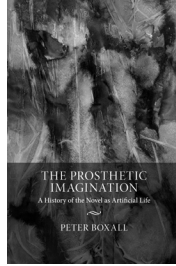


Book Reviews

Peter Boxall, *The Prosthetic Imagination. A History of the Novel as Artificial Life*, Cambridge University Press, 2020



The Prosthetic Imagination is a fascinating sequel to the examination of the ethical, political and aesthetic dimensions of narrative that critic and theorist Peter Boxall had already undertaken in his seminal *The Value of the Novel* (2015). Along with other contributions to the study of contemporary literature in English (such as *Twenty-First Century Fiction: A Critical Introduction*, *Since Beckett: Contemporary Writing in the Wake of Modernism*, or his edited *Cambridge Companion to British Fiction: 1980–2018*), the former book had reminded readers of the importance of the novel as a mediator of our material imbrications with the world; the present volume grants it an even more central position by “radicali[zing] the theory of artifice which took an earlier form in a postmodern cultural logic” (11) and aligning the novel with the “prosthetic condition” – in other words, the awareness “that all biopolitical extension is in some degree prosthetic” (5) that characterizes our historical moment.

To understand the stakes of *The Prosthetic Imagination*, one may well start with the method Boxall derives from climate studies – hindcasting, or the statistical projection of past models based on current conditions. “Literary hindcasting” is defined as “a mode of reading” (22) aimed at revealing the intimate connections between the undeniably prosthetic structure of all experience, and the (early through present-day)

instantiations of the novel, which are shown to share the dual temporality of “representing a missing thing and being the thing itself” (3). The appropriation of the term is not accidental. It is the current reinterpretation of the human, in no small measure forced upon us by the phenomena of global warming and ecological crisis, that triggers a reconsideration of the degree to which narrative intervenes in the act of self-representation and provides a ground for consciousness to imagine its bodily extensions, thus inserting us in a materiality of the world where the distinction between the natural and the made has stopped making sense. This is the crucial premise of Boxall’s approach: “If [...] the history of the novel is also a history of artificial life, this is because the novel, since it emerged in its proto-modern form in early modernity, is driven and shaped by its capacity to enter into this difficult, dissolving space between mind and matter, and in so doing to make of artificial supplements to life the very stuff of vital being” (17). This entails not merely a redefinition of mimesis in terms of prosthesis, since fiction, just like a prosthetic object, acts simultaneously to capture a past reality, and to produce a part of reality which it likewise replaces; it also gives rise to the claim that, through mimesis (working “to close the gap between an inner sense of self and the alien forms in which that sense of self is realized”), the novel, with its continual staging of both our proximity to, and distance from ourselves, becomes uniquely qualified to “historicize” and (therefore mend?) our current “deeply estranged relation to life” (13–14).

Boxall’s hypotheses are magisterially put to the test and verified by his series of close readings, prefaced by a revisitation of *The Golden Ass*, and distributed over the five

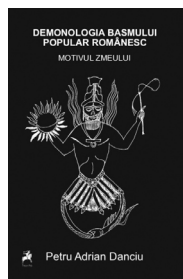
parts of the study. The arguments rest on an examination of foundational early forms (More's *Utopia*, Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World*, Cervantes's *Don Quixote*), which, according to Boxall, were pushed into emergence by the new awareness of the body produced by modern anatomy and the consequent need to imagine a transitional ground from mind to biomatter, opportunely provided by More's "no place" that suddenly sutured together existence and nonexistence. Part II occasions a reconsideration of the long eighteenth century (Behn, Defoe, Swift, Voltaire, Sterne, Sarah Scott, Richardson, Burney, Goethe) as less an expression of the individualistic values of the bourgeoisie than a reordering of the position and scope of bodily extensions into the world in the wake of the "derangements of scale" (87) generated by colonial expansion. Part III traces the nineteenth century's augmentation of the "gap between mind and matter" caused by such scalar instabilities and turned into the central focus of the novel: "the gap that it is the task of the novel form, as it reaches its maturity, both to preserve and to overcome" (18). Boxall illustrates the contradictions imparted to realism by life within an industrialized, mechanized world, by the recurring prosthetic figure of the "dead hand" as imagined under various guises by Wollstonecraft, Austen, Eliot, Dickens, Melville, or in the great Gothic texts of the period. Part IV identifies a "prosthetic modernism" initiated by the "duplicated consciousness" of increasing alienation from the material world and culminating in Beckett's exposure of the "hidden hinge" between "an alloyed, technologised, machinised being" and "the most intimate spaces of the inward self" (260). Part V describes the "specular" identities in the works of Angela Carter, Salman

Rushdie, Toni Morrison, Thomas Pynchon, etc. that somewhat counteract the tendencies towards simulacra dispensed upon fiction by the postmodern virtualization of the world. The last part attempts a recovery of the novel's re-enmeshment of the mind into material networks via the writing of Margaret Atwood, J. M. Coetzee, Roberto Bolaño, or Don DeLillo, following the paradoxical erosion of human agency during the age of the Anthropocene.

A celebration of the capacity of fiction to "enworld," doubled by the lucid alertness to the ethical and ideological dangers that beset it, Peter Boxall's *Prosthetic Imagination* demands from the reader a welcome and necessary reassessment of both the significance of the novel genre and of the contradictions in our self-image the latter illustrates.

Petronia Popa-Petrar

Petru Adrian Danciu,
*Demonologia basmului
popular românesc.
Motivul zmeului*,
Editura București,
Tracus Arte, 2019



Man, throughout his life, is constantly related to the religious tradition, to the forms of the divine, but also to a regional tradition, generally called folklore. This topic has been approached by different theorists and folklorists of Western literature. Nevertheless, studies on Romanian folk literature still have a lot of material to cover.

In this work, *Demonologia basmului popular românesc. Motivul zmeului*, Petru Adrian Danciu makes an act of phenomenological recovery of the *zmeu*'s demonology, a character with supernatural powers, a shapeshifter, commonly identified as an antropomorphic dragon, which embodies the forces of evil, found in this form in Romanian and Bulgarian fairy tales. The book comprises an introductory chapter that sets out the research method and three other chapters that engage in the analysis itself: nominal deconstruction and reconstruction in Semitic mythology, the literary motif of the *zmeu* in the *Book of Tobit*, and the fairy-tale rite in connection with otherness.

Starting from the differences that emerge in the perception of demonology in Christianity (as a recognition of evil after the fall) and in Gnosticism (evil as a result of ignorance), the fairy tale is defined as a syncretic formation, a demonology with a diversity of forms. The author refers to the origins of folk literature as "the first stage that marks cultural life as a religious and social experience of mankind". Therefore, we can understand that the creator of myths, a fundamental component of the narrated story, starts from personal experience ("Once upon a time, there was..., for if it hadn't been, the story wouldn't even be told"), and embraces the sacred in the social relations of a community, by folklorizing the mythical elements, in an "apologetic gesture".

Fairy-tale knowledge is revealed as a set of social norms, specific to a sacred space, in "a process of unraveling what is gradually exposed in myth, fairy tale or legend". Petru Adrian Danciu demonstrates that, in the Romanian popular tradition, the phenomenology of the *zmeu*'s

birth and origins occurs by overlapping the vein of the Semitic tradition with the Christian one.

In the *Book of Tobit* the author found the following adapted typologies: Tobias is metamorphosed into the saving hero (Făt-Frumos), Sarra is the kidnapped maiden, known as Ileana Cosânzeana, and the demon Asmodeus is the supernatural kidnapper. The demonological imaginary consists of reminiscences. The *zmeu* can be found at the border of the kingdoms, in the sacred continuation of the mundane; it is a physical and spiritually hideous character, hunted and killed. In folk tradition, his actions define him negatively, as a "Satan of fairy tales". Psychologizing the storyline, Petru Adrian Danciu attributes the act of kidnapping the maiden to the fact that the *zmeu* is missing. The tale of the kidnapping of the maiden is proof of the sympathetic magic between the energies of Ileana Cosânzeana and those of the *zmeu*: the rape does not physically take place because he considers the girl a "sacred object", insubordinate to profane habits. Some of the most important connections and interpretations discovered by the author are related to the moment of preparing the feast and to the maiden who attends it, without tasting anything, since this could be a symbolic way of looking at her own "consumption". The *zmeu*, like a self-expelled god from the pantheon, desirous of rebellion against destiny, will be punished by fate, precisely through a creature of human origins, Făt-Frumos.

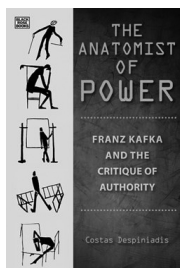
Thus, both in the sacred and in the profane fairy-tale spaces (identical with the birthplace of the recovering hero), "the image is the reality itself". It focuses on natural living in the profane and on the

death, the ritual resurrection and the wedding of Făt-Frumos, as heir to an earthly kingdom.

Well structured and documented, *Demologia basmului popular românesc. Motivul zmeului*, is a book that, through an archeology of knowledge, offers significant details about Romanian fairy tales, exploring the origins and the development of the *zmeu*-character.

Adelina Traicu

Costas Despiniadis,
The Anatomist of Power: Franz Kafka and the Critique of Authority,
Black Rose Books, 2019



In *The Anatomist of Power; Franz Kafka and the Critique of Authority* Costas Despiniadis propounds a new way of reading Kafka that critics have never before invited us to explore. Translated into English by Stelios Kapsomenos and published by Black Rose Books in 2019, this work analyzes Franz Kafka's most notable body of work through a lens that captures the anarchist ideas underpinning his literary creativity.

Despiniadis proposes concentrating on the elements in Kafka's work that deploy an anarchist criticism of power, bureaucracy, patriarchy, prisons, judicial authority, and law. Much of the basis of the argument in this text is confirmed by primary sources from Kafka's diaries, biographies and accounts from people associated with

the writer who discuss his participation in the anarchist circles of Prague in 1909-1912. Despiniadis' criticism is divided into seven chapters with the first five chapters providing an analysis of *The Castle*, *The Trial*, *Amerika*, *The Metamorphosis*, *The Penal Colony*, and *The Burrow* respectively. Here, the critic provides a short summary of each work, so the reader does not have to be familiar with Kafka's literature, while providing direct quotations from the stories to advance evidence that confirms his argument.

The author develops his arguments in a style that is comprehensible, holds the reader's attention, and is not excessively verbose. In these chapters, Despiniadis discusses the historical context that Kafka was a part of as well as writers who influenced him. These influences refer to anarchist authors such as Max Weber, Peter Kropotkin, and Arthur Holitscher. Many anarchist ideas are correlated in these chapters with diary entries such as one where Kafka divulges his wariness of marriage and patriarchy, a notoriously anarchist stance, which Despiniadis then uses as a means to an anti-patriarchal hermeneutics of, for example, *The Metamorphosis*. Despiniadis also uses other literary critics to support his arguments, such as Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), Deleuze and Guattari in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1986) and Michael Lowy's *Franz Kafka: Subversive Dreamer* (2016).

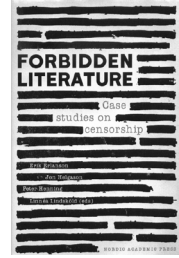
Although there are some critics who acknowledge a left-leaning Kafka, *The Anatomist of Power* goes further to expound on Kafka's anti-socialist and anti-communist tendencies as well, on the basis of his dissatisfaction with all

bureaucracy as well as his critique of the auxiliary persons it takes to run a State. In addition, the text aims to answer why this aspect of the writer's work and life has been greatly concealed or diluted in academic research thus far. The last two chapters deal with the writer's personal relationship with the anarchists of Prague. They include a draft written by Kafka, retrieved by Max Brod (Kafka's friend and editor), about a Utopian way to organize a work collective as well as accounts from those who participated with him in anarchist meetings.

The last chapter focuses on providing the reader with some history of the criticism of Kafka's work beginning with Brod. Although conscious of Max Brod's significance and important contributions, Despiniadis provides reasons to hold him accountable for beginning a biased and incomplete history of Kafka criticism. In addition, Despiniadis is critical of the overly psychoanalytical and theological interpretations as well as those of the New Criticism school of thought, or those that either completely ignore Kafka's politics or undermine them. The sources used in *The Anatomist of Power: Franz Kafka and the Critique of Authority* effectively support the interpretation proposed by the author as he correlates his claims and evidence in a logical, convincing way. The reader is not left with the sense of an exaggerated or inflated argument, but rather with fresh insights into the Kafkaesque oeuvre.

Victoria Eleanor Gaetan

Erik Erlanson, Jon Helgason, Peter Henning, Linnéa Lindsköld (eds.), *Forbidden Literature. Case Studies on Censorship*, Nordic Academic Press, Lund, 2020



Forbidden Literature, the volume edited by Erik Erlanson, Jon Helgason, Peter Henning and Linnéa Lindsköld, gathers eleven case studies on censorship and, to be more precise, it examines the mechanism of control that impacts the circulation of texts. Although the authors do not name it, they start from the idea that censorship represents a blameworthy way to reduce cultural freedom and, as consequence, it needs to be revealed by some quasi-detectivist investigations. In tune with the belief in literature “as a means of regulation” (10), expressed in the editors’ introduction, the studies deal with the strategies of censorship both in liberal democracies and totalitarian regimes. “Asking how and why literature becomes the object of repressive measure” (10), all authors are interested in different mechanisms of censorship that could highlight the connection between power, authority, the legal system, the author, and the reader.

The volume is divided into three thematically organized sections. The first one, “Literature in Court”, deals with some difficult and, at the same time, problematic distinctions between art and its morality. Of course, the main purpose of the investigations is not to provide definitive distinctions or clues, but to reveal short stories about ‘forbidden’ texts. This section starts with Dag Heede’s study about *Kan*

Mænd undværes?, a bestseller published by Emmy Carell in 1921. Heede chooses this novel that contains a powerful feminist message to exemplify the conflict between 'gender' morality and the law-making system in twentieth-century Denmark. Claus Schatz-Jakobsen focuses on *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, D.H. Lawrence's novel published in 1928, in order to re-read "the story of the novel (its composition, printing, publication, trial, and acquittal)" (45) through a New Criticism approach. Klara Anrsberg investigates the case of two volumes of *Sadistiskt övergrepp* (published under a pseudonym in 1967), representative for the relationship between censoring practices and market regulation. Linnéa Lindsköld analyses the history of Swedish comic magazine *Pox* (publisher: Hornst Schröder), reported under the Freedom of the Press Act due to "the unlawful depiction of sexual violence" (89). By invoking Carl Gustaf Böethius's critics, she illustrates "a period in the politics of reading in Sweden when reading printed literature, from an institutional perspective, could still be perceived as bad, or even dangerous" (89).

The second part, entitled "Contingencies of Censorship", exemplifies the consequences of censoring practices that could be seen in the productions and circulations of literature. From an 'agnotological' point of view (naming the way in which "knowledge is created or lost, suppressed or left to disappear – and [...] the absence of knowledge is always an outcome of a cultural and political struggle" – 114), Åsa Ljungström discusses an act of self-censorship due to the canons of the Church of Sweden by investigating Gasslander's work *Beskrisfning*, published in 1774. Kenneth Lindegren

signs the most theoretical study interested in copyright. Lindegren is concerned with the notion of ownership, the valorizations of original characters, the real-fake dichotomy (exemplified through the 'dialogue' between Avellaneda's sequel *Segundo tomo del ingenioso hidalgo Don Quixote* and the second part of Cervantes's *Don Quixote*) and concludes that strategies of copyright could have aesthetically productive effects. Liviu Malița's study synthesizes the history of censorship in Romania during the totalitarian era, institutionally established as the General Directorate for Press and Printing and renamed later as the Committee for Press and Print. In this context, the author chooses Paul Goma's *Obstinato* as an example for the political mechanism of constraint and control, and also for the strategies of resistance adopted in order to publish the novel.

The last section, "Censorship and Politics", is dedicated to the power of literature and the regulatory methods of control in the literary field. Kristin Johansson discusses the rhetoric of 76 booklets published by the Swedish Association for Moral Culture. She emphasizes "the use of medical language and sickness as metaphor for bad literature" (175) or the analogies of war, literature being regarded, in this sense, as an arena for debate. Erik Erlanson and Peter Henning comment on Arthur Engbergs's work, connecting his conception of art to Marx and German idealists, especially Schiller. They emphasize the regulatory character that Engbergs, as Swedish Minister of Church, Education, and Cultural Affairs in the 1930s, wanted to impose on literature and culture. Ilona Savolainen studies the children's library services in Finland in 1930-1959 and highlights the

difficulties that children must have been faced with in order to gain access to literature. Finally, Jon Helgason investigates three cases of rulings by the Swedish Office of Parliamentary Ombudsman, delving into the conflict between institutional frameworks and the freedom of expression.

All in all, *Forbidden Literature* is a project about a part of literature that academic research is responsible for. Besides the updated bibliography dedicated to censorship and its challenges, the book completes a niche area in cultural studies with some examples from (semi)peripheral literatures.

Ioana Pavel

Ștefan Fircă,
*Autenticitatea, sensuri
și nonsensuri. Teorii
românești interbelice
în contexte europene*,
București, Tracus Arte,
2019



A*utenticitatea, sensuri și nonsensuri. Teorii românești interbelice în contexte europene* [*L'Authenticité, sens et non-sens. Théories roumaines de l'entre-deux-guerres dans des contextes européens*] est la plus récente recherche de Ștefan Fircă qui reprend et examine le concept d'authenticité à travers la période écoulée entre les deux guerres mondiales. Ayant à la base une thèse de doctorat, l'ouvrage est composé de trois grandes parties : on y examine, tour à tour, la carrière roumaine du concept d'authenticité roumaine pendant

l'entre-deux-guerres dans un contexte strictement littéraire, ensuite les contextualisations culturelles liées au concept d'authenticité et, enfin, l'authenticité roumaine de l'entre-deux-guerres dans ces contextes. En plus, dans la troisième partie, l'auteur fait l'analyse de six cas particuliers concernant des écrivains roumains de « la Jeune Génération » ou de « la Génération de 27 » comme Nae Ionescu, Mircea Vulcănescu, Mircea Eliade, Mihail Sebastian, Eugen Ionescu et Emil Cioran. En fait, Ștefan Fircă veut observer à travers ces auteurs comment ils transforment l'authenticité dans un cliché non seulement littéraire, mais surtout politique et à la mode.

Ștefan Fircă commence sa recherche avec une analyse de l'influence du critique littéraire E. Lovinescu sur les directions de la littérature roumaine de cette époque-là ; le but recherché est de « synchroniser » la culture roumaine aux arts, aux sciences et à la philosophie internationaux. Du point de vue de la synchronisation de notre critique littéraire avec les autres théories débattues au début du XX^e siècle, E. Lovinescu semble s'aligner aux champs critiques européens et américains. Selon l'analyse de Fircă, malgré les préoccupations de Lovinescu pour les idées de la critique littéraire française (Anatole France, Jules Lemaître, Émile Faguet, Remy de Gourmont, Albert Thibaudet, Ferdinand Brunetière), le critique roumain peut être davantage rapproché de noms comme Wayne C. Booth provenant de l'espace américain ou Percy Lubbock de l'espace anglais, intéressés, eux, par la distinction entre l'objectivité et la subjectivité de la narration ou, autrement dit, par le binôme *showing-telling*. En dépit du choix de Lovinescu pour une perspective narrative objective, il est important, souligner

Ștefan Fircă, de remarquer la manière dont son attitude entre en résonnance avec les tendances occidentales.

En ce qui concerne le modernisme, le mouvement littéraire qui connaît son apogée pendant la première moitié du XX^e siècle, Ștefan Fircă radiographie les perspectives actuelles les plus importantes vis-à-vis de ce progrès culturel. Même s'il y a des différences entre les opinions exprimées par Gabriela Omăt ou Ion Bogdan Lefter, pour ne citer que ces deux critiques, on peut dire que le modernisme est vu comme « un phénomène polymorphe, avec un relief et des frontières variables » (p. 12, n.t.). Au fil de cet encadrement, le concept d'authenticité se trouve en relation avec l'autodiégèse, l'analyse psychologique et une forme d'anti-esthétisme qui provoque des mutations significatives pour l'évolution du roman et de la littérature roumaine en général. En reprenant les grandes influences de Gide, de Proust et de Papini (en matière de littérature) et de Bergson, de Husserl et de Freud (en matière de philosophie et de psychanalyse), Ștefan Fircă constate, au-delà du dynamisme du roman, la préférence des jeunes écrivains pour le journal, un genre de niche qui coagule autour de lui l'idée d'anti-esthétisme: « Les plaidoyers pour le journal avancés par Mircea Eliade, Eugène Ionesco et d'autres collègues de génération nous conduisent vers un autre sens de l'authenticité : celui-ci d'anti-littérature, d'anti-esthétisme » (p. 44, n.t.). Toutefois, Fircă soutient une certaine méfiance envers ces concepts alternatifs, vu que ces écrivains qui ont laissé des journaux, ont écrit aussi des romans qui sont devenus des repères dans la littérature roumaine de l'entre-deux-guerres.

Les six figures emblématiques pour « la Génération de 27 » choisies par l'auteur de cette recherche sont des écrivains qui se sont approprié et ont également assimilé selon leur propres objectifs ce concept d'authenticité qui a connu un parcours surtout politique et moins esthétique étant données les orientations sociopolitiques de ces hommes de culture. Par exemple, Mircea Vulcănescu considérerait que l'authenticité devait se représenter comme « une spiritualité disciplinée, sévère, purifiée du résidu sentimental » (p. 269, n.t.), contestant ainsi l'individualisme de Mircea Eliade ou d'Emil Cioran. Par ailleurs, Eliade imagine « l'homme nouveau » comme une personne authentique, qui a réussi à se dépasser soi-même dans le but d'atteindre une connaissance plénière de soi. En revisitant ces idées, Ștefan Fircă remarque un déclin du concept d'authenticité quand il est instrumentalisé dans des buts doctrinaires et politiques : en effet, ce concept reste « productif du point de vue littéraire à condition qu'il reste dans l'espace privé : une fois entré dans l'espace public, il devient nocif » (p. 279, n.t.).

Pour conclure, l'étude de Ștefan Fircă constitue une radiographie presque exhaustive du concept d'authenticité dans la culture roumaine de l'entre-deux-guerres, étroitement lié à des contextes externes. La recherche de Ștefan Fircă réussit ainsi à relever avec élégance un défi de taille : raccorder les sens de l'authenticité de l'espace roumain aux acceptions internationales de ce concept.

Teona Farmatu

Lucia Gorgoi et alii, *Germanistik im europäischen Kontext*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Mega, 2014



Published in 2014 at Mega Publishing House, *Germanistik im europäischen Kontext – Band IV* represents a collective volume that aims to discuss the forms of German literature in Transylvania and Banat, two of the most known regions of Romania. The book seems to be addressed to those who want to get an overall view on how precisely Romanian culture influenced the local German one. Moreover, the individual stamp of the volume is a close research on the bilingual background of the authors. The book is organized in three main parts: *Kultur und Sprachkontakte*, *Analysen zur Sprache* and *Buchbesprechungen und Berichte*. Each part manages to present an unbiased view on the impact that the historical and the linguistical background created in regional German culture.

The first section of the volume is focused on Romanian-German writers, such as Herta Müller, Anemone Latzina and Frieder Schuller. One of the most interesting aspects that the articles have in common is that they call into question the impact of the Romanian communist regime on local literature. For example, the reader can easily find out that the works of Herta Müller are a combination of politics and everyday life during the communist age. The *Aktionsgruppe Banat* is also brought up and it is described as a critical and socially committed literary community of young Banat authors

who set themselves the goal of breaking the existing traditions and the provincialism of earlier Romanian-German literature. Anemona Latzine was also one of the authors writing at the time. If bilingualism was the interpretation-key when it came to Herta Müller, what makes Latzine special is the influence of the Beat Generation on her writings. The Beat Generation had a massive impact on the literature of 1960s not just in the western world but also in socialist Romania. Poets like Latzina managed to modernize the outdated writing style and to give voice to the social and political sphere. However, the volume also addresses more current topics, such as the literary approach of the screenplay writer Frieder Schuller on the collaboration of Oskar Pastior with the Romanian *Securitate*.

The second part is also the technical part of the book. This section contains a linguistic analysis of the German language and of the translation process. The first paper brings up the linguistic sign and the linguistic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure. The paper focuses on the representative concepts of linguistics signs, with the aim of a better comprehension of their use, form and meaning. The second article of the section is concentrated on the German to Romanian translation of terms and expressions used in *Ost-Diskurse. Das Bild von den Ostdeutschen in den Diskursen von vier überregionalen Presseorganen 1989/90 und 1995* by Thomas Ahbe. The main point of analysis is the close-reading of the text. The reader is given the opportunity to comprehend how colloquial expressions, slang words or political abbreviations can sometimes be a problem for the translator. Moreover, we are also introduced to the media language and translation procedure.

The last part of the book addresses book reviews, reports and experiences from cultural exchanges between Romania and Germany. Most of the articles are based on research projects on local German culture. The literary figure of Herta Müller is present in this section too. Politics and aesthetics, memoirs and Müller's original prose are in the spotlight. Furthermore, a unique part of the section is that the reader can easily observe the authors' desire to research in detail aspects of the lives of the Romanian-German writers.

In a nutshell, *Germanistik im europäischen Kontext – Band IV* is a well-written volume that brings to attention the literature of the local German writers. The articles bring to light an extensive research and a variety of interpretative methods, based on a consistent bibliography. It is actually a very good read for those who want to broaden their horizon when it comes to Romanian-German culture.

Maria Bucșea

Andreea Heller-Ivancenko, *Condiția mesianică în romanul crepuscular*, București, Tracus Arte, 2019



Andreea Heller-Ivancenko's book *Condiția mesianică în romanul crepuscular* [The Messianic Condition in the Crepuscular Novel] (Tracus Arte Publishing House, Bucharest, 2019) raises an essential question in the field of comparative

literary research in the Romanian academia: how can the messianic condition be interpreted in relation to the modernity of the crepuscular novel, but also to the legacy of Western eschatological thinking? In the introduction, the author presents her critical approach to the messianic condition in the context of *Mitteleuropäan* literature, arguing in favor of a clear symptomatology of the crepuscular novel for the Eurocentric crisis, a crisis that is reflected in the historical consciousness of twentieth-century authors. The author proposes a theoretical approach in the first part of her study, which she will then apply to a corpus of "crepuscular" authors: Robert Musil, Hermann Broch, Franz Kafka and Heinrich Böll.

The volume with which Andreea Heller-Ivancenko inaugurates her critical and theoretical approach was necessary in the field of comparative literature. Through it, the author proposes some elaborate case studies, in different historical contexts. From the beginning, we are drawn to the fact that we have to deal with the distribution of a new subject: the conceptual and theoretical material is approached from a philological perspective, thus proposing a distance from the historical events themselves. In this sense, what is interesting to see is how Andreea Heller-Ivancenko captures, in this study, the way the concept of centrality is paradoxically marginalized. Thus, the messianic interrupts the flow of time and history, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the crepuscular state essentially resides in a messianic tension.

The author places the crepuscular condition under the influence of messianic tension. "The messianic condition is this node of exposures without identity,

because what operates is the division of identity itself, the suspension of tradition as ritual value.” (p. 23) Structured into six chapters, the volume deals in the first half with a suite of elements approached from an intertextual perspective. This is followed in the second part by a conceptual approach to the proposed case studies from an intra-textual perspective. The author’s approach is an interdisciplinary one, positioned at the intersection between philology, theology, philosophy and history.

From the Christian logic of expectation and the messianic model of resistance, which are addressed in the first chapter of her study, Andreea Heller-Ivancenko continues her theoretical journey by exploring several concepts relevant for the novels she analyzes, such as: messianic time, rest, remnant or remainder (in second chapter). This part culminates in a complex analysis of time, of expectation, and of messianic tension (in the third chapter).

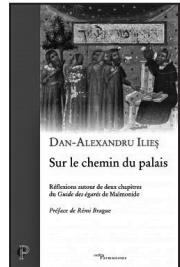
The following three chapters are devoted to intra-textual analysis, in which the author applies the theories developed in the previous sections. The condition of exile, the influence of the community, the state of twilight, time and waiting are just a few lenses through which Andreea Heller-Ivancenko explores literary texts.

Beyond the remarkable theoretical weight of the volume, the elegant and persuasive style with which the author probes the crepuscular novel from the perspective of the messianic condition is undeniable. Not only does the study develop a series of logically connected concepts, but it also proposes a set of theoretical instruments that can be very useful in further research. Indeed, as Andreea Heller-Ivancenko points out in the introduction, this study

is not intended to be an exhaustive, all-encompassing analysis, but a starting point for an interdisciplinary approach.

Ana-Maria Parasca

Dan-Alexandru Ilieș,
*Sur le chemin du palais,
Réflexion autour de deux
chapitres du Guide des
égarés de Maimonide,*
Paris, Éditions du Cerf,
coll. « Patrimoines »,
2016



Consacré au philosophe Moïse Maïmonide, l’ouvrage de Dan-Alexandru Ilieș est le fruit d’une thèse de doctorat en philosophie dédiée au début et à la fin de l’œuvre du grand penseur, le *Guide des égarés*. L’angle d’approche du livre prête attention à deux chapitres du chef-d’œuvre rédigé entre 1180-1190, tout en visant la contribution des perspectives philosophiques à la construction de la pensée maïmonidienne.

Selon l’auteur, l’œuvre éminente du philosophe juif constitue, d’une part, l’une des dernières contributions judéo-arabes de ce genre, et d’autre part un argument contextuel sur lequel l’auteur construit la motivation de l’examen critique qu’il mène.

Avant d’entrer dans le partage ésotérique du contenu, Dan-Alexandru Ilieș commence par présenter son propos, dans le but de l’édification méthodologique de son lecteur dans l’univers occulte des significations de l’opus. Ainsi, l’auteur part de l’écriture en arabe et étudie les détails des traductions pour faire parvenir son interlocuteur dans l’univers cosmogonique à décrypter. Dans les premiers

chapitres, Dan-Alexandru Ilieș détaille les opérations analytiques choisies afin de s'arrêter ensuite sur les éléments déductifs appartenant à l'esprit transcendantal. De plus, le répertoire du guide auctorial nous permet d'identifier de manière judicieuse les pièges de la compréhension et réduit au maximum les possibles interprétations fautives. Tout au long du processus, Dan-Alexandru Ilieș vise une lecture formative.

Au niveau du contenu, le volume s'avère enrichissant. La méthode des « têtes de chapitres », la transmission du savoir, l'allégorie, la brièveté et l'obscurité de l'exposé, ainsi que la contradiction voulue (p. 23-24) font partie du répertoire des moyens visant à inciter la curiosité du lecteur vis-à-vis de l'itinéraire mystérieux de ce livre, et cela malgré son accent systématique.

En retraçant la démarche de Maïmonide, c'est-à-dire l'occultisme comme système herméneutique mis au service de la recherche de la divinité, les deux chapitres en question exemplifient la perception globale du livre. Dans l'introduction du *Guide*, l'auteur identifie les outils interdisciplinaires qui soutiennent la connaissance de la Torah. Sur ce point, il indique les degrés d'illumination de sa figure centrale à travers l'allégorie de l'initié. Selon Dan-Alexandru Ilieș, le privilège de la démarche didactique révèle aussi l'importance que ces approches interprétatives présentent par rapport à l'errance herméneutique.

Plusieurs enjeux font l'objet du travail de l'auteur : l'aspect phénoménologique dans la structure du texte de Maïmonide, la spéculation biblique par la tradition ésotérique du judaïsme et la signature cosmologique, qui se différencie des interprétations réductionnistes faites par Léo Strauss ou Munk sur le sujet. Par ces directions,

l'auteur examine l'intérêt œcuménique qui se dégage à partir des éléments appartenant à l'islam. D'ailleurs, cet aspect représente probablement l'innovation la moins prévisible de la démonstration.

En outre, de nombreux éléments appartenant au système de pensée maïmonidienne vérifient l'association entre les catégories historiques ou religieuses et l'aspect philosophique qui dépeint la cosmologie de la perspective du maître Maïmonide. C'est ainsi que l'alliance comme point de départ met en valeur tant la relation contextuelle du judaïsme entre Dieu et Israël, que « la nature de l'être » devenue accessible par la pluralité des interprétations paradigmatiques. Sur ce point, on observe le caractère assimilateur du rapport entre la culture et la philosophie religieuse. De nombreux éléments faisant partie des repères ésotériques se retrouvent ainsi déchiffrés. Parmi ceux-ci on peut mentionner la prière qui équivaut, sur le plan occulte, à la pratique intellectuelle, l'ange de la tradition juive (*méatron*), qui correspond à la figure souveraine (l'agent intellectuel) et ainsi de suite.

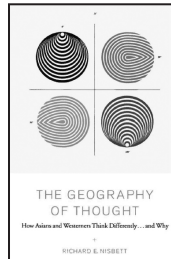
En somme, l'objectif visé montre la signification du plus haut degré gnoséologique possible, en partant de la tradition ésotérique de la Torah et en traversant le culte intellectuel du démiurge, jouissant de son épistème décodé. Par cela, l'analyse se révèle comme l'esprit d'un cœur rempli d'immortalité intellectuelle (p. 307) car, comme l'affirme l'auteur, « (c)e sont désormais les 'intellectuels' philosophes, plutôt que les spécialistes du Talmud, qui détiennent les clés exégétiques de la Bible ».

Effectivement, Dan Ilieș prouve dans ce cadre que l'herméneutique de son modèle revêt plusieurs missions. Tout d'abord, on peut distinguer comment un traité d'exégèse

philosophique se dissocie de manière fortement argumentée d'une écriture strictement liée à la religion juive. Deuxièmement, on retrouve un pont culturel entre différentes traditions à la croisée de la religion et de la philosophie – une opération fortement ambitieuse, dans laquelle Dan Ilieș se lance en traitant les esprits gréco-arabes et juifs à l'intérieur d'un contexte méditerranéen et en imaginant un parcours éclectique épuré. Dernièrement, malgré l'allure constamment apologétique du *Guide des égarés* et l'aspect très élogieux du savoir élitiste, l'auteur décrit comment une allégorie médiévale et les réseaux interprétatifs des prophètes-philosophes pourraient tomber dans un piège de complétude cosmogonique. Il va sans dire que le volume mériterait l'intégralité d'une étude sur l'ouvrage entier.

Ion Pițoiu

Richard E. Nisbett,
*The Geography of
Thought: How Asians
and Westerners Think
Differently*, New York,
Free Press, 2004



The *Geography of Thought: How Asians and Westerners Think Differently* tackles the question of the origin of mentalities, documenting a series of comparative studies between history, linguistics, developmental psychology and sociology, that provide us with adequate information so one can develop a theory for the myriad differences between systems of thought.

Not only social structures differ. Human cognition processes are also different from Western to Asian culture – according to Richard Nisbett, Professor of Social Psychology at the University of Michigan. To establish the contention that distinct systems of perception and thought exist, Nisbett draws on historical and philosophical evidence and modern social science research based on surveys and laboratory research.

The volume opens with the utterance that both West and East claim to be descended intellectually from Ancient Greece and China. Greece differed from other contemporary civilizations in the development of personal freedom, individuality and object thought.

Explanations for the Greeks' sense of *personal agency* rest on the political system and philosophy. The city-state and assembly encouraged the tradition of debate which was fueled by their striking curiosity and for the appreciation of knowledge for its own sake. The Greeks, far more than their contemporaries, perceived themselves as individuals with distinctive proprieties, imbued with freedom, as units separate from others in society.

Starting with Aristotle, Greek philosophy analyzed the individual object, be it a human being, an atom or a building by categorizing the object and generating rules about it. In contrast, the Chinese orientation toward life was shaped by blending Confucianism, Taoism and centralized political power. The Chinese counterpart was *collective agency*, harmony, interdependence and the conviction that objects were altered by the context.

One of the most revealing aspects of the inquiry is that these two different

outlooks, are self-reinforcing, homeostatic systems.

Structural features of the language compel different mental representations, different patterns of attention and perception foster different cognitive processes that will manifest into different social practices and different social structures are to be maintained and influenced by the economy.

Therefore, it is reasonable for Nisbett to plumb his theory by researching the differences in the mental processes of the modern Westerners (Europeans, Americans, British people) and East Asians (Chinese, Koreans and Japanese).

The outcome should be startling for intellectuals as it exposes broad differentiations: a propensity to interdependence and relationships for Easterners vs. independence and categories for Westerners, dialectical approach by dint of the Middle Way as a reasonable solution for Easterners vs. the either/or dichotomy for Westerners, assumptions about change for Easterners vs. beliefs about stability for Westerners, concern for a great self-image for Westerners vs. self/criticism for Easterners, abstract-orientation and use of formal logic in perceiving events with Westerners vs. practical-orientation, less use of formal logic for Easterners, equal rules for Westerners vs. rules that take into account the context and the nature of the relationships involved with Easterners etc.

These utterly distinctive approaches are held to be largely responsible for why Asians are more accurately empathic, international misunderstandings (Japanese-Australian sugar contract in 1970), for Americans' hindsight fallacy and for the steady, egalitarian Western utopias.

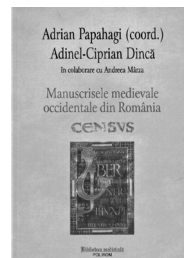
A peculiar and interesting survey about control condition showed gender

difference between American males and females. The Japanese participants males and females believed it was easier to avoid an unpleasant experience if being in a group, while American men thought they were more prone to escape it if they were alone. American women reacted like the Japanese, believing it would be more likely for them to escape an unpleasant event if they were in a group. It thus appears that women from both cultures are prone to be more integrative regarding their relationships.

In light of these accounts, my concerns consist of whether in the future we will witness a societal divergence or convergence, of how moral it is to apply the western universality to different ethnicities and how Christian theology dovetails with the inclusive, inter-linked Eastern religions.

Noemi Forțiu

Adrian Papahagi (coord.),
Adinel-Ciprian Dincă
în colaborare cu
Andreea Mârza,
*Manuscrisele medievale
occidentale din România:*
Census, Iași, Polirom, 2018



The collective volume entitled *Manuscrisele medievale occidentale din România: Census* (*The Western Medieval Manuscripts of Romania: A Census*) represents a pioneering study for the retrieval of the dispersed medieval manuscript legacy that can be found in Romania. As the authors note, only a few libraries and archives possess complete and well-maintained

collections, in many cases the manuscripts being damaged by time, ill-handling, social changes and hazards. The main body of the book is focused on a *census* consisting of medieval manuscripts prior to the year 1525, to which are added a few later Transylvanian manuscripts of great importance, copied before the Protestant Reform.

The inventory of the manuscripts, which occupies the largest section of the book, is preceded by an introductory study which provides a contextualization of the subject, tackling a vast array of information regarding the work of the authors. This study enlightens the reader with data concerning the "Purpose and nature of the study" ("Scopul și natura lucrării") and, moreover, it presents a brief "History of the described collections" ("Istoria colecțiilor descrie").

In the first part of this introduction, the authors explain the reasons that led them to produce this volume, stating that their work offers an overview of *medieval manuscript books* (p. 13), including conservation aspects, such as the place, nature, origin and content of the Western medieval manuscripts of Romania (p. 12). As the authors note, the census type of inventory is much more than a simple checklist, but it still does not provide the amount of information that could be found in a complete descriptive catalogue. Nonetheless, it offers an identification and description about the selected manuscripts.

Regarding the history of the collection, the authors clearly emphasize the fact that all the manuscripts that are now to be found in the National Archives of Romania or in other similar institutions, are inherited via two very distinct types of sources. Firstly, there are manuscripts which were

kept and then continuously passed on by local institutions from the Medieval times until today, and then there are entire volumes and collections acquired in the modern era (p. 13). Some of the most important places in Romania where the manuscripts contained in this study are preserved coincide with the order in which the *census* is organized. What is more fascinating about the census and the information it provides is that, besides the main cultural centers of the country, such as Cluj-Napoca, Sibiu, Brașov, Alba Iulia, Bucharest or Sighișoara there are a lot of manuscripts collected in small parishes and museums around the country, for instance, in Călnădie, Mediaș, Miercurea Ciuc, Odorheiu Secuiesc, or Sfântu Gheorghe, mostly in Roman-Catholic and Evangelical Churches.

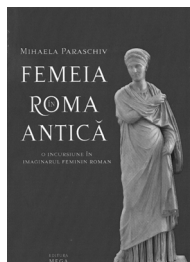
It is made clear that the purpose of this study is the depiction of a first step in the inventory of the great collection of Western medieval manuscripts that can be found in the Romanian patrimony, preserved in libraries, archives and parishes. However, despite the generous number of manuscripts, this incipient work is groundbreaking for the field, because from it henceforth provides a point of reference for further studies. The census offers to the connoisseur details about the subjacent material and a short identification of the type of writing, specific aspects about the presence of miniatures and decorated first initials, their type and colour, altogether with the content and notes regarding the language in which the manuscript was written.

Even though it endeavors to convene so many medieval works and manuscripts under a single title, this study manages to meet its goal, providing a much-needed

census which contains a missing piece of not only Romanian, but of the Western history of codicology too. Nevertheless, this study is the result of high standard knowledge of the domain, and given the fact that it finds itself only in an incipient phase it must be certain that the Western medieval manuscripts of Romania will have, hopefully in a near future, their place restored, not only in well documented archives, but in history as well.

Diana Capotă

Mihaela Paraschiv,
Femeia în Roma Antică.
O incursiune în
imaginarul feminin
roman, Editura Mega,
Cluj-Napoca, 2011



Mihaela Paraschiv's book, *The Woman in Ancient Rome. A Foray into the Roman Feminine Imaginary*, presents a research on the Roman feminine imaginary focused on the situation and position women had in ancient Rome. The main purpose of Paraschiv's study consists in a conceptual approach to the feminine issue (although it is not declared a feminist one), attentively observed in a specific historic area: ancient Rome. In order to conceive her study, the author gathers information from multiple works that depict the image of the Latin nation in that period of time. Thus, she concentrates her investigation on a corpus of texts appeared between the third century BC and the fifth century AD. Paraschiv's research does not tackle diachronically the life and evolution

of the Roman woman, but explores some social "references" – as she calls them – that help her analyse the Roman society as a whole. In this bigger picture, the position of women in the Roman society is closely observed. Therefore, the author's main objective is a close analysis of the way in which "the condition of Roman women unfolds within a universal feminine framework and the extent to which she manages to gather the attributes of specificity".

With an extremely-well organised structure, the book begins with an introduction that presents different perspectives on the feminine subject within ancient literature. There are thus mentioned some writings belonging to Plato or Aristotle, who discuss the nature of women. Using these texts, the author is able to create that insight into the imaginary of Roman civilization. Continuing with the way in which woman's name evolved in the Latin vocabulary (there are mentioned terms such as *mulier*, *mater*, *filia* or *soror*), the work analyses the way women's status developed as the Roman Empire was created and consolidated. The book offers, therefore, some coordinates regarding the judicial status of women. The study presents information extracted from multiple works from those times. Thus, Paraschiv analyzes the situation of the permanent custody the Roman woman was in, due to "the easiness of her spirit" or "the weakness of her judgement" ["uşurinţa spiritului", "slăbiciunea judecăţii"]. Paternal or marital, the legal guardian of the woman (and, implicitly, of her children) was a legislative aspect of ancient Rome's society, women's judicial position being – of course – an extremely disadvantaged one. As a consequence, women were deprived of civil rights too, such as

holding a will, the right to succession and also the right to appeal to civil justice. By observing diachronically the evolution of these aspects of the society, *The Woman in Ancient Rome*... proves that the situation changed with the legislation of Christian emperors. The judicial status of women was particularly protected during the reign of Emperor Justinian who, the author shows, acted under the powerful influence his wife, Theodora.

Furthermore, the research paper brings insights into marriage rituals and different types of marriages. For example, within the *Matrimonium sine manu* marriage type, the woman could remain under the authority of the father, without the possibility of the husband entering the “judicial possession” of the woman. What is more, beyond the legislative rigours of those times, the personal, “domestic” status of Roman women is also analysed. In order to offer information on the intimate life of Latin couples, the author consulted not only theoretical scientific works, but also literary ones. Thus, she frequently makes reference to the Latin writings of Cato the Elder, Horatio or Ovid, discussing some customs within Latin families. The woman had – it is mentioned – a significant role in raising and educating the child. Other analyzed aspects are connected to the rituals of birth and death. One of the most popular occupations for women in those times was the manufacturing of clothes. Working with wool or silk were activities that entered the sphere of feminine attributions, alongside cooking meals and cleaning the house. The professions of Latin women were those of dressmakers, hairdresser, saleswomen and – with an overwhelming role in the society – midwives. According to ancient writings,

doctors intervened only in cases of birth complications. Extensively discussed in Paraschiv’s work is also the “basic” occupation of women in the Roman society, namely prostitution. Mentioned under different judicial names, women who practiced prostitution were often organized in specific institutions, courtesans becoming one of the main modes of entertainment at sophisticated Roman banquets.

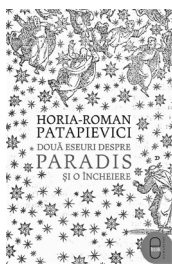
After analyzing multiple such “references” to the civilization of ancient Rome, the research paper also contains a section that studies feminine prototypes in Roman literature and iconography. Thus, among the “Roman virtuous” women analyzed, there is the case of *Lucretia*, the wife of Tarquinius Collatinus, who committed suicide because of a forced infidelity, and the one of *Cornelia*, who is included in the literary imaginary of Propertius. In a final chapter, in the form of an *addenda*, the author includes – alphabetically – a list of translated thoughts and reflections about the role and position of women in society. “The woman wears a long shirt, but has a short memory”, “Women started to cry in order to lie” or “The wife who got married against her will is an enemy for the man” [„Femeia poartă o cămașă lungă, dar o minte scurtă”, „Femeile au învățat să plângă pentru a minți”, „Soția măritată fără voia ei e un dușman pentru bărbat”] – these are just a few examples that complete the author’s demonstration, confirming the essential relation between the social, literary, and cultural representation of woman.

Mihaela Paraschiv’s very brief conclusion resumes the overall argument of her work, emphasizing the “mysterious fascination” of the “eternal feminine” that Roman women represented.

Indeed, Mihaela Paraschiv's study could be seen as representative in the field of historical and gender studies, as it examines women's position within a specific civilization. The parts that outline the image of Roman women's life are very well defined (and chosen) in the study.

Larisa-Georgiana Prodan

Horia-Roman Patapievici,
*Două eseuri despre
paradis*, București,
Editura Humanitas, 2018



In his book *Two Essays about Paradise*, Horia-Roman Patapievici proposes an analysis of the concept of paradise, approaching it not from a theological point of view, but rather as a principle of aesthetic construction, which modernity has cast into oblivion.

In the first essay on paradise, "Where did paradise go?", Patapievici explores ideas of paradise in different historical epochs, showing the areas where paradise is preserved in modernity or, rather, where traces of paradise are still legible. The author states that the notion of paradise is something that modern European mentality has suppressed.

First of all, we find that paradise was outlined by Persian mythology as a hunting park, a royal garden for enjoyment. Later taken over by the Greeks, the term circulated further, entered the Roman imaginary as *paradisus*, and then permeated most European cultures, with the meaning set by Christian eschatology. In the European conception, heaven acquires several facets: the royal

garden, the representation of the Golden Age, the earthly paradise and the celestial place.

Although the modern world brought about the secularization of the concept of paradise, the author notes the following: in modernity there are remnants of the notion of paradise, in the form of "paradisiacal instincts", whose mechanism is based on an unquenchable thirst for immediate physical possession of that which exists only spiritually, ideally or metaphysically, at a distance.

In order to better illustrate what happened to the idea of paradise, the author follows the destiny in the fate that Dante's paradise had in European culture. For modern posterity, the Inferno is much more easily accessible than Paradiso, which is why modernity has treated Dante's Paradiso with too much indulgence, and Ezra Pound has not made a paradise for his *Cantos*. Writing the *Cantos*, Pound concluded that the modern world could reach paradise only in fragmentary manner.

Patapievici's thesis is that mankind should rediscover, through the normal sensorial channels, the matter from which Dante's paradise was made. Poetically, according to the author, the solution is encapsulated in the modernist aesthetic program.

In the second essay, entitled "The principle of paradise", the author shows that the modern epic poem revolves around the impossibility of reaching paradise. On the other hand, not only does the principle of paradise transform the mind itself into paradise, but it makes splendour accessible to our sensorial perceptions. This aims would be to regain the original senses, which are paradisiacal. The author notices that: "In essence, the generic mind of modern man is the mind of Satan in Milton's poem, when he proclaims self-sufficiency (to God), indifference (to religion), and power (to enjoy pleasure)". According to

Patapievici, the principle of paradise is what unites the sky and the earth, the mortal and the divine. It is what turns existence into ecstasy, and allows splendour to enter the realm of being. Nothing can become whole and nothing can be fulfilled without this principle.

In the end of the second essay, the author concludes that the nostalgia for paradise functions as a substitute for paradise. With two clarifications: the aspiration of the work can never be a substitute for the work, and the failure of the modern epic poem is rooted in the principle of modernism, not in the poet's lack of genius.

The major conclusion Patapievici reaches in his book coincides with Pound's regret: Paradise must be felt spiritually and physically at once. In modernity, the human capacity to "perceive the matter of which Dante's paradise is made" is irretrievably lost. This fact is illustrated by Patapievici through the example of Mary Magdalene, the woman who was able to know pleasure, to share the grace in which charm and delight are consumed.

Irina Șandri

Ovidiu Pecican,
*Metafora trecutului
și conștiința istorică*,
Cluj-Napoca,
Limes, 2019



One of the latest volumes signed by the historian and professor Ovidiu Pecican, *Metafora trecutului și conștiința istorică* (*The Metaphor of the Past and the Historical Conscience*, published by Limes in Cluj-Napoca, 2019), continues his series of books that reunite historiographic comments.

Here, the author uses the Romanian Centenary as a starting point, an event which was celebrated in 2018 as an acknowledgment of the essential importance that the year of 1918 has had within the course of Romanian history. Based on this, the writer publishes a complex series of critical considerations, punctual reactions and reviews about the most significant historical studies that have appeared on the literary scene during the last two decades.

The volume is structured in two parts, entitled "Trecutul de acasă" (*The past from home*) and "Coagulări reprezentative" (*Representative coagulations*), and it proposes resuming the critical view upon the past, as well as a useful synthesis of the new book editions that bring to the surface, from wider and enriched perspectives, events, personalities and conflicts that have marked the tumultuous period of the last two centuries. In this way, the present collection of mini-essays addresses both the experts who can critically appreciate the accuracy of the selection criteria that have led to this specific book structure, and the ordinary readers, who are, maybe, curious to find out "what the last twenty years have produced in terms of history-related publications".

The first part salutes exclusively the publication of monographs which tackle Romanian subjects, thus illustrating the contemporary historians' principal spheres of interest and the directions of analysis on which they build their demonstrations. This part includes reflections on volumes that approach the life and the cultural and political influence of personalities like Ioan Slavici, Gheorghe Șincai, Avram Iancu or George Topîrceanu, as well as a brief presentation of scientific papers that discuss central problems of the Romanian society

(elitism, the mendicant industry, the rural population's lack of education etc.). Moreover, "Trecutul de acasă" also sheds light on the studies that focus on essential aspects of the two world wars and of the legionary movement whose supporters continue to be quite vocal even nowadays. Nevertheless, the author also pays attention to the way in which historical discourse is constructed. In connection to that, "Poliția stilistică" (*Stylistics police*), the essay that opens the volume, sets from the start certain guiding principles that all writers should follow.

The second part maintains, up to a certain point, the interest given to the studies that address the turning points in our national culture and history, but it also goes further, bringing to the readers' attention subjects of universal interest. Ovidiu Pecican embarks here on an unusual literary journey, as he discusses in detail themes such as Descartes' correspondence, the connections between Dimitrie Cantemir and Leibniz or Ioan Petru Culianu's works about Platonism during the Renaissance era; all these represent some sort of gates through which the reader is invited to step inside and discover the complex spheres of historiography and the philosophy of culture. What is more, in the pages of the book there can also be found reflections on the philosophy of language, on the superiority of evocative narration in comparison to the scientific text and on the type of national history (the recent totalitarian one or the bygone, medieval one) which should be studied the most. We can thus notice the fact that the volume is definitely comprehensive enough so as to include references to all or at least the vast majority of the themes that a specialist of this domain would like to see mentioned in such a synthesis as the present book.

Another particularly interesting element is, in my view, the puzzle-like aspect of Ovidiu Pecican's volume. His reviews are short and always on point, each of them standing out through its own subject, way of approach and part of history that it covers. In the same way in which the perfectly-cut puzzle pieces are made to fit together faultlessly, in order to form the bigger picture, the historiographic comments in this volume contribute with their individual "color", "form" and content to the bigger image that the author wants to present about the latest history-related publications. As a consequence, there is a certain fluidity in the narrative tone of the book, as well as the impression that each new study will bring new information that will prove essential for the reader who wants to get properly accustomed to the complex world of contemporary historical literature.

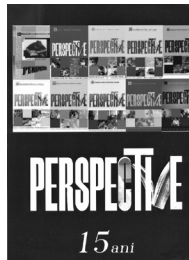
However, maybe the most important thing that the readers should remember after finishing this book and learning about the complex reading and documentation process involved in its construction is the message that it delivers. Even the title is significant in this sense, as *The Metaphor of the Past and the Historical Conscience* is a well-chosen series of words for a volume that does exactly that: it raises the readers' awareness towards what the past is, what its components are and what people should learn from it. One does not need to go too far to find proofs for the importance of knowing one's past, but history is a very big domain that can be difficult to approach without the necessary tools. What this book does is initiate the reader through small pieces of information, which all tackle different key-parts of what their historical conscience should pay attention

to. The writer's intention is thus fulfilled: through monographs, scientific studies or simple articles that he found relevant for his domain of interest and study, he brings a wide variety of themes to the reader's attention, thus helping him develop or maintain his knowledge about the past.

All in all, *Metafora trecutului și conștiința istorică* is a distinguishable historiographic study that stands out through its accessible and yet analytic style with which Ovidiu Pecican examines the last publications in this domain and also through the strong impulse that it gives to the cultivation of the interest for studying "the times of old". Just like a useful guide for everybody who is passionate by history, the present volume focuses on the idea of showing "how the past is written though the struggles of our contemporaries and right under our eyes", as well as exploring "what we select and what we pass on from this past".

Maria Barbu

Perspective,
no. 2, 2018



P*erspective*, the only journal of didactics in Romanian language and literature brings in the second number in 2018 (the 36th in its history) a very delicate subject: the "so-called" competence 5, the expression of one's own linguistic and cultural identity in national and international context. It is an integrated part of the

new school programmes launched since 2017- 2018, beginning with the 5th grade. The journal will further treat other aspects of these new programs in the numbers to come.

In the past, identity emerged naturally from the whole process of study, especially from the Romanian language and literature and history. When you raise the matter of cultural identity as a didactic goal, you bring into discussion the fear of losing it. Mircea Martin starts with the causes of this fear: the desire to become oneself without effort of thought, authenticity as exhibitionism, a predisposition to general confessionalism, the declining interest in acknowledging our historical past which brings an unstable vision of the future. Another cause is found at a European level by Corin Braga in the project "Enciclopedia imaginariilor din România. Patrimoniu istoric și identități cultural-lingvistice". The articles quoted by the magazine from the project highlights the need of European myths and symbolic discourses (Gérard Bouchard) and the emotional and fictional deficit (Pascal Lamy). The editorial team presents the project as a coincidence between the perspectives of Romanian teachers from the system and the academical activities, which emphasizes once more the immense gap between the gymnasium and lyceum system, on the one hand, and the universities, on the other. Grades from 5 to 12 should give the future students a solid base for the academic learning, and this mission should be acknowledged by Romanian teachers as a common goal with the universities, not as a simple coincidence.

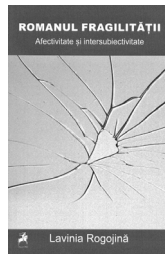
Competence 5 brings a set of problems due to the imprecision and inconsequence

in formulation pinpointed by Sofia Dobra. Some contributors proved the diachrony of this competence which already failed in European educational system or the fact that it is not a solution for the identity problem. Apart from all, the examples given in the curriculum are inefficient and teachers try with more or less success to apply their own understandings. The confusion created is resolved by some of the contributors with the simplistic and reductionist definitions of extremely complex ideas, for instance; interculturalism in personal development curricular model defined as a process of understanding oneself within the cultural predetermination, fast adaptation or perceiving the other only at a cross of cultural models or abstract categories, or the redefinition of the intellectual as a mediocre opportunist. Others came to the same kind of inconsequence sustaining that there is not a crisis of values in culture, but one of their implementations. Values are strictly linked with their means of manifesting as they are "an ideal expression of an accord between the self and the world" (Tudor Vianu), thus, by denying the crises, they refuse to accept their replacement with forms of superficiality, opportunism, etc. which used to be regarded as negative while today they are seen as comfortable, the comfort being one of the new values.

The next decade is going to show which of the educational values would survive and which not. Maybe, the most reasonable understanding of the competence 5, for the moment, would be the responsibility to the language as a responsibility to the world we live in.

Georgiana Tudor

Lavinia Rogojină, *Romanul fragilității. Afectivitate și intersubiectivitate în ficțiunea confesivă anglo-americană de la începutul secolului XXI*, București, Tracus Arte, 2019



How can the contemporary reader put behind him the numbness and disinterest that postmodernism has eventually left him with? Postmodernism was so playful and witty in theory, yet from the very start it was condemned to extinction due to its inherent incapacity to build over the ruin of everything it has constantly destroyed through irony (which, ironically, has given it its popularity in the first place). Lavinia Rogojină, the author of the present study, demonstrates that the reader we are talking about can do that through a return to confessional fiction, with its inclination towards fragility and, however hard it is for us to accept it, towards sentimentalism. This is the reader's only chance of getting out of the apathy that postmodern texts have got him into and go back to deeply humane sentiments.

The postmodernists' point of view is that today's reader, impatient as he is, tends to put greater value in witty figures of speech than in a novel which offers a look at the protagonist's inner life, with all its complexities and irregularities. But the authors presented here were ready to prove them wrong when they showed us the reader's interest in the writing which presents the intricacies of the characters' emotions and the complicate relationships between the self and the other.

Following David Foster Wallace's analysis of the contemporary novel and applying his theory to the writers Julian Barnes, Nicole Krauss, Jonathan Safran Foer, Jeffrey Eugenides and Will Self, Lavinia Rogojină manages to articulate any reader's simple tendency to value the frailty novel's protagonists' imperfect, vulnerable, unforeseeable nature over the wordy plays and the harmful irony, however smartly articulated the latter may be.

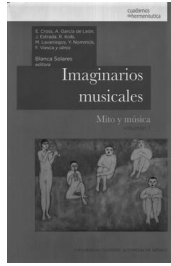
The reader is informed from the very start that the writers whose works are going to be studied are neither marginal, nor exotic, nor eccentric, but that they stand out through their capacity of restoring through fiction "an emotional space capable of capturing the European and the North-American reader, without him having to familiarize himself with completely different political, social or cultural contexts". But the relief that he might be feeling while reading about fictional worlds apparently accessible to him is not valid when talking about the frailty novel. While reading Lavinia Rogojină's exhaustive study, we are slowly becoming more aware of the change which the contemporary reader needs when approaching one of the mentioned novels. This happens because of his increasing inability to spend his time slowly processing a book, cautiously assimilating every page, the way people used to do it one hundred years ago. Now, due to the fantastic technological progress made by humanity, he has become used to skimming through the large quantity of reading material he has so as to be done with it as soon as possible. Of course, in this approach he will become unaware of many subtleties and perhaps will be able to remember only the general ideas.

This procedure is not applied only to academic papers or nonfiction in general (where we tend to gravitate towards the "essential" facts), but also to literature, with the obvious consequence of dimming the sense of understanding the characters' inner motivations. We won't be able to feel empathy for them and the way we recognize ourselves in the fictional world will be unsatisfying and superficial. Swiping the screen fast enough to catch the main ideas is not the right way to approach literature, as proven by Will Self in his most complex novel, *Umbrella*, which (not being divided into paragraphs or chapters) must be read entirely for the reader to understand the complexities it captures.

The end of the Gutenberg era, the digitalization of our libraries will most likely have a massive impact on the reader's way to interact with the written text in general and literature in particular. However, the present study shows how important it is for the writer to stop and imagine the little details of the characters' domestic lives and their personal way of coping with loss, alienation, loneliness or the sense of not being completely understood by the other (while still confessing themselves) and for the reader to take his time and immerse himself in the story, in order to deeply understand the writer's message. This is the proper way to perpetuate authentic communication in the digital era that we live in.

Iulia-Andreea Cărtăleanu

Blanca Solares (ed.),
Imaginarios musicales,
 vol. I and II, CRIM-UNAM,
 Editorial Itaca, 2015



A group of scholars from different fields such as linguistics, history, musicology, philosophy, have contributed to the completion of this collective work, under the coordination and supervision of Blanca Solares. Dr. Solares is a researcher with the Imaginary Studies Program (symbol, art and religion) at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico. For more than a decade she has focused on the study of the hermeneutics of culture, combining the theoretical research of symbolic imagination, myth and religion, with the anthropological study of pre-Hispanic thought.

What is revealed to us by reading *Musical Imaginaries*, volumes I and II, is the complexity of numerous aspects regarding the intersection of myth and music. It is a challenge to renounce the limitations of specialized study and the borders of our own fields of knowledge, and also a very convincing, cogent invitation to embrace an interdisciplinary approach.

The reader is carried through discourses on philosophy, sociology, anthropology, history, literature, art history, musicology, ethnomusicology and the history of religions, just to name a few. At this particular and immensely rich point of intersection, the dialogue between the fields of study mentioned before sets the scene for a rapid and exuberant exchange of information.

The set of essays presented in the first volume is in itself an inquiry into the relationship between myth and music. To exemplify in musical terms, the authors conduct their dialogue in the same way as a *double fugue* would unfold: on the one hand, the discourse focuses on what we understand by myth, and on the other, on how the myth is being reinvigorated, protected and metamorphosed into musical creation, from its cultural origins to its present form. If myths use symbols and words as means to preserve the cultural imaginary of humanity, the art, which in itself is an inexhaustible field of their manifestation, is limited here to its musical expression.

It is necessary to state there has not been enough interest in the connection between mythical-religious thought and musical creation, perceived as a symbolic sound language, due to the predominance of the instrumental language in modernity and the rapid rise to power of the media image that we witness nowadays. This is all too sad considering that myths reveal through their symbolism, the archetypal images of the world and that arts remain to this day their most refined and complex embodiment in reality.

Fighting against the lesser tendencies of the contemporary world, such as the globalization of consumerism, the trivialization of spaces and the overwhelming nature of our increasingly fast paced lives, in these essays we are invited to reflect upon the link between the ancient wisdom contained within myths and their musical expression, through the lens of what Gilbert Durand called a *new anthropological spirit* in the field of humanities, thus broadening our, so far limited, view on the matter at hand.

The second volume seems more of an ethno-musicology book, above all. While the first one revolved mostly around the hermeneutics of myths and their symbolic language, the second focuses on the study of the historical and ethnographic nature of the documents concerning the presence of myths in the music of indigenous cultures from India and Mexico. However, it is not entirely limited to that, as it continues to analyze the work of contemporary composers such as Maurice Ohana, John Cage and György Ligeti in order to identify some, if any, of the symbolic constants of the ancient world in their compositions.

There is a chance that, by developing a better understanding of contemporary music, we can establish links with musical records of archaic origin and guide ourselves to the possible tonal system that in ancient times might have been the catalyst to grasping the meaning of the universe, mythos and, later, language and writing.

The awareness that sound and its parameters, such as duration, intensity, rhythm, harmony and timbre are main components that affect our perception of reality, leads to the immediate need and interest to study the innovative musical developments of the last two centuries, particularly the areas which drew inspiration from traditional cultures, where the myth was intertwined with music in a ritualistic context.

Such a comparative analysis as the one that Blanca Solares proposes is bound to draw attention to both differences and similarities between the various perspectives on the theme discussed. How could one neglect to observe the similarity between Orpheus and his lyre and the harp from Huasteca potosina, or overlook the

silence – noise relationship in John Cage's work or in that of Juan Rulfo? Also striking are the parallels between the Greek god Hades, the Nahua underworld and the Rulfian Comala.

The imaginary of many of the topics that are being discussed is reinforced by illustrations and a listening guide for numerous musical works, such as *Orpheus and Euridice* by Monteverdi, *Don Quixote* by Manuel de Falla or *Saint Francis de Assisi* by Messiaen.

This work in itself is a way for myths, music and imagination to claim the place they lost in the contemporary world, a way of recovering that fundamental part of the human being: emotion, fantasy, imagination, subjectivity.

Music, like poems, myths or solemn prayers, is a way of accessing pure time, the great time suppressed, "it is immersion in the primordial waters" (O. Paz). If myth and music, as established by Lévi-Strauss, need a relationship with time to manifest themselves, it is only "to deny it: both one and the other - explains Lévi-Strauss - are, in effect, "machines of suppressing time". Myth and music are then linked with time, but it is a link through which the latter is deactivated, thus opening the way to a new temporal dimension.

Music and sung poetry are nothing but time; that is, a perpetually creative rhythmic combination of symbols and images. For "music is given to us with the sole purpose of establishing an order in things, especially and in particular to establish coordination between man and time". One should be reminded that in the overture and finale to his *Mythologiques*, Levi Strauss puts an emphasis on the link between tonal music and mythology, the

interplay between nature and culture, body and mind. Because music is both cultural and physiological, it exploits basic “organic rhythms”. The joy of music is the “soul’s delight in being invited, for once, to recognise itself in the body” (L. Strauss - *L’Homme Nu*), allowing the fusion of what we call sensory and what we call intelligible.

A very compelling and unexpected selection of short essays is present at the end of each volume, adequately titled *Impromptus*. Both selections have been expertly reviewed and reworked by Yvan Nommick – pianist, conductor, composer and musicologist, Doctor of Musicology from the Sorbonne University. In these *Impromptus* the reader will find some examples of the relationship between mythical-religious thought and musical creation, samples of the link between music and the sacred, found in traditional cultures, and also in contemporary philosophy, science and literature.

These works bring to light an understanding that seemed to be lost until the seventeenth century: that the role of music in antiquity has been underestimated for too long. According to Plato, music was regarded as the highest form of knowledge that man could possess about the universe. As a direct consequence of this neglect, intuition, imagination and sound perception have been left at the outskirts of academic study, such broad approached being discouraged in favor of those conducted in close compartments and focused on a single specialty, to the detriment of humanities and arts.

The importance of music has been long confined to the simplistic idea of a mere mean of aesthetic enjoyment, incarcerated within the walls of the concert

hall, while at the same time, its vulgarization becoming nothing more than a simple mass show, cheap entertainment, or muzak. However, in the past few decades we have noticed a broadening in perspective when it comes to the relationship between the ancient way of thinking and art, or other various disciplines and cultures.

The most significant role of the investigation coordinated by Blanca Solares is that, despite the effects of commercial globalization on music, the acceleration of the pace of life and the saturation of the audio sphere, it can rekindle the interest of scholars in this cultural spectrum of fundamental depth, concerned with the importance of sound and its symbolic significance.

Petre Cristian Nicolescu

A. Tarr, D.R. White (eds.),
*Posthumanism in Young
Adult Fiction: Finding
Humanity in a Posthuman
World*, University of
Mississippi Press, 2018



It is more than clear to say that the academic discussion on posthumanism as an extremely dynamic and newly defined concept that eases the construction and analysis of a critical view on the contemporary world has represented a widely debated aspect in the last decades. What *Posthumanism in Young Adult Fiction: Finding Humanity in a Posthuman World* is trying to bring to the table in this conversation is the idea that young adult fiction represents one of the most fruitful artistic areas in the study of the posthuman due to the fact that the main target-reader of the text is the

adolescent, who is by all means a figure of the *in-between-ness* – ontological instance that finds its place along the main conceptual lines of the phenomenon.

Structured into four parts, the book proposes twelve essays depicting ways in which this exercise of examining young adult literature through a theoretical pattern oriented towards posthumanism can unfold. Therefore, texts by authors such as Octavia E. Butler, Marissa Meyer, Ridley Scott and China Miéville are confronted with a deconstruction of the worlds they present, in a thorough and apprehensive investigation of the posthuman. One argument that the editors formulate which sparks interest is that young adult literature can be perceived as a modifier of the actual technological development and of the position the individual has toward a rapidly changing universe. In this sense, the utopian or dystopian natures the novels are embedded in tend to stand as virtual ethical points in the relationship between the adolescent and the idea of nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology and cognitive science as components of a prospective ordinary existence.

Furthermore, one of the main outlines of the book is illustrated by the discussion on the concept of *popular posthumanism*. Anita Tarr and Donna R. White build a case concerning the fact that what is typically regarded as posthumanism in young adult literature is, in fact, transhumanism; thus, this selection of essays presents itself as a new facet of the academic critical discourse focused on the matter, as the authors adopt a posthumanism-oriented approach. Another fundamental detail of the generic theoretical agenda of the book is that, opposed to other opinions in the field, transhumanism is considered to be a branch

of posthumanism rather than an autonomous concept or even field of study. Putting things into perspective, the substantial intention of *Posthumanism in Young Adult Fiction: Finding Humanity in a Posthuman* is to broaden the conversation it focused on and to annihilate the boundaries of an imposed transhumanist direction in the analysis of young adult literature. As a consequence, there are, for example, chapters dedicated to climate fiction and the manners in which it is linked to posthumanism.

By far, the main debated problems throughout the texts are the construction of one's identity in a posthuman world and the perception of the body. This can be easily explained by the fact that the plots of the novels in case follow the pattern of coming-of-age stories, aspect that supports the emerging of questions such as *what is a person, what makes someone human* and a reformulated, a remodelled conjunction of *good* and *bad*. Of course, all of this philosophical substratum that lives within texts targeted to teenagers is enabled even more by the adolescent fascination with the body; taking this into consideration, young adult fiction expands the definition of the body and takes it to the extreme, using real or fictional terms and means of biotechnology as a rule. All the essays dedicated to this matter investigate the potential psychological and cultural effects these "anatomical fictions" may have on the future adult shaped in his young years by such discourses and the way in which life itself may be influenced by the subconscious attitudes designed by these stories on a fully posthuman world and a transhuman body.

To conclude, *Posthumanism in Young Adult Fiction: Finding Humanity in a Posthuman World* stands as one of the first

writings on the subject, as it concerns a constantly innovative and dynamic field of study due to the fact that posthumanist considerations are relatively new in philosophy, politics, culture, science. More than that, it puts emphasis on the importance of teenage fiction and its nuances and

significance in culture, beliefs, behaviour, bringing to the surface a segment of literary texts that has been mostly excluded from academic conversation by revealing the “not-so-childish” layers of it.

Cassandra Corbu