

TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES IN *THE HISTORY OF CONTEMPORARY ROMANIAN LITERATURE*

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Article history: Received 31 January 2022; Revised 19 August 2022; Accepted 31 August 2022; Available online 20 September 2022; Available print 30 September 2022.

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ABSTRACT: *Transnational Perspectives in The History of Contemporary Romanian Literature.* Discussing literature from a global perspective requires a transnational view on the evolution and international integration of literature. Most recent *World Literature* studies imply such an analytic perspective when questioning the recognition of certain national literatures within the more developed ones. While using concepts such as “minor” or “major literature” or, more precisely, “central” or “peripheral literature,” attention needs to be paid, Prodan argues, when talking about the global acknowledgement of literature, especially of those literatures coming from “minor” and even isolated cultures. In *The History of Contemporary Romanian Literature: 1990-2020*, Mihai Iovănel proposes a thematic rather than a historical analysis of contemporary national literature with its periodized and temporal evolutions. The author includes, especially in the last chapter of his literary history, a transnational view of contemporary Romanian literature. Therefore, the main purpose of this paper is to analyse the way Romanian writers and their literary works are perceived by the critic as having “a transnational character.” Prodan also investigates how Iovănel succeeds in renewing critical strategies in literary historiography. Thus, this contribution is mainly dedicated to the last part of Mihai Iovănel’s *History*, which seeks out new strategies of transnational expansion of the spectrum of national literature, as the author also analyses the possibilities of a global integration and marketing of contemporary Romanian literature.

Keywords: *transnational literature, national literature, migration, literary history, periodization*

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REZUMAT: *Perspective transnaționale în Istoria literaturii române contemporane.* O analiză a literaturii la nivel global implică o perspectivă transnațională asupra evoluției și a integrării acesteia pe piața internațională. Studiile recente aparținând literaturii globale (*World Literature*) presupun tocmai o astfel de analiză a investigării modului în care anumite literaturi naționale s-au dezvoltat în cadrul literaturilor globale. Utilizând concepte precum „literatură minoră” sau „majoră” sau, mai precis, „literatură centrală” și „periferică,” o analiză a fenomenului este necesară, după părerea mea, în special în cazul afirmării la nivel internațional a unor literaturi provenind din culturi „minore” sau chiar izolate. Mihai Iovănel, în *Istoria literaturii române contemporane. 1990-2020*, propune o analiză mai degrabă tematică a literaturii naționale contemporane, iar nu una istorică, analizată prin intermediul evoluțiilor literare temporale. Autorul integrează, îndeosebi în ultimul capitol al istoriei sale literare, o perspectivă transnațională asupra literaturii române contemporane. Astfel, lucrarea de față își propune o analiză a modului în care scriitorii români și operele acestora sunt percepute de criticul literar drept o literatură „cu specific transnațional” și, mai mult decât atât, a modalității prin care Iovănel reușește să inoveze strategiile de interpretare critică în istoriografia literară. Un studiu, așadar, dedicat în speță ultimei părți a *Istoriei...* lui Mihai Iovănel, având scopul de a identifica noi strategii de extindere a spectrului literar național înspre unul transnațional, căci autorul analizează posibilitățile de integrare și promovare a literaturii naționale contemporane la nivel global.

Cuvinte-cheie: *literatură transnațională, literatură națională, migrație, istorie literară, periodizare*

The rise of *World Literature* studies has offered a new, detailed perspective on the evolution and global integration of national literatures. Dealing with the “network” the scholarship in the field variously emphasizes requires a *transnational* view on the inclusion of so-called “minor” and “peripheral” literatures alongside the “major” and “central” ones. In its peripheral status, Romanian literature gains a certain position within the global network of literatures due to the standing of some representative writers and their literary works. Such an overall perspective of the national literature that gained a transnational position is offered by Mihai Iovănel especially in the last part of *The History of Contemporary Romanian Literature. 1990-2020* [*Istoria literaturii române contemporane. 1990-2020*]. The present study is dedicated to this last chapter of Iovănel’s literary history, as the author manages to expand the critical perspective on the Romanian national literature by analysing its transnational recognition. The main purpose of this paper is to emphasize the innovation

Mihai Iovănel proposes in creating literary historiography. By departing from the traditional model of periodized literary histories, the author approaches a rather thematic perspective in analysing the national literary productions. Such a thematic view is represented by the enlarging of borders for the Romanian national literature towards a transnational canon. As Christian Moraru and Andrei Terian claim in the introductory part of the volume *Romanian Literature as World Literature*, “pursuing a worldly revisiting of Romanian literature” accomplishes “a rereading of this literature as world literature” (Martin, Moraru, and Terian 2018, 2). A similar perspective is also created by Mihai Iovănel in the analysis of contemporary Romanian literature, but perceived this time in a transnational context.

What is of primary interest in the case of *The History of Contemporary Romanian Literature* is precisely the author’s orientation towards the transnational integration of Romanian literature. If literary histories are generally focused on presenting the national literatures from the point of view of a temporal hierarchy, Iovănel departs his methodologic analysis from the classic canon of periodizing national literature and chooses otherwise a thematic structure oriented towards a global context. When discussing the themes of literary history and periodization, Susan Stanford Friedman claims that periodization is “a discourse about time, a methodology developed in the discipline of history that assumes the linear, chronological nature of time: past, present, and future” (Friedman 2019, 379-402). In her view, periodization represents quite a “convenient” method that “produces concepts — like ‘modernity’ or ‘modernism’” and it offers an opportunity of re-reading and understanding literature within “the historical period of its production and reception” (379-402). Thus, Friedman supports the usage of certain “non-linear concepts of time” that might improve the methods of doing literary history:

I think non-linear concepts of time might free up new ways of doing literary history, ones attuned to historical contextualization without being limited to ideologically weighted periodizations, ones that take into account the multiplicity, heterogeneity, and discontinuities of lived temporalities in cross-cultural, intercultural, and transcultural worlds (379-402).

Such “non-linearity” as a strategy of critical debate could be also seen in Mihai Iovănel’s literary history, as trying to integrate the national literature within the transnational canon might be interpreted as a development of the analytical methods when coming to the producing of literary historiography.

Questioning the departure from periodization in doing literary history, Eric Hayot discusses the miss of usage of such methods that imply a temporal hierarchy. What he proposes is in fact an “interdisciplinary” perspective that combines both “the disciplinary and the national” (Hayot 2011, 739) as, in his view, nation represents a basis for the transnational: “The nation lies, after all, at the heart of the transnational, just as the prominence of disciplines gives interdisciplinarity its meaning and power” (740). Such an “interdisciplinary” view combining “the disciplinary and the national” is retrieved by Mihai Iovănel, as he focuses his investigation on the creative strategies within the national literature, but integrating it at the same time in a global context. According to Hayot’s perspective, we could claim that at the basis of Iovănel’s transnational strategies of doing literary history lies the national literary phenomenon. Periodization gained, claims Hayot, a “near-total dominance” in literary studies, and such a status unfortunately causes at the same time “a collective failure of imagination and will” (740). Along the years, he states, “we have failed to create alternatives to periodization” (740). Period became a “central historical concept” in almost every level and form of literary education, it was institutionalized and the entire process was based on the context, on the “*historical context*” (741). Moreover, the author claims that “the lack of debate over the value of the period as concept” made periodization “ideological” (742). Thus, Hayot suggests some “alternatives” to “the forms of constraint that govern the periods (and theory of periods)” and one of these methods is to develop periods in such a way as to “cross national boundaries”:

Develop periods specifically designed to cross national boundaries. These would borrow for their logic some nonnational principle of social or cultural coherence, generating concepts like systems literature, literature of various economic formations (capitalism, feudalism, industrialism), literature of the city-state period, literature of Golden Ages, and so on (747).

Therefore, from this point of view, there could be easily observed that Mihai Iovănel, through his singular methods of dedicating the study of national literature to a transnational contextualization, and not to means of periodization, he manages to innovate the methodological strategies of doing literary criticism. By developing such an “alternative” to periodization, the transnational perspectives used by the author could be recognised as methods of “crossing national boundaries.”

If we are to compare Iovănel’s study with previous literary histories, and even to the tradition of doing literary criticism, the main focus of traditional literary histories is to offer a critical view on the national literature and also to

create a temporal hierarchy within the investigation of literary productions. Periodization, therefore, could be perceived as the main strategy of creating the canon of a national literature. These evolutions and processes within the already existing Romanian literary histories is analysed by Andrei Terian in his study (2009) dedicated to George Călinescu's *The History of Romanian Literature from its Origins to the Present* [*Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent*]. Andrei Terian considers Călinescu's literary history a national literary product: "a victorious fight of the national 'background' against 'forms' came from abroad."² This is stated even though he identifies certain inspirations in doing literary criticism from European models (Terian 2009, 406), as Călinescu follows within his *History...* an interest towards the Italian, French, and German cultures (450-451).

Nevertheless, Andrei Terian dedicates his studies also to the forms of transnational literary criticism. Thus, in *Export Criticism* [*Critica de export*], the author claims that the export of Romanian literary criticism is extremely reduced nowadays. This is due to a much-decreased number of translations of the Romanian literature in an international language and also to a "lack of popularity of Romanian literature abroad" (Terian 2013, 6). If national literature seems to have failed in gaining an international status, states the author, it is even more difficult for Romanian criticism to acquire a transnational "export": "How could one export literary criticism when you could not widely export until now its object—literature?"³ Moreover, it was even more difficult to internationally promote Romanian literature as there is no Romanian literary history written in English or French. Therefore, Andrei Terian is a literary critic that tries to integrate the Romanian literary criticism into a transnational context. Taking into consideration Mihai Iovănel' attempts to offer a transnational view upon Romanian literature, he does not resume only to following certain internationally acknowledged models in doing literary history, as G. Călinescu did for instance, but he opens up a worldly integration of the Romanian national literature. Iovănel's *History...* is not written "in English or French," namely in a language that might guarantee the global status of national literary criticism, but a forthcoming creation of a literary history written in one of the international languages seems to be a future perspective in the field of Romanian literary historiography.

Analysing different national and international literary histories, Andrei Terian observes that such literary criticism implies a "spatial turn" (78) and,

² Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own. The original Romanian reads: "o luptă triumfătoare a 'fondului' autohton împotriva 'formelor' venite din afară" (Terian 2009, 409).

³ "Cum să exportți critică literară atâta timp cât nu ai reușit până acum să exportți pe scară largă obiectul său - literatura?" (Terian 2013, 6).

therefore, transnational literary histories are even more adequate from this point of view as they offer “a polyphonic and fragmentary perspective, deliberately situating themselves at the antipode of literary histories from the end of 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.”⁴ Thus, space generally becomes the “object of study” when coming to literary histories and it represents (“or, at least, it should”) “the main factor in the construction of a transnational identity.”⁵ Furthermore, Romanian literary studies should not follow, in author’s view, a precise international model, but, considering the already overrated methods used in investigating literature, scholars should bring or create “a new mode of thinking literature” (291):

If there is any significant lesson that Romanian literary studies should assume from the experience of today’s international historiography, then I think it should consist not in imitating one or another recent disciplinary trends, but in accepting a new mode of thinking literature that is not limited to a certain methodology.⁶

Thus, when it comes to *The History of Contemporary Romanian Literature*, the author’s thematic orientation is not entirely dedicated to space or spatial configuration of the national literature, as to obtain a “transnational identity,” in Terian’s terms, but he managed to innovate the manner of thinking literature, and it is not a temporal one. On the contrary, the literary critic departs his work from periodization and its specific methods of doing literary criticism.

The History of Contemporary Romanian Literature represents, in an overall view, an extended version of one of Iovănel’s preliminary studies, namely *The Ideologies of Literature in Romanian Postcommunism* [*Ideologiile literaturii în postcomunismul românesc*]. There could be easily observed similarities between the two works not only in terms of content and critical views, but also in structure and the hierarchical organization of chapters and subchapters. The author motivates the subject of his study by claiming that the “literary histories appeared after 1989 either do not overcome the threshold of communism’s falling [...] or they discuss completely fragmentarily or subjectively the

⁴ “asumându-și o perspectivă polifonică și fragmentară, se situează în mod deliberat la antipodul istoriilor literare la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea și începutul secolului XX” (Terian 2013, 78).

⁵ “După cum arată declarațiile coordonatorilor acestor istorii, ele se bazează pe un decupaj al obiectului de studio care sugerează că spațiul este (sau, cel puțin, ar putea fi) principalul factor în construcția unei identități transnaționale” (Terian 2013, 79).

⁶ “Dacă există vreo lecție semnificativă pe care studiul literaturii române ar trebui să și-o assume din experiența istoriografiei internaționale curente, atunci aceasta mi se pare că ar consta nu în imitarea uneia sau a alteia dintre ultimele trenduri disciplinare, ci în acceptarea unui *nou mod de a gândi literatura*, care nu se reduce la o metodologie anume” (Terian 2013, 291).

period.”⁷ Iovănel outlines a primary aspect that differentiates his investigation from those offered as examples to the previous specified hierarchy, namely the fact that he focuses on the “global image seen in its dynamic” and the main purpose of such view is to “overcome the micro-monographic approach” currently present in Romanian literary historiography.⁸ Such perspectives would be extended in what becomes *The History of Contemporary Romanian Literature*, as in the last chapter of the book, the author dedicates his study to the “global image” and tries to include the national literature in a worldly context, by overcoming “the micro-monographic approaches.”

Mihai Iovănel succeeds in creating a transnational overview on both the national literature and the literary history, and therefore my analysis focuses on the last part of *The History...* that is dedicated to those writers and their literary works that are seen as transnational literary productions. Thus, beginning with the title of the chapter, it is suggestive for its thematic orientation: “The fifth part. The transnational specific.”⁹ Mihai Iovănel approaches literature through both the biographical—presenting the personal and the professional evolution of writers—and the creative strategies developed along with the writer’s evolution. Thus, he departs his methods from periodization and the analysed literary works belong instead to a sphere recognised as conferring national literature a global and transnational character. Moreover, the chapter is organised in three major subchapters, namely “Transnational Maps,” “Global Connectivity,” and “Towards a Transnational Canon.”¹⁰ Within this clearly organised hierarchy, the author presents a sociological perspective of literature’s evolution within the global context. Some of the most important arguments presented cover the social events and processes that influenced Romanian writers and, by default, their literary creations.

Thus, the first part, “Transnational Maps,” begins with an analysis of Romanian literature seen as “peripheral,” this status being the main reason for the lack of global acknowledgment of national literature so far. As a “minor” literature, it is guided by the western “major” literatures, generally perceived as a point of reference. The peripherals are not only created, but also modified according to the specificities of “the centre,” claims the literary critic. By presenting this status of Romanian literature, Mihai Iovănel also criticises the national literature’s character and attitude of considering inferior neighbour cultures and literatures considered “minor” in their turn: “the lack of West’s

⁷ “Istoriile literare apărute după 1989 fie nu depășesc pragul prăbușirii comunismului [...], fie tratează cu totul fragmentar sau subiectiv perioada” (Iovănel 2017, 10).

⁸ “Diferența specifică a cărții de față în raport cu lucrările amintite stă în accentul pus pe imaginea globală, sesizată în dinamica ei, care-și propune să depășească abordarea de tip micromonografic curentă de altfel în istoriografia noastră literară” (Iovănel 2017, 11).

⁹ “Partea a cincea. Specificul transnațional” (Iovănel 2017).

¹⁰ “Hărți transnaționale’, ‘Conectivitate globală’, ‘Către un canon transnațional’” (Iovănel 2017).

reciprocity in knowing Romania remained an injurious matter. [...] Of course, such lines have a significant dose of ridicule in a Romanian culture that, with minimal exceptions, easily ignores the cultures of neighbour countries such as Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia etc.”¹¹ Moreover, the author discusses the way Romanian writers, even when having the opportunity to promote the national literature within the western space, they did not do it or, at least, not entirely. The offered example is that of the German writer of Romanian origin, Cătălin Dorian Florescu. His literary works are mainly dedicated to migration – depicted as a general theme – but what Mihai Iovănel chooses for his *History...* is one of the last novels of the writer, *The Man that Brings Happiness [Bărbatul care aduce fericirea]* (2018). Based on the blend of two different narrative plans, the novel tells the story of two persons coming from distinctive spatial areas, Danube’s Delta and New York, but, as Iovănel claims, the depiction of the two areas is realised “more in a touristic manner”:

The information about New York and Romania is related to the German reader’s encyclopaedia via the trick of newspaper headlines read by the characters in the book—and these titles generally contain *info* familiar to a German-speaking reader [...] Then, most characters are more like ideas [...] than complex identities that can overcome the impression of a fluid patchwork of words. An idyllic note is added as a *topping*—one of the misery, melancholy and unhappiness that simple characters with a broken destiny struggle with [...]. A blend of realism and romance, of Dickens and chocolate commercials.¹²

Cătălin Dorian Florescu is therefore recognised as a transnational writer of Romanian origin. However, with *The Man that Brings Happiness*, he fails not only to fictionally represent the Romanian area, so that it could become better known in the West, but also to promote a national identity through language and spatial depictions. Even if the author might intend to offer a realistic view of the Balkan territory, the way it is perceived by the literary critic does not surpass the impression of a vague “assemblage” of words. Therefore, in the

¹¹ “lipsa de reciprocitate a Vestului în ce privește cunoașterea României a rămas un subiect lezant. [...] Desigur, astfel de rânduri au o doză semnificativă de ridicol într-o cultură română care, cu minime excepții, ignoră senin culturile unor țări vecine ca Bulgaria, Serbia, Croația, Slovenia, Ungaria, Cehia, Slovacia etc.” (Iovănel 2017, 646-647).

¹² “Informațiile asupra New Yorkului și asupra României sunt raportate la enciclopedia cititorului german prin trucul titlurilor de ziar pe care personajele le citesc de-a lungul cărții – iar aceste titluri conțin preponderent info-uri familiare unui germanofon [...] Apoi, majoritatea personajelor au un aspect preponderent ilustrativ, fiind mai mult idei de personaje [...] decât identități definite suficient de complex pentru a depăși impresia de încropiri fluente de cuvinte. Ca topping, se adaugă un anumit idilism – un idilism al mizeriei, al melancoliei, al nefericirii în care se zbat personaje simple, destine zdrobite. [...] O combinație de realism și romance, de Dickens și reclamă la ciocolată” (Iovănel 2021, 647-648).

context of the “transnational” mapping of literature, C. D. Florescu is not presented as successfully managing that. However, Mihai Iovănel analyses only one of the writer’s novels. Other works could have also been included and discussed, in my view, so that an overall view of Florescu’s literary creation could have been formed.

The second part of “The transnational specific,” titled “Global Connectivity,” addresses again the differences between “centre” and “periphery” and mostly Romanian literature’s attempts to “break through” the global market, with the help of a newly achieved character of “Europeanness.” An initial version of this subchapter appears in *The Ideologies of Literature in Romanian Postcommunism* [*Ideologiile literaturii în postcomunismul românesc*]. It is not only named the same, but also addresses the same topics and strategies of analysis. Among the attempts to penetrate the global literary market, Iovănel notices two representative “positions” within the Romanian national literature: the “collective” and the “individual” one. The “collective” position is represented by literary groups such as “The Third Europe from Timișoara” (Cornel Ungureanu, Adriana Babeți, Mircea Mihăieș etc.) that published books, collective volumes, literary magazines, it also organised colloquies on the theme of Mitteleuropa, exploiting the Habsburg and multicultural legacy—more European and more integrated—of Banat region.¹³ However, regarding the “individual” position in the international marketing of Romanian literature, Mihai Iovănel mentions Mircea Cărtărescu. Cărtărescu’s case is also discussed in the initial book, the literary activity of the author being in fact presented along the entire chapter as having a significant role in offering to the national literature a transnational status.

Contemporary Romanian literature’s “adherence” to European space notably begins after Romania’s integration to the European Union in 2007, states Mihai Iovănel. The social and the cultural evolution of the country are sustained, from that moment on, by the granting of different resources, such as opportunities to attend public lectures, translations or funding programmes—generally offered through scholarships of creation. These are perceived by the author as opportunities to promote and study national literature abroad. Also, Iovănel mentions the “recovery” of national writers “that had temporary relations with the Romanian literature, that either were born in the Romanian territory and tackled on Romanian thematic subjects (Panait Istrati, Paul Celan, Herta Müller), or entered, through different contexts, in the gravitational field of Romanian cultural system.”¹⁴ The discussed case is that of Emilian Galaicu-Păun, a writer

¹³ “A Treia Europă din Timișoara (Cornel Ungureanu, Adriana Babeți, Mircea Mihăieș ș.a.), care a scos cărți, volume colective, reviste, a organizat colocvii pe tema Mitteleuropa, valorificând moștenirea habsburgică și multiculturală – i.e. mai europeană și mai integrată – a zonei Banatului” (Iovănel 2021, 650-651).

¹⁴ “recuperarea [...] unor scriitori care au avut relații episodice cu literatura română, fie că s-au născut pe teritoriul României și au tratat subiecte românești (Panait Istrati, Paul Celan, Herta

originating from Bessarabia, whose work can be integrated both within the peripheral Romanian literature, the central French and the Russian one. The transnational status of Emilian Galaicu-Păun's literary work is thus outlined. Moreover, Iovănel approaches the case of the Romanian avant-garde, internationally represented by Tristan Tzara. He is highlighted as one of the writers who supported the evolution of twentieth-century Romanian literature through the new creative strategies adopted alongside Dadaism (661). Therefore, Iovănel states that for a writer from a peripheral space, accessing the global market is "a complex process."¹⁵ It is not only based on the "trade between a periphery and a centre," it is not a "finite process," but a continuous one. The changes depend both on "politics" and "ideology" and the discussed cases are meant to emphasize a certain transnational recognition of the Romanian national literature gained along the years. The adopted perspective and methodological analysis, as could be seen, is not periodized or temporal, but rather a thematic one, the critic approaching the life and work of specific authors seen as globally representative for the national space and literature.

The third and last part of the chapter, "Towards a Transnational Canon," is dedicated to the export of national literature that could confer it a transnational recognition and also a possible integration into an international canon. Iovănel claims that "once with the opening of borders" in 1989, after the end of the communist regime, "there appeared new mobility opportunities." With the exception of Matei Vişniec—who "reinvented himself as a French playwright" – and Christian Moraru – who "became an important comparatist in the United States," Cărtărescu is recognised again as being "the only one in a position of global renown."¹⁶ Again, the critical discourse focuses on case studies of writers that internationally promote national literature, and not solely on the literary analysis of their fictional works, temporally hierarchized as can be seen in most traditional literary histories. At the end of the chapter, Iovănel seems to be wary of national literature's international status, as he does not seem to identify the relevance of these literary works for a transnational positioning of literature. "There is little chance," he states, for Romanian literature to have a "central role

Müller), fie că au intrat, prin diverse contexte, în câmpul gravitațional al sistemului cultural românesc" (Iovănel 2021, 654-655).

¹⁵ "Intrarea unui scriitor provenit dintr-o (semi)periferie în sistemul global este un proces complex" (Iovănel 2021, 664).

¹⁶ "Odată cu deschiderea granițelor apar noi posibilități de mobilitate între România și spațiul vestic; dacă până atunci conectarea fusese făcută într-un singur sens, dinspre Europa către România, [...] scriitorii români aveau posibilitatea de a se exporta. [...] Dintre optzeciști, exceptându-i pe Matei Vişniec, care s-a reinventat ca dramaturg în franceză, și pe Christian Moraru, devenit în Statele Unite un important comparatist, Cărtărescu e singurul într-o poziție de notorietate globală" Iovănel 2021, 667).

globally.” The only solutions for national literature to become better known reside in translations or the export of writers—even through migration.¹⁷

Iovănel names two main strategies of “integrating” national literature on the global market. On the one hand, there are translations. The literary critic states that, with the help of translation, a writer coming from a peripheral space can achieve a global standing (2021, 668). By discussing Norman Manea’s biography and literary work, his “originality” is assumed to be “the substance of the autobiographic matter”¹⁸ that the writer authentically works with. The global and international connectivity of national literature is also exemplified by an analysis of Paul Goma’s life and work:

As a writer, Goma enters the series of the experimental writers. His narratives are almost never fluent from the point of view of chronology and expression. The writer fights every word, as he also did with the people in his real life. [...] He was, therefore, a creator in the field of linguistic expression. Thus, all his books have an autobiographical core, whether they are diaries, memories or novels.¹⁹

While Manea and Goma are perceived as “spatially deterritorialized,” because of their emigration, followed by their settlement in New York and Paris, Mircea Cărtărescu, even while having a good global dynamic, is appreciated for remaining a “national” writer. However, Cărtărescu is individualized through an authentic mechanism of “accessing the global network,” namely the intertextuality (“a transnational mechanism that introduces a local material among its global references”).²⁰ The previously mentioned “local material” is Bucharest, “a central *topos* in Cărtărescu’s literature.”²¹

On the other hand, the second strategy of global infiltration for national literature identified by Mihai Iovănel is the so-called “implant.” It is based on the “infiltration” of a peripheral culture within a central one, “in such a way that

¹⁷ “Cel mai bun scenariu pentru România stă în creșterea capitalului său de notorietate și a prezenței pe listele de referințe care populează canonul european și nord-american [...] . Aceasta se poate face fie prin traduceri [...], fie prin exportarea, inclusiv prin emigrație, de scriitori și de viitori scriitori” (Iovănel 2021, 679-680).

¹⁸ “Ceea ce dă originalitate scrisului lui Norman Manea este substanța materiei autobiografice pe care o prelucrează prin intermediul formulei alese” (Iovănel 2021, 668-669).

¹⁹ “Ca scriitor, Goma se înscrie în seria experimentalistilor. Narațiunile sale nu curg mai niciodată limpede din punctul de vedere al cronologiei și al expresiei. Scriitorul se oprește asupra fiecărui cuvânt pentru a se lupta cu el, așa cum a făcut și cu oamenii în viața reală. La un moment dat i s-a editat un volum de câteva sute de pagini cuprinzând cuvinte și expresii inventate de Goma. A fost, așadar, un creator în planul expresiei lingvistice. Altfel, toate cărțile lui au un miez autobiografic, fie că se numesc jurnale, memorii sau romane” (Iovănel 2021, 674).

²⁰ “mecanism transnațional între ale cărui referințe globale introduce un material local” (Iovănel 2021, 674).

²¹ “Acest material este în primul rând orașul București, topos central al literaturii lui Cărtărescu” (Iovănel 2021, 674).

it modifies its parameters.” A representative example is that of the Jewish-Romanian writer, Andrei Codrescu. He stands out in American literature as “a complex and prolific figure,” for in his poetry he “remembers the experience of both Romanian and European surrealism.”²²

Thus, “The Fifth Part” of Mihai Iovănel’s *History...* presents the evolution of twentieth-century Romanian literature, viewed from a transnational point of view. He analyses both the social and the creative processes that helped national literature to gain some international acknowledgement. The critical discourse is innovated by departing from the strategies of periodization and by adopting a case study structure that helps the literary critic to form an overall view on the transnational positioning of Romanian national literature. However, this chapter does not provide a close analysis of those fictional works that are thematically based on migration or exile. These literary themes could offer, in their turn, transnational perspectives on Romanian national writers and their works—separate from the previously-mentioned authors who confer a transnational character to national literature. In the second part of *The History...* there is a short subchapter on the phenomenon of migration: “The Emigrants” [“Emigranții”]. It represents yet further proof of Iovănel’s different critical perspective on literary historiography. Instead of periodizing literature or establishing hierarchies, he proposes a few indicative thematic cores that are afterwards used as guidelines in his critical investigation of national literature. Therefore, similar to global connectivity and to the export of peripheral literature, the author claims that migration has significantly increased in Romania after the 2000s, this being the major reason for the numerous literary representations of the phenomenon. Several writers are mentioned, among them Adrian Schiop, Dani Rockhoff, Dan Lungu, Lilia Bicec-Zanardelli and others. As migrants themselves—in one form or another—they all portray in their works the trauma and exploitation that Romanian emigrants suffer upon relocating themselves to western countries. The analysed novels are those of Radu Pavel Gheo, *Goodbye, Goodbye, My Homeland...* [*Adio, adio, patria mea, cu î din i, cu â din a*], and Bogdan Suceavă, *Avalon. The Secrets of the Happy Immigrants* [*Avalon. Secretele emigranților fericiți*] (Iovănel 2021, 333). Both literary works offer an insight into the personal and psychological experiences of two Romanian emigrants who try to develop professionally within the USA. However, the critical analysis is not extended to the literary works of other writers, the

²² “Al doilea model este cel al implantului. El privește infiltrarea unei culturi centrale dinspre o cultură periferică într-un mod în care modifică subtil parametrii primeia, fără a prezerva însă identitatea celei de-a doua [...] În literatura americană Andrei Codrescu este o figură complexă și prolifică. În poezie el amintește de experiența suprarealismului românesc și european” (Iovănel 2021, 676).

two discussed novels being deemed representative for an entire literature dedicated to migration and exile.

To conclude, Mihai Iovănel innovates the strategies of literary historiography by constantly finding “alternatives to periodization” (2011, 747). Through this thematic structure of his literary history, the author manages to expand the spectrum of national literature. The discussed chapter, dedicated to the transnational acknowledgement of Romanian national literature, engages in a critical analysis of national literature that is on its pathway towards global recognition. Even if Romanian literature has not had a solid worldly representation yet, some manifestations of the transnational phenomenon can indeed be identified and strategies for a global acknowledgement of Romanian national literature need to be improved.

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