

Iuliana Angela MARCU, *Bibliografiile literare: Bibliografie de bibliografii și studiu de sinteză (Literary Bibliographies: Bibliography of Bibliographies and a Summarizing Study)* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2012), 243p.

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In the reception speech held at the Romanian Academy on 23 May 1941, entitled “Ioan Bianu and the Romanian bibliography problems,” Dumitru Caracostea solemnly stated that “the fields of culture and literature are united, an attitude is defined by the opposing attitudes, meaning that it is the primacy of the synthesis, which is impossible without a systematic inventory of the entire literature”.¹ Important inventory efforts have been made before and during the following decades, some of which with remarkable results and continuous validity but, even so, a complete and coherent image of this literature remains a desideratum. In this context, the publication reviewed here must be received with great interest,² as part of a larger project of the Lucian Blaga Central University Library from Cluj, dedicated to the researchers in the field.

As Angela Marcu mentions in the *Introduction*, the theoretical synthesis in the first part of the book is compiled and developed starting from, and revolving around, the *Analytical Bibliographies of Romanian Literary Bibliographies*, a perfect information tool, discussed in the second part. . This bibliography was thought of and compiled by the author due to a very clear, clean-cut and well argued motivation: the documentary corpus of information tools from the Romanian literature field, compiled during two centuries, is so fragmented, dispersed and uneven, that the access to information from the respective field and, implicitly, their value is damaged. Building this tertiary tool of definite use, which she places in Barbu Theodorescu’s series of affirmations: “through the bibliography of bibliographies you can form an overall view on what Romanian bibliography means,” Angela Marcu fulfils a duty, mentioning the fact that “the present paper proposes that this desideratum be satisfied for the literary field”.³

The author’s concerns about the Romanian literature bibliographies have manifested over a long time. The conclusions of her research and, determined by them, her view on the domain implies the necessity of collecting and organizing the secondary information sources in Romanian literature in a unitary, ample, but critical

¹ Dumitru Caracostea, *Studii critice (Critical studies)* (Bucharest : Albatros, 1982), 148.

² Iuliana Angela Marcu, *Bibliografiile literare: Bibliografie de bibliografii și studiu de sinteză (Literary Bibliographies : Bibliography of Bibliographies and a Summarizing Study)*, (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2012).

³ Ibid., 12.

and selective document. At the same time, she stresses the fact that the very field of Romanian literature, from a diachronic point of view, is not fully covered in terms of a complete analytical and synthetic bibliographical processing by types of documents (monographs, serials), thematic coverage areas, chronology (retrospective, current), etc. The general view on the secondary and tertiary bibliographical areas in Romanian literature is heteroclite, lacking unity and cohesion. Most often, the information sources in literature are encapsulated in the general information tools, which makes their identification more difficult. "The bibliographies of books and periodicals from the Romanian literature field are far from being complete, but this lack is partially compensated by general bibliographies,"⁴ the author states in a synthesis published in 1995, revealing also the necessity of their common identification and marking within a single system designed for discovering sources in literary research. This is, in fact, something Angela Marcu also mentions in the introductory part of the book: "...emitting valuable assessments regarding the bibliographic tool designed for Romanian literature research is difficult, as long as there is no clear identification of all the existing publications,"⁵ taking up the difficult task of trying to reach this objective.

The first chapter of the book – **Preliminaries** – analyzes the alternation between *completeness and critical selectivity*, in the context of the dichotomy regarding *informational explosion and information crisis*. The author begins her study with Paul Otlet and Henry Lafontaine, with their plan for creating the Universal Repertoire of Documents, she continues with the "decline of reading" caused by a "text inflation" mentioned by Andrei Pleșu and with "assuming the principle of critical selection," stressed by Adrian Marino.⁶ José Ortega y Gasset also assimilates the "necessity of critical selection" as a "real book police" in which the critical librarian has a decisive role through selection, capitalization, ranking and, implicitly, through eliminating the irrelevant publications in order to distribute authentic value in the end.⁷ Tudor Vianu referred to the same "selection problem" in the preface of the Romanian Literature Bibliography (1965), stressing the necessity of distinguishing between authors and works of interest to literary history and the ones who/which lack authentic value.⁸

The second chapter, entitled **About the Connection between Romanian Literature History and Criticism**, explores the relation between literary criticism and bibliography as a primary work tool in literary research and it implicitly analyzes the interest in bibliography, manifested by the literary exegesis. Great figures of Romanian literary history and criticism are mentioned, figures who had been especially implicated in bibliographical and documentation activities. Remarkable contributions to the field were brought by the great coryphaei of the classical period of the Romanian Academy and by their important followers. Ion Bianu, Nerva Hodoș, George Baiculescu, Perpessicius, Ioan Mușlea, Tudor Vianu, Paul Cornea, Mircea Anghelescu, Ion Simuț, Th. Vârgolici, Adrian Marino are but a few of the names mentioned by the

⁴ Angela Marcu and Daniela Todor, "Referințe critice: o bibliografie a criticii și istoriei literare românești" ("Critical references: A Bibliography of Romanian Literary Criticism and History"), *BiblioRev* 17 (1995), <http://www.bcuculuj.ro/bibliorev/arhiva/nr17/info-focus1.html>

⁵ Marcu, *Bibliografie literare*, 10.

⁶ Ibid., 14.

⁷ Cf. Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 15.

author, stressing the importance of a real and substantial preoccupation for the bibliographical and documentary aspect of any critical approach or literary exegesis. In this context, a significant aspect is Ion Simuț's warning about the danger of "continuing to practice a precarious, defective, approximate type of literary history, with all the doubtfulness inherited during a century,"⁹ in the absence of a solid and efficient bibliographical tool.

Following the round table discussions on the topic *Critical editions in Romanian Culture. A Scientific Research Project of National Interest*,¹⁰ namely the *Critical Editions and Literary Histories* segment, held on 22 January 2008, one can also observe important preoccupations from this perspective. Considering the bibliographical and documentation research equivalent to "written archaeology, from all aspects" and the bibliographer similar to the "literary archaeologist,"¹¹ Theodor Vârgolici states that "no critical edition can begin without a bibliography or end without the absolute knowledge of the entire work, in order for it to be thematically or chronologically classified".¹²

The third chapter, **Literary Bibliography as an Integrated Part of Romanian Cultural Bibliography** is both interesting and substantial, with its subchapters *Romanian Bibliography – A Short Retrospective Summary*, *General Bibliographies of National Level*, *Main Steps in Compiling the Retrospective National Bibliography* and *Unfinished Projects and Overlapping Researches*. The diachronic coverage of the bibliographical and documentary field is analyzed by the author from a perspective that is directly imposed and laid out by the approached theme: documents on history, criticism, aesthetics and literary theory that have been processed bibliographically, analytically and synthetically during two centuries of activity in this field.

The detailed discussion of all the aspects the author brought forward does not end here, for they represent a broad synthesis of bibliographical and documentary history, aspects that are analyzed and debated in the professional literature.¹³ Starting with the first attempts of compiling simple documentation lists with a bibliographical role and an obvious retrospective character,¹⁴ the author covers the Great Bibliographical Plan of the Romanian Academy from 1895, initiated and supported by Ioan Bianu, up until the prestigious realizations of his successors.¹⁵

What we find remarkable is the author's pleading for the idea of the literary bibliography's affiliation to the ensemble represented by the Romanian nation's cultural inheritance. "It would be wrong to separate the evolution of Romanian literature bibliography from the evolution of Romanian culture, of which it is an

⁹ Ibid., 21.

¹⁰ "Critical editions in Romanian Culture. A Scientific Research Project of National Interest", *Revista de istorie și teorie literară (Literary History and Theory Journal)*, 1-2 (2008): 57-88.

¹¹ Contribution by Mircea Coloșenco, Ibid., 71.

¹² Contribution by Theodor Vârgolici, Ibid., 80.

¹³ The bibliography that the author investigates in order to compile the present publication is a good indicative for the richness of information given in the theoretical discourse from the first part of the book.

¹⁴ For example: Vasile Popp, Timotei Cipariu, B.P.Hasdeu, Georges Bengescu etc.

¹⁵ For example: A-Sadi Ionescu, N. Georgescu-Tistu, Sextil Pușcariu, Ioachim Crăciun, Gheorghe Adamescu, Barbu Theodorescu, George Baiculescu, Dan Simonescu etc.

integrated part,”¹⁶ the author also stressing the fact that the first bibliographical works of Romanian literature are included into the general bibliographies, covering the entire cultural production, at a national level. Even drawing together the notions of *bibliography* and *culture* suggests that, through this relation, the cultural value of bibliographies can be recognized. “By juxtaposing the two terms, even more aspects are realized, a logical link between them is thus formed,” as another researcher in this field recently stated¹⁷ and, furthermore, literary bibliography is part of the national one, contributing to the knowledge of the cultural phenomenon on different levels: current and retrospective, analytic and synthetic, sectorial and general.

It is also remarkable that, restricting the *bibliography–culture* relation to the binomial *bibliography–literature* relation, the author resorts to the arguments that were well established by Adrian Marino in *The Biography of the Concept of Literature*, according to which, although they are sometimes underestimated and minimized by the literary aesthetes of all categories, the bibliographies are now an essential component in literary research, they represent an information tool that is indispensable to an astute research activity.¹⁸

The cultural values of the bibliographies analyzed by Angela Marcu are sustained here mostly by the effect of the period of time in which they were created, contributing to the formation of national cultural memory. “With precision, they reflect the period’s ideology, movements, tendencies, cultural and social life in its entirety, constituting not only a tool necessary for literary research, but also a standard of Romanian cultural life,”¹⁹ as the author concludes at the end of the third chapter.

Another aspect that is mentioned in this first, theoretical chapter of the book and which then leads to **Conclusions, Findings and Proposals** presented in the final chapter, refers to the bibliographies of bibliographies and to the electronic resources-bibliographies that were, sadly, poorly represented in the professional literature. In this context, the importance of cooperation between the different institutions with attributions in creating and distributing the professional databases is stressed, without which the entire palette of secondary and tertiary information sources seems fragmented, repetitive and with blanks. The graphics in the addendum are also edificatory regarding the time periods covered in general national bibliographies,²⁰ general retrospective national bibliographies, current general bibliographies for titles of periodicals and general bibliographies for articles in periodicals.²¹

The second part, **The Analytical Bibliography of Romanian Literary Bibliographies** represents, in my opinion, an original contribution, the *pièce de résistance* of the entire work analyzed here. It is original through concept, data organization and in-depth analytical processing of the general and literary

¹⁶ Marcu, *Bibliografiele literare*, 33.

¹⁷ Cristina Popescu, *Evoluția bibliografiilor literare române, Studiu critic : 1932-1998* (The Evolution of Romanian Literature Bibliographies, Critical Study: 1932-1998) (Bucharest: Editura Universitatii din Bucuresti, 2011), 118–119.

¹⁸ Adrian Marino, *Biografia ideii de literatură* (The Biography of the Concept of Literature), Volume 4, Part II, (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1997), 230–231.

¹⁹ Marcu, *Bibliografiele literare*, 69.

²⁰ For monographs, and in case of serial publications for journal titles and articles in periodicals.

²¹ Marcu, *Bibliografiele literare*, 205–207.

bibliographies listed. Although many of them are already well known, “gathering them into a bibliography for bibliographies brings them into a new perspective by integrating them in a unifying frame of a unitary system”.²² This unitary system is also important because “the literary bibliographies published until now have either completely ignored the bibliography segment, or they are outdated compared to more recent publications”.²³

The concept and structure of analytical bibliographies, the selection criteria, the bibliographical classification system (primary and complementary), and the compound of auxiliary instruments created for a more productive access to data from within the bibliography are all mentioned in the introductory part of the book.²⁴ We thus find out that the bibliographies that refer to a single author, as well as the journal indexes (individual ones, per journal title) are not found within the publication.²⁵ Also, we find out that the work only comprises the publications that exist in the collections of the Cluj libraries, printed before 2008.²⁶ For extending the documentation coverage area, the author pointed out, in a separate segment of every thematic division, all the bibliographies she identified in other collections, apart from the ones stated in the beginning.²⁷

The applied methodology is as following: *primary classification* – the thematic one, according to the field to which each registry work refers to; *complementary classification* – the chronological one; *analytical processing* – an in extenso presentation of the summary of each work (when necessary) + a narrative and an in-depth analysis of the contents; *additional information* – referents to the professional literature²⁸ for the processed publications (where they had been identified); *auxiliary indexes system* – subject indexes, editorial indexes (authors, editors, preface writers) and index of names (referenced authors/ writers).

*The classification scheme applied in the paper – mentioning the respective entries*²⁹ indicates not only general themes, each with their subdivisions, but also their positions within the bibliography where one could find sources of information belonging to the respective thematic categories. The main chapters established by the author classify the documents that are described bibliographically by three taxonomic criteria: thematic coverage area (general, special, i. e. literary), by the length of the chronological period the bibliographic material refers to (retrospective and current) and then she differentiates between the types of documentary sources to which the respective bibliographies refer (monographic and serial). Within the chapters and

²² Ibid., 70.

²³ Ibid., 11.

²⁴ Ibid., 70–73.

²⁵ They are found only in the repertoires that exist for the same type of paper, i. e. the journal indexes.

²⁶ Lucian Blaga BCU, Cluj, The O. Goga County Library, Cluj and the Academy Branch Library, Cluj.

²⁷ Therefore, the bibliographical publications identified in the collections held by the university libraries in Bucharest, Iasi and Timisoara are also presented.

²⁸ Here we can identify the pattern applied by Tudor Vianu in *Bibliografia literaturii române 1948–1960* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei R.P.R., 1965).

²⁹ Marcu, *Bibliografiile literare*, 73–75.

subchapters, the material is chronologically organized, according to the date of publication. Thus, we have the following sections within the analytical bibliography: **A. National level general bibliographies**, **B. Literary bibliographies**, **C. Bibliography of bibliographies**³⁰ and **D. Bibliographies – electronic resources**. Each of these segments also has multiple subdivisions, established in accordance with thematic processing requirements.

In addition to this detailed scheme of bibliographic processing, the author establishes a set of essential problems in literary research, indicating papers within the bibliography that might offer possible solutions.³¹ References such as: *See entries: ...* clarify questions that might be formulated during any research, for example: Which volumes did a Romanian author publish in the literary field? Which journal index entry appeared in Romania? What kind of collaborations did the Romanian writers have in the cultural-literary press? Which bibliographical publications dedicated to literary and critical history appeared in Romania? Etc. It is an extra way to access information within the bibliography, one that additionally values the author's organizational, analytical and systematic efforts for a vast documentary material.

Another remark must be made at this point: the quasi-entirety of secondary documents that were analytically processed by Angela Marcu were directly researched. A classic author in the field once said that the bibliography must be enriched by "exegesis, interpretation and criticism of a work, this exegesis contributing to compiling a methodology of documentation hermeneutics"³² and this can only be accomplished starting with direct contact with the work-object of study.

As we stated in the section regarding the second part of the book, **The Analytical Bibliography of Romanian Literary Bibliographies** is constituted as a useful information tool in literary research. In this context, we would have a few suggestions.

Firstly, for a more productive means of accessing the information from within the bibliography, a simplifying operation of "cleansing" or "purification" of the bibliographical data would be in order. The bibliographical and documentary descriptions are so "thick," that finding the essential information for identifying sources can become quite stressful. For professionals in the bibliography/documentation field, the density, extension and depth of the available bibliographical data is a positive aspect, a useful and necessary one, but for a researcher who is not necessarily interested in all the details concerning the external description of documents, they can become upsetting. This bibliography of bibliographies can also be consulted as a database³³ but, in order for the access to information not to be obstructed by too large a quantity of extended bibliographical descriptions, the version dedicated to the general public should, within reason, be restrictive.

³⁰ It is interesting to notice that here we are now talking about a bibliographical section of level IV, namely about a bibliography of bibliographies of bibliographies.

³¹ Marcu, *Bibliografie literare*, 76.

³² Bruno Richardot, *Des pratiques bibliographiques à la hermeneutique documentaire*, cited in Popescu, *Evoluția bibliografiilor*, 119.

³³ Marcu, *Bibliografie literare*, 9.

Secondly, the thematic classification scheme of the bibliography could be more balanced, there are very rich thematic divisions and others very poorly presented (with one or two references). Certain divisions can be cumulated in a superior class without the risk of losing the thematic specificities – it can be found in the subject index.

Finally, we hope that databases will keep their basic characteristics, of being open, up to date, implying periodical updates with all further publications in the field. They can also be updated by including bibliographical data from other categories of documentation excepted from the present bibliography (sectorial/authorial bibliographies, bibliographies of published literary documents, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, etc.), resulting in “a database for all information tools for the Romanian literature field”.³⁴ Although comprehensiveness remains an impossible desideratum, the aspiration to its accomplishment can produce remarkable results. It is a difficult task but, at the same time, an exciting one which Angela Marcu herself mentions at the very beginning of her book.

Translated from the Romanian by Anca Chiorean

³⁴ Ibid., 12.