

## THE FOUNDING ATTEMPTS OF THE LITERARY HISTORIAN. SOLITUDES, SINGULARITIES, EXEMPLARITIES...

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**Abstract** The present study reviews D. Popovici's founding attempts in the field of literary history. It pursues his activity along four axes: critical editions of modern Romanian authors, studies in literary history, university lectures and "Studii literare" [Literary Studies], the scientific journal he founded as a professor of Cluj University. Both original and modern in his theoretic, methodologic as well as academic options, Popovici is a founder of institutions and initiator of a research school. His scientific projects are singular in their scope. Yet his critic posterity destines him to an unwarranted "singularity". Our reflection focuses upon the exemplary elements in the scholar's destiny.

**Keywords** D. Popovici, history of modern Romanian literature, the "Studii literare" [Literary Studies] journal, university lectures, the Ferdinand I University of Cluj.

In the history of the Faculty of Philology of the Romanian University in Cluj (today, the Faculty of Letters of the Babeş-Bolyai University), professor D. Popovici is regarded as one of the "founding fathers" of literary studies, despite the fact that he became an employee of the respective University only in 1936 (it had been created in 1919, as an institution of Romanian higher education in Transylvania, after the union of Transylvania and Romania, in 1918).<sup>1</sup> Consequently, in the case under scrutiny, what does it mean to be a "founding father" – Of a subject matter? Of a university department? Of a means of writing literary history (that is – of a means of

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<sup>1</sup> For the history of the Romanian University in Cluj, see *Universitatea din Cluj în perioada interbelică* [The University of Cluj in the interwar period], Ion Aurel Pop, Simion Simon, Ioan Bolovan (eds.), vol. 1-4 (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2019) (particularly vol. 3 – ed. Ana-Maria Stan, on *Facultatea de Litere și Filozofie* [The Faculty of Letters and Philosophy]); *Tradiție și excelență. Școlile academice / de știință la Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai din Cluj-Napoca* [Tradition and excellence. The academic / science schools of the Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca] (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2019).

conducting scientific research)? To what extent can D. Popovici's founding attempts constitute today actual *models*—models for an individual destiny in the field of literary studies, as well as models for good practices in the university life, in the academic formation? For the construction of such a reflection in general, the case of D. Popovici stands out as a “singular object”: which makes him part of a paradigm of “founders” (on an academic level) and which also makes his scientific trajectory difficult to classify – both axes are meant to provide an ideational substance to our reflection. D. Popovici's singularity – among the “founding fathers” of the new Romanian University in Transylvania, among the literary historians (through his desire to re-establish the subject he taught and to thus surpass the crises of the field that had escalated in the 1930s), among the literary historians of the Romanian modernity – is given not only by his exceptional intellectual quality, but also by a series of biographical and historical episodes (the “context” which inscribes his foundations was one of the most violently anti-cultural ones, in 20<sup>th</sup> century Romania), all of which transformed him into a particular character of our literary history,<sup>2</sup> as well as of our academic history.

D. Popovici (1902-1952) became a professor of Romanian literary history at the Cluj based University in 1936, through a competition that did not lack surprises (it was for the department of Romanian, a position vacated by the death of G. Bogdan-Duică, a figure of reference for the Transylvanian Romanian culture and for the old literary historicism, characteristic to the beginning of the century), in which he, the “outsider” candidate (he had studied in Bucharest and in Paris, he was not originally from Transylvania...), stood out in front of the local candidates, even more than Ion Breazu, the former assistant of his precursor, who was considered by the academic world of that time to be the “crowned successor” of the famous professor<sup>3</sup>. His public performance during the examination undoubtedly made an impact: some of the counter candidates withdrew from the competition after Popovici's public lecture, thus sealing, in the University, the idea that the new professor was not only very young, but also very charismatic (and very well

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<sup>2</sup> The most comprehensive intellectual profile of the scholar was signed by Ioana Em. Petrescu, his daughter (she was 11 years old when D. Popovici died), who also became a professor of Romanian literature at the same University: Ioana Em. Petrescu, “D. Popovici,” in *Dicționarul esențial al scriitorilor români* [The essential dictionary of Romanian writers], Mircea Zaciu, Marian Papahagi, Aurel Sasu (eds.) (Bucharest: Albatros, 2000), 685-686. On the personality of Ioana Em. Petrescu, see “Personalități ale Universității Babeș-Bolyai” [Figures of the Babeș-Bolyai University], in *Ioana Em. Petrescu*, ed. Ioana Bot (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> The reconstruction of the contest, in Mircea Curticeanu, “Un concurs universitar de altădată (I-V),” [A university vacant position contest of yesteryear] in *Echinox*, X, no. 2-3 (February-March 1978), 31; no. 4 (April 1978): 22; no. 5 (May 1978): 22; no. 6-7 (June-July 1978): 34; no. 8-9 (August-September 1978): 34.

prepared). The historians of the Cluj university life would tell us that the contest committee's decision to choose D. Popovici was influenced (to what extent, precisely?) by the administration of the new University's general inclination towards attracting young professors that had studied in the West, after which they created the favourable circumstances for them to actually reform the study and research plans of the department thus occupied. In a retroactive glance at all that D. Popovici (re)established within the Department of the History of Modern Romanian Literature throughout his 16 years of teaching, we can state that his academic activity met the expectations and policies promoted by the Cluj University (even during the extremely difficult years of its refuge in Sibiu, between 1940-1945), which will represent the primary subject of our considerations in the following.

Before all else, however, we must note that the professor's reformation projects were sensibly deferred, not so much during the refuge in Sibiu (quite the contrary, we could say that, during the refuge years, the intense work on new projects was, for him, a means of resisting the disaster brought on by the war), but more so by the beginning, in 1949, of a great reform of the education system at all levels, in the newly communist Romania. The 1949 reform purged the study programmes, as well as the universities, eliminating some of their most important professors: at the time, many were fired from their departments, persecuted, arrested, investigated. No chicanery from the recently instated (single) power was disregarded, in order to destroy the resistance of the university intellectuals. In Cluj, the most famous example of a professor who was fired from his department is that of Lucian Blaga. Besides him, the list continues with Nicolae Mărgineanu (psychologist), Victor Papilian (medic, anatomy professor, writer), Constantin Petrescu-Ercea (law professor) and many others. The documents kept in the family archive<sup>4</sup> speak of the chicanery to which D. Popovici was also subjected. Having died in 1952, Popovici thus "escaped" from beneath the steamroller of the new dictatorship that was instated in Romania, but most of his institutional establishments (the structure of the Romanian literature department/seminar, the curriculum for the history of Romanian literature, the university journal he had established, the Seminar library etc.) were destroyed.

When considering the Romanian literature history professor's critical posterity, we should also acknowledge that D. Popovici's unexpected disappearance from the university life, together with the political pressure put on the "reorganisation of the education system" (as well as the other vicissitudes of our

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<sup>4</sup> The archive is owned by the "O. Goga" County Library of Cluj and it can be accessed in the Special Collections section (the catalogue of Popovici's university documents - <http://greenstone.bjc.ro/greenstone/cgi-bin/library.cgi?a=q&r=1&hs=1&e=q-01000-00---off-0documen2--00-1----0-10-0---0---0direct-10-CR--4-----0-1--11-ro-50---20-about-Popovici%2C+Dumitru--00-3-1-00-0-0-11-1-0utfZz-8-00&fqf=DC&g=Doc&t=1&q=Popovici%2C+Dumitru> Accessed on 25 August 2020).

history's dark 50s), were liable to generate new systems of loyalties and new fields of power in which his former students would evolve. Iosif Pervain, the most long-lasting member of the Cluj university department out of all his former assistants (he defended his doctoral thesis under the coordination of Popovici, in 1948, with a subject on the Romanian Pre-Romanticism<sup>5</sup>), quickly became, during the dark decade (in 1958), head of the department that had been formerly led and reformed by D. Popovici. After that, he had a long academic career, in Cluj and in Oradea, with all befitting honours at that time (he died in 1982). Rather early on, his methodological choices, after the comparative studies thesis guided by Popovici, turned towards the model of the factological literary history, illustrated by G. Bogdan-Duică, and towards bibliographic research. Neither implicitly, in what he wrote, nor explicitly, did Iosif Pervain ever admit his origins rooted in the scientific establishments of his professor. A more interesting example of scientific filiation is that of Romul Munteanu,<sup>6</sup> who had also been Popovici's student: in 1950, after obtaining his bachelor's degree, he was appointed university assistant by Popovici, and in 1956 he transferred to the University of Bucharest where, although his academic path took other turns, he maintained his predilection for comparative studies. We must, however, note that his first single-authored volume, *Contribuția Școlii Ardelene la culturalizarea maselor* [The contribution of the Transylvanian School to the culturalization of the masses] (1962) brought together the interest of "Popovici's school" for the literary ideas of the Romanian Illuminism and a theme that was obedient to the official political instructions. Just like Romul Munteanu, but with a "personal file" that was much more difficult to defend in front of the communist power, Eugen Todoran also chose, in 1956, to leave Cluj (where he had been taken as an assistant by D. Popovici in 1949) and to go to the newly-established University of Timișoara, to build a highly prestigious university career; his most important studies were dedicated to the exegesis of several great Romanian canonical writers: Mihai Eminescu, Titu Maiorescu and Lucian Blaga.<sup>7</sup> None of D. Popovici's assistants were, after his death, careful with his "heritage", whether in the construction of each of their careers, or in their mature studies. In 1952, at the time of the professor's death, in the Cluj Faculty there were a series of students who would later rise as reference figures of the literary studies and of the academic life (among them: Mircea Zăciu, Ion Vlad, Mircea Curticeanu, Mircea Tomuș, Octavian Schiau, Leon Baconsky, Silvia Tomuș, Andrei Avram etc.); although they did have the

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<sup>5</sup> For more information on the academic trajectory of Iosif Pervain, see Mircea Popa, "Iosif Pervain," in *Dicționar general al literaturii române* [The general dictionary of Romanian literature], ed. Eugen Simion, vol. P-R (Bucharest: Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 2006), 166-167.

<sup>6</sup> About whom, see Stan Velea, "Romul Munteanu", in *Dicționar general al literaturii române...*, vol. L-O, 479-480.

<sup>7</sup> See Sorina Ianovici-Jecza, "Eugen Todoran", in *Dicționar general al literaturii române...*, vol. S-T, 728-730.

opportunity to attend the professor's courses, they were much too young at the time of his death to be truly formed in the spirit of his vision. Most of them became the disciples of Ion Breazu, who followed Popovici into professorship (and who had been his counter candidate at the famous 1936 contest...). The atmosphere of the dark 50s defined the rest. The oral histories of the Faculty of Philology in Cluj, where the professors of this final generation who had been taught by D. Popovici evoked him as an extremely charismatic and very ironic character, an elegant and aloof figure, mindful of the students' evolution and merciless with the impostors (encouraged to manifest themselves, even in the university space, by the events of World War II); the oral histories were, however, never completed by written records: the professor, who passed away in 1952, never became a character in their journals/memoirs, at the time when they were written.

Ioana Em. Petrescu, in *Jurnal*<sup>8</sup> [Journal], makes a series of interesting statements about what was – in her view – the perception of the epoch: that D. Popovici died without having left unpublished books or studies<sup>9</sup> and that, as such, he would not receive a critical posterity. Moreover, his daughter declared, in several interviews, that she had chosen to study philology so that she could edit her father's posthumous work and to implicitly correct the aforementioned perspective.

So it was that, during the years of the communist dictatorship (and before the editorial series started by Ioana Em. Petrescu, in 1969), the most explicit and ample avowal of having been influenced by D. Popovici's view on literary history belongs to... Rosa del Conte, a prestigious Italian Eminescologist, formed, in the 40s, in the study of Romanian literature at the Cluj University (Sibiu), where she worked as an Italian language lecturer<sup>10</sup>. After 1969, together with the posthumous editions of his writings, he became a name that was highly appreciated by the literary historians in Bucharest, who dealt with the Premodern Romanian literature and with the Romanian Romanticism: Paul Cornea, Mircea Anghelescu, Mihai Zamfir dedicated to him commendatory pages<sup>11</sup> – their re-readings will also represent a different model of filiation than the one under scrutiny in the present paper.

In the configuration of D. Popovici's "singularity", to these particular situations in the history of Romanian literary ideas, we must add several other no less significant details. Some refer to the way in which his work is "reclaimed" in the post-communist lexicographic and historical works. The article authored by Ioana

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<sup>8</sup> Ioana Em. Petrescu, *Jurnal (1959 – 1990)* [Journal (1959-1990)], Rozalia Borcilă, Elena Neagoe (eds.), Foreword by Elena Neagoe, Afterword by Carmen Mușat (Pitești: Editura Paralela 45, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the posthumous publication of D. Popovici's writings and courses was exclusively due to his daughter, and she began her endeavour only in 1969. Ioana Em. Petrescu also died very young (in 1990), leaving the project of an edition of D. Popovici's writings unfinished.

<sup>10</sup> Rosa del Conte, *Eminescu o dell'Assoluto* (Modena: Società tipografica editrice modenese, 1962), *passim*.

<sup>11</sup> See the *Bibliography* of the article from the *GDRL*, Sorina Ianovici-Jecza, "Eugen Todoran" ..., 730.

Em. Petrescu for the (aforementioned) *Dicționarul scriitorilor români* [The dictionary of Romanian writers] is, beyond the bibliographic information, a distinctive text, through its implicit character of a “dialogue over the decades” between two convergent views on Romanian literature, that of the father and that of the daughter, developed dialogically and, at the same time, independent from one another. For the present considerations, Nicolae Mecu’s article in *Dicționarul general al literaturii române*<sup>12</sup> [The General Dictionary of Romanian Literature] seems quite revealing. There, D. Popovici received a mostly correct description (with the occasional slight information errors), but one that does not formulate an axiological conclusion regarding his criticism, remaining in the territories of very general observations (“memorable phrasings”, “an enticing hypothesis regarding the personality of the modern Romanian Transylvanian literature”) and it perpetuates the image of a dry, distant university professor who was fair in his endeavours and... that would be just about it. The surprising (since they are unjustified) adjectives attributed to the Cluj-based professor bring colour to a barely sketched portrait: “If, in the studies of ideology, the literary talent of the austere researcher is revealed by staging the ideas (*a tacit takeover of Mircea Zăciu’s consideration from an article resumed in the volume Ca o imensă scenă, Transilvania* [As an immense stage, Transylvania]... *n.B.*), here it is manifested in the terseness and plasticity of the characterizations...” “The austere researcher”...? By feeling the need to further motivate what he actually barely suggested, namely the existence, in Popovici’s case, of an unfavourable destiny (which “marginalised and banished him to the narrow circle of specialists”), Nicolae Mecu ends his presentation with a long sentence in which he brings up both the issue of Călinescu’s adversity towards the work of the Cluj University literary historian (which is, perhaps, a subject that should be reconstructed, based on Popovici’s archive, in future studies), and that of the unjust destiny, as well as that of the modernity of his theoretical perspectives, with no further reflection on any of these particularities of a profile thus outlined: Having been interrupted at the age when the great syntheses are elaborated, marginalised and banished to the narrow circle of ‘specialists’, placed within the chapter ‘the university literary history’, a chapter burdened by the prejudice of solemn and pedantic aridity, massively outmatched by Călinescu’s the Baroque, exuberant, enchanting *History...*, minimised and obscured by the à outrance Călinescu-phares and (re)edited too late, Popovici’s modern and imposing work did not have the impact it deserved.<sup>13</sup> Much closer to our days – and after the publication of all

<sup>12</sup> Nicolae Mecu, “Dumitru Popovici,” in *Dicționar general al literaturii române...*, vol. P-R, 385-389.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 389. Original text: “Înteruptă la vârsta când se elaborează marile sinteze, marginalizată și relegată îngustului cerc al «specialiștilor», plasată la capitolul «istoria literară universitară», capitol apăsător de prejudecata aridității solemne și pedante, concuroasă masiv de baroca, exuberantă, seducătoarea Istorie... a lui Călinescu, minimalizată sau ocultată de

posthumous volumes, edited by Ioana Em. Petrescu – in *Dicționarul enciclopedic Mihai Eminescu* [The Mihai Eminescu Encyclopaedic Dictionary], compiled by Mihai Cimpoi<sup>14</sup>, he received a very short article, which summarises and cites Nicolae Mecu's article, without offering at least some additional considerations on the author's Eminescology, although the perspectives built by Popovici in his university courses on the matter (dedicated to Eminescu) had built, as Rosa del Conte also showed, true re-establishments of the exegesis of the most important Romanian writer.

Another "singularity" that plays an important role in understanding D. Popovici's destiny in the history of the Romanian literary ideas regards his founding attempts – as a professor, as well as a literary historian. Very large in number, they are projects developed predominantly within the Modern Literature Seminar, held at the Cluj University, and they were interrupted by the professor's untimely death. The historical contextualisation above tried to offer several arguments in order to foster an understanding of the reasons why Popovici's posterity was, despite his effort to found institutions and to re-establish academic subjects, relentless towards his name, towards the "spiritual heritage" he had, implicitly, left his disciples, despite not having managed to write the studies advertised by his courses, studies that would have been truly innovative for the Cluj academic horizon of the 40s... The historical guillotine of the instatement of the communist dictatorship, with the nefarious education system reform that began in 1948-1949, cannot explain, as we have already shown, quite everything: it is not merely a "hostility" against the generic history; to that we must add essential elements which are actually details regarding the professional (and political) choices of certain people who were important to Popovici, in the construction of a literary field.

*Quid est*, then, the founding attempts of the literary historian? What makes them exemplary, we ask ourselves, even though their exemplarity was not enough to save them, in the historical duration? Essentially, D. Popovici built a "school of literary history", accomplishing four decisive attempts which regarded: 1. The establishment and the scientific restoration of the object of study; 2. The study and discussion of this object, so that one can uphold an integrative, far-reaching and, at the same time, innovative perspective on the entire field (of literary history), 3. The construction of new university courses that would train the specialists in the field under the aegis of this new perspective and 4. The creation of a public space for specialised debates, with the purpose of not only disseminating the new results obtained through scientific research, but also of establishing a form of solidarity within a group of specialists, of constructing a trend of thought etc.

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călinescofilii à outrance și (re)editată târziu, opera impunătoare și modernă a lui Popovici nu s-a bucurat de influența pe care o merita."

<sup>14</sup> Mihai Cimpoi, *Mihai Eminescu. Dicționar enciclopedic* [Mihai Eminescu. Encyclopaedic Dictionary], (Chișinău: Ed. Gunivas, 2013), 399.

D. Popovici's literary history studies, from the very beginning of his scientific career, were accompanied by large editorial projects, dedicated to the writers that had not received critical editions, in the 1930s. The first, editing the work of Heliade Rădulescu, is a project that obviously accompanies D. Popovici's early works, dedicated to the writer (including his doctoral thesis – on Heliade's literary ideology), and it was published in two volumes (1939-1943), as a third volet of the largest project that had marked his youth, his years of studies and research, between Bucharest, Paris and Iași (the other two are constituted by the volumes of monographs *Ideologia literară a lui Heliade Rădulescu* [The literary ideology of Heliade Rădulescu], Bucharest, 1935, and "*Santa Cetate*". *Între utopie și poezie* ["Santa Cetate". Between utopia and poetry], Bucharest, 1935, which represent not only the first scientific, modern overview on the inner history of the work of an essential figure of the Romanian 1848 movement (the "Pașoptism"), but also a project of an admirable symmetry, in its construction, a symmetry between the synthetic perspective, that of the history of ideas, and the applied analysis of the inflections of literature – of "poetry" – with the Late Enlightenment ideology). Not an exhaustive edition, but rather a project "suspended" by the pressures of "small series" history, Heliade Rădulescu's *Opere* [Works] still remain a reference for specialists because they have the quality of a modern apparatus, impeccably led by the sure hand of the (still young) literary historian. The Heliade Rădulescu edition was followed by another, that of the D. Bolintineanu edition: *Scieri alese* [Selected works] (Bucharest, 1942). The chronology of the publication of these volumes speaks of the extent of the literary historian's philological prowess – as well as of his ability to identify "essential gaps" in the library of modern editions of the Romanian literature classics. These are, as I was saying, "early" publications, in the sense that D. Popovici had only just become a professor at the Cluj University when he sent the respective editions to the printing press, implicitly facing the vicissitudes of war, as well as those of the exile in Sibiu. However, they are not at all treated, first and foremost by their author, as "complementary publications", but as essential stepping stones (titles) of the construction project in which he was involved.

The years 1935-1945 are the ones during which D. Popovici continuously published literary studies through which he began to construct his new perspective on the Romanian literary history, the one synthesised in *Tendința de integrare în ritmul cultural occidental* [The tendency of integration in the western cultural rhythm] (a lithographed course held at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, in 1939-1940), in which he stated that literary history is the pilot-science of literary studies, whose task is to liberate, to synthesise and to interpret literary values. He did not manage to complete it – practically, after 1945, his energies crumbled between the reconstruction of the University returned from exile and a threatening disease which he knew to be incurable (as resulted from the discreet hints from the letters kept in the family archive). However, his studies (together with his university



courses posthumously edited by his daughter) show us “the entire construction of the first Romanian literary history in which the literary phenomenon was no longer seen as strictly pragmatic, but also in the light of its integration in the general dynamics of the ideological doctrines, from a sociological perspective and no less within the vast frame of the artistic evolution of Europe at that time”<sup>15</sup> (DGLR, p. 389). His proposed formula for literary studies, as Ioana Em. Petrescu demonstrated, “is an attempt to surpass the impasse in which literary history (and the traditional comparative literature studies) found itself when facing the statute of uniqueness held by the work of art. The proposed solution did not incline towards abandoning the historical perspective in favour of aesthetic criticism, or towards a methodological restructuring of literary history, since, structurally speaking, Popovici was not a critic, but a literary historian, first of all preoccupied with the process of the inner becoming of the literary phenomenon, conceived as ‘one of the factors of social dynamics.’<sup>16</sup>”

The new perspective in the field of literary history (which was supposed to be concretized into an ample history of Romanian modern literature), which D. Popovici was building, was prepared by his university courses on *The Romanian literature during the Age of Enlightenment* and *The Modern Romanian literature. The tendency of integration in the western cultural rhythm*, would “become” the antemortem monograph *La littérature roumaine à l’époque des Lumières* (1945). His other courses, some of which – lithographed, but most of which – kept in manuscript, in multiple versions, in the family archive, were posthumously published in the author series at the Dacia Publishing House, edited by Ioana Em. Petrescu (*Studii literare* [Literary studies], vol. I – VI, 1972-1989). They were courses on subjects such as *The Romanian Romanticism. Mihai Eminescu’s Poetry and Eminescu in the Romanian Criticism and Literary History*. Together with the lectures per se (or the notes gathered for them), the professor’s archive contains plenty of other internal documents of the Modern Romanian literature Seminar at the University: exam tickets, lists of subjects, correspondence received from his assistants,

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<sup>15</sup> Mircea Angheliescu, apud N. Mecu, “Dumitru Popovici”, ..., 389. Original text: “întreaga construcție a primei istorii literare românești în care fenomenul literar nu mai era văzut strict pragmatic, ci prin prisma integrării sale în dinamica generală a doctrinelor ideologice, în perspectivă sociologică și nu mai puțin pe un vast tablou al evoluției artistice din Europa acelei vremi.”

<sup>16</sup> Ioana Em. Petrescu, “Dumitru Popovici”, ed. cit., 686. Original text: “încearcă o depășire a impasului în care istoria literară (și literature comparată tradițională) se găsea în fața statutului de unicitate al operei de artă; soluția propusă nu tinde însă spre abandonarea perspective istorice în favoarea criticii estetice, ori spre o restructurare metodologică a istoriei literare. Căci, structural, Popovici nu este un critic, ci un istoric literar, preocupat, în primul rând, de procesul devenirii interioare a fenomenului literar, conceput ca «unul din factorii dinamicii sociale».”

acquisition notes for the Seminar library, several minutes from the department meetings. They outline a fairly clear image of the professor's preoccupation for the renewal of the teaching methods and for the structuring of the subject matter, as well as for conceiving the academic curriculum on two levels: an explicit one, of the taught subject matter, and an implicit one, of the construction of a (critical, theoretical) reflection on the approached themes, from which his students could learn how the study of Romanian literature is professionalized.

For the narrow space of the present article, we must make note of two examples. The first regards the introduction – in the succession of the courses taught by Popovici, which the students could choose each year – of the principle which today would be called “pre-requisite”: the enrollment in the course dedicated to *The Poetry of Mihai Eminescu* was permitted only to those who had attended, for one semester, the course dedicated to the reception of Eminescu “within the Romanian literature criticism and history”; Popovici considered that it was a compulsory initiation in the plurality of the readings and in the debate of ideas (with an Eminescian “pretext”), from the Romanian literary studies, so much so that all of the great figures of the field had approached (and applied...) Eminescu's works. His course on *The Poetry of Mihai Eminescu* was, naturally, built as a response (and a fairly explicit one, if we were to judge based on the references kept in the text of the lithographed lectures) to the previous critical perspective on the object of study. The second example – deduced from the lists of exam subjects kept – shows that, after having attended the monograph course dedicated to *The Poetry of Mihai Eminescu*, the students were required to apply the same critical and historical principles to other poets from modern literature that had not been previously studied thus (and about whom they could have previously heard by attending the course about Romanian Romanticism, but without having at their disposal, there, the details of the analyses that Popovici offered about the Eminescu lyricism). Such examples speak of a modern teaching method, centred around the student and interested in creating new effective professional competences, in training their critical thinking and less in reproducing the studied subject matter.

Popovici's fourth founding attempt while he was a professor at the Cluj University was represented by the creation of a specialized literary journal entitled “Studii literare<sup>17</sup>” [Literary studies], under the aegis of the “King Ferdinand I” University of Cluj-Sibiu, and of the History of Modern Romanian Literature Seminar, where the director was D. Popovici, as an ordinary professor. Although it was

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<sup>17</sup> The first issue was published in Sibiu, during the refuge of the Cluj University, in 1942 (although the cover states that it was printed by the Cartea Românească Printing Press in Cluj). It is probably the first university journal dedicated to literary studies, published in Romania (the volumes dedicated to the Romanian press are of no help in the validation of this information, unless, perhaps, through the absence of information that would contradict the present supposition).

explicitly placed in the filiation of the department predecessors (the first issue was dedicated “To the memory of Gh. Bogdan Duică and N. Drăganu, the first Romanian Literature professors of the Romanian University of Cluj”), which must also be read as a gesture of cultural resistance during the troubled times of war with the occupied Northern Transylvania etc., although it therefore fulfils the gestures of an insertion in the history of the institution, the journal is incontestably a novelty in the Romanian university sphere. The journal manages to publish four issues (1942, 1943, 1944, 1948), after which – probably as a consequence of the Education System Reform from 1948-1949 – its publication is permanently suspended. The journal shows an image of the scientific debate forum of that time, which D. Popovici meant to add to the construction of new perspectives in the history of Romanian literature.

Just like Popovici’s other institutional constructions, it is also too little known by the posterity. Not only does the website of the new series mention nothing of the old series<sup>18</sup>, but the journal is completely absent from the publications indexed by the *The General Dictionary of Romanian Literature*, even if Nicolae Mecu, in his article dedicated to Popovici, mentions its title<sup>19</sup> in passing.

The journal’s program is presented in the *Preface* of each issue, signed by D. Popovici. It is a highly interesting text for the way in which it includes the journal among the founder’s new projects: “The journal ... was designed as an organ of the Institute for the History of Romanian Literature, whose establishment preoccupied us from the moment we were entrusted with the department of the history of the Romanian modern literature from the Cluj University. [...] The activity from within our University in recent times made the publication of the journal necessary, for it is only one of the work instruments envisaged by us...<sup>20</sup>” – the times were indeed very

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<sup>18</sup> Under the coordination of professor Ion Pop, between 1998-2003, four issues of a “new series” of the journal are published, under the same title, about which see <https://centrulcle.wordpress.com/publicatii/revista-academica-%e2%80%99estudii-literare-%e2%80%99d/> (Accessed on 31 August 2020). The issues of the new series are not accessible on-line, nor are their tables of contents.

<sup>19</sup> Mecu, 386. Its mentioning (“Între 1942 și 1948 conduce la Sibiu publicația *Studii literare*” [Between 1942 and 1948, he directed in Sibiu the publication entitled *Literary Studies*]) does not tell much, and it contains inexact information – the journal returned to Cluj, probably in 1945, together with its publisher (The “Ferdinand I” University) and its editors, including – D. Popovici. On the cover of the final issue, in 1948, the place of publication is noted to be “Cluj”. The author of the article in GDRL probably never held it in his hands while writing that sentence about the journal.

<sup>20</sup> D. Popovici, “Prefață,” [Preface] *Studii literare* [Literary studies], no. 1 (1942): VII. Original text: “Revista ...a fost proiectată ca organ al unui Institut de Istoria Literaturii Române, a căruia înființare ne preocupă din clipa în care ni s-a încredințat catedra de istoria literaturii române moderne de la Universitatea Clujeană. [...] Activitatea desfășurată însă în cuprinsul Universității noastre în timpul din urmă făcea necesară apariția revistei, care nu este decât unul din instrumentele de lucru preconizate de noi...”

difficult for the University – and for Romania. The Preface is an anchor in the present of the war, with dramatic accents for our historical memory: “The studies we kept for discussion are published in 1940 and 1941. We intentionally started from this date, when our University received its most painful blow. The publication of the journal ‘Literary Studies’ is proof that, far from breaking down with grief, we shall continue our activity, guided by the same preoccupations: we thus consider that to a *forense* propaganda, obscuring truth and humanity in its retorts, one can only respond by wholeheartedly emphasising the dignity of truth and the dignity of humanity.<sup>21</sup>” The program of the journal is, however, more than a mere list of future institutions with good intentions. It configures options and describes methods, at the same time formulating critical positions, even regarding the positivism of the “canonical” literary history (which, in a journal dedicated to the memory of Bogdan Duică, is no small thing...). Thus, the second paragraph of the Preface speaks of its “object of study”, defined as follows: “The object of study which we propose is the Modern Romanian Literature, seen both in the internal development of its artistic and ideological values, and in its relation with foreign literatures. It will thus be a journal of National Literary History and of Comparative Literature with a Romanian basis. There will also be a strong focus on the issues regarding the research methods and it will show, in a critical light, the entire specialised scientific movement.<sup>22</sup>” Consistent with himself, Popovici does not omit the ironic accents and the polemic references: “This fact appears even more recommended today, when research feels the need for a new orientation and when, ripped from the positivistic congealment, our Literary History is once again cast into the sweet waters of impressionism, on

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.: VII-VIII. D. Popovici subtly alludes to the official, public propaganda during the war (“*forense* propaganda”; lat. *forense* = regarding the public square, what can be found in the forum etc.); it is very likely that the journal’s table of contents was also subjected to the obligatory censorship of all publications, which would have sanctioned any attitudes that were explicitly averse to Romania’s political allies in 1942. I wish to thank my colleague Carmen Fenechiu for her help in deciphering the “Aesopic” meaning of the used Latinist term. Original text: “Studiile pe care le-am reținut pentru discuție sunt publicate în 1940 și 1941. Am pornit în mod intenționat de la această dată, când Universitatea noastră a primit cea mai dureroasă lovitură. Apariția revistei «Studii literare» este o dovadă că, departe de a ne prăbuși sub durere, noi ne continuăm activitatea îndrumată de aceleași preocupări: socotim astfel că unei propagande *forense*, subtilizând în retortele sale adevărul și umanitatea, nu i se poate răspunde decât subliniind cu toată tăria demnitatea adevărului și demnitatea umanității.”

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.: VII. Original text: “Obiectul de studiu pe care ni-l propunem este Literatura română modernă, privită atât în dezvoltarea internă a valorilor ei artistice și ideologice, cât și în raporturile sale cu literaturile străine. Va fi deci o revistă de Istorie literară națională și de Literatură comparată pe bază românească. Se va acorda în același timp toată atenția problemelor referitoare la metodele de cercetare și se va înfățișa, în lumină critică, întreaga mișcare științifică de specialitate.”

which it once floated.<sup>23</sup> He thus takes a critical position towards both the positivist literary history of the past epoch, and against the critical “impressionism”, manifested in the Romanian literary history at the time, a tendency for which the most illustrative figure is, of course, G. Călinescu.

In its first issue, the journal had three primary sections: *Studii* [Studies] (the first of which was entitled *Studii franco-române* [Frech-Romanian Studies], authored by Popovici), *Note și documente* [Notes and documents], and *Recensii* [Reviews] (most of which were also signed by D. Popovici). The latter section disappeared from the issues that followed – probably because of the difficulty of receiving books during the war. The structure of the two other sections was kept in all four issues and Popovici was a highly important presence among the signatories of the articles – and (one can deduce) the one who set the primary direction in the selection of the approached themes. Besides Popovici, articles were also signed by Ion Breazu, Nicolae Lasca (the classicist), Petre Grimm (the Anglicist), Henri Jacquier (the French studies expert), Popovici’s fellow student Horia Rădulescu (a secondary school teacher<sup>24</sup>), Emil Turdeanu (the future Romanian studies professor at the University of Rome, in exile), Tancred Bănățeanu (the permanent lecturer of the Folk Literature course at the Cluj University in 1946) and the folklorist Ion Mușlea, as well as the younger (the professor’s students and assistants, at that time) Gavril Scridon, Eugen Todoran, Pia Gradea, Constantin Daicoviciu. By far, the most active were D. Popovici and Ion Breazu. Through the amount of substantial studies, through the approach of unexplored areas in the Romanian comparative studies (with studies bearing titles such as: *Slaviși Confucius* [Slavici and Confucius], *Lamennais la românii din Transilvania în 1848* [Lamennais for the Romanians in Transylvania in 1848], *Turgheniev la Românii din Ardeal* [Turgheniev for the Romanians from Transylvania], *Contribuții la soarta lui Silvio Pellico în România* [Contributions to the fate of Silvio Pellico in Romania] etc.), through its collaborators (most of whom were Cluj University professors), “*Studii literare*” was an academic journal characteristic to the universities of the past century. For Popovici, through his own studies published here, as well as through the research themes he encouraged his collaborators (and his colleagues / subordinates) to pursue, the journal represents a type of “testing ground” for his own research and for his own methodological options. By

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.: VII. Original text: “Faptul acesta ne apare cu atât mai indicat astăzi, când cercetarea simte trebuința unei orientări nouă și când, smulsă din congelarea pozitivistă, Istoria noastră literară este aruncată din nou pe apele dulci ale impresionismului, pe care ea a mai plutit pe vremuri.”

<sup>24</sup> About their close friendship, see D. G. Burlacu, L. Burlacu, “D. Popovici – H. Rădulescu. Corespondență,” [D. Popovici - H. Rădulescu. Correspondence], in *Dacoromania litteraria*, <http://www.dacoromanialitteraria.inst-puscariu.ro/pdf/05/15BURLACU.pdf> (Accessed on 31 August 2020).

constructing a space for academic debate, the journal founded by Popovici fulfilled an essential condition for a modern university.

As this sketch of his founding attempts shows, D. Popovici's exemplarity, as a professor of the history of Romanian literature in an interwar University has not been accompanied by an organic posterity (a filiation, even) of his ideas and visions, nor has it been sufficiently known and reassessed in the historical and lexicographic writings of the past decades of post-communist Romania. The four directions of actions on whose axes Popovici constructed his posture of a university professor speak of the specialist's modernity, of his ability to connect to the European spirit of his time, as well as of his extraordinary resilience, facing the vicissitudes of the violent history of World War II. Moreover, to use an expression employed by Tudor Vianu in order to characterise one of his studies, his foundations "inaugurated an epoch in the Romanian literary history."<sup>25</sup> Which was, as it turns out, not enough to "thrust" him out of either a paradigmatic singularity, or a solitude that invites reflection...

Translated from Romanian by Anca Chiorean

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<sup>25</sup> T. Vianu, apud N. Mecu, 389. Original text: "inaugurează o epocă în istoria literară română."