

# Theories of the Biographical Genres in Romanian Postwar Criticism

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**T**HIS ARTICLE aims to provide some methods through which the theoretical potential of concepts that emerged in Romanian literary theory and criticism in the post-war period and which refer to biographical works and especially diaries could be updated. Our interest comes mainly from the recent surge in theoretical approaches in *memory studies* and *life writing*. These directions not only led to genuine re-evaluations of the interdisciplinary possibilities opened up by the study of memory and confession in fictional and non-fictional literary works, but also helped to restore the relevance of East European cultures to literary studies. “The biographical genres,” to use the famous local concept of Eugen Simion, were directly modeled by the political and social movements in the region, which experienced many periods of sudden change and instability. Thus, *trauma studies*, *memory studies*, and *life writing* have become interested in Eastern Europe,<sup>1</sup> since the history of this area is a convulsive one. Biographical writing and, in particular, intimate diaries are then valuable as discrete signs of an evolving trauma.<sup>2</sup> The aim of this article is to show how theories of the genre, proposed by literary critics such as Simion or Mihai Zamfir in the 1980s, can be used in this new theoretical context. This could later be connected to recent studies on autofiction,<sup>3</sup> which has become of late a very important topic in Romanian literary criticism.

One of the most important benefits the post-communist period brought to Romanian literature was the (re)discovery of nonfiction and the species within its sphere. It is not true, however, that no diaries, memoirs, literary correspondences, etc. were written before 1989, but it is true that the most relevant from a documentary, aesthetic, and literary point of view were not published in the communist period because of censorship. Their rapid publication and the frequency of occurrences immediately after 1989 created collections dedicated to the genre, clearly demonstrating that the need for such restitutions was not negligible. Moreover, for many, it was a rediscovery of a certain kind of unbiased reading of history through individual memory. Starting in the first months after the Revolution of December 1989, Romanian cultural journalism began to be dominated by fragments

This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian Ministry of Research and Innovation, CCCDI-UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P1-1.2-PCCDI-2017-0821/INTELLIT, within PNCDI III.

of diaries that tried to recompose the intimate image of life under communism in a traumatic key and, in particular, the image of resistance in the communist era. The titles of these interventions are suggestive here: Romanian writer Octavian Paler publishes fragments from “Jurnalul unui scriitor interzis (17 aprilie–22 decembrie 1989)” (The diary of a prohibited writer),<sup>4</sup> Virgil Ardeleanu publishes a “Jurnal de sertar” (Drawer journal),<sup>5</sup> Liviu Ioan Stoiciu “Din jurnalul unui comis-literar participant la revoluție” (From the diary of a writer participating in the revolution).<sup>6</sup> We only give three paradigmatic examples for the causes underlying the massive revival of interest in the biographical genre in Romania after a period that would be increasingly seen as traumatic in such writings:<sup>7</sup> first, the diary as a reaction to censorship and, implicitly, as “drawer literature” and, secondly, the diary as an opportunity for self-validation as an agent for transformation.<sup>8</sup> Along with these, fragments and entire prison diaries are often published. The genre will culminate with the detention memoirs and diaries published by figures such as Lena Constante, Elizabeta Rizea, and Nicole Valéry-Grossu, laying the foundation for an entire traumatic biographic literature that would also be reflected in extensive studies of drawer literature and prison memories.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, in the 1990s, non-fiction becomes a tool for the pacification of spirits within the ample revival of the Romanian interwar ethnicity theories. The publication of Jewish writer Mihail Sebastian’s diary in 1996 may be considered as another important milestone in the assessment of the functions the “intimate diary” has had over the past decades.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the theories already proposed by Simion or Zamfir in the 1980s could be further used for a better understanding of intimate writing in this expanded context of the biographical itself.

Romanian criticism and literary theory somehow went ahead of the non-fictional literature itself, in the sense of a connection to the European, especially French, theories of biography during the 1980s. If most of the diaries, epistolary writing or Romanian literary memoirs published in that period are mostly of documentary interest, their massive publication in the post-communist period has opened the theoretical appetite for a reconsideration of the genre itself. Thus, our aim is to see how the theories developed in the 1980s for this genre could be used within *life writing* and *memory studies* as well.

## Epistolary Writing in Romanian Literary Studies

OF ALL the “biographical genres,” to use the formula established by Simion,<sup>11</sup> the literary or non-literary correspondence seems to have lost some ground in terms of the scholarly approach on the subject in favor of the more privileged memoirs and diaries. In the absence of a suitable partner, the correspondence, even of the most savvy writers, seems to lose its literary virtues, being merely a simple informative instrument:

*Analyzed against the Jakobsonian definition, of all the writings endowed with some particularities of literature—among which there are the expressive involvement of the author and the orientation towards a recipient—correspondence seems to be the least literary, as it excludes the poetic function . . . It is only after it is extracted from its natu-*

*ral context that the letter becomes literature and only insofar as it allows the reader to imagine, with uncertainty, another context. A certain amount of gratuity, therefore, is necessary for the transformation to take place; only gratuity allows, false paradox—for the existential charge of the letter to be aesthetically evaluated by the reader.*<sup>12</sup>

In 2009, we dedicated one of the post-December editions of the *Transilvania* magazine *Colloquia* to literary correspondence, an occasion on which we also produced a thematic number of the journal.<sup>13</sup> In the study opening the issue,<sup>14</sup> Paul Cernat notes the lack of synthetic approaches to “correspondence,” despite a relatively rich epistolary literature. The critic pertinently separates the “public” or “extimal” correspondence of writers, along Michel Tournier’s definition, from the intimate one, written without the intent of virtually publishing it anthumously. He then analyzes the nuances of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century public correspondence avatars, exploring the “diverse and sophisticated epistolary techniques of capturing the intimacy of the characters” from the Romanian rise of modernity to that of the Sibiu Literary Circle<sup>15</sup> and to that of the School of Păltiniș.

The diary is, by far, the most privileged subject of the Romanian postwar theory of biographical genres. Although the diary was one of the most powerful genres in Romanian literature, literary criticism has defined too few of its aspects until the late communist period. Thus, the most important commentators of biographical writings in Romania, Simion and Zamfir, had at their disposal an entire unexplored domain in the late 1970s and 1980s. And this virgin nature of the theory stemmed more from a preconception, named by Zamfir “a kind of generalized prevention against the diary.”<sup>16</sup> G. Călinescu, in “Fals jurnal” (False diary), an article included in the volume *Cronicile optimistului* (Chronicles of the optimist),<sup>17</sup> is reluctant in regard to the model of the daily entry diary and believes that events of minimal importance are superfluous. In his vision, the diaries put on paper external facts without meaning. Put differently, the critic asserts that the intimate diary is always written for the public, “otherwise the author would burn it.” Călinescu diminishes the importance of confession and memoirs and describes the genre as bearing specific conventions such as novels and plays. According to Călinescu, there are several types of diaries: the one “that inflates vital activity and daily gesticulation, insinuating a physical movement from the metaphysical plane” (the critic calls it the “vaporous diary of women”), the type “of the book-writing diary” (a model exemplified with an excerpt from A. Gide), the “prosaic notes” diary of Stendhalian descent and the “diaries only concerned with the literary success of the author,” exemplified by Edmond de Goncourt’s diary.<sup>18</sup>

## **The Diary As Theory’s Favorite Biographical Genre: An Overview**

**T**HE RECONSIDERATION of the importance of the genre’s theoretical grounds occurred in the 1980s, along the French theoretical line.<sup>19</sup> Simion, the most important exegete of biographical genres and especially of diarism, to which he dedicates the most consistent analysis, devotes hundreds of pages to the phenomenon, is also among

the few Romanian critics who offer a theoretical perspective, beyond the particular analysis of authors and writings. The 1986 issue of *Caiete critice* (Critical notebooks) on the subject of “diary as literature,” an excellent synthesis of Romanian concerns in the field, opens with the article “Jurnalul ca ficțiune” (The diary as fiction) in which the critic emphasizes the particular aspects of the genre which would be further analyzed in his monumental study dedicated to the intimate journal. A year earlier, in 1985, in his *Sfidarea retoricii* (The challenge of rhetoric), while writing about Liviu Rebreanu’s diary, the critic considered that the issue with diaries was not the rejection of the Romanian writers of the grounds that it was a minor genre. Even if the great Romanian creators did not leave behind intimate diaries, Simion thinks that the lack of a tradition comes from the prudish background of Romanian writers, hence the elution of the intimate aspect of existence.

We can already underline the consequences of this assertion put forward by Simion: the intimate diary is a species that fulfills its potential in the absence of censorship or moral retains, recalling what Zamfir would call the “diary of crisis.” Simion seems equally surprised by the almost total absence of writing itself as a subject of meditation, as the writers are more concerned with the trivialities and the “insignificant aspects” of the literary life. Hence, perhaps, the consonance with Călinescu’s skepticism. Before the actual analysis of Rebreanu’s diary, the critic also offers a general classification of diaries. Simion distinguishes three types: “(1) the diary as an indirect novel, as Eliade calls it, and as he illustrated himself in the 1930s through *India* and *Șantier* [The site], (2) the diary as *aide-mémoire*, the fragmented chronicle of a spirit that puts great ideas and the little happenings of life in such intimate books, and (3) the diary as a diary, an anti-literature that imposes itself as literature and sometimes covers literature itself.”<sup>20</sup>

Published after the year 2000, Simion’s extensive study of the intimate diary, *Ficțiunea jurnalului intim* (The fiction of the intimate diary), first emerged, he confesses, in the summer of 1989, as the fruit of several decades of research and has been planned since the 1977 *Jurnal parizian* (Parisian diary).<sup>21</sup> Reflections of this kind can also be found in *The Return of the Author*,<sup>22</sup> as in some articles in *The Challenge of Rhetoric*, and in the thematic issue of *Caiete critice*, in his study of “biographical genres.” What was originally designed as a small essay on the intimate diary thus turns into an exhaustive study in three volumes that manages to give an extremely nuanced picture of theories about the diary.<sup>23</sup>

The few attempts to theoretically and critically address the subject in the Romanian space generally failed to systematically cover such a vast area of research until Simion published his works. The 1969 study by Silviu Iosifescu, *Literatura de frontieră* (Frontier literature), treats non-differentiated species of the most varied genesis, structure and function, from science fiction, memories, intimate diaries, and travelogues, to biographies and historical dramas and novels. The subject’s treatment is rather dogmatic, not surpassing the traditional frames of the reception of literary frontier genres, in which “the freedom of literary creation is compelled to accept confinement, to observe the scientific fact or the biographical detail or the historical truth of a statement.”<sup>24</sup> Moreover, an account of Romanian experiences is almost non-existent. Although he discusses the aesthetic and artistic valences of these genres that push the boundaries of the literary,



the critic seems quite reluctant to the limitations that, for example, the intimate diary or memories face, failing to go beyond individual experience.

Ioan Holban's book entitled *Literatura subiectivă* (Subjective literature)<sup>25</sup> appeared in 1989 and deals exclusively with diarist and autobiographical Romanian experiences, starting from the premise that they are by any means literature. He identifies the signs of literality in writings which are not seen as "frontier literature," implying that the first diarist writings in the Romanian space, authored by C. A. Rosetti, Titu Maiorescu, Iacob Negruzzi, and Petre Ispirescu are simply literature. The critic is convinced that, although literary history values the documentary side of these writings, the Romanian prose writer "did not cease to conceive the 'intimate' text in the horizon of literature and in the perspective of immediate contact postponed with the reader. The intimate diary and the literary autobiography feature life itself, since their protagonists can be described as what I call the 'constructed human'; not the 'concrete human,' who is the one in the personal documents."<sup>26</sup> In Holban's opinion, the "personal" text serves as "orientation," through the search for meaning in everyday existence and through its "fictionalization" (i.e. fictional characteristics), and it is not accidental that the very concepts of "literature" and "writer" appear in the Romanian space through the "autobiographical fragment":

*By becoming a character, the author of the intimate diary illustrates the upper limit of the omniscient adventure, and his text is the speculum of life, a game of representation: here a new world is formed, and it is centered around the fiction of the self, where the indistinct becomes distinct, the inchoate becomes form, where living is manifested by thinking and where to have means to be. The journal is what I would call a poetics of the expansion of being in the density of life . . . the protagonist of the diary is a thought that centralizes reality after it has been sprawled, organizing language through the dispersed, distorted reality, being the very discovery of this language that makes the world.<sup>27</sup>*

The critic noticed in the Romanian literature after 1960 a spectacular evolution of the diary among the species of the epic genre (Geo Bogza, Radu Petrescu, Mircea Horia Simionescu, Tudor Țopa, Costache Olăreanu, Eugen Simion, Livius Ciocârlie, etc.), recapturing, at the same time, a tradition that emerged with nineteenth-century diaries.

Mircea Mihăieș's debut volume, published in 1988,<sup>28</sup> is dedicated to the intimate diary, an obsessive subject in many of his later books as well, and part of his Timișoara-based fellow researchers' projects—Livius Ciocârlie, Ilie Gyurcsik, and Adriana Babeți. Mihăieș had also been part of the team of young critics who had compiled the thematic dossier of the *Caiete critice* magazine in 1986, signing a translation of Jean Rousset's "Notes on the poetics of the intimate diary," a preamble to his forthcoming debut study. In its preface, however, the author prefers a bolder approach, writing a diary of the book itself, ingeniously made, but perhaps less theoretically effective. Nicolae Manolescu notes in his *Istoria critică a literaturii române* (The critical history of Romanian literature) that although "controversial only on a few points, not all important," the book has "the pioneering role, alongside the studies of Mihai Zamfir from the *Fața cealaltă a prozei* [The other side of prose], in a matter that would become . . . , immediately after the revolution, abundant and more appealing than that of fiction itself."<sup>29</sup> Manolescu, however, omits Simion's

works in this direction, ignoring in the chapter devoted to Simion precisely his volumes on the intimate diaries and biographical writing. Simion's work on this subject synthesizes, we believe, a theory of the diary and biographical writing which Mihăieș will develop later in his 1988 debut volume in a punctual analysis of authors and extremely diverse diaries, and later in his *Cărțile crude* (The cruel books) volume of essays from 1995 on the relationship between intimate diary and suicide.

## **Anxiolytic and Post-Trauma Diaries: Toward a Reconfiguration of Genres**

**I**N ORDER to better explain the necessity of re-evaluating biographical theories in the post-communist period, we chose to present in particular how the concepts proposed by Simion and Zamfir can explain today the historical source of biographical writing. First, it should be explained to what extent the two central categories proposed by Zamfir in *The Other Side of Prose* can be considered typical for different epochs or communities. In short, Zamfir distinguishes between the “diary of crisis” and the “diary of existence,” according to the urgency and style of the intimate notation. In the first case, the “diaries of crisis” are “diaries about exceptional tribulations and events that change a destiny,” and secondly, those of “existence,” which are the ones that imply “routine exercise.”<sup>30</sup> Zamfir argues surprisingly that while the first category is the one the diary writer can always safely discard, the second becomes addictive to the diarist, precisely because of the consistency needed to develop an “infinitely more difficult project:” “Writing a ‘diary of existence’ means eventually building up your existence on a diary model.” Thus, the dominant diary type for a certain period should be searched for in the function that the diary holds at that time. In a history that has undergone a lot of sudden changes, be they political, economic or cultural, most often accompanied by violent actions on institutional stability and sometimes even seen as attacks against the personal stability of writers, it is normal that the predominant genre be the one of “diary of crisis,” mentioned by Zamfir, or anyway suggested by the question “why do we have almost no diary of existence in Romanian literature?”<sup>31</sup> Zamfir does not answer this question by implying a socio-political condition of the Romanian cultural field, as we have done earlier, but by explaining the superficial condition of the entire Romanian literature: “Romanian literature has many febrile diaries, written in the fury of the moment, but which break as soon as the crisis has passed.”<sup>32</sup> It is no surprise that another key element in Zamfir's demonstration is the lack of a “great diary” and of a “great diary-shaped writer's life.”<sup>33</sup> The equation explained by Zamfir is quite predictable: he argues that the “diary of existence,” the stable category of the “intimate diary,” which French studies have long debated since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and mainly during the 20<sup>th</sup>, “introduces order where the species itself proclaims programmatic disorder.”<sup>34</sup> Zamfir explicitly claims that the “diary of existence” excels when its writer manages to extract the “miracle from banality,” and stresses that the “diary of crisis” is the most fruitful genre. What the Romanian critic does not observe is precisely the role of the banal itself in the emergence of the genre.

As Philippe Lejeune argues, “the diary, like writing itself, was born of the needs of commerce and administration.”<sup>35</sup> “In business, it is important to keep track of transactions and to know the status of your inventory,” writes further Lejeune, a fact that can explain the rise of the “diary of existence” starting with Romanian literary critic Titu Maiorescu. Beyond the amusement opportunities given by the link between the emergence of the “diary of existence” in Romanian culture and the well-known financial coherence of the most important literary critic in Romania in the 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>36</sup> this connection can raise some serious debates regarding the theory of biographical genres and their connection with the emergence of the modern Romanian state and economy. The first argument for such a deterministic incursion is that the first description of China attributable to a representative of Romanian culture comes also for political and economic reasons:<sup>37</sup> the memoirs of Nicolae Milescu-Spătaru, the “Romanian Marco Polo,” who gave a first description of China, were written as an economic examination of the Chinese space at the request of the Russian tsar.<sup>38</sup>

Then, Dinicu Golescu, whom G. Călinescu describes as responsible for “the first Romanian travel diary and the first study trip,”<sup>39</sup> in 1824, is set out to “observe especially the phenomena of civilization, the administration and the economy of the countries (Austria, Imperial Italy, Bavaria, Switzerland).”<sup>40</sup> Thus, the “diary of existence” as a category of the “intimate diary,” although not theorized by Zamfir as having an economic basis, can find its roots in the aim of the genre: the account of everyday life. Since it has the only precedents in Romanian travelogues of long-term travel experiences that require either resource management or economic and social descriptions to explain the alterity encountered,<sup>41</sup> the dominant feature of the intimate diary of the “routine exercise” described by Zamfir comes from this accountancy mission.<sup>42</sup> Thus, although the genre is improved by extracting the “miracle out of banality,” the mathematical banal is its very basis. Or, to understand the purpose for which we investigate these roots, the basis is the *fixed* nature of reality or the need to *fixate* it.

Zamfir further claims that the “diary of existence” appeared late in Romanian culture, although he never approaches the subject much. Thus, he explains that the first “romantic diary” (i.e. “intimate diary”) was a “diary of crisis,” Alecu Russo’s *Soveja* (the name reminding of the monastery where Russo was exiled in 1846). The connection between the exile and the “diary of crisis” is thus established from the beginning: “the document of a crisis of the soul—arrest and isolation—*Soveja* does not excel at telling of deeds, because those few days of imprisonment pass quickly; infinitely more interesting are the intimate notations of this great melancholy, which almost looks like delight in his new political prisoner, limited to the perimeter of a room, happy to read Théophile Gautier and meditate on Joseph de Maistre.”<sup>43</sup> It is exile that generates in Romanian culture the first “diary of crisis,” due to the lack of the fixed character of reality or the impossibility to fixate it. If the “diary of existence” comes from the desire to fixate reality, the “diary of crisis” comes to denounce an exile, a displacement, a separation. In other words, our thesis, starting from Zamfir’s terminology, is that the “diary of existence” represents the fixed and anxiolytic confession, while the “diary of crisis” represents the dislocated and post-traumatic one.<sup>44</sup> Thus, if Simion states that “the intimate diary of the twentieth century has discarded almost

all taboos,” it can be regarded as the most important document among biographies for explaining identity complexes.

## Conclusions

**Z**AMFIR'S CATEGORIES, applied to Simion's motto that "it is not the text, but the person who counts and should count in an intimate script," are thus extremely useful in linking biographies to major types of analysis of the transformations that make the subject of investigation for *life writing* and *memory studies*. The categories put forward by Zamfir should be further used without exaggerating the psychoanalytic proportions that such an interpretation may take: Maiorescu is representative for the "diary of existence" and Russo for the "diary of crisis," since the former had a stable position in Romanian society, and the second was exiled. The "diary of crisis" could be further used for writings of exile and migration. The same thesis of "resistance to chronology and linear narrative" in diaries or autobiographical and memorial works written in the context of migration was, moreover, proposed by Kathy Mezei in 2005, when she stated that "in making biography and autobiography live, domestic spaces play a crucial yet often unacknowledged part."<sup>45</sup> The transfer from this "theory of the biographical genres," and more specifically from the "diary of crisis" to the more general frames of *memory studies* and *life writing* could integrate Romanian and Eastern European diaries in the general category of migration and exile autobiographical writing. □

## Notes

1. For articles on *life writing* in Eastern Europe, see Leena Kurvet-Käosaar, "Bibliography on Eastern European Life Writing," *The European Journal of Life Writing* 2 (2013): 81–94. Moreover, scholars such as Zoltán Z. Varga have established several connections between the unstable local Eastern European history and life writing: "irruption of history was transformed into an artistic and intellectual challenge in the autobiographical works of Sándor Márai." Zoltán Z. Varga, "Rewriting History, Reshaping Memory: The Representation of Historical Events in Sándor Márai's Wartime Diaries and in his *Memoir of Hungary*," *The European Journal of Life Writing* 1 (2012): 22–40.
2. See Andreea Mironescu, "Transmiterea memoriei în Europa de Est: relocalizarea teoriei și narativizarea emoției," *The Scientific Annals of "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi, Sciences of Communications* 9, 1 (2016): 25–35.
3. See Alexandru Matei, *Ultimele zile din viața literaturii: Enorm și insignifiant în literatura franceză contemporană* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2008); Florina Pîrjol, *Carte de identități: Mutații ale autobiograficului în proza românească de după 1989* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2014).
4. Octavian Paler, "Jurnalul unui scriitor interzis (17 aprilie–22 decembrie 1989)," *România literară* (Bucharest) 23, 3 (1990). See Eugen Simion, ed., *Cronologia vieții literare românești: Perioada postcomunistă*, 1, 1990 (Bucharest: Editura Muzeul Național al Literaturii Române, 2014), 30.
5. Virgil Ardeleanu, "Jurnal de sertar," *Steaua* (Cluj-Napoca) 41, 1 (1990), in Simion, *Cronologia*, 1: 52.



6. Liviu Ioan Stoiciu, “Din jurnalul unui comis-literar participant la revoluție,” *Contrapunct* (Bucharest) 1, 6 (1990), in Simion, *Cronologia* 1: 69.
7. Mircea Zăciu describes the last decade of Romanian communism as “marked by ever deeper convulsions, crimes, dissolution of all kinds, deterioration of human relations, atomization.” See Simion, *Cronologia* 1: 99.
8. See Gabriel Liiceanu, *Jurnalul de la Păltiniș: Un model paideic în cultura umanistă* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1983). This diary is one of the most important documents for culture under communism, and it has been presented since 1990 as a form of “resistance through culture.” The first article for the post-communist period on the legacy of Romanian philosopher Constantin Noica is Mircea Handoca, “Noica, așa cum a fost,” *Țimpul* (Iași) 1, 3 (1990). See Simion, *Cronologia* 1: 45. Also see Gabriel Liiceanu, “Apel către lichele,” 22 (Bucharest) 1, 1 (1990), in Simion, *Cronologia* 1: 9; 35. Context in Cosmina Tănăsioiu, “Revisiting Romanian Dissent under Communism: The Unbearable Lightness of Solitude,” *History of Communism in Europe* (Bucharest) 2 (2011): 323–344.
9. See Grațian Cormoș, *Femei în infernul concentraționar din România (1945–1989)* (Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2006); Ruxandra Cesereanu, *Călătorie prin centrul infernului: Gulagul în conștiința românească* (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1998); ead., *Gulagul în conștiința românească: Memorialistica și literatura închisorilor și lagărelor comuniste: Eseu de mentalitate*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, rev. and enl. (Iași–Bucharest: Polirom, 2005); ead., *Călătorie spre centrul infernului: Memorialistica și literatura închisorilor și lagărelor comuniste* (Pitești: Manuscris, 2018).
10. Mihai Iovănel describes this as follows: “As the change in the polarity of value is made during the first post-communist years in a primitive way—everything that was positive under communism becomes negative and vice versa—fascists and inter-war reactionaries are positively valued, alongside the questionable or blamable aspects of their activity.” See Mihai Iovănel, *Ideologiile literaturii în postcomunismul românesc* (Bucharest: Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române, 2017), 66. In Iovănel’s terms, the publication of this diary was “a first moment of awakening from this dogmatic sleep.”
11. See Eugen Simion, *Genurile biograficului* (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic, 2002). 2<sup>nd</sup> edition: 2008.
12. Livius Ciocârlie, *Mari corespondențe* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1981), 7–8.
13. *Transilvania* (Sibiu), new ser., 37, 10 (2009).
14. Paul Cernat, “Corespondență intimă, corespondență publică: O propunere,” *Transilvania* 37, 10 (2009): 1–4.
15. See Dragoș Varga, *Radu Stanca: Sentimentul estetic al ființei* (Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2005); id., *Radu Stanca: Sentimentul estetic al ființei*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Sibiu–Iași: InfoartMedia-Timpul, 2010).
16. “‘A diary written in its own interest does not exist,’ writes G. Călinescu. Petre Pandrea qualifies it as ‘the soul’s pit,’ and Camil Petrescu—himself the author of a journal—declared ritually that ‘a diary is a dull thing and almost meaningless.’” Mihai Zamfir, *Cealaltă față a prozei*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2006), 167.
17. G. Călinescu, *Cronicile optimistului* (Bucharest: Editura pentru Literatură, 1964).
18. *Ibid.*, 74–75.
19. Often cited: Maurice Blanchot, *Le Livre à venir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959) and Béatrice Didier, *Le journal intime* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1976).
20. Eugen Simion, *Sfîdarea retoricii: Jurnal german* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1985), 276.
21. Eugen Simion, *Țimpul trăirii, țimpul mărturisirii: Jurnal parizian* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1977). New editions: 1979, 1986, 1999, 2005, 2013.
22. Eugen Simion, *The Return of the Author*, edited with an introduction by James W. Newcomb, transl. James W. Newcomb and Lidia Vianu (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996).

- See also id., *Întoarcerea autorului: Eseuri despre relația creator-openă* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1981). New editions: 1993, 2005.
23. Eugen Simion, *Ficțiunea jurnalului intim*, vol. 1, *Există o poetică a jurnalului*; vol. 2, *Intimismul european*; vol. 3, *Diarismul românesc* (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic, 2001).
  24. Silvian Iosifescu, *Literatura de frontieră* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică Română, 1971), 6.
  25. Ioan Holban, *Literatura subiectivă. I. Jurnalul intim. Autobiografia literară* (Bucharest: Minerva, 1989).
  26. Ibid., viii.
  27. Ibid.
  28. Mircea Mihăieș, *De veghe în oglindă* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1988). 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. edition: 2005.
  29. Nicolae Manolescu, *Istoria critică a literaturii române: 5 secole de literatură* (Pitești: Paralela 45, 2008), 1385.
  30. See Zamfir, 145–146.
  31. Ibid., 146.
  32. Ibid., 147.
  33. Ibid.
  34. Ibid.
  35. Philippe Lejeune, *On Diary*, eds. Jeremy D. Popkin and Julie Rak, transl. Katherine Durnin (Manoa: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 51.
  36. G. Călinescu is often amazed by the entries in the diary of Titu Maiorescu: “Maiorescu’s entries desolate through a constant terre-à-terre . . . As a tourist, Maiorescu makes a meticulous program of prices, hotels and recommended emotions, lists the smallest price of the most unimportant thing, inspects mattresses, towels, furniture.” See G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent* (Bucharest: Fundația Regală Pentru Literatură și Artă, 1941), 350.
  37. These travelogues are often described in Romania as “travel diaries.”
  38. “One of Romania’s first globetrotters—the ‘Romanian Marco Polo’—Milescu set off on his first long journey to China in 1675, returning there twice thereafter. His writings about Chinese history, geography, customs, and politics circulated widely throughout Eurasian countries from the eighteenth to the twentieth century.” Carmen Mușat, “After ‘Imitation’: Aesthetic Intersections, Geocultural Networks, and the Rise of Modern Romanian Literature,” in *Romanian Literature as World Literature*, eds. Mircea Martin, Christian Moraru, and Andrei Terian (New York–London–Oxford–New Delhi–Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 115–133. Quotation from 124.
  39. Călinescu, *Istoria*, 85.
  40. Ibid.
  41. An extended article on these travelogues and those of the 20<sup>th</sup> century can be found in Andrei Terian, “Cultural Triangulation in Romanian Travelogues to China under Communism,” *World Literature Studies* 11, 2 (2018): 16–30.
  42. A similar argument has been put forward by Ian Watt for “the rise of the novel:” “[an] inclusive reordering of the components of human society tends to occur wherever industrial capitalism becomes the dominant force in the economic structure.” See Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (Berkeley–Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957), 58.
  43. Zamfir, 153.
  44. Another “diary of crisis” mentioned by Zamfir is *Jurnalul meu* (My diary) of C. A. Rosetti, which was written in order to “start a new life, a life of study and renouncement to pleasures.” This indicates the same post-traumatic reason. See Zamfir, 154.

45. Kathy Mezei, "Domestic Space and the Idea of Home in Auto/Biographical Practices," in *Tracing the Autobiographical*, eds. Marlene Kadar, Linda Warley, Jeanne Perreault, and Susanna Egan (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005), 81–97. Quotation from 81. The author also explains in respect to the writings of Dionne Brand that "their resistance to chronology and linear narrative exemplify the troubled migrations of her people. In this dislocated and dislocating narrative, she jumps around in time and space, thus initiating the reader into a similar dislocation by means of fragments of and fragmented memories, places, experiences, and encounters," 93.

### **Abstract**

#### Theories of the Biographical Genres in Romanian Postwar Criticism

This article presents the main theories of "biographical genres" in Romania. It contends that especially the works of Eugen Simion, Mihai Zamfir and Mircea Mihăieș of the 1980s can be reused for a better understanding of biographical writing in the context of emerging life writing studies and memory studies. The authors emphasize the fact that theories of the biographical genres did not consider important the study of diaries, correspondences and memoirs until the late 1980s, and that there has been an increased interest on the subject in the 1990s due to the transition to the post-communist society. Thus, the study argues that certain categories of "biographical genres," and especially the "diary of existence" and "diary of crisis," put forward by Zamfir, could be used for a better understanding of biographical writing in a world of fragmentation, migration and post-colonial struggle.

### **Keywords**

Romanian literary theory, biographical genres, intimate diary, diary of existence, diary of crisis

