

Romanian Book Review

ISSUED MONTHLY • No. 5 • JUNE 2013 • DISTRIBUTED FOR FREE

Editorial



by
ANDREI
MARGA

REORIENTATIONS IN EUROPE

For several years now, there are perceptible changes in our world. In the late eighties, liberal democracy continued the expansion started after World War II, at least in Europe. Meanwhile, national states have weakened, under the pressure to liberalize trade and the fight for recognition of minority (ethnic, political, sexual, etc.) movements. Globalization of the economy, communications, security, knowledge has become a reality.

The financial crisis that broke out in 2008 surprised the world organized on market principles as economic regulator, and threatens to develop into an economic crisis with extended repercussions still hard to detect. U.S. last two elections favored the advocates of "change", and the policy reorientation of the first world power does not remain without consequences for all mankind. On the stage of the producers of the world, China and Germany are now the first exporters. Russia lies among the powers that cannot be ignored in a serious political approach. (...)

What happens, now? Facts cannot be captured only by impressions, perceptions and occasional random experiences, even though many intellectuals are lured by them, producing the barren chatter around us. *Systematic thinking is always indispensable to those who want to actually understand what is going on.* Not long ago, the famous National Intelligence Council, which, in the U.S., periodically offers interpretations of the global trends, published *Global Report 2015* (2008). The report is disturbing to a greater extent: this report foreshadows the change of the world.

Several phrases summarizing the analysis in this report converge towards the image of a change of the world we used to know in the last two decades. In this move, the shift of the relative wealth and economic power from West to East, and the growth of new actors, especially China and India, are crucial. U.S. will remain "the single most important actor", but it will look for cooperations. (...) The political agenda is becoming less „local”, as the international interconnections and dependencies have their say. *A world of "discontinuities, shocks, and surprises" opens its doors.* Consequently, "any single result is preordered: the Western model of economic liberalism, democracy and secularism, for example, which many have taken as inevitable, may be challenged by other models".

For the first time since the eighteenth century, China and India will be "the biggest contributors to global growth". With a foreign exchange reserve of more than two trillion dollars, China is already a financial power of the highest ranking. Russia and China after South Korea and Singapore, seem to embrace the path of market economy with the state as the main actor, which, considering the importance of the two countries, will prove to be appealing, especially against the background of the present financial crisis. (...)

The implications are vast, and also for Europe at large. One implication at least has a special weight: communities will solve their problems if they have leaders of quality. The importance of competence, insight and culture increases tremendously in the present change in the world. People of vision regain their place, since they are not only needed, but also indispensable for communities to be successful.

Against this background, the cultural diplomacy has to find out its strategies and to conceive its initiatives.

(From the opening speech at the Forum: *The Levant, the Cradle of Cultural Diplomacy*, Bucharest, May 23-25, 2013)

Three Days With Romanian Books in Prague



THE INTERNATIONAL BOOK SALON IN TURIN



ON PAGES 6-7

In this issue:

BOOKS AUTHORED BY:

- Cristian Ardelean ● Alexandra Ares ● Carmen Banu ● Eugen Barbu ● Lavinia Băluțescu ● Adina Berciu-Drăghicescu ● Cristian Ciocan ● Dan Coman ● Liliana Corobca ● Ion Cristodulo ● Valeriu Gherghel ● Adrian Guță ● Marilena Ilieșiu ● Mihaela Marin ● Vintilă Mihăilescu ● Cosmin Năsui ● Adrian Popescu ● George Remete ● Tatiana Ristea ● Elisabeta Savu ● Vasile Scârnci ● Eugen Simion ● Grete Tartler ● Silvia-Adriana Tomescu ● Mihaela Ursa ● Adrian Vasilescu

In the next issue: ROMANIAN WRITERS' UNION PRIZES



BOOKFEST 2013 – BOOKS AND BELLE ARTE

The Romanian Cultural Institute was present at the Bookfest International Book Salon held May 29-June 2 at the Romexpo Exhibition Complex in Bucharest with a stall making available to readers the books published by the RCI Publishing House, the *Lettre Internationale* magazine, and other RCI publications, as well as information about the programs carried out by the Institute.

On that occasion, two launchings were held. On May 29 at the RCI stall, they launched the album entitled *Corneliu Michăilescu. Journey Through the Daily Impossible* attended by Mrs. Ruxandra Dreptu, an art historian and critic, the author of this monographic work, and Mr. Adrian Silvan Ionescu, an art historian and critic, director of the G. Oprescu Art History Institute. A plastic artist and writer, Corneliu Michăilescu (1898-1965) was a major representative of the Romanian avant-garde. "He spent his youth like a virtual rentier, in Florence and Paris, he was a regular at the Jockey Club in Bucharest, and later he withdrew to the countryside, where he ended up unassuming, under communism, forgotten by the world. He painted, he wrote, he was a creator" (Ruxandra Dreptu).



The latter launching was the album entitled *Bessarabian Carpets* (a bilingual Romanian-English edition) by Varvara Buzilă; the launching was attended by Varvara Buzilă and Eugen Băzgu of the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History in the Republic of Moldova and by Georgeta Roșu of the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant in Bucharest. In a well-documented study, the author presents a major segment of traditional culture in the Republic of Moldova — Bessarabian carpets selected out of the patrimony of the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History in Chișinău.



"A ROMANIAN SOLZHENITSYN"

The series of debates entitled Characters — Iconic Biographies of Political Detention in Romania continued with a meeting dedicated to Ion Ioanid, who wrote a book entitled *Our Daily Prison*.

The event was opened by showing the documentary *A Romanian Solzhenitsyn: Ion Ioanid* of the documentary series *Anguish Memorial*. Then followed a discussion moderated by Lucia Hossu Longin, with Professor Dr. Manuela Cernat, a movie critic, editor Georgeta

Dimisianu, and former political prisoner Ion Radu participating. Actor Armand Calotă read excerpts out of *Our Daily Prison* published in 1991 by Albatros Publishing House and later re-published by Humanitas Publishing House. The book is a monumental fresco of the lives of prisoners in communist prisons, comparable in many ways to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's writings.

The work has been noticed both by literary criticism and by those interested in prison memoirs as historical and psychological documents. In this work, Ion Ioanid manages, among other things, to describe a huge gallery of human characters. It seems that this was his main preoccupation, because, significantly, both at the beginning and on the last pages of Volume 5, he comments on "character" and "characters."

His heartrending work *Our Daily Prison* is an impressive document, written by a flawless personality of the Romanian political detention.

EUROPEAN LITERATURE NIGHT IN BUCHAREST

The European Literature Night came back to Bucharest on Wednesday May 29 — the first day of the Bookfest International Book Salon 2013 — with a new itinerary. Thirteen partners — cultural institutes and embassies — invited literature buffs to 13 atypical spaces, where the public had the opportunity to meet classic and contemporary European writers. The readings were held in parallel every thirty minutes between 7:30 PM and 10:30 PM in selected places (the area framed by Carol I Boulevard, I.C. Brătianu Boulevard, Corneliu Coposu Boulevard, and Traian Street): Diane 4, The Living Room Café, ZOOM Out Lounge, AristoCats Bistro, Alchemia Art Gallery & Lounge, The General Association of Sport Hunters and Fishermen in Romania, The Bucharest Commodity Exchange, Lente & Coffee, Saga Film, The MOL Corneliu Coposu Gas Station, La Scena, GreenTea, and Blind Restaurant.

Actors Ioana Abur, Florin Busuioc, Ilinca Goia, Gabriela Ioniță, Nicoleta Lefter, Axel Moustache, Marian Râlea, Mihai Smarandache, Mihaela Teleoacă, Adrian Titienu, rapper Norzeatic, journalist Cătălin Ștefănescu, and writer Mircea Dinescu gave their voices to works by great contemporary writers such as Jonathan Coe, Péter Esterházy, Paweł Huelle, Daniel Glattauer, Thierry Debroux, Jérôme Ferrari, Florina Ilis, Gonçalo M. Tavares, Elif Shafak, and by classics such as Hrabal, Hašek, Kafka, Joyce, Buzzati, Muñoz Molina. Apart from readings of the best literature translations into Romanian, the organizers also prepared contests offering prizes and other surprises.

Playwrights' Club at the RCI

In collaboration with the drama section of the Association of Bucharest Writers and with the Romanian Writers' Union, the Romanian Cultural Institute held a new meeting of the **Playwright's Club**. As a reading-show, they performed the play entitled *The Cherry Cannon* by Pașcu Balaci, directed by Mihai Lunganu and read by actors Constantin Cojocaru, Violeta Berbiuc, Alexandru Georgescu, Mihai Dinval, Monica Ghiuță, and Florin Anton. This reading-show was produced in cooperation with the National Radio Theater as part of the THALIAFEST show.

Romanian Traditional Attire in New York

On May 17, the Romanian Cultural Institute in New York inaugurated a series of events under a general title, *LA BLOUSE ROUMAINE*, seeking to promote the Romanian cultural identity in North America, which will include collaborations with the Dimitrie Gusti Museum of the Village, the Museum of the Romanian Peasant, and other ethnographic museums in Romania, by organizing exhibitions and symposiums dedicated to the relationship between Romanian traditional arts, avant-garde currents, and artistic creations.

The first event in this series was marked by the opening of an exhibition of Romanian folklore attire out of the collection owned by engineer Cristian Pascu, hosted by the ICRNY Gallery. The exhibition is accompanied by a visual material positioning the Romanian folk attire within the larger sphere of national and international culture. A significant



counterweight, still in digital format, is a series of portraits of women wearing the "Romanian ie" (blouse) by French painter *Henri Matisse*, which portraits he painted mostly owing to his friendship with Romanian painter *Theodor Pallady*. In fact, the event borrowed its title from one of the best-known works in that series.

Lettre Internationale Reaches Issue No. 85

The 85th issue of *Lettre Internationale*, put out by the Romanian Cultural Institute, has been published. As exciting as it is varied, *Lettre Internationale* proposes to its readers texts signed by prestigious writers, such as: **Anne Applebaum, George Banu, Tudor Banuş, Sergio Benvenuto, Peter Brook, Stéphane Hessel, Jan Koneffke, Ian McEwan, Antonio Tabucchi, Ion Vianu, and others.**



Youngest Ever Member of the Mallarmé Academy

Aged only 31, Romanian-born poet and translator Linda Maria Baros was chosen to become a full member of the Mallarmé Academy in France. She has held this seat as one of the "immortals" since May 22, 2013.

Born in 1981, Ph.D. in comparative literature from Sorbonne University and the Bucharest University, and senior University lecturer in France, Linda Maria Baros has published five poetry books. In 2007, she won the prestigious Prix Apollinaire, the most important poetry award in the French and French-speaking world.

Her poems have been translated and published in 25 countries. She has published over 30 translations, of which 17 books in French. Currently, she is a member elected for life of the jury that awards the Prix Apollinaire and secretary general of the Collège de Littérature Comparée in Paris.

Linda Maria Baros is a member of the Romanian Writers' Union through the Association of Bucharest Writers and she has completed many translation projects supported by the Romanian Cultural Institute. She was one of the moderators of the events held at Romania's stall organized by the RCI at Salon du Livre, Paris, 2013.

These are some of the French writers who were members of the Mallarmé Academy: Paul Valéry, Jean Cocteau, Alain Bosquet, Valéry Larbaud, Maurice Maeterlinck, and Guillevic. Equally, these are some of the big names of world literature who were corresponding members: Octavio Paz, Eugenio Montale, Yannis Ritsos, Lawrence Durrell, Artur Lundkvist, and today Juan Gelman and Seamus Heaney.

Linda Maria Baros is the youngest ever member received by the Mallarmé Academy.

Romanian Book Review

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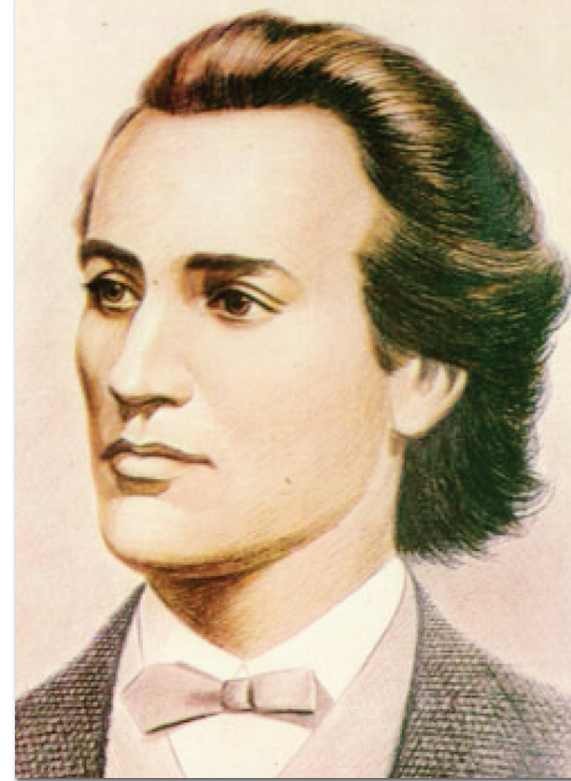
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The review uses information and comment fragments courtesy of and published by the periodicals of the *Romanian Writers' Union* as well as information taken from the website www.agentiadecarte.ro and press releases of the *Romanian Cultural Institute*.



MIHAI EMINESCU

by Gelu NEGREA



Like Victor Hugo in France, Aleksandr Pushkin in Russia or Petöfi Sandor in Hungary, Mihai Eminescu is the national poet of Romania, the tutelary genius of our literature of all times. In general, his name is accompanied by some phrases meant to emphasize his privileged place within Romanian spirituality; but the insistent repetition of these phrases turned them into clichés: “an integral expression of the Romanian soul”, “the matchless poet”, “the Evening Star of the Romanian Poetry”, “the whole man of Romanian culture”, “the last great European romantic” etc.

He is considered the founder of the Romanian literary language (“Eminescu’s fundamental reform operated especially in the domain of the language”, states the critic Mihai Zamfir); his work – essentially romantic, according to his own poetic confession – marks the transition of national literature to European modernity.

Mihai Eminescu’s date of birth and date of death are fundamental dates in the yearly cultural calendar, and the face of the poet is to be found on the effigy of the banknote with the highest nominal value currently used in Romania. The exegesis dedicated to his life and work is impressive; the high number of books and articles written about him led to the development of a special discipline in our literary criticism and history: Eminescology.

A POLITICAL ASSASSINATION?

These days – on the 15th of June, more precisely – we will commemorate 124 years since Mihai Eminescu passed away. There is no absolute consensus on the date and on the place of his birth, but the most probable and, anyway, the almost unanimously accepted are: the 15th of January, Botoşani (a town situated in Moldova). He was the seventh of the eleven children of the tither Gheorghe Eminovici; he started school in the town of Cernăuţi (nowadays in Ukraine) and continued it as an audient (“extraordinary auditor”) at the University of Vienna and Berlin, where he studied philosophy and law, but also other subjects such as: history, economy, legal medicine, Egyptology, Asian religious doctrines, linguistics etc. His philosophical horizon was broad, from Heraclitus and Platon to Schopenhauer, Fichte, Schelling, Kant (for a while he worked at the

of a tormented and unhappy life, consumed feverishly in the solitude of creation make Eminescu the emblem of the romantic genius who had become popular at the time thanks to Schopenhauer. Subsequently, the myth consolidated gradually as the revelation of a work of overwhelming richness became more and more extensive.

Mihai Eminescu did not write any volume *manu propria*, the only book published while he was still alive, *Poesii* (1883), was edited by the critic Titu Maiorescu and it consisted in texts published in magazines (most of them in “Convorbiri literare”). It would be the only one for a long time, but it would be published eleven times by 1913. Only fifty-five years later was there the first attempt at exhaustively capitalizing on Eminescu’s creation (G. Călinescu, 1938), although, meanwhile, four other editions had appeared; the latter were more or less different from the one put together by Maiorescu:

THE LITERARY WORK

The poet made his literary debut when he was sixteen, in the magazine “Familia” coordinated by Iosif Vulcan (who changed the poet’s name from Eminovici into Eminescu); he started his major work in 1870 and he had to bring it to an end in 1883, when the merciless illness invaded his body. The amount of work is fabulous, given the fact that he wrote only for thirteen years.

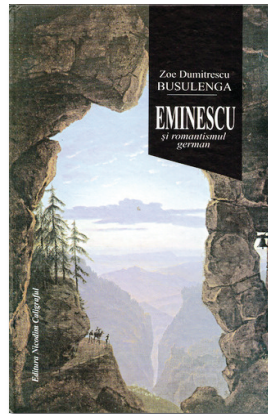
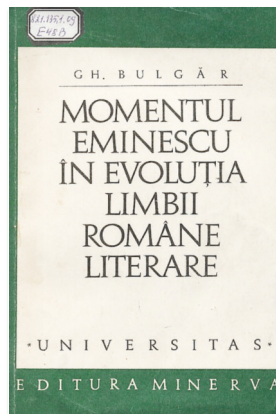
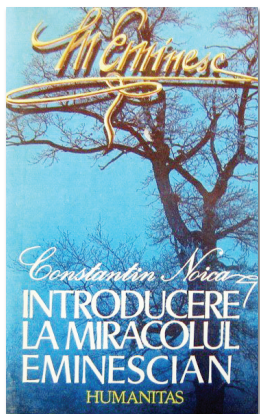
For a long time, the exegesis of the work focused mainly on the poems published while the author was still alive; out of these, some were considered to be masterpieces: *The Evening Star*, the *5 Letters*, *Ode. In Ancient Meter, I Have Yet One Desire, Călin*, *Fairy Tale Pages, Egypt, Gloss*, and others dominated by romantic motives (the genius, the titan, the night, the ghostly apparition, the solitude, inadaptability, the ruins, the unhappy love etc).

Current literary criticism has a fundamental duty: to take Eminescu down from the mortifying pedestal where he was placed by the idolatry and the lack of critical spirit of the numberless interpreters frightened by the greatness of his work; to give him back to the living circuit of the national culture and, equally, to themselves, as an active and personalized landmark of contemporary literature. Mihai Eminescu needs to be taken out of his own myth, to be liberated from the cultural image created in an encomiastic and subaltern exegetic time and given back to the present as a great Writer. No more, and no less than that.

BRIDGE ACROSS TIME

From a bibliography whose richness is overwhelming, but fatally unequal, I will mention some titles published in various periods:

Amita Bhowe – *Eminescu and India*, Ioana Bot – *Eminescu Explained to My Brother*, Gheorghe Bulgăr – *The Moment Eminescu in the Evolution of the Literary Romanian Language and From the Word to the Metaphor in the Variants of Eminescu’s Poetry*, Constantin I. Calotă – *Mihail Eminescu’s Poetry and the Psychology of Romanticism* (with a preface by C. Rădulescu-Motru), *Magical Idealism from Novalis and Eminescu*, D. Caracostea – *Eminescu’s Art of the Word and Eminescu’s Creativity*, G. Călinescu – *Mihai Eminescu’s Life and Mihai Eminescu’s Work* (four volumes), Matei Călinescu – *The Titan and The Genius in Eminescu’s Poetry*, Rosa del Conte – *Mihai Eminescu o dell Assoluto*, Cristian Crăciun – *Eminescu’s Uchrony*, Petru Creţia – *The Testament of an Eminescologist*, Ion Creţu – *Mihail Eminescu (documentary biography)*, Caius Dobrescu – *Mihai Eminescu. The Imaginary of the Private Place. The Imaginary of the Public Space*, Gheorghe Doca – *Eminescu. A Dialogical Perspective*, Ion Dumitrescu – *The Metaphor of the Sea in Eminescu’s Poetry*, Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga – *Eminescu, Culture, and Creation and Eminescu and German Romanticism*, George Gană – *Eminescu’s Melancholy*, Nicolae Georgescu – *Eminescu and his Editors*, Iliana Gregori – *Do We Know Who Eminescu Was? Facts, Enigmas, Hypotheses*, Alain Guillerme – *La Gènesis intérieure des poésies d’Eminescu (The Inner Genesis of Eminescu’s Poetry)*, Iurii Kojevnikov – *Mihai Eminescu and the Problem of Romanticism in Romanian Literature*, Eugen Lovinescu – *Eminesciana*, Dan C. Mihăilescu – *Perspectives on Eminescu*, George Munteanu – *Hyperion I. Eminescu’s Life, Eminescu and Eminescianism. Fundamental Structures and Eminescu and the Antinomies of Posterity*, Dumitru Murăraşu – *Mihai Eminescu, His Life and Work*, Ion Negoitescu – *Eminescu’s Poetry*, Constantin Noica – *Introduction to Eminescu’s Miracle*, Edgar Papu – *Eminescu’s Poetry*, Ioana Em. Petrescu – *Eminescu. Cosmological Models and Poetic Vision*, Ion Roşu – *Legend and Truth in M. Eminescu’s Biography*, Ioan Stanomir – *Eminescu: Tradition as Political Prophecy*, Gh. Tohăneanu – *The Language and the Style of Eminescu’s Poetry*, Tudor Vianu – *Eminescu’s Poetry*, Tudor Vianu (coordinator) – *The Dictionary of Eminescu’s Poetic Language*, etc.



translation of *The Critique of Pure Reasoning*, Hegel. He was familiar with the Indian Vedas and with Confucius’ *Analects*, with German romantic poetry and, in the spirit of the age, he was also interested in folklore.

In Vienna he met Veronica Micle, who was also a poet; they lived an intense and dramatic love story.

He came back to Romania without the PhD that would have provided a launch pad for a university career; he held some modest positions (a librarian in Iași, a school inspector in two counties of Moldova), and then he started to work as a journalist in Bucharest where, for seven years, he was the editor and the editor-in-chief for the conservative newspaper “Timpul”.

When he turned thirty-three years old, he started to show the first signs of the mental illness that was to torment the last six years of his life. He died on the 15th of June 1889 in a lunatic asylum and he was buried in Bucharest, at Bellu graveyard. There are a number of sensationalists who fantasize about a possible political assassination in which some pre-eminent personalities of the Romanian society were presumably involved, King Carol I included.

THE MYTH OF EMINESCU

The critic G. Călinescu was right to state that: “His life overlaps his work. Eminescu has no other biography.” This seems to be a metaphor, but it is only a paradoxical truth. The fact that Eminescu was put up on a pedestal as a national absolute genius is – in a first instance, at least – the result of a sentimental and impressionistic consensus; the critical valorization of his work comes on the second place. His tragic destiny, his madness and early death, before 40, at the end

Ioan Scurtu (in 1904, probably), G. Bogdan-Duică (1924), C. Botez (1933), Garabet Ibrăileanu (1936).

Nevertheless, the genuine birth of Eminescology must be considered the moment Călinescu from the second half of the fourth decade of the last century. The research on the 14.000 pages of the notebooks written by Mihai Eminescu held in custody by the Romanian Academy configured a new architecture of a monumental creation in which, apart from poetry, prose, fragments of theatre projects, and essays found their due place. In addition, G. Călinescu elaborated two voluminous monographs dedicated to the life and work of the great classic; these volumes have remained essential landmarks in Eminescu’s exegesis. The reconstruction of the integral corpus of his cultural heritage has been continuously preoccupying Romanian literary historians and philologists. Thus, mention must be made of the remarkable contributions brought by D. Panaitescu-Perpessiciu (a three-volume edition published between 1939 and 1944, followed by a second one, an academic one, started in 1952 and finished in 1999 with the 17th volume), Dimitrie Vatamanic (the coordinator of an integral edition of Eminescu’s work in eleven volumes), Petru Creţia or Nicolae Georgescu; the latter had the ambition to elaborate a *ne varietur* edition of the author’s lyrical creation.

Thanks to the endeavor of the critic Eugen Simion, starting with the year 2005, the Romanian Academy has been publishing a facsimile edition of the 14.000 pages of the poet’s manuscripts, which provides specialists with an exceptional instrument of research on Mihai Eminescu’s entire creation, promising other possible revelations in a domain which has not said its last word.

CRISTIAN ARDELEAN

The Agency
Cartea Românească
Publishing House,
Bucharest, 2013

Under the Sign of Chance

In the center of a small town, a young French teacher tries to supplement his income and to get rid of boredom by gambling. The betting agency becomes axis mundi, house and shelter for a wide range of characters, linked by an improbable solidarity: a robust and kind guy, a female taxi driver who requires to be treated in a politically correct manner, or an old man whose last purpose in life is the fight with the chaos.

As he is lucky to discover some eccentric tips, the young teacher goes off the deep end in order to raise the money he needs for a carefree life. Predictably enough, the exciting life of gambling puts forth passion and adrenaline, but not stability.

A short novel about chance and about how the human being strives to render every event meaningful. It was awarded the Debut Prize by Cartea Românească Publishing House, the edition of 2013.

"Intelligence and adrenaline. A captivating subject. A ritualic rhythm. A duel with destiny. An eternal present. A reactive rhetoric. An alchemy of wisdom. Profound and aphoristical. Alert and exciting. A won bet: Cristian Ardelean." (*François Breda*)

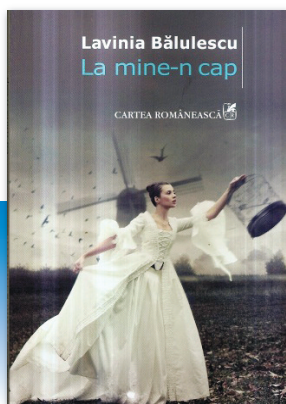
CRISTIAN ARDELEAN (born in 1989) graduated from the Faculty of Law, Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. At present, he is a probationer lawyer within the Bar of Cluj. He publishes reviews in the online magazine *artactmagazine.ro*.

Before and After the End of the World

April's life changes after she discovers that on the ceiling of her apartment there is another woman. From that moment on, the girl – both a child and a woman – is never alone again, and time, space, and memory become impossible to control. The end of the world takes place, men disappear and reappear with other faces, reality becomes double. It remains to be seen whether the (almost) magical events that occur are real or they are just in the minds of the protagonists, whose lives overlap, and at the same time, tend to escape a self-imposed captivity.

"A couple of years ago, one night, I dreamt that the end of the world was here. In the morning I woke up and I wrote a whole chapter. In fact, I started to write the book for real when I realized I was being my own prisoner. Back then, I was living in Timișoara. Meanwhile, I moved to Bucharest, with the obvious intention of getting rid of myself. I failed to do that." (*Lavinia Bălulescu*)

LAVINIA BĂLULESCU (born in 1985) graduated from the Department of Journalism-English of the Faculty of Political Sciences, Philosophy and the Sciences of Communication of the West University of Timișoara; at present she is a journalist. She made her literary debut with the poetry volume **PURPLE** in 2004. In 2007, she won the Manuscript Contest of the Romanian Writers' Union and thus she published the second poetry volume, *Lavinucea*. She is present in collective volumes, such as: *I Have Yet One Doors, My First Porn, Santa Claus & Co.* In 2005 she was awarded the Debut Prize by the Romanian Writers' Union, the subsidiary of Timișoara.

**LAVINIA BĂLULESCU**

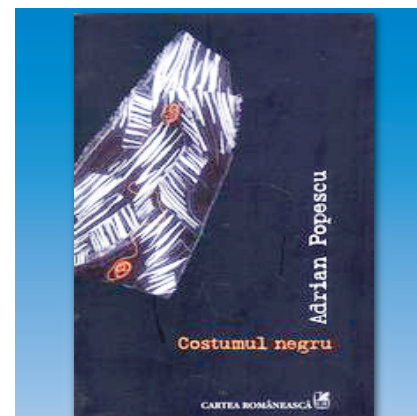
In My Head
Cartea Românească Publishing
House, Bucharest, 2013

**A Suave and Ardent Poet**

The new poetry volume written by Adrian Popescu brings a change of style and language which is surprising for a consecrated author considered by the critics to be rather neo-modernist. Several ample poems, structured by an epical thread, scenes from the poet life, are transposed in a tender-ironical recall, in which the old layer of fabulous memories meets the well-tempered skepticism, a kind of lucidity which does not turn into cynicism, a de-solemnization which renders the poetry authentic.

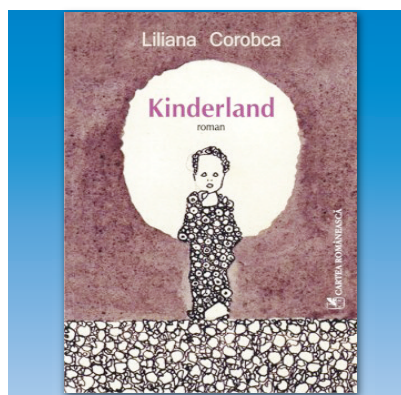
"Adrian Popescu is a remarkable poet, with an extremely fine language, a delicate, suave, and ardent artist, especially in the highly spiritual poems, which are not at all fleshless, in spite of the consuming fire of the religious imagination." (*Nicolae Manolescu*)

ADRIAN POPESCU (born in 1947) belongs to the first generation of the writers who published in the magazine "Echinox". Editor-in-chief of the magazine *Steaua*, where he made his literary debut in 1964. His books were translated into German, French, Serbian, and Hungarian. Selective bibliography: *Umbria* (The Debut Prize awarded by the Writers' Union), *The Doctors' Yard* (The Poetry Prize awarded by the Writers' Union), *The Suburbia of the Sky, A Wild Mercy, The Continuous Journey* (The Prize "Mihai Eminescu" of the Romanian Academy), *The Cats of Torcello* (The Poetry Prize awarded by the Writers' Union, the prize of the magazine *Poesis*, the Prize of the National Book Fair, Cluj, the Prize of the magazine

**ADRIAN POPESCU**

The Black Suit
Cartea Românească
Publishing House, Bucharest, 2013

Ateneu, the Prize of the magazine *Familia*, *Ageless, The Morning in the Roman Forum, Religious Poems, Out to Sea, The Nest.*

**LILIANA COROBCA**

Kinderland
Cartea Românească Publishing House,
Bucharest, 2013

Cristina, who is just a child, is obliged to become the responsible "mother" of her younger brothers when her parents leave to work abroad. The universe of a contemporary village in Moldova, mostly populated by old children, is seen from the perspective of this twelve-year old girl.

In a world in full crisis and led astray, children learn to fight and survive while waiting for a dream to

Waiting for the Parents

become true: their parents' return. But the latter do not come back, not even when invoked by means of magical rituals. The abandoned children take comfort in the vague memories of a normal family life. Cristina speaks about the country of mature children, about cruelty and tenderness, about pain and caresses, about despair and hope.

"I would not have written the book, if one summer, I hadn't met a child who impressed me. A frightened little boy, who was barely two or three years old, came with his father (...) at our house. I tried to talk to him, I gave him toys, but he remained silent and sullen, observing his parent attentively. I subsequently found out that the latter forgot him wherever he went. He barely knew his mother, his father came to the village whenever he found something to work and he was raised by an aunt or some step brother. He was the wildest and unhappiest child I had ever seen. Although he is not the protagonist of book, he was the trigger of the novel, whose initial title was *The*

Native Country and which was an epistolary one, because the little girl wrote to her mother about how she handled her brothers and the household. I gave up the letters and the initial title, and I let the stories just flow, and I let the children cope with their problems, while waiting for their parents." (*Liliana Corobca*)

LILIANA COROBCA (born in 1975) graduated from the Faculty of Letters of the State University in Moldova. She holds a PhD from the University of Bucharest with the thesis *The Character in the Interwar Romanian Novel*. She made her literary debut with the novel *Negrissimo* (the prize "Prometheus" for debut awarded by the magazine *România Literară*, the Debut Prize awarded by the Writers' Union of the Republic of Moldova). She edited the exile correspondence of Al. Busuioceanu, *An Epistolary Novel of the Romanian Exile, Romanian Exile Poetry, The General Dictionary of Romanian Literature* (co-author).

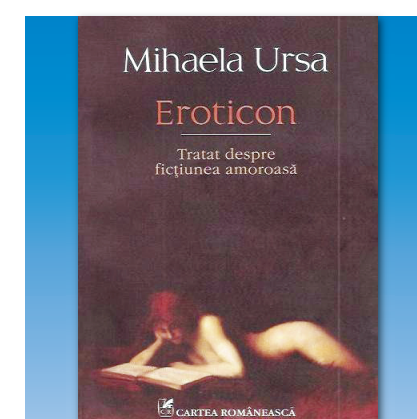
The Seduction Power of Erotic Literature

Last year, Mihaela Ursa published *Eroticon*, a book of studies. A treatise on amorous fiction, a highly-refined hermeneutical approach to love literature belonging to authors of very different epochs (Choderlos de Laclos, Chrétien de Troyes, Ovid, Nabokov, Patrick Süskind, and others). As the author confesses, this book is based on the lectures about erotic literature she gives at the Faculty of Letters in Cluj as part of comparative literature studies, plus her deeply personal love history.

Literary critic Adina Dinițoiu remarks in *Observator cultural*: "The structure made up of two large parts..., guided by the application of two work concepts proposed by the author — the *eroticon*, namely erotology —, this book conducts a variety of sagacious and passionate analyses, as fluid when it comes to reading them as they are solidly founded on bibliographical references and conceptual distinctions, proposing a corpus of texts out of world literature which, as Mihaela Ursa puts it, form some sort of a personal

library. Having the scope and competence of a comparative literature treatise, Mihaela Ursa's *Eroticon* is, at the same time, a beautiful and delightful book, written for pleasure, therefore opening up to a larger public, not just to specialists."

MIHAELA URSA (b. 1971 in Sângerz-Băi, Bistrița-Năsăud County) is a literary theoretician and critic. She graduated from the Faculty of Letters in Cluj, where she is now a lecturer holding a Ph.D. and the director of the Comparative Literature Department. She has written the following books: *The 1980s and the Promises of Post-Modernism* (debut award from the Romanian Writers' Union), *Gheorghe Crăciun. Monograph, Writertopia or the Fictionalization of the Auctorial Subject in the Theoretical Discourse* (awards from the Association for General and Comparative Literature, the Association of Cluj Writers, and the Babeş Bolyai University). She coordinated the book entitled *Divan of the Woman*

**MIHAELA URSA**

Eroticon. A Treatise
on Amorous Fiction
Cartea Românească Publishing
House, Bucharest, 2012

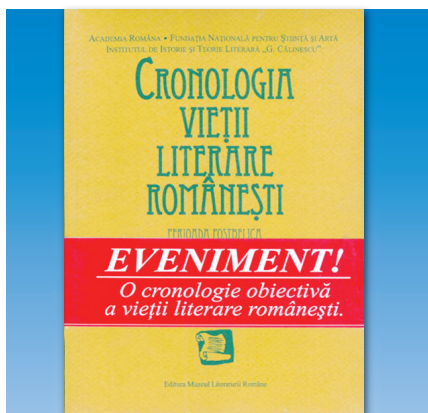
Writer. She is a member of the Romanian Writers' Union and of the Romanian Association for General and Comparative Literature.



A Reconstruction of Literary Communism

The ample work *The Chronology of Romanian Literary Life (1944-1964)*, coordinated by Eugen Simion and published under the aegis of the Romanian Academy and of the National Foundation for Science and Art was brought to an end. Carried out within the Institute of History and Literary Theory “G. Călinescu” (Bucharest), the project consists in ten volumes, and the researchers involved in the process of material documentation and publication are: Cristina Balinte, Nicolae Bârna, Lucian Chișu, Petruș Costea, Alin Crihană, Cristina Deutsch, Alexandru Farcaș, Andrei Grigor, Nicoleta Ifrim, Mihai Iovănel, Simona Marin, Andrei Milca, Oana Safta, Oana Soare and Andrei Terian. The last three volumes deal with the period 1959-1964.

Synthesis is the most credible, redoubtable, and thorough instrument for understanding the influence of communism on Romanian literature. The work focuses on identifying the campaigns and polemics related to imposing and abandoning socialist realism: “I proposed this topic for two reasons. The first reason is a pedagogical one: to determine the youth who did not live during the communist regime (or lived it only during their childhood or teen years) to find out more about the literary life of this period. And how could they get to know it if not by reading the publications of the age and, whenever possible, by researching on public archives?... The second reason (the main reason!) was to reconstruct through a common activity (read: through an attentive, thorough, and extremely objective research!) the events, which, in their often confusing and contradictory succession, marked the bleakest age in the history of Romanian literature and, in general, in modern Romanian history. For now, we have proposed April 1964



EUGEN SIMION (coord.)

The Chronology of Romanian Literary Life (1944-1964)
Muzeul Literaturii Române
Publishing House, Bucharest

as a reference point, but we certainly won't stop here.” (*Eugen Simion* in the foreword).

The most important opinions in the press of that period (“Scânteia”, “România liberă”, “Contemporanul”, „Flacăra”, “Tânărul leninist/ muncitor”, “Lupta de clasă”, “Almanahul literar”, “Gazeta/România literară”, “Carnetul agitatorului”) are put down, summarized, and exemplified by means of quotes. The results show that throughout two decades, the political activity influenced the entire cultural life. The landmarks of the research are the decision of King Michael I to give up the alliance with Hitler's Germany and to join the allies (the USA, the USSR, and England) on the 23rd of August 1944, and the so-called Declaration of Independence of the Romanian Workers' Party that became independent from Moscow in April 1964.

For the interval researched on in volumes VIII-X the following events are to be mentioned: the discard of the Marxist-Leninist dogmatism; the gradual removal of the obligatory propaganda topics from written texts; the discard of ideological, tendentious comments and the return to the expressivity of interwar masters (E. Lovinescu and G. Călinescu); the new generation of critics (Matei Călinescu, Lucian Raicu, Eugen Simion, Gabriel Dimisianu, Valeriu Cristea, Nicolae Manolescu), who will focus on freeing the literary discourse from the pressure of social clichés.

EUGEN SIMION (born in 1933) has been the director of the “G. Călinescu” Institute of Literary History and Theory since 2006 and a professor of the Faculty of Letters (the University of Bucharest). Another essential work he initiated is the *General Dictionary of Romanian Literature* (7 volumes). Within the National Foundation for Science and Art he coordinates the collection of editions “Fundamental Works” (Romanian writers). He was the president of the Romanian Academy between 1998 and 2006. He wrote around thirty volumes of literary history and criticism. Some of his works translated abroad are: *Die Mitte der Aufsätze zu Mircea Eliade* (co-author), Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt, 1984; *The Return of the Author*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 1996; *Le Retour de l'Auteur*, L'Ancrier Editeur, Strassbourg, 1996; *Mircea Eliade, Spirit of Amplitude*, East European Monographs, 2001; *Mircea Eliade, roman-cier*, Paris, Oxus, 2004; *Le Jeune Eugène Ionesco*, L'Harmattan, Paris, 2013.

The Lyrical Novel of Rural Dissolution

The Parish is the second novel written by Dan Coman, who is known as one of the best poets of the last decade. In a well-dosed mixture of epic and lyricism, we are presented with the grotesque dissolution of a traditional world under the pressure of the political evil of dictatorship.

“Vagueness and ambiguity are the elements which dominate this book, created both as the subjective monograph of an unnamed rural settlement in Ardeal, and the story of the late maturation of the thirty-year old son of the village priest. The time of the story is also unclear. The plot obviously unfolds during the communist regime when people trafficked in meat and Pepsi, and the village militia representative calls the tune upon informants' denunciations. The regular presence of some mysterious black tracks which “climb up to the forests”, as well as the unidentified dead bodies which the villagers take out the river and bury in common graves point to the Stalinist decade, while other details make a clear reference to Ceaușescu's regime.

...The contrast is the dominant stylistic formula of the book: the

moments of tenderness and affection get full of aggressiveness and end up in cruelty, comical images develop into grotesque ones (...), and banality and phantasms are the two faces of the same rural reality.” (*Marius Chivu*)

The literary critic Paul Cernat remarks upon the style of the novel *The Parish*: “The narration, which shelters a perfect anti-hero, decomposes itself into larger or smaller sequences, which somehow remind of the poetic hyper-realism of German post-avant-garde prose (...)”

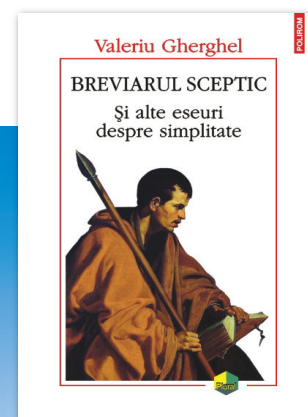
DAN COMAN (born in 1975, in Gersa, the county of Bistrița-Năsăud) graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy in Cluj-Napoca, in 1999. He published his first poetry volume in 2003 – *The Year of the Yellow Mole* (republished in 2004), for which he was awarded the National Poetry Prize “Mihai Eminescu” for debut and the Debut Prize awarded by the Romanian Writers' Union. This volume was followed by the poetry volume *Ghinga, a great coman* (anthology) and *Mara Dictionary*, the novel *Irresistible* and the volume *ERG* (anthology). He



DAN COMAN

The Parish
Cartea Românească
Publishing House,
Bucharest, 2012

is the co-author (next to Petru Romoșan) of the anthology *The Company of Young Poets in 100 Titles*.



VALERIU GHERGHEL

The Skeptical Breviary
and Other Essays about Simplicity
Poliprom Publishing House, Iași, 2012

About Simplicity and Waste in the History of Hermeneutics

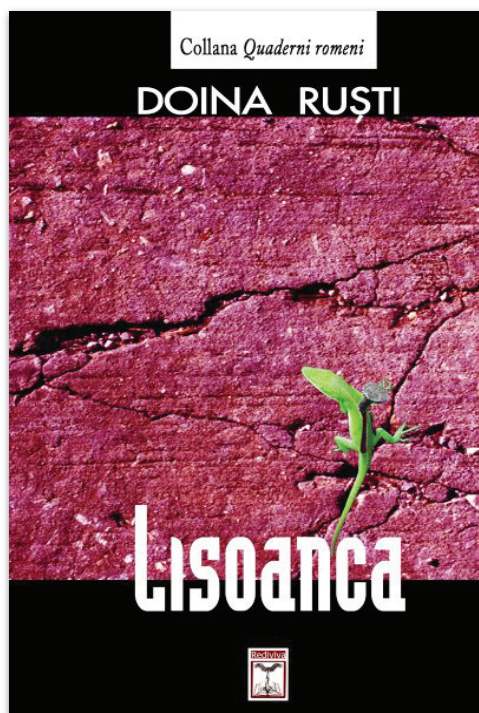
In the *Skeptical Breviary*, Valeriu Gherghel is preoccupied with the application of the principle of simplicity in the interpretation of literary texts: “We examined, therefore, the question of interpretative simplicity from several angles (...). The first part consists in the essays about simplicity and succinctness. The second part contains several texts about interpretative waste (about all sorts of waste) and about excess. In order to illustrate the difficulty of being simple, in the third part of the book I examined four episodes in the history of hermeneutics (Philon of Alexandria, Saint Augustine, Joannes Scottus Eriugena, Hugo de Saint-Victor).”

In an interview with the writer Stelian Țurlea, the author confesses: “I wrote for the «knowledgeable» reader (as well as for the «naïve» one), for a reader who pays attention to what is going on with himself, and with other readers as well) while reading. We all ask ourselves questions about the significance of a (literary, biographical, philosophical) text and especially about the right interpretation of a text. We are often surprised to notice that other people – «the scholars» – have a different perception about the text, they have invested it with a «deeper» or more interesting significance. In a way, we become envious (...). Thus, my book is addressed to a reader who no longer wishes to carry around the sin of envy.”

The erudite essays of the book “of a «Borges-like» refinement” (in the words of the critic Paul Cernat) are written in a warm, friendly tone, which is often ironical and humorous, and which renders the reading exciting and thrilling.

“With an obvious inclination for the exotic, downright rare texts of medieval scholasticism, Valeriu Gherghel is very passionate about books and his readings prompted him to ask a series of related questions: to what extent is the reading of a volume an interpretation of the latter? Is there only one genuine interpretation of a literary text? The volume *The Skeptical Breviary* is an essay collection whose focus is represented by these questions. A volume of erudite essays and calophile refinement, addressed to the readers with a speculative appetite.” (*Sorin Lavric*)

VALERIU GHERGHEL (born in 1955) graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy of University “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” in Iași. He holds a PhD in philosophy with a thesis about neo-Platonism. He was a deputy editor-in-chief for the magazine *Opinia Studentească* (1983-1989). Since 1993, he has been teaching at the University “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” in Iași. He collaborated with the most important literary magazines in the country. In 2006, he published the volume *Rabbi Akiba's Order*, which was nominated for the Prometheus Great Prize. *The Skeptical Breviary: and Other Essays about Simplicity* was nominated for the prizes of the magazine *Observator Cultural* in 2013.



Event

THE INTERNATIONAL BOOK SALON



The friendliest book fair is the one in Turin. In fact, I believe it is the only one, of the European fairs, where publishers can be approached easily. And it is also very lively. The Latin spirit comes out of the mikes and it is felt in the general movement. Like in other fairs, books are promoted with music and with writers who cook in public. Everybody knows that culinary talents are more appreciated than literary ones. But my avowed detestation of cooking prevented me from stopping to wonder at these actions.

This year, Romania's stall was organized by RCI Venice. It was visible from a great distance, and the exhibited books were more numerous than at past editions, I could say. Right from the entrance one could see the center-stage filled with books by Pleșu, Cărtărescu, and the freshly translated book by Breban (*In the Absence of the Masters*). Apart from those published in Italian, the bookcases marked Humanitas Publishing House were, as usual, teeming with a multitude of Romanian books, basically everything that has been published this year, from fiction to cooking books. Polirom Publishing House had a "Top 10" shelf. In fact, most of the famous publishers had books there. And, among the shelves, there was Professor Rudolf Dinu (director of RCI Venice), cultured and distinguished, acting with prompt and lively politeness. You know, usually, there is a protocol politeness or an excessive one, seeking to draw attention to itself by all means. In Rudolf Dinu's case, it was an effortlessly friendly attitude. Plus, he is stylish. He was the host of our stall, getting involved in all the Romanian actions. And there were many of them.

As far as I am concerned, *Lisoanca* took me to Turin. Translated into Italian (by Ingrid Coman), the novel was published by a small publishing house in Milan (Rediviva) and I was thinking that it would not attract attention. But the *Liberio* daily reviewed it in an article with a subtitle that is guaranteed to make you laugh: "Merry Assassins Come From the East." Of course, they just meant it as a joke, and I was in good company, too: Gospodinov and Alikavazovic. The three of us were some of the Balkans writers that had entered the European literature in merry violence.

We had two events: in the Azzura hall and at the Romanian stall. Except for my own launchings, of course, I glanced at other people as well, for example the dialogue between Jérôme Ferrari (winner of the Prix Goncourt in 2012) and Paolo Giordano, the Italian who wrote *The Solitude of Prime Numbers*. Two young, very successful writers, who filled the Azzura hall with fans.

But as far as I am concerned, Roberto Merlo's book was the most significant event by far. Not just because he is my friend, but because he deals with a subject I love: *Il mito dacico nella letteratura romena dell'Ottocento* (The Dacian Myth in the 19th-Century Romanian Literature). Published

by Edizioni dell'Orso under the aegis of the Turin University, where Roberto Merli is a professor, the 400-page book, impressive through its erudition, discusses the academic genesis of a myth that haunted the 1848-related literature. I expect it to be published in Romanian as soon as possible. Perhaps even on an RCI initiative, especially because this subject matter is very sparsely dealt with and quasi-unknown at world level.

Professor Merlo, who always attends Romanian actions on Italian soil, was invited this time as well and he showed up as usual with his entire chair. Equally, Marisa Cugno, Bruno Mazzoni, Roberto Scagno, as well as other professors, acknowledged Romanianists or just sympathizers (like Igor Piumetti), were involved in the events organized by the RCI.

Of the Romanian writers attending the fair, I will mention Stelian Țurlea. With the book *In the Absence of the Father*, translated by the same Rediviva Publishing House, a novel written with energy and intelligence, Stelian Țurlea was also my traveling companion. The presentation of his book attracted attention and brought the public in. After we left (on Saturday), other writers, such as Gabriela Adameșteanu, were scheduled to arrive. It is worth mentioning here that the organization of arrivals and departures was impeccable, owing to the two tireless representatives of the RCI Venice, Corina Bădelețu and Mihai Stan. Every time I see them I get the feeling they are computer programmed.

At any book fair, the new people one meets are the most interesting, though. Every time I have the opportunity to meet writers, and at that fair there were both Italians and Romanians scattered around the world, like Silvia Șimonca of Cremona. An additional thing compared with earlier years: this time, the Romanian community got involved as well through Violeta Popescu, president of the Italian-Romanian Cultural Center in Milan, writer Ingrid Beatrice Coman, Maria Floarea Pop, and others. In fact, the city of Turin seems besieged by Romanians. It is impossible to walk for five minutes in the street without hearing someone speak Romanian. There is a Romanian-language radio station and a newspaper (*Ora*). Journalist Daniela Radu interviewed me for this radio station asking me what I thought about the Romanian language spoken by Romanians born in Italy. In the past, maybe I would have pleaded for bilingualism. But considering the present conditions, I believe any Romanian born abroad has the duty to learn the language of that country well. Not necessarily to ignore the Romanian language, but one's geographic integration is decisive linguistically.

Professors at universities having Romanian language and culture sections often complain about the fact that students coming from families of Romanian immigrants speak neither Romanian nor Italian well. If I were to give one of my books as a gift to a Romanian born in Italy, I would prefer to give

them the Italian version.

As for the promotion of the events, I would again say it was positive. First and foremost I saw Georgiana Baciu of Pro TV International and Elena Postelnicu of Radio România International again: they are the traditional supporters of this fair. Radio Turin, owing to the good will of its Italian owner, came again to Romania's stall, while the Italian media showed the same moderate interest, namely two or three photos and two or three shots.

Equally, I noticed the discrete presence of Bogdan Popescu, the new director of CENNAC. Also participating from the RCI Bucharest were Ortansa Ispas and Iacob Florea, the director of the new department in charge of promoting creation.

And, since I was in Turin, I went again to see the Museum of Cinematography. As I was looking at lenses and daguerreotypes, it became so late, that I arrived at my own launching at the very last minute and kind of messed up because I had been running.

On Saturday I left for Bucharest, missing the weekend, which is known to be the most crowded time at all fairs. I will probably find out about what happened next from the press, from other notes by writers. (Doina Ruști)





IN TURIN

From One Fiction to Another

In Turin, I entered and I lived in a beautiful and pleasant fiction for three days. Far from being a slightly far-fetched metaphor, this image is the acute reality. And a feeling. A feeling I experienced as early as the first moment, when I got off at the Lingotto station, where, regardless of the time, I was to see the impressive lines of students, adults, and old people waiting to get into the exhibition pavilion.

There, everything is hyperbolized. One has a feeling of déjà vu, of having experienced this before, there is a buzzing, a clatter, and a teeming of people one recognizes, yet something is escaping. Perhaps it is not always pleasant to discover street fever in a book "temple," but neither do I think it hurts much. Not at all, rather.

But I do not wish to get lost in the sensations I experienced when I met the unexpected colossus conventionally called the Turin Book Fair. Equally, I do not plan to talk about the overwhelming atmosphere, about the mixture of seriousness and ludic, of interest and sentimental superficiality, about people, languages, abrupt gestures, and happy cries from all over the world. I wished to discover a less imposing Turin and, most of all, to find a common denominator for the Romanian writers present at the Romanian stall. I attended almost all the launchings from *Gaudeamus* by Mircea Eliade, *In the Absence of the Father* by Stelian Țurlea, to *Lizoanca* by Doina Ruști and *In the Absence of the Masters* by Nicolae Breban. And I believe the common denominator is called naturalness, normality. The Romanian authors were part of the show, they knew how to be part of the show. Perhaps my observation seems commonplace, but there are common things one has to mention sometimes.

I saw prose writer Doina Ruști talk with fervor and enthusiasm not about her own book (whose launching, between you and me, I was attending), but about Professor Roberto Merlo's book *Il mito dacico nella letteratura romana dell'Ottocento* (The Dacian Myth in the 19th-Century Romanian Literature). I must confess that the prose writer's enthusiasm was not at all strident and that it accommodated well the sagacious analysis conducted by the professor of Romanian language and literature at the Turin University. I listened very carefully to prose writer Stelian Țurlea talk about the universal values of childhood which cannot be traded or confiscated by political regimes, ideologies, and so on. I felt the unassuming certainty and I liked the well known spontaneity of prose writer Gabriela Adameșteanu, invited for the third time to the Romanian events at the Turin Salon. I was able to chat with distinguished publisher and prose writer Ingrid Beatrice Coman and with Maria Floarea Pop, Nicolae Breban's tenacious and enthusiastic translator.

I had the opportunity to have a substantial, useful, and extremely promising talk with Professors Roberto Scagno, chairman of the Society of Italian Romanianists, and Fulvio del Fabbro of the Florence University. I was happy with the total readiness of Professor Bruno Mazzoni of the Pisa University who found time to introduce us to several publishers of the Keller, Voland, Zandonai, and Transeuropa publishing houses. Professor Giovanni Rotiroti of the Naples University already envisions a collection of Romanian poetry published by Kolibri Publishing House, planning to begin with a Tristan Tzara anthology and the *Vistas* by B. Fundoianu.

Unfortunately, I believe many gestures, a lot of low-key and discreet naturalness and spontaneity have been left out as I have not mentioned them. Now I remember Mrs. Violeta Popescu, president of the Italian-Romanian Cultural Center, which is publishing a magazine and a well-structured yearly entitled *Romanian Cultural Landmarks in the Peninsula*. But all this would not have been possible without the organization and coordination efforts made by Director Rudolf Mihai Dinu of the Romanian Institute for Culture and Humanistic Research in Venice and his entire team. At Romania's stall, which was well devised, Director Dinu and the members of his team were present without bugging people, they were open and natural, always attentive and polite. I do not know if they had been the ones to imprint this note of naturalness, of normality that I mentioned at the beginning. But I know for certain that they made a decisive contribution to its birth.

I am hopelessly superstitious. I arrived in Turin one day late. And concerned. During the missing day, I had found out as I was traveling that Alessandro Barrico had launched a book. In fact, it was a reprint. Or several ones. Anyway, it did not matter anymore, I had missed him. I found consolation in the thought that, considering that he was such a big star in Italy, I would not have been able to get near him, anyway.

And I realized that was a bad omen. But it was not, as I was able to see. This Italian experience has revealed something else to me as well, something I guess usually passes unnoticed or people just do not pay due attention to it. In simple terms, this something goes like this: in Italy, everything has been constructed. There is nothing left to do, except to protect everything. I believe that, similarly, the relations between Italian translators and Romanian authors must only be protected and continued. (Jacob Florea)



Three Days With Romanian Books in Prague

May 16-19, 2013, the Czech capital: at the Praga Holešovice exhibition center, the 19th International Book Fair was held, with Slovakia as the invitee of honor. The theme of this World of Books fair was "Rozmanité cesty poezie. Čteme jedním dechem aneb Když se řekne bestseller/ Necunoscuté sunt căile poeziei. Citim dintr-o suflare sau ce e un bestseller/ Poetry works in mysterious ways. We read in one breath, or what is a bestseller."

This year's fair celebrated 100 years since the birth of Dominik Tatarka, a writer, essayist, and journalist (1913-1989), the 1,150th anniversary of Ss. Cyril and Methodius' arrival in Great Moravia, namely the saints who bequeathed an alphabet and a literary language to the Slavs, as well as the 20th anniversary of two independent states: the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The invitee of honor brought to the Czech public 20 authors and their books translated in May 2012-May 2013 on the initiative of the Center for Literature Information in collaboration with Czech publishers.

Romania's stall was organized by the Ministry of Culture. These were the Romanian writers invited to this fair: Cătălin Mihuleac, Andra Rotaru, Ioan Es. Pop, Liviu Ioan Stoiciu, and Varujan Vosganian.

The events organized at the Romanian stall began on Thursday May 16 with a session presenting the financing programs of the Romanian Cultural Institute.

Friday May 17, prose writer Cătălin Mihuleac was invited to the Romanian stall: he read from his book *The Adventures of a Bolshevik Gentleman* translated by Jiří Sabat. The book was published by Cartea Românească Publishing House in 2012. Still at the Romanian stall, they launched the Romanian-Czech Specialized Legal, Administrative, Economic, and Political Dictionary by engineer David Božetěch.

Saturday May 18, in the Poetry Hall of the Praga Holešovice exhibition center, writers Andra Rotaru, Liviu Ioan Stoiciu, and Ioan Es. Pop offered readings to the public. The poems of Andra Rotaru and Liviu Ioan Stoiciu were translated by Jitka Lukešová, while those of Ioan Es. Pop by Libuše Valentová. Each poet introduced himself to the public, the moderator being Dan Mircea Duță, director of the RCI Prague since 2006.

The same day, the Romanian stall saw the launching of an anthology of contemporary Romanian poetry translated into Czech, *Konek Slavnosti*, published by Petr Stengl Publishing House. These are the Romanian poets included in the anthology: Ion Mureșan, Ioan Es.

Pop, Simona Popescu, and Nicolae Prelipeanu; their poems have been translated by Jarmila Horakova, Jitka Lukešova și Libuše Valentova. Ioan Es. Pop read some of his own poems and poems by his anthology colleagues.

Still at Romania's stall and still on Saturday, they launched the *History of Romanian Journalism* published by Polirom Publishing House in 2012. The book, coordinated by Professor Dr. Marian Petcu, was launched in the presence of the author and of Dan Mircea Duță, director of the RCI Prague, who opened and attended all the cultural events that took place at this Fair. The book — which won the National Valeriu Braniște Award granted by the Romanian Association for the History of the Press — is the first chronological encyclopedia of journalism in Romania and it is a wide-scope project that 100 specialists worked on for over four years: professors, researchers, librarians, archivists, journalists, alongside students, candidates for master's degrees, and Ph.D. candidates at public universities in Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, and Sibiu. The entries in this encyclopedia record 18,000 periodicals, radios, televisions, and news agencies, as well as 33,500 journalists and publicists. The book covers 280 years of Romanian press — from 1731 until 2011 — and, for the first time ever, it offers relevant information not only about the journalistic production in the Romanian language, but also about the journalistic productions of the Hungarian, German, Jewish, Bulgarian, Serb, Russian, and other communities.

Sunday May 19, the last day of the fair, readings were held both in Romanian and in Czech out of *The Book of Whispers* by Varujan Vosganian, translated by Jarmila Horaková. Already published in Spanish, Italian, Armenian, and Hebrew, *The Book of Whispers* will also be translated into five more languages: Bulgarian, Czech, German, Hungarian, and Swedish.

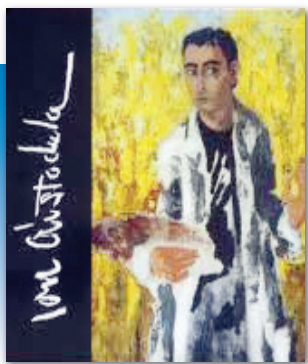
Still on Sunday, they held a reading out of *Ten Multilaterally Developed Stories* by Cătălin Mihuleac, translated by Jiří Sabat. The book was published in Romania in 2010 by Cartea Românească. Dan Mircea Duță, director of the RCI Prague, was the moderator of the meetings bringing the prose writers and the public together.

At the end of this Fair, official figures indicated that during the four days, in the 2,984-square-meter space, 30 countries joined the event and participated in it, while 36,000 visitors came to the 339 exhibition spaces. (Andra Rotaru)



ION CRISTODULO

Painter, Architect,
Scenographer, 1925-1991
R.A. Monitorul Oficial,
Bucharest, 2012



The Amazing Story of an Almost Forgotten Painter

Ion Aristide Cristodulo, George Apollon Cristodulo and Olimpiu Bandalc are the initiators of this homage-volume which is an act of retrieval at the same time. Their name is neither on the cover, nor on the front page, but only in a box on the last page. The foreword was written by the art critic Pavel Şuşară, and it was printed by the R.A. Monitorul Oficial. The album was published last year when an exhibition was organized around the works of this almost unknown painter, about whom the writer of the foreword writes that "he had to put up with a sort of a continuous exile throughout his entire life, he wore the stigmata of the incessant repressions inflicted by the communist regime, but also the greatness of relentless rebellion."

Born in 1925, Ion Cristodulo followed three directions of study, between 1942 and 1949: architecture, plastic art, and scenography. According to the documents in the archive of the National Council for the Study of Secret Service Archives, it seems that he activated in a "monarchic subversive organization" – *The Eagles of the Mountains* – that militated for activities of resistance against the communist regime. In 1950 he was imprisoned for having disseminated *forbidden publications*, together with other fifteen persons. He was sent to reformation through work to the Danube-Black Sea Channel. The most important moment of his experience in the concentration camp was when he was selected along with other one hundred people in 1951 and taken to Constanța for the restoration of the Casino bombed during the Second World War. He was released in 1953.

Six years later, after he participated in different activities related to architecture, restoration, quarry, stucco, church fresco, he got the commission to finalize the State Theatre in Braşov, but as a result of a calumnious denunciation, he was sentenced to another five years of prison. During the appeal, everything proved to be a calumny and he was released after one year of prison. He got hired as a scenographer at the State Theatre in Braşov, where he made the stage sets and the costumes for more than fifty shows. He was the scenographer of the first four editions (1968-1971) of the International Music Festival The Golden Stag.

He painted a lot. He left more than sixty paintings, along with sketches, studies, scenography and architecture works. Many paintings were created in the village Şimon near Bran. The album ends with a presentation text – "Ion Cristodulo, In Lieu of Conclusion" – written by the painter's son, Apollon Cristodulo, where one can find the above pieces of information and many others.

Histories from the Big Screen

Marilena Ilieşiu proposes a fascinating incursion in the history of Romanian cinema, an incursion in which she shows how stories in movies from different ages are told, from the "primitive" phase up to the present time. Historical movies, movies in which the story is distorted by ideology, movies focused on characters – they are all to be found in this journey among titles which are more or less known by the current public, from the *Romanian Independence*, *The Dacians* and *The Column*, going through *A Stormy Night*, *The Reverberating Valley* and *The Water like A Black Buffalo*, up to *The Merchandise and the Money*, *Aurora*, *Francesca* and *Beyond the Hills*.

"The work, a search on the becoming of the story in the Romanian movie, tries to profile the data and the limits of the narrative phenomenon in the historical context by highlighting the motives and the themes which are obvious in the pellicles representative for every period. Movies which perfectly reflect the state of a moment or of a period, cult-movies, forgotten movies, movies found again or remembered movies, they are in fact essential structures in the history of the Romanian movie seen as a phenomenon which articulates works and creators, ephemeral themes and subjects, models and deviations, which in their turn, rapidly became models." (Marilena Ilieşiu)

The author is an assistant and she holds a PhD in cinematography and media from the National University of Theatre and Cinematographic Art in Bucharest. She was an editor for the magazines *ProCinema* and *Cinema*. She is also a film critic, a producer at Studio Video Art and a member of the International Federation of Film Critics. (FIPRESCI).



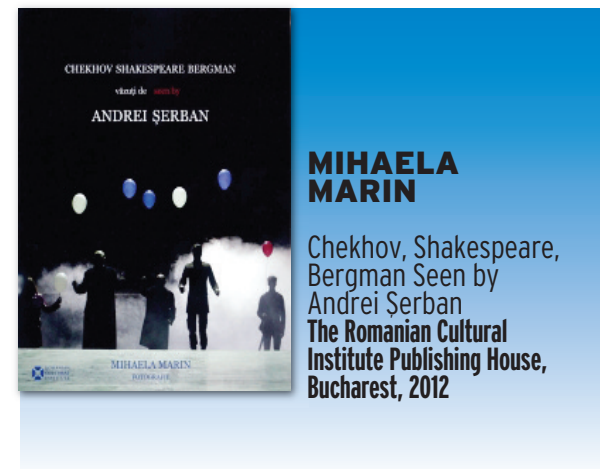
MARILENA ILIEŞIU

The Story of the Story in the
Romanian Movie (1912-2012)
Poliprom Publishing House, Iaşi, 2013

Plays Seen through the Photographic Objective

The album consists in photographs from the most recent theatre plays directed by Andrei Şerban in Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca and Budapest: the plays *Uncle Vania*, *Three Sisters* and *Ivanov* by Anton Chekov, *Cries and Whispers*, after Ingmar Bergman's movie and *King Lear* by William Shakespeare. The texts that accompany the photos taken by Mihaela Marin are signed by the director Andrei Şerban and the theatre critic Ana Maria Narti. Bilingual edition, Romanian-English, translated into the English by Samuel Onn.

"In theatre, the event is the play. Those who haven't seen the play become its witness with the help of Mihaela's pictures, and the angle of the camera helps them perceive the vibrations taken from the actors' faces by the photographic objective (...) When I invited her to take photos of more special subjects, *Cries and Whispers* after Bergman's movie or *King Lear* with an exclusively feminine distribution, I proposed Mihaela to take the bull by the horns and to enter the subject more deeply, namely to enter the intimacy of the actors' play (...) Every event is presented as it was seen by Mihaela's eyes, accompanied by my thoughts and comments, but we felt the need to introduce the impressions of a spectator, of a theatre critic – an old collaborator and friend, Ana Maria Narti. Thus, the image and the written word, as testimonies of the theatre event, complete complete each other." (Andrei Şerban)



MIHAELA MARIN

Chekhov, Shakespeare,
Bergman Seen by
Andrei Şerban
The Romanian Cultural
Institute Publishing House,
Bucharest, 2012

The first album, *Dorian Gray*, imposed **MIHAELA MARIN** as a photographer of show arts in Romania. After the albums *Hamlet Machine* (2007) and *Faust* (2008), she illustrated the issue dedicated to the Romanian theatre by the magazine *Alternatives Théâtrales* (2010) and the volume *The Cherry Orchard, Our Theatre*, signed by George Banu (2011). Her exhibitions were organized in New York, Paris, Berlin, Tel Aviv, Roma, Brussels.

Systems of Time Measurement

ELISABETA SAVU,
TATIANA RISTEA,
CARMEN BANU

Clock -
Science and Art
Omonia Publishing
House, Bucharest, 2012

In 1963, in a hall of the Culture Palace in Ploieşti, professor Nicolae Simache managed to set up a museum initially called "The Clock throughout Time", which had a patrimony of around three hundred pieces. Due to their growing number, doubled by the interest shown by the public, the exhibits had to be moved to a more generous space. This happened in 1971, and the building which has been hosting the museum ever since is an architecture monument dating from the end of the 19th century.

In 1993, the building changed its name into the Clock Museum "Nicolae Simache", in the memory of

its founder. The museum patrimony shelters more than 4.000 pieces and specific components, of great value and attractiveness, illustrating the evolution of time measurement systems between the 16th and the 19th centuries. The value of its patrimony makes the Clock Museum in Ploieşti compatible with other similar museums in Europe, such as those at La Chaux-de-Fonds in Switzerland or Besançon in France.

The main exhibition of the museum presents a chronological succession of the most known types of time indicators and clocks: solar quadrants, hour glasses, clepsydras, furniture clocks, fireplace clocks, pocket clocks, and travel clocks. The oldest clocks in the collection are the astronomic ones, dating from 1544 and 1562, created by the clock makers Jakob Acustodia (Holland) and Jeremias Metzker (Augsburg), respectively. The solar quadrants from the 17th and the 18th centuries belong to the same category; one of them is signed *Butterfield-Paris* (1690). Another piece which is special due to its functioning system and its age is the clepsydra (the water clock) made by Charles Rayner in the year 1654 in London.

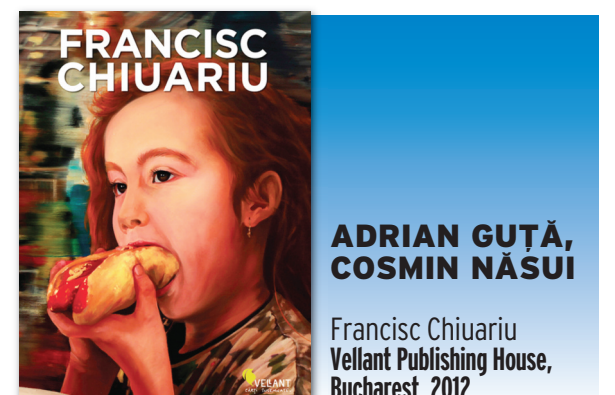
All these pieces of information, along with many others, are put forth in the admirable album edited by Ms. Lia Maria Voicu, PhD, with photographs by Alexandru Brumărescu. Bilingual edition. Translated from the English language by Carmen Lucia Marinescu.

The Portrait of the Artist as an Adult

The monograph *Francisc Chiuariu* brings to the public's attention one of the most interesting Romanian painters of the last decades. The book offers a generous inventory of the works signed by the artist between 1987 and 2012 and it puts forth exceptional images from projects such as *Obsession*, *Angels*, *Networks*, *Outdoor*, *Forever Ikea* or *Circle Theory*.

The album, published both in English and in Romanian, contains two introductions to the work of Francisc Chiuariu signed by Cosmin Năsui and Adrian Guţă, as well as a chronology of the artist's evolution.

"Productive, dynamic, challenging, and innovating from the point of view of the working techniques, by means of his works, Chiuariu sails on the meridians and parallels of the human condition with relentless curiosity and fascination for this universe of the being endowed with feelings as well as with thoughts. He is interested in the splendors and the darkness of the real world and of the imaginary/oneiric/ fantastical ones, the angelic and the devilish between which the border seems to be sometimes very fine and fragile, the beauty of the moment, the seasons of nature and of man, the major rhythms of existence, whose perception and acceptance can make our relation with time bearable..." (Adrian Guţă)

ADRIAN GUŢĂ,
COSMIN NĂSUI

Francisc Chiuariu
Vellant Publishing House,
Bucharest, 2012

FRANCISC CHIUARIU was born in Sibiu in 1966. He lives and works in Bucharest. He graduated from the National University of Art, the Department of Painting. Some of his personal exhibitions are: *Shadows*, AnnArt Gallery, Bucharest; *Outdoor*, The Center Palatele Brâncovenesti Mogoşoaia; *Plan Notebook*, AnnArt Gallery, Bucharest; *Networks*, Atelier 030202, Bucharest; *Obsession*, Gallery Quasar, Bucharest. He is present in numerous group exhibitions.



VASILE SCÂRNECI

Life and Death on the Front Line
Military Publishing House,
Bucharest, 2012

In Two World Wars

Bearing the subtitle *War Journal and Notes 1916-1920 and 1941-1943*, this impressive book of over 600 pages takes its readers to the two world wars fought in the 20th century, which the author actively participated in. In 1916, Vasile Scârneci was 20 and he already worked for the Romanian Security (Siguranța Română), namely he spied for Romania, which was preparing to join the conflagration. His efforts were rewarded by promotion to the rank of junior lieutenant without having graduated from any school for military officers and by being sent to the front line. After World War One, he was promoted to an even higher rank, and in 1928 he participated in the second Winter Olympics at Saint Moritz, Switzerland. Ten years later, he was promoted to the rank of major and detached to the Third Mountain Infantry Battalion, which in 1941-1942, in World War Two, would be almost always in the first line of the front. His attitude and behavior made the troops believe that Scârneci could not be hit by any bullet.

Vasile Scârneci's notes stop in early 1944. Those of World War One were written in six notebooks, and those of World War Two were preserved in 20 notebooks. Over 100 pages of this book are dedicated to document photos, which are pages of history themselves.

This is how the story begins, as told by Vasile Scârneci: "August 14 (night before August 15, 1916). Zero hundred hours. St. Mary, general mobilization. After two years of neutrality, the Brătianu Government decides to declare war on the Central Powers . . . I am at Ghimeș-Palanca, on the frontier, where, for over a year, at the disposal of the Army General Staff, I carried out a special secret mission. The day before, disguised as a shepherd, I crossed the frontier for the 14th time... and I collected intelligence... Bad luck, I was discovered by the Hungarian secret agents, but I managed to jump out of the train."

As you can see, this journal has the salt and pepper of an adventure novel, but with real events and characters.

Normality at a Time of Collapse

This crisis and recession are two different symptoms of the same suffering. Usually, the two are conjugated, they act together and produce serious effects. First, the crisis emerges, then comes recession, which strikes at the peak of the crisis, and, after recession passes, the crisis lingers on for a while. One year, two years, or more.

This new crisis, originating in the United States, having super-consumption as its launch pad, became possible in the 21st century when debt-based wealth had expanded over ample regions of this planet, often without being supported by healthy economies; or, even worse, relying on obese economies, pumped up with consumption over-fulfillment, with perfidious deficits and inflations. And it all started from too much greed.

"In the summer of 2011 in Paris, the crisis struck as powerfully as in the autumn of 2008. It was everywhere: in the street, in shops, in restaurants, on television, in newspapers. But the people were different: less concerned, less worried, seemingly habituated with pressing hardships. Tourists were different, too. In 2008, the mass of tourists had the composition maintained by Paris for a long time. There were visitors from all over the world. But now in 2011,

there was a specific composition, brought about by the crisis. Only the Japanese reminded people of the years before it. But most of the tourists were Russians and Chinese. They were everywhere. The media? Yes, the media still covered the crisis as its number-one issue in all hierarchies. And there were some boiling issues, too: Greece, Italy, Spain, sovereign debts, budget deficits, the euro, fiscal policy, and Europe's chances. But Parisians were trying to normalize their lives. The crisis was there, but it no longer drove them crazy. A new normality entered their daily lives. One evening, in a square close to the Opera, I witnessed a scene that made me awfully happy. Several loudspeakers were broadcasting famous tangos. And in this square, women and men of all ages were dancing. It was the tonic expression of a healthy attitude facing a crisis we had all had enough of." (*Adrian Vasilescu*)

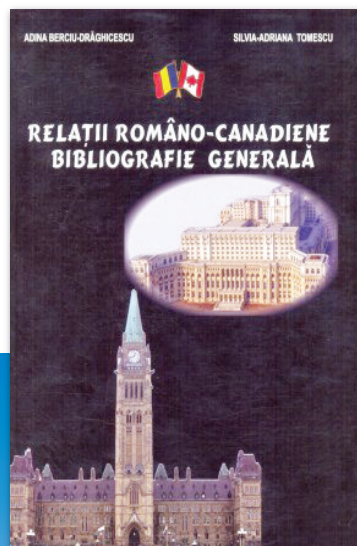
ADRIAN VASILESCU was born in 1936. He studied economics, law, and journalism. He was an associate professor at the Academy of Economic Studies, the Bucharest University, and the Upper Journalism School. He had a long career in journalism, having debuted in the press



ADRIAN VASILESCU

Ticket To Exit the Crisis
Curtea Veche Publishing House,
Bucharest, 2012

in 1962. In 1996 he began his banking activity, becoming coordinator of the communication strategy at the National Bank of Romania, and, since 2001, he has served as advisor to Governor Mugur Isărescu.



ADINA BERCIU-DRĂGHICESCU AND SILVIA-ADRIANA TOMESCU

Romanian-Canadian Relations.
General Bibliography
Publishing House of the Bucharest
University, 2012

This book is part of a vast project to research the international relations Romania has developed throughout history, seeking to pay homage to the 45th anniversary, in 2012, of raising the diplomatic relations between Romania and Canada to the rank of embassy. The institutions involved in implementing this praiseworthy initiative were the Faculty of Letters in Bucharest represented by Professor Dr. Adina Berciu-Drăghicescu (author and coordinator) and the Carol I Central University Library in Bucharest represented by Dr. Silvia-Adriana Tomescu (co-author).

Placed at the crossroads between political sciences and studies of multiculturalism, this work meets the contemporary need for information and communication horizon. As mentioned in an introductory note to this book by Professor Dr. Mireille Rădoi,

Landmarks in the History of Diplomacy

general director of the Carol I Central University Library in Bucharest, "identity is an amalgam of specific attributes and adaptable features. It depends on being aware of and implicitly recognizing the other. Here, the Romanian toponymy on Canadian soil is the most significant example."

In a complex approach to bibliography as a specialized language, which, apart from making an inventory of items, offers perspectives on realities and suggests models for the future, Romanian and foreign information sources are recorded and systematized, from manuscripts to archived documents — including some in Canadian archives — to dictionaries, monographs, periodicals, as well as web sources. Equally, a corpus of scientific references brings together all the pieces of information reflecting joint actions that have been taken by Romania and Canada historically, politically, geographically, scientifically, economically, and culturally.

The chapter entitled "Linguistics. Literature. Cultural Studies" presents a vast number of publications, including contributions by Romanian specialists to promoting the culture and civilization of Canada (translations, literary analyses, Ph.D. theses, and reviews published by domestic and international publishers).

The part dealing with cultural diplomacy and diplomatic visits, which includes interviews with personalities involved in the phenomenon of bilateral cooperation, proves the dynamic cooperation between Romania and Canada over the years.

Color pictures, reproducing documents of various historical epochs, make the book even more valuable and interesting.

Some sections are written both in Romanian and in French and English.

It is also noteworthy that the European Center for Canadian Studies, Canadian and Romanian diplomats, and Romanian university professors and researchers offered significant documentary support to this work.

The work is the second volume of a series of bibliographies consecrated to Romania's bilateral relations with various

states (the first volume was Adina Berciu-Drăghicescu et al., *Romanian-Swiss Relations, General Bibliography*, Publishing House of the Bucharest University, 2011).

"Well endowed and well coordinated, this team of document researchers studied an impressive amount of sources and competently used the entire bibliographic symbolism adequate to such a task" (*Professor Dr. Ion Stoica*).

ADINA BERCIU-DRĂGHICESCU, a graduate of the History Faculty in Bucharest, has a Ph.D. in history and she is a professor at the Faculty of Letters, the Department of Communication Sciences. She has made scientific contributions studying the culture and civilization of the Romanians in the Balkans. She is a tenured lecturer on management in info-documentary institutions, cultural models, archivism and connected fields, and museology. Equally, she has specialized in info-documentary sources in archives, museums, and libraries, editing a few books that published historical sources on themes that are less frequently dealt with (Romanian schools and churches in the Balkan Peninsula, Romanian hermitages and monastery cells on Mount Athos), as well as bibliographic indices (*Romanian-Swiss Relations, General Bibliography* — in collaboration).

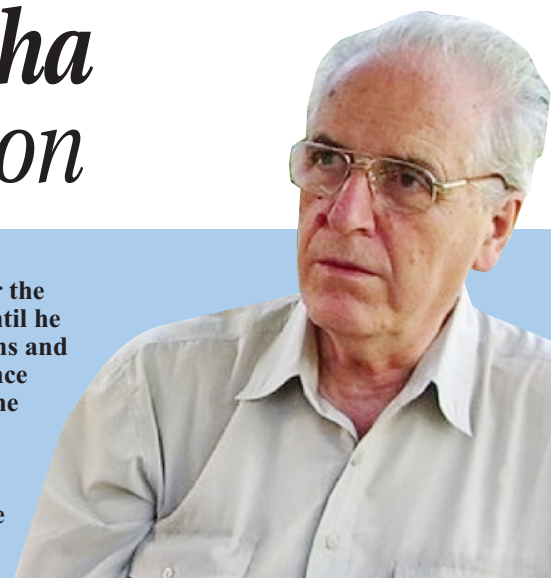
SILVIA-ADRIANA TOMESCU is a librarian at the Carol I Central University Library in Bucharest, the Library of the Political Sciences Faculty. She received her Ph.D. in philology awarded *magna cum laude* from the Faculty of Letters with a thesis about distance higher education. These are her main scientific research fields: e-learning, higher education, the science of information, and academic writing.

As a specialist at the Library of Political Sciences, she embarked upon researching cultural diplomacy and the study of the Romanian exile.



Paradoxically, *Don Quixote de la Mancha* Raises the Chivalric Romance to Perfection

Born in 1936 in Bucharest, Sorin Mărculescu graduated from the Philology Faculty of the Bucharest University, the French section, with a thesis on the art of the sonnet with Ronsard and Du Bellay (1959). He worked as a day laborer for the Academy Library (1960), as technical translator, and, since 1964, as editor for several publishing houses in Bucharest until he retired (December 1996). Poetry debut in the *Familia* magazine in Oradea (1966). He has received awards for translations and poetry (Romanian Writers' Union, Association of Bucharest Writers, and the *Poesis* magazine in Satu Mare), an excellence diploma for translations (the *Observator Cultural* magazine in Bucharest, 2011), and he was nominated for the Book of the Year Award given by the *România literară* magazine (2005, 2012). Member of the Romanian Writers' Union and of the Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas. Verse books: *The Book of Weddings*; *The Place of the Seed*; *Lonely Book*; *The Haphazard River*; *The Evening Light*; and *Part of Everything*. He has translated over 60 works (fiction, philosophy, aesthetics, and religion) from Spanish, English, French, and Italian, his activity as a translator reaching its peak with the complete narrative works of Miguel de Cervantes and the complete works of Baltasar Gracian.



RISKY AND CHALLENGING: TRANSLATING CERVANTES' COMPLETE NARRATIVE WORKS

A translation by one single specialist of the edition Miguel de Cervantes, *Complete Narrative Works*, Paralela 45 Publishing House (Volume 1: *La Galatea*, 2008; Volumes 2/1 and 2/2: *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, 2009; Volume 3: *Exemplary Novels*, 2009; Volume 4: *The Labors of Persiles and Sigismunda*, 2009), as well as of the *Faux Don Quixote de la Mancha* by Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda (2011) — an apocryphal sequel to *Don Quixote de la Mancha* — is a unique endeavor of its kind in the world. You are the only translator seeking such a facilitation for readers.

The history of these translations included in the edition you refer to, *Complete Narrative Works by Miguel de Cervantes* (Paralela 45 Publishing House, 2008-2009, four volumes, five tomes), is much older, it has been delayed for several decades. With the exception of *La Galatea*, all the other works have been published — some by other publishers — in at least three editions over the years, which made it possible for me to revisit and improve them and to unify the presentation under the aegis of Mr. Călin Vlasie's publishing house, Paralela 45. So, indeed, if we add the *Faux Don Quixote* (2011), this undertaking is unique as far as I know, because no similar edition by the same translator both of prose and of poetry has been published anywhere in the world. Because it is good to know that the narrative works of this great writer also include his poetic production, namely approximately 7,000 verses, of which over 5,000 in *La Galatea* alone: I translated all of them scrupulously abiding by the original forms, urged by the same desire for fidelity, also transposing the prose of the four masterpieces in the same spirit.

You also recuperated various other contributions by editors and commentators of Cervantes' work. What new things did you bring in?

I tried to keep up with the most important contributions made by Cervantes' editors and commentators and to propose some of my own interpretative views of the fascinating works I lived with for so long, which is both risky and challenging. The ever-growing bibliography of the editions and research into Miguel de Cervantes' life and works would fill a few massive volumes; therefore, I was overwhelmed by such a quantity, this is why I tried (or better put I had to) limit myself to what was directly accessible to me and which seemed essential to me.

In 1614, while Cervantes was writing the second volume of *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, another book was published, a sequel to his work signed with a pseudonym that has remained undeciphered — Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda. Other such cases of fraud have existed in the history of literature, too. What are the positive aspects of such an apocryphal writing?

In my introduction to the *Faux Don Quixote*, I discussed rather in detail the literary phenomenon of sequels to successful literary works, most of which are apocryphal, therefore unauthorized. This phenomenon has existed, with good effects, in the history of European literatures since the earliest times (for example, *The Aeneid* is a sequel to the Homeric epos), then in the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance, sequels were frequent. The same happened in classic Spanish literature. The emergence of the literary property and copyright concepts in the 18th

century changed that, but sequels (with the entire terminological family) are written today as well (see the Salinger case, which I deal with in the first pages of the mentioned Foreword, or, equally interesting, that of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*), but most of the phenomenon has decisively shifted to movies. Today it is difficult to speak about the positive aspects of such abusive sequels, but in the past centuries we could say that they somehow played the role of indirect criticism and exegesis of the works that were successful with the public, offering, in the absence of other methods or information, a very palpable measure of that success. In the case of Cervantes, who delayed for an inexplicably long time the writing and completion of his great novel's second part (I remember that *Don Quixote I* was published in 1605 and it was a fulminating success), Avellaneda's apocryphal sequel of 1614 hurt Cervantes' pride, as he was a writer fully aware of his own value, and a first positive aspect was that it pressed him to finish, as soon as possible, the second volume, in which, as I have suggested, he "phagocytizes" the parasite organism and launches a fascinating work of genius, a process of punitive inter-textualization and confiscation of the literary imposture that a contemporary hiding under a pseudonym which has not been convincingly deciphered to this day had defied him with. Among other things, Cervantes changed Don Quixote's itinerary, no longer sending him to Zaragoza, but, rather, to Barcelona, he took up a main character of the apocryphal *Don Quixote*, namely Don Álvaro Tarfe, and he attributed to this character a very important and surprising role in confirming the identity of the authentic Don Quixote: we can also say that, still following the publication of Avellaneda's book, Cervantes rushed the end of his hero and took all precautions to make any other sequel impossible. Everything Cervantes did, it is not useless to repeat it, bears the seal of genius, but we must emphasize equally strongly that the work of the impostor, which has some qualities but much more modest ones, benefited from this literary reaction as well: in the wake of the great *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, the editions and studies dedicated to this book have multiplied, beginning with the past century and most of all in the past two decades.

THE CHIVALRIC ROMANCE HAS UNDERGONE A METAMORPHOSIS

How was Cervantes received by his contemporaries? Were there any critical echoes at the level of his work?

Before *Don Quixote de la Mancha* was published, Cervantes was regarded as a very good writer. After 1605, however, he became representative of the entire

Spanish literature, seen as such abroad too, even at that time (France, England), and his literary stature continued to grow up to its present standing. This is indicated by some contemporary testimony and by comparing, with relative precision, the number of editions and published copies of his books as they were known back then. As for the way he was actually received, since there was no real criticism at the time in the contemporary meaning of the word, a writing like the *Faux Don Quixote* is extremely interesting and useful because, working within the expectation horizon of the time's readers, it can indicate precisely enough the reasons for the success enjoyed by Cervantes' great novel with his contemporaries: they mostly appreciated it as a comic novel about a little old man gone nuts over his passion for a declining literary species: the chivalric romance. This is the way it was seen by its contemporaries and this is the axis that Avellaneda's imposture is built on — without much grace or subtlety, we must say. The wealth of deep meanings of Don Quixote's adventures, which, at first, only Cervantes was perhaps aware of in an intuitive manner, has been brought to light little by little, beginning with the great German Romantics. So, the central issue of the book, the fault line between the hero animated by ideals and his epoch which rejects or ridicules those ideals, only understood in the comic register by the contemporaries of the knight of La Mancha, has never ceased to grow and become the central piece of an entire way of thinking.

Were there any attempts to combat chivalric romances at the time?

There was an orchestrated campaign against chivalric romances in the 14th-16th centuries conducted through numerous and vehement attacks against these "books full of lunacy and sheer lies" as an author of the time called them. But this genre was in full bloom at the time, chivalric romances were appreciated by all social layers, from the peasants whom such texts were read to, like in the scene with innkeeper Palomeque and the reapers in *Don Quixote* (I, 32), up to Emperor Charles V, St. Teresa of Jesus, or, even more spectacular, St. Ignatius of Loyola, to whom chivalric actions had been a model. A considerable number of philosophers, moralists, historians, and theologians, called "autores graves" by the great Cervantes scholar Martín de Riquer, attacked the chivalric literature unceasingly but also unsuccessfully. Cervantes himself avowedly wrote his book to definitely discredit that dubious literature. Still, Cervantes' novel is the most brilliant achievement of that literature, and, paradoxically, *Don Quixote de la Mancha* raises the chivalric romance to perfection. But, in his time, this genre was going down considerably, in other words it was no longer fashionable. So, we can say decisively that it was not the fight against it that bestowed universal dimensions to Cervantes' masterpiece.

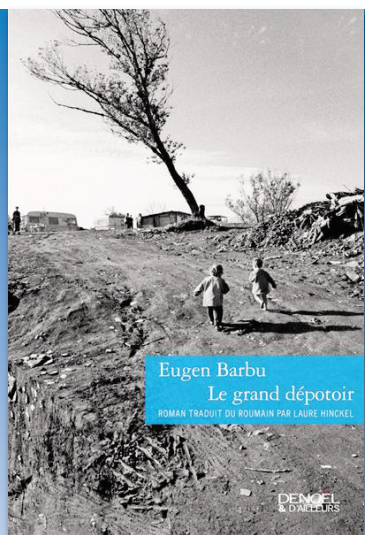
How would chivalric romances be received today? Can society influence a literary work or vice versa?

This question is interesting because somehow it raises the issue of popular or consumer literature. Chivalric romances as such can no longer trigger a mass *engouement*, I believe. Literary scenarios and social requirements are shifting (I will not venture to say "evolving") into speculative parallelism (in all meanings). Society requests something and writers offer that thing to it. In more felicitous cases, it is the other way around, authors offer something and they create receiving organisms and reactions. We could say that today there are equivalents of the old chivalric romance, such as the thriller, or fantasy or SF narrations. In certain cases, yes, literature of these types may also put pressure on society, shaping tastes and expectations because of its need for self-support. The chivalric romance has undergone a metamorphosis, perhaps one that is not always useful to its historical image.





A Masterpiece at the Age of 33



EUGEN BARBU

Le Grand Depotoir/ The Pit
Denoel Publishing House, Paris 2012

The book features an entire underworld from Bucharest; it was published in Romania in 1957, in the heyday of proletkult. Despite this, the novel *The Pit* avoided the clichés of socialist realism. Eugen Barbu was thirty-three years old

when he published this book. The second edition appeared in 1963, and the definitive edition in 1983.

The novel sends us in the interwar period in a neighborhood in Bucharest, Cuțarida, built at the outskirts of the town. The protagonists are poor losers who dwell in the former landfill sites of the town. It is a cursed space, inhabited by cursed people: garbage men, delinquents, loafers, and hooligans.

Grigore, the chief of the garbage men and his wife Aglaia were the first to build a hut near the pit of Cuțarida. He monitors the work of the garbage men, keeps track of the garbage trucks, and organizes the activity of the gypsies who gather rags or bottles. Gradually, the area is taken over by clay huts and needy people with many children. Grigore is rough and taciturn, while Aglaia turns the activity of helping the others into a genuine creed. The pit becomes a neighborhood. Stere Dragănoiu opens a tavern, which shelters thieves such

as Paraschiv or Marin Pisciă the Butcher, Gheorghe the Bandit, as well as some honest men, lost in this degraded world in which the author looks for a some trace of humanity.

The translation into the French language is signed by Laure Hinckel. The volume was published with the help of the National Center of the Book within the Romanian Cultural Institute, by means of the program for the financing of foreign editors for the translation of Romanian authors' works in 2012. This novel is one of the most important works of Romanian literature.

EUGEN BARBU (1924-1993) was a Romanian prose writer, playwright, essay writer, and poet. He made his literary debut in cultural periodicals where he signed with the pseudonyms Eugen Rabe and Eugen Baraba. He wrote many articles, in the field of sports, in literature, he published

political articles, reportages, travel notes and fragments of novels, sketches, and short stories. He made his debut with the short stories volume *Blue Collar Work*. Two pieces of writing featuring football followed: *The Ball is Round* and *Eleven*, and in 1957 the first novel, *The Pit*, appears. The writer's work is completed by the short stories: *Oaie and His Next of Kin*, *Four People on the Death Row*, *Sunday Lunch*, by various volumes of reportages, travel notes, journals, verses: *The Punishment of the Sun*, essays: *Goethe's Masks*, and especially novels: *The Highway of the North*, *The Madmen's Week*, *The Prince*, *Ianus* (published after his death).

He wrote several screenplays for feature films and TV series and he translated some works of Dostoyevsky, Thomas Mann, Faulkner, Priestley, etc. He was awarded the Writer's Union Prize in 1975 and the International Herder Prize in 1977.

The American Dream of an East-European Woman

The series of American adventures in *Dream Junkies*, a book written by Romanian Alexandra Ares, has something of the European inter-war perfume and mystery described by Anglo-Saxon writers of the time — Ezra Pound, Scott Fitzgerald, James Joyce, Ernest Hemingway, and Gertrude Stein — suggesting that they were broadcasting live a report about the boredom of being rich, for ever being unhappily in love, and living among artists as if to learn sadness even more deeply. Except this time the roles have been reversed: an East-European writer discovers America.

The Kitty-Matthew couple wring out the entire sap of their love lust in the big house in Malibu in an enchanting landscape by the ocean or in the sumptuous Bel Air house belonging to the media mogul, oscillating permanently, obsessively, and strenuously between being the hunter and the hunted, but, at the same time, they arduously grub in meticulousness, dread, and despair the initiatory trajectory of the meaning of love. On the other hand, the third character, Desert Rose, ascribes an almost tragic dimension to her own letdowns, disillusionments, and failures offering us the black-

and-white movie of her own love dream.

Alexandra Ares has broken completely with everything that fiction authors in Romania have conceptualized, theorized, and taken up in the past three decades under the sign (and shield) of post-modernism. She is a sensitive, romantic writer, sometimes cynical, but certainly very courageous, facing and confronting the "American Dream" from the viewpoint of an East European, who got away from the claws of communism but is periodically haunted by its ideological ghost. She has chosen the most direct path to tell her own story, running the risk of walking on stage without any makeup. She abandoned clichés. She seems to hate the intricate, bombastic, and intellectually highbrow stylistics used in today's literature. Reading *Dream Junkies* the reader realizes that the fairy-tale land across the ocean is populated by ordinary human beings, who suffer because of love as much as people anywhere else in this world. And this suffering caused by love become catharsis (through the heroine's amazing American experience).

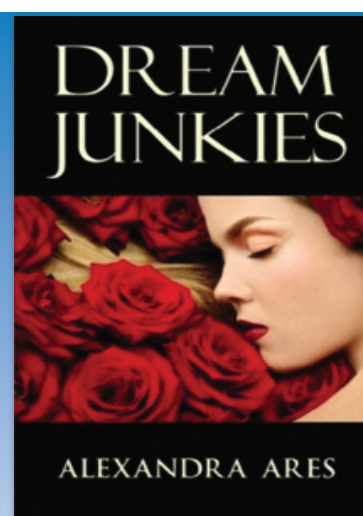
The novel *Dream Junkies* by Alexandra Ares firmly opens another gate in the

contemporary Romanian literature, and we will certainly hear good things about the author and her books in the future. (Mihai Ioan Cochinescu)

A graduate of the UNACT Theatrology Faculty, Bucharest, **ALEXANDRA ARES** (daughter of playwright Dinu Grigorescu) worked as an editor and producer for the Theater Department of the TVR Romanian public television in 1992-1997. In Romania, apart from the novel *Dream Junkies*, she has also published *Exiled to the Past*, *Sam Shepard*, *A Rebel of Mortal Rigor*, and the bilingual play *Waking Beauty* which was produced years later as a reading-show off Broadway.

In 1998 she immigrated to the United States, going to New York, where she worked for several U.S. television stations, production companies, and news syndicates, for the UN General Assembly, and for the UNDP.

Polirom Publishing House published her novel *My Life on Craigslist*, a Best Books Award Finalist by USA Books, 2011.



ALEXANDRA ARES

Dream Junkies
Publisher Ingenius Books,
Smart Media New York, 2012

Last year, her latest book, *The Other Girl*, still not published in Romania, was the winner in the novella category of the 2012 Next Generation Indie Book Awards, a book equivalent of the Sundance awards.

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