

Creative, less formal, even experimental texts complete the picture of the approaches to cosmopolitan thinking. Huiwen Zhang proposes the concept of transreading, advocating a slow reading, a hermeneutics of cultures intertwined with creative writing for the practice of literary interpretations. No less documented or serious, Alexis Nouss' manifesto focuses on the subject of migration as a subject of exile, considering it appropriate to reinvent the concepts of exile, migration and hospitality in the context of the overwhelming waves of emigrants generated by the Middle East's belligerence. Finally, the dialogue between Ying Chen and Christine Lorre-Johnston, which ends the volume, discusses cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism, as well as the experiences of an immigrant author in a presumably cosmopolitan city such as Vancouver.

The volume has significant merit for the field of literary, cultural, sociological and political studies, as can be seen from the diversity of articles and the intersections of methodologies. As indicated in the introductory chapter, written by the book's editors, the purpose of this book is to raise readers' empathy, to whet their appetite for various ways of knowing and outlooks, different from those already familiar ways of thinking and being in the world. Fortunately for the work of the authors, the final product is rhizomatic, plural, polyphonic and with different accents, some even contradictory, as appropriate for cosmopolitanism itself.



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**Beyond the Iron Curtain: Revisiting the Literary System of Communist Romania**  
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**T**HE LAST decade has seen several attempts at revisiting national literary phenomena. Undoubtedly, communism is one of the periods in Romania's history that are most difficult to analyze. This difficulty stems from the fact that the collapse of communism has led to an unproductive anathematization of the whole period almost everywhere in the Eastern European periphery. Romanian historical studies have seldom succeeded in overcoming the vindictive, tragic, or revisionist tone of the anti-communist discourse, which became dominant in the autochthonous intellectual field. Therefore, the publication of the volume *Beyond the Iron Curtain: Revisiting the Literary System of Communist Romania* is a step forward in surpassing the epistemological inertia that defined the entire transition to capitalism, as Ștefan Baghiu, Ovio Olaru, and Andrei Terian claim in the introductory chapter, "The Communist Literary System Revisited: New Approaches on Totalitarian (Meta)fiction." The chapters bring together contemporary methodologies and theories (Digital Humanities, World Literature, polysystems' theory, post-theory etc.) in order to finally make the communist system more graspable.

The anti-communist ideology has had such a strong impact on the local historical perspective that it led to a blurring of all the nuances within the socialist interval itself. If the general perception of socialism is that of a unique and static totalitarian regime, real communism actually under-

went numerous internal restructurings. This collection of studies proves that, from a literary point of view, we can talk about several Romanian “communisms.” Firstly, from a diachronic point of view, there were different phases of communism, accompanied by successive and complex transitions. Secondly, from a synchronic point of view, the same stage could encompass different facets. In the case of the literary system, state-oriented literature co-existed with anti-systemic forms of writing, usually resulting in a dialectical “agreement” between the two.

The Stalinist period (1948–1964) is considered to be the most artistically opaque period of the communist system, due to the fact that the literary act was under direct political control. However, there are several contributions that aim to clarify this image. By applying stylometry on a large corpus of novels, Daiana Gârdan hypothesizes that the socialist realist “recipe” made possible the qualitative leap of non-realist socialist novels. Costi Rogozanu confirms this by showing how three dissident Eastern European writers (Petru Dumitriu, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, and Czesław Miłosz) transformed socialist realism into a formal basis for the anticommunist novel. In the same key, Emanuel Modoc observes that the socialist rural topos is a “predilect space for novelistic innovation” (85) during this period, making the theme of collectivization a versatile instrument for writers with different ideological orientations. Cosmin Borza goes even further, arguing that the rural socialist realist novel cannot be reduced to mere socialist propaganda, since it also brought into attention other issues (the status of minorities or bureaucratization).

The interval between 1965 and 1971 saw Nicolae Ceaușescu’s rise to political

power and is considered to be a time of relative liberalization. Despite the Thaw’s fluctuations, it is doubtless that this period was productive for the local literary system, as it opened it up to external influences. Firstly, Alex Goldiș rightfully observes that not only was the Romanian Thaw an open gate for the translation of French canonical works, but it also facilitated the import of magical realism: “Romanian culture was a fertile literary market for South American products” (243). Secondly, as Adriana Stan argues, structuralism and formalism finally permeated the Romanian theoretical sphere. However, newer theories (such as poststructuralism) were not imported in communist Romania. Instead, their function was fulfilled by the fictions of the generation of the 1960s. Nonetheless, Andreea Mironescu demonstrates that, despite these writers’ thematization of power structures, they were particularly ignorant of gender power dynamics. Thirdly, the year of 1968 was pivotal in Romania’s history, as it marked Ceaușescu’s stance against USSR and his growing popularity in the Western world. The collateral effects of this fact were impressive: Imre József Balázs proves that the minority literatures in Romania started being aware of Western countercultures, while Mihai Iovănel maps the first phase of the “UFO literature” phenomenon around this period.

After the 1971 July Thesis, Romanian history reaches a new phase: national communism. This period is characterized by several attempts at criticizing the system while also trying to avoid censorship, resulting in Aesopian literary forms. Doris Mironescu sees the controversial Iași Group from the ’80s as an example of what postcolonial studies have named “vernacular cosmopolitanism.” Ramona Hârșan talks about the “silent, passive-

aggressive refusal” (168) in the experimental writings of Gheorghe Crăciun and Mircea Nedelciu. Ovio Olaru contextualizes the phenomenon of Aktionsgruppe Banat, a Saxon literary movement that exceeded both German and Romanian ethnocentrism by embracing the Western Marxist line of thought. However, Ștefan Baghiu and Costi Rogozanu’s essay takes a more cynical stance towards literary “dissidence.” They claim that Marin Preda’s case is symptomatic of the way in which the state sponsored “socialist modernism” and, to a certain extent, even anticommunist stances (as in Preda’s last novel). More so, the novelist’s death is seen as the beginning of a new phase in the state-centered market of Romania: “black market post-modernism” (155).

After 1989, local historiography has tried without success to portray the com-

munist literary system in a proper manner, but it lacked the proper tools. Andrei Terian uses Hayden White’s “metahistorical” instruments to systematize the historical works of three critics: Nicolae Manolescu, Eugen Negrici, and Marian Popa. Even if their narratives are anticommunist, all three “regard the postcommunist period as a decadent phase, in which literature is significantly inferior to that produced during communism” (38). This confusion shows how vague is the general understanding of what communism actually meant to the local literary system. This volume offers multiple paths of surpassing these narratives.

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