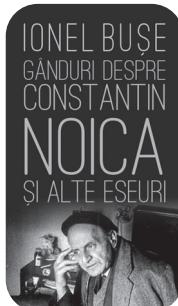


Book Reviews

Ionel Buşe, *Gânduri despre Constantin Noica și alte eseuri*, Bucureşti, Paideia, 2024



Ionel Buşe's volume *Gânduri despre Constantin Noica și alte eseuri* (*Thoughts on Constantin Noica and Other Essays*) opens with a memoir-style account of a formative encounter between Ionel Buşe (who, as he puts it, was then in a state of 'voluntary imprisonment') and his mentor, to whom the book is dedicated: Constantin Noica. Buşe's text thus goes beyond a mere collection of reflections, becoming both a philosophical meditation on Noica's personality and an original continuation of the intellectual path he forged. Written in a confessional register yet driven by a clearly articulated inquiry, this recollection takes on the substance of a documentary about the formation of the self through philosophy, and about the rigours and graces of a life devoted to the life of the mind.

The volume comprises five chapters devoted to Constantin Noica: "Thoughts on Constantin Noica," "Philosophy and the Imaginary," "Macedonski Redivivus," "Signs of the Time," and "Addenda." The first chapter highlights the contrast between the revolutionary turmoil of the period and the form of resistance through culture that Noica embodies, privileging the deep formation of the spirit over direct political engagement. This opening section sketches an intellectual portrait of Noica, placing him in a critical relationship with

his era, with traditional logic, and with the European cultural imaginary. Although physically distant from the ideological bustle of the West, withdrawn into the "caverna" of Păltiniş under the watchful eye of the communist authorities, Noica remains close to the great ideas shaping his time through the Hegelian spirit that animates his philosophy. The aim here is to reconstruct Noica's figure beyond ideological divides and to underscore the relevance of his project as a lucid reflection faithful to deep culture and inner formation.

The next chapter explores, in a complementary way, the role of the imaginary in Western philosophical thought, as well as in Romanian literature, using Macedonski as a touchstone in order to broaden and contextualise Noica's approaches. "Philosophy and the Imaginary" shows how the imaginary is essential to the shaping of a worldview within philosophical thought. From the influence of Bachelard and Eliade on a pedagogy of the imaginary to reflections on cosmic myths and the anthropology of imagination, the chapter emphasises the power of symbols in constructing philosophical and cultural realities. "Macedonski Redivivus" develops this theme in a literary context. Here the author examines how the poet Alexandru Macedonski addresses the same fundamental questions of the imaginary and mythology through a symbolic lens deeply rooted in the traditions of Romanticism and modernity.

The final two chapters offer a profound meditation on the crisis of modernity from two complementary perspectives, one existential and the other identity-based. The chapter devoted to Emil Cioran and I. D. Sîrbu explores how thought and writing become, in the face of death and historical

absurdity, forms of resistance and radical lucidity. Cioran is portrayed as a connoisseur of death, a spirit attuned to the collapse of his century, while Sirbu, akin to a modern-day Socrates, adopts scepticism and irony as ethical tools in a society hostile to critical thought. In both cases, death is not merely a theme but a horizon of human truth. The concluding chapter, through the figure of Rădulescu-Motru and an analysis of Romanian nationalism, addresses cultural identity amid tensions between tradition and modernity, between the ethnic and the European. What emerges is a critique of cultural mimicry and a reflection on the difficulty of finding an authentic model of modernisation within Romania. The national question is revisited beyond conventional labels, in an effort to reimagine a form of belonging that avoids both the traps of isolationism and the pressures of Western standardisation.

The volume gathers contributions that open a dialogue between Constantin Noica's thought and other key figures and currents in contemporary culture and philosophy. Ionel Bușe, the initiator and coordinator of the project, offers a deeply personal reflection alongside a sustained effort to continue Noica's work through an interpretation focused on the role of the imaginary and the symbolic in philosophical construction. This orientation is not only recuperative but also exploratory: the imaginary is re-centred within philosophical reflection, becoming an instrument through which both cultural reality and the tensions of modern thought can be understood with greater nuance. The contributors do not confine themselves to exegesis of Noica's texts; rather, they extend his project across varied theoretical contexts,

from critiques of modernity and analyses of foundational symbols to meditations on death, cultural identity, and the European sphere.

Anca-Alice Angheluță

Florin Chivoci, *Schițe pentru un imaginar al etnogenezei*, Târgoviște, Editura Bibliotheca, 2024



In *Schițe pentru un imaginar al etnogenezei*, Florin Chivoci explores the origins of a nation through the active creation of a narrative that shapes the collective Romanian imaginary, ultimately moulding an identity: what it means to be Romanian, how this identity began, how it was subjugated, how it conquered, and how it struggled to maintain its ethnic background.

Although this is not a conventional work of theory and history, it draws on documented historical facts to support an ethnogenetic interpretation of the Romanian people before, during, and after the Roman settlement in the second and third centuries. Written Romanian history emerged only in the Middle Ages, when the language as we know it had just acquired a solid foundation; hence Chivoci's premise is to explore the shadowy terrain of Romanian history, or what he calls 'the dark millennium', the period between late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. This, he argues, is the most crucial phase, since it

was the time of language formation, of the assimilation of certain customs from nomadic peoples who came into contact with autochthonous communities, and of the conflict between pagan traditions specific to pre- and post-Roman occupation of Dacia and the rise of Christianity, which produced a distinctive religious hybridisation that still persists in rural folklore.

According to the author, the ethno-genesis of the Romanian people begins with Emperor Aurelian's withdrawal from Dacia in 271 CE. This not only forced inhabitants to decide whether to leave or remain in an abandoned, undefended territory, but also left behind chaos: rising theft, famine, fear, and exposure to barbarian peoples. This historical event established a prominent motif in the Romanian collective unconscious, what Chivoci calls *the theme of abandonment or departure*, conceived as suppressed agony. As a historical landmark, the echo of the struggle triggered by the withdrawal of Roman troops is, on the one hand, 'emotional vibration' and, on the other, 'abyssal depth'. It could serve as a rich source for aesthetic expression in art, literature, music, and film, perpetuating the inheritance of proto-Romanian reality.

As Christianity spread across the territory, customs began to change and adapt: pagan monuments were Christianised, and temples were repurposed as churches. Yet the paganism that had long been embedded in the ethos of the people of Dacia was not easily overthrown. It persisted as a chimera of the past in the superstitions that still survive in rural Romania, where fairies and mythological figures continue to play an important role. The lives of the autochthonous inhabitants of the abandoned territory of Dacia, or Daco-Romanians, were

marked by an 'exacerbated ruralism' alongside a 'spiritual anarchy' that saw the only viable livelihood in working the land and building a local, community-based economy rooted in tradition and family.

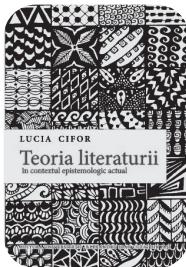
Set back by the Roman withdrawal, the Romanian peoples were forced to return to more primitive ways of living, which made them vulnerable to foreign, nomadic, and barbarian groups. Their primary refuge became the forest, an 'existential territory' where Romanians entered into profound contact with spirits or with manifestations of their fears, desires, and loneliness. To outline a dynamic imaginary of the preferred geographical sites of these communities is to reveal the primordial evolution of Romanian civilisation, which sought expression in 'cries' and 'yells'. An obsession with noise, whether song or shouted interjection, was characteristic of the vernacular expression of Romanian vitality, centred on community. In cultural gatherings with rural and autochthonous roots, popular lyricism, characteristic yells, and *hora* dances still open a crack into the abyssal, collective psyche of the proto-Romanians who, in the face of abandonment, vulnerability, and division, sought consolation in community and symbolic union through dance and song.

Schițe pentru un imaginari al etnogenezei is a book that challenges the boundaries of both fiction and history, seeking to create a hybrid of the two that enriches the substratum of the collective Romanian imaginary and supports fuller artistic and aesthetic representations of the people's origins. Beginning with the Roman desertion of Dacia in the third century CE, Chivoci carefully weaves a narrative in which the desperation of abandonment,

the fear of barbarian enemies, the conflicting pressures of Christian conversion and Slavic cohabitation, and, above all, the rich folklore born of the people's loneliness together produce a transfiguration of the imaginary of a troubled people and its initial identity profile.

Ana-Maria Munteanu

Lucia Cifor, *Teoria literaturii în contextul epistemologic actual*, Iași, Editura Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza, 2022



Lucia Cifor's *Teoria literaturii în contextul epistemologic actual* is a significant contribution to the study of literary theory through the critical lens of a mature contemporary epistemology. The author's approach is compelling, seeking to explore literature's manifestations via Adrian Marino's encyclopaedic theory. Organised into two sections, the study analyses, diachronically, the binaries of oral versus written, popular versus erudite, and sacred versus profane, and, synchronically, examines metaliterature, paraliterature, antiliterature, and subliterature. Through an interdisciplinary method that integrates aesthetics, history, and cultural sociology, Cifor maps the diversity of literature. This review assesses the subject, arguments, the author's positioning, examples, and the work's contribution, and highlights its relevance.

The work treats literature as a polymorphic phenomenon viewed through

a diachronic-synchronic lens, as noted above. The diachronic section explores the oppositions oral/written, popular/erudite, and sacred/profane, revealing historical interdependencies that shape literary forms. The synchronic section examines metaliterature, paraliterature, antiliterature, and subliterature as responses to the transformations of modernity. Drawing on Marino's motto, "Non nova, sed nove" (not new, but anew), Cifor recontextualises traditional literary phenomena through intertextuality, semiotics, and cultural sociology, offering a fresh perspective on a complex field.

The central arguments emphasise literature's dynamism and adaptability. Diachronically, the binaries are functional: orality influences written literature, as seen in the works of Ion Creangă and Rabelais, while sacred motifs permeate profane literature, evident in Marin Preda and Thomas Mann. These historically significant oppositions blur in modernity, demonstrating literature's flexibility. Synchronically, metaliterature reflects literary self-awareness through intertextuality; paraliterature privileges commercial accessibility; antiliterature challenges aesthetic norms to generate new forms; and subliterature, lacking cultural value, appeals to base instincts. In line with Marino's vision, Cifor argues that literature continually reinvents itself, transforming antiliterary contestations into sources of creation.

Cifor's positioning is rooted in Adrian Marino's works, notably *Hermeneutica ideii de literatură* and *Biografia ideii de literatură*, which provide the theoretical foundation. She extends Marino's categories by incorporating intertextuality inspired by Gérard Genette and a cultural sociology attentive

to the impact of mass media. References to Gheorghe Crăciun or Herder are limited, and engagement with paradigms such as postcolonialism or digital studies is minimal. Cifor acknowledges Western theoretical influences, positioning the work as a bridge between Romanian tradition and global debates.

The examples are diverse. Diachronically, orality is illustrated by Creangă, Rabelais, and Eminescu; popular literature by *Legenda lui Faust* and mass-market novels (Eugène Sue), contrasted with Balzac's aesthetics; and sacred intertexts by Mann (*Joseph and His Brothers*) and Marin Preda (*Cel mai iubit dintre pământeni*). Synchronically, metaliterature includes Cervantes's parodies (*Don Quixote*) and Cărtărescu's *Levantul*; paraliterature encompasses medieval icons and detective fiction; antiliterature is represented by Ionescu (*Scaunele*) and Tristan Tzara; and subliterature by erotic texts and underground media. These examples anchor the analysis in literary practice.

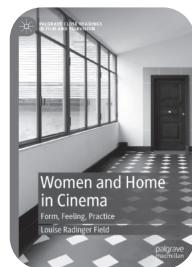
The major contribution lies in the diachronic-synchronic taxonomy, which integrates marginal phenomena. Reassessing antiliterature as a generative force challenges narratives of literary decline. In the Romanian context, the work revitalises Marino's legacy and forges connections with world literature. An analysis of digital literature could, however, have further enriched the perspective.

In conclusion, Lucia Cifor's study is an essential contribution to literary-theoretical research in the current epistemological context, offering a systematic and interdisciplinary exploration of literature's manifestations, from diachronic binaries to synchronic phenomena of modernity.

Through engagement with Marino's studies and a wide range of examples, from Cervantes to Beckett and from Creangă to Cărtărescu, Cifor demonstrates literature's vitality and capacity for reinvention. The book not only reaffirms the relevance of encyclopaedic theory but also opens new avenues for understanding literary complexity in a rapidly changing world. It is indispensable reading for those interested in literature's dynamics and its intersections with cultural spaces.

Mihai-Silviu Romaniuc

Louise Radinger Field,
*Women and Home in
Cinema: Form, Feeling,
Practice*, London,
Palgrave Macmillan, 2024



Louise Radinger Field's *Women and Home in Cinema: Form, Feeling, Practice* explores how the depiction of domestic space in cinema follows the experiential contours of female characters. Drawing on cultural associations between women and the domestic sphere, the author analyses ten films made between 1936 and 2013, building a bridge for understanding cinematic spaces through a descriptive framework that mirrors the embodiment of female characters.

Drawing from spatial theory, film theory, and feminist and psychoanalytic thought, the first four chapters address fundamental processes in film-making:

Découpage, Mise-en-scène, Sound, and Editing. These processes are deeply intertwined, and isolating any one of them risks fracturing the integrity of the cinematic imaginary. In the fifth chapter, however, the author carefully reweaves these threads, emphasising their fluid and receptive character. Here, Radinger Field reflects on the house as a generative space for the construction and reconstruction of a woman's self, creating a videographic work by assembling sequences from the films under discussion. Through poetic resonance, this videographic research seeks to render visible what a solely textual analysis struggles to capture in full complexity. The selected frames resemble one another, both in directorial technique and in the use of space in relation to the emotional experiences of the women portrayed.

The author not only shows how these films articulate interior psychological dimensions through composition, from set design to character positioning, but also invites readers to engage their own psychic interiority by participating in a conscious and subconscious decoding of audiovisual material. In doing so, Radinger Field challenges conventional frameworks for understanding domestic space, exploring how women assert agency through feeling, rather than merely illustrating how the home configures selfhood within identity constructs shaped by symbolic masculinism. The oscillation between interior and exterior, or between individual and context, is materialised through the videographic method as a form of embodied theory that places academic knowledge traditions beyond objectifying rationality that is desensitised to affect.

The chronologically diverse selection of films briefly surveys shifting perceptions

of femininity, from a mould of radical passivity to a potential model of identity re-configuration. The female character may acquire agency, experiencing and gradually transforming space, rather than remaining confined within the passive visual focus of the voyeuristic tradition.

Consequently, film form – through choices of framing, movement, rhythm, and editing – can both support and challenge gender norms, shaping the representation of women through emotional and social inflections that animate their presence on screen.

Rather than anchoring itself in a narrowly ideological critique, the work aligns with contemporary feminist thought of an affective and phenomenological kind. The author turns to the re-signification of space for the representation of multiple embodiments, through unstable affects construed in a fluid sense and removed from normative gender conventions. Central to the analysis is a reconceptualisation of sensitivity, undertaken with openness to frameworks offered by intersectional and post-colonial feminism. Examples from art and literature expand the visual repertoire of femininity, reinventing the aesthetic configuration of women's perception – understood in material terms – by appealing to a sensitivity situated beyond the traditional subject-object dualism of perception.

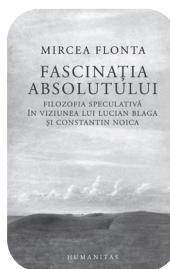
Contemporary affective orientations toward domestic space challenge traditional portrayals of the home and feminine intimacy, fostering reimagined embodied experiences for viewers that exceed the conventional limits of classical visual theory. These desemanticisations generate a fragmented, fluid imaginary shaped by affect, which unsettles the masculine symbolic

order imposed upon space, particularly through Radinger Field's effort to reclaim and demarginalise the domestic sphere.

Women and Home in Cinema: Form, Feeling, Practice is especially pertinent in the current cultural landscape of digital feminism. It offers a deeper understanding of the intersection between gender and spatial theory, while critically interrogating traditionalist perceptions shaped by a media history that has often distorted feminine figures through cinematic technique.

Alexandra Boiciuc

Mircea Flonta, *Fascinația absolutului: Filozofia speculativă în vizionarea lui Lucian Blaga și Constantin Noica*, București, Humanitas, 2024



Mircea Flonta's *Fascinația absolutului: Filozofia speculativă în vizionarea lui Lucian Blaga și Constantin Noica* is a compelling and erudite exploration of two of the most influential Romanian philosophers of the twentieth century, Lucian Blaga and Constantin Noica. Through a collection of revised essays and studies, the volume offers a thoughtful and rigorous interpretation of speculative philosophy as imagined and practised by these figures. Without concealing his admiration, Flonta engages critically with their ideas, highlighting both the originality and the limits of their philosophical projects.

From the outset, Flonta frames speculative philosophy as the pursuit of the absolute,

understood not as objective, verifiable knowledge but as visionary construction. He writes that this mode of thinking "is closer to myth and literature than to science," and that Blaga and Noica both regarded speculative philosophy as the "crowning achievement" of philosophical creativity. This interpretative lens, grounded in the distinction between empirical knowledge and conceptual imagination, informs the entire book.

The first part, devoted to Lucian Blaga, offers a detailed reconstruction of his metaphysical system, drawing extensively on the core ideas developed in his philosophical trilogies (of Knowledge, Culture, Values, and Cosmology). Flonta pays particular attention to Blaga's key concepts, such as *cunoașterea luciferică* ("luciferic knowledge") and *cenzura transcendentă* ("transcendent censorship"), emphasising their coherence and symbolic depth. In addition to situating Blaga within the traditions of Kantian and Romantic metaphysics, Flonta draws compelling parallels with thinkers such as Dilthey and Koyré. Particularly insightful is the chapter "O posibilă discuție între Blaga și Kant" ("A Possible Discussion Between Blaga and Kant"), where the speculative and transcendental aspects of their philosophies are set side by side.

A recurring concern in this section is the philosophical legitimacy of Blaga's project: is it a fully formed system or a set of enduring themes? Flonta responds with nuance, suggesting that while Blaga's metaphysics may not conform to strict academic standards, its intellectual ambition and internal coherence warrant serious engagement. In chapters such as "Știință și cultură" ("Science and Culture") and "Istoricitate și progress" ("Historicity and Progress"), Blaga emerges as a thinker torn

between the rationalism of science and the creative impulse of metaphysics, a tension that defines his philosophical identity.

The second part of the book, focused on Constantin Noica, explores the originality of his speculative ontology. Central here is the concept of *devenirea întru ființă* (“becoming within being”), which Flonta presents not merely as a metaphysical innovation but as a distinctively Romanian philosophical response to questions of essence and identity. Noica’s work is described as more fluid and less systematic than Blaga’s, yet equally ambitious in scope. Particularly noteworthy is the discussion in Chapter 14, where Flonta examines the Kantian echoes in Noica’s thought, especially the idea of *interogație transcendentală* (“transcendental interrogation”).

One of the most timely chapters addresses the controversial question of whether Noica’s philosophy is subordinated to nationalist ideals. Without excusing or ignoring the ideological context of Noica’s writing, Flonta treats the issue with care, urging readers to consider his metaphysical vision as both a cultural and a philosophical project. This balanced approach allows us to appreciate Noica’s intellectual contributions without simplifying their historical background.

Throughout, Flonta maintains a tone that is at once scholarly and accessible. He does not hide his appreciation for speculative thought, but his assessments remain clear, fair, and firmly grounded in textual analysis. The volume ends not with definitive conclusions, but with open questions: an invitation to continue the dialogue initiated by Blaga and Noica, and to reflect on the place of metaphysical speculation in present-day culture.

Mircea Flonta’s *Fascinația absolutului: Filozofia speculativă în vizionarea lui Lucian Blaga și Constantin Noica* is a significant contribution to the interpretation of Romanian philosophy. It restores Blaga and Noica to their rightful place in philosophical discourse, not only as national figures but as participants in a broader European tradition of speculative thought. Rich in ideas, elegantly written, and intellectually generous, the book is highly recommended to anyone interested in the intersections of philosophy, culture, and metaphysical vision.

Antonia Ujica

Graphè, vol. 30, Jean-Marc Vercruyse (éd.), *Les tentations du Christ*, Artois Presses Université, 2022



Publié en 2022 chez Artois Presses Université dans la collection *Graphè*, le volume collectif *Les Tentations du Christ*, dirigé par Jean-Marc Vercruyse, propose une exploration interdisciplinaire de l'épisode biblique des tentations de Jésus dans le désert, tel que relaté par les évangiles synoptiques. Rassemblant treize contributions issues des champs de la théologie, de la littérature et de l'histoire de l'art, l'ouvrage interroge les multiples interprétations de cet épisode fondateur, depuis les Pères de l'Église jusqu'aux écrivains et artistes contemporains.

L’ouvrage ne suit pas une progression strictement chronologique, mais s’organise

selon une logique thématique. Il commence par analyse symbolique de l'épisode biblique des tentations, rédigée par Camille Focant, qui en éclaire les enjeux théologiques et narratifs. Viennent ensuite deux études consacrées aux Pères de l'Église – Irénée de Lyon et Jean Chrysostome – qui proposent des lectures distinctes mais complémentaires. Pour Irénée, l'épisode s'inscrit dans une perspective sotériologique, soulignant la rédemption et la victoire du Christ sur le mal. Chez Jean Chrysostome, les tentations sont interprétées dans le paradigme moral chrétien, offrant un modèle pour surmonter les faiblesses humaines.

Enfin, le volume se conclut par une étude consacrée aux réécritures poétiques tardives des tentations du Christ, explorant l'émergence du genre de l'épopée biblique dans la littérature latine tardive. Sylvie Labarre analyse la manière dont les poètes Juvencus, Proba et Sedulius ont procédé à une transfiguration lyrique de l'épisode évangélique, en mettant en évidence les spécificités stylistiques de chacun. L'accent est mis sur la représentation de l'affrontement du Christ avec le diable et sur sa victoire, dans lequel se manifeste de façon paradigmatische la fusion entre l'héritage poétique classique et la visée didactique chrétienne. Par une analyse minutieuse, Sylvie Labarre révèle comment la tradition chrétienne tardive a intégré la rhétorique épique aux récits évangéliques, élaborant ainsi une nouvelle poétique sacrée.

Les études subséquentes du volume, intitulées « Art et réforme grégorienne à Zillis. Les tentations du Christ comme image de victoire sur la simonie » de Barbara Franzé, « Le Christ et le diable : représentation d'une lutte éternelle. L'iconographie

des tentations du Christ dans l'art italien à l'époque médiévale et moderne » de Monica Venturi Delpoer, proposent des approches approfondies sur la dimension visuelle de l'épisode des tentations. Barbara Franzé démontre avec rigueur comment la représentation visuelle (notamment à travers des bas-reliefs et des icônes) s'est constituée en stratégie de conversion durant la réforme grégorienne, dans le but d'inciter le peuple à renoncer aux vices tels que la simonie et le nicolaïsme. L'étude de Monica se distingue par son approche globale de la représentation iconographique des tentations du Christ dans l'art italien, s'étendant du XIV^e au XIX^e siècle. Il s'agit d'une incursion ambitieuse et très bien structurée, qui met en lumière la manière dont la représentation de cet épisode a été influencée par l'esprit de chaque époque ; de plus, l'étude se penche sur le changement des fonctions de cette scène biblique : de la morale, à l'émotion et à la réflexion. Les deux études sont accompagnées d'illustrations suggestives et soigneusement choisies.

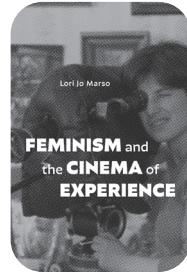
Parmi les autres études qui enrichissent la perspective sur cet épisode emblématique figurent celles consacrées à ses réinterprétations littéraires contemporaines, signées par Catherine d'Humières, Lucie Kaennel et Laurence Olivier Messonnier. Catherine d'Humières examine le roman de Kazantzakis, *La Dernière Tentation*, en le confrontant à la *Vie de Jésus* d'Ernest Renan. L'auteure de l'étude met en lumière la manière dont Kazantzakis s'éloigne du message évangélique pour se concentrer sur des tentations spécifiques du XX^e siècle : l'individualisme, la révolution et la concupiscence liée aux plaisirs. De son côté, Lucie Kaennel analyse quatre transpositions

littéraires de l'Évangile, à savoir celles de Heym, Tunstrom, Saramago et Crace. Elle met en évidence la manière dont ces écrivains explorent les « non-dits », les « blancs » du récit canonique, interrogeant ainsi les lacunes narratives et les silences textuels. Enfin, dans l'étude de Laurence Olivier Messonnier, l'accent est mis sur le roman *Je sais quand Dieu vient se promener dans mon jardin* de Gary Victor. L'auteur démontre minutieusement que ce texte ne constitue pas une profanation littéraire, mais plutôt une transcription scripturaire, relevant d'une démarche qui transcende la simple réécriture pour proposer une réappropriation symbolique et spirituelle.

Cet ouvrage se distingue par la richesse et la diversité de ses contributions, offrant une analyse approfondie des tentations du Christ à travers une approche interdisciplinaire. Son originalité réside dans sa capacité à croiser différentes disciplines, proposant ainsi une réflexion inédite sur l'évolution des lectures des tentations. Le volume représente une ressource précieuse pour les chercheurs en théologie, littérature, histoire de l'art et disciplines connexes, ainsi que pour quiconque souhaite explorer les liens entre texte sacré et représentations culturelles. Je le recommande vivement aux universitaires et à tous ceux intéressés par l'épisode évangélique qui, en mettant en évidence la double nature de Jésus, n'a pas cessé de susciter la fascination et continue d'influencer la culture contemporaine.

Teodora Tămas

Lori Jo Marso,
Feminism and the Cinema of Experience,
Durham/ London, Duke University Press, 2024



In *Feminism and the Cinema of Experience*, author Lori Jo Marso presents a politically urgent intervention into film theory, proposing a shift toward a mode of embodied, affective engagement she terms “the cinema of experience”. Marso’s argument is not merely an academic repositioning within the field of film studies, but an insistence on the political stakes of aesthetic encounters: how we watch, but more importantly resonate with films on an *affective* level, has a profound impact on our political sensibilities.

Structured across six chapters, each focused on different directors, the book’s composition reflects its theoretical intent: it privileges encounters and experiences over linear argumentation. From canonised filmmakers such as Agnès Varda, to contemporary directors like Joey Soloway or Julia Ducournau, Marso draws on a constellation of women whose works, she argues, defy containment within a strictly representational framework. These films ask viewers to engage differently with political ideas, by creating a space that allows them to *feel* and process the different emotions that arise from being a woman.

As such, the underlying idea in Marso’s study, that cinema can enact feminist theory through experience, relies on a re-thinking of political subjectivity which aligns itself with the tradition of Luce

Irigaray or Judith Butler, but even goes back to the phenomenological existentialism of de Beauvoir's writing. It is through its insistence on a spectatorship defined by feeling that the book participates in the broader affective turn within the humanities, that recognises the *situatedness* of critical discourse production.

What interests Marso is, above all, to create a formalist film theory that emphasises the potential within camera techniques and stylistic choices to disrupt mainstream discourse in order to create a feminist affective language that is both intersectional and anti-capitalist. Her focus on form and narrative is inspired, in part, by Laura Mulvey's ideas, who had already positioned, as early as the 70s, that avant-garde filmmaking was necessary for countering the dominance of the *male gaze* in cinema.

The book's theoretical thread is anchored in the dialogue between Chantal Akerman's cinematic practices and Simone de Beauvoir's philosophical writings. These references guide the reader through four chapters that address camerawork, sound, genre, and montage, respectively. In chapter one, Marso introduces "motherwork camerawork", central to her analysis. This idea blends Akerman's formal strategies with Black feminist theorizing on motherhood, particularly Patricia Hill Collins's notion of motherwork which seeks to redefine motherhood in a non-normative way, against the public/private dichotomy. Consequently, Marso's use of *motherwork camerawork* refers to Akerman's continuous questioning of the roles and societal expectations placed on mothers, leaving viewers a space to process their own complex and often ambiguous feelings in relation

to motherhood. *Jeane Dielman, From the Other Side*, and *No Home Movie* are placed in conversation with Alice Diop's *Saint Omer*, each offering unconventional portrayals of maternal identity. In line with de Beauvoir's critique of the myth of Woman, deconstructing the mother figure and maternal representations, as well as allowing viewers to experience feelings of discomfort, enables cinema to function as a site of political transformation.

Importantly, Marso's study also offers a reconfigured perspective on realism through a feminist lens. Building further on de Beauvoir's dismantling of the "eternal feminine," what Marso calls the "realism rule" refers to the deliberate depiction of unfiltered female experiences, however uncomfortable, as a means of challenging dominant representations of womanhood. The horror genre emerges as particularly fertile ground for such unmediated expressions, especially through feminist appropriations of its conventions. The porous boundaries of the female body (often explored through themes of pregnancy and bodily possession in films like *Happening* and *Titane*) alongside the genre's tendencies toward hyperrealism and excess, become tools for articulating the lived realities of womanhood within patriarchal structures. In doing so, the "realism rule" is rendered intersectional, as it accounts for the multiple factors shaping gendered oppression.

The study is not, however, without theoretical blind spots. Notably, the uncritical embrace of Gerwig's *Barbie* as a "love letter" to feminism despite substantial intersectional critiques contrasts Marso's engagement with Black political thought throughout her arguments. Still, *Feminism*

and the *Cinema of Experience* can offer productive lines of thought for feminist film theory, specifically through its focus on affect and its reconsideration of formal choices as sites of political engagement.

Alisa Tite

Mosaic. An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal, Vol. 55, No. 1, Shepherd Steiner, *Realtive Time / Little Time Proceedings*, March 2022



When it comes to time, it cannot be separated from the political and socio-economic struggles deepened by COVID-19. It is widely acknowledged that this global event has profoundly distorted our perception of time, giving rise to complex and multilayered crises that go beyond a linear understanding. This issue of *Mosaic*, *Realtive Time / Little Time Proceedings*, offers a rich interrogation of temporality across literary, cultural and philosophical contexts. It reconfigures temporal perception and representation via interdisciplinary diverse explorations of narrative, memory, and identity. The volume stems from the journal's online conference organized between November 2021 and April 2022. This collection unites diverse researchers invested in analyzing time as a fluid, constructed, and contested concept. The pandemic is treated not as a backdrop, but as a catalytic force shaping the issue's

critical engagements. The temporal disjunctions and cultural reconfigurations precipitated by the global crisis are manifested throughout the essays and discussions, underscoring the pandemic's formative role in contemporary scholarly discourse. It is notable that this journal serves as an innovative site not only through its thematic scope, but also through a layout that includes transcribed Q&A dialogue from the event. Each article navigates intertwined topics, establishing multifaceted relationships between the concept of time and contemporary critical theories such as ecocriticism, technology, social justice, affect theory, or media studies. Contributors, both artists and scholars, include this issue are as follows: exhibiting artist and researcher Erin Manning, associate professor in English Paul Huebener, visual artist Jonas Staal, academic and practicing artist Denise Ferreira da Silva, co-curators and co-investigators Anna-Sophie Springer and Etienne Turpin.

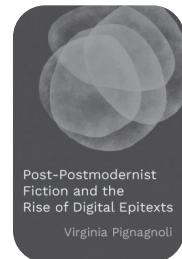
Setting the tone for the issue's engagement with temporality and transformation, Erin Manning's "The Untimely Impersonal" offers a philosophically rich, affect-driven inquiry into time, perception, and individuation. Primarily grounded in process philosophy, particularly the work of Alfred North Whitehead and Gilbert Simondon, her article also challenges the legacies of colonial modernity and capitalist logics to show how dominant systems structure experience, identity, and perception. "Untimeliness" and "impersonal" operate as keywords of resistance to normative and neurotypical modes of existence, calling for ways of thinking, moving, and relating that escape colonial-capitalist constructions of individuality. Paul Huebener's

“Sleep Through This Article: On Imagining Sleep in Canada” develops a critical literacy of sleep, taking as a point of departure media representations, especially advertising by the major Canadian retailer *Sleep Country*. Huebener questions how time is normalised as a measure of productivity within profit-driven work cultures and, consequently, how sleep is devalued and portrayed merely as an instrument for achieving the performance demanded by late capitalism. He also proposes a radical, political potential in sleep, capable of disrupting dominant chronologies and opening spaces for alternative temporalities. Adopting an explicitly political stance, Jonas Staal’s “Collectivize Time, Redistribute the Future” reconfigures the role of artistic and activist work as vehicles for reimagining and creating collective agencies. By exposing the dominant chronopolitics employed by a trillion-dollar company, he argues that art can serve as a tool for reclaiming time beyond classist and speciesist hierarchies. Denise Ferreira da Silva’s “Negative Accumulation, or That Which Happens without Time” unsettles the extractive logics of colonial modernity by advancing a mode of thought that resists linearity, classification, and control. She proposes an alternative framework to Western epistemology in which “the racial event” is not only a socio-cultural occurrence but also a perpetuation of future structures of power enabling colonial and racial violence. In a complementary vein, Anna-Sophie Springer and Etienne Turpin examine how natural history collections encode imperial temporalities and propose new pedagogies of art and alternative curatorial practices that might dismantle hegemonic knowledge production.

By foregrounding entanglement, fuzziness, indeterminacy, and speculative temporalities, these essays collectively advocate ethical and situated modes of care. Theoretically rigorous yet grounded in practice, they create an academic space for open dialogue that encourages readers and participants to envision alternative futures.

Diana Hutatu

Virginia Pignagnoli, *Post-Postmodernist Fiction and the Rise Of Digital Epitexts*, Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 2023



Virginia Pignagnoli’s *Post-Postmodernist Fiction and the Rise of Digital Epitexts* (2023) tackles a relevant topic in today’s world: the role played by the digital sphere in relation to our daily lives. The book’s central focus is the relationship between literary production and digital space, both as a medium that facilitates communication between readers and authors and as a force that shapes the poetics of post-postmodernist literature.

Structured into five chapters and a coda, Pignagnoli’s argument centres on the idea that digital paratexts help drive post-postmodernism’s shift towards sincerity, relationality, and intersubjectivity.

The opening chapter establishes the theoretical framework applied in the subsequent chapters and the coda. Beginning from Gérard Genette’s conception of the

“paratext” as a communicative process between author and reader, Pignagnoli surveys past critiques and revisions of Genette before advancing her own, accounting for the dominant role of digital space in the creation, distribution, and reception of literary works.

Pignagnoli’s key reframing distinguishes between “communicative paratexts,” by which an author directly influences readers’ understanding of a text, and “epistemic paratexts,” which shape readers’ general knowledge about that text. She further adds a temporal dimension, noting that readers may encounter either kind of paratext before, during, or after reading, with each timing producing different outcomes in the co-construction of narrative meaning.

Focusing mainly on the subcategory of digital epitexts as an act of narrative co-construction between authors and readers, the following chapters and the coda explore the way co-construction happens at the practical level through the analysis of five texts: Michael Chabon’s *Moonglow* (2016), Jennifer Egan’s *A Visit from the Goon Squad* (2010), Catherine Lacey’s *The Answers* (2017), Meg Wolitzer’s *The Female Persuasion* (2018), and Dan Egger’s *The Circle* (2013), each of the selected books highlighting the relation between digital epitexts (or their lack in the case of Egger) and the poetics of post-postmodernist literature.

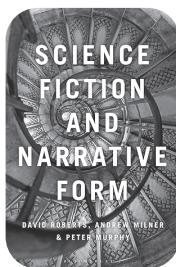
Chapter two’s examination of the epitexts surrounding *Moonglow* shows how they enhance the novel’s pursuit of sincerity by blurring the boundaries between fictional and non-fictional genres. Chapter Three turns to *A Visit from the Goon Squad*, where relationality comes to

the fore: the novel’s metamedial discourse on the expanding influence of digital space prompts a self-reflection on post-postmodernist literature’s own materiality as a medium. Chapters Four and Five address intersubjectivity. The fourth chapter considers authorial consistency across fictional and extratextual discourse through digital epistemic epitexts around *The Answers*. The fifth explores the reader’s role in co-constructing intersubjectivity via digital epitexts surrounding *The Female Persuasion*, focusing on readers’ online dialogue – Goodreads reviews, Instagram posts – and the ways such epitexts can shape reception before, during, and after reading. The coda addresses rare instances in which digital epitexts are absent, concentrating on *The Circle*. Here Pignagnoli argues that the author’s refusal to produce digital epitexts is a conscious choice aligned with the novel’s critique of technology companies, thereby reinforcing the earnestness of its cultural commentary.

All told, *Post-Postmodernist Fiction and the Rise of Digital Epitexts* makes a strong case for further inquiry into how digital space not only permeates day-to-day life but also actively shapes culture and cultural production, becoming an ever-growing component of the poetics of post-postmodernist literature.

Florin-Claudiu Luca

David Roberts, Andrew Milner, Peter Murphy, *Science Fiction and Narrative Form*, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2023



Written collaboratively by David Roberts, Andrew Milner, and Peter Murphy, *Science Fiction and Narrative Form* is an ambitious, intellectually rigorous, and at times provocative reassessment of the role that science fiction plays not only within literary history but also in shaping our understanding of narrative, culture, and historical consciousness. The book's aim, as Roberts states in the introduction, is to locate science fiction among the great narrative forms, arguing for its reinvention of the epic tradition in a world that has outgrown the novel's preoccupation with private life and individual alienation.

Drawing on Georg Lukács's *The Theory of the Novel* (particularly his concepts of the epic and the historical novel), the first part, "From the Epic to Science Fiction," by David Roberts, traces a lineage from the classical epic through the modern novel to contemporary science fiction. Analysing these three narrative forms, Roberts argues that science fiction can restore the totalising view of the world that was lost with the modernist turn. Focusing chiefly on Canetti's *Auto-da-Fé* and Houellebecq's *Atomised*, he concludes that science fiction offers a balanced combination of the epic and the modern novel, reconciling individual narrative with collective destiny and meaning by addressing the human condition on a civilisational scale.

In the second part, "Science Fiction and the Historical Novel," Andrew Milner deepens the historical-materialist reading of science fiction, particularly through its intersection with climate fiction. Drawing parallels between the historical novel and climate-based speculative fiction, he shows how future-oriented narratives respond to the same dialectical tensions that shaped realist fiction in the nineteenth century, and how they project, in a logical manner, historical and scientific developments into imagined futures. Particularly insightful is the argument that climate fiction, exemplified by the work of Kim Stanley Robinson, functions as a "future historical novel," documenting socio-political contradictions that are no less real for being projected forward in time.

Peter Murphy's third part, "Epic Science Fiction," takes an intriguing metaphysical turn, exploring how science fiction recovers the cosmic aspirations of ancient epics through galaxy-spanning narratives, moral teleologies, and posthuman intelligence. He analyses the "hidden god" and the symbolic return of transcendence via technology, drawing chiefly on Asimov's *Foundation* and Banks's *Culture* series to show how science fiction reimagines the divine agency found in the classical epic, now appearing in secular form.

The fourth and final section of the book, "World Science Fiction" by Milner, considers the genre's global variants. Here the study most clearly resists parochialism, emphasising that science fiction is not merely an Anglo-American phenomenon. Rather, it is a form uniquely capable of responding to global modernity, with local specificities in postcolonial, socialist, and ecological contexts. The chapter's engagement with world literature adds a compelling comparative

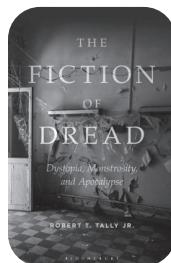
dimension, showing how the genre has evolved across cultures and decades.

Science Fiction and Narrative Form is a compelling study that places science fiction, often regarded as commercial and non-canonical, within a taxonomy of narrative forms alongside the epic and the novel, traditionally considered the most important and complex genres. Moving from literary theory to socio-political and eco-critical interpretations, and drawing on a wide-ranging corpus, the authors assemble persuasive arguments in favour of science fiction, demonstrating the genre's remarkable adaptability and intellectual depth.

Although the focus on science fiction as the only contemporary narrative form capable of reinvigorating the novel's overused individualist focus may at times seem overreaching, this remains a refreshing study of literary theory and narrative form. It makes a convincing case, whether one is a science fiction enthusiast or a sceptic, that the genre deserves a place among the other great narrative forms.

Raluca Pop

Robert T. Tally Jr.,
The Fiction of Dread: Dystopia, Monstrosity, and Apocalypse, New York, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2024



In *The Fiction of Dread: Dystopia, Monstrosity, and Apocalypse*, Robert T. Tally Jr. offers an engaging perspective on the

concept of dread, the elusive yet pervasive affect that permeates much contemporary fiction, which he analyses through the overlapping figures of dystopia, monstrosity, and apocalypse. Tally argues that the shift towards dystopian literature, away from the utopian thought that characterises much of previous centuries, carries broader socio-political and economic implications. Drawing on a wide range of literary and theoretical works, he defines dread as the central feature of the cultural logic of the present, arising from ecological disasters, economic inequalities, globalisation, and political crises.

Structurally, the volume comprises eight chapters, each depicting a facet of the cultural and social phenomenon understood as dread. Chapter One analyses the dystopian turn in twenty-first-century popular culture, arguing that dread can operate as a form of hope in the face of late-capitalist crises. Together with Chapter Two, which focuses on formal differences between dystopia and utopia, these chapters provide the volume's theoretical groundwork and explain the rise of dystopia as a reflection of contemporary fears and anxieties. In Chapter Three, the author offers a close reading of *American Gods*, contending that the novel is a dystopian narrative that shows how complex notions of identity and belief are shaped in a technological age. Chapter Four shifts to the acclaimed television series *Black Mirror*, examining episodes that address existential anxiety in the era of globalisation and raising questions about personal identity, memory, and freedom. Chapter Five introduces the concept of the terocene, exploring how our time is marked by a prominent presence of monstrous figures

across media as reflections of postmodern fears. Chapter Six considers the study of monstrosity as an ideological critique, including examples from children's literature. Chapter Seven investigates how apocalyptic narratives reflect systemic failures, depicting the end of the world and various global crises. In Chapter Eight, Tally turns to the fictional representation of space in dystopian settings.

Although the book is clearly written for scholars, given its theoretical depth, frequent references to thinkers such as Fredric Jameson and Martin Heidegger, and semi-academic style, it can also prove provocative, if sometimes demanding, for general readers. Its interdisciplinary scope is notable, ranging from canonical novels such as *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to contemporary works like *American Gods* and *The Hunger Games*, as well as film and television such as *Black Mirror*. Tally combines critical theory with close reading to shape his arguments, offering a fresh perspective on dystopian fiction without reducing it to a lesser genre. At times, however, the volume tends towards a degree of universality that a book of fewer than 200 pages should not attempt to claim, and it exhibits a measure of Eurocentrism by drawing primarily on critical theories and cultural forms from the Anglo-American sphere.

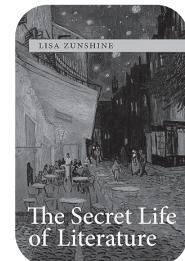
Despite these shortcomings, Tally ultimately succeeds in his aim, capturing the zeitgeist of the present. His concept of the teratocene stands out as an explanation for the dominance of dystopian culture in today's climate, grounded in the ontological collapse faced by contemporary society. The book is not merely a taxonomy of cultural dread but a sound argument for

understanding fiction as a mode of ideological critique.

Ultimately, *The Fiction of Dread: Dystopia, Monstrosity, and Apocalypse* stands out as a powerful instrument for understanding how contemporary narratives reflect and shape societal anxieties and uncertainties. By constructing a coherent monograph that juxtaposes dystopian themes, monstrous figures, and apocalyptic scenarios across a wide array of cultural artefacts, Tally captures the essence of the twenty-first century, a period profoundly characterised by dread.

Lidia-Alexandra Ileana

Lisa Zunshine,
The Secret Life of Literature, Cambridge
(Massachusetts),
The MIT Press, 2022



Lisa Zunshine's *The Secret Life of Literature* is an interdisciplinary work that links cognitive science and literary studies, aiming to illuminate not only how these fields interrelate and what the former can reveal about the latter's subject matter, but also how the cognitive patterns involved in reading and writing are shaped by cultural, social, and political factors. She borrows methodologies from cognitive science as well as from literary and cultural studies, and draws on a wide range of scholarly references and works of fiction from across the world.

The opening chapter introduces Theory of Mind, or mindreading, terms used by psychologists to describe the capacity to attribute mental states (for example, feelings and desires) to others. These may be explicit or implicit. Zunshine also explains how the embedding of mental states within mental states functions, providing examples and a structured account of these automatic processes so that they can be used to investigate how literature works, its, as she puts it, "secret life."

Having briefly outlined these characteristics of the mind, Zunshine shows how they influence perception and what factors shape them. Mental states can be misread and, tellingly, social status can affect how much one engages in active mindreading. As the studies she cites indicate, weaker social positions are associated with more assiduous mindreading. Within a literary context, this dynamic does not necessarily predict accuracy, define character typologies, or speak to a text's aesthetic value. It is also important to note that strong and weak social positions are fluid, depending on multiple factors and on which factor is most salient in a given context; intersectionality (race, class, gender) matters here. Social class and mindreading can further be situated within a broader theoretical framework that includes Bakhtin's heteroglossia. Moreover, while much literature reflects real-life mindreading, fiction may also present an inverted model; Zunshine argues that such inversions can signal an ideological agenda on the author's part.

Zunshine then examines the evolution of complex embedding, acknowledging that the evolutionary perspective depends on ongoing research in neuroscience. At the same time, she considers the historical level and broader cultural context, looking at different

communities, and she turns to the specialised domain of literary history, tracing patterns across genres, traditions, and texts. All these levels – evolutionary, historical with various "ideologies of mind," and the adjacent sphere of immediate literary practice – are relevant to her argument. Presenting concepts from psychology and neuroscience, she links them with cultural anthropology. She also discusses states of mind as plot devices, analysing, for instance, deception (including through unreliable narrators) and shame in literary works, while noting that encountering these in texts and in real life draws on the same mechanisms.

After surveying these levels from the most distant to the most immediate, Zunshine narrows her focus to development. The final chapter before the conclusion addresses children's literature, with subsections devoted to different aspects and covering ages from one to fifteen. This chapter contributes to the study of cognitive milestones and shows how age-tailored stories reflect readers' capacities: stories for one- to two-year-olds avoid complex embedding, while for older age groups the number of embeddings increases gradually. It also considers variations within literature for readers aged nine and above, highlighting the role of historical factors.

The book concludes with an inquiry into the future of literature at the intersection of culture and cognition. Zunshine's contribution to literary theory complements other approaches: the cognitive, empirical perspective is not reductive but open, drawing on diverse theoretical frameworks to provide a more detailed picture of how society and culture influence the literary production of complex embeddings.

Ada-Mihaela Mașcovici