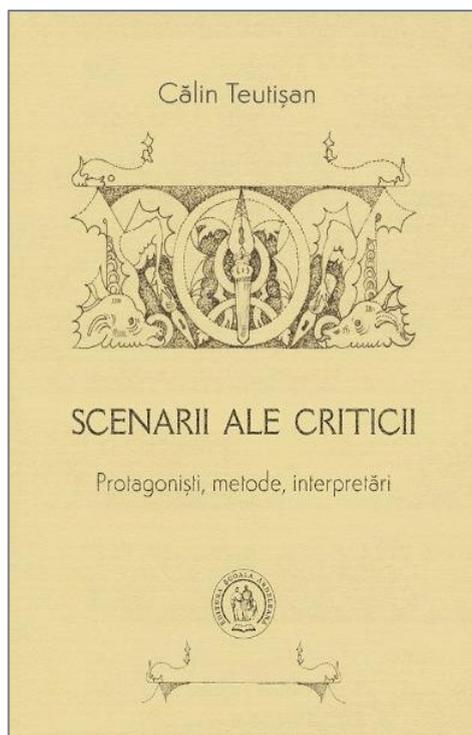


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Călin Teuțișan, *Scenarii ale criticii. Protagonişti, metode, interpretări*, Cluj-Napoca: Şcoala Ardeleană, 2021, 276 p.

Bringing together a series of scientific articles published between 2011 and 2019, Călin Teuțișan's book, *Scenarios of Criticism. Protagonists, Methods, Interpretations*, aims to map the critical spirit of the so-called "Şcoala de la Cluj" [Cluj School], represented by a series of emblematic figures analyzed in detail. Călin Teuțișan's analytical hypotheses start from empirical data, namely a series of dictionaries and monographic studies published in co-

authorship, thus demonstrating "the readiness of these critics to work together" (10). Assuming the concept of *la communautaire inavouable*, belonging to Maurice Blanchot, Călin Teuțișan demonstrates that beyond differences between these scholars, there is a certain feeling of "incompleteness" whose counterpart is the feeling of belonging to a community, developing common ideas, obsessions, and



methods. The effort to bring together ample critical portraits of Dumitru Popovici, Ioana Em. Petrescu, Liviu Petrescu, Ion Pop, Mircea Muthu, Corin Braga, Alex Goldiș, Emanuel Modoc, Daiana Gârdean, Ovio Olaru, and others is doubled by the welcome contextualization, both historical and theoretical, of each figure or school of thought. This means that a theoretical framework accompanies the deliberately exhaustive and engaged presentations of some

Opera Omnia (in the case of well-established critics). One of the merits of this book is bringing forward a productive intellectual dialogue with these critics. Therefore, Călin Teuțișan's critical portraits combine in-depth analyses with synthetic approaches, contextualization, and cultural dialogue. What distinguishes each author analyzed is the style and methodology by which critical works are approached.

The book, structured in seven chapters, focuses on the structural commonalities of the Cluj-based critical tradition, striving to go past the idiosyncrasies of individual works. In the last chapter, dedicated to the generation of literary critics from the 2000s and onward, Călin Teuțișan identifies the main directions of the "Cluj School" perpetuated by the young literary scholars: 1) "critical monographism with theoretical expansion" (211), 2) "critical and historical-literary synthesis" (212), and 3) "quantitative studies and *world literature*" (212). Reconstructing the relationships between these critics, at the macrostructural level, it becomes easy to see how Ion Pop, Corin Braga, Ioana Em. Petrescu, Cosmin Borza and Adriana Stan are dependent on some forms of monographic literary criticism, focused on an analytical and theoretical discourse around a single writer. Then, syntheses of history and literary criticism are exemplified by authors such as Mircea Muthu, Liviu Petrescu, Dumitru Popovici, Alex Goldiș, etc., whose scientific approach is based on methodological heteronomy, often combining, with remarkable success, aesthetics with the extra-aesthetic. The last direction emerges in the Romanian literary field thanks to the so-called "digital turn," doubled by the popularization of Franco Moretti's *distant reading*.

Some deep affinities, related to the theme, methodology or vision remain to be decrypted by the reader himself. For example, the vocation of *synthesis* is an ambition often targeted by critics from Cluj. Dumitru Popovici, a post-Lansonian thinker, as described by Călin Teuțișan, has the merit of having documented Romanian romantic literature from a historical point of view, according to the principle that the social shapes cultural evolution. Against a very well-articulated theoretical

background (retracing the trajectory of Lansonian criticism via Roland Barthes, Patrizia Lombardo or Antoine Compagnon), post-Lansonism is defined by the author as "historicism to which the rhetoric of literary discourse is added" (19). The same heteronomous, but synthetic approach is also present in the case of Alex Goldiș's book (*Criticism in the Trenches*) on the negotiation of aesthetic autonomy during communism. The strategies of historical and ideological negotiation are detailed and researched by Alex Goldiș through a hermeneutics of suspicion, blending aesthetic criteria with cultural, historical, social, political, and ideological ones. As in the case of Dumitru Popovici and Alex Goldiș, Mircea Muthu's critical and theoretical projects are channeled through this vocation of *synthesis*, in two well-known fields: Balkanology and aesthetics. Mircea Muthu proposes a syncretic Hegelian reorganization of the arts, while also creating bridges with the strong sciences. Moreover, the same tendency towards reuniting the *ethos* in a synthetic and syncretic form is recognizable in the ample studies dedicated to Romanian literary Balkanism. Dealing mainly with cultural morphology, Mircea Muthu's books are placed in the broader context of Edward Said's Orientalism and, more closely, of Maria Todorova's post-Ottoman hypothesis. Muthu's theoretical framework starts from the hypothesis that *homo balcanicus* originates in the Byzantine man, "in the structure of which there are four layers: the Roman idea, the Orthodox faith, the Oriental influence, and Hellenism" (138). If the historical-literary synthesis is fundamental to Ion Pop, one of the specialists in the field of the Romanian historical avant-garde, too, it is no less true that the same author can deal with local cultural phenomena from a

dialectical perspective in his monographs. The specific difference in Ion Pop's brand of criticism is—according to Teuțișan—that he applies the dialectic Hegelian evolution of literary forms to the system of literature, inherited from the interwar critic E. Lovinescu, to which he adds rhetorical and stylistic criticism, cultural morphology and comparatism.

For Ioana Em. Petrescu and Liviu Petrescu, literary criticism is based on the ontological horizon. Whether it is *cosmological models* or *pure intuition of form*, whether it is the *poetics of postmodernism* and its completely ontological charge, the common denominator of the Petrescu family's critical core is to identify an infratextual level, which belongs either to the metaphysical or to the "general essences" of literature. Placing it in the tradition of abysmal criticism (Gaston Bachelard or Gilbert Durand), Călin Teuțișan reveals the nucleus of Ioana Em. Petrescu's metatextual projects, namely the effort to offer, through hermeneutic reading, a model of return to the metaphysical foundation of literary works. In other words, in this case, whether it is about Eminescu's poetry, monographic projects, or whether we are considering theoretical projects (about the configurative levels or postmodernism), we are dealing with "*revealing* kinds of criticism, but based on a *rationalist apparatus*" (34). Almost in parallel, beyond its explicit essentialism, Liviu Petrescu's literary criticism reveals a certain appetite for (post)impressionism, the writer himself having declared in several texts his adherence to the "essay," rather than to literary studies centered on facts. In other words, Liviu Petrescu approaches what Roland Barthes calls "the science of literature" or what Gerard Genette describes as "pure criticism." For

Liviu Petrescu, aesthetic-literary meditation must combine with philosophical concepts, without altering the concreteness of critical discourse, but, rather, pushing it towards an essentialist critique. However, psychocriticism, another hermeneutical direction of the Cluj School, acquires a decisive turn with Corin Braga's work. Synthesizing and restoring all the nodes of his critical outlook, Călin Teuțișan notes that "psychoanalysis, psychocriticism, psychogeography, psychohistory, psychobiography on the one hand; dreams, lost paradises, 'enchanted' maps, utopias and counter-utopias on the other hand, this is Corin Braga's network of imaginary meanings and signifiers" (146). Closer to the modernist episteme of research and grasping literature, Corin Braga, in his books about Nichita Stănescu (a neomodernist poet) and Lucian Blaga (a modernist-expressionist poet), tries to identify the subjective, abysmal self and its interior movements, as it is reshaped in poetry. Also with the tools of psychoanalysis, more Jungian than Freudian, Corin Braga sees the morphology of culture as a complex system, namely a form of "refulare-defulare-întoarcerea refulatului" [repression-expression-the return of the repressed]. Călin Teuțișan's vocation as a theorist and comparatist is highlighted by the systematics of the concepts proposed by Corin Braga's work: archetypology, anarchetype, eschatology, eutopia, outopia, dystopia and counter-utopia. Finally, as in the case of Ion Pop, Călin Teuțișan exercises his appetite for completeness and tests the adhesion between text, context and metatext. In other words, he tries to validate the fact that the aesthetic creed that belongs to the critic overlaps with the fictional creed of the prose writer and poet.

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At the end of his book, Călin Teuțișan opens his critical, analytical and descriptive spirit to the new horizons of the post-2000 generation of literary critics. Covering both the strengths and the resistance levels, the chapter dedicated to the emergence of *digital humanities* confidently welcomes the projects of the younger critics, who, through upgraded

tools of literary theory and criticism, can render new hypotheses on the hidden part of the iceberg of literature. Ultimately, Călin Teuțișan's book is a synthesis of the Cluj School's critical *ethos*, whose full merit is to have identified similarities where there were differences and to have mapped divergences where only analogies were obvious.

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