

Bogdan Vișan

The Worldedness of Postmodernism in the Romanian Literary Field: A Traveling Concept

Abstract: In spite of its alleged outdatedness, recent enquiries in World Literature Studies have not completely neglected the concept of postmodernism. On the contrary, they emphasized its “worldedness” and transnational characteristics. Building on this perspective, I approach postmodernism through Mieke Bal’s *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*, framing it as a “traveling concept” whose diffusion in East-Central European culture — precisely the Romanian context — merits closer examination. This investigation focuses on its interactions with coeval literary concepts within the world-literary system. Using this framework, the article argues that Romanian postmodernism, a category discussed by Mircea Cărtărescu among others, served as a legitimizing theorization. In this regard, it was pragmatically employed to counter the (semi-)peripheral condition, and to act as a heuristic battleground between two fields of knowledge production on literary postmodernism: French and American.

Keywords: Postmodernism; Worldedness; Transnational; Self-Colonization; Traveling Concept; Mircea Cărtărescu.

BOGDAN VIȘAN

Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Romania
visanobogdan@gmail.com

DOI: 10.24193/cechinox.2024.47.19

Postmodernism, as both a national and transnational phenomenon, has long been historicized in large-scale critical and theoretical debates. The term first appeared in Western culture in the early 1960s, while in Romanian culture, it dates back to the 1970s, having been introduced by Andrei Brezianu in his 1974 article, “Post-modernii americani. O trajectorie spre viitor” [American Post-Modernists. A Trajectory Towards the Future]¹. The concept has enjoyed worldwide recognition in the circles of criticism and academic theorizing, whose cultural product it also is². Prior to the emergence of postmodernism, Romanian modernism dominated the local field of literary theory and criticism of the interwar period and beyond, serving as a cultural production that stimulated the development of national literature³. In the Romanian literary studies up until the 2000s, the reception of postmodernism varied between enthusiastic acceptance and more reserved or even repudiative attitudes. Nonetheless, this did not prevent the substantial growth of a bibliographical archive. For example, a quick search of the Arcanum database reveals 7,855 entries

of the term “postmodernism” in digitized Romanian newspapers and magazines. Moreover, while various competing -isms have emerged in Romanian culture – including altermodernism, transmodernism, metamodernism, and cosmodernism –, none have not yet garnered the sufficient momentum to establish themselves. As a result, these -isms remain confined to the stage of theoretical projects “in the theorists’ laboratories”⁴. However, in light of the highly influential Modernist Studies of today, “postmodernism” itself now seems like a residue of the past. For instance, scholars in literary modernism critique postmodernism’s “self-sufficiency” and “theoretical rigidity,” which they argue have created an autonomous formula⁵. Furthermore, the term “modern” functions as a root concept for series such as “premodern,” “postmodern,” and “postmodernism”. The problem arises, however, when “people appropriate all forms of the root concept to serve their different purposes”⁶, a tendency particularly evident in the conceptual circulation of postmodernism within Romanian culture, as I aim to demonstrate.

“Epidemiological” metaphors are particularly apt for describing the circulation of the conceptual narrative of postmodernism, as its worldwide transmission evokes the image of an “epidemic” or “sublime’ influenza”, in the words of the editors of *Theory in the “Post” Era*⁷. The metaphor of an “epidemic” image carries multiple connotations, including associations with “contamination”. In this context, I employ it to critically examine the premise of postmodernism as an intellectually “contaminating” narrative. Building on these preliminary remarks, this essay comprises three parts. The first one opens a discussion of “travelling”

theories and “travelling” concepts, highlighting their defining characteristics. The second part focuses on two concepts that may align with the theoretical inclinations of Romania’s 1980s generation: “intellectual captivity”, as developed by Chen Bar-Itzhak, and “self-colonization”, as theorized by Alexander Kiossev. The third and concluding part broadly examines the crisis within the Romanian conceptual framework and explores alternative approaches proposed by local critics.

The Premises of “Travelling”. Between Theory and Concept

The idea of “travelling concepts” belongs to the theorist Mieke Bal, who developed it as a tool for cultural analysis in her early 2000s volume, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*. A significant precursor to this discussion, however, is Edward Said’s seminal essay *Traveling Theory*, in which he outlines a framework for analyzing the transformations that theories undergo as they circulate. He takes as examples the appropriation of the concept of class consciousness from Georg Lukács’s *History and Class Consciousness* by Lucien Goldmann and Raymond Williams, as well as the uncritical dissemination of Michel Foucault’s theory of power. Said’s premise is that the geocultural spread of ideas and theories catalyzes an active intellectual climate, serving as “a usefully enabling condition of intellectual activity”⁸. What he means is that intellectual development cannot be achieved in the absence of a medium for idea dissemination.

In this part of the essay, I will outline certain characteristics that define a concept or theory as “travelling”, as understood in

the frameworks of Said and Bal. According to Said, four key moments define the trajectory of a travelling theory: the point of origin (which overlaps with what Pierre Bourdieu called the “field of origin”⁹), the distance it crossed situationally, the conditions of acceptance or resistance (aligned with Galin Tihanov’s concept of “the regimes of relevance”¹⁰ and with Bourdieu’s “field of reception”), and the new uses of adopted ideas over time and space. The latter recalls Wai Chee Dimock’s notion of “deep time”, which captures the intricate temporal and spatial relationships between American literature and world literature.¹¹ Moreover, Said argues that theory is a response created by intellectuals within a culture to address a specific socio-historical situation.

From Mieke Bal’s standpoint, conceptual circulation is not primarily geocultural and socio-historical. Instead, Bal focuses her analytical lens on concepts rather than theories, or methods, treating interdisciplinary conceptual transfer as essential to creating shared theoretical terminology and, consequently, a space of common reference: “Concepts are tools of intersubjectivity: they facilitate discussion on the basis of a common language”¹². Since concepts are an emanation of theoretical schemes, Bal describes them as “miniatures of theories”. Unlike theory, which often carries a degree of rigidity, concepts are inherently flexible, allowing for contextual and programmatic resemantization and refunctionalization. As Bal notes, “[c]oncepts are never simply descriptive; they are also programmatic and normative”¹³. In addition to the transformations they undergo through interdisciplinary and transnational transfer, concepts possess an active internal capacity

– a generative potential for differentiation – which Reinhart Koselleck highlights as essential to their function:

Every fundamental concept contains semantic residues buried at different levels, as well as prospectings of the future in different weightings. Thus, they generate, in their linguistic immanence, potentials for action and change active over time. Representative for such innovative concepts are those provided with the suffix *-ism*.¹⁴

I have made the above brief incursion into the question of “travelling” potential to return to the central question of my essay: what makes postmodernism a “travelling” concept in the Romanian literary field? Intuitively, a sufficient answer would be its transnational and interdisciplinary circulation. It spans fields such as architecture, anthropology, history, art, and cinema, each contributing to the theoretical narrative of “postmodernism”. Besides these two answers, at least four additional factors help explain its travelling potential. First, the socio-historical circumstance. For Bourdieu, the transfer of ideas occurs seamlessly only when there is structural homology between the “field of origin” and the “field of reception”¹⁵. One of the founding voices of Romanian postmodernism, Ion Bogdan Lefter, considered that the importation of Western terminology “was ‘demanded’ by the internal evolution of the autochthonous literature”, which was advancing toward “rallying our country to the advance in a structurally homogeneous direction of the whole European culture”¹⁶. In Lefter’s case, homology, structural homogeneity, or synchronization – quasi-synonyms in

context – refer to shared literary matrices, particularly the stylistic characteristics of Romanian postmodernist writing. This observation, however, overlooks the material-historical and socio-political climate that facilitated the emergence of a postmodern literature and theoretical developments in Western core literary fields from the 1960s onward. In Romania, this climate only allowed for aspirations toward Western cultural structures. The “transfer” of postmodernism was more concerned with seeking legitimacy outside the former Soviet Bloc, in contrast to interwar modernism, which involved a process of synchronization beyond local culture.¹⁷ Similarly, the so-called neo-modernism of the 1960s endeavored to reconnect the literary field with the previous modernist phase as a way to challenge the socialist realism doctrine. In other words, the “travelling” of postmodernism was about breaking away from the cultural austerity of state socialism (i.e., the socialist aestheticism of the 1960s), and developmental nationalism (i.e., linked to the conditions legislated by the July Theses of 1971). While this process does not align entirely with Bourdieu’s theory, it complements it: the nationalization of certain literary concepts depends all the more on the “complexes” of the literature in question. These include the desynchronized socio-historical situation and the ethos aspiring to cultural homogeneity.

In a recent article, Costi Rogozanu explores the connections between the economic austerity imposed by the July Theses of 1971, the oil crisis, and the writing practices of the 1980s generation. He concludes that, by the end of Romanian state socialism, a form of neoliberalism was beginning to emerge, driven by a forced

synchronization with the West – a neo-liberalism that would become even more prominent in the post-1989 period:

A newly industrialized socialist country enters the whirlpool of global oil markets, the vortex of international borrowing and ends up in austerity: this too is globalization, a strange one, with closed borders for citizens, but globalization. [...] The representatives of 80s generation are therefore postmodernists with all the conditions of postmodernism observed, including consumerism and pop references are provided by the black market or by investments in red entertainment.¹⁸

The nationalization of the concept of postmodernism, in one sense, reflected a tendency to synchronize with a cultural “Greenwich meridian”, which at the time was represented by American culture, in an effort to transcend the (semi-)peripheral status of local culture. Lefter articulates this tendency as “the effective adaptation of a linguistic signifier to a cultural signified”¹⁹. Similarly, Ceaușescu’s developmentalism²⁰ reflected an aspiration to compete with the industrial West.

Another aspect that makes postmodernism a “travelling” concept is its ability to create a common language. By importing the concept, the generation of the 1980s managed to introduce and establish a shared conceptual vocabulary characterized primarily by its ambivalence: it both delegitimized (in relation to socialist aestheticism²¹, also referred to as neo-modernism or even socialist modernism in Andrei Terian’s elaboration²²) and

self-legitimized (oriented toward the conditions of existence for the new generation). The literature generated from the debates on postmodernism traces its origin, albeit sterile, in Andrei Brezianu's 1974 article, "Post-modernii americani. O traiectorie spre viitor" [American Post-Modernists. A Trajectory Towards the Future]. However, it was not until 1986, with the issue of *Caiete critice* [Critical Review] dedicated to the dispute, that the local debate was settled and theoretical positions on postmodernism were firmly negotiated. I will, however, dwell upon Magda Cârnelci's 1995 article, published in *Euresis*, which addresses the issue at hand. She opens her contribution by posing fundamental questions concerning the adoption of Western theories in an eminently nationalist literary environment resistant to innovation: "How was it possible to have something of a postmodern symptomatology under a communist regime?" Or, furthermore, "What could postmodernism mean in a small, marginal and isolated European country?"²³ Her answer takes into account the intersection of Romanian field of literary theory and criticism with Western notions amidst the cultural stagnation under the imperative of autochthonous socio-political conditioning: "The interest about postmodernism in these small East-European countries should/could represent rather a way in which to overcome mentally and artistically the local difficult socio-political conditions, it was a subtle symptom of a diffuse premonition of change"²⁴. By suggesting the idea of an international cultural integration, viewing interest in postmodernism as a symptom of change, and stressing that "[i]t is not fortuitous that the interest for postmodernism coincided with the last,

decadent phase of state communism in Eastern Europe"²⁵, Magda Cârnelci frames the discussion in terms of the profitability of circulating concepts within Eastern European culture. This was not only advantageous within the context of Romania's stagnant socio-political climate during the 1980s, but it also had the potential to induce a significant shift in literary practices, diverging from the prevailing dynamics of other literary traditions.

Moreover, in the vein of crossing national borders, Mircea Cărtărescu recalls the episode of the meeting between Romanian representatives with renowned theorists of postmodernism in the context of "The Stuttgart Seminar in Cultural Studies", held in 1992 at the Faculty of American Studies²⁶. Broadly, the concept of postmodernism was generally instrumentalized, both to delegitimize the previous generation of the 1960s – alongside its preference for interwar modernism – and to propel the new generation beyond the borders of Romania, or beyond those of the former Soviet Bloc, which was marked by the stigma of totalitarianism. By this, I refer to their efforts to gain recognition beyond the confines of the local cultural sphere.

The concept of the "miniature theory" is closely linked to the conceptual vocabulary developed by the 1980s generation in Romanian culture. From a broader perspective, one might argue that the theory was developed and utilized solely to address the immediate needs of the time, thus limiting the concept's potential to what could be termed a "miniature theory". It was in the 2000s that the theory of postmodernism in Romanian cultural sphere was expanded into a more comprehensive

theoretical framework, most notably in Mircea Cărtărescu's doctoral work, *Postmodernismul românesc* [Romanian Postmodernism]. Here, Mircea Cărtărescu engages eruditely with Western essays and critical volumes, frequently referencing prominent figures such as Gianni Vattimo, Jean-François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard, John Barth, Richard Rorty, and Ihab Hassan throughout his work. Beyond this, Cărtărescu's explanation for the emergence of postmodernism and postmodernity, both globally and locally, is grounded in an intellectualist and culturalist perspective. His primary interest lies in the history of philosophical and cultural ideas, particularly the thought of Nietzsche and Heidegger, as well as the hermeneutics of Gadamer, Jauss, and Rorty, to name just a few. Another case is that of Alexandru Mușina, who, with his concept of a "new anthropocentrism", sought to develop an autochthonous theory. However, his efforts were ultimately hindered, in part, by the resistance of his colleagues to his ideas. Indeed, it is necessary to distinguish between postmodernism and postmodernity. While Mircea Cărtărescu addresses both concepts, he does so differently from David Harvey and Fredric Jameson, who use Marxist analysis. For Cărtărescu, postmodernity, or postmodern society, refers to a technologically advancing world – specifically the American context – characterized by liberalism, a market economy, and informational technology. However, postmodernism is often regarded as a stylistic departure from previous literary phenomena. This perspective is prevalent among many Romanian theorists of postmodernism, whose analyses primarily focus on stylistic aspects.

Behind the emergence of the debate on postmodernism and postmodernity lies an ideological evasion of the conditions of socio-political crisis and economic austerity, which were favorable to the rise of a "theoretical and practical paradise", as Alexandru Matei describes postmodernism in the footsteps of Monica Spiridon:

In the wake of the political events and cultural fallout of the early 1990s, the "postmodern" debate can be seen in retrospect, above all, as the abandonment of one camp for another; this other, little-known camp may have constituted a veritable theoretical and practical "paradise" for writers and for some Romanian intellectuals of the time, whose ambiguity and traditions were not yet very visible²⁷.

Importing such a "paradise," instead of engaging in a conflict with the cultural tradition and with the state of affairs, is also one of the reasons why postmodernism, as a moment of theorizing, has acquired an image of superficiality, and of short-term profitability, being rather a tool for access to Western recognition, "an excellent way of self-promotion", or even "pure bovarism"²⁸. Ironically, the anti-Eurocentrism of postmodernism went unnoticed by the Romanian representatives of postmodernism, who were eager to embrace democratic Europeanism.

The resonance of postmodernism as a "global term" has led, in the Romanian cultural field, on the one hand, to the proliferation of strategies for appropriating Western literary practices. I am referring to the stylistic distinctions between modernism and postmodernism, as outlined by Hassan,

which include elements such as irony, play, text/intertext, decreation/ deconstruction/ antithesis, and antiform, among others²⁹. On the other hand, it has also led to the proliferation of discourses with theoretical implications, which were often more aimed at garnering local recognition than at establishing robust theoretical frameworks. In other words, what was at stake was precisely what Alexandru Matei sanctioned as “the pre-eminence of desire over thought”³⁰. This implies that, rather than actively participating in the production of knowledge on postmodernism, Romanian theorists were predominantly focused on the aspiration to be recognized as postmodernists. The failure to substantiate a distinct “Romanian postmodernism” and to integrate a postmodern logic into the local cultural milieu can also be attributed to the use of formulations that merely substituted for genuine attempts to assimilate Western ideas. Additionally, the reluctance to consistently classify 1980s writers as postmodernists is symptomatic of this issue³¹. At the time of the importation of Western notions, these ideas were undoubtedly a way of marketing within national borders the innovative elements of 1980s literature. Subsequently, however, there was later a period of academic institutionalization of postmodernism, which included the integration of postmodern theory at the local level and the attribution of “symbolic capital” to it, following Bourdieu’s perspective. To the extent that postmodernism in debate has remained a site of liberation from historical constraints and of academic institutionalization, Christian Moraru’s 2018 call for “critical literacy” states that Romanian literary studies have never been a part of “global critical and literary culture”. He asserts that:

[p]erhaps it’s time – if not to (re) become postmodern – to at least see where we are, in the hope that we can finally move on to participate in the global critical-theoretical and literary culture that has left behind postmodern definitions and practices of play, irony and intertextuality, ‘meta-like’ pyrotechnics and ‘not facts, just interpretations’ type of cliché sophistry.³²

In fact, what was intended to be a linkage to Western ideas was nothing more than a “cosmetic” strategy aimed at resolving national issues related to structuring the literature and its relationship with the social. Another argument for the “cosmetic” nature of postmodern theory in Romania is the emergence of what Andrei Terian calls the “Frederic syndrome”, which signals “one of the endemic diseases of Romanian criticism: the superficial assimilation, more ‘from hearsay’ than ‘by reading,’ of international references”³³. By “Frederic syndrome”. Terian refers to the tendency among Romanian theorists and critics to mistakenly reference Jameson’s name in their texts, indicating shallow readings. The superficiality of the circulation of theory reveals a weak correspondence or connection of Romanian intellectuals with the current cultural world, and an apparent attempt to contemporize; thus, in reality, it reflects a false “critical literacy” and a false inscription in the Anglo-American epistemic tradition. The case of Fredric Jameson’s reception on local grounds is all the more relevant as the North-American cultural theorist’s contributions were overlooked by the Romanian intellectuals of the 1980s, most of whom were focused on anti-communist ideas. The case is similar

to that of David Harvey who, however, has been able to enjoy a translation of his volume, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, since 2002³⁴, while Jameson received his own only in 2021. By equating, without critical questioning, the methodological Marxism in Jameson's *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* to the autochthonous communist ideology, Romanian theorists of postmodernism fell into ideological essentialism. This led to the exclusion of significant aspects of the international theoretical debate. For the 1980s generation, whose ideology embraced a democratic and neoliberal ethos, Marxism, in any form, was seen and discredited as a symbol of the Soviet Bloc, and the austerity of late state socialism in Romania. An example of this tendency is Liviu Petrescu, who, in his 1996 essay *Poetica postmodernismului* [*The Poetics of Postmodernism*], briefly summarizes Jameson's theory of the third stage of capitalism's development, but chooses to replace the Marxist methodology he critiques with Alvin Toffler's theory of civilizational waves.³⁵ Additionally, as Robert Cincu notes, "Mircea Cărtărescu observes that, in the case of primary literature, cultural influences are often imported into the Romanian space without taking into account (or totally ignoring) the implicit leftist philosophy"³⁶. In this context, the aspects of the international debate I am referring to are specifically those concerning materialistic explanations – rooted in the base-superstructure relationship and the analysis of material and historical conditions – for the emergence of postmodernity, postmodern society, and, by extension, postmodernism.

The concept of "postmodernism" brought with it a miniature, embryonic theoretical

baggage, but the way it was conveyed – trans-ideologically – did not lead to the development of a "strong" local theory. This brings me to the final aspect of its "travelling" character: its flexibility. The very fact that postmodernism has shifted from one goal to another, from one circumstance to another, and from one ideology to another, shows its significant mobility. At times, it served as a denier of the previous generation, that of the 1960s³⁷; at other times, it acted a legitimizer of the new generation, both within national borders and beyond them. Postmodernism "travelled", above all, between the various needs of a generation in a time of economic and cultural austerity.

"Paradise" or "Captivity"?

Notes on Intellectual Activity

I began with Edward Said mainly due to his enthusiasm for the transformative and adaptive capabilities of theories. As I have already pointed out, according to the critic, the transfer of ideas supports a dynamic discursive spectrum, forming a collaborative, community-based network where points of connection also foster productive differentiation. However, Said also draws attention to the inequalities generated by the transplantation of ideas. As David Damrosch comments on the Palestinian-American theorist's work, "the world is full of irregularities and inequalities, which have to be attended to when tracing the worldly fortunes of literary theory"³⁸. What happens when the intellectuals of one culture become "captives" of the thinking of another? It is well-established that since the 1970s, the literary center has shifted from the once-dominant French core, which was rapidly losing its international hegemonic

status, to the American core, which was experiencing a period of cultural ascendancy. Even Mircea Cărtărescu considers that “the fact that the evolution of a literary system can still be explained by resorting only to its internal logic is an illusion”³⁹. On top of that, he acknowledges that “postmodernism” is synonymous with “posthumanism” and “posteuropeanism”, thereby highlighting the concept’s inherent flexibility⁴⁰. What exactly is “posteuropeanism”? My argument is that, although postmodernism in Romanian culture should have evolved as “posteuropeanism”, it remained entrenched in and heavily influenced by American thought. Given the various perspectives on what constitutes the “literacy” of a culture’s intellectuals with regard to Western ideas, I propose a brief overview of these viewpoints to establish the framework that most appropriately fits the Romanian context of postmodernism.

A case in point is Chen Bar-Itzhak’s article, “Intellectual Captivity: Literary Theory, World Literature, and the Ethics of Interpretation”, published in 2020. In this work, she questions the Eurocentric theoretical canon of World Literature Studies, addressing the problem of “the unequal distribution of epistemic capital in our discipline”⁴¹. She tackles the problem of the invisibility of scholars from peripheral and semi-peripheral states in World Literature Studies by arguing that “literary theory” has become quasi-synonymous with “Euro-American literary theory” due to the hegemonic influence of Euro-American history of ideas. According to Chen Bar-Itzhak, the lack of circulation of non-Euro-American theory corresponds to the marginalization of the periphery and the unequal epistemic resources. While her

critical, if not decolonial, project is confined to the field of World Literature Studies, I believe that her approach can be extended further. Thus, I address the question whether “theory”, akin towards the end of the previous century with postmodern theory and postmodern criticism⁴², has given rise to a field of “intellectual captivity”. This process, in my view, has led to the reading of the periphery through the epistemological grid of the core theoretical field and the rewriting of the periphery in accordance with that particular epistemology. In other words, might one speculate that the hegemony of the Western intellectual tradition has fostered a spirit of conformity and transformation of literature and criticism in line with American cultural categories? In this vein, the question remains: was what appeared to be “intellectual activity” – and which, during the 1980s, fully celebrated the dynamic energy generated by newly transplanted ideas – merely a form of unforeseeable “intellectual captivity”, rather than the “paradise” that many proponents of postmodernism envisioned? Does the fascination with the West arise on its own, or is it that the West, through its own forces, impose a fatal, irresistible fascination? My argument is grounded in the observation that Romanian theorists of postmodernism predominantly rely on American sources in their explorations of postmodernism, postmodernity, and postmodern society, with only a few exceptions that reference French postmodernist thought.

Of course, the equation becomes even more complicated when another uncertainty is added. The second case is that of self-colonization, a concept stemming from Alexander Kiossev’s theoretical texts, which

Ștefan Baghiu defends in a recent discussion on Romanian social media, particularly in reference to Romanian postmodernism⁴³. For Kiossev, self-colonization, typical of Central and Eastern European cultures, involves a voluntary, active process of selecting and transplanting cultural elements from the core to the (semi-)periphery, particularly elements whose strength in the national economy of transfers would propel the autochthonous cultural-literary dynamics⁴⁴. Regarding the concept, Mihai Iovănel notes that it “has permeated left-wing discourse, ending in recent years to identify any reference of peripheries to Western quality standards”⁴⁵. The critic argues that the idea of self-colonization has been co-opted by reactionary discourses (his example refers to the critic Eugen Simion and his reaction to Americanism) and concludes that this is a reactionary concept. Without delving into a polemic on the ideological nature of the concept, I would say that what distinguishes “self-colonization” from “intellectual captivity” is the active versus passive nature of the envisioned colonial process and the level of deliberate or conscious involvement. Ultimately, both concepts require clarification. Although both terms refer to a colonial circumstance – whether it is the epistemic coloniality of Euro-American theory imposed on the theoretical fields of the world, or the desire for colonial elements as a catalytic engine for a cultural tradition – their direction of action differs. “Intellectual captivity” heralds the condition of the inevitably passive subject who cannot evade the Euro-American circulation of theoretical ideas, a passivity that makes the subject susceptible to lacking a critical lens or to overlooking the “captivity” – perceiving

it, as in the case of Romanian writers, as a “paradise”. In contrast, “self-colonization” signals the emergence of an active subject, characterized by opportunistic mimicry, in which the subject benefits from imitating foreign cultural formula. The advantage lies in its potential to set a cultural tradition in motion, preemptively engaging with its colonial condition while consciously risking a fall from “paradise.” Where, then, does Romanian postmodernism position itself within these coordinates?

I would argue that literary and theoretical production should be separated, although this would not be in accordance with the “postmodern” ethics. The reason for this is that the so-called Romanian postmodernist literature appears to have worked with different tools than those the theory of postmodernism amounted to. As I mention earlier, the theory remained at an embryonic stage in Romania because the debates primarily revolved around stylistic confluences of Romanian writings and those of internationally recognized authors in the world literary system. When attention was often directed toward textual practice, it suggested that the subject could have been invested, active, ready to transplant successful literary strategies from the Western literary market. Have our postmodern writers self-colonized themselves?⁴⁶ The hypothesis may be convincing, since the textual strategies imported by Romanian writers from the Western literary “stars” involved, to some extent, an interventionist activity aimed at the national level and, more precisely, at hijacking the local “stars” of the 1960s and the Soviet culture. However, if we focus strictly on the critical and theoretical discourse, this is not entirely the case. As Terian notes,

at least in the first post-war decade (since the establishment of the communist regimes of 1945/1948 until the “de-Stalinization” of 1956), sometimes even longer (until the middle of the seventh decade), the literature of all Central and Eastern European states, with the partial exception of Yugoslavia, was authoritatively dominated by the so-called “creative method” imposed on the Soviet model: socialist realism⁴⁷.

I would take this “logic of extra-literary dependencies”⁴⁸ even further and refer to a framework of Soviet “intellectual captivity” in the first post-war decade. Although de-Stalinization led to a weakening of Soviet influence, it did not fully eliminate Soviet cultural captivity, which Terian equates with “Soviet colonialism”. This captivity was ultimately circumvented through a process of re-westernization. But what was the price of this avoidance through re-westernization? The hypothesis I propose suggests that the reorientation towards postmodern theories from the West, especially from the American academic field, also led to a form of inevitable “intellectual captivity”, in the sense that no other solution would have been available to the generation of the 1980s in the struggle against the “episteme” of the regime and the forms of nationalism promoted in the Ceaușescu’s era. Moreover, the prolonged engagement with the French intellectual sphere facilitated an increased interest in American culture, particularly as postmodernism emerged at the intersection of French poststructuralist philosophies and the American academic field, which, through a form of academic appropriation,

reshaped these philosophies into what became known as “French theory”⁴⁹.

Moreover, I refer to postmodernism as capturing the conditions of captivity, also from the perspective of the analysis conducted by Christian Moraru. He concludes that the mindset of the 1980s generation came to resemble that of the 1960s generation. The “alphabet” of postmodernism has indeed passed through the local intellectual field, but only as a fascination with rescue; postmodern opportunism has ultimately proven to be another trap. I call it a trap precisely because it has led to universalist, idealist discourses⁵⁰, extolling democracy and neoliberalism, aligning with anti-communism in an attempt to go “beyond the nation” and secure a role in international literary debates.

Postmodernism and its Discontents, or the Crisis of a Conceptual Laboratory

If the debate around postmodernism provoked critical-theoretical controversies in the Romanian cultural field of the 1980s, I must stress that it also prompted an examination of the tools of local literary criticism, disturbing critics rather than facilitating their engagement with the texts of the 1980s generation through a previously theorized optic. Since such an approach did not actually materialize, despite the anticipated impact of asserting postmodernism locally – which would have led to a broader departure from the generational chronological segmentation in literary historiography – it instead exposed a crisis in conceptual frameworks. The competition in terminology likely indicates that: “[i]n Romanian literary criticism, however, the

emergence of the term seems to be mostly an infinite source of tension, our theorists being most often uncomfortable with the emergence of a new terminological star⁵¹. Moreover, the intrinsic ambiguity of the concept⁵² has contributed to a cautious stance among critics, many of whom have avoided the label “postmodernist” – a label nevertheless endowed with a commercial capital within local contexts, due to its Western resonance attributed to it. The ambiguity is also evident in the local conceptualization of the term, as I had previously concluded. For instance, some critics, like Nicolae Manolescu, discuss postmodernism as an extension of the ethos of the 1960s generation, while others view it as a rupture in the development of literary tradition. Additionally, some emphasize the overlap between the 1980s generation and postmodernism, or focus on the aesthetic and chronological distinctions between the two. Even Mircea Cărtărescu admits that:

[t]he 80s generation’s style is, in fact, fixed in both poetry and prose before the emergence of a postmodern consciousness in the 80s, so that, paradoxically, the most ‘postmodern’ artistic group of the contemporary period is found, in fact, on the road to postmodernism⁵³; [t]he appearance of the concept of postmodernism in the Romanian area was, therefore, a shock for the 80s generation, acting as a catalyst for their artistic identity⁵⁴.

Others, such as Alexandru Mușina, resist the concept of postmodernism, instead discussing a “new anthropocentrism”. Additionally, Eugen Simion highlights “textualism” and “textistence” as defining

features of the prose from the 1980s generation. Even the term ‘80s generation’s postmodernism is frequently employed in critical discourse. Without the need to index all the critical ways of referring to the literature of the 1980s, “localist” labels, as I term them, and conceptualizations can signify a complex national situation, oscillating between national and transnational contexts, reflecting the widespread influence of postmodernism in literary and theoretical cultural spheres.

Thus, while the borrowing of textual strategies and theoretical notions could have facilitated access to the “internationalization” of local literature and beyond, the confinement to inevitable local “complexes”, the superficiality of theoretical acquisition (driven by the principle of short-term profitability), and the attempts at terminological self-promoting led to: 1) the hijacking of the “institution” of the socialist modernism, 2) the failure to resolve the crisis of the conceptual laboratory through attempts to integrate and consolidate concepts from the Western space, and 3) the practice of a national literature with transnational elements – whether these are “self-colonized” or not. Beyond being a “travelling” concept, postmodernism has also been the source of conceptual battles, and thus of battles of resistance. According to the proposed hypothesis, postmodernism simultaneously reflects two contrasting aspects: “paradise” and “captivity”. Ultimately, though, the question remains whether the 1980s generation has escaped (or could have escaped – which is even more doubtful) from the so-called Eurocentric and Westocentric “paradise”, which, even as it turned national writers into international “stars”, seemed more like a pitfall.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baghiu, Ștefan, "Bătăliile postmodernismului românesc: Ion Bogdan Lefter – *Postmodernism. Din dosarul unei «bătălii» culturale*", in *Transilvania*, no. 11, 2016, p. 73-78.
- Bal, Mieke, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*, Buffalo and London, University of Toronto Press, 2002.
- Ban, Cornel, *Dependență și dezvoltare: economia politică a capitalismului românesc*, translated by Ciprian Șiuulea, Cluj-Napoca, Tact, 2014.
- Bar-Itzhak, Chen, "Intellectual Captivity: Literary Theory, World Literature, and the Ethics of Interpretation", in *Journal of World Literature*, no. 5.1, 2020, p. 79-110.
- Bertens, Hans, "Worlding Postmodernism", in Jeffrey R. Di Leo and Christian Moraru (eds.), *The Bloomsbury Handbook of World Theory*, New York, Bloomsbury Publishing Inc., 2022.
- Boschetti, Anna, *Ismes. Du réalisme au postmodernisme*, Paris, CNRS Éditions, 2014.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, "The Social Conditions of the International Circulation of Ideas", in Richard Shusterman (ed.), *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*. Malden and Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing Inc., 1999.
- Cărtărescu, Mircea, *Postmodernismul românesc*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1999.
- Cărtărescu, Mircea, "Europa are forma creierului meu", in *Observer Cultural*, no. 153, 2003.
- Cărnci, Magda, "The Debate Around Postmodernism in Romania in the 1980s", in *Euresis*, no. 1-4, 2009, p. 161-171.
- Cincu, Robert, *Postmodernismul în teoria literară românească*, Alba Iulia, OMG Publishing House, 2021.
- Cotoi, Amalia, "Modernist Studies in the 21st Century. *The Modern Condition* or Why is Postmodernism Out of the Picture Today?", in *Philobiblon*, vol. XXIX, no. 1, 2024, p. 107-117.
- Cusset, François, *French Theory: How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, & Co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States*, translated by Jeff Fort, Josephine Berganza and Marlon Jones, Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Damrosch, David (ed.), *World Literature in Theory*, Malden, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2014.
- Dimock, Wai Chee, *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time*, Princeton & Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Dumitru, Teodora, *Modernitatea politică și literară în gândirea lui E. Lovinescu*, Bucharest, Muzeul Literaturii Române, 2016.
- Dumitru, Teodora, "Gaming the World-System: Creativity, Politics, and Beat Influence in the Poetry of the 1980s Generation", in Mircea Martin, Christian Moraru, Andrei Terian (eds.), *Romanian Literature as World Literature*, New York, Bloomsbury Publishing Inc., 2018.
- Friedman, Susan Stanford, "Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of *Modern/Modernity/Modernism*", in Pamela L. Caughie (ed.), *Disciplining Modernism*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 17.
- Goldiș, Alex, "Fredric Jameson sau despre unghiul de refracție al postmodernismului românesc", in *Vătra*, no. 9, 2022, p. 26.
- Harvey, David, *Condiția postmodernității: o cercetare asupra originilor schimbării culturale*, translated by Cristina Gyurcsik and Irina Matei, Timișoara, Amarcord, 2002.
- Hassan, Ihab, "The Culture of Postmodernism", in *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1985, p. 119-131.
- Iovănel, Mihai, *Istoria literaturii române contemporane: 1990-2020*, Iași, Polirom, 2021.
- Kiossev, Alexander, "Notes on Self-colonising Cultures", in Bojana Pejić, David Elliott (eds.), *After the Wall: Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe*, Stockholm, Moderna Museet, 1999.
- Lefter, Ion Bogdan, *Postmodernism. Din dosarul unei „bătălii” culturale*, Pitești, Paralela 45, 2000.
- Koselleck, Reinhart. *Begriffsgeschichten: Studien zur Semantik und Pragmatik der politischen und sozialen Sprache*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp Verlag, 2006.
- Martin, Mircea, "Despre estetismul socialist", in *România literară*, no. 23, 2004.
- Matei, Alexandru, "Penser le « postmoderne » en Roumanie. Les problèmes d'une notion culturelle", in *Euresis*, no. 1-4, 2009, p. 294-305.

- Matei, Alexandru, Christian Moraru, and Andrei Terian, "Introduction: Toward a 'Post' Vocabulary—A Lab Report", in Alexandru Matei, Christian Moraru, and Andrei Terian (eds.), *Theory in the "Post" Era. A Vocabulary for the 21st-Century Conceptual Commons*, New York, Bloomsbury Publishing Inc., 2021.
- Moraru, Christian, "Șaizecizarea optzecismului. Contemporaneitate și decontemporaneizare în literatura română de azi", in *Vatra*, no. 9, 2022, p. 10-16.
- Moraru, Christian, "Noi nu am fost niciodată postmoderni. Despre alfabetizarea critică", in *Vatra*, no. 6-7, 2018, p. 86-89.
- Petrescu, Liviu, *Poetica postmodernismului*, Pitești, Paralela 45, 1996.
- Rogozanu, Costi, "Postmodernismul românesc s-a născut din tezele din iulie și din crizele petrolului", in *Transilvania*, no. 02, 2024, p. 1-8.
- Said, Edward W., *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, Cambridge and Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1983.
- Terian, Andrei, "Faces of Modernity in Romanian Literature: A Conceptual Analysis", in *Alea Estudos Neolatinos*, no. 16.1, 2014, p. 15-34.
- Terian, Andrei, "Socialist Modernism as Compromise: A Study of the Romanian Literary System", in *Primerjalna književnost (Ljubljana)*, no. 42.1, 2019, p. 133-147.
- Terian, Andrei, "Sindromul «Frederic» sau Jameson în România", in Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernismul sau logica culturală a capitalismului târziu*, translated by Alex Văsieș and Vlad Pojoga, Sibiu, Editura Universității „Lucian Blaga”, 2021.
- Terian, Andrei, *Critica de export: teorii, contexte, ideologii*, Bucharest, Muzeul Literaturii Române, 2013.
- Tihanov, Galin, *The Birth and Death of Literary Theory. Regimes of Relevance in Russia and Beyond*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2019.
- Ursa, Mihaela, *Optzecismul și promisiunile postmodernismului*, Pitești, Paralela 45, 1999.

NOTES

1. See, for instance, Robert Cincu, *Postmodernismul în teoria literară românească*, Alba Iulia, OMG Publishing House, 2021, p. 26-29.
2. As Hans Bertens claims: "Far more than earlier literary movements, postmodernism is the product of academic criticism and particularly of academic theorizing", Hans Bertens, "Worlding Postmodernism", in Jeffrey R. Di Leo and Christian Moraru (eds.), *The Bloomsbury Handbook of World Theory*, New York, Bloomsbury Publishing Inc., 2022, p. 92.
3. See Andrei Terian, "Faces of Modernity in Romanian Literature: A Conceptual Analysis", in *Alea Estudos Neolatinos*, no. 16.1, 2014, 15-34 and Teodora Dumitru, *Modernitatea politică și literară în gândirea lui E. Lovinescu*, București, Muzeul Literaturii Române, 2016.
4. "În eprubetele teoreticienilor", in Andrei Terian, *Critica de export: teorii, contexte, ideologii*, București, Muzeul Literaturii Române, 2013, p. 305-306.
5. Amalia Cotoi, "Modernist Studies in the 21st Century. *The Modern Condition* or Why is Postmodernism Out of the Picture Today?", in *Philobiblon*, vol. XXIX, no. 1, 2024, p. 112-113.
6. Susan Stanford Friedman, "Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of *Modern/Modernity/Modernism*", in Pamela L. Caughie (ed.), *Disciplining Modernism*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 17.
7. See, for instance, their explanation: "Originating in transmission and, literally by the same movement, in translation also, culture and theory remain transmissible and translatable, epidemic. They are triggered by, and *equal*, intellectual influence. They are a «sublime» influenza: non-pathological, multidirectional, life-giving", Alexandru Matei, Christian Moraru, and Andrei Terian, "Introduction: Toward a 'Post' Vocabulary – A Lab Report", in Alexandru Matei, Christian Moraru, and Andrei Terian (eds.), *Theory in the "Post" Era. A Vocabulary for the 21st-Century Conceptual Commons*, New York, Bloomsbury Publishing Inc., 2021, p. 15.

8. Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, Cambridge and Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1983, p. 226.
9. See Pierre Bourdieu, "The Social Conditions of the International Circulation of Ideas", in Richard Shusterman (ed.), *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*, Malden and Massachusetts, Blackwell Publishing Inc., 1999, p. 220–229.
10. Galin Tihanov points out the following: "The meaning I invest in the term 'regime of relevance' harks back to Foucault, but here it has a more specific semantic compass: it refers to a historically available constellation of social and cultural parameters that shape the predominant understanding and use of literature for the duration of that particular constellation", Galin Tihanov, *The Birth and Death of Literary Theory. Regimes of Relevance in Russia and Beyond*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2019, p. 1–2.
11. "I would like to propose a new term – 'deep time' – to capture this phenomenon. What this highlights is a set of longitudinal frames, at once projective and recessional, with input going both ways, and binding continents and millennia into many loops of relations, a densely interactive fabric", Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature across Deep Time*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006, p. 3–4.
12. Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*, Buffalo and London, University of Toronto Press, 2002, p. 22.
13. *Ibidem*, 28.
14. "Jeder Grundbegriff enthält verschieden tief gestaffelte Anteile vergangener Bedeutungen sowie verschieden gewichtete Zukunftserwartungen. Damit generieren diese Begriffe, gleichsam immanent sprachlich, unbeschadet ihres Realitätsgehaltes, zeitliche Bewegungs- und Veränderungspotentiale. Repräsentativ für solche innovationsträchtigen Begriffe sind die mit einem -ismus- Suffix versehenen", Reinhart Koselleck, *Begriffsgeschichten: Studien zur Semantik und Pragmatik der politischen und sozialen Sprache*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp Verlag, 2006, p. 68, m.t.
15. Pierre Bourdieu, *op. cit.*, p. 224.
16. Ion Bogdan Lefter, *Postmodernism. Din dosarul unei „bătălii” culturale*, Pitești, Paralela 45, 2000, p. 51, m.t.
17. See Teodora Dumitru, *Modernitatea politică și literară în gândirea lui E. Lovinescu*, p. 240–272.
18. "O țară proaspăt industrializată socialistă intră în turbionul piețelor globale ale petrolului, în vria împrumuturilor internaționale și sfârșește în austeritate: și asta e globalizare, una stranie, cu granițele închise pentru cetățeni, dar globalizare. [...] Optzeciștii sunt deci postmoderni cu toate condițiile postmodernismului respectate, inclusive consumismul și referințele pop sunt asigurate prin piața neagră sau prin investițiile într-un divertisment roșu", Costi Rogozanu, "Postmodernismul românesc s-a născut din tezele din iulie și din crizele petrolului", in *Transilvania*, no. 2, 2024, p. 6, m.t.
19. "Efectiva adaptare a unui semnificant lingvistic la un semnificat cultural", Ion Bogdan Lefter, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
20. For a discussion on national-socialist developmentalism see Cornel Ban, *Dependență și dezvoltare: economia politică a capitalismului românesc*, translated by Ciprian Șiulea, Cluj-Napoca, Tact, 2014.
21. The concept was coined by Mircea Martin, and it refers to the 1960s generation. See Mircea Martin, "Despre estetismul socialist", in *România literară*, no. 23, 2004.
22. See Andrei Terian, "Socialist Modernism as Compromise: A Study of the Romanian Literary System", in *Primerjalna književnost (Ljubljana)*, no. 42.1, 2019.
23. Magda Cârnelci, "The Debate Around Postmodernism in Romania in the 1980s", in *Euresis*, no. 1–4, 2009, p. 161.
24. *Ibidem*, p. 162.
25. *Ibidem*, p. 165.
26. See Mircea Cărtărescu, *Postmodernismul românesc*, Bucharest, Humanitas, 1999, p. 115.
27. "Dans la foulée des événements politiques et des retombées culturelles du début des années 1990, le débat 'postmoderne' peut être regardé rétrospectivement, avant tout, comme l'abandon d'un camp pour un autre; cet autre camp, mal connu, a pu constituer pour les écrivains et pour quelques intellectuels roumains de l'époque un véritable 'paradis' théorique et pratique, dont l'ambiguïté et les

- traditions étaient alors encore peu visibles”, Alexandru Matei, “Penser le ‘postmoderne’ en Roumanie. Les problèmes d’une notion culturelle”, in *Euresis*, no. 1-4, 2009, p. 296.
28. *Ibidem*, p. 301.
 29. See Ihab Hassan, “The Culture of Postmodernism”, *Theory, Culture and Society*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1985, p. 123-124.
 30. “La prééminence du désir par rapport au penser”, Alexandru Matei, “Penser le ‘postmoderne’ en Roumanie. Les problèmes d’une notion culturelle”, p. 299.
 31. In contrast to more “technical” historiographical distinctions, which correspond to successive and competing movements, critics have increasingly relied on generational “boundaries”. In this regard, the phrase “the ‘80s generation” has gained the most traction, followed by “the generation in jeans”, a term that encapsulates the post-communist transition and Nicolae Ceaușescu’s era of economic austerity. Other designations include “textualists” and “lunedişti”, referring to participants of the Cenaclul de Luni [Monday Literary Circle], mentored by critic Nicolae Manolescu. This trend also reflects, among other things, a certain reluctance to embrace foreign concepts.
 32. “Poate că e timpul – dacă nu să (re)devenim postmoderni – să vedem, cel puțin, unde ne aflăm, în speranța că putem în sfârșit să trecem mai departe pentru a participa la cultura critico-teoretică și literară globală care a lăsat în urmă definițiile și practicile postmoderne ale jocului, ironiei și ale intertextualității, pirotehnicele ‘de tip meta’ și sofisme-cliseu de genul ‘nu fapte, ci doar interpretări’”, Christian Moraru, “Noi nu am fost niciodată postmoderni. Despre alfabetizarea critică”, in *Vatra*, no. 6-7, 2018.
 33. “Una dintre maladiile endemice ale criticii românești dintotdeauna: asimilarea superficială, mai mult ‘din auzite’ decât ‘pe citite’, a referințelor internaționale”, Andrei Terian, “Sindromul «Frederic» sau Jameson în România”, in Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernismul sau logica culturală a capitalismului târziu*, Translated by Alex Văsiș and Vlad Pojoga, Sibiu, Editura Universității „Lucian Blaga”, 2021, p. IV.
 34. See David Harvey, *Condiția postmodernității: o cercetare asupra originilor schimbării culturale*, translated by Cristina Gyurcsik and Irina Matei, Timișoara, Amarcord, 2002.
 35. See Liviu Petrescu, *Poetica postmodernismului*, Pitești, Paralela 45, 1996, p. 8 and Alex Goldiș, “Fredric Jameson sau despre unghiul de refracție al postmodernismului românesc”, in *Vatra*, no. 9, 2022, p. 26.
 36. Robert Cincu, *Postmodernismul în teoria literară românească*, p. 215.
 37. The writings of the 80s generation, together with the borrowed theoretical vocabulary, were such as to close the circle of the legitimacy of modernism, putting into practice, in Christian Moraru’s terms, “a revolution or, more modestly, an insurrection against the hegemonic paradigm of late Romanian modernism”, See Christian Moraru, “Șaizecizarea optzecismului. Contemporaneitate și decontemporaneizare în literatura română de azi”, in *Vatra*, no. 9, 2022.
 38. Edward W. Said, “Traveling Theory”, in David Damrosch (ed.), *World Literature in Theory*, Malden, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2014, p. 115.
 39. “Este o iluzie faptul că evoluția sistemului literar mai poate fi explicată doar apelând la logica sa internă”, Mircea Cărtărescu, *Postmodernismul românesc*, p. 58, m.t.
 40. *Ibidem*, p. 59.
 41. Chen Bar-Itzhak, “Intellectual Captivity: Literary Theory, World Literature, and the Ethics of Interpretation”, in *Journal of World Literature*, no. 5.1, 2020, p. 80.
 42. Hans Bertens, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
 43. The idea of postmodernism as self-colonialization was recently promoted by Ștefan Baghiu, and it is going to be developed in a forthcoming article. Up until then, see Ștefan Baghiu, “Bătăliile postmodernismului românesc: Ion Bogdan Lefter – *Postmodernism. Din dosarul unei «bătălii» culturale*”, in *Transilvania*, no. 11, 2016, p. 73-78.
 44. See Alexander Kiossev, “Notes on Self-colonising Cultures”, in Bojana Pejić and David Elliott (eds.), *After the Wall: Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe*, Stockholm, Moderna Museet, 1999.
 45. “[C]onceptul a permeat discursul de stânga, sfârșind în ultimii ani prin a identifica orice raportare a periferiilor la standardele de calitate din Occident”, Mihai Iovănel, *Istoria literaturii române contemporane: 1990-2020*, Iași, Polirom, 2021, p. 162, m.t.

46. Whether we accept the hypothesis or not, what is certain is that this fact would have occurred, however, through a borrowing: that of American models, and through a particular acclimatization to the context, what Teodora Dumitru calls “repurposing’ the Beats”. See Teodora Dumitru, “Gaming the World-System: Creativity, Politics, and Beat Influence in the Poetry of the 1980s Generation”, in Mircea Martin, Christian Moraru, Andrei Terian (eds.), *Romanian Literature as World Literature*, New York, Bloomsbury Publishing Inc., 2018, p. 282. In fact, literary strategies were transplanted from the poetry of the Beat generation, which underwent an immediate process of refunctionalization according with the demands and needs of the poets of the 80s generation and with the national material-historical circumstances. Teodora Dumitru discusses the “double discourse” of the 80ists, a discourse that “[...] on the one hand, reworks, relocates peripherally, and ultimately decenters symbolically this center itself and, on the other, critiques the Soviet world subsystem of which Communist Romania had been part”, *ibidem*, p. 272. Thus, it underlines an interest in the de-centralization of modernism installed as a syndrome of a “backwardness” (a backwardness that leads the 80ists „[...] to step outside national, ‘slow’ time and compete internationally in the contemporary arena, like ‘genuine moderns’ – and possibly as postmoderns – even though in that broader, transnational context, their ‘revolutionizing’ of Romanian literature signified basically an ‘update’”, *ibidem*, p. 281.
47. “[C]el puțin în primul deceniu postbelic (de la instaurarea regimurilor comuniste din 1945/1948 și până la ‘destalinizarea’ din 1956), uneori chiar mai mult (până la mijlocul deceniului șapte), literatura tuturor statelor central- și est-europene, cu excepția parțială a Iugoslaviei, a fost dominată în mod autoritar de așa-zisa ‘metodă de creație’ impusă după model sovietic: realismul socialist”, Andrei Terian, *Critica de export*, p. 122, m.t.
48. *Ibidem*, p. 123.
49. See, for instance, François Cusset, *French Theory: How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, & Co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States*, translated by Jeff Fort, Josephine Berganza and Marlon Jones, Minneapolis & London, University of Minnesota Press, 2008 and Anna Boschetti, *Ismes. Du réalisme au postmodernisme*, Paris, CNRS Éditions, 2014.
50. Mircea Cărtărescu’s speech in the early 2000s is exemplary. See Mircea Cărtărescu, “Europa are forma creierului meu”, in *Observator Cultural*, no. 153, 2003.
51. “În schimb, în critica literară românească, apariția termenului pare a fi mai ales o sursă infinită de tensiune, teoreticienii noștri fiind cel mai adesea incomodați de apariția unei noi vedete terminologice”, Mihaela Ursa, *Optzecismul și promisiunile postmodernismului*, Pitești, Paralela 45, 1999, p. 15, m.t.
52. “We can only say that across the ocean the term defines in equal measure the most optimistic utopias (aimed at the integral liberation and emancipation of all systemic relations) and the equally credible dystopias of imminent cultural apocalypse”, *ibidem*, p. 19., m.t.
53. “Stilul optzecist este, de fapt, fixat și în poezie, și în proză înainte de apariția la optzeciști a unei conștiințe postmoderne, așa încât, paradoxal, cea mai ‘postmodernă’ grupare artistică a contemporaneității se află, de fapt, pe drumul către postmodernism”, Mircea Cărtărescu, *Postmodernismul românesc*, p. 184, m.t.
54. “Apariția în zona românească a conceptului de postmodernism a fost, de aceea, un șoc pentru optzeciști, acționând ca un catalizator al identității artistice a acestora”, *ibidem*, m.t.