

World Literatures and Romanian Literary Criticism

Caius Dobrescu
University of București

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Abstract: In his article "World Literatures and Romanian Literary Criticism" Caius Dobrescu argues that the notion *Weltliteratur* of Goethe posits the concept of world literature as the conveyor of universal (i.e., cosmopolitan) skills of socio-cultural adaptation. The influence of this form of *Weltliteratur* on Romanian literary criticism is traceable from Westernization in the nineteenth century to the cultural dissent of the post-Stalinist era. Based on Norbert Elias's diffusionist theory of the civilizing process, Dobrescu contends that one of the role models of the Romanian literary scholar and critic in his/her capacity of intercultural mediator was the eighteenth-century *philosophe* in the tradition of cosmopolitan *politess*.

Caius DOBRESCU

World Literatures and Romanian Literary Criticism

The discovery that in a hand note concerning his translation of the odes of Horace, Christoph Martin Wieland used "*Weltliteratur*" in 1790 (see Weitz). Goethe's notion of *Poesie* as "universal possession" of humankind in his 1827 conversation with Johann Peter Eckermann (*Conversations* 203) is viewed by John David Pizer in his 2006 *The Idea of World Literature: History and Pedagogical Practice* with caution and a certain amount of criticism: "it is safe to say that many, if not most, students and even teachers of World Literature in English translation courses in American universities and colleges will ask themselves why this bit of archival research was even published. What difference does it make if Wieland preceded Goethe in using the German term for 'world literature'? Is not world literature simply the literature of the world in its entirety, the *belles lettres* of all corners of the globe, chronologically encompassing all of history, from Gilgamesh to cyberpunk?" (Pizer 1; of note is that *Weltliteratur* was used already in 1773 by August Ludwig Schläözer [see Schamoni]).

While not all reactions were indifferent to associating Wieland or Schläözer with the origin of the notion of *Weltliteratur*, even a benevolent attitude towards the origins of the term are tempered by the remark that its meaning was restricted only to Greek and Latin literatures (see Beecroft <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss5/2>>). I posit that Hans Joachim Weitz's position with regard to the origin of *Weltliteratur* goes beyond placing the use of the notion in conjunction with Horace and the Rococo interpretation of the literary milieu of the Roman Augustan era (see Curran 5). More significant is the fact that Wieland's notion *Weltliteratur* had to do with urbanity of ancient Rome understood as "a delicate tincture of erudition, experience of the world, and politeness" acquired through the "reading of the best writers, and from the company of the most cultivated and excellent people in a highly refined epoch" (Wieland qtd. in Weitz 207). In other words, the original meaning of *Weltliteratur* seems to be literature of and for urban and cosmopolitan people elites. If this holds true, the importance of Wieland's notion reveals the social dimension of the Goethean idea of *Weltliteratur*. Even if *Weltliteratur* consists only of "more or less elaborated hints in conversations, letters, notes, aphorisms, newspapers articles and reviews" (Koch 52), it could still be inferred that the concept implied the fusion of two distinct notions of the "world." One of them would allude to human beings as sentient and rational creatures and thus the "world literature" would ideally consist of those works appealing to the sense and sensibility of such a universal community. The other notion of "world" would imply an unrestricted and global network of intellectual contacts within which literary masterpieces would have the function of differentiating nations among themselves.

Goethe did not feel the need of distinguishing between the above two meanings maybe on account of an allegedly spontaneous accord between what would be held by a cultural community as its most powerful literary self-expression and what the world would select among that community's creations as compatible with standards of a universal aesthetic. However, from the perspective of our age, the belief in a harmony between the two understandings of representativeness appears problematic. The divorce and opposition of the two "worlds" was made obvious with the emergence of Romanticism. By adding another meaning to "world" in *Weltliteratur* this promoted the idea that cultures are mental universes and that one cannot have the profound, emotional experience of a "world" without being fully immersed in a *Volksgeist*, a national spirit (see Neumann 265-74). From this perspective, the power of a literary work and hence its cultural representativity, is in direct proportion to its untranslatability, i.e., with its capacity of containing the uniqueness and distinctiveness of a given mental pattern (see Berlin 26-53).

In the dispute originating in the Romantic epoch around the very possibility of *Weltliteratur* and the sharp philosophical polarization it generated in the long run, an important semantic dimension of the notion of "world" — susceptible of having been present in Goethe's mind and of having shaped his vision of the matter — was lost. If Claude Digeon once called the second half of the nineteenth century the German moment of the French thought, we should acknowledge that the come of age of Goethe's notion of *Weltliteratur* at a time that could still be called the French moment of the German thought allows for the hypothesis that to a certain extent Goethe's

understanding of *Welt* was still infused by the French notion of *monde* with its specific connotations that surface in the derived notion of *mondanité*. Goethe has been a man of the world — a *Weltmann, homme du monde* — and his different utterances on the cultural effects and affects of the arts and letters are, especially in the latter phases of his thought, convergent with Wieland's fusion of civility and cosmopolitanism under the notion of "polite literature": "Politeness is for Goethe not only the opportunity and the neglected educational task of the German intelligentsia; politeness is in general the only maxim of conduct that could be used against the increasing splintering of the modern world. To this day there hasn't been given enough thought to the measure to which, after 1789, the work of Goethe can be read as one big disquisition on the decay of the mores, the insecurity of the social conduct, indiscretion and bad manners" (Koch 63). I posit that Goethe's attitude towards conversational politeness reveals an attraction and a tension divided between the cosmopolitan brilliance of Voltaire's and Rousseau's call for radical sincerity openly adverse to the Enlightenment ideal of urbanity (see Götze 25-28). In Goethe's dialogues with Eckermann and Frédéric Jacob Soret published as a supplement to Eckermann's *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens* (1836, 1838) Goethe is quoted having said, in 1830, that "You ... have no idea of the influence which Voltaire and his great contemporaries had in my youth, and how they governed the whole civilized world. My biography does not clearly show what was the influence of these men in my youth, and what pains it cost me to defend myself against them, and to maintain my own ground in a true relation to nature" (209).

Goethe's sense of manners was fused with the disposition that made the eighteenth-century French *philosophes* scorn scholastic erudition for its attempt of reducing the world to a conceptual scheme. I believe Goethe agreed with Voltaire and Hume that systematic erudition was wrong not only because it forced the "world" — i.e., Mother Nature — into a demeaning caricature, but also because with its omniscient, aggressive, conceited arrogance it defied the "world," i.e., *la bonne société*. It is significant in this respect that Goethe concluded what he said confessing his sensitivity to Voltaire's poetry: "We talked further about Voltaire, and Goethe recited to me his poem 'Les Systèmes' from which I perceived how he must have studied and appropriated such things in early life" (Goethe qtd. in Eckermann and Soret 209). We have to remember that cultural historians have construed the above-mentioned Voltairean satire as a manifesto of the Enlightenment's rejection of scholastic (i.e., rigid, systematic) thinking in favor of an empirical (i.e., flexible, refined, polished) skepticism (see Hempfer 111). This is the reason why Goethe met his Romantic contemporaries with apprehension explicit in the manner in which he caricatures them in front of the intellectual confidants of his old age: "And if I enter into a conversation with any of them, I immediately observe that the things in which one of us takes pleasure seem to them vain and trivial, that they are entirely absorbed in the Idea, and that only the highest problems of speculation are fitted to interest them. Of sound senses or delight in the sensual, there is no trace" (Goethe qtd. in Eckermann and Soret 59-60). Considering Goethe's internalization of benevolence, sociability, urbanity, civility, politeness, and virtue it can be assumed that his vision of *Weltliteratur* was in relation to the understanding of the then contemporary notion of German "polite" society: *Höflichkeit* (Götze 22). The Goethean vision of a world literary market would have been impregnated with the belief of the Enlightenment in the civilizing function of commerce, an enterprise whose success was seen as depending on a fine balance between the calculation of interests and the refinement of manners and moral sentiments (see Dobrescu; McCloskey; Pocock).

If my above assumptions are right, it might be inferred that the Goethean model of *Weltliteratur* is premised not only on an aspiration of the human mind towards a unifying universal perspective, but also on a universal tendency of human beings towards mutual benevolence and dialogue. In the latter interpretation, the Goethean *Welt* is not (only) a global marketplace. The concept has affinities with the *salon* as a form of intellectual sociability that had become — in terms of both its self-understanding and of its sociological reality — a West European event in which pan-human and national allegiances seemed to harmonize (see Fumaroli; Lilti; Simanowski). World literature is possible when and where it can be assumed that politeness had become the language of a *Weltgesellschaft* (see Macho). The vision of a generalized intellectual commerce supported by the transnational network of polite conversation is implicit in Gerhart Hoffmeister's contention that for Goethe

Weltliteratur was neither the sum of all national literatures nor the ever increasing canon of world masterpieces, rather he conceived of it as a dynamic process of rapprochement among European nations — above all Britain, France and Germany — with the goal of breaking down the walls of national prejudices that hampered peaceful coexistence in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars. To realize this social function of literature, Goethe called upon contemporary authors to serve — along with himself — as mediators and facilitators across the frontiers in periodicals, translations and memoirs. He hoped this common market of ideas would eventually manifest itself in a greater sense of understanding and tolerance, first among the intellectuals and thereafter also among the peoples. (232)

The reason I try to capture this particular nuance of Goethe's notion of *Weltliteratur* is that in my view it is seminal for describing the assimilation of this notion in Romanian modernity. I posit that in the Romanian case the understanding of *Weltliteratur* did not rest on the Enlightenment tenet of a universal human mind bound in the long run to organize human knowledge in its entirety — including the one incorporated in the literary masterpieces — but on the precept that by polishing oneself so as to become an intellectually sophisticated *homme du monde*, one becomes simultaneously a citizen of the world. The *salon* was introduced in Romania by the Hellenized ruling elites (*Phanariots*) of Walachia and Moldova — the two autonomous principalities under Ottoman sovereignty later on united in the Kingdom of Romania — since the end of the eighteenth century. Connected initially to the neo-Byzantine court culture of the two capitals București and Iași, the *salon* became beginning with the 1820s the cultural expression of negotiation between the emancipatory impulses and the customs of the local upper class, the *boyars*:

The assimilation of this fashion occurred against the background of the autochthonous sociability, which construed associativity around two essential determinants, conversation and entertainment, both still under the influence of the Oriental life style. For instance, in the wake of the nineteenth century, the after-noon promenade was frequently followed in the agenda of a typical day of the local high-life by paying amiable or complacent visits, which tended to last until late in the night. The frequency of these reunions, motivated by the necessity of sociability, was regulated by a specific perception and management of time, "killing time" with different social rituals being a distinctive feature of the boyar mentality during the last phase of the Phanariot regime. The fashion of the salons extended rapidly among the noblest Moldo-Walachian boyar families who disposed of sufficient material and symbolic resources to sponsor social ceremonies. (Iacob 84)

The critical distillation of this state of mind lead in time to an understanding of world literatures less connected to the "best" literatures produced by all the nations, but more partial to designating the kind of literature whose educated reading could assist cosmopolitanism. Educated reading came to be seen as a doorway to a kind of transcendental "politeness" instrumental to the adaption to the *grande monde* seen as a universal *salon* of cultural diversity. Of course, the relevance of Romanian nobility and aristocracy with regard to the consumption and writing of literature was similar to other loci of such elsewhere in Europe (see, e.g., Quint). By "educated reading" I mean the educators of public taste which mainly implies the action, status and self-understanding of the literary critic and scholar. My assumption is that the Romanian sense of world literature(s) — not simply as *littérature universelle*, but as *littérature du monde* where *monde* preserves the nuances of *mondain/e* and *mondanité* — was determined by the fact that along the Romanian process of Westernization the social prestige of literary scholarship and criticism became intertwined with the influence of *salon* culture. Consequently, long after the waning of the social establishment that made possible the *salons* literary criticism preserved the intimacy between the training of rational cognition and the refining of aesthetic taste. In other words, it preserved and championed in spite of dramatic social mutations the culture and spirit of cosmopolitan "polite conversation." The subsequent dictatorships of king Carol II (1938-1940), of the fascist-like *legionnaire* movement of the pro-German marshal Ion Antonescu (1941-1944), this ghastly suite culminating with the Soviet occupation at the end of World War II and the 1946 imposition of the communist system has disturbed the local "civilizing process" (see Elias). Eventually, official communist ideology tended — especially in the 1950s — to demonize social manners and conversational politeness associated with the alleged reactionary propertied classes. Nevertheless, this sequence of totalitarian regimes did not uproot this culture, but in a paradoxical and unintended way contributed to its counteractive preservation and reproduction. A significant part of the "new" Romanian intellectual elites managed to preserve the "old" culture of self-fashioning through polite conversation.

A major line of the civilizing process sponsored by the literary criticism, a line proving, in retrospect, to have been surprisingly consistent and cohesive, even without the reasoned consent of the involved agents, was its direct or implicit confrontation of the aggressive nationalist voluntarism *cum* isolationism of the communist era. Literary criticism stood for the mental representation of the world itself as a complex network of influences. This imagination of dynamic networking structures could be distinguished in the work of George Călinescu (1899-1965), one of the most influential literary scholars of the *interbellum* epoch who — after the instauration of the communist regime — represented an inspiration for new critics. Călinescu's 1941 *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent* (The History of Romanian Literature from Its Origins to the Present) — placed on the index of books "with restricted access" despite Călinescu's official recognition as an "old" intellectual sympathetic to the new regime — fascinated the younger generation by its art of creating a sense of monumentality through a-heroic conversational strategies ranging from the *mot d'esprit* and aphorism to satirical musings, the use of paradox, anecdotic *piquanterie*, and the psychological insight characteristic of *salon* gossip (*badinage*). The massiveness of this national literary monument appears as residing in a myriad small sociable references knit together by the ubiquitous vibration of critical intelligence. In other words, the sense of a cultural history implied the illusion of a "world" created by a dynamic network configured and sustained by an *esprit de finesse*. What is even more important is that the comedy-drama of epic proportion of the Romania's literary history was interwoven with the greater networks of European literatures, cultures, and societies. Călinescu's associations between Romanian and European authors — following not only the consecrated one-directional patterns of influence between the West and the East, but more often than not exposing, to wit inventing intimate structural affinities between rather different and distant works — could be seen as an instantiation and an expressive embodiment of the Goethean vision of a vast conversation between the literatures of the world (see Martin, G. *Călinescu* 209-37; see also Juvan <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss5/10>>). There are no differences with regard to Călinescu's comparative vision between his history of Romanian literature and his treatment of Spanish (*Impresii*) or generally European (*Scrittori*) authors and literatures.

The scope of Călinescu's influence on post-World War II Romanian literary thinking (see Terian, *George Călinescu*) becomes even more relevant if we consider it against the fact that institutionalized "universal and comparative literature" was dominated not by himself, but by another scholar, Tudor Vianu (1898-1964). Vianu made a name for himself as a philosopher with interests in aesthetics (e.g., *Estetica*) and the theory of culture (e.g., *Filosofia*). But the instauration of the communist regime determined him to opt for the less ideologically sensitive field of literary studies. In this new capacity, he was the founder of the chair for universal and comparative literature at the University of Bucharest. Given his antecedents as a researcher in the field of axiology (e.g., *Introducere*) and as a promoter of the classical humanist ideal. To his credit and against the growing tide of nationalism in the *interbellum* era, Vianu located his scholarship in a universalist vision of literature (see *Goethe, Idealul, Literatura universală*). But even if the great majority of those who taught "universal literature" at the University of București in the next period — e.g., Edgar Papu (1908-1993) (e.g., *Barocul*), Vera Călin (1921-) (e.g., *Alegoria*), Romul Munteanu (1926-2011) (e.g., *Literatura europeană*), Dan Grigorescu (1931-2008) (e.g., *Directții*), Corneliu Mihai Ionescu (1941-2012) (e.g., *Palimpseste*), Tudor Olteanu (1943-) (e.g., *Morfologia*) — were Vianu's students, Vianu's dedication and conciseness were seen as exemplary and a force of the ingrained cultural mentality and tradition combined with George Călinescu's personal charisma carried the day with the exception of Adrian Marino (1921-2005), who carried out comparative literature projects while polemicizing with what he perceived as the mondaine essayism of Romanian criticism (see, e.g., *Biografia ideii, Comparatisme*).

Thus, the perception of world literature(s) — i.e., of both the world as literature and of literature as a world — was resonant with Wieland's *Urbanität* and *politesse* and world literature was not seen primarily as a universal, supra-historical, multi- and trans-cultural canon, but as a network of transcultural communication. The network could never be organized and systematized, but one could profit from its energy and power once connected to it in the "right way": a right way that implied training cognitive and ethical faculties according to the model of universality, i.e., to be

able to experience the world beyond its cultural eclecticism as one vast literary *salon*. Ideally, this implies that true cosmopolitanism resides not so much in the international diversity of one's objects of interest, but in the nature of one's treatment of these objects and this amounts to saying that a scholar with linguistic and historical knowledge over a broad range of literatures and cultures could, theoretically, prove to be more parochial than an open-minded scholar or critic writing with a cosmopolitan conversational acumen mostly on local (e.g., Romanian) literary topics. The art of moving between a local and a global perspective is a direct expression of the glocal (see Robertson) character of the Romanian heritage of Enlightenment's intellectual sociability.

A connection between *interbellum* manners and literary criticism and the resurgence of a cosmopolitan literary culture in the post-Stalinist era can be found in the works of Alexandru Paleologu (1919-2005) and Nicolae Steinhardt (1918-1989). After their imprisonment — which occurred in waves of arrests of Romanian intellectuals as a consequence of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution (see Tănase) — from the late 1960s on they became active and influential in the literary press. Paleologu's 1972 volume *Bunul simț ca paradox* (The Common Sense as a Paradox) is an indirect manifesto for the recovery of subtlety in intellectual and social intercourse: "Common sense is not, as it is generally held, a primitive form of intelligence or an inferior substitute of the latter. There is (and in no short supply) intelligence without common sense, but no common sense without intelligence" (8; unless indicated otherwise, all translations are mine). Accordingly — as a counterpart to the communist unilateral worship of technological "civilization," Paleologu advocated a conservative-liberal notion of civility: "Not the planes, the rockets, the buttons pressed to obtain one commodity or another give the measure of civilization, but only the degree of civility" (108). Paleologu's vision of a worldly life-style also implied an opening to cultural diversity counterpoised to the mounting nationalism of the Ceaușescu era in the manner in which Goethe himself opposed blood-and-soil Romantic ideology (see, e.g., Saul).

An advocate of constitutional liberalism, a champion of enlightened Judaism, and an Epicurean aesthete before communist times, Steinhardt converted to the Christian Orthodox faith during his prison years, but — despite of the fact that after his release he retired to a monastery in Transylvania — he also became an umpire of intellectual elegance through the 1970s and 1980s. His refined and fluent essays connected Romanian themes with a wide variety of up to date topics of the world's literatures and philosophies albeit in particular with regard to the Western world with a special inclination for the English-speaking world. On the other hand, Steinhardt's cultural conversationalism was imbued with a spirit recalling French seventeenth-century Christian skepticism: "To what could any candid and serious conversation amount, in its essence, if not to a series of mutual questions ever more comprehensive, more insistent, more provocative, more intense, more startling?" (44) and his intellectual ethos reverted around the necessity of establishing a civil relationship: "not only of the writer (or thinker) with the public, but also with the own self ... Writing and thinking — were they to be really meaningful, to be expressions of honesty and not small talk or the guiltification of one's fellows (making them know their place, scolding them) or manifestations of vanity, and so on — should be imbued with awe, with mystery, with intermissions (if not with actual silences) and should account for a quantum of shadow, of universal contradiction and intricacy" (45).

In the next generation of scholars and critics, the implication of the comparative approach in the strategies of a conversational rhetoric is illustrated by such as Alexandru Călinescu (1945-) (e.g., *Perspective*), Livius Ciocârlie (1935-) (e.g., *Fragmente*), Dana Dumitriu (1943-1987) (e.g., *Ambasadorii*), Nicolae Manolescu (1939-) (e.g., *Teme*), Mircea Martin (1940-) (e.g., *Critică*), Marian Papahagi (1948-1999) (e.g., *Intellectualitate*), Ion Pop (1941-) (e.g., *Ore*), Lucian Raicu (1934-2006) (e.g., *Critica*), Eugen Simion (1933) (e.g., *Timpul*), Cornel Ungureanu (1943-) (e.g., *Mitteuropa*), Ion Vartic (1944-) (e.g., *Modelul*), Mihai Zamfir (1940-) (e.g., *Din secolul*). This tradition was set forth in the works of younger literary scholars and critics who emerged in the 1980s — paradoxically enough, at the height of Ceaușescu's attempts of the North Koreanization of Romania including, for example, Mihaela Anghelescu Irimia (1951-) (e.g., *Stimulating Difference*), Adriana Babeți (1949-) (e.g., *Dandysmul*), Ștefan Borbély (1953-) (e.g., *De la Herakles*), Corin Braga (1961-) (e.g., *De la arhetip*), Ioan Buduca (1952-) (e.g., *După Socrate*), Ruxandra Cesereanu (1963-) (e.g., *Gourmet*), Gheorghe Crăciun (1950-2007) (e.g., *Aisbergul*), Ion Bogdan

Lefter (1957-) (e.g., *Postmodernism*), Alexandru Muşina (1954-2013) (e.g., *Paradigma*), Mircea Mihăieş (1954-) (e.g., *Metafizica*), Dan Petrescu (1949-) (e.g., *Tentaşiiile*), Virgil Podoabă (1951-) (e.g., *Metamorfozele*), Simona Popescu (1965-) (e.g., *Salvarea*), Monica Spiridon (1948-) (e.g., *Les Dilemmes*), etc.

Next, I refer to Romanian literary intellectuals and scholars who — while partaking in above-mentioned cultural heritage — left Romania and worked as academics abroad. For example — and my selection is by no means exhaustive — there is Norman Manea (1936-), who teaches European culture and literature at Bard College and is perceived as a major Central European novelist and essayist (see Updike 386-94) and his critical essays are a telling example of cosmopolitan conversationalism (e.g., *Pe contur*, *The Fifth*). The understanding of world literature as promoting a conversational ideal rather than a definite canon is distinctive in the work of Basil Munteanu (1897-1972) — a pioneering figure of the Romanian exile comparatist school who studied the *grand siècle* and the Enlightenment and their impact on cultural and political modernity in France (e.g., *Constantes*). Munteanu began his work in pre-communist Romania with a study of forms of sociability in the French literature (e.g., *Forme*). Another member of the first generation of Romanian exiles — Alexandru Ciorănescu (1911-1999) — published work about courtier culture (*L'Arioste*), but also in distinguishing the civil from uncivil interaction between the sense of practicality and the freedom of imagination in the tradition of utopian thinking (e.g., *L'Avenir*): Ciorănescu taught at the University of La Laguna in Tenerife. And special mention should be made of Ştefan Baciu (1918-1993) who taught comparative literature at the University of Hawaii and was editor of one of the most popular anthologies of Latin-American poetry of the 1970s (*Antología*). Further, the thematization of civility as a stylistic constant of liberal and cosmopolitan literary thinking can be followed in the works of Sorin Alexandrescu (1937-) at the University of Amsterdam (e.g., *Identitate*), Matei Călinescu (1934-2009) who taught at the University of Indiana at Bloomington (e.g., *Five Faces*), Marcel Corniş-Pope (1946-) at Virginia Commonwealth University (e.g., *Narrative, The Unfinished*), Călin-Andrei Mihăilescu (1956-) at the University of Western Ontario (e.g., *Foartă-n faţă*), Christian Moraru (1960-) at the University of North Carolina Greensboro (e.g., *Postmodernism*), Virgil Nemoianu (1940-) at American Catholic University (e.g., *Imperfection, A Theory*), Ileana Alexandra Orlich (1953-) at Arizona State University (e.g., *Staging Stalinism*), Thomas Pavel (1941-) at the University of Chicago (e.g., *La Pensée*), Mihai Spăriusiu (1944-) at the University of Georgia (e.g., *Global Intelligence*), and Roxana M. Verona at Dartmouth College (1946-) (e.g., *Les "Salons"*). It is also noteworthy that at the largest convention of humanities scholarship in the world — the MLA: Modern Language Association of America — at its annual gatherings the Romanian Discussion Group is always represented with several panels and among the discussion groups of "minor" literatures and cultures the Romanian group is exceedingly active (on comparative literature in Romania in general, see Berlina and Tötösy de Zepetnek; Terian, "National Literature" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss5/12>>; Ursa).

The scholarly contributions of above-mentioned scholars could be seen as prefiguring and resonant with the revival of cosmopolitanism and comparative humanities. For example, Moraru's vision of overcoming the limits of classical cosmopolitanism towards a wider "cosmodern" literature and its scholarship and criticism suggests an incisive approach to the concept of world literatures:

The cosmodern vision declines to be another egological extrapolation of U.S./Western nuclei of values, ideologies, and intertextual repertoires. Mindful of the culturocentric risks historically involved in such macro-systemic undertakings, cosmodernism is an imaginary of worlded aesthetic relations as much as it is one of ethical relatedness. Not only is the cosmodern problematic of otherness more authentically — heterologically — 'other,' vaster, more capacious ethnically, racially, or religiously, and not only is it more extensively explored than in postmodernism ... but this 'theme' is also ethically explored. This actually means that the other's presence in cosmodern discourse is no longer just a matter of 'theme,' and hence of thematization, of rational reduction. The other's presence founds, organizes, and orients cosmodern representation rather than merely supplying it with the subject *du jour*. (*Cosmodernism* 313).

In conclusion, the concept of "world literature" as originated in the eighteenth century required a reunion of cognitive dispositions and skills, which tend to be separated within the contemporary institutionalization of the humanities. My understanding is that, as an illustration of the offbeat evolutions occurring in Central and East European cultures as a consequence of the distortion of

their contact with the West owing to the Soviet occupation, Romanian comparatism manages to perpetuate this cognitive mix up to the twenty-first century. This hypothesis on the nature of the Romanian perception of "world literature" might also contribute to a deeper understanding of the connections between "literary criticism" and "literary scholarship." At face value, this distinction seems obvious whereby former is intuitive criticism while the latter refers to theoretical inquiry. However, it is difficult if not impossible to ground the division between said two practices in their respective essential features: their mutual positioning is necessarily contingent, i.e., conventional and historical. The diversity of world cultures confronts us with practices which fuse in unpredictable dosages and skills associated with criticism considered as a form of (both aesthetic and social) "tacit knowledge" (Polanyi) and criticism as an aspiration to emulate scholarly authority. It is my contention that the investigation of these variations might prove to be one of the most fruitful future lines of research for the discipline of comparative literature.

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Author's profile: Caius Dobrescu teaches theory of literature, comparative literature, and European cultural studies at the University of București. In addition to numerous articles in Romanian and English, his book publications include *Revoluția radială. O critică a conceptului de "postmodernism" dinspre înțelegerea plurală și deschisă a culturii burgheze* (2008) (The Radial Revolution: A Critique of the Concept of Postmodernism from a Plural and Open Understanding of Bourgeois Culture) and *Mihai Eminescu. Imaginarul spațiului privat* (2004) (Mihai Eminescu: The Imaginary of the Public Space). Dobrescu also published several novels and collections of poetry in Romanian. E-mail: <caius.dobrescu@g.unibuc.ro>