans les récits fictionnels du romancier francophone Jean Muno, comme le remarque si bien Isabelle Moreels. À partir d'éléments biographiques et autoréférentiels de l'écrivain, l'étude nous révèle l'ancrage diégétique maritime par lequel l'auteur évoque le « retour à la bienheureuse vacuité temporelle, à l'insouciance de l'enfance », mais aussi « les fantasmes douloureux du narrateur ».

Les articles « Les motifs de l'eau dans *Ludo* de Conrad Detrez », signé par Agnieszka Kukuryk, et « Les paysages aquatiques de Vera Feyder » de Judyta Zbierska-Mościcka parviennent à compléter toutes ces analyses détaillées sur la valeur symbolique de l'eau dans l'imaginaire des écrivains belges.

Renata Bisek-Tatara propose également une étude sur l'élément aquatique dans deux textes d'inspiration fantastique : *Médua* de Maurice Carême et *La Grande Pitié de la famille Zintram* d'Anne Richter. Au niveau diégétique, l'influence maléfique que subissent les personnages favorise leur métamorphose et leur décadence physique et mentale.

Tandis que l'objectif de l'article rédigé par Anna Maziarczyk est d'analyser diverses représentations de l'eau dans le cycle de Marie de Jean-Philippe Toussaint et les effets textuels qu'elles

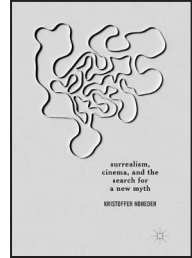
produisent, celui de Przemysław Szczur se focalise sur les formes et les fonctions du motif aquatique dans l'économie narrative du roman autofictionnel *À l'ombre des gouttes* de Saber Assal. La nouveauté de ce dernier est donnée par le fait que le texte appartient au courant postcolonial de la littérature belge et il est intéressant d'observer comment l'auteur relie ce motif au sujet postcolonial de l'époque contemporaine. Le volume se clôt sur l'analyse d'Alicja Ślusarska qui nous révèle une autre facette de cet élément, découvert dans l'odyssée du *Saumon noir* de Serge Delaive, à savoir l'eau perçue comme un tissu cicatriciel.

L'importance du volume consiste notamment dans la complexité des approches et la richesse du corpus mis en discussion. On est néanmoins surpris de constater l'omission de certains auteurs, dont l'œuvre est indissolublement liée à l'élément aquatique, comme par exemple Jean-Luc Outers.

Sans prétendre à l'exhaustivité, cette publication ouvre de nouvelles pistes de lecture. L'eau, en tant que thème fédérateur, irrigue et fertilise une impressionnante diversité générique : nouvelle, roman régional ou policier, théâtre expressionniste, essais, récits fantastiques, autobiographies. En outre, envisagé dans une perspective diachronique, le volume jalonne les étapes importantes de l'histoire des lettres belges, allant du symbolisme à l'extrême contemporain.

Iulia Roxana Georgiu

Kristoffer Noheden,
*Surrealism, Cinema
and the Search
for a New Myth*,
Palgrave Macmillan,
Basingstoke,
Hampshire, 2017



Surrealism, Cinema and the Search for a New Myth by Kristoffer Noheden is an important research on the impact of the surrealist cinema on postwar surrealism, when great personalities such as André Breton, Luis Buñuel, and Salvador Dalí created a new perspective for perceiving and interpreting art, as well as stronger symbols and signifiers in their strive for freedom and “hopes of healing the world.”

The book is organized in four chapters preceded by an introduction. In my opinion, the introduction should be read with great interest especially by those who are less initiated in the surrealist aesthetic programme. The most important outlines are clearly explained and the reader is familiarized with important terms and definitions such as “the new myth” and its necessity, magic, and esotericism. “The new myth” means “less an invention of a new doctrine than a cultivation of a new sensibility permeated with magic.”

The book has its starting point in André Breton’s organizing a large exhibition in Paris in 1947, named “Le Surréalisme en 1947.” It was meant to be an initiatory journey, as surrealists had developed a range of new interests during the war. In organizing the exhibition, they addressed all forms of art: paintings, literature,

especially poetry, and film. In a later publication, Breton mentioned the connection between cinema and the new orientation of surrealism as they frequently evoke magic and occultism in their search for the new myth. The author mentions that “occultism is a heterogeneous” current that “belongs to the larger field of Western esotericism.”

“The Artist-Magician as Filmmaker: Wilhelm Freddie’s Films and the New Myth” is the chapter dedicated entirely to the Danish artist, who had also been invited to participate in “Surréalisme en 1947.” Not everything went as expected, but the event had such a strong impact on him that Freddie changed forever his perspective and attitude towards his own work. That was the moment when Freddie entered “his self-proclaimed esoteric period”, when he took on the role of an artist-magician. From now on, he would reconsider radical politics in a freethinking manner, becoming more receptive to myth and magic.

The Definite Rejection of a Request for a Kiss and *Eaten Horizons* were produced together with the filmmaker Jørgen Roos in 1949 and 1950. As they are depicted in this chapter, the films may be considered masterpieces of the genre – they are full of symbols and significant elements acquired through the succession of still and moving pictures that the reader can navigate through making use of the irrational power of association. The author explains how the two films relate to magic, occultism, and surrealism’s search for a new myth, and thus he brings into discussion Walter Benjamin, Eliphas Lévi, and André Breton.

The third chapter, “Initiation into the New Myth: Primitivism and Poetics

in the Surrealist Documentary Film”, underlines the manifestations of surrealist myth and magic in the documentary short films *L’Invention du monde* and *Quetzalcoatl, le serpent emplumé*. The films were made by Jean-Louis Bédouin and Michel Zimbacca, with narratives written by the poet Benjamin Péret. The chapter places the films in relation to the surrealist contribution to the documentary film, and discusses how they bring into play a surrealist poetics with a primitivism reformulated under the influence of surrealism’s search for a new myth. *L’Invention du monde* provides the spectator with a disorienting journey lined with statues, objects and artefacts of non-Western origin. As in Freddie’s films, it is conceived as a combination of narrated mythological extracts with a rapid montage of moving and still images. Both *L’Invention du monde* and *Quetzalcoatl, le serpent emplumé* focus on the mythical relations between the human and the world “as a communal treatment of trauma conducted through an affirmation of the imagination.” The snake and the bird are of great importance as they become symbols of earth and air. The plumed serpent god Quetzacoatl represents the two elements and the union of the opposites. The theme of rebirth and renewal, the sacrifice that the god makes annually for the survival of the world is one of the favorite themes in the documentary. Caribbean surrealists, including Aimé and Suzanne Césaire, and the surrealist occultist Pierre Mabille are significant names in this development.

In the chapter “Surrealism Is What Will Be: Nelly Kaplan’s Myths of Revenge”, the author depicts how Nelly

Kaplan's feature films bring the surrealist search for a new myth into a new historical context as well as into a new film format. Kaplan is most well known as a pioneering feminist filmmaker, but this chapter shows that her films also contributed to the surrealist search for a new myth and a magical transformation of society. Kaplan made her feature film debut, "A Very Curious Girl", at a time when several surrealists, including Ado Kyrou and Robert Benayoun, turned to feature filmmaking, under the influence of Luis Buñuel's late films. Kaplan combines an appeal to popular genres with narratives about revenge against patriarchy in ways that resonate with surrealism's new myth. Kaplan gives up the overly serious art-film traditions and chooses the pleasure of popular culture. Her preference is clearly expressed in her affirmation that: "When I tell stories I prefer to avoid neorealism, because you can be much more universal through myth."

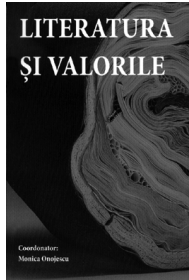
The final chapter, "Magic Art and Minor Myths: Jan Švankmajer's Transmutation of Material Reality", discusses the Czech animator, artist, and filmmaker Jan Švankmajer's work in relation to his cultivation of a personal mythology, his interest in alchemy, and his desire to create a magic art. The author places Švankmajer's films in the context of other surrealist uses of animation, including those of Jan Lenica and Walerian Borowczyk, but he suggests that they are best understood in relation to his own work across multiple art forms. The chapter shows that Švankmajer negotiates between Czechoslovak surrealism's focus on concrete irrationality and French surrealism's assertion of the importance of myth and magic. The result is a creation of minor myths that can be

understood as instances of what Gaston Bachelard calls the material imagination. Two films are analyzed in this chapter in order to sustain the author's perspective on Švankmajer's view on filmmaking: *Historia Naturae, Suita* (1967) and *The Flat* (1968). The first one is a wild and sarcastic story that shows stuffed animals and other objects being brought to life and the other one is a claustrophobic description of a flat in which everything comes to life, purposefully undermining their received order and function. We also find out that Švankmajer is a prolific artist, making collages and mediumistic drawings. Indeed, despite his extensive film production, he insists that he has never considered himself a filmmaker. He claims that he rather sees himself as a "poet", regardless of the medium, since: "There's only one poetry, and whichever tools or methods you use, poetics is all one."

In conclusion, this research is not only a factual presentation of some great personalities and their work in the field of surrealist cinematography, but also a well written and accessible study even for the uninitiated reader. The author manages to bring together the most important ideas underpinning the Surrealist movement, easing the reader's way into sometimes shocking creations and giving the reader the necessary tools to understand the experimental films in the spirit of their creators.

Sabina Ioana Popa

Monica Ojonescu (ed.),
Literatura și valorile
 [Literature and Values],
 Casa Cărții de știință,
 Cluj-Napoca, 2018



This volume has as its starting point the seventeenth edition of the National Symposium of Didactics of Romanian Literature and Language held in Cluj (5-7 May 2017), where the general discussion theme was Romanian literature teaching, its origins, and the conveyance of its values. This work proposes an analysis of presently controversial subjects regarding literature teaching and study in Romanian schools, aiming to provide solutions for an improvement of the education process. In this regard, alleviating the patterns elaborated around literature by ethics and didactics, teaching can be pushed towards perceiving literature as an autonomous instance which can express itself independently of such constructs.

The usage of algorithmic analysis in the interpretation of texts by canonical authors pervades Romanian high schools as a symptom of the transmutation of literary values themselves from the organic to the artificial. The paper illustrates how, mistakenly so, the emphasis in secondary and high schools is not placed on the study of literature through its aesthetical and cultural value, or through the inherent value of its fictional universes (corresponding, in terms of the formative role of literature, to the intra- and inter-personal development of each), but on the identification of patterned aspects through a structuralist type

of inquiry, which limits the reading experience and therefore fails to account for the authentic virtues of literature.

Ingeniously structured into chapters concerning the ethical, affective and intellectual dimensions through which literature, in its formative role, can assist the development of students, and sustained by suggestive drawings, schemes and graphics for the initiated pedagogues, this study aims to discover an appropriate way of harmonizing the sensibility of today's youth with literature. In this sense, Brândușa Chelariu's article "Literature and the adolescents' need for meaning" observes how the subjective truths of literature will not substantially change the reader, but enrich his conscience and cement his own approach to and perception of the world. By proposing the coordinates of F.M. Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* as an application of this hypothesis, the article explains that the multitude of fictional experiences lived by characters with an intricate psychology provides keys of interpretation that are problematic and nuanced. Given these keys, the reader is thus able to extract and integrate new coordinates into his pre-formed ideas about human experience, presuming that the information conveyed by the author is not regarded as an absolute truth. Following the latter assumption, the literary epiphany will therefore be subject to the individuality of each reader. From this manner of offering pedagogical solutions regarding the reception, internalization and teaching of literature it is possible to recall Wittgenstein's vision on one's self: "The philosophical self is [...] the limit of the world – not a part of it".

Interestingly, the study also approaches the formative coordinate of literature by

establishing a relationship with the current sensibility of youth. Therefore, considering the nature of such an association, the focus of pedagogical solutions is now shifted towards the empirical. In the chapter “Forming values from the pupil’s perspective”, Simona Achimescu derives conclusions from samples of student questionnaires, observing how especially negative models have an influential role in the lives of young schoolchildren. Thus, at the level of literature conveyance, values may also be indirectly transmitted, justifying the introduction in the curriculum of more thought-provoking reading material. Literature does not require a didacticist approach; it requires to be received and perceived through its own intentions, since, intrinsically and indirectly, it awakens, depending on each sensibility, various virtues in readers.

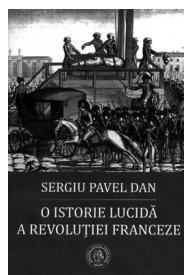
Another central and intriguing issue is delineating the problem of contemporary literature, almost inexistent in the curriculum, depriving pupils of a problematic and up to date literature that challenges the reader and brings him out of his comfort zone. The Romanian literature teaching style adopted in schools does not instill the values of tolerance and multiculturalism, since it is presented in vitro, outside of the international literary context, according to Alex Goldiș’s report in the current study. In his view, contemporary literature brings up new issues, impossible to ignore in the present society, and has a great chance of appealing to students, through the nonchalance with which they are treated. On the same note, and referring to the model established by the 2000’s writers, which have been marginalized by the curriculum, Alex Goldiș states that “poetry is not always about abstract matters, about

far-away problems, solely about symbols and metaphors” (in the original: “poezia nu este întotdeauna doar despre lucruri abstracte, despre probleme îndepărtate, doar despre simboluri și metafore”).

My conclusion, thus, is that the study under discussion would prove useful to professors, literature specialists, individuals interested in the philosophy of values and culture, secondary school and high school teachers. Coherently and rigorously covering a vast area of interest, the collection of studies edited by Monica Onojescu proves the need to discard the current patterns of literature reception and proposes new, innovative solutions, which are supported by pertinent arguments, towards extracting the whole formative potential of literature.

Sabina Ioana Popa

Sergiu Pavel Dan,
*O istorie lucidă a
Revoluției Franceze*,
Cluj-Napoca, Editura
Școala Ardeleană, 2018



Reading the latest work by Sergiu Pavel Dan, a lucid history of the French Revolution, the author’s name is required as a record of criticism and literary history in the Romanian literary space. The levels of memory on which literary work is intertwined reveal the epic crest of the events that have been caught up in the French Revolution.

The book is divided into six chapters, which progressively deal with the events

that took place between 1789 and 1799. What is truly remarkable is the author's honest reporting of the events to his readers; Sergiu Pavel Dan has made an enormous documenting effort, and yet the book does not sacrifice the fluency of the narrative on the altar of academic discourse. The literary historian knows how to talk about people and places and provide statistics without getting stuck in them. Sergiu Pavel Dan does not preach, but leaves the facts to speak for themselves and confines himself to an ironic condemnation of barbarity.

The history of the French Revolution is sometimes portrayed with a conglomerate of clichés, which accelerates untold, told and rejected truths. What we find in the pages of the present work is a story about the history of material facts. The result is a universal chronicle of the lives of ordinary people, but also of those in power, an account that captures, in an original manner, the diversity of human existence.

Stories have been told about a universal realism and cinematic pragmatism regarding the series of events that took place between 1789-1799. The author's remarkable contribution to the exposure of these historical revelations is the marginal direction outlined by the recovery of the density of life.

Only who has looked through the lenses of lucidity can read the history of the French Revolution reported by Sergiu Paul Dan with a playful sense. The author forces the reconstruction of complementary worlds. The construction of reality in this volume is a credible one, since it is one that follows the polymorphism of the worlds at that time. The French Revolution represents, through the narrator's lens, a particle accelerator.

At the stylistic level, we find an emergence of the *then discourse*, which builds a fictional grammar of those times. The reader is witnessing a new reality in which the tensions are framed in an ethical paradigm of French space.

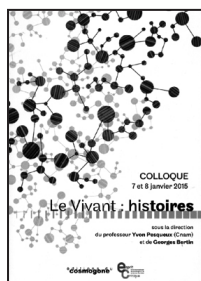
Appealing to the instinctive irony, Sergiu Pavel Dan perceives a society of the spectacle with grotesque accents, a society whose foundation is superficial. In this respect it is worth mentioning the slogan "The Republic does not need scholars" (p. 67). This reply came in response to the chemist Antoine-Laurent Lavoisier, who was sentenced to death and who demanded to be allowed to complete his last experiment before he was served his capital punishment. The episode is one with self-referential aim. The ostracization, the liquidation of enlightened scholars during the republic are rendered by a kind of absurd aesthetics, re-enacting cinematographic images with minimalist authenticity. Their enumeration seems to appeal to the DIY technique, thus rendering a scenario that brings the artifact to the surface with a specific naturalness.

The intentional association of the volume with Eugène Ionesco's creation is based on the antitotalitarian foundation that existed at the beginning of their writing. The lucid, experimental vision seems to suggest to the reader a vertiginous look towards the future, while the narrator's gaze turns to a past with which he polemizes.

His investigation consists in synthesizing and conceptualizing a discarded history in which a lucid approach is needed. In other words, the corpus of these historical facts is rethought by Sergiu Pavel Dan in terms of membership and representation.

Ana-Maria Parasca

Yvonne Pesqueux,
Georges Bertin (éds.),
Le vivant : Histoires
(colloque organisé par
le CNAM Pays de la
Loire), Lyon, Éditions
du Cosmogone, 2016



La question posée par la matérialisation d'un récit est celle de l'adéquation (ou pas) entre un modèle et le récit proposé, récit qui se réfère à des actes. Il est donc question ici, en partant de la notion de « cycle de vie d'un produit », du processus de construction d'une représentation et du risque de l'effet de composition « modèle-récit » qui viendrait figer cette représentation en faisant comme s'il s'agissait du vivant. Les récits constitutifs du modèle du « cycle de vie » induisent les effets attendus, c'est-à-dire la représentation naturaliste d'un produit comme s'il s'agissait d'un être vivant. Les discours sur le cycle de vie peuvent être considérés comme des actes propositionnels, des actes illocutoires et des actes perlocutoires. Des liaisons s'établissent entre sens, modèle et action, discours et écriture. Le « cycle de vie du produit » occulte les dualités des « modèles d'interprétation » en les confondant. La notion de « cycle de vie du produit » sert les structures élémentaires de l'organisation qui se cachent alors derrière les mythes. La question que cela pose alors au discours courant est celle du caractère général ou de la langue véhiculaire, la rattachant au discours professionnel de caractère particulier.

Dans les sociétés traditionnelles, la relation au vivant se confondait avec celle

au sacré, dans des démarches de propitiation ou de mise à distance des forces naturelles tant internes qu'externes. Famille, tribus, clans, communautés naturelles ont appris à vivre ensemble se basant sur leur respect réciproque. Il ne s'agit ni de devenir mouton, chèvre ou cheval, ni de se mettre à leur place, en s'imaginant d'un point de vue humain et à l'aide de références humaines ce que l'animal vit effectivement. Notre jugement concernant les animaux est fondé sur nos expériences directes avec les animaux, qui sont comparées et confrontées à ce que nous apprennent les sciences et la technique.

Les chercheurs en mécatronique et informatique sont encore fascinés par le modèle japonais de simulation cybernétique. Les robots dits « compagnons² » sont majoritairement anthropoïdes et le challenge du test dit « de Turing » reste pertinent. Rappelons-nous-en rapidement les termes ; un interlocuteur a affaire à deux entités : l'une d'entre elles est une machine, l'autre un être humain. Le test est considéré comme réussi si l'interlocuteur ne parvient pas à distinguer la machine entre ses deux inter-actants. On n'oubliera pas, au passage, que le test de Turing mettait en œuvre des opérations simplissimes et abstraites.

Pour un mécatronicien, une interaction doit pouvoir être totalement réductible à un modèle. Totalement, c'est-à-dire dans toutes ses composantes. Elle est réputée close, donc computable. Le modèle convoqué spontanément par les spécialistes en sciences naturelles et formelles c'est le modèle basique EMREC, émetteur-récepteur, complété par le dispositif de Norbert Wiener sur le feed-back ou la rétroaction et quelques autres variantes touchant aux contextes ou aux phénomènes de bruit. Un

exemple en serait le traitement du signal : contrôle, filtrage, analyse, compression, identification, prédiction, etc. La communication dans le cadre de ce modèle est considérée comme étant réussie lorsque le message A émis est identique au message B reçu ; et lorsqu'A peut être corrigé au cas où A est différent de B.

La notion d'innovation diffère du « nouveau », par son inscription organisationnelle. Dans le même ordre d'idée, soulignons aussi l'extensivité d'une notion qui déborde aujourd'hui le cadre des organisations pour voir son application étendue à la société. Elle diffère aussi d'un enracinement technologique, malgré l'articulation « étroite » qui varie entre les deux notions, valorisant ainsi une technologie qualifiée de « haute » dont on ne doit pas oublier qu'elle ne s'oppose pas en tant que telle à une technologie que l'on pourrait qualifier de « basse ». Elle diffère aussi de la notion de « création », même si l'on doit remarquer la perspective vitaliste qui lui est inhérente, la façon de valider l'innovation comme forme de transgression tranquille. Dans son acception vitaliste, l'innovation est marquée par l'idée d'une contingence visant la socialisation restreinte qui vaut dans l'organisation ; elle va procéder d'une démarche de réduction de l'incertitude par sa transformation en risque. C'est à ce titre que la référence à la création a d'abord conduit à la logique de modèles d'innovation linéaire (de l'idée au produit ...) pour déboucher aujourd'hui sur des conceptions interactionnistes et diffusionnistes de l'innovation. Dans les deux cas, l'enracinement est très entrepreneurial, dans une sorte de confusion « créateur – innovateur – entrepreneur ». C'est à ce titre que l'existence d'un éventuel modèle organisationnel

sous-tendu par l'innovation se dissout dans une acception entrepreneuriale.

L'innovation est un processus concret qui se planifie, qui est réalisable et qui doit s'adapter aux besoins de l'entreprise. L'innovation est un moyen d'atteindre ses objectifs stratégiques, d'améliorer sa compétitivité, de se différencier et de créer de la valeur. Le modèle du changement organisationnel est ainsi largement légitime comme un « processus » dans l'univers de ce qu'on appelle le développement organisationnel. C'est aussi ce qui vient fonder l'illusion du progrès, les organisations étant alors vues comme ne pouvant que fonctionner de mieux en mieux à partir d'un modèle d'idéal cumulatif.

Ainsi, se réinvente notre relation au vivant. Comme le souligne Yvonne Pesqueux, « explorer les mondes inventés par les humains, c'est comprendre que tout monde est une société du risque, ... que les peurs des hommes sont propres aux mondes qu'ils inventent, que chaque monde a ses peurs » ; car, parlant de peurs, on sait que chaque groupe estime les siennes rationnelles (logiques, justifiées par la réalité) et celles des autres irrationnelles. Question qui, en outre, constitue un véritable analyseur – au sens sociologique du terme – de la socialité contemporaine comme des interactions que l'humanité entretient entre les sphères vécues de la relation homme/société/monde. Le débat concernant nos conditions de vie imprègne la pensée occidentale et revisite notre rapport à un vivant vulnérable dont nous nous sentons désormais un peu plus responsables. Nous interrogeons notre interaction avec les environnements technologiques que nous avons créés (l'homme bionique) et ses conséquences, notamment au sujet

de nos systèmes éducatifs, quant à la fabrication artificielle de l'homme.

Mihaela-Georgeta Prodan

Teodora Prelipcean,
*Utopia. The Social
Imaginary between
Projection and Reality*,
Iași, Adenium, 2015



In her work *Utopia. The Social Imaginary between Projection and Reality*, Teodora Prelipcean offers a panoramic perspective on the literary genre known as *utopia*. The book puts together the most representative authors of this genre and reveals the common elements of utopian writings from Antiquity to the present, while showing how various societies were considered and described along the ages, as well as how all attempts to transpose the imaginary into reality have so far only failed. The author states that the purpose of the book is to provide a systematic reconstruction and thinking of utopias.

The book begins by clarifying the term *utopia* and it shows that the basis of its construction is imagination, specifying that imagination is not only a way to escape reality, but also the only method of revolting against its imperfection. Finding that our world is not the best possible world and that it can be modified to reach perfection has led to imagining utopian worlds. In a utopian worldview, the central element of social and political action

is man, who must be modelled on the criterion of moral righteousness. The author defines the utopias discussed in the book as representing “an effect of dissatisfaction with the organization of the society in which we live and carry on our activity... they formulate the need for partial or radical, socio-political, economic and cultural reformation of society.” She believes that the image of a society that aspires to be perfect is always different, depending on the inner structure of the one who imagines it.

Firstly, the center of her investigations are the illustrative writings in the field of philosophy and the attempts of the utopian socialists to restructure the society through new associations or workshops. Secondly, the book proposes some reading grids for two traditional utopias while emphasizing the special place they occupy on the utopian spectrum. Thus, she discusses in great detail *Utopia* by Thomas Morus and Francis Bacon’s *New Atlantis*. Not lastly, the author analyses the multiple social, political and economic aspects of socialist utopias and their proposals for reorganizing the society in order to establish a new order. As a result, she discusses Saint-Simon’s view of the way in which justice and peace between people can be established, the apology of the new “industrial system” in Robert Owen’s attempts to reform and reorganize the English industrial society, and, extensively, the way in which one of Charles Fourier’s disciples, Teodor Diamant, devised his utopian communities.

The book is organized in three chapters. Chapter I dwells on defining *utopia* and other related terms, as well as the

concepts of negative and positive utopia. This part includes an examination of the works considered as representative, and it lists a plethora of productions that have circulated under this name: philosophical, literary and social-political. The last part of this chapter shows some relevant features of these imaginary constructions, attributes that allow a discussion of *gender utopia*. Chapter II focuses on traditional utopias, their readings and multiple interpretations, while altogether proposing a well-informed reading. In particular, the *Utopia* imagined by Thomas Morus and *The New Atlantis* by Francis Bacon are analyzed in detail, but there are also mentions of Aristophanes's *Birds*, Plato's *Republic* or Campanella's *City of the Sun*. After the previous chapters briefly showed fragments of socialist utopia representatives (Charles Fourier, Robert Owen, Count of Saint-Simon and Claude-Henri de Rouvroy), socialists called retrospectively utopian by Marx and Engels, Chapter III presents some of the ideas of the first utopian socialists.

This book can be valuable for both scholars and uninitiated readers and it is the author's hope that each reader, depending on their particular interests, will find useful information, interpretative guidelines or interesting ideas in its pages. Furthermore, the book proposes well informed further readings and questions for future utopian studies.

Ionela Hiripan

România Orientale,
n. 31, A. Tarantino (a
cura di), *Città strane. Sguardi insoliti sullo spazio urbano*, Roma, Sapienza Università Editrice, 2018



Nel 2018, anno del trentennale della pubblicazione, *România Orientale*, rivista del Dipartimento di Studi Europei, Americani e Interculturali dell'Università Sapienza di Roma appare in una nuova e rinnovata veste grafica, pur mantenendo la propria vocazione scientifico-contenutistica.

Pubblicazione inizialmente dedicata al solo spazio rumeno si è progressivamente avvicinata alle discipline umanistiche nel loro complesso, superando i propri "limiti" e aprendosi verso più ampi spazi culturali. La rivista ha tuttavia mantenuto l'originaria struttura tripartita in *Contributi*, *Proposta di lettura* e *Note critiche e discussioni*.

Il numero 31 della rivista apparso a cura della direttrice Angela Tarantino è intitolato *Città strane. Sguardi insoliti sullo spazio urbano* e richiama tematicamente e strutturalmente il numero precedente, strettamente connesso al progetto di ricerca coordinato da A. Cosentino "Dislocazioni e spostamenti dell'espressione e del significato nelle società liberali del Novecento".

Trait d'union tra i due numeri sono alcuni concetti tipicamente novecenteschi, primo fra tutti quello della dislocazione, che diviene individualismo metodologico, prospettiva, sguardo su uno spazio urbano disgregato, alienato e alienante.

Nella Premessa al volume A. Tarantino scrive: “si è deciso di indagare la città nella prospettiva di uno sguardo dislocato che la leggesse per metterne in evidenza scarti, difformità, incertezze, ambiguità tanto sul piano della concretezza urbanistica quanto su quello di spazio smontato e riassembleto dalla scrittura letteraria”. Protagonista di questo volume multidisciplinare è infatti la città intesa come spazio urbano nella doppia accezione di *nonluogo* in senso antropologico, ma anche di area abitata da comunità complesse. La città non viene quindi analizzata, scomposta nei suoi elementi fisici elementari, ma ricostruita e reinterpretata a partire da una percezione singolare.

I contenuti del volume costituiscono un percorso di lettura attraverso il moderno concetto di geografia urbana muovendosi da uno spazio fisico, sociale ed economico concreto verso l'astrazione letteraria in cui il paesaggio urbano si configura nello sfondo entro il quale si sviluppa la narrazione, costruito capace di ridare unità alla frammentarietà. La città non viene quindi presentata soltanto in quanto configurazione topografica di un luogo, ma anche come dispositivo narrativo.

Il percorso di lettura proposto è anche itinerario geografico, circolare, attraverso l'Europa, in cui punto di partenza e d'arrivo coincidono. Epicentro intorno a cui si sviluppa l'itinerario di lettura su cui è costruito il volume è Bucarest, spazio urbano in divenire, indefinito, su cui si riflettono i cambiamenti e gli stravolgimenti che attraversano il XX secolo dagli inizi, fino alla “invisibile e fantomatica” città cãrtãresciana.

Per quanto lineare, non si tratta tuttavia di un percorso univoco, infatti il

volume 31 della rivista è caratterizzato da più voci e indirizzi, prestandosi dunque a una molteplicità di letture e interpretazioni. Da Bucarest, passando per Varsavia, Ankara e Cluj si incrociano percorsi tematici accomunati da parole chiave ricorrenti, che tuttavia divergono tra loro in una rappresentazione dello spazio che si presenta come costruzione mediata da background culturali e preconetti, come “distanza” percorribile, ma anche come messa in scena.

Città strane. Sguardi insoliti sullo spazio urbano presenta dunque le molte sfaccettature dello spazio urbano, tema composito, eclettico, ma anche la pluralità di punti di vista da cui viene osservato.

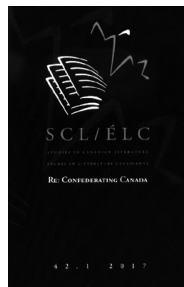
Gli studiosi che hanno presentato i loro elaborati per questo numero di *România Orientale* provengono da contesti e ambiti diversi. Discipline complementari tra loro – letteratura, antropologia, storia, critica letteraria, architettura – permettono, interagendo, di offrire una lettura articolata e complessa dello spazio urbano, attraverso prospettive e strumenti capaci di mettere in luce aspetti mai indagati prima.

Il corrente numero di *România Orientale* si presenta quindi come un interessante connubio in cui l'elemento percettivo individuale assume una posizione di primo piano nella lettura di uno spazio che si è evoluto perdendo, almeno in apparenza, la propria capacità aggregativa. Costruito sul concetto di dislocazione che può essere letto tanto come difetto quanto come spostamento verso un diverso punto di vista, *Città strane. Sguardi insoliti sullo spazio urbano* riflette per titolo e contenuti l'evoluzione della rivista, capace di rinnovarsi mantenendo intatta la propria identità strettamente legata allo spazio rumeno e

rivolgendo il proprio sguardo verso spazi culturali e disciplinari "altri".

Jessica Andreoli

SCL/ÉLC Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature Canadienne, vol. 42, no.1, Paul Keen and Cynthia Sugars (eds.), *Re:Confederating Canada*, 2017



The 2017 issue of the *Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne* (*SCL/ÉLC*) incorporates articles that revolve around the theme of the construction of Canadian historical dimensions and its identities. *SCL/ÉLC Studies in Canadian Literature. Re: Confederating Canada* gathers twelve individual studies in a volume, following some guiding lines that correspond to the values, the practices and the representations through which Canada is defined on its 150th anniversary of Confederation. *SCL/ÉLC* is a bilingual peer-reviewed academic journal, published biannual, devoted to the study of Canadian literature in English and French.

This volume focuses mainly on historical, sociological and literary studies which try to answer the questions of how Canada's aesthetic concerns and political issues had evolved.

In the introductory essay *Re:Confederating Canada: Nineteenth Century Canadian Literature, Forward and Back* Paul Keen and Cynthia Sugars highlight the issue of cultural interaction and its reflection

in Canadian culture, as highlighted in the studies. The necessity of charting critical perspectives on 150 years of Canadian literature is a concern raised in all the eleven studies based on different domains which harmoniously combine, like a puzzle, and whose aim is to present a small part of the interethnic, intercultural and interreligious image of Canada. Paul Keen and Cynthia Sugars analyze the approach of a wide range of themes and subjects treated in this volume and, at the same time, open numerous other directions to be investigated, revealing a society embarked on an active identity quest.

The anticipation of present conflicts by past writers over wild rice and its habitat is established in Sarah Wylie Krotz's essay who examines the interconnectedness of wild rice and Anishinaabe culture, raising the problem of the ideologically biased phenomenological descriptions.

The Canadian space, with its various submerged identities in the dominant genres of its early periods, provides authors like Susan Francis Harisson with a prolific foundation for unsettling the heteronormative basis of the Anglo-nationalist plot. Shelley Hullan identifies in her essay the protagonist's desire of returning to colonial times as a trigger for revealing spaces for sexuality.

The literary views on Canadian identity are organized also along a cinematographic coordinate. Misao Dean makes a parallel of the identity paths in the case of the NFB film adaptation of Archibald Lampman's 1888 poem, *Morning on the Lièvre*, and the poem itself in order to reveal the tension between the goal of historical fidelity and the influence of the present's pressure.

D.M.R. Bentley's focus is particularly on the two major tropes of comparison, as conceptualized by Aristotle and their association with the pre-Confederation period, in order to emphasize Canada's metaphorical peculiarity.

The afterlife of Samuel Herne is stated in Carole Gerson's study as a constant in the imaginary of identity in the past, reflected on the basis of two coordinates: the familiar and the strange. The subject of the past, understood as an ongoing process, is of interest to Honor Rieley as well, who examines the Scottish literary models identified in the Canadian magazines of the 1820s and 1830s. Chantal Richard chooses instead to focus in her essay on the extensive history of the Acadian newspapers.

Authorial influence and biographical detail are two coordinates that influenced the internal dynamics of the Canadian literary field. In this line, William Kirby's interest in Emanuel Swedenborg is shaped by Thomas Hodd in his essay, while Valerie Legge emphasizes Agnes C. Laut's effect on her writing as a Canadian writer, determined by her exposure to both American and British culture.

Some of the articles in this volume illustrate different attempts to find new coordinates for the construction of the imaginary of Canadian identity on its 150th anniversary of Confederation. In his turn, Sergiy Yakovenko's article is an exploration of Charles G.D. Roberts' *The Tantramar Revisited*, framed as an allegory of Wordsworth's influence on his work. The same attention given to the reconfiguration of the past, as a catalyst for disclosing external influences can also be noticed in Laurel Ryan's article on James Martin Cawdell's

work, who tried to create a model for Canada's future by tackling some medieval boundaries from Britain.

As reflected in this volume, the literary views on Canadian literature identity provide the background for a debate on the constantly challenging issue of identity in books or video productions, all confined in a labyrinth that may overcome the need for revealing the imagery of collective identity.

Ana-Maria Parasca

SCL/ÉLC *Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature Canadienne*, Vol. 42, no. 2, Cynthia Sugars (ed.)
Special section: *Digital Textualities*, 2017



The content of this issue of *Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature Canadienne* (SCL/ÉLC) is divided into two sections, which include a special section, dedicated to digital textualities. The issues offer a fresh perspective on Canadian literature, indicating the careful study of the contributors, as well as the current natural interest on Canadian digital poetics and narratives. Whilst the aim of the first volume of the 2017 journal focuses mainly on historical, sociological and literary studies which try to answer the questions of how Canada's aesthetic concerns and political issues have evolved, the second volume's interest deals with various themes, subjects, motifs in different manners.

In the first section, articles focus on the research conducted by such questions as: narrative closure, foodscare performances, the Canadian condition in its cultural expression, stereotypes in global gay communities, negotiation between mediumship and originality or the question of authorship in terms of mediation. The essay opening the selection belongs to Nathalie Cooke, whose concern is with the narrative techniques in Gabrielle Roy's short story, *Où iras-tu*, Sam Lee Wong, published in the collection *Un jardin au bout du monde*, in 1975. The author's aim is to emphasize the authorial process in developing the portrait of human dignity and desolation. Shelley Boid continues by observing in her study the conventions of foodscare in plays like *Paper Wheat*, *Street Wheat* and *Seeds*, and how food has been transformed from a daily ritual into a devalued product. Canadian space in border writing is interpreted by Katherine Anne Roberts with reference to Craig Davidson's *Cata-ract City* (2013). John Stenberg offers his contribution on the work of Andy Quan and, in this case, he advocates the idea of breaking habits like stereotypes, especially in shaping canons, identities and categories. Exploring the issue of authorship in Margaret Atwood's literary work, David Hadar demonstrates how the author's role as a medium does not cancel his role as an actor. Reaching the final study of the first section, the reader is gratified with an interview by Ruth Panofsky, with the artist and writer Bernice Eisenstein, born in Toronto to Polish Holocaust survivors.

The second section, dedicated to the issue of digital textualities opens with an introduction written by Susan Brown and Cecily Devereux in regards to this matter.

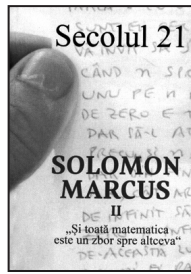
An interesting and affirming study belongs to Jordan Bolay, whose aim is to underline the major impact digitization has on archives. The paper that follows undertakes a complex problem, that of the Canadian cultural scholarship's survival in a digital age. Related to this issue, Susan Brown analyzes how Canadian literature will thrive through a robust digital ecosystem. Another approach comes from Jessica McDonald, who is interested in reading text and paratext in the digital era, by making use of a series of concepts and theories identified in Douglas Coupland's *JPod*. Amanda Montague's article on mobile apps and national narratives as material sites of memory in Canada's capital region reveals another form of contamination in the synthesis of the sense of history and memory and the relationship between materiality, time and affect. Dani Spinosa discusses in his article about the role of a national literature Canadian digital poetics, while Hannah McGregor shifts the focus on the discourse of banality concerns regarding printed magazines editions and the need of embracing digital reading methods in order to gain access to an archive. The collection ends with Jessica MacEacher's paper, which gives an insight into the issue of soundscape, by analyzing the excessive noise of Lisa Robertson and Rachel Zolf, two poets who infuse the natural with technology by reproducing acts of perception. Her aim is to bring into the present the connection between aesthetic creation and reality.

The volume therefore reunites multiple perspectives and discourses on Canadian digital poetics and narratives, integrated within a larger literary framework, addressing not only specialists focused on Canadian literature, but also a large

audience interested in literary subjects and the evolution of digitalization narratives.

Ana-Maria Parasca

Secolul 20/21, no. 1-6:
Solomon Marcus,
București, 2018



The 20th/21st Century (*Secolul 20/21*)’s name reframes 57 years of social and literary commentary every single trimester. A magazine brought onto the periodical shelves of Comparative Literature libraries, its book format worthily pertains to prestigious Romanian and foreign writers, each referring to either current cultural events and problematics or memorable personas. A name with both a mission and a history, the Romanian Writers Union (*Uniunea Scriitorilor din Romania*) has completed its title by adding “Periodical synthetical publication: universal literature, sciences of man, dialogue of cultures” (*publicație periodică de sinteză: literatură universală, științele omului, dialogul culturilor*).

This issue belongs to the monographical set and is dedicated to the late mathematician, formal languages theoretician and cultural revolutionary Solomon Marcus. The foreword is given by Alina Delleanu, who carefully describes Marcus as a “grand Professor of Interdisciplinarity”, enunciating his versatility as master of his own field, as well as his contribution towards the expansion of mathematics within

philosophical and cultural understandings, seeking to present Marcus as the emblematic figure he portrays. It should be recognized that this issue is indeed an homage, a gathering of texts written by and for the universal scientist that is Solomon Marcus.

The 21st Century mentions the focal and most descriptive pillar of Solomon Marcus’s journey by including his poem “Decat o-nchipuire” (*But an Imagining*), both in print and in manuscript form, in which he articulates his own theory in the opening verse “Zero and infinite are brothers” (*Zero și infinit sunt frați*). Through the relevancy and merit of his words, the reliability of his personal philosophies, we discover that nothingness and the intangible entirety of human knowledge are the unequivocal postern towards other realms, and thus, for Marcus, “all mathematics is a flight towards something else” (*toată matematica este un zbor spre altceva*). The readers are now introduced to the professor’s mind and conduit.

If one does not empathize with Solomon Marcus’s stance on who is the one at fault concerning the deliberate marginalization of mathematics, of his critique on Schopenhauer’s *World as Will and Representation*, in such instance they are liable of misunderstanding an entire history of music, astronomy and geometry. Marcus associates the liberal arts to a cordial relationship with mathematics up to the seventeenth century, concurrently maintaining mathematics’ *ipso facto* strengths and purposes.

“But Eco understood my codified message and informed the Congress that Marcus is ill, suffering of... passport”, Solomon Marcus reveals about the *First International Congress of Semiotics* in Milan,

where the professor could not be physically present. Umberto Eco expressed immediate interest in Solomon Marcus's work. This is but one of his many personal histories revealed within the issue.

The prolific life and work of Solomon Marcus would be of interest not only to the scholars of this field, but to every reader seeking to comprehend the junction where science and the arts meet, as well as the inner workings of a memorable fragment of condensed cultural history that *The 21st Century* brings to both knowing and mentee shelves.

Anda Miuțescu

Susana Monica Tapodi,
Itinerare textuale, Iași,
Editura Vasiliana 98,
2017



In her work, Susana Monica Tapodi provides an impressive collection of essays that focus on the power of mutual understanding between the Romanian and the Hungarian people, researching a multitude of resemblances in their history, cultures and linguistic aspects. The purpose of this collection is to reignite a sense of solidarity and support between these two nations, by finding similarities that bind them and differences that define each of them as well as offering an insight into the main cultural phenomena that became symbols and myths.

The book opens with a well-researched historical background of the

Hungarian people, tracing their roots to the first use of the Hungarian language by the emperor Constantin, back in the 7th century. It later draws an authentic comparison between similar sounding words, used by both of these nationalities, such as “ficsur-fecior”; “pulya-pui”, “orda-urdă”, “male-mălai”. It also emphasizes the legacy that Hungarian people left to their fellow Romanian predecessors, which can be distributed into 3 main categories: cultural, culinary and architectural. When it comes to the Romanian traditions, we can easily find some that were brought by the Hungarians, such as the custom of sprinkling water on women during the Easter, as well as the celebration of the dead where people light candles on the graves of their deceased relatives, registered in the customs under the name of “Luminație”. They also introduced their traditional foods, the famous *paprikás*, *palinka*, *gulaș* that are now enjoyed and cooked by their fellow Romanian citizens. But probably the most outstanding legacy can be treasured in the marvelous buildings that are eternal spaces of historical and everlasting beauty, such as Banffy Palace (Cluj-Napoca), Castle Bethlen from Kersed (Criș), The National Szekler Museum (Sf. Gheorghe).

When it comes to the Hungarian literature in Romania, its roots must be searched towards the end of the First World War, when 1,600,000 Hungarian people from Transylvania became a national minority, with the promulgation of Greater Romania. The author mentions the early poets that beautifully drew surreal Transylvanian landscapes, such as Aron Tamasi and Jozsef Nyiro. The book pays great attention to the figure of

Lorand Dandy, who was falsely accused and stayed in prison under the accusation of hate speech towards the Romanian nation, smartly camouflaged in his literary works. One of his monumental works, *Împotmolirea*, which was greatly praised for its strong themes, but unjustly punished, is one of the proofs of not just a neutral outlook on the Romanian nation and people, but one of great admiration. The novel presents numerous admirable and grand Romanian characters, such as Moisa, who represents absolute devotion, as well as the figure of the old Romanian lawyer that sacrificed his life for the union of the Romanians.

In a chapter dedicated solely to the exposure of the sinister areas of Transylvania, the author presents the life and work of the novelist Adam Bodor, who serves as a relevant model for the Hungarian authors that have lived in the Romanian space after the revolution of 1989. His prose is defined by irrational and grotesque moments, as well as absurd and fragmented scenes, with suggestive episodes. Another figure the author pays great attention to is fellow author, Corin Braga, whose work is dominated by the power of the irrational, the absurd that stays hidden in the casual, as well as by a frightening presence of the grotesque and the abject.

The volume also emphasizes a great study on the figure of Don Juan, which is treated in a comparative approach in the works of Spanish, Hungarian and Romanian authors, with a focus on the regimen of decadence and nostalgia for the past depicted through lyrical prose. All part of the modernist literary tradition of their respective countries, the unifying factor for the figure of Don Juan is the

peripheral nature of the cultures which originated him. The core of the original is transposed in provincial settings, leading to different metamorphosis of the same myth as a thinly veiled, pessimistic alter ego of their creators, features most salient in the oppositional construction of the protagonists who embody, simultaneously, old-fashioned knights and intellectual hedonists. The interest in the inner life of the characters, where external action gives precedence to memories, dreams and mysteries, barely hides the desire of escaping the restraints of the unfavorable socio-cultural present.

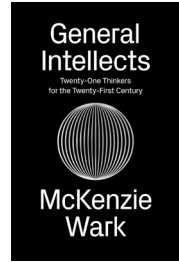
In the case of Ramon Maria del Valle Inclan, his sonnets come under analysis, as they pertain to the most accomplished period of creation. Each sonnet a short novel, they bear the name of the natural seasons which carry a symbolic value in the process of the protagonist becoming. The motive of the meeting between Eros and Thanatos, recurring throughout the sonnets is similarly encountered in the works of Mateiu Caragiale and Krudy Szindba, the interplay showcasing the unbreakable union between love and death in the myth of Don Juan. The titles of the work similarly carry significant symbolic value. The musical inspiration of the *Sonnets*, the *1001 Arabian Nights* reflected in Szinbad, the passionate force evoked by the Red Chaise find latter correspondence in the development of the narrative plot along with the name of the characters themselves, along with regional symbolic iterations. For an archetypal figure spanning more than four centuries of literary tradition, the possibilities of interpretation appear as countless: if Valle-Inclan's Don Juan is modern,

“unattractive, catholic, sentimental” (in Valle Inclan, 303), under Byronic inspiration Szinbad is a victim of female seduction, while M. Caragiale’s characters are the eternal dreamer, in an eternal pursuit of the impossible ideal. Krudy’s Szinabd, his favorite character and alter ego, is an allegorical sailor navigating on the waves of memories in an attempt to retrieve a beautiful past now lost, always a victim of disappointment due to the infallible understanding of the linear nature of time which permits no reiteration. M. Caragiale’s seducers are seen as belonging to two contradictory modes of existence, one of the vice and decadence, the other of luxurious culture and artistic expression. Observing how, despite the impossibility of knowing each other, the authors create analogies and correspondences in the absence of any visible interferences, Tapodi considers the socio-cultural chronotope as defining, all encompassed within a highly lyrical prose which offers the works an ethereal, surreal quality meant to seduce readers old and new.

By analyzing the influences and similarities of the Hungarian and Romanian nations, while providing an outstanding analysis on the great literary figures, the volume creates an authentic and memorable work of solidarity, creation and history, being a mandatory reading for people that are fascinated of the Romanian-Hungarian history and culture.

Gabriela Danilescu

McKenzie Wark, *General Intellects. Twenty-One Thinkers for the Twenty-First Century*, London, Verso, 2017



As suggested by the title, McKenzie Wark’s latest book is a compilation of twenty-one contemporary thinkers from various fields of the humanities (political theory, media theory, cultural studies, speculative realism etc.). Wark does not simply present the theories as they are. They intertwine descriptive passages of the texts with critical ones that are looking to show the subtle flaws of each author. More importantly, they try to pull from each of the thinkers certain elements through which one could better understand the events (be them political, economic, or cultural) that are shaping the century we live in.

The problem from which they start is the drastic decline in numbers of public intellectuals across the globe. Separating themselves from a point of view that attributes an almost apocalyptic connotation to this decline, Wark sees this shift as normal in the socio-political climate we live in. Since contemporary intellectuals are working in a different system and can no longer sustain themselves financially solely from writing books and giving speeches (as Jean-Paul Sartre or James Baldwin were doing, for example), they have to start dividing their time to accommodate to this. Here, Wark introduces the term “general intellects” to speak about this new type of intellectuals.

“General intellect” is a term first coined by Marx in his 1858 “Fragment on Machines.” He used it to refer to the role that intellectual labor plays in the production process. McKenzie Wark takes up this term and modifies it. Instead of thinking, like Marx, about “the general intellect” as something singular, Wark makes use of it for describing people, mostly from academic environments, who try to think of the more general problems of the world and do not remain stuck in their own niche. Moreover, Wark’s hope is to conceive a cooperation between these multiple general intellects, so that none of them could think of their point of view as something totalizing, having sovereignty over the others.

Being a thinker of the Marxist tradition himself, for Wark, intellectuals from this spectrum have priority in the structure of the book. The first two chapters are dedicated to new, “imaginative” as Wark calls them, readings of Marx (Wendling and Karatani) and the following four deal with workerist and autonomist thinkers (Virno, Boutang, Lazzarato and Berardi). There are Anglophone cultural studies (McRobbie and Gilroy), psychoanalysis (Žižek and Dean), political theory (Mouffe, Brown and Butler) and considerations on body politics (Azuma and Preciado), then media theory (Chun and Galloway), speculative realism (Morton and Meillasoux) and, at the end, two chapters on science studies (Stengers and Haraway).

Although Wark manages to extract different concepts or methods from every author that they have selected, their own interests prevail at times and take over the readings they are doing. This is why, when discussing the two readings of Marx from the beginning, Wark positions himself more on the side of Wendling than of Karatani.

Wendling tries to reinstate the influence that scientific materialism had on Marx, as well as his own work in engineering and fascination with machines. Kojin Karatani, on the other hand, has an original view on Marx, but it is one built through a more popular reading, that of the influence that German idealism had on Marx, especially Kant. Wark believes the direction Wendling opens is more suitable for understanding the dynamics of our own society, giving the fact that technology and mechanization play such an important role in it.

The adherence Wark has to a more vulgar type of Marxism is also visible in his chapter on Slavoj Žižek. Here, Wark brings a harsh critique of the Slovenian thinker’s works, claiming that his position is a bourgeois one, the dialectical materialism he assumes having too much to do with Idealism and too little to do with actual, real materiality. A distinction is made between two types of Marxism: a bourgeois type that gives birth to high theory (the kind Žižek employs) and a vulgar type that breeds low theory (that of Wark).

Another aspect that Wark seeks to underline by either agreeing or disagreeing with some of the authors is the importance that new technologies have in constructing the world around us. One method through which technology infiltrates itself in our lives is by creating new types of subjectivity very fast. This point of view is shared by Maurizio Lazzarato, who believes subjectivity is nowadays mechanized by all the gadgets we use. Another way is by creating a new, different class of people – the hackers. They are the ones creating a distinguished type of content, almost artistic, through which they try to withstand ideology. Wark describes this class in another of

their book (*A Hacker Manifesto*) and brings them up when analyzing texts from Chun or Galloway, for example, in this book.

One of the main features of *General Intellects* is that Wark tackles very diverse thinkers and concepts in ways that are in-depth, yet possible to grasp by people who are not necessarily specialized in those domains. Even more, it leaves room for debate, Wark himself wanting their ideas to be provoked and put to the test, so that the cooperation between general intellects can take place. This is why this book is a recommended reading for both academics and people outside of Academia who are interested in the on-going history of thinking.

Mihai Țapu

Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, Alberto Filipe Araújo, Rogério de Almeida (eds.), *Os Trabalhos da Imaginação. Abordagens teóricas e modelizações*, Paraíba, João Pessoa, Editora da UFPB, 2017



Any relevant theoretical discussion concerning the applications of such notions as image or imagination in the field of literary history or comparative studies should rely on an exhaustive set of definitions and employments of the aforementioned concepts, since they have known a quite controversial evolutionary route, shared between different types of cultural and scientific discourses. The contemporary imaginary related studies have recently enriched in those terms with an ambitious panoramic volume that aims to

synthesize the etymological senses, as well as the symbolic dimensions and the historical employments and examinations of the very concept of imagination. A notable collective volume edited by Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, Alberto Filipe Araújo, and Rogério de Almeida, *The Labours of Imagination. Theoretical Approaches and Applications* investigates the internal structures of the imaginary, by means of 25 studies, each orientated on historical, philosophical, pedagogical, or artistic aspects, models and uses of the working concepts.

The volume's structure presents two main sections, each with its own internal logic. The first one gathers several theoretical approaches, while the main purpose of the section is a radiography of the imaginary studies, made by authors from several different cultures and academic fields. The first five studies, written by authors such as J.J. Wunenburger, Corin Braga, or Luis Garagalza, focus on the etymology and the cultural and philosophical history, along with an examination of evolutionary aspects and constantly updating meanings, of the following notions: image, imagination, imaginary, and imaginal (*mundus imaginabilis*), retracing their origins and re-discussing them with challenging new conclusions and theoretical openings. This particular endeavor's main concerns revolve around issues like 1) the mutations that occurred in the understanding in terms of cultural validation of the concept of image, from the general negative attitude of Greek philosophers and Judaeo-Christian discourse towards the visual objects (denied as repositories of truth), to the redemption of the image in the contemporary philosophical discourse due to the theoretical constructions of certain theorists such as Aby

Warburg or Gilbert Durand (Luis Garagalza); 2) the creative imagination, as it can be seen through a historical approach to the many shifts in the understanding of this concept, from the reproductive imagination to Kant's breakthroughs concerning the human faculty of imagination and its relative structural independence from the empirical realm (Wunenburger); 3) the creative phantasy and the cultural circulation of associated notions such as image, imagination, imaginary and imaginal, each of them examined from their etymological backgrounds to their definitions and theoretical uses in order to (re)construct their biographies in the European culture (Corin Braga); 4) the history of the reception of the notion of imagination, seen through the lens of psychology by means of a rather technical, surgical examination (Carlos H. do C. Silva), as well as those of sociology. Imagination, as a human faculty, has shifted in the general understanding from what used to be a fool's particularity or, later, a children or women leisure, to a highly important creative mechanism of the human mind (José Pedro Matos Fernandes).

The following studies of this section employ a pedagogical perspective, in order to demonstrate not only the liaison between the process of learning and the faculty of imagination, but the very necessity of implementing in the modern education the study of the imaginary and its related notions.

The last three papers that close the theoretical approaches dedicated section are rather heterogeneous in terms of perspectives and openings, but brought together by the correlation of imagination with artistic objects (narratives, poetry, cinema) and mythology. The most notable

matters discussed in the aforementioned studies are the issue of originality in the writing process, the relation between literature and imagination, from the Russian Formalists to the *new criticism* (Fernando Azevedo), and the cinematic translations of myths and the role of imagination in the filmic arts (Rogério de Almeida).

The second part of the volume gathers fifteen studies that, reunited, work as a history of models that have emerged over the time concerning the concept of imagination (while also discussing the term "imaginary"), from Aristotle to Bachelard or Henry Corbin. This section presents as well a rather dissimilar character in terms of both methodological perspectives (due to the different academic fields and schools of thoughts that the authors come from) and cultural fields (philosophy, literature, religion, music). Starting with a "proto-history" of the concept (Carlos H. do C. Silva examines the Aristotelian legacy on phantasy and imagination), the authors investigate in very detailed manner how thinkers such as Immanuel Kant and C. G. Jung have left working definitions of the concept that reshaped the very understanding of the human creative resources in the European space. Furthermore, the theories of Gaston Bachelard and Henry Corbin are examined by the authors in an attempt to synthesize the circumscriptions of the notions of *imaginary* and *imaginal*. These section of independent but yet complementary studies functions as a must-have textbook for researches that aim to either discuss the aforementioned notions in a theoretical way, or use them in particular analyses of a specifically delimited corpus of cultural and artistic objects or movements.

Several studies of this second section of the volume focus on the works of Mircea Eliade regarding the imagination and the religious imaginary. The most notable openings of these endeavors emphasize the significant impact of Eliade's works concerning the history of religions on the western spirituality. Literature is not avoided by the volume's contributors, nor the considerable share of poetry, theatre and narratives in updating imagination and imaginary's meanings. Thus, the romantic sensibility and its approach of imagination has been investigated by several authors, in studies dedicated to Blake, Keats (Paula Alexandra Guimarães), or Novalis (Yamin Aman), in order to expand the understanding of the creative imagination by examining it at

work in some of the best known romantic poets and writers. Finally, the last study of this section employs a pedagogical perspective and focuses on the urgent need for placing the faculty of imagination at the center of any educational process.

This extensive volume brings together a collection of studies, approaches, and themes that generate a notable, one-of-a-kind panoramic database of origins, definitions, and employments of imaginary related concepts. Due to its exhaustive character and polyphonic composition, Wunenburger, Araújo, and de Almeida's volume is essentially a prime instrument for any further imaginary-related research.

Daiana Gârdan