

BOOKS

Adrian Tudurachi (Ed.), *Dicționarul cronologic al romanului românesc de la origini până în 2000*, revised second edition, Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2023, 770p + 757p (2 volumes)

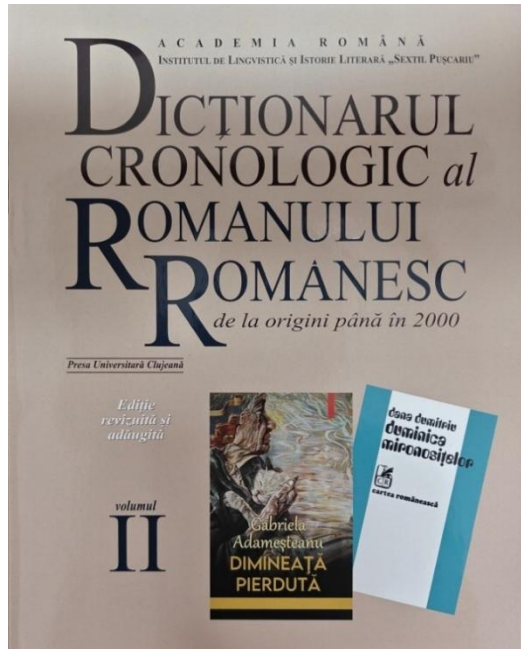
The new edition of *The Chronological Dictionary of the Novel from its Origins to the 2000s* [*Dicționarul cronologic al romanului românesc de la origini până în 2000*] is a large-scale, long-term undertaking, strengthened by an extensive research team of Sextil Pușcariu Institute from Cluj-Napoca. Intended as an “exhaustive bibliography”, the dictionary encompasses two chronological volumes, with the year of 1977 marking the end of the first tome and the beginning of the second. The work has a double aim, as mentioned in

the introduction: to illustrate the production and the literary reception of the novel and to highlight the social dynamics of literary forms. Although situated within literary studies, the project advances clearly articulated theoretical and sociological objectives.

The first volume opens with an overview of the contributors responsible for the dictionary entries. After that, the introduction reconstructs the contextual framework of the first edition’s publication, focusing on the sociopolitical influences on the literary field. As such, the authors of this section – Cosmin Borza, Alex Goldiș and Adrian Tudurachi – underline the dynamics between cultural legislation and literary interest. The year 1974 represents a pivotal moment for Romanian scholarship in this area, a period when cultural institutions transitioned from state subordination to the authority of universities.



With this shift, literary projects transcended the framework of national cultural history to engage with the transnational circulation of literary theory. The introduction traces several turning points in Romanian literary criticism, noting that the dictionary's first edition [2004] was initially read through an aesthetic and hermeneutic lens. Only after 2016, with the Romanian reissuing of Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters*, was it reinterpreted within a broader systemic framework. As the researchers point out, a paradox emerges at this point: the dictionary, which would ordinarily "serve a cultural heritage function, preserving and organizing existing knowledge, is now called upon to occupy a central position within the shifts and explorations of contemporary research" (p. XX). In this regard, the 2023 republication marks a stage in Romanian literary criticism's maturity, aligning it with world literary discourses.



First of all, it is important to acknowledge the merit of this new edition, which provides a significant update to the first. In one of the prefatory texts, Adrian Tudurachi, director of the Sextil Pușcariu Institute's Department of Literary History, provides an overview of the specific contributions of this new edition under his coordination: 300 articles were completed and rewritten, 100 titles initially omitted were identified, and a total of 116 novels have been recovered through the databases developed in recent years within projects led by Roxana Patraș, Ștefan Baghiu, and Vlad Pojoga. Although both the first and the second edition of the dictionary were undertaken by the team of the Sextil Pușcariu Institute, the project has involved a significantly larger research team in recent years. This lexicographical instrument was designed to reflect a broad perspective on the Romanian novel, tracing its development within the local context. In this sense, the research team has taken all forms of novelistic production into account, paying particular attention to serialised work (*feuilleton*). Furthermore, erroneous translations of novels present in the first edition were removed, as they could cause inaccuracies in studies on the reception of Romanian literature beyond national borders. It is notable that the dictionary also takes novels authored by Romanians in the diaspora or in exile during the 1990s into consideration, assessing these contributions as an integral component of Romanian literature. After highlighting the outstanding merits of the dictionary for this field, Tudurachi acknowledges the contributions of all the researchers involved in this five-year process of examining and reevaluating the

entire material of the previous edition. Without making claim to any local prestige, the dictionary is presented as a working project that is both intergenerational and national, having fostered the participation of scholars from multiple Romanian research centers. At the same time, the merit of libraries nationwide is recognized through interlibrary loans and the digitalization of certain texts, procedures that provided researchers with access to materials otherwise unavailable in their region. Despite not claiming to be exhaustive, the shortcomings of this reedition are noted in the preface. One such shortcoming refers to the awards sections and to details pertaining to the circulation of the novels, both of which remain incomplete.

The next section of the dictionary outlines the terminology of the subgenres employed in the taxonomy of the novels, a process that represents, arguably, the most remarkable contribution. In other words, the new edition of the dictionary doesn't only cover the morphology of the Romanian novel, but connects the development of this genre to a larger international context. Therefore, the project serves as an instrument for *World Literature* methodologies, which open up Romanian literature to dynamics beyond its national borders. More than being a qualitative hermeneutic undertaking, this lexicographic tool is intended as a quantitative framework designed to provide a foundation for studies investigating the dynamics of subgenres within the Romanian literary field. The terminological table placed at the beginning makes a list of Romanian subgenres together with their corresponding Anglo-American and French equivalents. In addition to widely circulated novelistic terminology, the dictionary also incorporates local formulas for which there are no direct foreign correspondents. Some examples would be *the novel of the „obsessive decade”* [*romanul „obsedatului deceniu”*], a subversive subgenre in regards to the communist regime, *the novel of uprising* [*romanul răscoalei*], centred on Romanian peasant revolts, *the novel of the revolution* [*romanul revoluției*], centred on the fall of the communism in 1989, and *the textualist novel* [*romanul textualist*], which highlights the late 20th century Romanian movement of the same name. In several instances, international terminology overrides attempts to introduce local subgenres. This is illustrated by Mircea Eliade's *Maitreyi* (1933), framed as an *existential novel*, but containing the formula of *the novel of experience* [*romanul „experiențialist”*], which refers to the interwar Romanian intellectual current bearing the same name. In the case of some entries from the first edition, the authors attempted, with the resources at their disposal, to provide a subgenre categorization. However, this classification remains tentative and frequently lacks precision. For instance, it applies broad formulations, such as that of the *erotic novel*, or assigns a novel to multiple subgenres, as is the case for the 1961 novel *A Lost Rider in the Steppe. From the Time of Petru the Great* [*Un călăreț pierdut în stepă. Din vremea lui Petru cel mare*] by Felix Aderca, which, in the first edition, is classified as a *socialist realist, historical and adventure novel*, but in the second it is only classified as an *adventure novel*. In numerous instances, novels were later subject to a reevaluation of their subgenre, even when the original taxonomy reflected widely used terminology. This is exemplified by *I came from darkness* [*Veneam din întineric*] by Nicolae Jianu, which transitions from the category of *memoir* to that of *autobiography*. The researchers' effort was to classify each novel within a subgenre, a task that in some cases required negotiation, since several

novelistic formulas coexisted in the same text. Simultaneously, certain initial classifications were based largely on thematic criteria, without considering additional factors in the assignment of labels. The second edition, however, provides a comprehensive view of both the publication context of the novels and the reception of these works. This can be seen, for example, in the case of Ury Benador's 1934 novel *Ghetto 20th Century* [*Ghetto Veac XX*], which shifts from "novel about the Jewish community and milieu" to *ghetto novel*, a category that reflects the subgenre's profound political implications. Given the terminological clarifications, subgenres may function as interpretative keys for the novels, directing the reader to the text's core idea.

Even though the dictionary is not physically available yet, it is digitally accessible on the Institute's website and has already been referenced in scholarly studies. Beyond its significant impact on literary scholarship, a desirable outcome of this new edition would be for it to find application in Romanian pre-university education, where the high school curriculum addresses the issue of subgenres. For instance, Mihail Sadoveanu's 1930 novel *The Hatchet* [*Baltagul*] is studied as a "traditional, objective, mythical novel", while actually being a *rural novel*. Similarly, G. Călinescu's 1938 novel *Otilia's Enigma* [*Enigma Otiliei*] is studied as a novel of "Balzacian realism" and as a "objective, urban *Bildungsroman*", whereas the new dictionary frames it as a *social novel*. Failing to integrate lexicographic projects into the school curriculum leaves students trapped between outdated pre-university literature courses and the realities of contemporary literary theory and criticism. Aligning the curriculum with such projects is essential to fostering a precise and nuanced understanding of literature.

Continuing this line of thought, *The Chronological Dictionary of the Novel from its Origins to the 2000s* seeks to function as a catalyst for the formation of a new generation of researchers. It stands as a project that clearly marks a new stage in Romanian literary studies, one that manages to integrate this field within the broader network of *World Literature*.

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