

RSAA NEWSLETTER

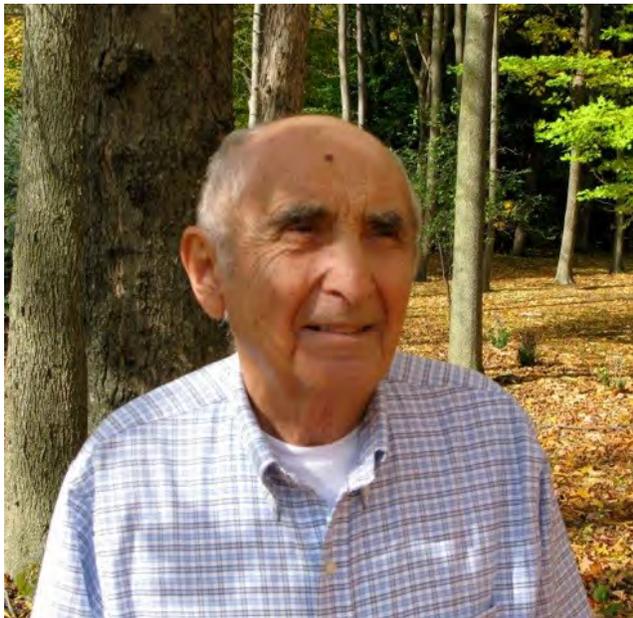
Romanian Studies Association of America

September 2015

Volume XXVI, Issue II

Special Guest:

Dr. Nicolae Babuts



Dr. Nicolae Babuts

Dr. Nicolae Babuts, Professor Emeritus of French, has known a successful career that stretched over almost thirty years at the Syracuse University. But professional life did not stop at retirement for him; in fact, one could say it began all over again. To start with, Dr. Babuts has published three impressive volumes during this time:

Mimesis in a Cognitive Perspective: Mallarmé, Flaubert, and Eminescu. New Brunswick, USA and London, UK: Transaction Publishers, 2011.

Memory, Metaphors, and Meaning: Reading Literary Texts. New Brunswick, USA and London, UK: Transaction Publishers, 2009.

Baudelaire: At the Limits and Beyond. Newark, USA and London, UK: University of Delaware Press - Associated University Presses, 1997.

They reflect Dr. Babuts' research in Nineteenth-

Century French literature and in the field of Cognitive approaches to literature. He has studied Baudelaire in particular, but also Hugo, Mallarmé, and Flaubert and has also worked toward developing a cognitive theory of literature. The new and radical move in the theory is to install memory at the center of interpretation. In this new context, interpretation is guided by the concept of dynamic patterns as units of meaning, which are represented neither by words alone nor by theoretical or perceptual categories but by sentences in their capacity to unite language and perception. The concept of dynamic patterns is crucial to understanding how meaning is created to represent the world in memory.

In her review of *Memories, Metaphors and Reading*, Suzanne Nash [*Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 39.1-2 (Fall-Winter 2010-2011): 172-73] affirms: "Nicolae Babuts's latest work on the relationship of memory to creative expression and interpretation is an invaluable addition to the current research on cognitive approaches to literature being carried out by such influential scholars as Elaine Scarry, Michael Holquist, and Jonathan Gottschall." *Memory, Metaphors, and Meaning* abounds in finely textured interpretations that demonstrate the power of literature to create meaning."

Referring to *Mimesis on a Cognitive Perspective*, C. Kerr [*Choice*, November 2011] emphasizes: "Displaying impeccable scholarship, Babuts sheds new light on Stéphane Mallarmé's "Hérodiade," Gustave Flaubert's "Hérodias," and Mihai Eminescu's "Luceafărul." He also takes his readers on a fascinating voyage through centuries of artistic creation, from Aristotle and Virgil to Shakespeare, Proust, Baudrillard, Ricoeur, and Tarantino." "Babuts skilfully lays the foundation for a cognitive

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Dr. Nicolae Babuts:
*Folkloric Reception of the Bible. II. Christianity:
Europe and Russia. Romance Languages*

approach to literature, proving that memory is crucial to the way humans process art.”

Words such as “skillful,” “a pleasure to read,” “graceful book,” “a turning point” reflect the high professional appreciation his work receives among peers.

He has also edited *Mircea Eliade: Myth, Religion, and History* published at Transaction Publishers in 2014.

In addition, he published poetry (http://stonecanejournal.org/SC6OnlineContents/SC6_babuts.pdf) and poetry translations, as well as numerous encyclopedia articles and reviews. His scholarly articles from the Phoenix re-birth period can be read in *Philologica Jassyensia, Mosaic, Carmina Balcanica, Symposium* 49, 54, 57 and 60.

Forthcoming? *Literature and the Metaphoric Universe in the Mind*. The book will appear in September, 2015 at Transaction Publishers.

Folkloric Reception of the Bible

II. Christianity: Europe and Russia

- Romance Languages ■ German ■ British Isles
- Nordic/Scandinavian ■ Russia ■ West Slavic

A. Romance Languages

Folklore in Romance languages, as well as in other languages, should be understood as comprising the creations of oral traditions. However, we know most epic songs, fairy tales, lives of the saints, and ballads, mainly through the mediation of texts, in which they appear either as copies of oral narratives, or as inspiration for the creation of new stories, like those of the lais of Marie de France (late 12th

cent.). There was, especially in the Middle Ages, a fruitful exchange between learned authors or authors connected to the established church and the anonymous throng of singers or tellers of stories.

Many epic songs were inspired by the Christian faith and its traditional role in the wars against the Saracens. As early as the 8th century, “The texts of the period are filled with biblical reminiscences” (Delaruelle: 26). Speaking of the chansons de geste (epic songs), Norman Daniel writes: “The Biblical story is the expression of faith most characteristic of these poems” (Daniel: 214). He cites Aymery’s prayer (in the 13th-cent. poem *La mort Aymery* [The death of Aymery]): “Glorious Father who made the world ... chose to be born for the ransom of the world...” (Daniel: 214–15). The prayer is uttered while Aymery watches the fire that is prepared for him by the Saracens. It contains references to biblical figures such as St. Peter, Jonas, Daniel, and Moses. In another passionate prayer, this time before the battle against the Saracens, from *Le Couronnement de Louis* (12th cent., The Crowning of Louis), Guillaume addresses God and speaks of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah, and the life of Jesus, his passion, and resurrection (see Daniel: 216). In *La chanson de Roland* (The Song of Roland), again the warriors’ inspiration comes from the belief in the sacred character of their cause. Both Roland and Charlemagne begin their prayers addressing God with the moving lines: “Veire paterne, ki onques ne mentis” (line 2384: “O true Father who have never lied”) and “Veire paterne, hui cest jorn me defent!” (line 3100:

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Dr. Nicolae Babuts: *Folkloric Reception of the Bible.* (2)

“True Father, this day defend me!”) respectively and mention biblical figures. Mortally wounded, Roland invokes the experience of Lazarus and Daniel, hoping to have God save his soul, while Charlemagne prays to God for victory against the Saracens and mentions how Jonas and Daniel were saved (see “Song of Roland”). There may be some irony in the fact that historically Charlemagne’s army at Roncesvaux (reportedly in 778) battled not the Saracens but the Basques. Yet the fact that two or three centuries later (perhaps at the end of the 11th or the beginning of the 12th cent.), in the Chanson, Roland died fighting the Saracens is an indication of the power of the people’s imagination to substitute the enemies of the faith for the historical reality.

Sometimes, however, the prayer occurs not before a battle with the Saracens but during a confrontation between Christians. Thus Girart of Vienne prays to God to intervene and help Oliver, his champion, in a duel with Roland, Charlemagne’s champion:

Immortal God, Who suffered mortal Passion,
And from the grave brought back and saved St.
Lazarus,
And pardoned all the sins of Mary Magdalen,
And saved old Jonah when the great fish had
him...

Redeem this day the life of my young champion
(Newth: 429)

Speaking of the end of the 11th century in France, Delaruelle points out that the editions and commentaries of the Bible multiply (Delaruelle: 236). Among the reasons for this “flowering” of both oral and written traditions during the 12th and 13th centuries, one may count the crusades, increased wealth, better social conditions, and a

cultural cohesion that prompted L. Cazamian to write: “The medieval system as a whole knew an organic integrity and a well-rounded definiteness of outline during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries” (Cazamian: 11–12); and to add glowingly: “... all western Europe was involved in the glow and enthusiasm of a cosmopolitan age whose common Christian faith was the deepest principle of its moral harmony” (12). On the negative side, one may count the Albigensian crusade and the birth of the Inquisition.

Throughout the Middle Ages, many known and just as many anonymous writers and storytellers told stories of the saints and of biblical events. One of the best known is the story of the fall in the Garden of Eden as told in the liturgical drama called *Le Mystère d’Adam* (*The Mystery of Adam*; see “Liturgical drama”). But the story that has been told and retold, more than any other, with thousands of variations and thousands of contexts is the one connected with the cult of the Virgin Mary. The chronicle version of the Spanish Mainet, tells how the young Charlemagne (before he was king) refused to kneel before the Lord of Toledo’s daughter. His tutor explained that Mainet, as Charles was called, “bows to no woman except the Holy Virgin” (Montgomery: 56). In the Middle Ages she acquired the title *Maria maris stella* (Mary, the star of the sea). Her images guiding the ship of faith “appear frequently in Iberian literature” (Fontes: 86). Fontes gives as an example of devotion Alfonso X’s *Cantigas de Santa Maria*. On the French side, Émile Male writes: “The cult of the Virgin, which grew in the 12th century, flourished in the 13th” (Male: 175). According to tradition, Mary, already betrothed to Joseph, was given by the high priest the task of weaving the purple veil for the holy of holies. In a scene of the annunciation, she



Dr. Nicolae Babuts: Folkloric Reception of the Bible. (3)

she is portrayed spinning on the spindle the purple thread. And Male comments: Moreover, the people have never completely forgotten the old tradition: the light threads that in the fall float in the fields, today are still called the threads of the Virgin. (191) In the 13th century, tradition held that Mary was present at the birth of John the Baptist. This may explain why in the later Italian practice of Leonardo and Raphael, e.g., the two children are shown playing together.

A French fairy tale tells the touching story of Péquelé, a juggler who wanted to remain in a monastery to serve the Holy Virgin. The abbot, however, did not think that the Holy Virgin needed an acrobat to serve. One day the abbot witnessed the scene in the chapel in which Péquelé performed, before the image of Our Lady, all his acrobatic tricks with such passion that ... the Virgin left her stone column and came to Péquelé on a ray of light. She leaned over him and, with the edge of her veil, gently wiped his streaming forehead. (Pourrat: 41) The abbot saw that he was wrong and allowed the juggler to stay. Another legend, that of the three Marys, daughters of Anne, has it that the three arrived as fugitives on the shores of Provence (see Santman: 75). In some versions the third Mary is not the Virgin Mary but Mary Magdalene. According to Philippe Walter the three were: Mary the mother of James the minor; Mary Salome, mother of the disciples James and John; and Mary Magdalene: The whole group [including Maximin, Lazarus, and Martha] is said to have arrived in Provence to escape the persecutions. (Walter: 233) But according to Walter, the legend has no historical basis. For him it is a Christian transformation of a triad of fairies. In any case we note that "In Provence the cult of the Marys was connected to the sea" (Santman: 76) and that in his well-known poem *Le Bateau*

ivre (The Drunken Boat), Arthur Rimbaud speaks of "les pieds lumineux des Maries" ("the luminous feet of the Marys") in the context of possibly calming the ocean. Such are the unexpected ways in which legends are propagated.

One of the most interesting phenomena is the case of the Provençal troubadours. Robert Briffault points out that the troubadours at the beginning of the 12th century...took over the formulae and conventions of erotic poetry and applied them to religious poetry by the single expedient of substituting the name of Our Lady for that of the object of their profane passion. (Briffault: 157) Briffault adds: The Italian troubadours [such as Montanhagol and Sordello] adopted the fashion instituted by the piety and prudence of their Provençal colleagues. (159) And they are the ones who were the mediators for the poetry that came to Dante and the other poets of the stil nuovo.

In the modern era, people have been attracted to the various places where the Virgin Mary is believed to have appeared, e.g., Lourdes in France (in 1858), and Fatima in Portugal (in 1917). In the former case, the initial vision appeared as a small woman no bigger than Bernadette herself, very young and not necessarily like Mary mother of Jesus. But by saying that she is the Immaculate Conception, she gave the public, including the authorities and the church, a reason to believe that she was Mary. One can perhaps see here the dynamics of how traditions begin and take hold.

Another saint who merits attention is St. James, the Greater, the apostle who was considered as the evangelizer of Spain. In order to reconcile the sojourns in Spain with the evangelical account of his martyrdom in Judea, the tradition imagines a translation of his body to Spain. => p. 5



Dr. Nicolae Babuts: *Folkloric Reception of the Bible.* (4)

This was confirmed when his tomb was discovered or rediscovered in the 9th century (see Melczer: 13). One cannot overestimate the role that St. James played in the tradition of pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela. Melczer mentions ... the mystical story involving both Santiago and the Virgin Mary. Weary and disheartened by the labors imposed upon him, Santiago is comforted by the Virgin who appears to him standing on a jasper column planted in the Ebro River. (69) The case of St. Anne is also interesting. She is not mentioned in the Bible, but because she was needed to fill the role of the mother of Mary, both she and her daughter were associated with motherhood. One of Anne's "best-known functions in popular religion was assisting women in labor, a belief kept alive even into this century in, for instance, the Abruzzi region of Italy" (Santman: 84). And in the Romanian fairy tale, "Voinicul cel cu cartea in mina nascut" ("The Hero Born with a Book in his Hand"), it is the Virgin Mary who helps an older couple have a child. The distance between the two areas, Romania and Italy, indicates that these legends were widespread.

Sometimes, fairytales aim to highlight the dimension of the fantastic and not the religious aspect as such. When they do include biblical figures, these acquire some of the aura of the fantastic. In the French tale of "The Flight into Egypt," Our Lady invokes the help of nature to escape the pursuing Herod's soldiers and the child performs miracles (see Pourrat: 70–73). The duo of God and St. Peter, or Jesus and St. Peter are often introduced as traveling in this world and interacting with people. In "Le diable et le maréchal ferrant" ("The Blacksmith Outwits the Devil"; Delarue: 346–47) the blacksmith who

ruins himself by helping others, especially passersby whom he would wine and dine, signs a contract with the devil to sell his soul for Folkloric Reception of the Bible some money. Afterwards Jesus and St. Peter travel through the village and as it is raining, the blacksmith invites them in gives them dinner and fresh clothes, and has them sleep in his house free of charge. The next day, when leaving, the travelers offer to fulfill three requests. These requests help him outwit the devil and get back his soul. In a Romanian tale, "Imparatul cel fara-delege" ("The Sacrilegious King"; Ispirescu: 433–42), God and St. Peter, disguised as two old men, save the heroine's baby from drowning.

In the Romanian tale "Cei trei frati saraci" ("The Three Brothers who were Poor"; Ispirescu: 443–49) each of the three brothers asks that his wish be fulfilled. The oldest brother asks to have a vineyard, the middle brother asks to have a flock of sheep, and the youngest asks to marry and have a house by the bridge. They all promise to help travelers, but only the youngest keeps his promise. He is sleeping when two old men come by and his wife has to wake him up. He helps the two travelers and gives them dinner and a change of clothes. One of the old men asks for more: he asks the man and his wife to sacrifice their only child. He gets up from the table and takes the child to throw him into the oven. But when the wife goes to check the oven, she finds her son unharmed and a woman as shining as the sun comforting him. As the two travelers leave, they walk without touching the ground. A cloud lifts them to heaven. They were God and St. Peter. The tale is noteworthy for some affinity with the story of Abraham who was tested by God when asked to sacrifice his own son (Gen 22; see "Aqedah").



Dr. Nicolae Babuts: Folkloric Reception of the Bible. (5)

Also there are some resemblances with the legend of St. Julian the Hospitaller (see Jacobus: 127–28). Both the youngest brother and Julian have a house or a hospice by a bridge or by a river, with the purpose of helping travelers at a critical stage of their journey. Both protagonists are resting or sleeping when the travelers arrive. In both stories the help they give to the strangers is a test that shows their essential goodness and enables them to obtain happiness for the brother and his wife and salvation for Julian and his wife. (See also Gustave Flaubert's version, "La légende de Saint-Julien l'hospitalier" [1877, "The Legend of St. Julian the Hospitalier"], in which the traveler, whose appearance is that of a leper, asks Julian to embrace him. He is Christ, who ascends to heaven and takes Julian with him. The embrace appears almost as shocking as the sacrifice that the brother and his wife are asked to make.) Another legend that has some affinity with the two preceding ones is the story of the giant Reprobus ("the reprobate"), who was persuaded by a hermit to help travelers cross a river. One day when he was carrying a child on his shoulders, the waters began to rise and the child became heavy as lead. With superhuman efforts he brought the child to the other bank to safety. At that moment the child declared: Je suis le roi que tu cherchais et que tu as servi sans le connaître. Désormais, tu ne t'appelleras plus Reprobus mais Christophe, "celui qui a porté le Christ." (I am the king whom you sought and served without knowing him. From now on you will no longer be called Reprobus but Christopher, "the one who carried Christ.") (Walter: 239)

In his fine study of the well-known Romanian ballad Mioritza, Mircea Eliade advances the idea of the shepherd's impending death in a Cosmos

"sanctified by participating in the mystery of marriage." He then adds: "And it is also as a marriage that the Christian mystics and theologians have interpreted Christ's agony and death" (Eliade: 252). He cites St. Augustine as proof of this interpretation.

Some minor references to biblical names are nevertheless significant because they indicate how widespread the biblical echoes reverberated. Thus in Marie de France's lay of "Gugemar," a bed is said to be "a very rich bed, carved by the cunning workmen in the days of King Solomon" (Marie de France: 7). In "A Story of Beyond the Sea," having lost all hope to persuade the Count to save his own daughter, Thibault and the brother pray asking for Jesus' help, and indeed she is rescued (see Marie de France: 175). In a wider sense of folklore, one has to count Christmas carols, which are characteristic of all Romance languages, including those in the new world (see "Carol" and "Christmas VII. Music").

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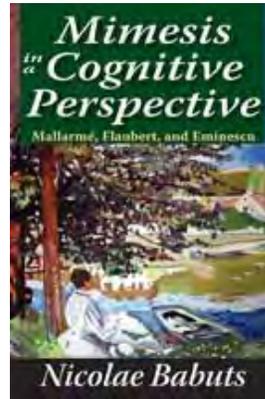
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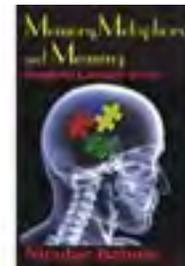
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Nicolae Babuts. "Folkloric Reception of the Bible. II. Christianity: Europe and Russia. A. Romance Languages," in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception* Volume 9 (Field - Gennesaret) Editor(s): Dale C. Allison, Jr., et al. De Gruyter (Berlin, Boston) 2014: 301-306.

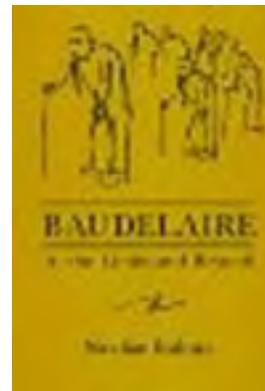


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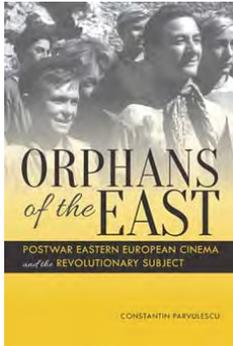


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Romanian Studies Association of America

Recent Publications:



Constantin Pârvulescu. *Orphans of the East. Postwar Eastern European Cinema and the Revolutionary Subject*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2015.

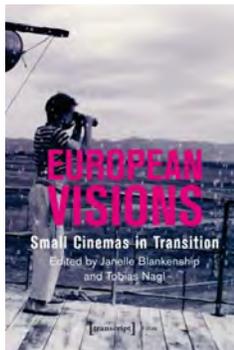
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German Life and Letters. Special issue: **The Eastern European Turn in Contemporary German-Language Literature**. 68:2 (April 2015). Brigit Haines, Anca Holden, co-editors.

Anca Luca Holden. "Interview with Herta Müller and Philip Boehm." 324-332.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/glal.2015.68.issue-2/issuetoc>



Lenuta Giukin. "At the Crossroads of Time. Memoirs and Becoming in Ben Todica's Documentary *Our Journey*. In *European Visions. Small Cinemas in Transition*. Janelle Blankenship, Tobias Nagle, editors.

Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag, 2015. 141-9.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/glal.12073/abstract>



Ramona, Mielusel. *Langue, Espace et (Re)composition identitaire dans les Oeuvres de Mehdi Charef, Tony Gatliff et Farid Boudjellal*. Paris: l'Harmattan, 2015.

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/glal.12073/abstract>



Recent Publications (2)

Translation Café

under The University of Bucharest,
in conjunction with The British Council,
The Romanian Cultural Institute,
and The Embassy of Ireland

Announces the publication of

Issue No 145
Poems by Lucian Mănăilescu

Translation Café publishes in Issue 145 poems by Lucian Mănăilescu, a Romanian writer who has been awarded numerous distinctions. This issue contains poems from the volume entitled *The Atrocities of Happiness*. The poems have been translated from Romanian into English by graduate students of the MA Programme for the Translation of the Contemporary Literary Text.

Translation Café No 145 is available for consultation and downloading on receipt of this Press Release, at the following internet address: <http://revista.mttlc.ro/>

Nicolae Babuts

Forthcoming book:

Literature and the Metaphoric Universe in the Mind. Transaction Publishers. 2015.

Articles:

“Baudelaire and the Identity of the Self.” *Mosaic*. Vol. 47, No. 3 (September 2014): 159-173.

“A Metaphoric Intercession in Miorita and The Arges Monastery.” *Philologica Jassyensia* XI, No. 1 (21), 2015. 15-31.

Find us at: <http://www.thersaa.org/>
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Romanian Studies Association of America



Recent Professional Presentations

Dr. Noemi Marin (Florida Atlantic University) participated in June 2015 at the first European prima European Conference in Argumentation at the Univeridad Nova de Lisbon. She presented : “Crafting Arguments by Definition for Nationalist Identity in Post-Communist Contexts: A Case for Re-Inventing Communist Models of Argumentation”



Dr. Marin with a poster of her presentations. Lisbon, 2015.



Looking at rhetorical practices of political transition, her paper examined political arguments by definition, focusing on nationalist identity as a discursive model populating the public sphere of communist times.

Examining how nationalist political arguments engage with political deliberation in the public sphere, the paper featured Romanian presidential rhetoric in and post-1989 to examine whether arguments by definition on nationalist identity follow the pre-1989 communist model of nationalist and/or patriotic identity rhetoric.



Dr. Marin at Estoril, Portugal. The house of King Carol al II-lea who died in exile in Potugal, where he was initially buried.

Presentations by RSAA members at the Romanian Studies Association Conference in Bucharest (June 2015)

Dr. Letitia Guran, North Carolina A&T University

Title: *De-colonizing Discourse: The Rhetoric of the New Wave'and the Communist Legacy*

Dr. Noemi Marin, Florida Atlantic University

Title: *There Is Communist Rhetoric and Then There Is ROMANIAN Communist Rhetoric: A Theoretical Perspective on Totalitarian Discourse*

Domnica Radulescu, Washington and Lee University

Title: *Writing the Immigrant Experience and Post-Communist Dystopia*



Romanian Studies Association of America



Announcements

Call for Submissions: 2015 Association for Women in Slavic Studies Graduate Essay Prize

The Association for Women in Slavic Studies (AWSS) invites submissions for the 2015 Graduate Essay Prize.

The prize is awarded to the author of a chapter or article-length essay on any topic in any field or area of Slavic/East European/Central Asian Studies written by a woman, or on a topic in Slavic/East European/Central Asian Women's/Gender Studies written by a woman or a man. This competition is open to current doctoral students and to those who defended a doctoral dissertation in 2014-2015. If the essay is a seminar paper, it must have been written during the academic year 2014-2015. If the essay is a dissertation chapter, it should be accompanied by the dissertation abstract and table of contents. Previous submissions and published materials are ineligible.

Essays should be no longer than 50 double-spaced pages, including reference matter, and in English (quoted text in any other language should be translated). Completed submissions must be received by **September 15, 2015**. Please send a copy of the essay and an updated CV to each of the three members of the Prize Committee as email attachments. Please address any questions to the chair of the prize committee.

Committee:

Professor Karen Petrone, Committee Chair
Department of History
University of Kentucky
petrone@uky.edu
Professor Janet Johnson

Associate Professor, Political Science &
Women's Studies
Brooklyn College, City University of New York
Johnson@brooklyn.cuny.edu

Professor Adrienne Harris
Associate Professor of Russian
Baylor University
Adrienne_Harris@baylor.edu (Please note
underscore in this address between Adrienne
and Harris)

Future conferences:

RSAA panel, Austin, TX (January 2016) Mothers without Frontiers: Inscriptions of Affective Maps in Contemporary Romania and the World

“Motherhood at the Periphery in Recent
Romanian Cinema”, Ramona Uritescu-
Lombard, University of Michigan

“The Impossible Return in Stere Gulea's
Weekend with my Mother”, Catalina Florescu,
Pace University

(Un)documenting motherhood in “*The Flower
Bridge*” by Thomas Ciulei and *Code Unknown* by
Michael Haneke, Oana Chivoiu, South Louisiana
Community College

“Care Drain and Substitute Mothering in
Waiting for August by Teodora Ana Mihai”,
Maria-Sabina Draga Alexandru, University of
Bucharest



Romanian Studies Association of America



Call for Papers: American Comparative Literature Association

March 17-20, 2016

CFP deadline: September 23, 2015

Images of Sciences in Literature

Organizer: Catalina Florina Florescu, Pace University

This seminar investigates the views man has expressed about the impact of technology and science across recorded history. Questions that might be addressed include: What is the relationship between religion and technology? Has man always viewed technological innovations as positive? What relationship is there between man's vision of utopian society and technology? The seminar promotes awareness of the importance of literature in creating and maintaining the social, political, ethical and religious systems by which we live. The seminar also considers how humans have discussed the impact of technology and science on society. Suggested primary works may include, but are not limited to, T. More's *Utopia*; A. Huxley's *Brave New World*; H. Müller's *The Passport*; S. Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*; E. Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*; S. Ruhl's *Dead Man's Cell Phone*; A. Clarke's "The Nine Billions Name of God"; U. Guin's "The One Who Walked Away from Omelas"; A. Lightman's *Einstein's Dreams*; etc.

Violence in Contemporary European Cinema

Organizer: Monica Filimon, Kingsborough Community College

This seminar seeks to examine the representation of violence, in its public (political, economic, environmental) and private manifestations (gender, racial, ethnic, and domestic), in contemporary European cinema. Brutality, cruelty, and aggressiveness permeate not only the lives of victims of war (as in *Grbavica* [2006], *Caché* [2005], etc.), of totalitarian regimes (*4 luni, 3 saptamani si 2 zile* [2007], etc.), or of crime syndicates (*Gomorrah* [2008], etc.), but also that of the ordinary individual confronted with racial and ethnic injustice, poverty, or familial conflict (*Gegen die Wand* [2004], *Lilja 4-ever* [2004], *L'enfant* [2005], *Entre les murs* [2008], *Fish Tank* [2009], *La Pianiste* [2001], *Pozitia copilului* [2013], *Leviafan* [2014], *Urok* [2014], etc.).

Violence plays a fundamental role in the organization of the continent's political, economic, and social life, and its presence on the screen raises further questions about its possible effect on the viewers. What are the roots of such violence? How do certain forms of violence (racial, ethnic, political, economic) complicate the ideals of the European Union? What are the forms of invisible violence that govern the European citizen's daily interactions? What is the ethical approach to the representation of violence? Can we speak of such an ethics?

This panel invites papers that consider both the topic of violence in its diverse manifestations, and the question of the aesthetics of violence in post-2000 European cinema. Papers are encouraged to rely on a wide range of critical approaches (e.g. phenomenology, trauma theory, postcolonial theory, psychoanalysis, etc.) and focus on cinematic traditions across the continent.



Prezentări remarcabile de artă, cultură și știință românească la ARA 2015

Al 39-lea Congres anual al Academiei Româno-Americane de Arte și Științe,
Frascati, Italia, 28-31 iulie, 2015

Prof. Dr. Ileana Costea



Prof. Dr. Ileana Costea, autoarea articolului, cu Dr. Cătălina Curceanu la Congresul al 39-lea ARA de la Frascati, iulie 2015.

Într-o seară la sfârșitul lunii iulie-“cuptor” (nume care nu a fost dezis de valul de căldură înăbușitoare venit peste Europa vara aceasta), pe terasa unui hotel din mica localitate Frascati, se aude vorbind înflăcărat românește. Un grup de români din diverse colțuri ale lumii ciocnesc un pahar de vin alb, rece, sec, foarte fin la gust, celebrul vin italianesc Frascati. Plini de voie bună și antren, povestesc, glumesc. Din când în când mai și traduc în engleză pentru cei doi care nu știu limba română, cunoscutul pictor american (Jerry W. McDaniel, profesor la FIT/SUNY, SUA) și matematiciana elvețiană, Dna. Rațiu; împărtășesc impresii despre sesiunile ce au avut loc în timpul acelei zile. Căci toți au venit pentru a participa la Congresul Academiei Româno-Americane de Arte și Științe (ARA). Sunt binecuvântați de briza plăcută care răcorește aerul seara în frumoasa regiune Tuscolana, la numai 20 km de centrul Romei, Italia. Este vorba de cel de al 39-lea congres anual ARA, organizat pe campusul

Institutului Național de Fizică Nucleară de la Frascati, LNF-INFN (Laboratori Nazionali di Frascati Istituto Nazionale di Fisica Nucleare).



Pe terasa hotelului Villa Merced câțiva din participanții de la Congresul ARA povestesc despre sesiunile ținute în timpul zilei. De la stânga la dreapta, Ileana Costea, Doina Uricariu, Livio Dimitriu, Tudor Rațiu și soția, și Jerry W. McDaniel.

Congresul și Organizatorii.

La Congresul anual ARA se întâlnesc intelectuali de origine română de pretutindeni, și prieteni ai României de diverse naționalități pentru a prezenta și discuta contribuții recente în domeniile artei și științei; participă unii dintre cele mai recunoscute și respectate personalități din domeniul academic.

Anul acesta congresul a fost organizat de Dr. Cătălina Oana Curceanu, Congress Chair, în colaborare cu Ruxandra Vidu, Președinta ARA și membrii de conducere a Academiei ARA. Un rol important în invitarea “speaker-ilor” l-a avut Dna. Dr. Oana Leonte, una din consilierii congresului.



Prezentări remarcabile de artă, cultură și știință românească la ARA 2015

Prof. Dr. Ileana Costea (2)

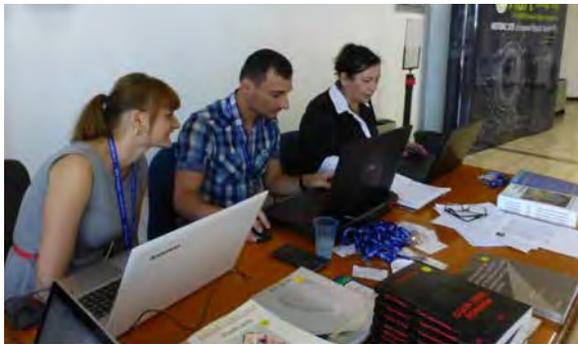


Poză de grup cu participanți la al 39-lea Congres ARA.

Dr. Cătălina Curceanu, Congress Chair, deschide Congresul ARA de la Frascati. La masa de prezidiu Dr. Umberto Dosselli, Directorul Institutului LNF-INFN, Dna. Dana Constantinescu, Ambasadoarea României în Italia, și Dr. Ruxandra Vidu, Președinta ARA.

Spicuri din program

La Congres au avut loc numeroase prezentări despre idei inovatoare în tehnologie, medicină, educație, sociologie, filozofie, artă, arhitectură și cultură. Articolul de față prezintă doar câteva spicuri din program (<http://www.americanromanianacademy.org>).



La

masa de înscriere la Congres, Președinta ARA, Ruxandra Vidu (dreapta), cu doi studenți ai dânzei din România, Mirela Ionela Mihai și George Tepes, doctoranzi la Universitatea "Politehnica" (UP), București.

Keynote Speakers și Invitați de Onoare

Speech-ul Keynote al Doinei Uricariu (Director al Institutului Cultural Român din New York) "Poezia și Politica Memoriei" a atins un punct important: fiecare din noi avem "o mașină a timpului" a noastră, memoria umană fiind cea care ne construiește și ne definește, devenind adevărata noastră carte de identitate, putând reprezenta "carnetul nostru de conducere" către viitor. Memoriile, poezia, istoria sunt influențate de politică și forțele culturale. Politicile memoriei dau formă memoriei colective, felului în care ea este scrisă și transmisă istoria

La deschiderea oficială a Congresului Ambasadoarea României în Italia, Dna. Dana Constantinescu, a adresat participanților de origine română în limba lor maternă un îndemn: "Vă încurajez și vă doresc din tot sufletul să simțiți în continuare românește, să continuați să faceți lucrurile minunate pe care le faceți și să puneți suflet românesc în tot ceea ce faceți."



urmatoarelor generatii.



Prezentări remarcabile de artă, cultură și știință românească la ARA 2015

Prof. Dr. Ileana Costea (3)

Foto pagina precedenta:

Dr. Oana Leonte introducând-o pe Dr. Doina Uricariu ca keynote speaker.

Un lucru deosebit a fost prezentarea video-ului despre Memorialul Sighet și un fragment din filmul regizorului Andrei Zine, *Proiecte din Trecut*, după romanul Anei Blandiana despre deportările în Bărăgan. Participanții de la Congres au apreciat aceste “documente” importante ale istoriei recente a României sub comunism.



Închisoarea de la Sighet, azi Memorialul Victimelor Comunismului și al Rezistenței.

Unele prezentări au fost în domeniul științei: ingineria polimerilor și arhitectura complexă a materialelor hibride (Acad. Bogdan C. Simionescu, Academia Română din România), al sintezelor organice enantio-selective (Prof. Sorin I. Rosca, Secția de Chimie Organică "C.D.Nenitescu", Universitatea "Politehnica" din București), “Tehnici de mecanică geometrică în înregistrarea imaginii” (Prof. Tudor Rațiu, Departamentul de Matematica, Școala Politehnica Federala din Lausanne), “Microcircuite prefrontale corticale” (Dr. Ioan Oprea, Departamentul de Fiziologie și Farmacologie, Universitatea Wake Forest, Școala de Medicină, NC, SUA).

Arhitectul Livio Dimitriu (Professor la Școala de Arhitectură a Institutului Pratt din Brooklyn, New York) a abordat o temă inedită: “Probleme de traducere în arhitectură”. Cu numeroase exemplificări susținute de imagini edificatoare el a prezentat audienței modul în care arhitecții studiază cultura în complexitatea ei și introduc în opera lor: geometrie, biologie, artă de toate formele, filosofie, sociologie, etc. Transformarea acestei uriașe varietăți de interese în forma construită ce urmează a fi locuită implică un proces de traducere dintr-o “limbă” într-alta. Metodologia traducerii între poezie, pictură, sunet, sculptura și arhitectură Livio Dimitriu a prezentat-o cu exemple de creație la poeți ca Rimbaud și Appolinaire, la pictori ca Juan Gris, și în complexul de la Târgul Jiu al lui Brâncuși.



Arhitectul Livio Dimitriu prezentând “Probleme de traducere în arhitectură”

Mese rotunde

La Congresul Academiei ARA de anul acesta au avut loc trei mese rotunde.

Prof. Dr. Ruxandra Vidu (University of California at Davis) a condus Masa Rotundă “ARA – o platformă de networking pentru cercetare și diseminare într-o lume sustenabilă” despre un



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obiectiv care o preocupă: de a crea o platformă ARA de network puternică și mai largă de comunicare pentru comunitatea Româno-Americană de cercetători din toată lumea, oameni de știință și din domeniul artistic, pentru a face schimburi de informații și a spori vizibilitatea și impactul ARA și a membrilor ei. S-au discutat diversele posibilități de finanțare existente, destul de numeroase și variate, care trebuie însă explorate.

Prof. Dr. Ileana Costea (California State University, Northridge) a condus Masa Rotundă “Spațiul Mioritic al Românului din Exil”. Dânsa a prezentat spectrul larg al atitudinii românului exilat față de tot ce este românesc, față de limba maternă și de România: de la dor și nostalgie, la acțiuni de promovare a culturii românești, de implicare în politica sau economia din țară, până la atitudinea opusă, de totală negare a lui “a fi român”. Și totuși, conștient sau nu, indiferent unde se poziționează un român exilat pe acest spectru, el poartă în sine, oriunde s-ar afla, “spațiul Mioritic”. Dr. Doina Uricariu (poetă, scriitoare, editoare) a prezentat situația scriitorilor din exil din experiența anilor cât a locuit la New York. Ion Lază (scriitor din București) a vorbit despre nefericita neglijare în țară a scriitorilor din exil, omiterea acestora din diverse dicționare, istorii literare și antologii importante, și despre modul în care el personal a scris despre ei și le-a prezentat opera de-a lungul anilor în blogul lui literar și în Calendarul Scriitorilor (publicat recent). Dânsul le-a pus și lor, scriitorilor români din afara țării, plăci memoriale pe casele unde au locuit aceștia în București, în cadrul proiectului de care s-a ocupat și care a fost descris în cartea lui “Odisea plăcilor memoriale”. Ben Todica (creator de emisiuni la

secția română de radio și TV din Melbourne, scriitor și cineast) a vorbit despre despre “cordonul ombilical cultural”. Petra Vlah (poetă) a intervenit printr-o pre-înregistrare video explicând cum, după 36 ani de trai în Los Angeles, dorul, niciodată stins, o face să se întoarcă în țară.



Ileana Costea conducând masa rotundă “Spațiul Mioritic al Românului din Exil”, Doina Uricariu și cei doi participanți pe Skype, Ben Todica – din Melbourne și Ion Lază din București.

A treia masă rotundă, foarte interesantă și aceasta, pe tema “Micro expresii și grafologie în Educație. Un model psiho-educational.” a fost organizată și ținută de Antoneta Firuța-Tacea și Maria Mion Pop de la Universitatea din București, România.

Din Sesiunile la Congres

În domeniul artei interesante au fost prezentările: Dr. Carmen Sabău despre opera pictorului Lucian Grigorescu; Dr. Isabella Sabău despre “Visual Literacy” în epoca digitală și cea a pictorului american Jerry W. McDaniel, despre lucrările lui de inspirație românească (Lucian Blaga, Ana Blandiana, Ion Țuculescu) ilustrate cu



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Prof. Dr. Ileana Costea (5)

diapozitive și videouri cu numeroase imagini viu colorate.



În fața standului cu ilustrații pentru poezii de Blandiana și Blaga create de Jerry W. McDaniel. De la stânga la dreapta, din SUA: Oana Leonte, Jerry W. McDaniel, Ileana Costea, și din Canada: Dorin Stoica.

Două lucrări pe temă de poezie au fost: “Paradis sau neant” (Dinu Leonte) și “Textul epic al poeziei lui Arghezi” (Raluca Boca). Personal m-a fascinat studiul Angelei Stoica (Universitatea din Montreal) despre valorificarea limbii și culturii materne la copiii care trebuie să învețe franceza ca a doua limbă, ceea ce îi ajută atât în relațiile cu familia cât și în performanța școlară.

Prezentările au fost de mare ținută; cele tehnice au atins profunzimi uneori greu de înțeles pentru cei din afara domeniului. Pentru audiența ARA o prezentare de gen TED, de știință popularizată ar fi fost de mai larg interes.

Anul acesta volumul de Proceedings a fost publicat într-un format frumos, cu o imagine de pictură abstractă viu colorată pentru coperta donată Academiei de artista din România, Luminița Gliga. Toate lucrările din Proceedings

au atribuite numere DOI (Digital Object Identifier) pentru identificare și accesarea lor online. Ruxandra Vidu încearcă să introducă Proceedingul ARA în circuitul ISI (International Scientific Indexing) în speranța de a atrage un cât mai mare număr de participanți de elită. De-a lungul existenței ei ARA a avut ca membri personalități de elită precum scriitorii Eugen Ionesco și Virgil Gheorghiu, filozoful Mircea Eliade, prof. George Emil Palade, premiat Nobel în fiziologie și medicină în 1999, și mai recent, astronautul Dr. Dumitru-Dorin Prunariu.

La Congres s-a ținut și o expoziție de carte cu vânzare de: Doina Uricariu; Ana Blandiana (cu ilustrații de Jerry W. McDaniel); Paul D. Quilian, Aspazia Otel Petrescu, și Ileana Costea. Cartea Ilenei, “Exerciții de Neuitare - publicată de editura Reflection Publishing Co. a fost lansată anul acesta la ARA Frascati.

În zilele congresului, după-amiază, după sesiuni, s-au făcut mici excursii: în centrul vechi al orașului Frascati, la vilele-palate din zona Castelli Romani, Lazio, la orașelul papal Castel Gandolfo, și o vizită la Accademia di Romania unde participanții ARA au fost primiți de Daniela Crăsnaru, Director Adjunct.



Vizita la frumoasa clădire a Accademia di Romania.



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Activitatea “turistică” culminantă a fost vizitarea acceleratorului în după amiza ultimei zile a congresului ghidată de Dr. Mihail Iliescu (cercetător în fizică experimentală nucleară la LNF) care, cu istețime de povestitor fascinant și adâncă cunoștere a domeniului lui, a explicat pe înțelesul tuturor termenii și concepte ultra-savante despre experimentul DAΦNE. O frumoasă încheiere a celor câteva zile de schimburi intelectuale intense.



Vizitarea acceleratorului.

La banchetul organizat la un restaurant tipic din Frascati, Zarază s-au înmănat premiile de anul acesta ale Academiei ARA pentru contribuții de excepție, pentru lucrări excepționale prezentate la congres următorilor: Acad. Sorin Roșca, Acad. Prof. Bogdan Simionescu, și Prof. Dr. Tudor Rațiu, Doina Uricariu și Mihaela D. Leonida; pentru deosebita organizare a congresului: Dr. Cătălina Curceanu; pentru suportul continuu acordat academiei ARA și pentru excelență academică: Dr. Carmen Sabău, Premiul ARA pentru Excelență în Artă: Dr. Luminița Glica; și Premiul ARA "Prof. Dr. Mircea Sabau" pentru

Excelență în Fizică și Chimie”: Prof. Dr. Ioana Ionel.



Ruxandra Vidu (Președinta ARA) și Marius Enăchescu (Vice-Președinte ARA) împart premiile Academiei.

În comparație cu situația din trecut, când la congresul anual participau 300-400 de persoane, în ultimii ani prezența este mult mai redusă (40-60) fapt ce se poate datora schimbării situației politice după 1989 și crizei economice mondiale. “ARA este o Academie care se bazează pe ‘membership’, nu este susținută de nici un guvern, de nici un partid și atunci e greu să organizezi ceva de mare amploare fără susținerea puternică a membrilor ei.” a afirmat prof. Dr. Ruxandra Vidu. Pasiunea și convingerea celor din conducerea ARA nu sunt suficiente pentru acoperirea cheltuielilor necesare.



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Prof. Dr. Ileana Costea (7)

Prezența unor “speakers” de mare valoare se datorează contribuției meritorii a numeroși sponsori.

O chemare trebuie adresată instituțiilor universitare și de cercetare din România spre a realiza importanța Academiei Româno-Americane de Arte și Științe și a considera importantă trimiterea de reprezentanți (studenți, cercetători, profesori) la congresele viitoare, a anunța pe scară largă congresul anual ARA, a informa asupra prezentărilor și sesiunilor interesante făcute în anii trecuți. Profesorii care au studenți la masterat sau doctorat ar fi indicat să definească proiecte la care studenții să poată să-și aducă contribuția la ARA, fie prin a participa în acțiunea de promovare a academiei și congresului anual, fie la menținerea bazelor de date necesare, sau la dezvoltarea și menționarea paginii de web ARA și a congreselor. Cei interesați sunt invitați să comunice prin email cu Președinta ARA scriind la info@americanromanianacademy.org.

Două lucruri care ar aduce ARA în secolul XXI sunt: crearea unei platforme de comunicare pe Internet între membrii actuali și potențiali ARA în intervalul dintre congrese și extinderea sesiunilor congresului prin video-conferințe la distanță. În acest mod cei ce nu vor putea fi fizic prezenți vor beneficia de o taxă de participare redusă, acesta făcând posibilă o participare mult mai numeroasă. O dovadă că participarea online funcționează cu succes a fost făcută anul acesta la ARA 2015 Frascati la masa rotundă “Spațiul Mioritic al românului din exil”, organizată de Prof. Dr. Ileana Costea la care s-a făcut legătura între Frascati, Melbourne și București.

Următorul congres ARA se va ține la Montreal, 28-31 iulie, 2016. “Sper ca anul viitor, când Congresul ARA aniversază 40 de ani, să avem o cifră record de participanți, mai ales pentru că există o comunitate foarte mare de români în zona Montreal.” (Ruxandra Vidu)

Referințe:

<http://www.americanromanianacademy.org>
American-Romanian Academy of Arts and Sciences (ARA)

<http://www.americanromanianacademy.org/#!39th-congress-2015/c1vxd>

The 39th ARA Congress, National Institute of Nuclear Physics, Frascati, Roma, July 28-31, 2015

<http://www.ara-conf.org/arochure.pdf>

Brochure of the program - 38th Annual Congress of the American Romanian Academy of Arts and Sciences, Pasadena, California, July 23 - 26, 2014

acum.tv/articol/71515

Ileana Costea, *Știința și arta românească minunat reprezentată la CalTech, Pasadena, California de Sud*; Al 38-lea Congres ARA, 23-26 Iulie 2014.

<http://www.americanromanianacademy.org/#!congresses/c6zc>

ARA - poze din anii trecuți

<http://w3.lnf.infn.it>

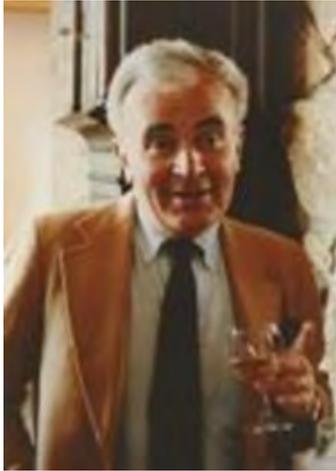
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Contact: lenuta.giukin@oswego.edu



In Memoriam: Stephen Fischer-Galati



Stephen Alexander Fischer-Galati was an Honorary Member of the Romanian Studies Association of America.

The Distinguished Professor Emeritus in History at the University of Colorado died on March 10, 2014 in Boulder CO. He was born in Romania on April 15, 1924 and left the country with his family who escaped Romania during World War II.

After high school studies in Andover, Massachusetts, he attended Harvard University where he received his Ph.D. (1949) in History. In addition to the University of Colorado, Dr. Fischer was a professor at Wayne State University, Detroit; Visiting Professor, Indiana University, Bloomington; MacArthur Professor, New College of the University of South Florida, Sarasota; and Visiting Professor, Central European University in Budapest.

In 1967, Dr. Fischer founded an international journal dedicated to professional dialogue between Eastern and Western schol-

ars. *East European Quarterly* published almost one thousand significant contributions in East European history, sociology, economics, literature and other social sciences. In 1970, in collaboration with Columbia University Press, over 800 volumes from the East European Monographs series on East Central and Southeastern Europe were published and distributed.

His own publication record is equally prolific: he has authored more than 250 articles and contributions to books, and authored or co-authored over 15 books.

Dr. Fischer received many honors and awards for his scholarship, including Doctor Honoris Causa from Maria Curie-Sklodowska University (Poland, 2006) and the University of Craiova (Romania, 1994); Guggenheim Fellowship (1962); Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (1950-51;) National Endowment for the Humanities (1980, 1981, 1982-1984).

He was a member of the Hungarian Academy of Science and the Romanian Academy. He was also awarded the Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Centennial Medal in 2010 for his life achievements.

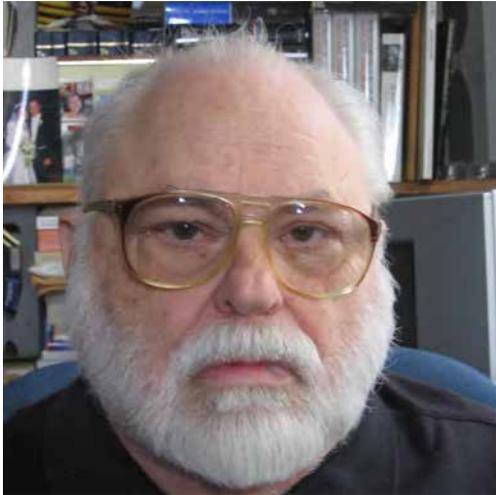
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Accessed: August 24, 2015.



Academic Portrayals: Ștefan Stoenescu



Ștefan STOENESCU este născut la 30 ianuarie, 1936 în București. După bacalaureatul (1951) luat la Liceul teoretic de băieți nr. 2 (fost Matei Basarab), a absolvit Facultatea de Filologie a Universității din București, Secția Limbi Romanico-Germanice (Engleză și Română, promoția 1962).

În perioada 1951-53 face figurație la Teatrul Național, în feeriile *Înșir'țe Mărgărite* de Victor Eftimiu și *Sânziana și Pepelea* de Vasile Alecsandri, precum și în piesa și filmul *Nepoții Gornistului*, peliculă semnată de maestrul cameraman Ovidiu Gologan.

După absolvirea facultății, a lucrat ca traducător și bibliotecar la Institutul Meteorologic și apoi ca documentarist în științele sociale la BCU, București. Începând cu 1962, anul înființării Universității Populare din București (mai târziu denumită Universitatea Cultural – Științifică) și până în 1977 a funcționat ca profesor de limba engleză în sistemul cursurilor serale, și din 1968 a fost șeful colectivului didactic de limba engleză.

Din 1964 până în 1987 a fost titular de curs la Catedra de Engleză a Universității din București,

predând literatură victoriană, istoria genurilor și cursuri specializate de teorie și critică literară modernistă și postmodernă din Statele Unite și Anglia. A condus tezele de licență a unui număr impresionant de studenți din cadrul a 24 promovii consecutive, cărora le-a îndrumat pașii pentru a se înscrie în limitele rigorilor cercetării umaniste. A îndrumat mulți ani Cercul științific studențesc de cercetări literare “William Shakespeare,” a fost activ și în domeniul cursurilor de perfecționare a cadrelor didactice din învățământul liceal și a condus lucrări de Grad I didactic, echivalent în Statele Unite cu un Ph.D. in Education.

Face studii avansate de literatură comparată la Cornell University (Ithaca, NY) până în 1995. În aceeași perioadă este, succesiv, Teaching Assistant și Lecturer în Departamentul de Literatură Comparată al Universității Cornell.

Debutează jurnalistic în *Secolul20* nr. 2 (februarie) 1966 cu un scurt eseu despre *Exercițiul esențial: <Wallace Stevens și George Enescu>*, iar debutul editorial îl face cu o traducere despre arhitectura peisajului sau cum se realizează o condiționare peisagistică a spațiului, volum apărut în 1967.

Devine membru titular al Uniunii Scriitorilor din România (1978) și este traducător și editor pentru versiunea engleză a *Revistei Române / Romanian Review*. Colaborează la reviste literare importante, în special *Secolul20* dar și la *România Literară*, *Viața Românească*, *Transilvania*, *Euphorion* și *Origini* și la diferite edituri, mai cu seamă, Editura Univers, dar și la Editura Meridiane, Editura Universității din București (un timp fiind Secretar de Redacție pentru sectorul anglistic al *Analelor – Seria de limbi și literaturi germanice*), *Cartea Românească*, *Criterion Publishing* și, mai



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nou, Editurile Humanitas din București și Limes din Cluj-Napoca.

Este autor a mai multor studii introductive și prefete pentru traducerile sale din opera scriitorilor englezi sau americani. De la numărul inaugural (iunie-iulie 1997) se află în Biroul redacțional al revistei *Origini/Romanian Roots*, care apare trimestrial în Georgia, SUA. Este de asemenea membru în Colegiul anuarului *Caiete Internaționale de Poezie / International Notebook of Poetry. Poems in Translation: East and West; Essays on Poets and Poetry*, care a apărut regulat timp de aproape un deceniu, începând cu anul 2000, sub egida Asociației Internaționale a Scriitorilor și Artiștilor Plastici Români din Diaspora *LiterArt – XXI*.

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A participat deasemenea la conferințele: MLA (1989); RSAA (1993/94); ARA (American-Romanian Academy of Sciences and the Arts, 1997); Congresul de la Rochester New York (1998; organizator alături de Charles Merritt Carlton); ALTA (American Literary Translators Association, 2001).

Poeme în traducere ale lui Ștefan Stoenescu se pot găsi la:

http://www.amazon.com/s?ie=UTF8&page=1&rh=n%3A283155%2Cp_27%3AȘtefan%20Stoenescu



Ștefan Stoenescu: Poem in translation under pseudonym

Constantin Abăluță

PUCK

(Poezia Romana după Proletcultism, Editura Ex Ponto, 2000, vol I, p. 182.)

On Valentine's Day

my pet tortoise disappeared.

I've looked for her everywhere: under pieces of furniture, behind the stove – in vain.

I rummaged through the attic, the cellar, all nooks of the courtyard. I scanned every bit of a square inch of space as if I had lost a button.

Every other day I would resume my quest, like a robot, in the selfsame places.

How on earth could she have so utterly vanished away? Where has she gone to?

Have I ever missed providing her the crisp lettuce leaf,

have I ever failed to clean her little feet and the dome of her shell with alcohol?

All along she was peering into my eyes from dozens of thousands of years away, making me feel that very instant as confident and powerful as the foolhardy guy that affixed the capstone onto the peak of the pyramid.

Seeing me so woebegone, my neighbors – who were at best vaguely familiar faces – took pity on me and every so often would keep me informed about Puck's whereabouts.

Telling me that they either had spied on her splashing at some car-wash station,

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Ștefan Stoenescu: Poem in translation under pseudonym (2)

Constantin Abăluță

PUCK

or that they had a glimpse of her on a market stall, where two children tried to sell her.
The Gypsy
florist thought she had seen her in Circus Gardens, sunning on an auto tire, afloat
in the pond. I have also been told that she was seen walked on a leash by the lady-owner
of a jewelry, that she was also recognized in a subway carriage, cradled in the arms of a
blind beggar. It's impossible for me to recall all the streets names on which she was
ostensibly spotted. According to their accounts, Puck seemed to have taken the whole city
over. On several occasions she had even ventured across our neighborhood
and so we were almost about to suddenly bump into each other.
Seeing them so eager of chatting, in their attempt to give me some illusory
hopes, I peered into their eyes from dozens of thousand of years away, and in a flash
I understood the significance of your Valentine parting gift to me, dear Puck:
the warm and compassionate friendship of my fellow beings who until
that day had hardly been aware of my presence amongst them.

***Translated from the Romanian by Heathrow O'Hare
September 12, 2015***

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Identities in the New Romanian Cinema

Lenuta Giukin

Intense preoccupation with identity among Romanian intellectuals started in the 17th century, culminating between the two world wars, after the stabilization of the 1918 political and geographic unification of Romanian territories. Among them, Lucian Blaga, a local philosopher inspired by Spengler and Kant, defined the cultural “stylistic matrix” of a group or nation as essential to its identity as culture is determined by concrete historical, geographic and political circumstances. His original approach explains the Romanian stylistic matrix based on the village culture and the rich folkloric expression. Although Blaga acknowledged that mutual influences can take place between liminal cultures and one could often find common traits in both, he insisted on the unicity of each culture due to numerous factors that shape over time a cultural matrix.

Similarly, today’s critics emphasize that identities “[...] are shaped by shifting boundaries between cultures, religions, and other places of belonging,” and are often based on comparisons with a real or imaginary ‘other.’ As complex processes of negotiation, identities (individual or national) “seek to authorize cultural hybridities,” thus to create a space for “tolerance and pluralism.” (Petrunic 2005) On the other hand, as dynamic constructs involving time and spatial coordinates, identities are built on numerous layers of overlapping differences and/or similarities, often based on socio-political orders that arrive from the outside (Bjelić *Balkan as Metaphor*, 3).

The result of such complex multiple processes, the overall locus of identity is always an in-between or constantly shifting place, although within the global frame, national and/or cultural identities cannot be denied significant differences, or authenticity. Hence, liminality may, in some instances, such as the Balkan space, be the only way to analyze and theorize local discourses on national identity. Although most nations experience(d) intense territorial, political, ethnic and cultural debates, Romania, as territory of transition between Eastern and Western Europe, due to a

long history of colonization and territorial division among other states, as well as to the struggle for recognition not only as nation, but as a Romanic population surrounded by Slavic cultures, requires to be analyzed within both Balkan and European contexts.

The Bulgarian theorist Alexander Kiossev has affirmed that East European nations, “on the periphery of civilization (Imre 2005, 18),” came into existence and have survived through a process of “self-colonization.” These nations voluntarily accepted the superiority of European Enlightenment ideas of rationality, progress, and racial hierarchy (Imre, 18). Kiossev manages to express, not without a grain of irony, the complexly close, but challenging relationship between Eastern and Western nations within the European continent. Within this ongoing dialectic, the Western European nations, perceived historically as “superior” since they established nationhood early and were at the forefront of industrial and technological developments, were and still are in a position to exert pressures under the form of ideological and cultural exports, as well as cultural criticism. As scholars have observed, Eastern Europe’s positioning on the gates of Europe, between east and west, makes it an in-between space repeatedly claimed or rejected by Eastern (The Russian and Ottoman empires) or Western powers (the Austrian, Hungarian or later, Austro-Hungarian empires). The lack of political stability in the area generated by diverse economic and political interests created intense confusion, divisions and disputes in and among local populations on many levels.

As a space of “whiteness” between two worlds—the West and the (former) Ottoman East—the Balkans are, in Bjelić’s opinion, subject to different representational mechanisms. Within this duality West-East, different ethnic groups define each other as the East of the others, while thus Occidentalizing themselves. Part of this process originates in the position of the Orthodox Church that defines itself as West in relationship to Islam, and as East in relationship to the Catholic and Protestant churches. (Bjelić *Balkan as Metaphor* 2002, 4)



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In addition, as Bjelic mentions, the Ottoman Empire did not apply the same politics of assimilation used by Westerners in the colonized areas (locals were allowed to rule), while the Hungarian or Austro-Hungarian empires imposed their socio-economic and cultural structures, gave their language(s) official status and acted through politics of more or less gentle assimilation. Under Ottomans occupation people experienced both the indignity of being “colonial subjects” under a foreign ruler, and the position of rulers. Consequently, Balkan identity “meanders between Orientalism and Occidentalism” being in two places at the same time, concludes (*Balkan as Metaphor*, 5-6). The meanings of “East” and “West” continued to remain unclear and unstable in the Balkans; as a result, in the repeated and consistent effort to (re)define and distinguish the East from the West, the Balkans became the permanent Other.

Describing the Balkan nations’ position, Bjelić wonders if the term “Orientalism” could be used as a subsidiary for Balkanism (*Balkan as Metaphor*, 3), but scholars such as K.E. Fleming strongly insist on using Balkanism as a more appropriate theoretical concept (2000, 35). The Balkan nations’ “status as an “inside other,” their own claims to European primacy, their geographical location (on the borders of but nevertheless within Europe), Western Europe’s uncertainty as to where to place them” reflect a very different frame of mind compared to Said’s theorization of the Orient (Fleming). A door between continents, the Balkan region was for a longtime and still is a melting pot of cultures.

Linguists studying the Balkans affirm the existence of a strong hybridizing convergence among ethnic cultures up to the 18th century, followed by the divergence of regional cultures during the 19th and 20th centuries. (Detrez 2009, 1) The linguistic argument shows that ethnic groups of very diverse origins such as Albanians, Bulgarians and Romanians share similar grammatical structures and common myths. These phenomena would not be possible unless such groups had strong relationships over a long period of time, and shared closely linguistic structures and mythical

beliefs. (Jenej Kopitar in Detrez, 2)

However, collective memory, as expressed in oral literary productions over many centuries, reflects the locals’ awareness of differences between various ethnic groups, as well as themselves and the Ottoman or Austro-Hungarian presence, politics, and cultural practices. The mythical essence of such data could be challenged due to the unreliable nature of social memory. However, in spite of the idealizing aspects common to oral productions, they reflect identity formation through oppositional processes and comparisons, as well as through reflection upon one’s historic status in the region. Besides offering an insight into the surviving psychological processes in these populations, they became sources of inspiration for literary productions, arts, and even politics, offering an existing self-projection as foundation for (re)defining local identities.

A cinematic production that illustrates the role of collective memory in the process of self-representation is *Nemuritorii (The Immortals, 1976)* by talented actor and director Sergiu Nicolaescu. Produced in the best years of socialism (its period of relative freedom and economic prosperity), this artistically accomplished cinematic work served the socialistic regime’s populist goals. Centuries of oral folk literature representing the national aspirations of the Romanian majority inform an appealing visual portrayal of local heroism.

Influenced stylistically by the American Western, the film presents a group of former soldiers roaming throughout Europe. Their leader Michael, called the Brave in Romanian folklore, tried to unify the Romanian territories, but was betrayed and killed. Ten years later, his loyal soldiers are looking for someone to take over Michael’s mission: they carry the unity flag and a chest full of what they believe to be Michael’s gold. Although the group leaders know it contains rocks, the truth is not revealed to the others, since the chest represents the group’s hope in finding a leader capable of using the money for future unification of the country.



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The soldiers' circular trip within Eastern Europe and their nomadic way of life represents what is considered to have been the life of Romanian ethnics forced to take refuge in mountains, move away temporarily, or hide every time the country was invaded by various empires or migrating populations. The territorial division of the Romanian-speaking populations is depicted as the undesired consequence of foreign politics, local rulers' corruption, and the difficulty of finding skillful leaders.

The East in the form of the Ottoman presence is represented as parasitic and inescapable. Outnumbered at one point by the Ottoman army, the small group is forced into accepting the Ottoman commander's invitation: guests in their own territory, they are robbed of their hope, the chest (symbol of their dream for national unity), and tortured to reveal its secrets. In spite of this, the group seems to share closer connections with the Ottomans (who learned their language and customs) than Austrians or Hungarians from whom they are separated not only linguistically, but also physically, by an impenetrable fortress. If the Ottoman army caught them in an inescapable circle, Austrians do not allow them in their proximity. Approaching their fortress is deadly, the distance and the walls between the Austrians and the soldiers being symbolic of the separation between themselves (this time the East) and the West.

In the only instance when the soldiers enter a fortified castle uninvited, they are out of place in the refined society, and their efforts to imitate local manners turn into parody. The hosts send secretly for armed help, proving one more time that their common past, as well as present is one of mistrust. The manners and refinement of the civilized Westerner are portrayed as a hypocritical mask: local people and territories are simply means to wealth and a life of luxury.

In spite of individual traits and differences, the characters (Ottomans, Romanians, Austrians, Hungarians) consistently revert to their imaginary collective identity. Ana-Maria Petrunic rightly observes that

"Boundaries do not physically limit the existence of one's being and the extent of one's dwelling within the sphere of one's identity and acts of identification. [...] ethnic, religious, cultural, racial and other affiliations are present for individuals as long as other individuals share similar affiliations expanding or delimitating the *boundary of presence*." (2005)

However, sharing is also determined by the context of willing or forceful sharing. Petar Ramadanovic considers that Balkan languages failed to recreate the past in stable, rational ways because trauma was incorporated in discourses for the production of reality. Consequently, discourses of resistance are based on re-inventing identity as often as historical conditions changed. Vlaisavljevici (Bjelić *Balkan as Metaphor*, 17) emphasizes that in war (which is a form of trauma) the ethnic self operates as an imaginary symbolic body that invents its entire subjective reality. Furthermore, in spite of co-existence within the same empire (Byzantine, Ottoman, Austrian, Austro-Hungarian), a shared Balkan identity based on a common religion was rejected in favor of an identity based on ethnicity, and cultural hybridism was rejected in favor of "an imaginary ethno-national pureness." (Detrez, 5) A number of scholars agree that while ethnicity became the core of national organization (a trait shared with Western European nations), religion became the second most important identifier. The Balkan nations shared their Christian religious beliefs with the rest of the Europe, a strong identifier that created a permanent and powerful ideological separation from the Eastern Ottoman Empire.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, with the development of national states in the Balkans, Romanians (similarly to its Balkan neighbors) proceeded to the cleansing of language (words of Slavic and Turkish origin were replaced with Romance terminology), and architecture (Turkish architecture was declared typically local), and to (re)writing its national history. An additional wave of Westernization took place in the 20th century as the socialist state continued on an existing trend of modernization, its efforts being successfully supported by new developments in industry. To doc-



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ument this processes, cinema was used as a means of propaganda. As Romania did not have an established national cinema before 1949, and film production was not funded in any organized way, the socialist state employed the film industry for the education and creation of the “new socialist” individual.

Popular culture and oral literature became sources for romantic figures such as Robin Hood type of heroes (*Haiducii/The Outcasts*, 1966; *Razbunarea haiducilor/Revenge of the Outcasts*, 1968; *Haiducii lui Saptecai/The Saptecai's Outcasts*, 1970; *Pintea/Pintea*, 1978; *Iancu Jianu, haiducul/Iancu Jianu, the Outcast*, 1981, etc.), or local charismatic leaders. Like the *Immortals* these productions create the portrayal of a victimized population whose dreams and aspirations were repeatedly threatened and stolen by selfish foreigners. Eventually, the theme of sacrifice for one's national ideals underlines the main theme of heroism. However, *Dacii (The Warriors)*, Sergiu Nicolaescu, 1967) reconstitutes in a positive light the Roman occupation, a colonizing experience Romanians tried to re-internalize as foundation for local identity formation.

In “The changing face of the Other in Romanian films,” Florentina Andreescu considers that in founding myths such as *Trajan and Dochia*, the Roman colonizer represents Europe, therefore the place of truth and purity. The colonized defined themselves in terms of dependency of the colonizing other. In a process of inversion meant to veil the lack of freedom (a form of castration) due to colonization in this case, the pleasure of the oppressor (colonizer or occupier) is claimed by the oppressed as his own. The oppressor is also the law maker or father figure, and the oppressed strives to obtain his approval. As a result, Romanian cinema portrays numerous types of authoritarian figures to whom the protagonist(s) submit(s) in a process that often requires pain and suffering in order to resolve the conflict. This could explain why the dichotomy primitive-civilized, native-foreign, popular-elite in *The Warriors* is depicted constructively through the skillful reconstitution of complex historic circumstances: the Roman colonizing experience is internalized as positive authentication of Europeanism. (2011,

80-81)

Epic historic dramas, *Mihai Viteazul (Michael the Brave, aka The Last Crusade*, Sergiu Nicolaescu, 1971), *Stefan cel Mare (Stephen the Great*, Mircea Dragan, 1974), *Vlad Tepes (Vlad the Impaler*, Doru Nastase, 1979) deal with the theme of unity, the constitution of a Romanian national state, as well as themes of historic victimization and betrayal. These re-enactments of national history benefitted large audiences over a decade of relative socialist prosperity (12 million viewers for *Tudor* (Lucian Bratu, 1962); 9 million for *Dacii (The Warriors)*, 9 million for *Mihai Viteazul (Michael the Brave)*, etc. out of a population of 20 million), proof of a wide approval on the home market. They answered a need for self-recognition, and especially for a self-congratulatory discourse that would acknowledge the meritorious efforts of those who persisted in patriotic endeavors.

Although socialism pursued a strict separation of state and church, religious images were used to invest imaginary historic reconstitutions with dramatic appeal, and to endorse them with ultimate authority. Such is the case of *Michael the Brave* whose betrayal scene is closely modeled on Jesus and his trusted disciples (here, Western allies and rich local rulers) around the table. Michael's allies, however, abandon him and witness in collective approval his assassination. He becomes a Christ figure betrayed by all those he believed to be close supporters. Native distrust, consequence of repeated experience of abandonment (by the West), is presented as the cause of ethnic segregation and mistrust of the West. The theme of mistrust in the West sporadically resurges in Romanian literature and cinema, especially in times of political difficulties or, as it was the case during socialism, when the government was heavily criticized for its ideological standing. Representing oneself as victim of Western betrayal was a winning strategy in the popular oppositional imagination since both East and West were perceived (and portrayed repeatedly over the centuries) as intruders.

At the beginning of the 20th century there was an extended agreement among Romanian intellectuals



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about possessing a different spirituality than the West. Some intellectuals (Nicolae Iorga, Nechifor Crainic) openly promoted a return to the Romanian culture and traditions, to the rural world and Orthodox spirituality, and the Byzantine culture. Peasants were perceived as authentic Romanians and possessors of real values, a point of reference often adopted in Romanian politics in crucial times. Other respected local intellectuals (Lucian Blaga, Nae Ionescu) sided either with modernism and a moderate rejection of the West, or strong anti-Western and anti-modernist ideas. Mircea Eliade studied in India at a time when a general philosophical and intellectual adoption of mystic doctrines created an association of Romania with the East and the Orient. (Andersen, 12-13)

Said insisted that “the Orient has helped Europe to define itself in opposition to a contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” (Bielic *Balkan as Metaphor*, 2). Similarly, at certain historic periods, Romanians defined themselves in opposition to an incompatible, decaying, capitalistic West (Spangler in Andersen, 16), seeing their culture as superior to Western Europe, since they inherited and were the continuators of Roman Byzantine traditions. Although resistance to assimilating Western elements was not absolute, the infusion of intellectual thought with “irrational and mystical ideas” (Hitchins in Andersen, 12) positioned Romania in the West as oriental, mystical, and backward.

The socialist national cinema used film among other forms of art to rewrite both its ‘anti-capitalist’ and ‘anti-orientalist’ identity not as a defense discourse of local values, but rather as re-creation or re-interpretation of national mythology. Socialist democracy supported at the time by popular success was projected as effective progress in front of failing capitalist democracy. The backwardness of the Romanian nation “was” (since socialism modernized and industrialized the country) considered therefore the consequence of repeated wars with Ottomans, a fight for freedom that also protected a selfish and ungrateful West.

The dichotomy East-West as socialism-capitalism, re-emerged even more intensely during the last years of dictatorship (1980s) fueled by (re)new(ed) perceptions and criticism of Romania’s regression manifested through oriental despotism in form of dictatorship, and lack of human rights. Even recent Westernization of the Balkans takes place under the perceived danger of reverting to Balkanism in the form of ethnic wars and divisions. Constrained by such real or imaginary threat of regression, and afraid of being left outside the Western world again, Romanians embraced unconditionally the European Union, McDonald’s, Auchan and Aldi’s, American pop culture, the 60+ hours working week, a large choice of contraception, Chinese food, high-sugar soft drinks, Mexican soap operas, and many other realities of capitalist consumerism in a short amount of time. The leap from Balkanism to globalization via Westernization, transforms the Romanian society into a space more exotic than ever.

New Romanian Cinema: Identities in Times of Transition

The post ‘89 Romanian cinema is less focused on the redefinition of nationalism, as the shift to European integration and the pressures of globalization require (d) a re-assessment of the recent past. Moreover, many contemporary films directly or indirectly reflect the world and/or consequences of former socialist dictatorship. Highly charged emotionally and ideologically, works by young directors like Nae Caranfil, Cristi Puiu, Cristian Mungiu, Corneliu Porumboiu, Catalin Mitulescu, among many others, question the status of a society in transition, the place of old and new ideals, and indirectly the nation’s transformations and representations at crucial moments in history. Consequently, the obsessive return to a specific past relates to the need to assess the present and (re)build an identity often challenged not only by sudden ideological shifts within short periods of time, but also by consistent internal and external criticism of its socio-ideological and cultural structures.



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Maybe the most powerful cinematic work on the last years of socialism, *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* (2007) by Cristian Mungiu has not been sufficiently analyzed and assimilated. While Romanian audiences largely ignored it since they had no desire to contemplate a traumatic past, Western audiences could not get enough of it. Anikó Imre believes that through distribution of prizes and prestige at various film festivals, Western European countries continue to make their own values central to a so-called 'European society' (Introduction, XII), celebrating at the same time the victory of capitalism over socialism. A bleak film like *4, 3, 2* could easily cater to self-congratulatory feelings and attitudes; however, the lack of reaction at home, in spite of a Romanian movie earning the first Palme d'Or since 1957, speaks as much or more about the post-socialist state of mind than the triumph of capitalism.

At first, its style and apparent lack of moralistic message puzzled festival audiences and opened a global interest in a small cinema industry which had hit ground zero (when no film was produced) in 2000. The simple story of two students pursuing an illegal abortion for one of them, and the degrading encounter with a male nurse who asks for sex in addition to the original payment, became a powerful metaphor for Ceausescu's dictatorship. The climax of the film, the sexual act to which both the pregnant student and her friend submit, usually labeled as "rape" by scholars and reviewers, is in fact negotiated and freely performed in spite of its psychological rejection by the women. The male nurse as patriarchal figure represents dictatorship (imposes his will) and the degrading father-Law (abortion is illegal) through which a woman's body is socially controlled and abused both legally and illegally at the same time. The act is even more dehumanizing since the victims are vulnerable women, longtime second class citizens, now reduced to the minimal status of submissive bodies.

This sequence raises key questions: Why did the pregnant young woman wait until the last moment? Why did the friend accept to participate in the act? Why did not they consider a different option? Since the two young women stand for the victimized Roma-

nian society of their time, these questions become: Why did an entire nation allow things to go that far? Why did not the nation abandon its dictator before it was too late? Why did 20 million people accept social "prostitution" in the form of illegal abortion, dehumanizing orphanages, humiliating food queues, collaboration with Security, tyranny of corrupted elites, etc. rather than fight, demand changes, or explore different options?

Mungiu's film questions heroism and national mythologies, re-writing history and national identity from an unforgiving critical perspective. The final framing of the two girls behind the restaurant's large window contemplates the dead end of a society, as well as the feeling of defeat and gravity after undergoing an unspeakable (collectively self-inflected) trauma. The repeated affirmation that the new Romanian cinema has no agenda is contradicted by the strong critical content of various cinematic works belonging to the new wave.

Criticism through the intermediary of a social mirror has also been explored by Corneliu Porumboiu in his first feature *12:08 East of Bucharest* (2006). The film's main subject is a television show with guests discussing whether or not the revolution of 1989 took place in their city. While the guests and callers quarrel, the truth is lost in confusion and accusations. The cameraman consistently tilts the camera, creating a metaphor for the distortion of reality: heroism is not possible in a world where memories do not contribute to the creation of History; this process requires archiving material in the form of collective memories that create the basis for national identity. The end result is a grotesque fresco of a society that lost its focus, ideals and direction in a process that did not bring the fulfillment of fantasy.

For Meta Mazaj *12:08 East of Bucharest* represents failed attempts at stabilizing a national identity (2010, 2011). If this artistic product does not contribute to a national discourse, in what kind of discourse does it participate? In the case of "post-conflict spaces," Petrunic speaks of "negotiation space" or "dwelling" (7) and Detrez of a "crossing space" or "bridge" (7). They both suggest that changes in these



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situations are transitional and open to negotiation over conflicts. However, even welcome change produces trauma, and new cultural conventions could be perceived as imposed or alienating (Andreescu, 88). In this complex process, loss of hope or lack of desire may take place, as well as loss of social orientation.

Revealing from this perspective is *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* (Cristi Puiu, 2005) where too rapid social change leads to profound loss of humanity. In great need of urgent medical attention, Mr. Lazarescu is being transported for an entire night from hospital to hospital, verbally insulted for his drinking habit, submitting to absurd pressures to sign documents he cannot fully understand, and allowed to physically degrade while vital surgery is postponed indefinitely. Although the medical personnel are professionally well prepared, their unprofessional behavior translates into an almost generalized lack of compassion. Sick and dying, Mr. Lazarescu has no chance of living with dignity his last moments of life. The more helpless he becomes, the more those in a position to assist insult and abuse him, their irresponsible decisions leading to his rapid deterioration, and possibly an early death. Narcissism, arrogance, self-righteousness, and especially individual dictatorial attitudes (manifested as lack of social responsibility and abusive personal initiative) are some of the traits of this post-socialist, post-dictatorial society. Although the ambulance nurse does not abandon Mr. Lazarescu, the overall picture of this society remains terrifying.

Social disorientation also affects generational communication and interactions. *Medalia de onoare* (*The Medal of Honor*, Calin Petre Netzer, 2009) explores the difficult relationships between a retiree and his family; his bond with son and wife was irremediably altered by a past decision to turn his son in to the Securitate when intending to defect the country. Incapable to admit the truth or apologize, when presented with a medal of honor for merits in battle during Second World War, he hopes to gain his family's respect back. Unfortunately, the medal belongs to a veteran with a similar name. Faced with the option of telling the truth and endure shame, he decides to buy a simi-

lar medal which passes as his own. A heroic version of the past was forged, just as he created a politically correct version of his collaboration with the communist police to disguise an act of betrayal. The medal does not restore the much-hoped affection or the dialogue between him and his son in a visit from abroad. His painful efforts to recuperate it from his grandson, who speaks no Romanian, emphasize the loss of the most basic human relationships: affective and linguistic exchanges.

Socialist dictatorship manifested, among others things, the confinement of citizens within the country's borders. This created a wave of defections, as well as massive migration after the regime's fall in 1989. Families were separated, and later encounters revealed enormous generational gaps between those adapted to Western ways of living and a local dysfunctional population. Such is the case in *Felicia inainte de toate* (*First of All, Felicia*, Melissa de Raaf, Razvan Radulescu, 2009). Although father, mother and daughter speak the same language, they are engaged in parallel conversations, miscommunication resulting in a series of unfortunate events. Felicia is engulfed in a distressing relationship with her mother, a well-intended father who believes he can still call old Communist friends to alter airport timetables, and airport employees who threaten her with total lack of regard. Between past and present, East and West, Felicia cannot find a personal space of accommodation or a stable identity. Tense relationships with both her family and Dutch ex-husband mark her alienated status in both countries and societies. The West, in addition, is to blame for the estrangement of the grandson (as in the *Medal of Honor*) who is left behind because of the inability to communicate with his grand-parents, or to understand the culture and society.

The re-entering of former socialist states within the larger Europe attracted, at first, increased migration to the West, and soon after, disappointment with a Western Europe that not only disrupted the original family configuration, but also proved incapable of fulfilling fantasy expectations. *The Italian Girls* (Napoleon Helmis, 2004), *Occident* (*West*, Cristian Mungiu, 2002),



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Boogie (Radu Munteanu, 2008), and *California Dreamin'* (Cristian Nemescu, 2007) are some of the cinematic works dealing with the subjects of separation, alienation and nostalgia. They portray desperate individuals who renounce love in order to find illusory happiness in the West, as well as those who experienced the West, but live in nostalgia for their past lives in a faraway native land (West). Others find themselves unfulfilled and, like Felicia, lost between cultures (*Boogie*); and finally, some hope the West will solve their problems (*The Italian Girls*), in spite of numerous warning signs about putting one's faith in money and capitalism.

In this sense, the new cinema is not less metaphorical in its illustration of the alienating effects both dictatorship and migration had on a population little prepared, psychologically, economically or ideologically, to enter the global world. Depicting the uneventful encounter of three former high school friends, *Boogie* presents the spectator with a 'before' and 'after' (the fall of the dictatorship) perspective. The three friends meet by chance at the Black Sea over the Labor Day weekend of May 1st and comparisons between a past spent in parties, women and drinking and the "boring" present are generated. Places (various beaches, resorts, as well as Ceausescu's seaside villa), cold weather and people do not rise to former glory. The better-off friend of all three, a small business owner, is married and has a child he barely sees and with whom he cannot communicate. While he blames it on long work hours, his inability to understand child play and repeated tentative attempts to impose his own rules are symbolic of a generation corrupted by narrow viewpoints and totalitarian principles. The other two friends have no particular achievements, although one lives in a Scandinavian country. His relationship with a Scandinavian woman is based on a need to survive, rather than love or respect. The West is both openly cursed and despised, and the conveniently absent girlfriend, a substitute for the Westerner's general image, is both mocked and debased, but also praised for her hospitality and generosity. In spite of an embarrassing situation never fully admitted (his job as a cleaner), he chooses to marry the woman rather than return to a country where only memories of the past generate

meaning. The friends' attempts to revive 'old times' through dinking, mutual insulting, sharing a prostitute, and revisiting old places reveal the gap between then (the past) and now (the present), and here (the East) and there (the West). Home or abroad, the men are not fully adjusted to their adult lives and social obligations. Significantly, their last meaningless walk brings them by Ceausescu's villa. The peacocks are missing and they 'replace' the birds by imitating their calls. The effort is pathetic and overall joyless: the peacocks as symbols of the past are gone and, in spite of their best efforts, they cannot become/replace the peacocks. Recreating the past is a hopeless illusion.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, due to its involvement in the European World Wars, rise to economic supremacy in the world, as well as cultural dominance, especially through Hollywood's strong appeal, the United States became a powerful extension of Western Europe and Western type of civilization. As a result, the image of the "West" became more desirable and intimidating at the same time. "America" grew to be the new universal myth, an object of desire, as well as envy, a powerful ally every nation wanted to befriend, but in terms based on one's idealized image.

The West as America is central to *California Dreamin'*, the saga of a train with American soldiers going to Kosovo via Romania. The film depicts the story of a missed cultural encounter caused by World War II's unfortunate events. The Americans prove in the new circumstances an illusory ally, the locals' unrealistic hopes being empty fantasy projection(s) over another culture. Closer to the spirit of carnival and filmed in a style very different from the minimal realism of the new Romanian cinema, *California Dreamin'* mocks the locals who invite outsiders to help solve their internal conflicts. The film stands as a metaphor for the entire Balkan region where crucial ally interventions eventually do not take place, while uninvited ones only pretend helping: the US abandoned Eastern Europe at the end of the WWII, insists a resentful character, but showed up (uninvited) for a conflict in Kosovo, creating additional ethnic divisions and misunderstandings. In fact, after over five decades of living in different



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types of societies (socialist and capitalist), the US and Eastern Europe are as far apart as one could imagine: linguistic translations for the aim of communication, mostly misunderstood and corrupted by intentions, interpretations, and assumptions are symbolic of the distance that separates East and West.

Although these cinematic works on the East-West relationship focus on “the transitional phase of a post-totalitarian chaotic society whose longing for the ‘western paradise’ [is] so strong that it [breaks] all existing barriers, overtly neglecting personal identity and integrity,” (Georgescu 2012, 32), one cannot ignore that lies, deceit and prostitution are strong themes that, besides loss of direction, suggest the betrayal of old values of loyalty and patriotism in favor of suspect capitalistic gain. The West and capitalism exert a strong fascination, but remain questionable. Hence the tendency to criticize, take one’s distance or (in)directly condemn Western promises and/or interventions in the East.

Imitating the West—a historically common reality in the Balkans—causes suspicion, as in Corneliu Porumboiu’s *Police, Adjective* (2009). A character insists that Bucharest used to be called “Little Paris” and that Brasov’s Black Church should be re-covered in gold, as it was in the past, to claim Prague’s title of the “Golden City.” Competition goes, however, only so far as claiming attention for reproducing similar realities. The character embodies Romanians’ submissive attitude to Western Europe and the comparison of their achievements with West European (or anything West of Romania) accomplishments. This obsession with copying the West comes from a self-placement in the East and a desire to conform to Western European notions of culture and statehood (Ravetto-Biagioli 2005, 183).

The cult for imitating and following standardized models finds ultimate criticism in the usage of a dictionary as supreme reference. A lesson in understanding and applying the law given by a superior to two young policemen transforms the disembodied written word into an absurd ‘absolute.’ literal definitions are applied literally to human situations without regard for the destructive consequences on a helpless teenager.

The struggle between a young policeman and his boss on behalf of the teenager emphasizes the serious need for this society to find its humanity.

In spite of a strong feeling of social and ideological disorientation, the new Romanian cinema supports strong humanistic messages in favor of a new social consciousness liberated from the traumas of a former dictatorship and engaging in the adoption of better-quality social standards. In addition, as Deltcheva observes, there is a “new sense of East-Europeans’ awareness that their lives validation need not be mediated via Western cultural and social markers.” (2005, 203). Like all former socialist nations, Romania has to deal with complex realities that require, besides rapidly learning the functioning of market economies, an adaptation of local specifics to global pace and management.

Unlike the bigger-than-life historic figures and the populist tone specific to socialist productions, the new Romanian cinema focuses on everyday individuals, their daily anxieties, and especially an insignificant routine life. In the transition from the mythical to the mundane, from the extraordinary to the ordinary, from exhilarating to monotonous, the new cinema provides a mirror for the Romanian viewer to recognize oneself and adjust to its humane destiny. The consequences of the past and their end result, a dysfunctional present, call for the acceptance of collective responsibility. Georgescu believes that the New Romanian Cinema reflects the nation’s difficulty in finding its current identity and in the end “giving up” on finding it (26). One cannot ignore, though, the presence of positive, determined characters: the young policeman’s fight to save a teenager or the determination of an ambulance nurse to help a dying patient could be interpreted as possible paradigms of changes to come.

In Place of Conclusions: The Road to Normalcy

An especially significant work by young director Marian Crisan, *Morgen* (2010), depicts the unfortunate delay in Romania of a Turkish immigrant who misses his truck to Germany. A local man hosts him in his



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cellar until a chance to cross the border to Hungary occurs. The two speak little, share work and chores, play cards and billiards at the local pub, and go fishing together. Although under threat by the police and his brother-in-law, an unspoken friendship ties the local man to the Turkish transient. In the process of depicting the setting on the border with Hungary, Crisan creates a metaphor for the entire Romanian territory as a transit space: a bridge of hope for illegal refugees expecting an occasion to cross the border to the West; a rigid limit for Hungarian patrols and border officers; or a familiar territory for the main character who drives across to fish. Far from reminding of the past Ottoman occupier, the Turkish man, a father with a dilemma (he searches for his son), finds understanding in a sympathetic individual who does not care about History, the East, the West, or immigration laws and politics. Even a reluctant brother-in-law gives the man temporary work in his factory, and transports him by car while comically wondering why he is doing it. Concern over the fate of a migrant in transit, rather than the possible threat he could represent because of illegality, becomes the main theme.

Demystified of its traditional aura of exoticism, the East, represented by an ordinary man in need of help, or by invisible refugees behind bushes, is not a threat to anyone. Besides transitory illegals largely ignored by the Romanian border patrols, no locals seem concerned with the West, but rather with solving their everyday problems. The only time people go west is to have a football match with their Hungarian neighbors or to fish in waters across the border.

Morgen represents the West as a mirage place for easterners, and Romania as space of transition between the East and West. Passive spectators to the migration of others, locals lead modest lives, dealing as well as they can with economic hardships. The only visible authority, the border patrolman, only pretends to do his job. Threats are a formality since the law is not applied; in fact, the patrols abandon the Turkish man in the middle of the road to find his own way to some unknown refugee center. The apathetic reaction of villagers to the presence of foreigners in transit over their territory is highly significant: historically,

their territory has always been a transit space for migrant populations (Slavs, Huns, Goths, etc.), conquerors advancing West (Hungarians, Ottomans), and lately, illegal transients.

Georgescu considers *Morgen's* characters incapable of leaving their "enclosure," and affirms that 'journeys' in Romanian cinema "end up with the inevitable conclusion that it is impossible to reach other realms, both physically and spiritually (29)." Analyzing the Romanian cinema of the 90s, Anna Jackel observes that "negative images" (orphanages, miners' demonstrations) became representative for the entire country (2000, 108). A similar tendency to analyze the minimalist realism of the New Romanian Cinema in negative terms dominates the academic and critical analysis today. A man helping a transient foreigner, a police officer trying to save a teenager from prison, or an ambulance nurse not giving up care of a dying man demystify traditional cinematic heroism confronting the viewer with the everyday action as act of responsibility and self-worth. The willful camera focus on people's resilience and will to fulfill their duty, or simply go on with their lives is significant: finally free from invasions and dictatorship, they can re-start to re-build their communities, as they had done for centuries.

Accustomed to traditional images that celebrated "the exotic authenticity of the Balkan Other" and with people who exhibited a "prodigious lust for life" (Žižek in Bjelić *Balkan as Metaphor*, 21), traits common not only to socialistic productions, but to the nineties movies of Kusturica and other East-European productions, audiences, critics, and academics were taken by surprise by the minimalist style of the new Romanian cinema. The features of the new realism (lack of non-diegetic music, long takes of [almost] static scenes, contained emotional reactions, common spaces, ordinary characters, few or no spectacular episodes, etc.) created wide puzzlement and questioning. "There is almost no didacticism or point-making in these films [...]. There is an unmistakable political dimension to this kind of storytelling, even when the stories themselves seems to have no overt



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political content” affirmed film critic Anthony Scott (3). Roddick also remarked the “striking naturalism” of details that makes *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* look like a documentary; “The result is cinematic humanism in its purest form.” (*Sight and Sound* 2012)

In spite of its novel formal style, the contemporary Romanian cinema continues a local tradition of (self) representation and self-contemplation through such elements as the absurd, the grotesque, and/or the carnivalesque. Subtle dark humor highlights a reflection on contemporary realities, as well as new emerging identities. Through processes of cinematic reconstitution and reflection, as well as innovative approaches to realistic cinematic conventions, the New Romanian Cinema gave voice to an authentic imaginary.

Although this cinema has no unified ideology, its persistent close up on the contemporary individual and his/her immediate surroundings creates a detailed portrayal of the present-day psychological behavior and transformation. It is without a doubt a deeply political and didactic cinema, a carefully crafted social mirror aimed to expose and dispose of an offensive past, opening avenues to new identities. In this context, one can understand the wide festival success of the Romanian cinema abroad: its faux documentary style allows a glimpse into unusual social phenomena and changes. People could finally “see” the internal metamorphosis of a nation physically invisible for almost half of a century.

Although at home many of these films remained largely ignored, nevertheless they show the concern of a generation of young filmmakers determined to do their duty: reveal the gaps in the social fabric and subtly point to new aspirations. The lack of didacticism and ideology is only an appearance: while a new ideology is still to be defined, the didacticism and symbolism are present through deliberate exclusion. The cinema of this former socialist country did not lose its normative and educative function; it only changed its approach.

Notes

1. On December 1, 1918 Romania, Transylvania and Bessa-

rabia created one state inhabited by a majority of Romanians. A tentative to unify all “Romanian” territories took place in 1599-1600 under Michael the Brave.

2. A good summary of Blaga’s philosophy of culture, although without direct references to the Romanian cultural space, is given by Michael S. Jones in “Culture as Religion and Religion as Culture in the Philosophy of Lucian Blaga.” (*The Journal for the Study of Religions and Philosophy*, Nr. 15, Winter 2006).

3. A short summary of Blaga’s discussion of the Romanian stylistic matrix can be found in Catherine Lovatt’s “The Mioritic Space: Romanian National Identity in the Work of Lucian Blaga” (In *Central Europe Review*, Vol. 1, No. 18, 1999). <http://www.ce-review.org/99/18/lovatt18.html>.

4. A direct translation for “haiduc” would be “outcast.”

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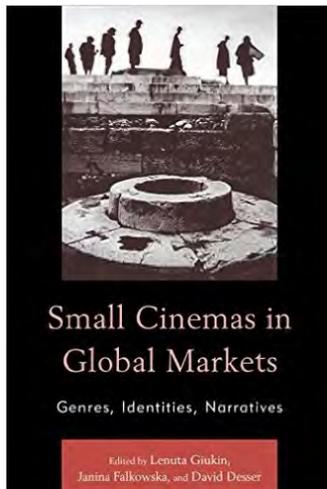
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Romanian Artists from the Diaspora: **Ben Todica, The "Mioritic Space" in Exile**

Even today when I feel the lamb haggis smell I remember our hills and valleys, and the mountains with sheep and folds. I used to pick wild strawberries which abundantly grew on the land enriched by sheep, then I would find some shepherd's hut where I would curiously observe everyday objects used in the milk products' preparation. Cheese, cottage cheese and curd would hang on stakes to strain.

Mother used to go early in the morning across the street, to the farmers' market, for fresh cheese and cream. In spring, when the snow would melt and snowdrops would appear, the shepherds would come to sell lambs. It was an amazing site for me, as a child, all that spectacle of intersecting human voices, animal sounds and bird chirping.

In tumult and clamor, people would heavily negotiate and one could see in the end happy faces after a good deal and the prospect of a rich Easter table; but one could also see provisions for shepherds, flutes and traditional shoes, jackets and jewels for shepherdesses.

We, Romanians, have been living for thousands of years in harmony with the land. We have inhabited the Carpathian region long before the ice age (ask Zalmoxis who says we go back to the golden age of mankind). We come from eternity and walk alongside it. Lucian Blaga told Mircea Eliade that "The Romanian culture is a minor culture since it has adopted the 'childhood age.'" Of course, the big philosophers judge the maturity of a nation from an intellectual perspective.

But if we listen to Petre Tutea's story about a Nobel prize winner and an old countryside woman – "Before God, the old woman is a human being, while the Nobel prize winner is a ferret, and will die a ferret" – we can affirm the existence of a cultural maturity in the 'ignorance' of the everyday man, a maturity he may not see or recognize.



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Romanian Artists from the Diaspora: Ben Todica, The “Mioritic Space” in Exile (2)

The culture of a nation matures through osmosis and is inherited from father to son, a tradition that lacks in the West due to the traditional family's loss. The Australian Aborigines have no written language. They have orally transmitted their culture for about fifty thousand years through songs, dances, customs and traditions. Grandparents always lived with their grand-children, a way of passing on the culture, while in the West, family members are encouraged to live separately and independently, severing the thread of continuity. This is why the West has fragmentary or specialized spaces cut off from evolution and unable to mature as in the case of the Mioritic space. Nowadays, we assist at the cut of the cultural umbilical cord between generations.

The immigrants have held on their identity because of cultural continuity. Cultural traditions were preserved for thousands of years, impregnated into the Romanians' DNA such as rings in trees' trunks. I survived in the West because of the language and culture of my parents and ancestors. Praying to God in my parents' language is an immaculate dialog with the Creator, while in English it would be a Shakespearian spectacle. The ancestral word has healing properties. Romanian immigrants retained the Mioritic space through language, food, music, and clothing. In the new country, we created new families, cultural and sport clubs, Romanian schools and churches, journals and magazines and even libraries, as well as radio and TV channels. We organized exhibits and festivals, and communal outdoor gatherings with guests from other cultures. We preserved the link with our country of origin through the Department for Romanians Abroad and

accomplished exchanges with home institutions. A true Romanian cannot ignore the Mioritic space. This would mean to allow oneself be slowly and surely uprooted. For me, it would mean to amputate a part of my life and soul. Some affirm they are not Romanians and I believe them. They do not belong to the Romanian nation, they were just planted among us! Those who do not understand the cultural maturity of our people because of pride or social pressures are fated to grow incomplete or deformed.

In the ballad “Miorita,” the shepherd rejects violence, showing great maturity and wisdom; he establishes an umbilical link between his place of eternity and universal eternity, distinguishing himself from his companions who remain artificial puppets of time, incapable of connecting with the eternal and the divine. This maturity is present in our Romanian immigrant houses through the pictures of parents and grand-parents, their clothing and places, their smile and eye sparkle, though our songs, occupations, social behavior, our creativity and contributions to society, our thoughts and prayers.

The Mioritic space manifests itself in every Romanian word I am saying, and in those moments I feel protected. I am again home with my parents. The Mioritic space is the divine law of creation and of our people's continuity. The Mioritic space is the bond between sky and earth. The Mioritic space is nature's flawlessness. When I opened my eyes at my mom's breast, God was inspired to create the earth with ITS Mioritic space. The Mioritic space is a lullaby, a wind's breeze, a flower's scent, it is nostalgia. Without the Romanian language, I would have died a long time ago in exile.