

All in all, by offering a nuanced account of a historical figure affirmed, with justifiable certainty, to have been a product of his time as well as an embodiment of certain realities of his country, Oliver Jens Schmitt provides a fascinating biography that fills an important gap in the historiography of the Legionary movement and contributes in large measure to a more profound comprehension of such a complex phenomenon as Romanian fascism.

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MIRCEA MARTIN, CHRISTIAN MORARU, AND ANDREI TERIAN, eds. *Romanian Literature as World Literature* (New York, London, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018)

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*Romanian Literature as World Literature* was published as part of a series that contains works such as *American Literature as World Literature*, *German Literature as World Literature*, *Danish Literature as World Literature*, among others. It integrates and validates Romanian literature as a literature of the world, part of a vast, global network. It was edited by Mircea Martin, Christian Moraru and Andrei Terian and it is, in fact, the product of the teamwork carried out by critics and literary historians of different generations who are already well known in the field of Romanian literature and literary criticism. I believe this volume has a double purpose. On the one hand, in the theoretical field, it reconceptualises the idea of world literature by proving, through remarkable and refined analyses, the necessity of integrating the minor literatures, as is the case of Romanian literature, into the global literary and cultural phenomenon. On the other hand, it outlines the conceptual bases for reassessing, in new terms, the Romanian literary canon that was established through the prestige held by certain literary critics and cemented by the academic and cultural institutions, but that today must be readdressed from a fresh analytical viewpoint. However, the purpose of this reassessment is not to destroy the canon; by redefining the Romanian literature in the fresh terms of territorial de-spatialisation and reconfiguration of national literatures in the wider context of the relations between cultural phenomena that thus become trans-national, the purpose of these analyses proves to be both polemical and, implicitly, constructive. Therefore, the hegemony of

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certain dominant cultural models no longer subscribes the definition of world literature; on the contrary, a new view that was also adopted by the contributors to the publication illustrates the mutations that occurred in the literary field and sheds a more *democratic* light on the concept of world literature itself. The concepts of “emergent” or major literatures in relation with minor literatures become irrelevant and disappear. A critical re-evaluation from a wider historical and cultural perspective, while also taking into account the nature and aesthetic value, shows the process of reconstructing a vast network of communication vessels, within which the place of the Romanian literature is established in relation both with the neighbouring literatures and with the more distant, central or influential literatures. On the one hand, this viewpoint seems highly democratic and, to a great extent, perfectly justified. On the other hand, since it adopts a totalising, globalising view on literature, it presents the risk of weakening the concept of literary value itself. However, this is not the case in this volume dedicated to Romanian literature, in which the process of repositioning the literature in relation with the ideological context of the communist period is assumed and it allows the authors to maintain an adequate critical distance, as well as a balance between the political and aesthetic parts of literature.

The concept of world literature was established in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but it continuously reinvents itself. Thus, the questions raised in the preface by the editors of the volume are perfectly in tune with the recent attempts in the field of literary criticism to adapt the concept of world literature to the evolution of a world less and less interested in the art of the written word: “how national literature, and literature in general, comes about historically; where it lies or, better yet, the kind of physical, political, and emotional geography it covers; how it looks and what it is structurally; and how one might read it today so as to do justice to its history, spatiality, circulation, and cultural texture.” (p. 3) This new means of approaching the literary phenomenon in a wider sense favours the marginal literatures that thus overcome their conjectural limitations or the peripheral areas in relation with the *major* literatures; in the context of the crisis of the nation-state, the critical endeavour to fortify the national literatures on linguistic bases is no longer operable. From this viewpoint, the volume *Romanian Literature as World Literature* is of unquestionable importance, not only for the relation between the Romanian literature and the other, geographically more or less close literatures, but also for our own literary history and for the evolution of current literary studies. In this sense, the authors extend an invitation to reassess the entire history of the Romanian literature and to reposition authors and their works from the new perspective. Undoubtedly, the Romanian literature has much to gain from this approach, the more so as, because of the historical conditions of development, the concept of national literature was established here with a slight delay, as compared to the major literatures. Furthermore, the idea of professionalising literature is fairly recent, but imposing a literary canon was impossible before accepting the idea of critical thinking, a concept promoted by Titu Maiorescu at the end

of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This means of treating literature is not completely new, but what is remarkable about it is the idea of widening the perspective and overcoming the linguistic barriers, as well as focusing on those creative figures whose literary and cultural horizon, through influence and propagation, transcends the linguistic barrier.

The volume contains three parts that are not organised by a strict chronology, but they cover almost four centuries of Romanian literature. The first study is not coincidentally dedicated to the poet Mihai Eminescu, who is unanimously considered to be at the top of the Romanian literary pantheon. The author of the study, Andrei Terian, does not analyse the poet's writings in the well established fashion of Eminescu studies; he deconstructs the national poet's image, he analyses its many facets and he contextualises the process that leads to its construction by placing it in comparison with other similar cases from European literature and by showing the role played by the literary myths in the foundation of national literatures. In this case, it is no longer a surprise that the study dedicated to the authors Nicolae Milescu and Dimitrie Cantemir comes after the one that treats the national poet, Mihai Eminescu. Bogdan Crețu, the author of this study, through the two scholars from the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, retrieves the origins of an old, Oriental, Orthodox tradition, a heritage to which some more traditional literary genres later related. The subsequent studies follow a chronological pattern established by literary history, but Caius Dobrescu, Alex Goldiș and Carmen Mușat discuss the evolution of the literary forms from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in a manner that has nothing to do with the traditional literary history – they start by defining the aspects regarding world literature as a cultural and aesthetic phenomenon, their critical endeavour reconstructs not the writers' individual trails, but, by bringing the great genres and literary movements that also appeared in the Romanian space up to date, they conduct a lucid and refined analysis of the characteristics, reciprocal influences, the networks of dissemination of ideas, the creation of resistance or promotion stances, the cultural and ideological environments in which the debates were held. The studies authored by Caius Dobrescu, Alex Goldiș and Carmen Mușat reconfigure the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which coagulated the main movements that would pave the way for the literary modernity from the beginning of the following century. Even if traditional literary history had also noted the importance of this crucial *melting pot*, the exceptional novelty resides in the perspective from which this moment of interference is reassessed, in terms such as "*Soft*" *Commerce* (Caius Dobrescu), *Transnational Geolocation* (Alex Goldiș) and *Geocultural Networks* (Carmen Mușat). Thus, the authors of these studies focus not on the writers or on their works, but on a series of relations or connections created between the primary points of reference of the evolution of the literary forms which, at that time, became carriers of the seeds of later Romanian modernism.

The second part of the volume, entitled *Literature in the Plural*, contains studies authored by Mircea A. Diaconu, Imre József Balázs, Ovidiu Morar and Paul Cernat. This section

follows a natural chronological order in relation with the first part, but, through a wider perspective, it emphasises the *plural* nature of the literature that oscillates between ethnic and universal. This section contextualises the literary movements with ethnic, traditional or regional focus. Naturally, the Hungarian literature written in the Romanian linguistic space cannot be ignored, since it offers insights into the Hungarian literature in general, but, considering the historical context of its evolution and its ethnic origins, it also presents similarities to the Romanian literature. The case of the Jewish authors analysed by Ovidiu Morar is also interesting – writers whose emigration to Zürich led to the creation of the European Avant-Garde.

The third part, entitled *Over Deep Time, Across Long Space*, treats the Romanian literature published after World War II; it is recalibrated in relation with the evolution of European literature on two coordinates – in space, through the authors who, because of the regime, were forced to go into exile and to reinvent themselves in other cultures (Mircea Eliade, E.M. Cioran, Eugene Ionesco), and in time, through a process which features both regression and leaps forward, in relation with the other literatures, showing certain specific identities (as is the case of the Socialist Realism period), as well as distinctive marks in the case of the 80s poets who were influenced by the Beat Generation. The authors of this section (Mihai Iovănel, Mircea Martin, Bogdan Ștefănescu, Teodora Dumitru, Doris Mironescu and Mihaela Ursa) constructed their studies starting from the same premises that were also stated in the preface, following “a worldly revisiting of Romanian Literature” or a “rereading of this literature as world literature” – a perspective that subscribes to what Amy Elias and Cristian Moraru identified as a *paradigm turn*, namely the pressure made by the humanists “to see and read with the world no matter what and where they are reading.” Therefore, Romanian literature no longer represents merely a marginal literature; through multiple connections, even through its regressions from the major literatures, it is positioned within the vast network that constitutes the global cultural system. This new type of approach allows the authors to see the Romanian literary phenomenon in a continuous relation with the other similar European movements or, in the terms of a critical methodology, if we understand literature as a system of communication vessels, then Romanian literature becomes part of this planetary network of literatures that communicate with one another through a continuous exchange of relations and influences. In this case, the task of the literary historian is to identify the subterranean network of wires that fuel the evolution and development of the creative individualities whose emergence within literature no longer needs to be seen as a genetic accident or as something singular, but as the result of certain historical and cultural circumstances that favoured their assertion in relation with the literary characteristics of the time period in which they produced their works.

This volume undoubtedly offers the international readers not only a historical perspective on the Romanian literature, a perspective that would not alienate it from the rest of the literatures of the world – one that contextualises Romanian literature and makes it more comprehensible and even more accessible.

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