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Genre Transgression in Contemporary Romanian Crime Fiction

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Abstract: Crime fiction is currently evolving towards a literary genre which encompasses the intertwining of several textual practices, rhetorical modes, cultural identities, and topoi. Multiculturalism and the relation to alterity are gradually conquering the realm of detective fiction, thus rendering the crime enigma or suspense only secondary in comparison to other intellectual "enjeux" of the text. Transgressing the national horizon, contemporary detective fiction in Romanian literature can be thus considered as "world literature" (Nilsson–Damrosch–D'haen 2017) not only because it does not engage representations of Romanian spaces alone but also due to its translatability, its transnational range of cultural values and practices. This article aims to discuss several categories of examples for this fresh diversity that Romanian crime fiction has encountered. Novels written recently by authors such as Petru Berteanu, Caius Dobrescu, Mihaela Apetrei, Alex Leo Şerban, or Eugen Ovidiu Chirovici employ variations such as either alternative narrators or cosmopolitan characters, or contribute to anthologies, writing directly in English in order to gain access to a more complex audience. The paper sets out to analyse the literary or rhetorical devices at work in these transgressional phenomena as well as their effects on contemporary Romanian crime narratives and their possible correlations to transnational phenomena.[1]

Keywords: crime narratives, contemporary Romanian literature, intertextuality, hybridization, cultural intersections

1. Introduction

This paper will refer to transgression in relation to the poetics of the genre but also to auctorial strategies for publishing and marketing. One of the most remarkable traits in contemporary Romanian crime fiction concerns the fact

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that the authors and publishers themselves are actively and explicitly assuming positions of advocacy for a more nuanced critical reception of the genre. This type of advocacy seems to adopt two main forms. On the one hand, we can point out the practice of speaking up for "the aesthetic rights of crime fiction", which engenders a type of discourse that we may call "a defence of crime fiction", to some extent in the sense of Shelley's "defence of poetry"; writers and editors themselves emphasizing the livresque and aesthetic value of crime stories (George Arion, Bogdan Hrib). On the other hand, one can identify the tendency of responding to prejudice and condescending views in literary criticism with creative strategies for reshaping crime fiction.

2. New Techniques of the Genre – Stimuli for Textual Cooperation and Readership

The tension between elitist criticism and crime fiction writing can be regarded as a structuring factor for genre transgression and for subverting the classic *topoi* of detective stories. I will argue that these transgressions are made by willingly emphasizing the intersecting spaces of high culture and mass/popular culture. Multiculturally framed relations to alterity, plural modes of consciousness, voicing discontent with real political contexts, as well as poetic language play, are gradually conquering Romanian crime fiction patterns, with mystery or suspense as parts of the narrative becoming almost secondary for the fictional world construction. Thus, crime fiction has been developing techniques for stimulating several variations of textual cooperation (in Umberto Eco's sense from *Lector in Fabula*) and readership (Eco 1984, 245).

2.1. Seriality

One of the main targets of negative criticism has been seriality itself, both as a poetic/production strategy and as a reading mode:

> Much of the criticism on crime fiction – and on serial crime fiction in particular – faults its heavy reliance on formula and convention. To cite two (in)famous examples, Wilson (1947) compares readers of detective stories to drug addicts and alcoholics, eager to get their next fix and unconcerned with the quality of the product they consume; and Eco (1966) describes Fleming's spy novels as a narrative machine that 'produces redundancy'. Crime fiction, then, is either a narcotic or an elaborate yet cheap carnival ride, offering thrills and distraction but little else. (Blandford 2015, 11)

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W. H. Auden's *The Guilty Vicarage* (1948), referenced by Blandford, can be regarded as a quintessential confession that separates between detective stories and the function of art, based on reader reactions and addiction. He also coins an important trait of crime fiction, in his view: being un-rereadable. Such texts can be mentioned here because they illustrate the history of the defamation of crime fiction and the minimization of its chances to be considered good-quality, aesthetically valuable literature. In spite of such views, as we will point out, contemporary crime fiction seems to have found its way out of developing the features that exposed it to such criticism.

The idea of crime fiction as un-rereadable literary production leads to another association made possible by Eco's 1979 classification of open and closed texts in *Lector in Fabula* (English translation: 1984) with the tendency to place crime fiction in the latter category, thus making it a type of text decidedly coordinating its reader in very precise, predictable manners, making rereading for the purpose of clarifying meaning rather unnecessary (Eco 1984, 47). Such reading schemata have sometimes been proven wrong in the case of pseudo-crime fictions such as Borges's *Death and the Compass*; for instance, Matei Călinescu explains the story mechanism as "allegory of reading/writing" in his essay "Adventures of Misreading: Borges's 'Death and the Compass', a Commentary" (2003), describing the path of rereading. Recent Romanian crime narratives are, in their turn, rereadable in the sense that they make a reading offer that opens the path for several interpretive possibilities, and they do not follow the rigorous guidelines of the genre.

In connection with seriality and with crime fiction deflecting its seriality traits to new directions, two strategies can be identified in recent Romanian crime fiction: either aborting seriality completely or reinterpreting seriality. The first direction moves away from the unique detective figure and develops new characters for each new storyline. Seriality reinterpreted may feature recurring characters but not necessarily as heroes or central identities for the plot, or sometimes it resorts to thematic series such as collective works, anthology series, and so on. Another string of accusations against crime fiction has to do with ideological interpretations conveyed by many of the critics, often unidirectional and logically insufficient.

> [The] indictment of crime fiction as subliterary is often accompanied by a second charge – that its formulae are ideologically conservative, and that thus, like a drug, crime fiction's repetitive pleasures may have pernicious effects. Along these lines, Porter (1981) argues that crime fiction's apparent redundancy serves the ideological purpose of reassuring readers, managing our anxieties about crime by containing its threat to social order within familiar and predictable structures. (Blandford 2015, 11)

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Blandford argues instead – and the present paper adopts a similar point of view – that "crime literature's seemingly endless recycling of characters and tropes can have unpredictable and potentially even disruptive effects" (Blandford 2015, 11). This has become one of the most prominent features in Romanian crime fiction nowadays in that familiar formal building blocks of crime fiction are combined in such ways as to generate "disruptive," uncanny effects: they can include poetry techniques, they involve different other fields of knowledge and activity in their discourse, such as: philosophy, physics, even gastronomy in digressive passages, they intertwine various states of the same narrator or feature challenging narrator shifts, etc.

2.2. From Marginal Layers to Criminal Superstructures

In his recent study *Fictions à la chaîne* [Serial Fictions] (2017), Matthieu Letourneux discusses "L'oeuvre face au genre" [The Work Facing the Genre], also taking into consideration several variations of the *récit noir* and *thriller* during the second half of the twentieth century and after. His observation that crime representation is transferred from marginal layers of society to the depiction of criminal superstructures can also be an object of reflection concerning Romanian crime fiction, though with a different contextualization, since questioning superstructures and corrupt mechanisms of power is only possible after 1989. However, in this case, some writers claim that the lack in popularity of crime narratives may be at least partly explained by people's mistrust with justice and authorities: "the audience does not believe in Romanian justice, so it is difficult to come up with the proposition of a plausible hero from the field of law enforcement since everybody has learned of policemen, prosecutors, judges, who are known for law infringement themselves"[2] (Arion 2010). Therefore, genre adaptations and conversions from classic conventions to mixed techniques occur in order to meet the changing requirements and predispositions of readers, thus building the space for a renewal of character creation as well as for textual strategies straying from the traditional detective story (*policier* or "*militist*" – with a parodic term coined by Romanian writers in order to refer to ideological crime fiction written before 1989, alluding to the militia of the time).

Letourneux also provides an image of genre as becoming involved with transgressive practices:

> In relation to genre, there is a remarkable amount of dialogic practices: mere simple variations of serial formulae, transgeneric hybridizations, transpositions, subjective appropriations, parodical or critical

2 Translations from Romanian and French literature or critical texts are my own throughout the article.

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> deconstructions, camp detours, postmodern pastiche, subcultural rearticulations, countercultural reversals; all these means bring into play the perpetual realignment of critical distance and of the relation to norm and encyclopaedic approach. (Letourneux 2017, 284–285)

In his comments on Letourneux's position towards genre, Lionel Rérat outlines the fact that, especially in serial productions, the reader or viewer is invited to approach the text either *within* or *against* genre borders, thus emphasizing the in-betweenness of crime fiction in its variations (Rérat 2018). Such traits that have been discussed frequently in relation to European (especially Western-European) literature and TV or cinema production are to be considered also concerning Romanian crime fiction, given the fact that recent novels and short stories often engage in dialogic outflow that illuminates the attempts to make the renewed genre more popular by using sometimes unexpected strategies, e.g. partaking in "conversations" with other novels (not necessarily detective stories), poems, or films.

3. New Techniques in Romanian Crime Fiction

3.1. Reinterpreting Seriality – A New Variation of Voices and Characters

Seriality is one of the features that has accompanied crime fiction since its beginnings, and traditionally it had often been constructed through the recurring presence of one main character in all books or episodes, either the investigator of murders and mysteries (i.e. Poirot, Miss Marple, Detective Montalbano, Harry Hole, and other famous characters) or the murderer. This feature often changes, and it becomes an object of genre transgression. Reinterpreting seriality traits is obvious in contemporary Romanian crime fiction, for instance, in Caius Dobrescu's *Vlad Lupu Series* (2017–ongoing). For other crime fiction writers, seriality does not even seem to be a tempting option (Petru Berteanu, Mihaela Apetrei, Eugen Chirovici – whose novels the paper will refer to). Furthermore, they employ intertextuality, innovative narratological structures, postmodern blurring of the lines between reality and fiction, and so on as traits which illustrate the hypothesis that crime fiction is changing and embracing new forms and patterns of representation.

Moving on to the attempt to prove the presence of transgressive features in contemporary Romanian crime fiction, the article will focus on gradually outlining some possible nuclei in the analysis of examples. While exhaustivity cannot be the aim of the present article, it could perhaps serve for future developments in the study of this field, which has not been frequently explored in recent Romanian

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criticism or literary theory. In the *Vlad Lupu Series* already mentioned above, the lead character mentioned in the title of the series is atypically only represented in the others' narratives and is sometimes quite passive; for instance, the second novel of the series sees the protagonist in a hospital, comatose after being involved in a car accident that might have been the outcome of a conspiracy. The main character is himself an enigma, ambiguously being spoken of by the narrators as, in turn, a heroic figure fighting to reveal the communist crimes, and someone who jeopardizes his old friends' safety and well-being, seemingly protecting obscure political interests and forming unlikely alliances. While typical seriality usually involves the main character as a homodiegetic narrator or as coordinated by a heterodiegetic narrator, here Vlad Lupu's image is a construction stemming from the discourse of unreliable narrators addressed to an unreliable narratee.

Characters such as a half-German migrant who struggles with recovery after an alcohol addiction, a failed and deceitful physician, a female singer and composer fashion rhetorical modes that engage "variations of distance," as Wayne C. Booth would put it (1983, 155). All the narrators' rationale and sometimes even soundness is shaken by the corrupt environment they live in, and this trait is conveyed through the narrators' hesitations, disruption of chronology, and palinodic dramatization. Two of the narrating characters display an intriguing mannerism by (deliberately) mistaking the narratee's name (apparently Corina), which becomes itself an object of linguistic and identity play and ambiguity. This narrative diversity is certainly not the norm for classic crime fiction, which is substantially enriched in Dobrescu's novels through the involvement of complex poetics.

The voices we never encounter in any of the novels are Vlad Lupu's and Corina's. The latter is a PhD candidate from Central European University, documenting the story of a subversive group of youngsters during the last communist decade in Romania. So, the novels are actually shaped as research interviews with a twist, also engaging the topic of suspicion specific to a post-communist society, as the plot is set in nowadays' Romania, and the 1980s are just an object of recollection. Recording one's memories and confessions echoes, to the mind of the narrators, surveillance and investigation practices during the former regime.

Dialogic frames are at play since each of the three novels structurally relies on interactions with other genres or modes of artistic productions: *Death in Szeklerland* often refers to the graphic novels of a certain Sonja Mireille; Tiberiu Goanță's deceitful, unreliable narrative in *Dust* is based on Lars von Trier's *Riget*; while *Requiem for Nobody* becomes partially a verse narrative due to the narrator Mona's habit of speaking in rhymed phrases as she would with her Israeli role model and friend singer Chava Gur.

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3.2. The Social Body as a Character

In Petru Berteanu's novel *Cumsecade* (*Good Neighbours* should probably be considered as an option for translating the title; 2016), the structure and the plot reflect each other. The structure of the book is atypical as the chapters are titled "Ground Floor," "First Floor," "Second Floor," and so on, mirroring the structure of an apartment building. In this novel, the investigator is a young photographer trying to build a career path in Bucharest, summoning echoes of Antonioni's iconic *Blow-Up* (1966) as he stumbles upon mysterious incidents in the building where he had rented a flat: a rock singer disappears (people assuming he was a victim of the loan sharks he was indebted to), a young girl is nowhere to be found, and a postman vanishes with the pension money he was supposed to deliver to the senior residents.

Meanwhile, Robert works for a small agency selling online photographs of "exotic" places and of people from Romania to foreign visitors. The agency is led by a journalist who reluctantly turns into an entrepreneur trying to establish a more profitable business during the rise of online commerce and press. International stereotypes and common ignorance about Romania are reflected in the questions Robert has to answer for the visitors of the website: "What is actually going on at the Maiden Fair on Mount Găina? Are there deserts in Romania? Is there a wax museum in Bucharest? Are the pictures of abandoned railways recent?" (Berteanu 2016, 165). Robert also takes photographs for non-commercial uses, featuring transcultural characters such as the members of the Silent Band, a music band formed by "three Rroma men and a fat Morrocan drum player they had befriended while taking their shot in Porto" (Berteanu 2016, 141).

Linguistic play can also be detected in the title, which can also be read as "how to fall" (*cum se cade*). The blurb on the back cover states that it is an "atypical thriller because the main corpse is that of a neighbourhood" (rather than the classical pattern of detective stories where one learns about a victim or a series of victims but not of an entire urban community as a "corpse"), and also "an uncanny social novel, where people disappear inexplicably, one by one." The setting of the novel is focused on realistic descriptions and comments aiming to convey an accurate imagery related to the communist urban environment: "A quiet atmosphere reigned, enabling one to claim that eternity was born in an apartment building in the neighbourhood" (Berteanu 2016, 21). The narrator obviously rephrases Lucian Blaga's iconic view of the village as the place where the sentiment of infinity is conceived; the assertion is phrased so as to simultaneously mimic the communist party rhetoric, self-glorifying national accomplishments in modernization and progress. Ideologically biased rewritings of classics were also a notorious commonplace of socialist propaganda. This kind of rewriting is parodied in Berteanu's novel through such rhetorical strategies as reinterpreting

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Blaga's poetry. In spite of the "eternity" feeling quoted above, "the street grew old early, long before its dwellers" (Berteanu 2016, 21) and the neighbourhood became a *topos* witnessing difficult times and transforming as dictated by the economic and administrative crisis of the 1980s: "Crossing each other's path on sidewalks, people would stare at one another's shopping bags, trying to guess if and where something they needed was on sale. Precious information was being exchanged on geographies of salami, beer, women's stockings, cheese, batteries, or coffee" (Berteanu 2016, 22). The decline in confidence and authority is followed carefully and then analysed as a site predisposed for felonies:

> During any holiday, women would wake up at night to bake their cakes because that would be the only time when gas flames burned at noticeable intensity. Stray dogs, their count always rising, had various shades of grey too. Order itself seemed shabby, the announcements in buildings were in their places but had gotten manky, elevator doors would bear key-scratchings and out-of-order notices more often than not, the local policeman would patrol more carefully, watching his step as though slightly fearful. (Berteanu 2016, 22)

The realistic and social turn in post-communist Romanian crime fiction extensively embraces depictions of transition as felt in urban neighbourhoods. In this sense, new authors' presence on the scene of Romanian crime fiction continues and brings additional emphasis to previous works such as the novels of George Arion, Bogdan Hrib, Stelian Țurlea, and Rodica Ojog-Braşoveanu, who in their turn had alluded to this social scenery. However, for Berteanu, the social body with its degenerative disorders is itself a central character of the novel: "Communism left on Christmas Eve. The residents on Ilie Melcu St. woke up without it one day. They queued at the soda shop while they could listen to the Patriarchal Cathedral mass aired for the first time, on a loud radio […] A collective divorce was beginning to put down roots" (Berteanu 2016, 23).

Crime and the mystery surrounding it are just one side of the fictional pact proposed in *Cumsecade*. The police officer in charge of the disappearance cases is Sandra Sas, a woman dedicated to her profession, who is also described in terms of her personal life, at the end of her marriage to a disappointing also-ran, wondering about issues such as: "Why is there no masculine term for *housewife*? I have been living for years with a house-man who did nothing for the house" (Berteanu 2016, 174). Gender roles and relations are also scanned in manifold layers of the represented society: couples, parent-child relationships, and so on, mainly rendered as by-products of the staggering transition from a totalitarian state to democracy. A similar perspective is adopted when describing professional roles, where characters displaying high standards of work ethics

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are facing individuals who only pretend to act properly, according to the orders they were given. Another important polarity guiding the plot is the reference to the generation gap, subtly converted into a war-like conflict where senior citizens in the neighbourhood try to re-establish by any means the order they had known in their youth, thus reprimanding new behavioural features of the younger generations. In such novels, crime fiction is set to explain possible worlds where the exacerbation of social conflict invites one to speculate on political philosophy. In this case, the explanation for the missing people's cases is eventually deciphered by Robert, and it has much to do with the motto of the novel, chosen from Chesterton's reflections: "The Bible tells us to love our neighbors, and also to love our enemies; probably because generally they are the same people" (Chesterton 1910).

Dialogic and transgressive genre features are involved also because one of the victims, Dan Nişici, would write seemingly fantastic stories about some collective entities named "goblin" creatures, in fact coded references to the murderers. Another key topic is collective crime, alluding to specific traits of communist and post-communist societal trauma. Therefore, mystery solving is just one stage in reading Berteanu's novel as it further prompts towards the critique of superstructures mentioned before and towards community-shaping issues.

3.3. Crime Fiction – The Playhouse of Language

3.3.1. English as Means of Going Global

Apart from transgressing well-known conventions of the genre, recent Romanian crime fictions also trespass linguistic borders and aim for transnational markets or at least linguistic play that involves transcultural suggestions. Two very different but relevant cases for this direction are represented by Alex Leo Şerban, author of *The Parlayed Letter*, and Eugen Ovidiu Chirovici, *The Mirror Room* (2016). Both are written in English by Romanian authors. However, *The Parlayed Letter* was only published in Romanian translation (*Litera din scrisoarea misterioasă*, 2011), while Chirovici's novel became an international best-seller through its circulation in English. Before that, the author had published several crime and mystery novels in Romanian. *The Mirror Room*'s trajectory was unpredictable, and its details became quite famous as well since it had been rejected by several editors before it was finally singled out by a small publishing house in the United Kingdom and recommended to important stakeholders in the field. Chirovici's setting and characters are all-American, with each part of the novel "coordinated" by another narrator, whose name is also the title of the section: Peter Katz, John Keller, and Roy Freeman all approach a murder mystery from different angles, making the story embrace

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both the private eye perspective and the police investigation procedures. A literary agent, a writer and a retired police officer try to learn the truth about the murder of a university professor named Joseph Wieder. The fictional world is shaped here rather by literary and television references while also engaging in resurfacing the American critique of psychiatric and investigation procedures and their limitations, based on the author's research and literary interest in American culture rather than on direct experience.

3.3.2. Intertextuality and Other Postmodern Tools

Another significant mode of transgression, though widely practised before, involves the use of extensive intertextuality. In Alex Leo Serban's *The Parlayed Letter*, the characters are the world-famous writers Jorge Luis Borges and Fernando Pessoa. They are involved in clarifying the enigma of a conman named Franz Osberg. Mr. Franz is tracked by Interpol for various crimes such as using false identities and dealing in art forgeries. Osberg is obviously one of his false identities, and an experienced reader can easily guess that. Borges and Pessoa are trying to defend this apparently vile character, and one can promptly figure out why: Osberg is the famous anagram that Vladimir Nabokov used in order to mock Borges. At the same time, the author creates identities for the Interpol agents using parts of Borges' name. The entire story prompts the reader to reflect on typical postmodern issues such as the ontological framing of the narrative, the intertwining of reality and fiction, the topic of identity, and questioning the notion of guilt in relation to all elements of existence. This micro-novel can be placed under the category of "self-voiding fiction" postulated by Brian McHale in his seminal work *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987) since in the end no hermeneutical path or conclusion seems to stand. "Self-erasure" and "flickering worlds" in postmodern literature have been referred to as pointing to "an irresolvable paradox of the world *outside* the character's mind" (McHale 2004, 101); furthermore, "[n]arrated events, then, can be un-narrated, placed *sous rature*; and, in much the same way, projected *existents* – locales, objects, characters, and so on – can have their existence revoked" (McHale 2004, 103). In Leo Serban's novel, the characters of Borges and Pessoa are represented as not very interested in each another and having difficulties in finding anything to communicate, a view which casts a different light on writers belonging to the same spiritual family. Literary affinity is portrayed as triggering lack of interpersonal dynamics in "real life". The main motifs of the novel also revolve around references to Poe's famous stories, not only the *Purloined Letter* that has already been referenced in the book's reception but also alluding to *Tell-Tale Heart* and *The Imp of the Perverse*. Şerban and Chirovici elude the local or national dimension of the work by plunging directly into another language and transnational cultural horizons. Both writers share the

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taste for referencing international classics of the crime fiction genre, thus pairing their novels to world literature trajectories.

Chirovici explains his beliefs about the value, hierarchy, and genealogy of his work and of crime fiction viewed *in extenso* by explicitly linking mystery stories to canonized literary works and norms:

> Well, you might say that my book is a whodunit, a crime novel. But I would say that it's a whydunit. I have always thought that after three hundred pages the reader should get something more than just who killed Jane or John. I have also always thought that a writer should aspire to discover the magic land of good stories that are literary at the same time. A so-called crime novel should be as stylish as a literary novel—please be so kind as to read *The Long Good-bye* by Raymond Chandler or *Who Killed Palomino Molero* by Mario Vargas Llosa or *The Pledge* by Friedrich Dürrenmatt. (Chirovici 2016)

3.4. A Different Web of Interests

Mihaela Apetrei employs a different thematic thread, drawing more from American patterns of the serial killer and *gastro-noir* elements. The plot is set in Bucharest, but its development reveals various transnational elements shaping transcultural readership. The main character, named Murki, is a cuisine aficionado inviting random guests to eccentric dinners using Facebook. He is also an art critic and curator who brings and exhibits in Romania Brueghel's *Allegories of the Senses*. His choice reflects a deviant philosophy of senses, and thus the novel also becomes an *ekphrastic* text, to some extent. The murder mystery occurs as Murki's dinner guests die one after another, and the detective plot only seems to accumulate details in order to reveal his guilt. The protagonist is referred to in relation to childhood psychological trauma (his emotions fade away after the death of a kindergarten girlfriend depicted as an angelic child, just as a typical Renaissance image), and the narrator explains how the purpose of the dinner invitations is in fact a theft of energy and "vibration" from his guests, according to principles of traditional Chinese medicine and philosophy. These eccentricities single him out as a probable murderer, especially since he is closely watched by a neighbour, an elderly lady named Sophie, described by the narrator, the main character and herself as a paragon of the "unofficial detective" or private eye similar to Melania Lupu, a famous protagonist of Rodica Ojog-Braşoveanu's popular crime novels. However, the red herring technique is subtly used by Apetrei, and the clues are later on proved to be false. While other contemporary Romanian crime novels resort to using peripheries or remainders of the socialist regime as environments for crime, Mihaela Apetrei's novel casts the characters into a decadent aristocratic

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web of interests such as exquisite art, medicine, and cuisine not at all typical for the national literature or for the popular culture of the recent years.

The detective plot initially seems to have the only function to catch up and intersect the crime timeline but is gradually developed into an independent story focusing on the policemen Marc Aureliu (the name of the stoic Roman emperor is referenced with irony) and Doina, a witty and unwavering detective, the latter having gained much popularity among the readers.

3.5. Thematic Anthologies

Another trend in reinterpreting seriality is represented by collective volumes of short stories revolving around a given topic, therefore commissioned by the editor. Tritonic Publishing House has developed this practice, having already reached more than five such anthologies. The writers featured are often well-established crime fiction authors such as Bogdan Hrib, Teodora Matei, or Petru Berteanu. They possibly reflect to the highest extent the mixture of "vernacular and cosmopolitan" (Nilsson et al. 2017, 125) as their horizons are determined by the choice of topics and by the spatial turn: *Bucharest Noir*, *Timişoara Noir*, *GastroNoir*, *Domino 1* and *2* reunite "glocal" features as well as bringing together large numbers of the contemporary Romanian crime fiction writers. They would be best suited for analysis in the context outlined by "crime fiction as a discursive field – a network consisting of elements and nodal points that connect and build on each other. The nodal points forming this discursive field can include subgenres, iconic works, authors, and domestic literature" (Nilsson et al. 2017, 111).

4. An Attempt to Conclude

In her study on the poetics of detective stories, Daniela Zeca argues that one of the rules of the game is "to provide the reader with readily graspable interpretive approaches" (Zeca 2005, 198). However, recent crime fiction proves that this is no longer the case or at least that authors no longer seem to find this type of poetics mandatory. Even when they do recycle elements of the classic works, they do so with a "disruptive" outcome, as the selection of novels discussed above demonstrates. The "interpretive links" are also intertextual in each of the contemporary novels mentioned here, and this can be easily followed by analysing another tool that can be found in almost all of them: the mottos and quotations set as chapter markers, which often provide literary journeys to other genres (see the Chesterton quotation example mentioned above).

Although mostly part of just the national range of literature (with the notable exception of Chirovici among the authors the article referred to), Romanian crime

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stories emerge as connective elements that not only surpass internal conventions of the genre and open gates to other types of poetics but also transcend local topics and representations and could make for a potential interesting transnational diffusion phenomenon, granted the proper translation and marketing strategies. They displace common clichés in the reception of crime fiction by using transgressive strategies which strongly impact the bridges between crime fiction and canonized literary production as well as the active channels between Romanian literature and European or world literature.

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