ION CHINEZU IN THE ROMANIAN-HUNGARIAN INTERWAR LITERARY ATMOSPHERE

Mirela-Iulia Cioloca
Phd student, "Petru Maior" University of Târgu-Mureș

Abstract: The purpose of this study is to make a literary journey into the interwar literary landscape to observe the development of Romanian-Hungarian relations. Improvement and increasing interest in Romanian literature by Hungarian readers can be observed. Hungarian-Romanian translations are encouraged. An important aspect in this regard is Ion Chinezu's book, Aspects *ofTransylvanian-Hungarian literature (1919-1929), which investigates the works of Hungarian writers for ten years. His study captures the Hungarian literature numbness awakening which develops qualitatively and quantitatively. Through his study, the Transylvanian critic revealed his appreciation of Hungarian literature and its writers, creating an approachable atmosphere towards Hungarian literature understanding and opening the eyes of translators; it can even be said to have demonstrated the closeness to Hungarian literature and its study. He certainly wanted to correct the injustice of ignorance concerning this literature. Just as neither gold is a noble metal in fact, except when there is a miner to bring it to light and a craftsman to process it, the valuable Hungarian literature does not come to be really known until someone discovers it and presents it to those who are eager to find out the literary secrets. Ion Chinezu had taken over these cultural responsibilities.*

Keywords: interwar, literature, Hungarian, cultural, responsibilities, closeness.

An important role in the period following World War I in terms of press and the Hungarian public was played by Cluj. Why? Because at the end of 1918 there are no longer newspapers coming from Budapest, and "the food for soul"[1]had to be purchased. Cluj will be the cultural leader, getting involved in the Hungarians' problems, being the "centre of the political directive organ for Hungarians in Transylvania"[2], but also "the Hungarians' spiritual life centre in Transylvania"[3]. In the next ten years, Cluj will bring out the largest number of periodicals in Hungarian press in Romania. If the Romanian and German ones are added, their number will be slightly smaller than the periodical publications of the capital[4].

The twenties are prolific to Romanian-Hungarian relations. During this period, translators (road openers) were formed, increasing the interest in Hungarian language, Romanian works in this language, as well as the works that debated Romanian literature. The Romanian-Hungarian communications road develops, along with the awareness of their necessity and the consolidation of relations. In the interwar period one can speak of an improvement of these connections. There is an increasing interest in both classical and modern literature. The preoccupation for Eminescu' s poetry and its translation into Hungarian develops, creating "a real Eminescu fever"[5]. Alecsandri becomes loved by the Hungarian public. There are many translations in Hungarian from Romanian prose: Ion Luca Caragiale, Ion Creanga, Mihail

[1]Niculae Ferenczi, *Presa periodică maghiară din România în ultimii zece ani*, [*Hungarian periodical press in Romania in the last ten years*], in *Transilvania, Banatul, Crișana, Maramureșul 1918-1928*, vol II, București: Ed. Cultura Națională, 1929**,** p. 1305.
[2]*Ibidem.*
[3]George Kristóf, *Zece ani de viață literară a ungurimii din Ardeal*, [*Ten years of literary life ofHungarians in Transylvania*], in *Transilvania, Banatul, Crișana, Maramureșul 1918-1928*, vol II, București: Ed. Cultura Națională, 1929 , p. 1153.
[4] Niculae Ferenczi, *cited work*, p. 1308.
[5]Sámuel Domokos, *Bibliografia maghiară a literaturii române 1831-1860, 1961-1965* [*Hungarian bibliography of Romanian literature 1831-1860, 1961-1965*], foreword by Laszlo Galdi, București:Editura pentru literatură, 1966, p. 50.

BDD-A27487 © 2017 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:44:11 UTC)

Sadoveanu, Liviu Rebreanu, etc. Bilingual periodicals have also been published: "Aurora", (Aurora), "Cultura", (The Culture). In this approving background Ion Chinezu's study about Transylvanian-Hungarian written writingsis being published[6].

The 1930s had brought an order (o circulară) in the national area, stating that it was not allowed to offend national minorities. This was a consequence of certain history textbooks content. In December, at the first official census there were 1,425,507 Hungarians in Romania, and 1,554,525 Hungarians after their mother tongue. In the same month, "*Erdélyi Fiatalok* " publication, Sándor Kacsó's novel - *On Dead Line (Pe linie moartă)* (which presents the Transylvanian social and political difficulties of the years following the World War I) and Ion Chinezu's book had appeared. It seems that the last month of the year has proved to be productive for Hungarian literature.

The Transylvanian critic gave the first synthesis of the Hungarian literature in Romania in the first decade after the Great Union, *Aspects of Transylvanian-Hungarian Literature (1919-1929)*, printed by the Publishing House of the periodical "Society of Tomorrow" ("Societatea de mâine"), Cluj, 1930[7]. Due to this work and the fact that he was an authorized translator of Hungarian, it should be rightfully included in a Hungarian literature history of Romania[8]. In his book he "tackles the (trans)formation period of Hungarian literature due to the new political realities"[9].

The literary critic Nicolae Balotă promotes the necessity of the Romanian-Hungarian bond in *Scriitori maghiari din România 1920-1980*(*Hungarian writers from Romania 1920-1980*): "To build a vault or a bridge means, in the double sense of the Romanian word, to build and to persist in time. There is a need for such a bridge between Romanians and Hungarians, brothers on the same earth. That's the only way we can last"[10]. The Romanians "twinned with the land of Transylvania, twinned with nature, like the leaf and the grass of the forest"[11] have established relations with the Hungarians as a consequence of coexistence. Ion Chinezu is a Hungarian literature supporter, he himself being filled by its breath, contributing to its development. "An ethnic community cannot exist without the contribution of its intellectuals"[12] .He was one of those intelectuals formed and raised in a cultural environment that impressed his life. According to Nicolae Balotă, Chinezu "was the witness and the interpreter of the deprovincialization process of Transylvanian Hungarian literature during paradoxical times, when Hungarians had the status of minority"[13].

According to Mircea Popa, "a priceless unchangeable feature of Transylvanian scientific writing" is "to serve the twinning of Romanians and Hungarians, to highlight the historical truth and combat the autarchic, isolationist, exalted theories"[14]. Like Andrei Veress, who published *The Romanian-HungarianBibliography*, and placed Romanians and Hungarians "always together on different stages of their historical development"[15], Ion Chinezu is praised

[6]*Ibidem*, pp. 50-53.
[7]Gavril Scridon, *Istoria literaturii maghiare din România 1918-1989*, [*History of Hungarian Literature inRomania (1918–1989*)], Cluj-Napoca: Editura Promedia Plus, 1996, p. 9.
[8]*Ibidem*, p. 171.
[9]Valentin Trifescu, *On the Advantages of Minority Condition in the Romanian-Hungarian Cultural and Literary Relations*, in"ActaUniversitatis Sapientiae, Philologica", 9,1(2017) 7–16, p. 9, available from https://www.degruyter.com/ (accesat în data de 13.10.2017, 21:07)
[10] Nicolae Balotă, *Scriitori maghiari din România 1920-1980 [Hungarian Writers in Romania (1920–1980*)], Bucureşti: Kriterion, 1981, *apud* Gavril Scridon,*cited work*, p. 10.
[11] Elie Buftea, *Transilvania şi românismul* [*Transylvania and the Romanism*], 1943, p. 10.
[12] Cseke Péter, *Valori ale presei maghiare din România (1919-2004)* [*Values of Hungarian press inRomania (1919-2004*)], Bucureşti:Editura Tritonic, 2015, p. 11.
[13]Nicolae Balotă, *cited work*, pp. 447-448, cited by Valentin Trifescu in *On the Advantages of Minority Condition in the Romanian-Hungarian Cultural and Literary Relations*, in "Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Philologica", 9,1(2017) 7–16, p. 9, available from https://www.degruyter.com/ (accesat în data de 13.10.2017, 21:17).
[14] Mircea Popa, *Andrei Veress- un bibliograf maghiar, prieten al românilor* [*Andrei Veress- a Hungarian bibliographer, a friend of the Romanians]*, Vulcan*:* Editura Realitatea Românească, 2006, p. 6.
[15]*Ibidem.*

BDD-A27487 © 2017 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:44:11 UTC)

by Liviu Rebreanu, as a result of his book publication- *Aspects of Transylvanian-Hungarian Literature (1919-1929)*, considering that the Hungarians had an ideal representative of objective criticism, but also a historian, commentator and highly documented judge[16].

Chinezu gathered most of his book material since he had been a teacher in Târgu-Mureş. His visits to Hungarian writer Molter Károly at that time, the discussions with him, the books he borrowed, all these moments proved a curious spirit, but with detailed knowledge of Hungarian writers' works and literary directions of the time[17]. According to Kuncz Aladár, this work presents with the highest accuracy (as it had not been done before) the Hungarian literature in Transylvania since 1918[18]. His real interest in the art of the word had been the bond of relationships: "literature can plant indestructible friendships among people and has a particular influence on the conscience and disposition of the whole nation. That is why we need to know more, much more about each other. We can never know enough"[19]. Literature was the stream from which Ion Chinezu's soul had fed, that is why he could lift his head, full of knowledge.

If we were to put Ion Chinezu in a category of a "subconscious temporal horizon" after Lucian Blaga's philosophical system[20], perhaps "havuz-time" (timpul-havuz)[21] is the best one, because it involves more orientation towards the future. The Transylvanian critic used his intellectual capacity to leave something of value behind him. In Lucian Blaga' thought, for the person in this category, "who lives in such a horizon, time even has through its own perception, the gift to continually raise the level of existence.Time would be, due to its ascending structure, a creator of even higher values"[22].

Ion Chinezu, who was himself full of high ideas and concerned about their connection to the cultural environment, had been heading towards such values. Although Blaga asserts that the one who is included in this temporal horizon "tastes the certainty, through nothing demonstrated, but not less lived, that the next moment always possesses in itself the significance of an ascension to what it is or was"[23], I believe, however, that Chinezu himself demonstrated the construction of a Romanian-Hungarian connection through *Aspects* ... And time that came recognized his contribution. His study captures the numbness awakening of Hungarian literature, which develops qualitatively and quantitatively.

In his study in "Familia" (The Family) publication from April-May 1935, Al. Dima presents the term "creative localism", which aimed at encouraging talents, forming groups of intellectuals who will support each other, creating a cultural environment in major cities, thus keeping the interest in cultural values alive, "thus opposing to the powerful minority offensive, positive aspects (works) of our national spirit"[24]. In this context, he noticed the life of the minority culture that began to manifest itself forcefully in Transylvania. A conclusive example in this regard is Ion Chinezu's work, which "In his excellent study of information and characterization *Aspects of Transylvanian-HungarianLiterature* ... he presented with great clarity the thrill of the Hungarian literary movement that reached a much higher level after 1918 than before the war"[25].

---

[16] Mircea Popa, *Figuri universitare clujene*, [*University figures of Cluj*], Cluj-Napoca: Editura „Grinta", 2001, p. 188.
[17] Beke György, *Fără interpret, Convorbiri cu 56 de scriitori despre relațiile româno- maghiare*, [*No Interpreter. Talks with 56 Writers on Romanian-Hungarian Literary Relations*.], București: Editura Kriterion, 1972, p. 40.
[18] *Ibidem.*
[19] Avram P. Todor, *Confluențe literare româno-maghiare [RomanianHungarian LiteraryConfluences.*] Ed., notes and foreword by Gyula Dávid, București: Kriterion, 1983, p. 357.
[20] Lucian Blaga, *Orizonturi temporale*[Time horizons], fragment from the study "Horizon and style", vol. I of "Trilogy of culture"in "Familia" ["The Family"], series III, year II, no. 5-6, September-October 1935, p. 3.
[21] Havuz is a basin with waterfall fountain in the middle.
[22] Lucian Blaga, *cited work*, p. 4.
[23] *Ibidem*. p. 4.
[24] Al. Dima, *Localismul creator-definirea și justificarea lui-* [*Creative Localism – its Definition andJustification]*, in "Familia" ["The Family"], series III, year II, 2, April-May, 1935, p. 6.
[25] *Ibidem.*

BDD-A27487 © 2017 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:44:11 UTC)

Chinezu's study had met the criteria long before the proposal of "Familia" was published in 1930. Nevertheless, it seems that the issue of Romanian-Hungarian relations continued and concerned more minds. One of them, the director of "Familia" periodical, M. G. Samarineanu, launched in 1935, in the July-August edition, the question: "Can we understand each other in the cultural area? Can we honestly foresee a soul-to-soul approach? The answer is simple: yes"[26]. If some and others had faced many difficult circumstances, it was because the times had been unfavorable. The author of the article does not consider that there had been any discrimination. There may have been some differences in the behavior regarding the writers in Oradea, for example, but they were based on the talent criterion, which is understandable. His suggestion is that Romanians and Hungarians reach a brotherly friendship, because if they unite their thoughts, they will have only to gain. Although they are different people who have a different route, valuable elements can be created through this cooperation: "By the loan we expect from each other, will we not reciprocally enrich our soul treasure? Some bring the strength, others the gentleness, some subtlety, others the method, all the diligence ... We anticipate an understanding in the scholarly matters. The brain is directly linked to the heart and the soul. And the approach will surely come after we get to know each other"[27]. As a beginning of this project, the mayor of Oradea, a university professor also announced a money prize for the best work that promotes the Romanian-Hungarian understanding. A committee of Romanian and Hungarian writers based in Oradea was formed[28].

The launch of this "investigation," as M.G. Samarineanu calls it, starts from the desire of Romanian-Hungarian rapprochement, nationalism promoting, but one that "resembles the precept: know yourself so that you can understand your neighbor and appreciate him. A nationalism that does not disregard others, that will be enjoyable to yourself "[29].

The writers' response was positive. Mihály Babits, for instance, sees both Romanian and Hungarian literature as constituent elements of European literature. The lamentable condition in which it came about is due to the fact they did not come closer to each other for the sake of knowledge. As such, no cultural gain will flow from this situation, as "literatures, like some writers, grow influencing and enriching each other"[30]. If certain reasons such as language or history are invoked as pretexts to the situation discussed, the Hungarian writer will have arguments: "Literary history shows us enough that neither language nor politics can be obstacles to this influence and mutual enrichment"[31]. What can be done? First, there is a need for mutual discovery. And this is primarily the responsibility of Transylvanian writers and translators, whose sustained effort will reach to the knowledge of the works. But even simple information about writers and works is not enough, but it is mandatory "to enter into their spirit, to sip everything they can give and tell us"[32].

Through *Aspects* ..., the Transylvanian critic revealed his appreciation of Hungarian literature and its writers, contrary to Romulus Dianu's statement, which responds to the investigation launched by "Familia": "we appreciate each other, but we do not show it on the surface"[33]. Before the challenge of 1935 "Familia" publication, Ion Chinezu's study had

[26]M. G. Samarineanu, *Între maghiari şi români-Pe marginea curentului de apropiere-, [Between Hungarians and Romanians-On the edge of the approaching movement]*, in "Familia" ["The Family"], series III, year II, no. 4, July-August 1935, p. 98.
[27]*Ibidem*, p. 99.
[28]*Ibidem*, p. 101.
[29] M. G. Samarineanu, *Ancheta noastră-Ne putem înţelege noi şi ungurii?-* [*Our investigation-Can we and Hungarians get on?-]*, in "Familia" ["The Family"], series III, year II, no. 5-6, September-October 1935, p. 65.
[30]*Ibidem*, p. 67.
[31] M. G. Samarineanu, *Ancheta noastră-Ne putem înţelege noi şi ungurii?-[Our investigation-Can we and Hungarians get on? Mr. Mihai Babits's answer]*, in "Familia" ["The Family"], series III, year II, no. 5-6, September-October 1935, p. 67.
[32]*Ibidem*.
[33]*Ibidem, Mr. Romulus Dianu's answer*, p. 74.

BDD-A27487 © 2017 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:44:11 UTC)

created a wellcoming atmosphere for Hungarian literature, had opened the translators' eyes, it can even be said to have demonstrated that it had been possible to achieve the closeness of Hungarian literature and its study.

Ion Chinezu fully depicted Victor Eftimiu's belief that "writers are the avantgarde of the understanding among peoples ... By popularizing the literature of another nation, the translator himself uncovers that nation, and there is no nation who, being researched with respect and known in its depths, cannot be loved"[34].

It seems that his endowment was also recognized by Hungarian speakers: "He wanted to make us know each other, bearing with one another, in love, in order to understand each other"[35]. Through *Aspects* ... see the light of the day his critical ideas, just as sculpture, for example, reveals the sculptor's thoughts: "All that a great artist ever thought / Is hidden in the stone; but the hand / In thought will find the mistress, / And only through her is embodied work" ("Tot ce-a gândit un mare-artist vreodată/ Ascunde-n sânu-i piatra; însă mâna/ În cugetare-şi va găsi stăpâna,/ Şi doar prin ea e operă-ntrupată").

Has Chinezu been found in the following definition of the elevated literary critic? "An elevated literary critic must be a repairer of injustice, as Baudelaire says, a researcher and a scattered beauty accumulator, not a noisy announcer of recognized glory. Only so literary criticism becomes a useful literary factor and not a parasite". I think so. He certainly wanted to correct the injustice of ignorance concerning Hungarian literature. That is why he gathered part of her literary adornments, which he presented in a beautiful critic bouquet – *Aspects of Transylvanian-Hungarian literature (1919-1929)*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Balotă, Nicolae, *Scriitori maghiari din România (1920–1980)[Hungarian Writers in Romania (1920– 1980)*], Bucureşti: Kriterion, 1981

Brateș, Radu, *Scrieri inedite* [*Original writings*], Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2009

Chinezu, Ion, *Aspecte din literatura maghiară ardeleană (1919–1929)[Aspects of Transylvanian Hungarian Literature*] Cluj-Napoca: Editura Revistei "Societatea de Mâine", 1930

Cseke, Péter, *Valori ale presei maghiare din România (1919-2004)* [*Values of Hungarian press inRomania (1919-2004*)], Bucureşti*:* Editura Tritonic, 2015

Buftea, Elie, *Transilvania şi românismul*, [*Transylvania and the Romanism*], 1943

Domokos, Sámuel, *Bibliografia maghiară a literaturii române 1831-1860, 1961-1965* [*Hungarian bibliography of Romanian literature 1831-1860, 1961-1965*], foreword by Laszlo Galdi, București; Editura pentru literatură, 1966

György, Beke, *Fără interpret, Convorbiri cu 56 de scriitori despre relațiile româno-maghiare*, [*No Interpreter. Talks with 56 Writers on Romanian-Hungarian Literary Relations*.],București*:* Editura Kriterion, 1972

Nastasă, Lucian, Salat, Levente, *Maghiarii din România şi etica minoritară (1920-1940)*, [*Hungarians of Romania and Minority Ethics (1920–1940)*], Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Resurse pentru Diversitate Etnoculturală, 2003

Popa, Mircea, *Andrei Veress- un bibliograf maghiar, prieten al românilor*, [*Andrei Veress- a Hungarian bibliographer, a friend of the Romanians]*, Vulcan*:* Editura Realitatea Românească, 2006

Popa, Mircea, *Figuri universitare clujene*, [*University figures of Cluj*], Cluj-Napoca: Editura "Grinta", 2001

[34] *Ibidem, Mr. Victor Eftimiu's answer*, p. 73.
[35] Baróti Pál, *apud* Avram P., Todor, *cited work*, p. 360.

BDD-A27487 © 2017 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:44:11 UTC)

Scridon, Gavril, *Istoria literaturii maghiare din România 1918-1989*, [*History of Hungarian Literature inRomania (1918–1989*)], Cluj-Napoca: Editura Promedia Plus, 1996

Todor, Avram P., *Confluenţe literare româno-maghiare. [Romanian-Hungarian LiteraryConfluences*]

Ed., notes and foreword by Gyula Dávid. Bucureşti: Kriterion, 1983

***Transilvania, Banatul, Crișana, Maramureșul 1928-1928, vol. II, București: Ed. Cultura Națională, 1929

Țepelea, G. *Așteptând..., Însemnări periodice 1978-1979, Însemnări periodice 1981-1982*, [*Waiting for..., Periodical notes 1978-1979, Periodical Notes 1981-1982*], Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia, Oradea: Editura Cogito, 1997

Critical studies in volume

Ferenczi, Niculae, *Presa periodică maghiară din România în ultimii zece ani*, [*Hungarian periodical press in Romania in the last ten years*], in *Transilvania, Banatul, Crișana, Maramureșul 1918-1928*, vol II, București: Ed. Cultura Națională, 1929

Kristóf, George, *Zece ani de viață literară a ungurimii din Ardeal*, [*Ten years of literary life ofHungarians in Transylvania*], in *Transilvania, Banatul, Crișana, Maramureșul 1918-1928*, vol II, București: Ed. Cultura Națională, 1929

Critical studies in periodicals

Blaga, Lucian, *Orizonturi temporale* [Time horizons], in "Familia" ["The Family"], series III, year II,no. 5-6, September-October 1935

Buonarroti, Michelangelo, *Sonete [Sonnets]*, *II*, translated by Al. Iacobescu, in "Familia" ["The Family"], series III, year I, no. 3, May-June, 1934

Cucu, D. I., *E faliment sau nu e? În chestia literaturii din Ardeal [Is it failure or not? In the matter of the Transylvanian literature]*, in "Cosânzeana", year XII, no. 1-2, 1-8 January, 1928

Dima, Al., *Localismul creator-definirea și justificarea lui-* [*Creative Localism – its Definition andJustification]*, in „Familia“ [”The Family“], series III, year II, 2, April-May, 1935

Samarineanu, M. G., *Ancheta noastră-Ne putem înțelege noi și ungurii? [Our investigation-Can we and Hungarians get on?]*, in "Familia" ["The Family"], series III, year II, no. 5-6, September- October 1935

Samarineanu, M. G., *Între maghiari și români-Pe marginea curentului de apropiere-[Between Hungarians and Romanians- On the edge of the approaching movement]*, in "Familia" ["The Family"], series III, year II, no. 4, July-August 1935

Websites

https://www.degruyter.com/ (accesat în data de 13.10.2017, 21:07)

BDD-A27487 © 2017 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:44:11 UTC)