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NEW METHODOLOGIES IN THE STUDY OF THE ROMANIAN NOVEL

The transnational and the digital turns² have significantly influenced literary studies over the past thirty years, positioning the novel as an ideal subject for examining innovative methodological and analytical approaches³. As both a recipient and an initiator of socio-economic, political, and cultural tensions, the novel regains its societal role as a mirror and mediator of its source culture, particularly at local and regional levels. Consequently, new issues have arisen in recent research initiatives: the global dissemination of imported literary forms (considering the disparities in modernization between central and peripheral cultures), the transformation of these forms across various social, historical, and spatial contexts, and the emergence of subgenres with national or regional distinctions.

In the realm of evolving literary criticism, which seeks to treat national literatures as part of the global literary landscape and employs statistical and computational techniques for sociological literature analysis, scholars exploring (semi)peripheral literary cultures have begun taking significant steps toward fresh literary interpretations since 2010. In Romania, new research directions have predominantly centered on novelistic works (both local and translated). Initial distant readings of this cultural segment were facilitated by the *Chronological Dictionary of the Romanian Novel* (2004, 2011) and the *Chronological Dictionary of Translated Novels in Romania* (2005, 2017), two of the few national lexicographical resources greatly enhancing the application of new research

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² See Pascale Casanova, *La République mondiale des lettres*, Paris, Seuil, 1999; David Damrosch, *What is World Literature*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2003; Katherine Bode, *Reading by Numbers: Recalibrating the Literary Field*, London, Anthem Press, 2012; Thomas O. Beebe (ed.), *Literatures as World Literature* series, New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2014–2023.

³ See Franco Moretti, "Conjectures on World Literature", *New Left Review*, 2000, 1, pp. 54-68; Franco Moretti, "The Slaughterhouse of Literature", *Modern Language Quarterly*, 61, 2000, 1, pp. 207-227; Stanford Literary Lab, *Pamphlets*, 2011–2018, <https://litlab.stanford.edu/pamphlets>. Accessed November 20, 2024; Warwick Research Collective, *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2015; Ted Underwood, "The Life Cycles of Genres", *Journal of Cultural Analytics*, 2, 2016, 2, pp. 1-25; Andrew Piper, *Enumerations: Data and Literary Study*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2018.

methodologies. Quantitative analyses have reignited interest in the sociological examination of the novel, with literary lexicography serving as an essential resource. Noteworthy projects in this respect include Yves Stalloni's *Dictionnaire du roman*⁴, encyclopedias of the novel⁵, as well as traditional bibliographies focused on themes, authors, or genres within specific national literatures⁶.

To foster the growth of this research platform, the Romanian Academy's "Sextil Pușcariu" Institute of Linguistics and Literary History in Cluj-Napoca hosted in 2023 the inaugural *International Conference for the Study of the Novel*. This conference aimed at exploring the potential of utilizing traditional lexicographical tools (dictionaries focused on authors, literary works, periodicals, bibliographies, critical references, etc.) as (meta)data sources for novel studies, as well as to redefine philological lexicography in response to the quantitative and digital shifts. The event focused on two primary areas: first, presenting ongoing or completed research projects that employ systemic, transnational, quantitative, or digital methodologies regarding the novel and promoting the sharing of their preliminary or final findings. Second, it engaged in theoretical discussions about the transformation of research tools for studying the novel in light of new methodological developments in literary studies, emphasizing individual applications and workshops that explore the advantages and challenges associated with these innovative methods.

The studies gathered in this issue of *Dacoromania litteraria* represent a significant part of the findings presented at the first *International Conference for the Study of the Novel*. The issue follows the main thematic areas highlighted throughout the conference.

In the first section, titled "Engaging with Theoretical Perspectives", Valeska Bopp-Filimonov's paper explores Liviu Rebreanu's novel *Ion* through the lens of Critical Disability Studies, highlighting how physical impairments and social hierarchies intersect. It examines marginalized characters with disabilities, such as Savista and the Romani musicians, and contrasts them with the protagonist Ion, whose physical strength symbolizes the potential of the Romanian nation. Focusing on a corpus of 95 Romanian novels translated into Polish between 1931 and 2023, Olga Bartosiewicz-Nikolaev and Tomasz Krupa's paper investigates the reception of the Romanian novel in Poland over the 20th and 21st centuries. Their study uses statistical and computational methods to analyze the sociological aspects of this literary exchange, examining the political, economic, and cultural factors influencing the translation of Romanian literature in Poland, highlighting the role of translators, the impact of historical events, and the gender disparity in translated works. Teodora Dumitru examines the reception of B. Fundoianu's 1922

⁴ Yves Stalloni, *Dictionnaire du roman*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2006.

⁵ Peter Melville Logan (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of the Novel*, I–II, Malden, Wiley-Blackwell, 2011; Paul Schellinger (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Novel*, I–II, London and New York, Routledge, 2014.

⁶ See, for instance, Donald W. Urioste, Francisco A. Lomeli María Joaquina Villaseñor, *Historical Dictionary of U.S. Latino Literature*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2017; Taiping Chang, *A Dictionary of Chinese Literature*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017.

famous thesis on the colonial status of Romanian literature, exploring the reception of this theory from E. Lovinescu's critique in the 1920s to its post-war fate under Romanian Communism and post-Communism. Her study also explores the adaptation of Fundoianu's thesis to modern academic concepts like Antoine Compagnon's "antimodernity". Following a highly relevant theme in the contemporary critical discourse on literary creation, Constantina Raveca Buleu's probes the evolving role of Artificial Intelligence in literary production, examining the methodologies, achievements, and dilemmas associated with AI-generated works. It discusses the limitations of AI's "synthetic creativity" compared to human "transformational" creativity and highlights notable AI-generated texts like *I the Road* and *The Day a Computer Writes a Novel*. Camelia Lăncrănjan's study performs a semantic micro-analysis of the term "fashion" in 19th-century Romanian novels using digital techniques and data gathered from *The Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel*, positing that the term encapsulates modernity and social emancipation. Through the quantitative analysis of 46 contextual excerpts, the study finds that fashion predominantly evokes negative connotations, with over 60% of these negative associations appearing in novels of manners.

In the second part of our issue, titled "Revisiting Forms and Poetics", Andreea David uses a quantitative approach to examine the political dimension of the post-war Romanian novel, delving into the complicated nature of political influence on literature and focusing on novelistic subgenres such as the socialist realist novel, the political novel, and the novel of "the obsessive decade". Her paper reveals that, contrary to what critics suggested throughout time, while political themes were prominent, they did not dominate the literary landscape. Focusing on Mateiu I. Caragiale's *Craii de Curtea-Veche* [*Gallants of the Old Court*], Angelo Mitchievici's study examines the revival of adventure fiction in the Romanian novel, emphasizing the transformation of the notion of adventure from a heroic perspective to a more introspective and fictionalized approach. Teona Farmatu's contribution explores the evolution and impact of autofiction in post-communist Romania, highlighting its origins in French poststructuralism and its adaptation within Romanian literature. The paper critiques the dominance of male perspectives in autofiction and examines how female authors like Lavinia Braniște and Sașa Zare challenge and redefine the genre through their works, emphasizing themes of vulnerability, exploitation, and feminist critique. With a focus on migrant literature, Mihnea Bălici examines the Romanian autobiographical novels written by authors who worked as caregivers in Italy, through the lenses of Sarah Brouillette's "global literary marketplace" and Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek's "in-between peripherality". The paper argues that works authored by Lilia Bicec-Zanardelli, Liliana Nechita, and Ingrid Beatrice Coman-Prodan emphasize migrant exceptionalism over solidarity, aiming to legitimize themselves to Italian readers. Finally, Magda Wächter investigates the significance of subtitles in Romanian novels, analysing their evolution and impact on literary interpretation. Her study examines subtitles' roles across different historical periods, illustrating their nature as reflectors of diverse socio-cultural contexts and literary genres.