

COMPTESS RENDUS / BOOK REVIEWS

ANGELO MITCHIEVICI, IOAN STANOMIR,
Comunism inc.: Istorie despre o lume care a fost [*Communism Inc.: Histories about a Passed World*], București, Humanitas, 2016, 332 p.

The book joins to the studies aimed at the topic of the Romanian Communism. The authors, Angelo Mitchievici, a literatus, and Ioan Stanomir, a political scientist, meet in the broad arena of cultural thinking in order to reflect in two voices on the conditions of literature during Communism, as well as on the multiple aspects of the relationship between writers and the new type of authority installed after the 23rd of August 1944. Elegant and erudite, the study does not focus on concepts, but offers a cinematographic picture, through successive images, of a vivid, concrete reality, in a postmodern authentic style. The vindictive tone or the confessional sentimentalism are completely absent from this cultural fresco of the so-called “obsessive decade” and the immediate years that followed, unconventionally structured in a collage form blending together several “existential files” of writers. “A chronicle in cinematographic montage of two decades in the life of Sovietised Romania”, “a documentary film made on the skeleton of a world that disappeared”, the book is intended to be a natural appeal to memory, an answer given by the authors “to those of their contemporaries who are tempted by the Communist and «progressive» illusions”. As a historical document seen through the lens of fiction, the study also represents a meditation on literature in general. What can literature do? At what extent may it be an “antidestiny”, in the context of its forced ideologization? Which are the possible relationships of writers with the new canon set up by the system?

As formulated by Angelo Mitchievici, the premise of the analysis put in literary terms is that no document is as relevant as literature, and literary criticism, when it comes to the investigation of the transition from the interwar Romanian liberal society towards the Stalinist one. This is firstly because “literature offers the exemplary dramatizations of the real or, in other words, of the world, investing them with the power specific to representation and artistic expression”. Secondly, given the fact that sociology, philosophy, anthropology, psychology or history were kept silent during Communism, literature, as a substitute, tends to be “literaturecentric”. A third reason might be its capacity to reveal both “the imaginary of the epoch and the mentality reflexes that shape the society”. Thus, by reading several emblematic texts and biographies, the authors capture the ideologic portraits of the first Communist decade and of the so-called revisionist period that follows, to provide new insights into the cultural atmosphere of the 1980s. The literary “portraits” sequentially reflect the creation of the new literary canon as a result of an ideological reading of the great classics, and of the intellectual identity of the new Republic, by an analysis of the “Royal Foundation Magazine” (“Revista Fundațiilor Regale”) in 1947. In like manner, novels such as *Moromeții* [*The Moromete Family*] by Marin Preda or *Cronica de familie* [*The Family Chronicle*] by Petru Dumitriu feature the portrait of the Romanian revolutionary, lacking monumentality, whereas *Facerea lumii* [*The Creation of the World*] by Eugen Barbu makes the radiography of the concept of utopia. Novels like *Șoseaua Nordului* [*The Road to the North*] or *Facerea lumii* [*The Creation of the World*] are considered authentic chronicles of the era, relevant both for the apparent “realism” of the political events they render and for the development of a series of occultation strategies which cast a veil over their real significances. In all these cases, the “reading key” is obviously an ideological one, accessible only to a competent reader. The authors of the book often insist precisely on this “text behind the text”, not avoiding literary judgements: “Almost illegible today, contorted, thick, dropping hermetic hints, in an excess of uncertainty, the prose of Dumitru

Radu Popescu offers a Romanian *imago mundus* in the time of the obsessive decade”, as Angelo Mitchievici states, for instance.

As an essayistic discourse, the book employs a diversity of methods, from the sociologic and literary reflection to the psychological investigation and the case study, in which the biographical essay alternates with the text analysis. Authors and characters interpret the same historical sheet, while text and context both reveal and conceal “the case” of literature in a totalitarian country. While Eugen Barbu is “one of the talented mythographers of the Communist regime”, Horia Lovinescu, genealogically placed under the separation of Arcadia symbol, uses the hero of his play *Citadela sfărâmată* [*The Broken Citadel*] to illustrate an existence marked by interrogations and uncertainties: Matei may be read as a Horia who could have been”, while “the mundane course of Horia Lovinescu is the supreme text of his life”, as Ioan Stanomir asserts. Similarly, the case of Petru Dumitriu, “a local Latunski”, reveals a sick social heredity, a history “full of sin and failed redemption from a theological perspective”.

A great part of the book is dedicated to the possible ways of escaping from the Communist cultural prison, either by means of an inner exile, as a form of unspectacular daily heroism, or through a manifest refusal. Behind the official culture and the visible circle of intellectuals who entered into the alliance with the political power, there is also an underground universe of the “extras”, of “marginal”, “eccentric” people. Also, beyond the official chronology – a parallel one, in a natural sequential order with our interwar Lovinescian modern culture. In their journals, Radu Tudoran, Radu Petrescu, Pavel Chihaia, Dinu Pillat, Radu Petrescu, Alice Voinescu, G. M. Cantacuzino, Monica Lovinescu or Nicolae Steinhardt evoke the condition of the inner exile, revealing an “underground” counterculture. “The chronology of literature needs to be amended, as Ioan Stanomir considers. *Noaptea de Sânziene* [*The Forbidden Forest*] is contemporary with *Cronica de familie* [*A Family Chronicle*], while the writing period of Dinu Pillat’s confiscated novel overlaps the early era of Labiş, Preda or Barbu. The power could not crush the opposition that expressed itself in literary groups, meetings, readings or book exchanges. The terror does not interrupt a continuance of intellectual freedom”. The inspiring suggestion of a “could-have-been” literature, possible in the absence of the ideological canon, calls for a much mandatory recuperation of this fragmented intellectual history in the context of inner exile and immigration. How would Romanian literature or literary criticism have looked like outside Socialist-realism and what remains from the Communist century, the authors finally wonder. Their answer, enclosing the central idea of the book, dwells on “the endless solitude of the ones who said ‘no’”, as well as on our regrettable feeling that their exemplary sacrifice is only worth a footnote in a history written by conquerors.

Magda WÄCHTER

Romanian Academy Cluj-Napoca Branch

“Sextil Puşcariu” Institute of Linguistics and Literary History

CLAUDIU TURCUŞ, *Împotriva memoriei. De la estetismul socialist la noul cinema românesc. [Against Memory. From Socialist Aestheticism to the New Romanian Cinema]*, Bucureşti, Eikon, 2017, 212 p.

The study *Against Memory. From Socialist Aestheticism to the New Romanian Cinema*, signed by Claudiu Turcuş, proposes an insight into the elaborate interplay of literature and cinema over the span of the last 60 years in Romanian culture, from the 1950s to the present. The reference

point for both these fields is the Communist regime and the way in which its power mechanisms found their way into artistic expression. As such, the book is one that dwells on intermediality and collective memory. The author bases his analysis on Mircea Martin's concept of "socialist aestheticism", a counter-reaction to Socialist Realism, the leading theoretical frame used to describe the cultural production of the Soviet Block during the 1950s. While Socialist Realism possessed a very powerful ideological component, far from explicitly undermining the political status quo, socialist aestheticism aimed at keeping art free from political insinuation, thus preventing it from becoming propaganda. Regarding this point, Turcuş makes a few considerations on how Lucian Pintilie denounces the absence of an overtly political cinematic production, emphasizing the fact that, during the first decade of Communist rule, Romanian cinema was reluctant to assume an underlying political discourse, either critical in regard to the Regime or explicitly laudatory in regard to it. Opposing this view, Turcuş argues that, from 1970 onward, cinema that revolves around themes of actuality – as opposed to the so-called *artistic cinema* – slowly subscribes to an ideological model of film-making, whose purpose is both to normalize class-struggle as a continuous social necessity and to spread within its public a socialist ideal. The myth of permanent revolution possesses a pedagogical undertone and, as a result of the imperative of uplifting the genre in accord to the party's political necessities, it also finds its way into the cinematic production. This type of cinema, deeply in tune with the political context, Turcuş then explains, is correlated to the literary production of the same period. This constitutes the proof that socialist realism is an intermedial phenomenon.

Regarding films that approach social issues and themes specific to that particular period, Turcuş takes a wide-ranging look at how eroticism – namely the *socialist eroticism* – becomes the aesthetic environment most capable of shedding light on the way politics has permeated cinema. He discerns three types of eroticism within Romanian Communist film industry. First of all, he investigates eroticism as propaganda and sexualization as a formula that portrays foreign, especially American, decadence, where the emphasis falls on the downright immoral aspects of erotic conduct; he then identifies a soft, poetical eroticism, which is to be regarded rather as erotic contemplation and as mere romanticized byproduct of sexual practices; lastly, he points out the potential of a subversive type of eroticism – which mainly refers to instances when erotic instances are no longer the object of detailed reproductive planning, when they do not let themselves fall within a scheme of mathematical precision, in which reproduction is a necessity and sexual pleasure a mere byproduct. Sexual pleasure in itself is condemnable inasmuch as it consumes the working class' energy and leaves it diluted and unfit for work. Following this argument, the sexual act must be consumed rapidly and joylessly, so as not to become gratuitous pleasure. The moment when a cinematic portrayal of sexuality underlines its hedonistic character, opting to omit its strictly utilitarian end-purpose, represents the debut of a subversive mechanism.

Further in his book, Turcuş discusses works that deal with socialist memory, revisiting the Communist past through the lens of the transitional period. Narratives of incarceration, descriptions of torture and psychological warfare generate a new genre, the memoirs, which dominate the decade following the Romanian Revolution of 1989. Regarding works that challenge the viewer not only to *objectively remember*, but to *actively deal* with the Communist memory, Turcuş suggests a few modes of approaching the Communist inheritance.

First of all, he regards Lucian Dan Teodorovici's novel *Matei Brunul* and Mungiu's film *4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days* as ample narratives of the Regime, that create an all-encompassing perspective over several aspects of socialist life. Although in the case of these 2 examples, as Turcuş argues – the undertones are tragic, their filmic expression never goes beyond a somber resignation. Even if neither Teodorovici, nor Mungiu support an explicit anticommunist stance, making absolutely no reference to the political situation in Romania, they both capture the prevalent atmosphere of the time.

The second approach focuses on the programmatic deconstruction of Communism as a valid ideological framework, depicting it not in its whole, namely as a complex system of power-

dynamics, but as a despotic, devilish entity, whose sole purpose was the nullification of the individual. As it is, this approach has proved reductionist and ultimately unable to grasp the full dimension of life under the Regime. Within this context, *The Most Beloved of Earthlings* (1993), directed by Șerban Marinescu, the filmic adaptation of Marin Preda's homonymous novel, is a striking example of this strong anti-communist tendency.

Eventually, the last approach refuses to acknowledge the past, privileging a discourse on trauma, and chooses to treat Communism either from a parodical point of view (*Tales from the Golden Age*, 2009, script by Cristian Mungiu) or as a collective body of nostalgic experiences (*I'm an Old Communist Hag*, 2013, directed by Stere Gulea and based on Dan Lungu's novel with the same title, published in 2007). Such works reinforce a burlesque and humoristic interpretative grid and impose a necessary critical distance towards the recent past. Following the author's arguments, it becomes clear that, while the films of the 1990s were ostentatiously trying to undermine everything that took place during the Regime, the newer ones impose a critical distance, allowing categories such as nostalgia and humor to find their place within the cinematic production.

As for the reception of the *New Romanian Wave*, Turcuș argues that it represents a case of auto-colonialism: In his reading, the cinematic production of postcommunist Romania was constructed in order to appeal to Western formal rules; exotic in its aesthetics, yet recognizable in its themes, simultaneously refusing to maintain an explicit anticommunist discourse that would prove itself naive and would make the entire enterprise redundant. What grants it its recognition. Nevertheless, it is its exotic character that grants recognition to this type of cinema, vouching for its value as an exportable cultural good.

Meticulously defining his field of interest and displaying a set of proper methodological instruments, Claudiu Turcuș makes a strong case for a common approach of cinema and literature, succeeding to contextualize the importance of Romania's Communist past and its aesthetic unfolding.

Ovio OLARU

Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca
Faculty of Letters

ALEXANDRU MATEI, *O tribună captivantă. Televiziune, ideologie, societate în România socialistă* [*A Captivating Platform. Television, Ideology, Society in Socialist Romania*], București, Curtea Veche, 2013, 468 p.

Due to its innovative approach, Alexandru Matei's book fills an important gap in the Romanian cultural studies. Generally, the investigation of the Romanian television phenomenon has been employed from two equally insufficient perspectives: on the one hand, the studies about television before 1990 are markedly ideological, in keeping with the propagandistic stakes of the Communist regime. Published under strict censorship circumstances, books such as *Contribuții la cunoașterea Radioteleviziunii române* [*Contributions to the Knowledge of the Romanian Radiotelevision*] (1972), coordinated by Victor Crăciun, or Pavel Câmpeanu's *Oamenii și televiziunea. O privire sociologică asupra spectatorului* [*People and Television. A Sociological Survey of the TV Spectator*] (1979) cannot obscure the *langue de bois* of Ceaușescu's era, inflicting on the neutrality of the approach. On the other hand, most of the studies published after the fall of Communism are strictly informative, insisting on the television's technical innovations and production resources. The books signed by Eugen Denize (*Istoria Societății române de Radiodifuziune* [*The History of the Romanian Broadcasting Company*], 2000) or by Valentin Nicolau (*TVR. Mărire și decădere* [*The Rise and Fall of the Romanian Television Company*], 2009) are representative in this respect.

Therefore, while information on the Romanian media phenomena is largely available, the researcher can find few approaches which seek to understand this context from anthropological or political points of view. Alexandru Matei's book retraces the history of the Romanian television by screening it through the radical political shifts of the second half of the 20th century. The established reference points of the study are the year 1965 – which marks the end of Stalinism in Romania and the beginning of a cultural democratization – and the year 1983, when the austerity enforced by Ceaușescu's regime cut the television's broadcast to only several hours a day. A wide range array of resources is being deployed between these two fixed points in order to reconstruct the ideological seismograph of the most important political broadcasts. The documentary foundation of the volume is outstanding and it looks at a number of segments specific to the interdisciplinary character of the approach. Alexandru Matei lists and analyzes statistically the Romanian television program by comparing the density of the political message at a given time, he examines video archives or interviews some of the most important TV producers or stars.

The most important achievement of the book resides in establishing the main stages in the development of the television by exploring its relationship with ideology. A first stage, which started in 1956 – the year of the institution's establishment – equates with the so-called lyrical and innocent phase of television, when its moderate autonomy from politics stemmed from the fact that the Romanian officials were yet unaware of its high propagandistic potential. The author notes that, paradoxically, in the phase when censorship was at its most drastic point in Romania, television enjoyed some extent of freedom: "As it happened, television appeared in Eastern Europe after Stalin's death – *post hoc ergo propter hoc oblige* – like a rainbow after the rain. Television appeared when the Communist regimes had clearly won the fight against the 'enemies', when the Soviet institutions had shaped up and grown strong, as if there had been an anticipation, behind the (iron) curtain, of the settlement of the new order and the beginning of the show" (43). The second stage is identified by the time span between 1965 and 1971 and can be described as the most democratic phase of the Romanian television during Communism. Its opening to the general public prompted the appearance of something that could be labeled as an incipient consumer society in the Romanian culture: the TV program was growing in complexity and started to include entertainment shows, the target-audience began to diversify including broadcasts for the young, for women or for the intellectual milieu. However, Alexandru Matei's most consistent comments focus on social-educational broadcasts, to the extent where they managed to describe "the dynamics of a social ethos, the ethos of Ceaușescu's regime, with which the history of the TVR (Romanian Television Company) identifies" (16). Broadcast shows such as *Transfocator [In the Spotlight]* or *Reflector [Zooming]* – examined from the point of view of their content and their narrative practices – are considered representative of the cultural developments endorsed after 1965 by Ceaușescu's political reform. In the social sphere, the two TV shows introduce a number of categories inconsistent with the politics of the socialist states: the youth's nonconformist culture – the hippie movement – entered for the first time the media space, without being directly disapproved by the show broadcasters. The implied criticism, notes Alexandru Matei, stemmed from the interviewers' dim view of the hippie phenomenon rather than from the vision of the TV coverage producers. Socially, the strategy of disproving the Stalinist regime was visible in the democratic character of the feature reports regarding the socialist industry: those in question were encouraged to signal the qualitative faults of the Romanian products or the heavy bureaucracy of the state's institutions. "At that time, the regime needed critical opinions that could help it pose as a hero of emancipation", observes the researcher (97). However, the stage that parallels the 1971 July Theses and which inaugurated Ceaușescu's cult in keeping with the Asian pattern was an annulment of the television's autonomy from the political power. By abandoning the criteria of attractiveness (hence, the sense of television as a "captivating platform", as understood by Ceausescu himself midway through the 1960s) and by apprehending the risk of its total seizure by the consumer society – incompatible with the values of Communism –, the officials transformed television into pure propaganda. Even if they were not cancelled, social TV shows became the privileged peddlers

of the Party's ideology. From among the moral themes promoted after 1971, the most important ones insist on the sacrifice of the individual on the altar of the collective, on social integration through work, as well as on an aspect that Matei calls "the aesthetic de-ranking of the cultural imaginary" (289).

Apart from the explicit ideology that configures the three stages, the book insists on the implicit discursive strategies, which can be traced back to the stylistics of the coverage materials or of the social-educational broadcasts. Thus, the author looks into the concept of the programs, into the narrative modalities employed by the producers or into how they envisaged their ideal audience. From the point of view of the narrative strategies, Alexandru Matei registers an obvious shift from a neutral narrator, who does not assess the described facts – in the age of the television's maximum autonomy from political commandment – to an omniscient narrator, quick to rectify potential unorthodoxies and to supply the official perspective. As to the viewer's behavior, in the 1980s, when the ideologization process peaked, they were required to directly provide solutions to the cases presented in the television coverages: "By trying to adhere to the trial staged by the producer, instead of feeling as if they were impartial witnesses, they [the viewers] felt either as potential victims or as potential executioners, directly targeted by the described actions, pushed to choose quickly between one side or the other – one obviously good, the other one bad" (343).

Last but not least, Alexandru Matei's study encourages reflection on the broader relationship between ideology and the media phenomenon under totalitarian regimes, by insisting on its contradictory nature. Is an actual consumer culture conceivable in a censorship-ruled system? What kind of strategies do the officials employ in order to turn the diversified and subversive television discourse into propaganda? Is television in itself a subtle advocate of the capitalist consumer society and a means of undermining the economy of the totalitarian state? Even if the investigator avoids direct answers, *O tribună captivantă* hints at the fact that, in the Communist period, the television constituted a form of alternative culture that the official ideology feared constantly.

Alex GOLDIȘ

Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

Faculty of Letters

Romanian Academy Cluj-Napoca Branch

"Sextil Pușcariu" Institute of Linguistics and Literary History

GABRIEL ANDREESCU, *Existența prin cultură. Represiune, colaboraționism și rezistență intelectuală sub regimul comunist*, [*The Existence through Culture. Repression, Collaborationism and Intellectual Resistance under the Communist Regime*], Iași, Polirom, 2015, 376 p.

With chess strategy tailored intentions, Gabriel Andreescu moves on the writing board two queens to a vacant square; guided by the haunting question "why we still feel like living in the post-communist era?" (9) it is where we meet the first major, yet overwhelming stake of the volume – that of providing the premises of a new reference frame with a different unit of measurement for the past and its implications upon the present. Escaping a repressive past is not a matter of simply closing the tap of an excessive lobby for the glorification of the past times, but an issue of exhausting or defusing the subject through a complete comprehension of it. This leads us to the second intention of the text, a minor, yet achievable one. The second part of the volume slowly slides into the author's rather critical approach and the thesis rests on a series of remarkable Romanian intellectual and cultural testaments of the Communist era. Following the trace of a

pendulum between intellectual survival (*existence*) and cultural camouflage (*resistance*), the author analyses a collage of experiences of repression, bringing forward personalities like Dumitru Țepeneag, Mircea Iorgulescu or Ștefan Aug. Doinaș. Based on a solid research foundation, the text succeeds to remarkably hold on to at least one of its initial stakes through, thus moving a queen to the vacant square of this particular slice of history.

It is worth emphasizing that Gabriel Andreescu's book addresses the issue of intellectual resistance in the Romanian Communist regime in two distinctive parts, entitled *The cultural niches of existence* and *Ethically reclaiming the past. Obstacles*, that are not to be interpreted as opposable, but rather as complementary sides of the same problem, that share the same point of departure. The work ethic and the interpretation style of the volume give the impression of a compulsive need to bring order in a mixed bag – which might seem designed to fail when thinking about it exhaustively but is utterly manageable when following individual elements of the Romanian anti-Communist resistance movement. And Gabriel Andreescu chooses to break the mirror into pieces. With an add-on technique the author manages to carry out his demonstration by matching the puzzle pieces of the Romanian network of dissenters.

The first part of the volume objectively decants towards a repressive past. This is a necessary distance which enables us to appropriate the past not as an ordinary reoccurrence of a repressed memory, but rather as an insightful lesson personal files and journals from the Romanian Communist era. The author submerges himself into a dense archive of the Romanian cultural resistance through culture, only to create the premises – in the second part of the volume – of instituting some sort of political and nonetheless sanitarian distance of our own evolution. Rather than a telescopic approach, Andreescu captions the image of the Romanian Communist era by applying a close-up technique in his struggle to achieve this epistemologically clean distance from the past. Moreover, this type of perspective can be used to subsequently calibrate the right focal length of understanding the past and its effects on the present times. The author plunges into the dense material of the CNSAS (National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives), following two directions of interpretation: ways of creating identity and mapping a commonly accepted memory through Security's files. These paths reveal the double identity of the cases under investigation: one and the same person may resort to acts intellectual or political insurgency, making it difficult to distinguish the subtle versus the high-pitched dissent.

Returning to the documentary sources of the volume, it is useful to notice that Gabriel Andreescu stresses one of the main issues of a profoundly subjective corpus. How else could we see the documents amassed by the Securitate if not as a collection of records of the memory, a subjectively altered memory or, as the author calls them, "details which touch the moral surface of the human being in the most intimate way" (13). The author not only identifies the issue, but also throws some light upon this matter: the manifold structure of the memory is altering the authenticity of one's actions. In this case, the ethical perspective of the memory becomes a mandatory acquisition, thus introducing an epistemological unit of measurement in the fight on memory or more precisely put, against a subjective distortion of cognitive dissonance. The fight against the distortion of reality is to be reduced at a minimal margin of error by introducing two guiding reference points: the context (a set of events and circumstances) and the collective memory (a multi-perspective approach of the same event or figure). Given this context, is important to emphasize that Andreescu set a finish line to the first part of the volume: to oppose reason to intuition or, differently put, to impose reason over his intuitively-driven conclusions. Therefore, the author manages to abolish the distance between reason and intuition and to organize the corpus of the Romanian cultural resistance starting from particular individuals (Dorin Tudoran, Mircea Dinescu, Bujor Nedelcovici and many more) and moving towards social and cultural communities. At this point Andreescu follows the homogenous ideologies and their isolated doctrinal discharge if any (Aktionsgruppe Banat or The Romanian Writers' Union, to name just a few).

Having formulated a set of premises in the first part of the volume, the second part aims to offer a satisfying answer to as many questions as possible. The overwhelmingly dense opening sets

down to something worth reflecting on. At this point the author tries to create an ordering pattern of memory, following the rules of context and multi-perspective. In this puzzle of archives, the apparatus of ethics comes not only as an intended thesis of the author, but also as a natural consequence of the obstacles intertwined in the ethical reclaiming of the past. There are missing files, poor dossiers, files that do not say much, and which threaten the osmosis of a thorough documentation. The blanks are not camouflaged but, on the contrary, they are emphasized by several subchapters that point out our inability to discuss objectively about certain cases of resistance through culture, while also trying to answer the question: "Why can't we get away from the past?" To fill the gap, Gabriel Andreescu needs to create a map (which might be suspected of subjectivity) of the potential content of the files and, most importantly, of the possible errors or omissions they may enclose. And here is the merit of the volume: that of questioning not only what meets the eye, but also what is hidden, engaging in a critical approach the Security's file and their way of creating memory. Returning to our initial chess analogy, we would be inclined to say that even if *Existence through culture...* does not end with a checkmate or threaten to capture the king, it does unveil some beautiful strategies and a clean game.

Mădălina STOICA
"Ovidius" University, Constanța

LIVIU MALIȚA, *Literatura eretică. Texte cenzurate politic între 1949 și 1977* [*The Heretical Literature. Politically Censored Texts between 1949 and 1977*], București, Cartea Românească, 2016, 374 p.

Liviu Malița's volume, published in 2016, is an ample monograph that brings to light the complex and often disconcerting mechanism of censorship under Communist rule in Romania. The sheer exhaustiveness of this study is proof enough for the degree of intricacy involved in the process of censorship in Romanian literature under Communism, while the formal approach of the volume manages to portray Censorship as a polyvalent machine and as an institution that enforced constraints over the literature of the post-war period. For Liviu Malița, any literature under Communism that becomes "inconsistent with the official ideology and thus subversive" (7) is defined as heretical literature. The book begins by categorising the main ideological principles that governed the activity of Romanian censorship and dwells on a boar understanding of the internal logic of Censorship as a legitimised and democratic form of controlling the literary production. These principles are seen by the author as "masks": "the democratic mask" (characterized by party interests, Marxism and classism), "the populist mask", that expressed the anti-elitist sentiments of the Party, and "educational mask" (literature in the service of the public).

The first part of the study contains a chronology of censorship reflecting its variation in influence and power over the literary production. Thus, the author distinguishes four periods in the history of censorship: a first phase, between 1949 and 1959, that is highly exploratory and subject to the most anomalous forms of censorship, often times redundant or just arbitrary. A second one, between 1960 and 1964, is marked by a refinement of the methodology behind the literary censorship, followed by a period of relative ideological relaxation between 1965 and 1970, and a final, more accentuated era of censorship beginning in 1971. This final phase marks the period in which new measures of strengthening the Censorship's grip over the literary production are implemented, in order to impose a "new dogmatism", that will last until the dissolution of censorship in 1977. One interesting trait in the activity of Censorship is that the artistic value of a

literary work is almost never ignored. Therefore, when reviewing the literary production, the censors are systematically interested in “literary matters such as « the positive character », the principles of plausibility, situational motivations, dramatic conflict, literary fruition, even of style” (18).

Liviu Malița’s research also analyses the complex dynamics between the literary genres and censorship. As an example, a novel may become troublesome due to its “dialogic form and shifts in alternative perspectives”. Similarly, a dramatic play was subject to additional review prior to its premiere performance. By systematising the application of censorship based on the differences between literary genres, the study manages to recreate the image of the institution of Censorship as a vast network, with complex and stratified mechanisms. Doubling this demarche, Malița’s book also inventories the aesthetic tendencies and directions that were in the Censorship’s crosshairs for their “heretic” formulas: apolitism (in direct conflict with an “engaged literature”), aestheticism (seen as “gratuitous”), formalism (seen as “an expression of a hostile social element”), naturalism (seen as “vulgarising”), the so-called “allusive literature” (or “Aesopian literature”), onirism or avant-garde (seen as decadent forms of art – hermeticism, experimentalism, and abstractionism fell into the same category). The latter currents were censored not necessarily for political reasons, but for their hermetic quality, underlining the lack of understanding that characterized Communist censorship in regard to experimental literary forms.

The most important segment of Liviu Malița’s study is dedicated to a discussion of literary themes, with which, as the author declares, Censorship has battled all along. The fluctuations in literary themes (that were encased, according to the author’s categories, under “prohibited themes”, “recommended themes”, and “tolerated themes”) produced a kind of unstable literary dynamic that, alongside the dialectical relationship between censorship and authorship, generated a paradoxical literary phenomenon: the number of “prohibited themes” always coincided to the number of “recommended” themes. Malița’s inventory emphasises this interesting phenomenon by explaining how the authors shifted from explicitly propagandistic themes such as history, revolution, and contemporaneity (subjects that were to be exploited in a grandiose and apologetic manner) in order to “turn” them against each other by administrating administering a rhetoric of failure. Another example of thematic dissidence concerns religion, seen as an offensive gesture by the censorship and abusively prohibited until 1965, only to re-emerge as a subversive mechanism in the later years. The dichotomy between the themes of “the self” and the themes of “the citadel” is yet another discussion that concerns literary themes and their relationship to the phenomenon of Communist censorship in Liviu Malița’s study. The totalitarian dogma, mainly oriented towards the dissolution of the self and its assimilation into the community, manifests an outright intolerance towards the individual. This aspect is best exemplified in the Censorship’s attitude towards the themes of love, death and liberty.

In the last part of the study the author questions some of the most overused clichés of Romanian literature under Communism (the absence of dissidence, of samizdat literature, the idea of general compromise etc.) in order to challenge the claim that literature was completely subsumed to the Communist propaganda and failed in overturning the Socialist themes, thus limiting itself to compromise and servitude. In reality, as the author claims, the complexity of the Romanian literature “needs to be sought beyond the precarious and aesthetically rudimentary clichés that were imposed by the Censorship” (342), for these strictures were themselves responsible for creating a complex form of resistance that is to be traced through the literary documents that have so far remained unexplored. Liviu Malița’s study is as articulated as it is well documented, and it represents an indispensable approach for a better understanding of the dynamics of the Romanian literature under Communism.

Emanuel MODOC

Romanian Academy Cluj-Napoca Branch
“Sextil Pușcariu” Institute of Linguistics and Literary History

IOANA EM. PETRESCU, LIVIU PETRESCU, *Scrisori americane (1981–1983)* [*Lettres américaines (1981–1983)*]. Étude introductive, note sur l'édition et notes par Ioana Bot. Postface par Liana Vescan, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2017, 366 p.

Le volume comprend les lettres que Ioana Em. Petrescu (1941–1990), professeur de littérature à la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Cluj, avait envoyé à sa mère et à quelques-unes de ses amies clujaises pendant un stage de recherche dont elle avait bénéficié entre 1981 et 1983 à l'University of California de Los Angeles, grâce à une bourse Fullbright. C'est la deuxième édition de cette correspondance, complétée et augmentée, après une première, réalisée toujours par Ioana Bot, qui avait été publiée en 1998 (București, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică) sous le titre *Molestarea fluturilor interzisă* [*La molestation des papillons, interdite*].

Nous nous sommes habitués à l'idée que tout intellectuel roumain qui réussissait, « par miracle » (comme Ioana Petrescu le formule elle aussi plusieurs fois), de partir avec une bourse à l'étranger dans les années du régime communiste, avait la chance, inespérée, de changer une « vie mauvaise » pour une « vie bonne ». Il arrivait de cette manière à se réjouir pour un certain temps, tout limité qu'il fût, d'une liberté qui ne lui était pas permise dans son espace originaire.

C'est en raison de cette idée préconçue que le témoignage d'un état affectif exactement contraire, dans la correspondance de Ioana Em. Petrescu, est de nature à retenir dès le début l'attention. Il est ici question d'irascibilité, de crises de nerfs, d'angoisse, de peur, de panique, de fièvre etc.. « En effet j'ai peur, une peur diffuse » (86) ; « J'ai peur et je ne sais pas quoi faire » (87) ; « j'avais une énorme envie de pleurer » (92) ; « un fond de panique, impossible à dépasser » (87). Ioana Petrescu est d'ailleurs la première à percevoir le paradoxe de son sentiment, qui va contre tout ce que le nouveau climat de vie lui offre. Elle se retrouve captive d'un état de malheur, dans un monde qui lui apparaît, au même moment, parfait et paradisiaque. « De l'extérieur doit apparaître fantasque le fait que c'est justement dans ce paradis au bord du Pacifique que, au lieu d'exalter de bonheur, j'ai tout le temps envie de pleurer » (87) ; « Sais-tu comment je me sens ici, les matins ? – écrit-elle à une de ses amies de Cluj. Comme à la clinique. C'est tout à fait pareil, Lena. Et complètement idiot, je n'y peux rien comprendre, mais c'est comme ça. Où est-elle disparue ma liberté intérieure, que ni l'écorchement de ma peau à la clinique n'avait pas réussi à m'enlever, je n'en sais vraiment pas. Et je répète, je jure, il n'y a rien dont je pourrais me plaindre. Le monde, ici, est paradisiaque » (102).

D'où vient-elle cette affection, ce désir de pleurer et de désespérer dans le meilleur des mondes possibles ? L'explication semble tenir de la manière dont Ioana Petrescu définit le rapport entre la forme de vie américaine et la forme de vie roumaine. Ou, plus précisément, du fait qu'elle n'arrive pas effectivement à constituer ce rapport en termes de « forme de vie ». De manière intuitive, elle distingue entre deux formules. *Forme de vie* est réservée pour la vie américaine, pendant que les références à la vie clujoise, à « chez soi », entrent sous le signe du *régime de vie*. Le choix des termes est par lui-même significatif. « Régime » – pour la vie sous le totalitarisme, c'est-à-dire pour une vie qui dépend dans sa totalité d'un *régime* de gouvernement, qu'elle implique et qu'elle reflète dans tous les choix ; pour une vie donc où c'est une administration qui décide sur les existences. « Forme » – pour la vie libre, où chacun décide son existence, les moyens et la définition de celle-ci. La conséquence la plus importante qui découle de cette différence tient du fait que, de cette manière, la vie sous le totalitarisme est dès le début tenue *en dehors* des formes. Plus importante que sa définition positive (en tant que « régime ») se prouve être sa définition négative (en tant que « forme »).

La vie sous le totalitarisme ne peut pas être « forme de vie » tout simplement parce qu'elle n'accepte pas une définition formelle. L'observation, de première importance pour la compréhension du totalitarisme, avait été déjà formulée en 1951 par Hannah Arendt, dans la *Les*

Origines du totalitarisme : les régimes totalitaires, celui fasciste comme celui communiste, dit Arendt, se préoccupent surtout de rendre impossible la régularisation des existences. C'est parce que cette régularisation entraînerait leur stabilisation – dernière chose qu'un tel régime puisse admettre. Malgré la monotonie et le gris généralisé, malgré les objets de décoration et les vêtements uniformes, la nourriture identique pour tous, les existences sous communisme n'étaient pas stables. Conséquence d'un geste mineur, d'une parole quelconque, d'une rencontre banale etc., devenait possible à tout moment un changement qui bouleverse l'ordre destinale. Pratiquement toute manifestation de l'individu sur le plan social, même les plus inoffensives, s'y constituaient en occasions des transformations de vie qui échappaient au contrôle individuel. Or, il est bien évident qu'un parcours de vie à tel point accidenté et dont les oscillations excluent à chaque fois les choix de la personne, lui étant imposés de l'extérieur, n'accepte pas de la formalisation.

Pour éviter ce bouleversement, certains intellectuels roumains de l'époque avaient choisi de se retirer de la vie sociale pour s'enfermer dans leur cadre privé et dans leur bibliothèque, où ils se consacraient à la lecture et à la réflexion. C'était également le cas de Ioana et Liviu Petrescu. Leur existence à Cluj était retirée et solitaire. Ils y avaient aménagé un horizon de vie qui était d'ordre exclusivement intérieur. Découplé de l'histoire, ce temps « à soi » a l'apparence d'être non seulement calme, mais aussi infini, ce qui fait possible la consécration de l'intellectuel à sa réflexion et à son écriture. Mais si l'existence menée dans l'extérieur excluait la définition formelle par son irrégularité et l'absence des choix, l'existence par retraitement le fait par la coupe même des rapports avec l'extérieur. Car cette déliaison, qui défait le relais avec la réalité afin d'offrir la protection, au lieu de fortifier (une fois avec l'esprit), nourrit l'intellectuel d'une conscience coupable. Le rend conscient de la position toujours faible qu'il assume ainsi, car il reste passif et accepte de se déresponsabiliser. C'est pourquoi l'écoulement de cette vie retirée ne se laisse en effet pas, lui non plus, organisé en fonction des options personnelles. Il est d'une monotonie absolue, qui fait accuser la paresse et l'accalmie ; c'est un temps de la pure attente, dont les entrées et les sorties sont décidées par le pur hasard. De cette manière, la passivité de l'intellectuel va, sur ce plan très intime aussi, jusqu'à la suspension des désirs.

C'est dans ce rapport entre passivité et action que tient en effet la grande différence que fait Ioana Petrescu entre la vie américaine et la vie roumaine. La cause qui rend si difficile son accommodation au « paradis » de Los Angeles et la rend incapable de se réjouir de la « chance » de son séjour là-bas tient, justement, de cet engagement dans la vie, dont elle était loin d'avoir l'habitude. L'existence clujoise lui apparaît dans ce contexte positive (idyllique dans une certaine mesure), avec son manque de dynamique, qui encourage l'oisiveté et reconforte l'esprit. Pendant que la vie américaine (celle intellectuelle y comprise) l'oblige à la présence, à la participation, à l'implication dans la socialisation. Le temps de la bourse (court, très mesuré, car il se limite à deux années) se consomme entièrement avec ses occupations, qui sont toutes de nature sociale – enseignement, préparation des cours, rencontres, promenades, visites, reçues des visites. Devant une imposition si puissante de l'existence extérieure, miser sur l'intériorité devient insoutenable. « Il me manque – note Ioana Em. Petrescu – les heures dans lesquelles je descendais si profondément en moi que je devenais l'une avec ce que je pensais – et je me libérais de tout ce que je signifiais autrement. Il me manque la suspension fertile des rythmes de chez moi, violés ici, instant par instant » (210). En même temps, cette existence qui se passe entièrement *en dehors*, qui est visible et matérielle, fait que la vie américaine se réalise de manière naturelle en tant que « forme ». On comprend pourquoi la perception de la « forme de vie » commence par être négative pour Ioana Petrescu. Sans aucun accent sur la vie intérieure, se consommant dans la pure apparence, elle lui semble conventionnelle, superficielle, exactement à l'opposé de l'« essentialité » dans laquelle elle avait investi auparavant. En même temps, cette vie est marquée par l'incongru, caractérisée par le mélange d'une multitude de manières d'être : « le sentiment, plusieurs fois vécu, que l'Américain que je connaissais ici était un produit superficiel (...). Un mélange de nations, de races, de styles et de gestes comme à Los Angeles n'existe peut-être dans

aucune autre ville dans le monde entier. Tu t'y confrontes avec tous les styles – mais non pas à *un* style, si tu n'as pas le courage de définir ce style unique comme un style « pot-pourri » (195).

Tout paradoxal que cela peut paraître, au moment de sa première articulation dans la correspondance de Ioana Petrescu, l'opposition entre « forme de vie » et « régime de vie » ne donne pas avantage à la première. C'est, par une étrange inversion de sens, le paradis qui soutient une « vie mauvaise », pour laisser l'enfer entretenir la « bonne ». Cette opposition est ensuite reprise sur deux autres plans : comme opposition entre « vivre dans le Temps » (envisagé comme durée, temporalité historique) et « vivre dans l'instant » ; ou comme l'opposition entre « culture » (conçue comme produit d'une tradition) et « civilisation » (qui exploiterait la dynamique de l'implication dans le présent). Ces reprises ne font que renforcer, à leur tour, l'infériorité de la vie américaine en tant que « forme de vie ».

Les éléments à travers lesquels Ioana Petrescu représente la « forme de vie » américaine sont apparemment divers, mais font tous partis d'une seule catégorie formelle, qui devient ainsi étalon. De manière systématique, la vie américaine est qualifiée comme « spectacle ». Ce que Guy Debord avait développé comme hypothèse en 1967, dans *La Société du spectacle* – le fait que, sous capitalisme, toutes les manifestations existentielles reçoivent l'aspect d'une mise en scène, avec tout ce que cela apporte de bon et de mal – Ioana Petrescu l'esquisse intuitivement en 1982, à partir de l'expérience aliénante de quelqu'un qui, après s'être efforcé à trouver un équilibre vital dans un monde communiste, se voit incapable d'assumer l'existence qui lui est offerte dans une société qui reconnaît ses droits. Comme chez Guy Debord, le « spectacle » est chez elle un pur jeu d'apparence, superficialité, jeu de masques, contrefaçon, artificialité – de son côté négatif ; et, d'un côté positif qui ne tarde pas de s'y configurer – disponibilité pour le jeu, versatilité, vitalité et joie. Sauf que, à la différence de Debord, chez Ioana Petrescu on assiste à une évolution de la perception, qui va de la déconsidération à une fascination de plus en plus prégnante. Le spectacle commence par l'énerver et la fatiguer : la désespère. C'est lui qui la fait pleurer, par ses rythmes trop accélérés et incessants, comme par sa superficie). Mais plus elle reprend cette expérience et cet exercice, plus elle le trouve « extraordinaire », « charmant », « mobilisateur ».

Finalement tout, à Los Angeles, semble tenir du spectacle. Ioana Petrescu parle de la rue-spectacle et du campus-spectacle : elle y observe les couleurs, les rythmes, les habits qui mélangent les styles et les codes, la disponibilité de tous ces éléments pour le « jeu », le fait qu'ils paraissent soutenir naturellement des mises en scène : « Ils portent leurs livres dans des sacs colorés, desquels ils accrochent éventuellement un ballon. Tu peux voir dans le campus les vêtements les plus étranges, le pantalon court assorti avec des pantalons en satin, cloche, avec des volants, ou encore les t-shirts portés avec de longues boucles d'oreille en or (et souvent, tous ceux-ci trouvent des places sur la même personne » (94). Il y a également des conférences-spectacle (« J'ai vu avant-hier à la télé un spectacle absolument extraordinaire : un récital *Acting Shakespeare* soutenu par Ian MacKellen – un acteur d'une intelligence si fantastique qu'elle se transformait en charme personnel pendant seulement les 90 minutes d'émission, sans maquillage, sans décors, menant une sorte de conférence-spectacle, où il interprétait dans les deux sens – en acteur, et en critique – une série d'extraits fameux de Shakespeare, à côté de quelques fragments des compte-rendus shakespeariens datant du XVIII^{ème} siècle. C'est la chose la plus extraordinaire que j'y ai vue jusqu'à présent », 140) ; ou, autrefois, des enquêtes-spectacle. Dans la même série sont inscrites les réclames TV, les bulletins informatifs et, avec des saveurs spéciales, les bulletins-météo : « Sais-tu, Lena, en quelle mesure peut être show un bulletin météo ? L'un des spécialistes météo, vivace et agité, avec des lunettes et une mimique d'acteur habitué avec les gros plans, nous a fourni il y a quelques soirées l'information suivante (interrogatif envers nous, ceux installés dans les fauteuils) : „Vous devez vous rappeler que je vous parlais hier de la brume qui devrait s'installer pendant la nuit. (De manière confidentielle, la main à la bouche, dans la même direction) : „Elle a été retardée de 24 heures” (sourire heureux, comme pour une bonne nouvelle, qu'il nous destinait en exclusivité). Il y a ici un goût charmant pour le spectacle – étonnant pour les européens frustrés comme nous – et une vitalité séductrice et enfantine, qui prend souvent des aspects

carnavalesques » (72). Ou, autre part : « Un bulletin informatif et – permanent sujet d'étonnement pour moi – un bulletin-météo devenu *commedia dell'arte* sont autant de moments de grand spectacle, beaucoup plus intéressants que les films » (91).

D'ici jusqu'à déclarer ces spectacles plus intéressants que les livres, et abandonner la « mission » première qui avait justifié la bourse (celle de se familiariser avec les bibliothèques de spécialité, de parcourir et de photocopier les réflexions récentes sur les sujets préoccupants, qui lui était inaccessible en Roumanie), il n'y a encore qu'un seul pas. C'est le pas décisif, qui « convertit » Ioana Petrescu à la forme, à la vie en forme. Intervenu vers le milieu de la deuxième année de bourse, il amène Ioana Petrescu à comprendre que c'est cette expérience-là (esthétique) de la vie elle-même, que Los Angeles lui offre, au lieu de l'expérience intellectuelle qu'elle attendait. « Je crois vraiment que le grand profit de ces années-ci ne vient pas de ce que j'ai lu, mais justement de ce qu'avait commencé par m'énerver et qui me déroutait encore : la relativisation de mes critères, l'effort de comprendre l'esprit de ce monde nouveau, que je suivis avec une sorte de faim de mon esprit dans les faits les plus communs de la rue, dans les supermarchés, à la télé, etc. Je ne peux pas jurer que je comprends exactement de quoi il s'agit, ni au moins dans les situations où je serais la plus tentée de dire : cela, je l'ai compris. Mais je peux jurer que je m'efforce de le faire – et c'est en cela que consiste, tout de même, la « joie » de ces années-ci » (211).

Combien difficile a dû-t-elle être pour Ioana Petrescu cette circonstance de bourse qui l'a obligé d'éliminer le « soi-même » (car c'était justement ce « soi » qui faisait la substance du « régime de vie ») et se laisser emporter dans un vécu de surface, d'apparences, de « pur spectacle ». Elle est consciente qu'elle perd beaucoup par cette concession : son identité et son « naturel » introverti. Mais elle sent gagner aussi quelque chose : une mise en forme de sa vie, une « concrétisation » de soi à travers son externalisation. A quel point cet acquis lui devient précieux le montre l'enthousiasme avec lequel, vers la fin de sa deuxième année de bourse, elle se mène à « régulariser » son programme ; et l'importance qu'elle commence à accorder à la formation des habitudes. Parmi celles-ci est surtout souligné un geste qu'elle dit avoir le plus détester pendant sa vie à Cluj : la lecture des journaux. A Los Angeles, cette occupation est, par contre, acceptée et élevée au rang de règle de vie. Prise comme substitut « gymnastique » de matin, cette lecture d'un texte du quotidien, d'un texte qui présentifie la vie américaine, la rendant sur sa surface – est « pratiquée » chaque jour à une heure fixe. Elle devient « tique » : un « tique accepté ». « Je me suis fait des tiques : je m'élève deux heures (deux heures et demie) plus tôt, je me fais un café et je lis le journal. Le journal *ici* tient lieu de romans, de films, de concerts, et souvent j'ai l'impression qu'il tient aussi lieu de la vie. Peux-tu m'imaginer moi (quand tu savais quelle allergie je faisais aux journaux et aux bulletins info) dépendante de ce *rituel journalier* ? ».

Cette lecture du journal reçoit encore un autre qualificatif, qui la relie cette fois directement au monde du spectacle. Elle est dite être une forme de « maquillage ». « Je crois que c'est ma forme de maquillage, mais l'une très lâche. Au lieu de me refléter dans le miroir, j'essaie de m'oublier dans quelque chose d'autre, plus étranger et plus éloigné, mais *très bien fait* et *très palpitant*, avec un air de réalité-plus-réelle-que-toute-réalité » (260). De cette manière, le journal n'est pas seulement « tique accepté », mais également « maquillage accepté » (et on souligne encore une fois combien cette autre pratique lui était elle aussi détestable en Roumanie). C'est-à-dire acceptation d'une dissimulation de soi, d'une sortie dans le masque, d'une construction exclusivement à l'extérieur, « morceau par morceau », pour l'interface sociale. La fin de la période de deux années vécues à Los Angeles finit de telle manière par réveiller en Ioana Petrescu le *besoin* d'une mise en forme de la vie, qu'elle identifie, cette fois sans éviter l'accent politique, non pas seulement comme éducation nécessaire des corps, mais aussi comme éducation corporelle qu'on faisait aux enfants dans les familles, dans une Transylvanie qui n'avait pas encore connu le communisme, une Transylvanie de 1918, qui faisait encore partie de l'Empire dualiste Autriche-Hongrie : « Le maquillage est, au moins, un engagement précis, un art – *techné* – qui t'aide et te contraint, par la discipline même de chaque geste, à être quelque chose [...]. Je sais que *j'ai besoin*

d'une mise en forme disciplinée – quelque chose d'imposé, d'auto-imposé, quelque chose dans le genre de la discipline autrichienne, par laquelle ma grand-mère essayait de m'habituer à me „tenir ensemble” » (259).

Ligia TUDURACHI

Romanian Academy Cluj-Napoca Branch

“Sextil Pușcariu” Institute of Linguistics and Literary History

MIHAI IOVĂNEL, *Ideologiile literaturii în postcomunismul românesc* [*The Ideologies of Literature in Romanian Post-communism*], București, Muzeul Literaturii Române, 2017, 251 p.

The state of post-Communist Romanian literature remains not only problematic, but scarcely discussed by the local criticism, which is a surprising phenomenon considering that we are talking about a period of transition from a literature written under the censorship of a totalitarian regime to a so-called political liberalization committed to freedom of speech. The complex and important changes that occur in this given context demand a more careful and observant analysis. In regard to Romanian cultural field, the literary discourse becomes secondary in the nineties, as the priority shifts to the historical events after the 1989 Revolution.

Mihai Iovănel's volume puts forward not only a revise of this subject, but also a different way of mapping the Romanian post-communist literature, a global one, capable of signaling the lines of escape, the configurations and attempts of synchronization of literary works under the many post-communist ideologies. The two main subjects of his work are complementary, the author aiming to highlight the ideological paradigms of the post-Communist period and their effects on literary works, on the one hand, and to survey the literature of the period itself through a new lens, on the other. Iovănel's approach is articulated around the relationship between the ideological structures that emerged after the fall of Communism and the literature written in this context, where the variety of cultural discourse imbibing Romanian cultural space enables the development of a rather hybrid type of literature, situated at the edge of sociological discourses.

By coining a new concept, “the resistance point”, the first of the six chapters of the book presents itself as radiography of the Romanian post-Communist literature. The author proposes a selection of literary themes and of elements related to the mechanics of writing that migrate from the sociological environment towards the fictional one, given that the structures of literary creation are ideologically contaminated, thus exposing a product/superstructure kind of relationship, a relation between what is written and the dominant cultural speeches. Thus, Mihai Iovănel identifies a series of “updates” that have affected Romanian literature after 1989, alongside the freedom of expression of writers. The author discusses the new formulas of representation that challenged the literary reception, like sexuality, for instance, which, with its long absence in the Romanian literature during Communism, violently explodes as a new theme. Other changes, at a cultural and epistemological level, are also of interest in this volume. Mihai Iovănel documents, with a wide range of examples, the transformations that the language of the new literature underwent and the mutations of cultural references that penetrated the literary discourse. This exhaustive inventory shows the complexity of changes in post-Communist literature, with the new emerging ideologies.

The subsequent chapters follow a similar path, attempting to place Romanian post-Communist literature within the context of the polyvalent ideological superstructures that govern it. The author proceeds with a historical and theoretical analysis and summarizes certain cultural or political

events that show how the functions of the new mechanisms of post-communist literature are ideologically driven by the contemporary socio-political discourse, exposing the dialectical relationship between Communism-anticommunism-post-Communism that features prominently in the Romanian cultural sphere after 1989. The last two chapters of the book integrate the national ideological structures into a transnational context, focusing on how Romania can export its cultural products to the European cultural space. “Compensatory myths” and “conspiracy theories”, the author posits, are not only imaginary resources for native literature, but sellable cultural commodities for the West, enabling Romania to integrate into the European cultural circuit after the fall of the Communist regime.

Given the urgency of the matters raised and their prevalent complexity, Mihai Iovănel’s study is a necessary one at the moment. Even if the study is described by the author as a “work-in-progress”, it is of high importance for the Romanian literature, as it reconstructs and re-evaluates some essential parts of its contemporary evolution. The panorama of the post-Communist period and the comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics between literature and the ideologies that emerge after the fall of the Communist regime are some of the greater merits of this volume. Aiming to compensate for the present disparity of approaches in the existing literary historiography, Mihai Iovănel’s book is of great interest for both the Romanian literary studies and the Eastern European studies that concentrate on the reconfiguration of the cultural and literary discourses that emerged with the collapse of the totalitarian regimes.

Daiana GÂRDAN

Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca
Faculty of Letters

ADRIANA STAN, *Bastionul lingvistic. O istorie comparată a structuralismului în România* [*The Linguistic Bastion. A Comparative History of Structuralism in Romania*], Bucureşti, Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române, 2017, 356 p.

The author of *The Linguistic Bastion* (2017) makes a point of not missing any relevant reference, starting from long-forgotten articles in Romanian literary reviews and reaching the paragon theoretical standpoints made by the most remarkable European, Russian or American scholars in the 20th century. Exhaustiveness and endurance in pursuing the faithful image of a much discussed, but seldom rigorously analyzed paradigm in humanities, are the key-words to define Adriana Stan’s comparative history of structuralism in Romania. Mircea Martin’s formula for the introductory pages, “This is not a debut”, is one to be remembered, for it comprises a minimalist, concise image of the book and of the author’s mastery of critical thinking and expression. The phrase also hints to the fact that although this is Adriana Stan’s actual print debut, her first published wider study is a work on *Tudor Vianu’s Posterity. Alternatives in Post-war Romanian Criticism* (2015), which might be regarded as a preparation for the conquest of the “linguistic fortress”.

By employing in a well calibrated manner the rhetoric of modesty in order to introduce the topic – conscientiously and ironically claiming that any current discussion about structuralism cannot but seem “boring” or resemble a “paltry attempt” at reviving a closed case –, Adriana Stan manages to prove quite the contrary of this assertion-cliché. The research patiently begins with one of the most audacious attempts to tame an object as framed by the purpose of rigorosness as it is marred by ambiguity in its reception, perhaps especially in Romania. The introductory chapters

trace back the most relevant occurrences of the concept back in late 19th and early 20th century, with the intent to prepare a thorough interdisciplinary approach to structuralism (as other reviewers of Adriana Stan's book already noticed, it is the first of its kind in Romanian theoretical writing). "I have tried to point out a set of issues and solutions in literary research, the formulation of which was similar in spite of different particular circumstances triggering them" (28), she writes, pointing to the resemblances between British-American Criticism, Russian formalism, Czech and Polish Interwar linguistic research.

In passing on to the Romanian context, Adriana Stan astutely notes that a critical scenario followed in both Western and Eastern countries during the first part of the 20th century ("the polemic against determinism, the need to secure field autonomy, embracing the principles of non-realist literature", 30) becomes popular here only in the Postwar period. Stan argues that the "encounter with the three potential reformers", Mihail Dragomirescu, D. Caracostea, Tudor Vianu, was "missed" by the largest part of Romanian criticism. With intuition and subjectivism remaining the reigning principles, and later on confined to the mandatory rhetoric of the communist-controlled direction after the War, Romanian approaches to literature will endeavour to return to the doctrine of aesthetic autonomy as soon as they get a chance to do so. But however strongly positioned against method, all those interested by theory can no longer avoid the forceful impact of structuralism. Adriana Stan faithfully follows Mircea Martin's observation in this sense in order to provide the reader with the display of this peculiar hybridization of structuralist instruments and intuition-based criticism. The rejection or relative indifference towards historicism stands on common ground, shared by structuralism as well as by the impressionistic critics.

The bulk of Romanian criticism was confined to what might be dubbed "columnism". Polemic debates and the most important signs of new concepts, as well as the dawn of paradigm shifts, were all to be found in literary reviews rather than in books. This dynamic field is extremely well analyzed in Adriana Stan's book in the sense that the confrontation of the viewpoints is dramatized and very lucidly interpreted in terms of a fight for power and legitimacy. The image of the *bastion* or the "stronghold" pinpoints to the fact that during the 1960s, the connection with structuralism is the "outermost" area in Romanian criticism, facing the dominant (though already fading slowly) thought pattern in Western approaches to literature and simultaneously creating a research area seemingly impervious to realist-socialist weapons. One of its main characteristics, as explored in the book, is the confrontation of "inheritors" and "rioters", as Adriana Stan presents the main forces on stage during the 1960s, and later on in the 1970s, when the dynamics of acceptance and opposition is definitely more appeased.

The issue of the "metalanguage" produced by structuralism-imbued didactical frames could not have been missed. For a direction without as many followers as in Western countries, structuralism has provided the Romanian education system with a legacy that turned out to be difficult to displace. The quest for stylistic devices and the inventory of the layers to be found in the structure of literary text engender technically competent readers, but hardly render comprehensible any other dimensions of literature, such as its inextricable connections to extratextual reality, to psychological factors, to ethical dilemmas, and so on.

Following its reconnection to the French culture due to the relative ideological reconversion in the 1960s, Romanian criticism hosts former radical Marxist authors who decide to embrace a more liberal lexicon, as studied in the chapter entitled "The Cured Militants and the Blockage in Sociology". Authors such as Savin Bratu share pages of literary publications and topics with the newcomers, the young critics such as Sorin Alexandrescu, Virgil Nemoianu, Toma Pavel, influenced more by models such as Tudor Vianu, the Sibiu Literary Circle, or linguistics. Adriana Stan's book helps the contemporary reader understand the circumstances of this improbable and often inauthentic dialogue. However, as Adriana Stan aptly remarks, it is precisely due to this dissimulated conversation that the young generation's brilliant representatives choose to pursue their academic goals abroad, where they almost sever their ties to structuralism or they decidedly delineate its epistemological flaws (as Toma Pavel famously does in his book *The Spell of*

Language). So, the main critics who could have acted as activating agents for the promotion of structuralism in Romania are actually not interested in doing so, because they conceive of other types of career aims more related to Comparative Literature or to World Literature rather than to the restrictive patterns developed by structuralism. Adriana Stan's book emphasizes the context factors leading to this outcome and patiently analyzes each stage of the young critics' discourse, though their texts as such reveal very little of the circumstances; therefore, one of the main merits of the researcher is, here, to have succeeded in explaining the gradual rupture between the new generation of critics, especially Vianu's disciples, and the Romanian cultural milieu. In analyzing Sorin Alexandrescu's work, Stan concludes that his method in the famous monograph dedicated to William Faulkner defines the spirit of the compromise between structuralism and aesthetic judgment and that Romanian authors have to leave the country in order to actually become structuralists or to be able to transcend the paradigm subsequently. The pungent, yet of the finest quality, rhetoric in Adriana Stan's book refers to the relationship of the future exiles with the local environment in terms such as: "Sorin Alexandrescu employs too much of an erudite discourse and takes part in too few clashes with his fellow critics in order to gain access to be driving anywhere else but on a frontage road."

Idiosyncratic rejections of method based on the claims of "identification criticism" or "criticism of consciousness" are debated by the Romanian scholars for a while even after departing from their native country. The tradition of criticism as a literary genre in G. Calinescu's view left long-lasting traces which end up in defining one of the main attitudes towards structuralism.

Criticism "as a substitute for social action" (Virgil Nemoianu, in a 1977 article from *World Literature Today*, "Recent Romanian Criticism: Subjectivity as Social Response") is the formula for any direction of literary criticism during all of the decades of Romanian communism. In Romania, structuralism came to be regarded as a helpful evasion from the obligation to write in terms of actuality and praise for the "new world order", as the only possible manner to avoid discussing the context surrounding the literary texts. *The Linguistic Bastion* explains and meticulously illustrates the features of this opportunity taken by Romanian criticism to renew its language, not without some skepticism and vanity in rescuing the "sacred" dogma of intuition, identification or consciousness criticism.

One of the most successful "impressionistic" authors, the adept of a "unfaithful reading" and of G. Călinescu's intuitive, namely Nicolae Manolescu, is the protagonist of the subchapter titled "Minimal Investment and Maximal Profit", which tries to discuss in a new light the premises for Manolescu's success: adjusting structuralist notions to a fundamentally subjectivist discourse in order to achieve the stakes of being innovative as well as in touch with tradition. Manolescu's critical attitudes, as well as the positions taken by Pavel, are comparable to Roland Barthes's "infidelity", but to a rather limited extent, as the French critic envisages a "deflation" in the force of aestheticism.

"The Author Undoing the Series", the subchapter dedicated to Mihai Zamfir, as well as "Let's Find a Job for Concepts" – on Al. Călinescu's work, "aggression and transgression" as main features in Eugen Negrici's criticism (wittily described as a "*lone ranger*"), "Idealist Materialism" as a fertile oxymoronic principle in Liviu Ciocărlie's critical thinking, and "The Access Path", on Marin Mincu, complete a diligently performed inquiry into the structuralist influence on the various exploits of Romanian critics asserting themselves in the 1970s.

As Marcel Cornis-Pope was writing in his article "Critical theory and the Glasnost phenomenon: ideological reconstruction in Romanian literary and political culture" in 1994, "the dialogue with Western literary theory should be conceived as a broad intercultural exchange involving complex operations of reencoding and restructuring, rather than a crude assimilation of Western models. The East European reception of Western critical theories has seldom been a passive, one-sided affair." It is precisely this type of operation that Adriana Stan's book performs with the utmost accuracy: it unfolds stages of the "adaptation" of structuralist patterns to Romanian literary criticism, in a thorough analysis which had been felt as necessary for a long time after the

fall of the communist regime. In the absence of new, radically innovative directions in theory, today's young generation of critics chooses the honorable and challenging wager of clarifying the work of the forerunners, especially in their relation to foreign influences and to (af)iliation (another pair of notions tackled and illustrated by Adriana Stan in her study on Tudor Vianu). In order to conclude, I can only emphasize that in borrowing from the title structure of an illustrious predecessor, *Le mirage linguistique* [*The Spell of Language*], Adriana Stan's critical rendition of Romanian structuralist instances is worthy of another phrase used by and for characterizing Toma Pavel: "the fascination with rigorousness".

Roxana EICHEL
University of Bucharest
Faculty of Letters

ION SIMUȚ, *Literaturile române postbelice* [*Post-War Romanian Literatures*], Cluj-Napoca, Editura Școala Ardeleană, 2017, 475 p.

The latest book authored by the critic Ion Simuț is an investigation into the history of literature/literary history, as well as an insightful foray into an extremely sensitive issue, namely the changing rapport between *culture-politics-ethics*. In the context of Simuț's literary criticism, this book is unique, first and foremost due to its polemical tone, which is rather unusual for the type of discourse and cultural position this author has become known for over the past few decades. The deliberate composure of the numerous seminal studies written by this literary historian and critic, included in his books or published in the form of articles or reviews, seems to have been replaced now by a different, dialogical compass: the analyst takes an explicitly distant stance towards other writers and literary critics, but gets closer to the hypothetical reader, whom he presents with an entire cascade of queries, interrogations and often with surprising solutions to the crises affecting literary studies today.

In *Literaturile române postbelice*, Simuț returns to older thematic concerns. These can be found, for instance, in *Reabilitarea ficțiunii* [*The Rehabilitation of Fiction*] (2004), in *Europenitatea romanului românesc contemporan* [*The Europeaness of the Contemporary Romanian Novel*] (2008), or in *Incursiuni în literatura actuală* [*Insights into Contemporary Literature*] (1994), which "incorporates" articles published by Simuț in *România literară*, during 1993, as well as in seventeen different articles he contributed to this literary journal in May-August 2008. One of the fundamental theses of his latest volume, summing up all these previous references, is that there is not one Romanian literature but several: these Romanian literatures can be, and have been approached as such in the history of Romanian culture, in terms of certain series or in accordance with various constitutive criteria: geographical, historical, and typological. Simuț aims to map a fourth literary series, a political one. Behind all these constructions, the literary historian detects an atmosphere of conflict between different cultural regions/ eras/ forms. The political series of literatures is no exception in that regard. Even though the critical eye perceives the literary phenomenon not as a "didactic", "rigid" series of "successive literatures", but as a flexible scheme of "parallel literatures", these are "inconsistent and incongruous". Moreover, "after Călinescu, the histories of Romanian literature have tended to hide, ignore or boycott this truth". The conflicting essence of his object of study appears to have activated the commentator's polemical instinct.

What does, then, the political series of Romanian literatures comprise? It develops along four parallel lines: opportunistic, escapist, subversive and dissident. This classification is expressed in memorable terms and stands every chance of becoming “viral” in the Romanian critical discourse. Furthermore, the political history of Romanian literature (compiled by the author in *Literaturile române postbelice*) is placed within the political context of national history. The innovative lenses through which Simuț examines this context lead him to assert, with vehement arguments, that Communism never existed in Romania. In keeping with the opinions of several contemporary historians, Simuț regards Communism as “a projective ideology, an impractical utopia”. Communism never existed anywhere in the world, nor can it ever exist. And then, what was the historical reality of Romania during the second half of the twentieth century? From the literary historian’s point of view, there were several realities, not one: the dictatorship of the proletariat (or Proletkult), socialist realism and, finally, socialist democracy, identified with the Ceaușescu era – hence, with a socialist dictatorship. Thus, the socio-political practice that dominated the Romanian world for nearly half a century was Socialism, and not Communism, even though it was concealed behind a boisterous ideology based on the idea of Communism. An implicitly polemical impulse can be sensed here, too, as the author contests the validity of the frequently used phrase “Romanian literature under Communism”. Based on the demonstration above, it could not have existed as a cultural form.

Finally, what do the four “contemporary” literary series include? First, the very concept of “contemporaneity” is put into question – rightly so, because it represents the bone of contention of the cultural wars waged around the canon. The opportunity of rethinking the canon of Romanian literature, much debated in recent studies, often envisages (implicitly or explicitly) the inclusion of various “contemporary” writers in the history of literature. Without a doubt, it is a war waged, above all, for securing the future image of the literary field and, from this point of view, the fight is justified. However, if the “contemporary” period is conceived as a historical age that exceeds half a century, the notion of “contemporaneity” becomes counterproductive, preventing the completion or, in any case, the crystallization of the procedures for the establishment/stabilization of the canon. In addition to these difficulties and resistances, the *ethical* dimension must by all means be heeded in cultural historical discourse. What Simuț outlines in *Literaturile române postbelice* is, of course, a political history of Romanian literature over the past few decades, but also (especially) an ethical history, since the relations between the individual and one or another model of totalitarian society could not be assessed if such a criterion were to be ignored. On the other hand, this ethical focus is somewhat counterbalanced by the – more familiar – type of aesthetic criticism that Ion Simuț has accustomed us with. Thus, the critical focus is on literature, and not on the individuals who write it. Simuț insists on this aspect, emphasising it repeatedly and, thus, avoiding the dangers that always lurk behind the didacticist, univocal, stereotyped or monological views of ethical exhibitionism. Consequently, Simuț, real contemporaneity spans the period from the 1990s onwards, and the time has come for the preceding era to go down in history, with its own canonical forms, as they were crystallised over the past two decades and a half. *Literaturile române postbelice* seeks to provide a somewhat definitive overview of these crystallisations and to open the field for discussions on real contemporaneity, from the same vantage point, that of the canon of literary history.

Resuming the question above, what are the features of parallel literatures according to Ion Simuț? Each of them is described in ethical-political and aesthetic terms, in relation to the official regime, but also with itself. The historical image of these models is complemented by lists of authors and works, as well as, sometimes, by particular genres or species, and provide their intrinsic aesthetic substance. The literary critic’s comments outline a canon of the era, albeit a partial one, integrating a few unique options, for authors who are still undervalued at present. The perspective is panoramic. Simuț does not insist on excessive interpretive details and in-depth hermeneutical gestures. The book primarily intends to highlight the historicity of the literary landscape and its phenomena. However, he does express a preference for escapist literature, which

“forms the most comprehensive aesthetic space, and which generated the most long-lasting values of the post-war period”. Moreover, Simuț states that “an aesthetic history of post-war Romanian literature could narrow its focus down to this type of literature, built exclusively around an aesthetic principle of the literary work as a linguistic performance”. Now, besides the authors and the titles gathered under the umbrella of such a chapter of literary history, what should be discussed, perhaps, is this formulation: a “linguistic performance”. I could agree with it only to the extent that the author understands “language” as a kind of generic “literary language”, encompassing both working with language and structuring the imaginary – be it poetic, narrative or dramatic. Otherwise, I would be forced to accept that *Literaturile române postbelice* needs more *critical* assessments, in addition to the substantial historical effort the author has put into this book.

Since I was speaking of openings, the question underlying the end of Ion Simuț’s book might be the following: “what kind of literature/literatures we are facing today?”, in “extreme contemporaneity”, if we are to use a popular syntagm in the French culture. Resorting to speculative, but exciting arguments, Simuț replaces Communist dictatorship with market dictatorship, and the result is predictable: the same four categories of literature dispute their common ground in a war in which public success determines different “ethical” attitudes relating to the aesthetic, rather than the political.

Beyond all this, the pages of this volume appear to betray a certain anxiety triggered by the immensity of the literary material taken into consideration in this study and by an awareness of the impossibility of reading everything. The book aims to address such anxieties and to defuse them. It could be argued that attempts to appease similar anguishes have already been made, for a decade and a half, by Franco Moretti and his computational criticism, based on quantitative studies and on concepts such as “world literature” or distant reading. Moretti himself is very careful with regard to the disciplinary area in which he places himself or the one in which he is placed by his commentators. He insistently shows that he is a literary historian, not a comparative scholar, and that he wishes to achieve a “more rational literary history”, as he states in a text from 2003 (*Graphs, Maps, Trees. Abstract Models for Literary History*). Without a doubt, however, it is not only statistical graphs that can ease such anxieties of one’s critical consciousness. A more classical history of literature, such as *Literaturile române postbelice* by Ion Simuț, can, in turn, integrate a necessary order in a field of cultural tensions.

Călin TEUȚIȘAN

Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

Faculty of Letters

Romanian Academy Cluj-Napoca Branch

“Sextil Pușcariu” Institute of Linguistics and Literary History

VINTILĂ MIHĂILESCU, *Apologia pârliazului*
[*L’apologie de l’échalier*], Iași, Polirom, 2015, 336 p.

Le livre de Vintilă Mihăilescu semble placer l’anthropologie sous le signe d’une dimension sensorielle et de l’immédiat, étant fondé sur le geste naturel de l’écoute de la réalité et de la surveillance du monde. Ce recueil se formule au fur et à mesure de la lecture, vu son côté fragmentaire, comme un geste anthropologique, en guise de préface pour une analyse à venir. Syntagme utilisé par l’auteur dans l’introduction du premier article, qui appartient à Baudrillard, « mot d’accès » semble s’appliquer aussi à la première partie de cette étude dont il est question dans cette réflexion. Du côté de l’autorité, l’auteur se place dans la posture de l’observateur comme

gardien du monde, sans manifester en même temps un certain contrôle sur l'objet de son regard. La réalité qu'il désigne incarne sans doute le produit de ce « regard éloigné » de Lévi-Strauss qu'il évoque dans le chapitre, « Religion et démocratie », où on traite la problématique de la religion et la démocratie dans les manifestations de la société roumaine.

Il faut signaler dès le début la fondation théorique de ce recueil qui réside dans « l'optimisme critique » de l'auteur. Bien qu'il propose une vision anthropologique évidemment subjective et à la fois éloignée de l'objet du regard, l'auteur s'avère plutôt rassurant qu'inquiétant par rapport à la société qu'il surprend. Le monde présenté par le biais de ce regard qui se veut à moitié scientifique relève d'un paradigme descriptif qu'analytique. Il s'agit dans cette collection d'essais de mettre à profit une capacité intellectuelle purement révélatrice d'une pensée complète et approfondie en brouillant les frontières entre l'œil aigu du spécialiste et le regard innocent de celui qui se confronte, sans être nécessairement en péril, à une réalité en mouvement. Il ne faut pas ignorer la forme de ces textes : ils sont publiés dans une revue culturelle ou dans des actes des colloques ou il s'agit des textes des conférences soutenues par l'auteur tout au long des années. À part la vision qu'il propose sur la société roumaine envisagée sous l'aspect de ses particularités, il fournit en même temps une possibilité structurelle de l'anthropologie, une version à elle, inaccessible aux lecteurs non-spécialistes jusqu'à cet essai évidemment abouti : « L'anthropologie publique ». Qu'est-ce que cela veut dire dans ce contexte ? Il s'agit d'un côté adopter et faire usage d'un langage commun et compréhensible par deux catégories de lecteurs – l'anthropologue et le lecteur non-spécialiste – et d'un autre côté de transmettre un message « d'optimisme critique ». Où peut-on placer alors ce livre dans le champ de la réflexion anthropologique ? La réflexion anthropologique proposée par Vintilă Mihăilescu fonctionne au-dessus de la complexité scientifique, celle-ci est dissimulée pour faciliter ce chemin vers le lecteur. En tant que récit, vu l'existence de certains paramètres littéraires, la narrativité de ces textes est interprétable à plusieurs niveaux : on peut y identifier l'autorité narratologique de l'auteur qui réfléchit en valorisant son expérience sociale et aussi on reconnaît un penchant pour le fait littéraire comme produit inévitable de l'histoire.

D'ailleurs, ce livre peut être lu comme un ensemble des fragments configurés et structurés autour de la même idée : le besoin de signaler le non-dit. Cette qualité fragmentaire ne peut être alors que la preuve d'un manque de liaison entre les différents objets sur lesquels porte la réflexion. À la manière de Barthes, le discours gravite autour des figures, plus ou moins dispersées dont l'actualité diffère en fonction des intérêts anthropologiques. Les mots d'accès de la première partie prouvent leur fonction dans la deuxième partie où on surprend des thématiques actuelles et immédiates comme la nécessité d'avoir un musée du communisme, la modernité roumaine ou le statut du Musée du Paysan Roumain. Une première lecture de ce recueil est imprégnée de l'impression que l'auteur formule son discours en guise de défense (contre une certaine attitude récurrente de blâme), qu'il regarde de manière compensatoire la société par rapport au discredit général, société qu'il arrive à comprendre plus profondément à l'aide des outils qu'il ne dévoile pas. Le regard anthropologique semble pénétrer son objet / ses objets d'étude d'une expérience qui a ses origines dans la simple capacité d'*apercevoir* les choses. Néanmoins, cette capacité, aussi fluide soit-elle, vient de la maîtrise extrêmement raffinée de l'auteur de crayonner des perspectives anthropologiques et de leur attribuer ensuite des contenus qui intriguent et suscitent la curiosité des lecteurs.

L'expérience personnelle de celui qui regarde surgit comme intermédiaire de l'expérience du lecteur. Dans le chapitre, « La vie comme une madeleine », où l'auteur évoque de façon proustienne le rôle de la photographie comme arrêt du temps, il en fait une plaidoirie pour l'inutilité de tout acte qui puisse englober d'une manière ou d'autre le passé sous sa forme sensorielle. Théoriser le souvenir ne peut être un geste purement anthropologique même si l'auteur y réalise un rapport indéniable à sa discipline. « L'anthropologie publique » ne s'éloigne pas de la littérature. Alors, c'est dans les approches de l'anthropologue roumain qu'on y reconnaît cette immanente dépendance. Ce rapport personnel provoque dans le geste anthropologique l'empathie

du lecteur qui peut facilement s'identifier à cette voix narrative : « Je me demande s'il y a quelque chose d'irrégulier en moi... Je ne crois pas. J'arrive à aimer cette incapacité à moi pour la mémoire et mon appétence pour le souvenir. Certes, aucun livre de psychologie ne traite pas cette distinction, elle ne correspond à aucune géolocalisation identifiée ou identifiable au niveau du cerveau. Et pourtant, au-delà des mots que je pourrais choisir, une telle distinction existe, je le pense. J'ai l'impression que la mémoire signifie 'avoir' alors que le souvenir signifie 'être' » Le regard anthropologique de Vintilă Mihăilescu devient dans ces conditions un geste anthropologique qui dépend inévitablement d'une certaine volonté narrative de l'auteur de se pencher sur ses habitudes de vivre quotidiennement en utilisant son expérience comme objet d'étude anthropologique. Si l'anthropologie envisage l'homme dans son milieu d'existence, alors un premier objet d'étude que l'auteur propose dans ce cas s'avère être soi-même. Un sujet comme le bonheur ne peut être que littéraire au sens où l'auteur raconte ses expériences en partant de la question : « qu'est-ce que vous rend heureux ? ». Et la réponse, si elle souhaite couvrir dans un sens plus large une capacité du monde de provoquer un tel sentiment, se trouve dans une anecdote que l'auteur évoque pour décrire le bonheur. Il raconte un épisode de sa jeunesse où il trouve le bonheur dans un moment passé avec ses collègues autour des quelques verres d'eau, en regardant la ville dans leur terrasse sans prendre en considération leur précarité et la fragile situation économique de tous ceux concernés. Alors, il développe sa propre théorie sur le bonheur : « Il n'y a pas d'objets qui puissent te rendre heureux, mais il n'y a que le bonheur qui est à la recherche de ses objets. » Tout au long de ce livre on peut remarquer une note de distinction que l'auteur apporte pour nuancer ses propos sur la découverte du monde qui l'entoure. Elle provient d'un besoin de renvoyer toujours à un soi qui problématise son rapport au monde et qui met sous question la réalité sociale. On y trouve des éléments qui forment la particularité de ce livre, dans cette stratégie de faire un récit de soi pour analyser le monde et la réalité tout en conservant un but anthropologique dans le sens faible du terme.

Un autre aspect à noter dans la construction de ce recueil vise l'actualité des sujets qui préoccupent l'auteur et, pourquoi ne pas le dire, leur importance à une échelle réduite ou en tout cas minimale sur le plan scientifique. Il s'agit peut-être d'une condition d'existence de l'anthropologie publique, encouragée à trouver ainsi un chemin vers le lecteur. L'image de l'auteur demeure dans ce cas-là toujours forte. Il essaie de résoudre des conflits publics développés autour des concepts sensibles et dynamiques comme « le goût ». Il prend l'exemple du film *Aferim* auquel il intente un procès imaginaire en invoquant le trait exotique, tout en admettant une position délicate, en tant qu'anthropologue face à une tentative de commenter un film pareil : « Ce n'est pas mon affaire, bien évidemment, commenter le film de Radu Jude. Je me contente alors de dire que je l'ai bien aimé. Mais je me demande dans quelle mesure il est exotique. » On y souligne un certain équilibre de l'analyse anthropologique qui se contente, parfois, de nommer l'inédit et de le commenter toujours en conservant une mesure nécessaire quand l'objet provient d'un tel domaine comme le cinéma. Des notions qui tiennent du contenu distinctif et d'une certaine qualité cinématographique autochtone reviennent, y compris une capacité de parler directement de la société qu'on habite depuis le temps les plus anciens. L'auteur fait usage des connaissances cinématographiques très alertes pour arriver en fin de compte toujours à l'homme généralement et à soi-même particulièrement.

Si on a l'impression que l'homogénéité des thématiques manque dans cette attitude adoptée par l'auteur devant la société et ses péchés, on peut affirmer sans recul que ce n'est qu'une impression. Un point commun dans toutes ces réflexions tient d'une logique ou bien d'un fonctionnement de la société qui résulte des ses excès et des ses irrégularités. On ne peut pas nous empêcher de déceler dans l'attitude de l'auteur une expertise dont il fait usage dans ses propos. S'il faut indiquer des manières où lesquelles il partage sa vision anthropologique, on y précise en premier lieu, dans ce recueil, l'usage des techniques analytiques d'origine anthropologique. L'auteur ne les dévoile pas, tout au contraire il semble les cacher ou bien les dissimuler sous le signe d'un questionnement chronique. Mettre en question les fragilités d'une société qui en fait

preuve à tout pas avec une certaine évidence en utilisant une technicité critique, voilà le point dans lequel l'anthropologue roumain excelle et se distingue comme penseur dans ce contexte culturel. Si on a mentionné un aspect structurel de ce recueil dont les textes ont été destinés, pour la plupart, à être publiés dans la revue culturelle roumaine *Dilema Veche*, il faudrait peut-être nuancer ce propos en rappelant que, par son spécifique, la revue encourage ce type de réflexion qui fait usage des outils d'analyse différenciée empruntés à la sociologie, aux études littéraires, à la philosophie, à l'anthropologie ou bien à la psychologie. D'ailleurs, on pourrait dire que les perspectives envisagées par les auteurs s'insèrent dans le contexte plus large des études culturelles.

En fin de compte, Vintilă Mihăilescu fait émerger les valeurs de la société qu'il observe en tant que spécialiste et qui sortent de leurs formes pour devenir des archétypes, tout en encourageant une attitude innovatrice dans le développement d'un regard critique multilatéral. Cette attitude se traduit par la réalisation d'une convergence entre une discipline qui traite l'homme, ses imprévus et ses difficultés et la préoccupation pour la réussite de la communication entre la société et l'anthropologue. Si l'auteur a envisagé d'écrire un livre « d'anthropologie publique », il a totalement réussi avec ce recueil qui nous montre qu'il est possible de mettre à profit une approche anthropologique ample et sophistiquée pour aboutir à une connaissance détaillée de la réalité. Sa méthode s'appuie sur l'écoute de tous les échos de la société roumaine immédiate auxquels l'auteur répond avec promptitude et fascination.

Despina JDERU
University of Bucharest
Faculty of Letters