

Romanian literature for the world: a matter of property

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For many Romanian intellectuals of the 19th–20th centuries, the relation of their national literature to world literature(s) was not only a pressing question to consider, but also a real obsession which has led to two extreme attitudes in modern Romanian intellectual culture. On the one hand, a number of Romanian writers and scholars (some of whom deliberately left for the West) have described the situation of their own culture from a pamphlet and/or self-victimizing position, which confirmed a foreign researcher's observation that "self-denigration is an essential component of the Romanian self-image and is deeply rooted in the matrix of the national culture" (Deletant 2007, 224). On the other hand, the inferiority complexes of Romanian literature in relation to world literature have been translated, starting from the middle of the 19th century, by attempts to euphemize, exorcize, sublimate and even attempt their imaginary conversion into superiority complexes (see Goldiș 2014).

ROMANIAN LITERATURE AND THE WORLD

Despite this radical antinomy present in Romanian cultural discourse, we can still note that most of the time its representatives agreed on three matters for discussion that call for a more careful analysis.

The first aspect relates to the concept of Romanian literature as such. With the exception of the protochronists,¹ in Romanian literary historians' opinion, Romanian literature was specifically the literature written in Romanian. For the authors of the first canonical Romanian literary histories (Eugen Lovinescu's *Istoria literaturii române contemporane* (History of Contemporary Romanian Literature, 6 vols., 1926–1929) and George Călinescu's *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent* [History of Romanian Literature from its Origins to the Present, 1941]), the equivalence between Romanian language and Romanian literature appears so obvious that they do not even approach it as a possible methodological question. At most, George Călinescu notes in a half-page subchapter, *Foreign Language Romanian Writers*, that writing in another language, albeit "explicable", "is not commendable", and warns that foreign literatures' unawareness of such writings should provide "food for

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thought to Romanian emigrants” (Călinescu 1988, 840). The linguistic criterion is dominant even now, as shown by the categorical conclusions expressed by the contemporary literary historian Nicolae Manolescu: “Romanian poetry can only begin with texts written in Romanian. That the Romanian Middle Ages saw writings in more languages does not enable us to classify such texts as parts of Romanian literature” (Manolescu 2008, 26–27).

Another defining aspect of Romanian literature’s position in the world touches on the concept of world literature, as understood in the Romanian culture. At best, this category is the exclusive domain of the canonical works of national literatures, which in an elusive manner perpetuate Goethe’s *Weltliteratur*. However, in most of the cases, the concept is grasped even more restrictively: for Romanian critics, world literature means an elite group which, apart from classic literatures, includes only the so-called great European literatures: French, English, and German, and maybe Spanish, Italian, and Russian (see Terian 2013, 1–18; Ursa, 2013). As Monica Spiridon has noted, owing to linguistic and geopolitical affinities, French literature was privileged above the others, which turned Bucharest’s tendency to imitate Paris into a real “national obsession” (2012, 23–36). In fact, in a manifesto volume dedicated to France, poet and essayist B. Fundoianu claimed that Romanian literature’s only chance of becoming known worldwide was to simply transform into a “colony of French culture” (Fundoianu 1980, 25). Despite the worldwide expansion of English, Paris still seems to remain the capital of the literary establishment for most Romanian writers.

Last but not least, we need to note the specific manner in which the aforementioned concepts interrelate in Romanian culture. Since the beginning of the 20th century, Romanian literary critics and historians have reserved the exclusive right to establish which Romanian literary works are worthy of becoming world literature. Moreover, they were often sceptical of or even hostile to Romanian-born authors who have been successful abroad. A typical case is Panait Istrati (1884–1935), one of the first Romanian writers to become notably successful in France after the First World War. His exotic stories and novels with their Balkan settings won acclaim, but his good fortune was also helped along with Romain Rolland’s support. Nevertheless, the reception of his work in Romania was reserved and even reluctant, as shown by Lovinescu, an influential inter-war Romanian critic who, by charging Istrati with “infantile fanfaronade”, “aggressive familiarity”, and “uncalled for confession”, concluded: “we have no interest in the echo of his Parisian ‘successes’, whose so relative significance cannot be grasped by his Oriental soul” (Lovinescu 1926, 142). The Romanian critics’ hostility to the writers who became known in Paris would persist after the Second World War, this time for political reasons. Thus, in a series of articles published at the end of the 1950s, George Călinescu ridiculed Emil Cioran’s and Eugen Ionescu’s international (and unjustified, according to him) success. The former had peddled “some borrowed, obsolete ideas ousted from the soul of the new strong generations”, which had an “embarrassing and even execrable” effect (Călinescu 2010, 505), while the latter had circulated a simple “theatre of empty verbigeration”, “an enormous hoax, for the mere shock or amusement of the bourgeois” (ibid, 497).

ROMANIAN LITERATURE IN THE WORLD

Despite the lack of support or even the adversity shown by critics in their homeland, over the 20th century numerous Romanian-born writers and literary scholars were acclaimed at home, or even worldwide. Thus, if we omit some isolated cases from the ages prior to the national awakening and to the establishment of the Romanians' conscience of an ethnic identity, we may say the presence of Romanian literature in the world has been perceived in at least four successive waves.

The first major wave of the Romanian literary export is the avant-garde. Although around the year 1900 Romania was mainly an agrarian country with a rather conservative literary tradition, over the course of only a few several decades it became one of the cultures where experimental culture – unexpectedly – thrived. The main explanation for this development can be found in the activity of the Jewish writers from Romania, a country which, at the beginning of the 20th century, held the largest percentage of Jewish diaspora in the world.² Cosmopolitan and open to novelty, these writers were the main movers in the Romanian avant-garde and, more broadly, of Romanian cultural modernization (Crohmălniceanu 2001). The best-known among them is Tristan Tzara (1896–1963), who, after a brief period of activity in the Romanian symbolist magazines, immigrated to Switzerland. In 1916, with Hugo Ball, Jean Arp and others, he founded the famous Dada movement at the Voltaire Cabaret in Zürich. In line with this new movement, Tzara published *La Première aventure céleste de Monsieur Antipyrine* (The First Heavenly Adventure of Mr. Antipyrine, 1916) and *Vingt-cinq poèmes* (Twenty-Five Poems, 1918), and, after he moved to Paris, in 1919, he tried to re-launch the movement by the *Sept manifestes Dada* (Seven Dada Manifestos, 1924). Although he first rejected the emerging Surrealism, Tzara then reconciled with André Breton in 1929, and the many volumes he published afterwards are increasingly marked by the new movement. In parallel, his work was also revived in Romania, where it had been initially rejected both by the critics and by members of the local avant-garde. Nevertheless, his relationship with the Romanian avant-garde groups would cool off again in the first years after the Second World War, when Tzara's unconditional pro-communist and pro-Soviet attitude created a rift with his younger colleagues. There were other Jewish-Romanian writers who took Tzara's path (migration to France) but were not equally enthusiastic about communism (Pop 2006, 313–330). Let us first recall B. Fundoianu (1898–1944). His real name was Benjamin Wexler and he used the French pen name Benjamin Fondane. In 1923 he left for France and he died in Auschwitz. Apart from poetry, his French work includes two ample essays on Rimbaud and Baudelaire, as well as books of aesthetics and philosophy. Ilarie Voronca (1903–1946) was born Eduard Marcus. In 1933 he left for France, where he published 20 books of poetry in French over the next 13 years. Finally, we mustn't neglect Gherasim Luca (1913–1994), who was born Salman Locker. A member of the surrealist group since his high school years, Luca left in 1952 for Paris, where he worked with famous artists such as Paul Celan, Jean Arp and Max Ernst. While in Romania, the writer seemed obsessed with the idea of emancipating the proletariat by eroticizing it, in France he particularly endeavoured to explore the possibility of transmuting reality by inventing a new language that was

conceived as a stammer able to idiosyncratically overwrite the regular linguistic routines. Little known to the general audience during his life, Luca would become more widely known in an unusual manner. His work was popularized by the poststructuralist philosopher Gilles Deleuze, who greatly admired Luca and often used the poet's words to help develop and exemplify his own concepts. Deleuze enshrined him in the ranks of the defining authors of world literature: "A style is managing to stammer in one's own language... Being like a foreigner in one's own language. Constructing a line of flight. The most striking examples for me are Kafka, Beckett, Gherasim Luca and Godard. Gherasim Luca is a great poet among the greatest: he invented a prodigious stammering, his own" (Deleuze and Parnet 1987, 4).

Perhaps the one Romanian literary wave currently recognized both in its country of origin and abroad is the Young Generation of 1920s–1930s,³ which is identified, in general, with three names: Mircea Eliade (1907–1986), Eugen Ionescu (1909–1994; French name: Eugène Ionesco) and Emil Cioran (1911–1995). As a fiction writer, memoir author, journalist and historian of religions, Mircea Eliade first stood at the theoretical and ideological fore of his generation in Romania, thanks to the essays he had published in the magazine *Cuvântul* (The Word), in which he pleaded for a spiritual rebirth of Romanian culture. Endowed with unusual precocity and efficiency, Eliade began to work on this ambitious task by publishing, in Romania, no less than 14 novels before the Second World War, from which *Maitreyi* (Bengal Nights, 1933), inspired by the time he had spent in India, brought him national recognition. Exiled first in France (starting from 1945) and then in the United States (from 1957), Eliade was awarded tenure in the History of Religions department at the University of Chicago and became the author of a scholarly work that would make him known all over the world.

His friend Eugen Ionescu, who had published only two books in Romania, was of comparable renown. Ionescu left Romania in 1938 for France and starting from the time of his exile, wrote exclusively in French under the name Eugène Ionesco. The most important of his plays, *La Cantatrice chauve* (The Bald Soprano, 1952), *La Leçon* (The Lesson, 1951), *Les Chaises* (The Chairs, 1952), *Tueur sans gages* (The Killer, 1959) and *Rhinocéros* (1959), drove him quickly to the international literary stage. His fame shone so brightly that Martin Esslin declared him one of the founders and most important representatives of the theatre of the absurd, along with Samuel Beckett, Arthur Adamov, Jean Genet, and Harold Pinter (Esslin 2001, 128–199). By using numerous repetitions, discontinuities, and paradoxes in his anti-plays, Ionescu constantly approached the impossibility of communication, the individual's fragility, and the emptiness of existence.

Although their discursive formulas were quite different, this kind of sceptical stance is also to be found in works by Emil Cioran, who, to some extent, took a path similar to Ionescu's. However, while Ionescu remained immune to the age's extremist ideologies, in Cioran's youth, he too, like Eliade, was a supporter of the Iron Guard, and even defended, in *Schimbarea la față a României* (Transfiguration of Romania, 1936), the necessity of installing a totalitarian regime in his country as a remedy to endemic Romanian traditionalism and passivity. Later, especially after his migration

to France (1941), Émile Cioran publicly recanted the errors of his youth and assumed the position of “private thinker”, indifferent to any political radicalism (seen as a mere expression of mass hysteria) and focused exclusively on his metaphysical dramas, by analysing his despair and obsessions both lucidly and lyrically. It was from this position that, starting from *Précis de décomposition* (A Short History of Decay, 1949), Cioran gained international recognition, inspiring admiration by quite diverse intellectuals, from Saint-John Perse (who saw him as “one of the greatest French writers to honour our language since the death of Paul Valéry” [apud Liiceanu 1995, 114]) to Susan Sontag (who, by placing him next to Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, called him “the most distinguished figure in this tradition writing today” [Sontag 1969, 78]).

The third wave of consistent presence of Romanian literature in the world is trauma literature. As with the members of the Young Generation, it includes authors who, either personally or through their families or their friends, dealt with the two defining totalitarian regimes of the 20th century (fascism and communism), but exclusively as their victims.

Thus, the youth of Paul Celan (pseudonym of Paul Antschel; 1920–1970), a Jew in the German community of the town Cernăuți (German: Czernowitz; English: Chernivtsi), which was part of Romania at that time part, was deeply marked by the beginning of the Second World War. During a space of only four years, the town changed its state membership between Romania and the Soviet Union the same number of times. In 1942, in a social context dominated by ghettos and labour camps, Celan’s parents were deported to Transnistria, where they died in the same year. After the war, the young poet, who had not been deported because he had not been at home, worked as a translator in Romania and managed to publish poems only under a pseudonym. Among these works is the famous *Todesfuge* (Death Fugue), which would make him known worldwide in the following decades and which was published for the first time as a Romanian translation (*Tangoul morții* – Death Tango) in the magazine *Contemporanul* on 2 May 1947. Nevertheless, Celan did not stay too long in Romania; after the installation of the communist regime, he emigrated to Vienna, where his first poetry volume was published (*Der Sand aus den Urnen* – The Sand from the Urns, 1948), and then to Paris. In the meantime, his poetry books, all written in German, would approach, in an increasingly ragged and opaque syntax, the experience of the *Shoah*. The obscurity of his poetry, however, did not hinder his international recognition. For example, in his famous *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), published in the year of Celan’s death, German philosopher Theodor W. Adorno called him “the most important contemporary representative of German hermetic poetry” (1997, 322). Furthermore, thanks to translations into English, the poet’s prestige increased exponentially in the last half of the century; thus, in a review published in the year 2000, the renowned German studies scholar Mark M. Anderson did not hesitate to describe Celan as “the greatest European poet in the postwar period” (2000).⁴

Norman Manea (b. 1936), a Romanian writer of Jewish origins, had a somewhat similar fate. He was born in the same region as Celan (Bukovina) and was deported as a child, along with his family, to a concentration camp in Transnistria. Unlike Celan,

however, Manea also had to bear the repression of the other totalitarian regime – the communist one – in Romania. That is, until 1986, when he rejected the compromises enforced by censorship and left for the United States, where he continued to write in Romanian. Manea’s reputation, confirmed by encomiastic appreciations from colleagues such as Philip Roth, Heinrich Böll, Günther Grass, Claudio Magris, Orhan Pamuk, and Octavio Paz,⁵ had especially grown by the virtue of his autobiographical novel *Întoarcerea huliganului* (The Hooligan’s Return, 2003), which recounts his experiences under the two tyrannical Romanian regimes.

Last but not least, the trauma wave also includes Herta Müller (b. 1953), a Romanian writer of German origin from the multicultural region of Banat, who left for Federal Germany in 1985 after receiving similar treatment at the hands of the communist censors as Manea had. Müller was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2009 for works that treat the tragic existence of the German minority in Romania under the communist regime, in which, at the same time, she develops a more general contemplation of the relationship between political power and individual resistance. Perhaps her best known book is *Atemschaukel* (The Hunger Angel, 2009), a semi-fictional novel based on the experience of her friend, the poet Oskar Pastior’s deportation to Ukraine. His name is fictionalized to Leo Auberg in the book and he serves as a symbol of the tragic fate of the German ethnic group in Romania during communism.

The most recent wave of assertion of Romanian literature in the world belongs to the comparatists; i.e. to a number of scholars who left Romania after the Second World War and earned international recognition in the countries where they settled (Vajdová 2011). In fact, there are several waves, each of them with numerous representatives. Thus, the first generation, who left shortly after the end of the war, includes Basil Munteano (1897–1972; professor at the Collège de France and author of a book on the “dialectical constants in literature and history” that prompted his frequent comparison with René Étiemble)⁶ and Alexandru Ciorănescu (1911–1999; professor at the University of La Laguna in Spain; author of *Principios de literatura comparada* – Principles of Comparative Literature, 1964, considered the “starting point” of comparative literature as discipline in Spain [Domínguez 2006, 60]). The second generation of Romanian comparatists left in the 1970s–1980s, most frequently for the United States. It includes Matei Călinescu (1934–2009), Sorin Alexandrescu (b. 1937), Virgil Nemoianu (b. 1940; professor at the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.; author of *The Taming of Romanticism*, 1984), Thomas G. Pavel (b. 1941), Mihai Spăriosu (b. 1944; professor at the University of Georgia and author of several volumes on mimesis, play, interculturality, modernism and exile) and Marcel Cornis-Pope (b. 1945). Finally, the third generation of Romanian comparatists left their homeland after 1990, and also mainly settled in the US. In this group we find names such as Călin-Andrei Mihăilescu (b. 1956; professor at the University of Western Ontario, Canada, whose research focuses on topics such as fictional worlds, the Renaissance, Mannerism, the Baroque and postmodern philosophy) and Christian Moraru (b. 1960; professor at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro; author of several substantial studies on postmodernism and cosmo-

dernism as the cultural paradigm that succeeds postmodernism in the post-Cold War era).

ROMANIAN LITERATURE OF THE WORLD

Despite the undeniable international recognition of the aforementioned authors, their reception in Romania was (and in some cases still is) uneven and fluctuating. In fact, we may see that all the Romanian writers who came to be known as relevant names in world literature prevailed despite native Romanian criticism. They were eventually rehabilitated to various extents by Romanian culture, but only after they had already achieved some level of renown in the West, and even then, many of them were not received as Romanian writers, but as foreign ones.

Thus, the fastest rehabilitation was of the avant-garde representatives, who benefited from their contacts with colleagues in Romania (in the inter-war era), as well as by their left-wing or at least anti-fascist inclinations (in the communist era). After them, the members of the Young Generation were helped by the fact that, by the time they left their country of birth, they had published a more or less consistent body of work in Romanian (even if the affinities some of them had with the Iron Guard hindered their reintegration into the Romanian literary system). In any case, by the fall of the communist regime, Romania had already seen the translation of significant parts of Ionescu's, Eliade's and even Cioran's oeuvres. By contrast, Manea, Müller and most of the comparatists remained *nomina odiosa* in communist Romania. This is no surprise, since they did more than just turn their backs to Romanian totalitarianism: they sometimes gained international fame by denouncing the totalitarian nature of the communist regime in their works. This disproportion in reception at home and abroad was maintained in the post-communist era. For example, while Eliade and Cioran were the objects of a real cultural "fashion" in the 1990s, the translation of Müller's work in Romania was approached systematically only after 2005 and she became a reference point in Romanian literary debates only after 2009, when she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. On the other hand, despite his success in the West, Manea continued to be a controversial name, described by the conservative literary critic Nicolae Manolescu in his recent *Istoria critică a literaturii române* (Critical History of Romanian Literature, 2008) as the author of a "prolix work, which cannot decide between fiction and testimony, often written in a set wooden, supercilious and barely legible language" (Manolescu 2008, 1443).

Therefore, we may note that the nationalist, isolationist, and provincial routines that dominated the Romanian literary system in the 19th and 20th centuries are active, to some extent, even now. However, whereas in the age of Romania's modernization prior to the Second World War this cultural approach was partially substantiated by the intent to establish an autonomous national literary field (see Terian 2013), and under communism it was explained by the limitations of the official ideology (which was hostile to defectors), in the post-communist era it simply became a brake or a suppressor of the comprehension and even assertion of Romanian literature in the world. For this reason, I have formulated several proposals regarding a change in the manner of envisaging national literature, world literature, and the relationship between the two in Romania.

Thus, the approach taken by recent histories of Romanian literature in which the aforementioned writers and critics (Celan, Müller, Cornis-Pope, etc.) are completely ignored or only their work written in Romanian (Eliade, Ionescu, Cioran) is evaluated has been misguided and counterproductive. Even if in the Europe of the 19th century, language served as the main criterion for delineating a national literature, this criterion is not universal nor is it at all self-explanatory. The existence of multinational literature(s) as products of “specific interliterary communities”,⁷ and the prominence of migration phenomena have contributed in the last few decades to the questioning of the equivalence of language, nation, and identity. Not only are there many (multi)national literatures written in a multitude of languages, but there are also numerous authors who maintain several ethnic-linguistic identities (Ryan and Deci 2012, 225–246). Therefore, to separate migrant writers’ work written in their mother tongue from that written in their adoptive languages is an arbitrary approach, because, in most cases, the latter cannot be understood adequately without the former. In fact, the identity profile of an emigrant or exile is not given by the fact that he/she has abandoned a language/culture and adopts another one, but precisely by his/her existence between two languages and cultures.

One of the most convincing confirmations of this identity rupture is the manner in which Matei Călinescu analyses Ionesco’s famous play *La Cantatrice chauve* (1950) in parallel with a Romanian version of it (*Englezește fără profesor* – English without a Teacher, 1943), showing that “the discovery of the universal banality of absurdity and, at the same time, of ‘the tragedy of language’” (Matei Călinescu 2006, 122) is not only present in the Romanian version, too, but is also prompted by the very crisis of its author’s Romanian identity. Certainly, I am not suggesting the substitution of the linguistic criterion by another essentialist one (ethnicity, place of birth, religion, etc.), nor will I suggest that Celan and Ionesco should be, with their entire work, considered only Romanian writers. What I do claim is that, on the contrary, the identity of a national literature is the result of a constant negotiation of the various factors that define its configuration, just as migrant (or minority) writers’ identity is the result of negotiations between the culture they inherited and the culture into which they try to fit. And when these factors also include the Romanian linguistic, geographic, ethnic or cultural identity, the relevant work should naturally fall within the sphere of interest of Romanian literary studies. Thus, a *de-idiomatization* of the concept of Romanian literature would contribute not only to a better understanding of its place and role in the world, but also to a *prise de conscience* of its complexity.

There is a similar situation regarding the concept of world literature, which, as discussed here, continues to be identified in the mainstream of Romanian literary studies with the world’s major literatures (especially French). As proposed by Dionýz Ďurišin, we could explain this state of things by the fact that Romanian culture is still showing a preference for a purely selective concept of world literature (as world canon), to the detriment of a historical-literary one (as intertextual network) (Ďurišin 1993, 27–30). Besides the former model being anachronistic and ideologized, it also excludes from world literature a large part of the world itself. From this viewpoint, the most symptomatic case is the reception of Central and (South-)Eastern European

literatures, with which Romanian literature avoids comparisons, partly because of a certain westernizing snobbism, and partly because of the linguistic barriers that hinder the direct knowledge of them in Romania. Therefore, a *de-centration* of the Romanian concept of world literature could contribute not only to a better position of Romanian literature in the world, but also to the attenuation of some of its oldest complexes.⁸

Nevertheless, the most important issue is the reserved attitude of Romanian literary criticism and historiography in relation to the reception of Romanian literature in the world. If we accept Pascale Casanova's sociological theory about the "world literary space", according to which any national culture pursues an increase of its "literary capital" (Casanova 2004, 12–17), then Romanian critics seem to have interpreted this precept in the most literal way. In other words, they posed as privileged guardians of national literary assets and approached any foreign attempt to reshape the outlines of their own literature with caution. This type of treatment is still applied today even to those literary historians who tried to push new grids in the analysis of Romanian literature. A perfect example of this is the reception of the *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe* (4 vols., 2004–2010), edited by Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer, which was received with sceptical reviews or ostentatiously ignored in Romania.⁹ Yet, such a nationalist perspective, which betrays the lack of dialogue with external perspectives, can only hinder the spread of Romanian literature abroad and, thus, intensify its inherited complexes.¹⁰ In the end, the thing that has defined world literature since Goethe is the fact that it ceases to be a national asset that needs protection from Others' desires and indiscreet gazes, and turns into a shared asset, available to the whole world. Such a *de-nationalization* of the literary capital is required especially since, as shown by David Damrosch and Mads Rosen-dahl Thomsen, the *international* canon of a literature coincides only rarely with its *national* canon,¹¹ because of the differences of tradition and of expectation between the culture where a certain literary work is produced and the cultures where it is received. Therefore, in order to become a true literature *for* the world, Romanian literature should first learn to see itself as a literature *of* the world, as a cultural asset to which all the world's readers and critics, no matter their native culture, have equal ownership rights.

NOTES

¹ "Protochronism" was a doctrine established during communism by the comparatist Edgar Papu, which declared national priority (hence, superiority) in nearly all the fields of world culture, and, thus, turned some Romanian writers into predecessors or even inventors of the Baroque, of Realism, Parnassianism, Existentialism and Absurdism (see, e.g., Papu, Edgar. 1983. *Motive literare românești*. Bucharest: Eminescu). Protochronist literary historians constantly stated that Romanian literature is not limited to Romanian language, but they used this thesis mainly for nationalist and propagandistic purposes, and pushed the origins of Romanian literature back to the age of the Roman Empire (see, for example, Diaconescu, Mihail. 1999. *Istoria literaturii dacoromane*. Bucharest: Alcor Edimex, which analyzes "Romanian" writers in the 1st to 6th centuries A.D.). In fact, we may assume that, by their abuses and overstatements, protochronists had an important say in the

hindrance of literary historiography approaches of the opportunity to also consider the Romanian literature written in other languages.

- ² According to statistics (Jacobs 1905, 531–532), the percent of Jews in Romania (4.99%) was markedly smaller than in Poland (16.25%). Nevertheless, we do need to note that by the end of the First World War, Poland was not an independent state, but a part of the Russian Empire.
- ³ The Romanian literary historians also suggested other names for this generation: Generation of 1927, Generation of 1930, the New Generation, etc. I have opted for the Young Generation because it is the name used both by its followers and by its commentators in the interwar Romanian cultural press (see, e.g., Iovănel 2012, 61–74).
- ⁴ On Celan’s Romanian roots, see Solomon, 2008.
- ⁵ Regarding the reception of Norman Manea’s work in Romania and abroad, see Turcuș 2012, 11–38.
- ⁶ For an extended comparison between Munteanu, Étiemble and Adrian Marino, see Ursa 2014, 149–161.
- ⁷ For the definition of the two concepts, see Đurišin 1993, 20–23.
- ⁸ For example, Romanian literary historiography and cultural studies ignored, in general, the fact that, at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th Romania played the role of a core literature in the Balkans, in relation to literatures such as the Bulgarian and the Albanian ones. By studying and publishing in Bucharest, some of the most important writers of modern Albania – Asdreni, Lasgush Poradeci and Mitrush Kuteli – took as models the Romanian authors Vasile Alecsandri, Mihai Eminescu, Alexandru Macedonski, George Coșbuc, Tudor Arghezi, and Mihail Sadoveanu (Elsie 2005, 10–104, 148–151).
- ⁹ For example, Marcel Cornis-Pope is nowhere mentioned in Nicolae Manolescu’s “critical history” (Manolescu 2008), although the book analyzes at length the writings of other Romanian-born comparatists, such as Matei Călinescu, Virgil Nemoianu and Sorin Alexandrescu.
- ¹⁰ “The literary nations that are most closed in upon themselves, most concerned to equip themselves with an identity, endlessly reproduce their own norms in a sort of closed circuit, declaring them national and therefore necessary and sufficient within their own national market” (Casanova 2004, 106).
- ¹¹ See Damrosch’s concept of “elliptical reading” (2003, 283) and Thomsen’s discussion of Hans Christian Andersen’s case (2008, 27).

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Romanian literature for the world: a matter of property

Romanian literature. World literature. Cultural complexes. Migration. Literary capital.
National vs. international canon(s).

Starting from the recent developments in the fields of transnational studies and world literature, this article analyses the presence of Romanian literature in the world and its specific manner of relating to the world. Thus, my paper consists of three parts. The first part approaches, in short, the way in which Romanian culture envisaged national literature, world

literature, and the relationship between the two over the past two centuries. The second part is an attempt to systematize the manner in which Romanian literature asserted its presence in the world until now, by identifying four successive waves of its dissemination beyond national borders (the avant-garde, the Young Generation, trauma literature, and the comparatist wave). Finally, the third part of the article poses a new approach toward the problem, meant to contribute to a better understanding and, at the same time, an improvement of the presence of Romanian literature in the world.

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