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Vers une vision pluridisciplinaire des études littéraires

Mémoire d'habilitation à diriger des recherches

2014

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A.III. ABSTRACT

In order to draw a coherent image of my research following the PhD title which I obtained in 1995, first of all, I considered it useful to offer a description of the course of my scientific activity from my graduation at the University of Bucharest, which I attended between 1978-1982, up to the elaboration of my doctoral thesis, which I completed and defended in 1995.

My Bachelor thesis was meant to be the first step towards the preparation of my PhD thesis. Titled « Montaigne et la conception baroque sur l'homme » (“Montaigne and the Baroque Concept of Man”) and defended in 1982 under the supervision of Professor Silvia Pandelescu, a reputed Renaissance specialist, it represented a first attempt at a personal synthesis regarding the transition from Renaissance to Baroque.

My enrollment in PhD studies took place in September 1990. I completed my thesis, *The Artist in the Baroque Age – the Brilliance and Suffering of the Magician*, under the supervision of Prof. Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga. Its final form was published only in 1998, after my supplementary readings in the libraries of Reims and Paris. Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga, after having read my book, concluded her report thus: “by reviewing the most important European contributions about the Baroque (and the intermediate phase between Renaissance and Baroque) in a vast synthesis, Ileana Mihăilă maintains those precise elements that support her new, astonishing and convincing point of view about the artist of the period she chose to study. Indeed, starting from the assertion that Baroque art was built around the concept of persuasion, she considers and proves the existence, within the artist who is meant to move and to call for public support, of ‘the concealed successor of the Renaissance magician’ ».

Following the writing, defense and publication of my doctoral thesis, I continued along the same line for a while, mostly as a result of the documentation I had made in France during 1998, publishing a series of articles and studies on the same subject, all of which are presented in section *B.1.A.2.2. Postdoctoral researches in the same direction*. A first selection of said researches can be found in my volume, *Renaissance and Modernity. Studies in Romanian and Comparative Literature*, published in 1998.

The following sub-chapter is dedicated to *the new directions in my postdoctoral research*, starting with the reception of foreign literatures in Romanian culture, as researcher at the Institute for Literary History and Theory “G. Călinescu”. I worked on the subject of this reception between 1988 and 1998, while the following years were marked by my periodic work on the publishing the ten volumes that resulted from this immense collective endeavor. From that period and to this very day, I have not stopped adding information to this immense database, so as to offer a more complete and more precise view of the reception of French literature in Romanian culture. This area of research attracted me more and more. I have thus presented several of my contributions to the study of the fate of great French writers in our land (Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, Madame de Genlis, George Sand, Victor Hugo), and these contributions of mine were well-received in scientific media as well, as I have already pointed out in the footnotes.

I also intended to complete the study of the reception of literary works by adding historical and cultural information, which would add lively detail to this vast image of Romanian historical Francophonie. For instance, the perspective of Women's Studies, which reveal the oft unknown and always neglected or underrated contribution of women writers or translators, proved to be a rich source of yet unknown details, thus allowing me to complete my database by adding not just names and titles, but also an entire unexplored area of the cultural evolution which led to our current culture.

Another area of my research that I have detailed in this paper is that of my contributions to the study of French and Francophone literature. Despite the rupture in my career at the end of the 80s, I did still continue, over the years, to show interest in the writings of George Sand. This consisted in the recovery of the database (which I had already built for that PhD) in order to make her bio-bibliographical presentation for the second edition of the *History of French Literature*, coordinated by Professor Angela Ion. This project had been stopped by historical events and would serve as a starting point to my Sand-related studies.

However, from the early 90s, I also began to be invited to the international scientific activities which had been dedicated to the recovery of this great female personality of French literature by the International Society called *Les Amis de George Sand*, whose membership was offered to me in 1992. Most of my articles were published during those years in the volumes that resulted from said international conferences.

Yet another matter that had interested me, starting with 1994, is that of the French Enlightenment. Aside from my punctual studies regarding the reception of writers such as Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, Madame de Maintenon or Félicité de Genlis in Romanian culture, I have also presented and published researches about the poetry of Voltaire, the hylozoism of Diderot (both had prestigious publishers such as Voltaire Foundation – Oxford and P.U.F. – Paris, which made them also be currently available on the Internet), as well as on the subject of Pierre Choderlos de Laclos, Louis-Sébastien Mercier and Claude Crébillon, the first two being written at the Heterotopos Center of the French Department of the University of Bucharest, while the third was presented at the University of Sofia and is currently being published. In 1999, I presented a synoptic study on *Don Juan in the 18th Century* at the International Congress on the Enlightenment in Dublin, which was later published in *Synthesis*, the Romanian journal for Comparative Literature.

I should also add that a good amount of these studies on French literature have had a certain impact, as can be seen from their citation in a series of works concerning similar themes (a list of the most important citations can be found in the footnotes). These studies have been made available to my students and my colleagues through their inclusion in my volume, *De la Renaissance à l'âge romantique – Regards sur trois siècles de littérature française* (2010).

Another issue that has been added to my general concern with the French 18th century was that of the change in the mortuary rites of passage that had been caused by the French Revolution, which was a theme I had had the chance to work on in 1998, during the 12-month postdoctoral scholarship at the Centre d'Étude de la langue et de la littérature française 17^e -18^e siècle (Paris IV – Sorbonne), as a part of the team led by the late Professor Charles Porset. My duty was to search through the French Institute's archive for any documents that may have mentioned anything about the context in which the *Concours de l'an XVIII* (also known as the

Concours de l'an IX, which was the year it ended in) took place. I have offered details pertaining to the results of this research and the manner they were used through publication.

Another direction my research has taken, starting with 1993, was that of the testimonies left by the 18th century French and Francophones who had passed through the Romanian Principalities, most notably during the Russo-Turkish War of 1769-1774. This new preoccupation was generated by my participation in the East-West Seminar (August 1993), which had been organized for young specialists in the Enlightenment by the famous Professor Robert Darnton. On this occasion, a Russian colleague who had discovered a manuscript concerning the Romanian Principalities in the archives of Moscow requested my help in editing this genuine discovery. The author of the manuscript was a counselor of Catherine II named Charles-Léopold Andreu de Bilistein. This first memoir, written in December 1770, was entitled *Est-il de l'intérêt de l'Empire de Russie de conserver les Provinces de Moldavie et de Valachie à titre de propriété ou à titre de protection (Is it in the best interest of the Russian Empire to maintain the Provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia as property or to protect them?)*, currently conserved in the Russian State Library in Moscow. After the peace of 1774 puts an end to his dreams and ambitions, he tries to reorient himself towards a more lucrative perspective, that of integrating the two Romanian provinces in the French economic circuit, which is the project he exposes in the second memoir, *Mémoire sur l'accroissement que la France peut procurer à son Commerce en étendant celui qu'elle fait aux Échelles du Levant aux provinces de Moldavie et de Valachie directement (Memoir regarding the growth that France may gain for its Commerce by extending the one from the Scales of the Orient directly to the provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia)*, currently conserved in a copy from that period in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Empire (AVPRI), Moscow, attached to a ciphered letter written by the Russian ambassador in Versailles, count Igor Baryatinsky. Alexandre Stroeve dealt with the author's biography during his very complex and very long European travel, while I transcribed and added notes to these texts in view of their publishing, also reconstructing the Moldo-Wallachian segment of his life based on Romanian sources. The result of our combined work can be found in the article published in 1997 in *Dix-huitième siècle* (P.U.F., Paris) and in the book entitled *Ériger une République souveraine, libre et indépendante (Building a Sovereign, Free and Independent Republic)*, Bucharest, 2001).

Next, I presented my *Contributions to the study of Romanian literature*. I should mention that my preoccupations in terms of Romanian literature started, in fact, in rather particular biographical circumstances. On August 8, 1991, the death of my 35-year old husband, classical philologist Bogdan Hâncu, author of both a critical edition and a Romanian translation of Ioan-Inocențiu Micu-Klein's unpublished manuscript, *Illustrium poetarum flores*, only two days after the book's manuscript had been brought to the Scientific Publishing House (where it would, indeed, be published in May 1992), forced me to continue his work the day after his burial, as requested by his editor, Nicolae Gheran, who was a reputed philologist and editor of Liviu Rebreanu's works, as well as the chief editor of said publishing house in Bucharest. The volume was ultimately awarded the *Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu* award by the Romanian Academy on May 8, 1994, and I went up the podium myself to receive the prize in my late husband's name. I would like to mention that, at my request and in spite of Nicolae Gheran's contrary opinion, my name and contribution are in no way

featured in this book. First of all, I had wanted this because all I had done had only been due to the love that had bonded me to Bogdan Hâncu and in order to honor his enormous eight-year effort. Moreover, I would have considered it disrespectful towards the true classical philologists that I unrightfully include myself among them. I was then required to conclude the research regarding the sources that Micu-Klein may have had access to during his exile in Rome, when he composed his anthology of Latin poetry. Thanks to a research scholarship offered by the *Romanian Cultural Foundation* and the *Accademia di Romania* in May 1992, I was able to fulfill this objective.

Starting with 1997, I associated myself with team of the “G. Călinescu” Institute, which made the first edition of the *General Dictionary of Romanian Literature*, which was awarded the *Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu* award by the Romanian Academy on December 19, 2005. Within the project, I wrote 39 articles, some which were dedicated to certain specialists in French literature or other Romance literatures (*Al. Dimitriu-Păușești, Angela Ion, Paul Miclău, Ioan Pânzaru, Nicolae Șerban, Micaela Slăvescu, Dolores Toma, Radu Toma; Joaquín Garrigós, Micaela Ghițescu, Victor Ivanovici*), but I have also had the chance to write an article on an important Franco-Romanian writer, B. Fundoianu/Benjamin Fondane. Other articles are dedicated to old, pre-modern or current authors. I have currently been assigned to the group that is making the second edition of the dictionary. While there, I have reread and updated older articles, while also writing new articles.

Between 2008 and 2012, I also took part in the Institute’s project to make an encyclopedia of Old Romanian literature which is currently being published, for which I have written 20 articles and have also been a part of the coordinating team (it was first coordinated by reputed specialist Dan Horia Mazilu and will be concluded under the supervision of Professor Gheorghe Chivu, corresponding member of the Romanian Academy). The first version of this work was made in CD form in 2009; I myself took over the coordination and finalization of this version after the death of Professor Dan Horia Mazilu (CNCSIS project cod 1008/2007 under the name *Enciclopedia culturii române vechi* [Encyclopedia of Old Romanian Culture]).

I have also cooperated in the writing of the *Dictionary of French Writers*, which had been initiated and coordinated by Angela Ion, but whose publishing took place long after her death, namely in the summer of 2012, at Ed. Polirom. I wrote 12 articles: Cyrano de Bergerac, G. Casanova, E. B. de Condillac, D. Diderot, B. Fondane, J.-B. Louvet de Couvray, Ch. de Montesquieu, Anna de Noailles, Ch. Perrault, J. Racine, G. Sand. In accordance with the model proposed by Angela Ion, these articles are also concerned with the reception of the authors’ works in Romanian culture. Two of these articles are dedicated to Franco-Romanian authors (Anne de Noailles and Benjamin Fondane).

Among my activities at the Institute, I should mention that, in 1999, I was assigned to make the jubilee edition of *G. Călinescu – The Works of Mihai Eminescu* (2 volumes) and *The Life of Mihai Eminescu*, both of them on the occasion of the centenary of G. Călinescu’s birth. The edition was awarded the *Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu* award by the Romanian Academy on December 18, 2002. It was also reedited through the collaboration with Litera International Publishing House (Chișinău – Bucharest) in 2003. In addition, this work had very good critical reception.

As a result of the success of this edition, I was included in the team that had been formed by the Institute for Literary History and Theory to create a complete edition of Călinescu's articles in journals, which also included his unpublished manuscripts. All this was to be done under the coordination of Nicolae Mecu, a remarkable editor of Călinescu's novels and an eminent philologist. He entrusted me with the transcription of an unpublished manuscript of George Călinescu, namely the initial version of his essay, *The Universe of Poetry*. The text was published in 2012, in *Works – Journalism (posthumous and unpublished)* and was defined in E. Simion's *Preface* as "the greatest surprise in this work of literary archeology". As for the coordinator, he himself expressed his favorable opinion and obtained my transfer to the scientific edition sector, so as to continue our collaboration for future projects.

A final mention concerning my works on Romanian literature should be about my contributions regarding feminine literature, which most notably took place within COST Action ISO901 *Women Writers in History*, coordinated by the Huygens Institut – Netherlands, Hague (2009 – 2013). I have been particularly interested in Dora d'Istria (Bucharest, 1828 – Florence, 1888), a Romanian writer who wrote in French, whose real name was Princess Elena (or Ileana) Ghica. I also worked a lot on the press and the editions of the 19th century in order to shed light on the efforts and biographies of Catinca Sâmboteanca, Maria Burada (the first female translators from Wallachia and Moldavia), Hermiona-Asachi Quinet, Maria Rosetti, Constanța Dunca Schiau, Maria Flechtenmacher and Eugenia Scriban.

Moving on to my professional and academic preoccupations, in the following chapter, I detailed the stages of my career during the doctoral and post-doctoral periods, so as to offer a concise presentation of my professional and academic preoccupations. I have thusly listed the positions I've occupied, the activities I've taken part in (commissions for admission exams, bachelor exams, master exams, didactic or research contests and, finally, doctoral commissions), the courses I have held at the University. I have also offered detail regarding my professional activity in terms of academic research.

As for the chapter dedicated to *Guidelines of my future scientific and professional projects*, it is, first of all, a presentation of those projects that I wish to develop as a part of my activity at the University of Bucharest.

As professor, I would like that my future scientific projects find their place in my didactic activity, particularly in my courses concerning 18th-century French Literature and Culture and the ones on Franco-Romanian relationships, notably the ones from the 18th and 19th century.

I would also like to gather my studies on Franco-Romanian relationships in a volume that would make them available to students (and colleagues) who might be interested in them. Bearing the title *Cultural Studies and Franco-Romanian Relationships*, it has already been included in the Publishing House of the University of Bucharest's plan for this year.

Another project that is currently in progress is that of a history of French Literature and Culture in the Age of the Enlightenment, which would be a synthesis of both my punctual research in this area and my 10-year experience of titular professor for this course.

As for my future activity in the "G. Călinescu" Institute, I am still a part of several projects. The first, ongoing, one is a new edition of *The Life and The Works of Mihai Eminescu* by G. Călinescu, for which I am collaborating with Nicolae Mecu and Daciana

Vlădoiu so as to give it a much richer critical apparatus. I will then be working on a new edition of the works of Ion Ghica, which is also included in the prestigious *Fundamental Works* series.

As for my professional projects, I intend to continue proposing a new optional course every three years, thus allowing me to share the results of my new research concerning French literature, Franco-Romanian relationships and Romanian Francophonie with the students. I also intend to make use of my recent documentation for the Master of Canadian Studies and propose it in this form to students of the French Department.

I also intend to recommend a new Master program dedicated to the thorough study of *Romanian Francophonie*. This master might interest both students of our faculty's French Department and students of the Faculty of Letters, be they mainly specialized in Romanian language and literature or graduates of the Universal and Comparative Literature section.

I thus hope to retie the thread of the research that had been undertaken at the French Department between 1976 and 1990, which, under the coordination of Angela Ion, had led to the accomplishment of synoptic studies regarding the reception of French literature in Romania. These studies remain the richest database for the modern and contemporary age to this day.

As such, one hundred years after the death of Pompiliu Eliade, the first professor of French language and literature at the University of Bucharest and the author of remarkable but insufficiently recognized works, it might be the time that his teachings concerning the unification of cultural studies and literary studies in reconstructing a living and seductive image of the Franco-Romanian relationships be brought back to the honored place they deserve.