
Criticism as a Time-Lapse Photography

Podoby Sucasneho Rumunskeho Romanu/ Forms of Contemporary Romanian Novel. Jana Páleníková (coord.), Univerzita Komenskeho V Bratislave,/Komenius University of Bratislava, 2021

Dana Sala¹

Literary criticism can act like a time-lapse photography that portrays the most fundamental changes of society through re-reading the effects of the novels written in a certain epoch. The volume coordinated by Jana Páleníková, entitled *Podoby Sucasneho Rumunskeho Romanu / Forms of Contemporary Romanian Novel*, contains extensive studies in four languages: Slovak, Czech, Romanian and English.

All articles are dedicated to Romanian writers and to translators from Romania. There is one study dedicated to the novel in Bessarabia.

Through this book, the individual articles receive a new context. A postmodern notion such as intercomprehension becomes an inevitable tentation. One is tempted to try to comprehend even the texts in Slovak and Czech, despite the linguistic barrier, since they speak about Romanian realities and the notes can be recognized by the Romanians who are avid readers. Thus, the volume creates the context for a literary intercomprehension between two languages that are not from the same linguistical family. English appears also as a kind of lingua franca.

The common theme of the volume is the critical gaze on facets of Romanian realities as contained by the evolution of prose with its unexpected turnouts. All articles deal with the theme of reflection. The quantity of new novelists that might have been unknown to a Romanian reader is impressive. If the novels have a specific capture, the list of names of the Romanian critics visible in this international book is also impressive.

The thirty-two years that have passed since 1989 act both like a mirror and a void. All the articles in the volume know how to figure out the essential outlines necessary for a new mapping of the road of this uncharted territory. The theme of gaze becomes emergent in several articles. Thus, in the first article is is companied by the theme of self-referentiality.

After a short Foreword, signed by the coordinator, Jana Páleníková, from Komenski University, Bratislava, the first article belongs to Eva Kenderessy. She writes about solipsism and humanism in Cărtărescu's novel, *Solenoid*. Eva Kenderessy is also the translator of *Solenoid* in Slovak language.

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The following article belongs to Jana Páleníková. She writes about history and fiction in the novels of Eugen Uricariu. The author of the article also translates for the first time in Slovak fragments for Uricaru's novels. The analyzed novels are: *Supunerea (The Obedience)*; *Cât ar cântări un înger (How Much Would an Angel Weigh)*; *Plan de rezervă (Backup Plan)*; *Beniamin*; *Permafrost*.

Jarmila Horakova, from the University of Prague, writes in Czech about childhood and auctorial self and destiny in Vosganian's novel, *Cartea șoptelor (The Book of Whispers)*. She is also the translator of the book in Czech, under the title *Kniha sepotu*. The translation has been published for seven years now.

Klaudia Donkova writes about Floriuna Ilis. Romanian-Japanese relationships and atmosphere are caught in their intricate details in an article on the novel *Cinci nori colorați pe cerul de răsărit*. Fragments from the novel are translated into Slovak.

Marius Miheț undertakes an extensive radiography of the 1989 Revolution and its implications for Romanian literature: some writers were aware that they would be judged for their pact with communism, so they started to focus on their dissident acts, even when they could hardly be named so. This creates a shift on diarism at the verge with inventing autobiographical elements. The writers had all the freedom to invent, but they could not use it, some of them had to invent hypothetical dissidences, for fear of being judged. This is a symptom of the confusion that engulfs the writer between two epochs fundamentally different. Of all representative writers of the moment, Miheț focuses on Adriana Bittel, as in an attempt to keep the discrete vibrations and non-ostentatious collection of photographs in prose, typical for her writing. Through Adriana Bittel, marginality gathers substance, and this shift is a symptom of a new reality of writing.

Doris Mironescu writes about post-transition. He even refers to novels of the pandemic. The authors discussed by him are either very established in their own connection with the reader, such as Dan Lungu, or representatives of very traumatic effects of change on their identity, such as Diana Bădică, M. Buzatu, Adrian Schiop and Bogdan Cosa.

Cristina Balinte discusses an unknown aspect of the theory developed by Gheorghe Crăciun, poet and novelist. His portrait is thus very much enriched with essential data.

Postsoviet prose in Romanian in Bessarabia benefits from an extensive *tableau*, written by Nina Corcinschi.

Felix Nicolau discusses in a comparative approach the appetite for trilogy of Romanian literature. The examples are Nicolae Breban with *Amfitrion* and Cărtărescu with *Orbitor*.

Lena Constante is seen in a new perspective, that of auctorial distance in order to gather the events in writing, and closeness and slowness to recollect the moments of systematic torture in prison. The author of this study is Daniel Cristea-Enache. Lena Constante was put into prison by the totalitarian system in the fifties.

The next article, *Feeling in the Dark-Romanian Memoir Writing in Communist Times*. Emilia Ivancu tackles a dialectics of the gaze and blindness with examples from Steinhardt, Valeriu Anania, Vlad and Sanda Stolojan, Ion Caraion.

Goergeta Orian makes an extensive analysis of a pandemia novel, with roots in the mythos of Miorița, by Bogdan Răileanu.

Iulia Cosma, from Pushkin to Nabokov, carefully traces a popular quote attributed to Pushkin about the translators as 'post-horses of enlightenment'. She then discusses the situation of translations from Romanian literature in Italian and publishes a list of the translations that appeared at Italian publishing houses after 1989.

The book *Forms of Contemporary Romanian Novel* creates a context of reflection in which three East-European countries can find their common grounds and the things that unite them. The international context created by Jana Palenikova is actually a better understanding of the archaeology of self through otherness.