LITERARY HISTORY GOES FURTHER

Ştefan VLĂDUŢESCU
University of Craiova

Abstract: The study investigates the current status of literary history; it focuses on the possibility, the status and the development potential of the literary history. This is seen, on the one hand, as discursive practice of aesthetic evaluation and as decoding speech, interpretation, hermeneutics decryption. On the other hand, the literary history is retained as fundamental concept of the theory of literature.
It starts from the axioms of some of the fixed stars of the domain (George Călinescu, Rene Wellek, Augustin Warren), taking into account the positions already accredited of some distinguished contemporary literary critic (Nicolae Manolescu, Eugen Simion, Eugen Negrici), taking into account the assertions of some critics, historians and committed literary theorists (Mircea A. Diaconu, Iulian Boldea, Al. Cistelecan, Gheorghe Crăciun) and also are considered the opinions expressed by personalities in the making of the investigated field (Nicoleta Ifrim, Gabriel Coşoveanu, Ion Buzera, Ioana Andreea Mircea, Cătălin Ghiţă, Sorina Sorescu).
To clarify the issue, it proceeds to a triangulation, it appeals to a research methodology consists of three methods convergent used: the meta-analytic method, the historical method and the comparative method.
The reached conclusion is that literary history is an actuality domain with great evolution perspectives. There are four arguments in the support of the conclusion, and therewith constitute factors that ensures the continuity and development potential of literary history: 1) the infinity of human aesthetic sense, 2) irrepressible improving of the critical spirit, 3) optimizing of reading standards and 4) functioning need and the canon reviewing.

Keyword: literary history, critical spirit, aesthetic sense, canon

1. Introduction

Actuality of literary history is a derivative of the aporetic issue of the literary history possibility. The terms, under which by default the theme of a possible not topicality is formulated today, are precisely those in which George Călinescu and Rene Wellek enunciated their interrogation in decades 4, 5 and 6 of the last century. Data that must give account today the project of an effective literary history are however others. "The reality, shows George Călinescu in «The criticism and literary history technology», critics and historian are two sides of criticism in the widest understanding. Is it possible to perform clear critical without historical projection, although the true value criticism implicitly contains a historical determination, but it's not possible to perform literary history without critical examination. (...) Who excludes the aesthetic criterion from literary history does not perform literary history, but cultural history". George Călinescu, like Rene Wellek, links deconstructive the criticism and literary history in a single destiny. Beyond of their common trunk axiom, standing evolutionary in the coordinates of a temperate relativism, Rene Wellek formulates a set of aporia; of which that with modeling value for the further investigative approach it has the axiom that "the historical process must be judged according to certain values, but the scale of values is itself taken from history".

Moreover, in "Theory of literature" (written with Augustin Warren), Rene Wellek will emphasize the existence of three disciplines: a "study of literature, of its categories, of its

BDD-A22051 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:58:55 UTC)

criteria" (literary theory), a study "regarding concrete literary works" (literary criticism, "essentially static") and a diachronic study of works (literary history). These three disciplines "overlap" and are unthinkable separately. Later, in "Criticism concepts", Rene Wellek will discuss how criticism tends to literary theory (when performs a "conceptual knowledge" of the literature) and towards literary history (when describes the "historical achievements" and individualizes the "great classics" that "forms the main canon of literature").

2. The actuality or not actuality of literary history

From this perspective, the actuality or not actuality of literary history is also criticism actuality/not actuality. Through their mutual destiny, criticism and literary history live unitary and consubstantial in a single existential formula.

About Romanian criticism and literary history, the three great critics / literary historians of the current period, Nicolae Manolescu, Eugen Simion and Eugen Negrici, express points of view, generally, convergent: especially regarding in the critical spirit, taste change, literature evolution, standards, systems of expectations, revisions, values mutation, etc.

There is a consensus that the object of criticism and literary history is the literary work. Rene Wellek states that "the subject" is "the literary work". In the same vein, George Călinescu states: "The starting point of the critic and literary historian is the work , as artistic reality". In "The Themes" (Manolescu, 2011, p. 5), Nicolae Manolescu notes that "writer's works" constitute the "raw material" for criticism and literary history. With the same object, the two are, how he will conceive them also in "The Critical History of Romanian Literature" (Manolescu, 2008, p. 1455) "inseparable". However, after 1989 it is visible the temptation of an objectual segregation and "general tendency" "leaving of the actual literary history for multicultural studies". On the other hand, throughout the twentieth century and early twenty-first century, Professor Nicolae Manolescu senses three aggression against criticism and literary history: "violation of literary facts by the Marxism-Leninism doctrine " (with effects in "abandoning much of the aesthetic valid tradition of literature" and in fixing a new and false hierarchy) diachronic rejection by structuralists (it was "vitiated criticism" and was "annihilated literary history") and, after 1989, while the literature (after the guidance-ascertaining intervention of Allan Bloom) occupy a secondary place in people's lives, history would come to be "an ineffectual action". The first two aggressions belongs of the past and are taken under the benefit of inventory. The third is removed as follows: "No literature has given rise to criticism and literary history, but literary history and criticism gave birth literature, by the very fact that they made it aware of her new nature: the sacred and high literature became profane and common".

3. Developing after principles

Criticism and literary history remain actual because they develop after principles. The first of these aesthetic principle. For Nicolae Manolescu criticism remains "a primarily aesthetic reading" critic being "a man endowed with aesthetic sense", a man whose natural tastes are not discussed, but whose cultural tastes are questionable (Manolescu, 2008, p. 1454). The principle of aesthetic criticism shows that literary reading occurs for "literary beauty and value." Aesthetic criticism reveals "the essence of literature works" and literary history - "the essence of national literature". The history of literature is "based on aesthetic criticism". According to Eugen Simon, literary criticism (and by default literary history) cannot function without accepting the "principle of aesthetic autonomy" and the "principle of review" ("Death of Mercutio") (Simon, 2002, p. 249 and 289).

4. Aesthetic value

BDD-A22051 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:58:55 UTC)

An actuality component of literary history is the aesthetic value. For Professor Manolescu the main issue of criticism and literary history since 1989 is the tendency that "the success and no value" to form "the main criterion of literature publishing" and the value to be judged "according to trade rules", following the way of "canonical battle" of American type. In any case, the aesthetic value must be the standard by which to enter the canon. And since "literary values are not assessed by themselves", they will be installed by criticism and literary history. The literary historian certainty is that "there are absolute values" (Manolescu, 2008, p. 1456) among them counting also the aesthetics one.

Staking on pronounced relativity of aesthetic value, Eugen Negrici admits that "being determined by a rate and being the product of a change of perspective also the consequence of an assignment (by recipient), it, the value, has no the attribute of the permanence and there is only potential in a text" and when the artistic value "faded in enough ways" "remained to speak us – incomparable of insightful – the expressiveness values"("Illusions of Romanian literature ") (Negrici, 2008, p. 76). Eugen Simon senses that some values may expire and then intervenes "revision of values"; he adds that at us, "the values are almost systematically challenged" and "hierarchies are regularly demolished": " polemical spirit is excessively" ("Critical fragments") (Simion, 1998, p. 330).

5. Evolution

Another dimension of literary history is the evolution. Nicolae Manolescu believes that "to give an account of the whole evolution of literature“, is necessary “its periodization" (Manolescu, 2008, p. 7). It has to be reminded that Hans Robert Jauss found that a literary history renovated by reception aesthetics must be based on relevance of “an evolutionary understanding", on "critical of tradition" and on "selective forgetting." Going in this direction, Professor Manolescu is stimulated also by the taking into account the fact that "an outline of the canonical evolution of Romanian literature meantime is missing" and the fact that in Romanian culture have to do with "evolutions always not clear". Nicolae Manolescu assumes the fixing a canonical evolution after he notes that here, to us, were written especially panoramas and metamorphosis, "carefully avoiding the context evolution". In turn, Professor Eugen Simion talks about our literature of "an evolution by leaps" (“Critical fragments") (Simon, 1998, p. 330), to "quickly recover the disabilities and delays”, because it was prevented "to develop normal". Eugen Negrici falls into the same conceptual when he holds that Romanian literature "does not just rarely known a natural evolution" (Negrici, 2008, p. 23), registering only "two periods of relative stability (1860-1914, 1919-1927) "which have reached a natural "normality level".

6. Entrance in normality

In addition, Romanian literary history, after 1989, occurred, as opined Nicolae Manolescu ("Literary Romania" no. 2, 1990) "entrance in normality": was restored aesthetic tradition and war released the canon of ideological and political pressures. The fact was found also by Professor Eugen Simion who recognized that one who "launched in early 1990 (...) the idea of returning to normality is N. Manolescu" ("Death of Mercutio") (Simon, 2002, p. 231). In turn, the teacher Eugen Negrici published in "Literary Romania" a long set of articles under the heading "Simulacrums of normality" that apparently made to be seen appearances and to become determinable "erroneous views of literary history". Convergence to normality made possible to question some of the elements of normality.

a. The first element of normality is the critical spirit. Nicolae Manolescu observes that is not for approval "the abolition of the critical spirit", that sometimes can be ascertained "the absence of critical spirit" and that it is not natural "diminishing of the critical spirit" (Manolescu, 2008, p. 1454); finally, in his plea for " critics aestheticism" concludes that, in

BDD-A22051 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:58:55 UTC)

the knowledge of ourselves, "the chance of difference is that calls us to appreciate, to separate and to exercise our critical spirit".

Eugen Simion notes that it should not be abandoned "the critical thinking" ("Death of Mercutio") (Simon, 2002, p. 232), that "critical spirit is adapting to the expectation horizon" and that "the critical spirit has not abdicated from his aesthetic and moral principles" ("Critical fragments") (Simon, 1998, p. 281).

Eugen Negrici (in "Illusions of Romanian literature", 2008) shows that the abnormality of Romanian literature is based essentially on a scarce critically spirit , even more retarded than literature itself. It let to be manipulated "by his own conscience, altered and halting." Romanian Literature (delayed, out of sync and out of phase) is largely the creation of a critical spirit blind and feeble. It is also, the creation of a critical spirit belonging sometimes "under drugs", or "anesthesia". Criticism recorded also "agony of critical spirit", and "defection of critical spirit", and the case of a critical spirit "suspended himself" or was not "awake, not concessive", and "reducing the critical spirit" and "anemia of the critical spirit" and "after the Revolution, the agony of critical spirit in the last decades turned into his death" (Negrici, 2008, p. 178). Illusions constitute, largely a disease of the critical spirit.

b. Another review of normality is revision, seen as intervention in canon, as a change in hierarchies and as mutation of values. Nicolae Manolescu holds notes that "also after 1989 was drafted a first revision of the canon" (Manolescu, 2008, p. 1097). Eugen Simion considers that the revision is "a normal and necessary critical principle", being inevitable and necessary (...). It is needed a "radical revision" ("Critical fragments ") (Simon, 1998, p. 124). But when it "exceeds the edges of normality", "it risks to become a disease of the critical spirit". Eugen Negrici who expected a radical revision notes: "Announced in all literary journals, the revision campaign in the early 90s threatened to be a refresh hurricane. It arrived, amazingly quickly, a breeze to break some poor dry branches long time ago "(Negrici, 2008, p. 125).

c. The third element of normality was envisioned to be the system of expectations and representations, the horizon of expectations, the standard of reading.

Nicolae Manolescu ascertains that Eugen Lovinescu and his generation "had different standards of reading" than we have: "mutation implies a mismatch of critic standards with those of the writer", because "the expressiveness is neither voluntary, nor involuntary: it is confirming (of a system of expectations, of standards, of habits) or frustrating". Eugen Negrici explains the mutation values by the idea of novelty and states: "the novelty is new only to a certain set of expectations", avoiding "the naturalized term of horizon, which seems laden with connotations". Eugen Simion concludes that, in generally, "critical spirit adapts to the horizon of expectations of the epoch" (Simon, 1998, p. 6).

7. Conclusions

The survival of the aesthetic sense and the critical spirit, the literature evolution (processuality, continuity and organicity), functioning of the canon and of its revisions, remaining with consistently in axes of the autonomy aesthetic and in coordinates of some standards of reading (systems-horizons of expectation), same as that there is sensitivity to literature and is aware that it is the product of criticism and literary history constitutes the arguments for the topicality of literary history.

References

Boldea, Iulian (2009). *Tendinţe actuale în teoria literară*. Târgu Mureș: Editura Universităţii „Petru Maior”.

Boldea, I. (2011). *Romanian Literary Perspectives and European Confluences*. Éd. Asymetria.

BDD-A22051 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:58:55 UTC)

Buzera, I. (2000). *Reinventarea lecturii*. Aius.

Călin, Răzvan Alexandru (2014). Psychology of the Archetype *Symbol in Orthodox Church Picture and Architecture*. Neutrosophy, Paradoxism and Communication, 178.

Călinescu, G. (1968). *Principii de estetică*. Bucuresti: Editura pentru literatură.

Cistelecan, A., Andraş, C., Buda, D. M., Adamek, D., Ursa, M., Spiridon, V., ... & Ştefănescu, D. (2007). Cărţile criticilor universitari. *Revista Literară Vatra*, (07), 46-76.

Coşoveanu, G. (2003). *Libertăţile escortei critice*. Scrisul Românesc.

Diaconu, M. A. (2002). *Poezia postmodernă*. Aula.

Ghiţă, C. (2005). *Ipostaze ale actului critic: eseuri şi cronici literare*. Universitaria.

Grabara, Janusz, & Dima, Ioan Constantin (2014). *Social Sciences and Education Research Review*, *1*.

Grabara, Janusz, & Man, Mariana (2014). *Social Sciences and Education Research Review*, *1*(2), 11-21.

Ifrim, N. (2013). *Identitate culturală şi integrare europeană: perspective critice asupra discursului identitar românesc în perioada postdecembristă*. Editura Muzeului Naţional al Literaturii Române (MNLR).

Kot, S., & Pigoń, Ł. (2014). Effective Occupational Counselling For The Unemployed. *Polish Journal of Management Studies*, *10*(1), 54-62.

Manolescu, Nicolae (1999). Conceptul de istorie literară. *România Literară*, 10.

Manolescu, N. (2008). *Istoria critică a literaturii române: 5 secole de literatură*. Ed. Paralela 45.

Manolescu, N. (2011). *Teme*. MintRight Inc.

Mîndru, Oana-Roxana (2014). Comparative study of the concepts regarding the literary history and the role of the literary historian in the cases of Nicolae Iorga, Eugen Lovinescu and George Călinescu. *Journal of Romanian Literary Studies*, 5, 673-682.

Mircea, I. A. (2013). Istorii literare parţiale versus istorii literare integrale. *Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series Philologica*, (14/3), 41-46.

Negrea, X. (2014). Objectivity between illusions and professional standards in today's journalism. *Social Sciences and Education Research Review*, *1*(1), 29-35.

Negrici, E. (2008). *Iluziile literaturii române*. Bucureşti: Cartea Românească.

Negrici, E. (2011). *Simulacrele normalităţii*. Paralela 45.

Păun, Mihaela Gabriela, & Teodorescu, Mirela (2014). Hermeneutics can make beauty and ugly as neutral (as neutrosophic). *Social Sciences and Education Research Review*, *2*.

Popescu, Gabriel (2001). *Metamorfozele hermeneuticii*. Bucureşti: Paideia.

Popescu, R. (2014). *Creativitatea lexicală ca mijloc de persuasiune în textul publicitar*. In Claudiu Marian Bunăiaşu, Xenia Negrea, Alina Ţenescu (Coordinators), 80. *Creativity, Imaginary, Language*. Craiova: Sitech.

Sandu, Antonio (2014). *Elemente de sociologie*. Bucureşti: Editura Tritonic.

Simion, E. (1998). *Fragmente critice: Demonul teoriei a obosit* (Vol. 2). Craiova: Editura Fundaţia "Scrisul Românesc".

Simion, E. (2002). *Moartea lui Mercutio*. Craiova: Editura Fundaţia "Scrisul Românesc".

Ślusarczyk, B., & Golnik, R. (2014). The Recruitment Process in Transnational Corporations. *Polish Journal of Management Studies*.

Sorescu, S. (1999). *Jurnalistul fără jurnal: jocurile semnăturii*. Aius.

Voinea, D. V. (2014). *Social Sciences and Education Research Review*, *1*(1), 63-70.

Wellek, R. (1963). *Concepts of criticism*. Yale University Press.

Wellek, R., & Warren, A. (1956). *Theory of literature*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.

BDD-A22051 © 2015 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 04:58:55 UTC)