

D. Popovici's Eclectic Method, between Biographist Historiography and Critical Didacticism

CĂLIN TEUTIȘAN

DEELY INFLUENCED by the French model of literary history from the first half of the twentieth century, especially after completing his studies in Paris (1930–1934) under the supervision of Paul Hazard and Mario Roques, among others, D. Popovici assumed the critical outlook of historicist scientific determinism. By and large, this outlook was not to change, even though towards the end of Popovici's career formalism influenced the interpretative mindset of the Romanian literary historian. In the article dedicated to D. Popovici in the dictionary of *Romanian Writers (Scriitori români)*, edited by Mircea Zăciu, Ioana Em. Petrescu advances a rather bold hypothesis concerning the disciplinary spectrum covered by the research of the professor from the University of Cluj. Petrescu states that Popovici “evolves from the classic comparative study of literature, with a thematic and ideological focus, towards the horizons of structuralist interpretations.”¹ I would say this hypothesis is risky, as it exaggerates the stylistic and methodological scope of Popovici's texts. In terms of methodological borrowings, Popovici did not move beyond the formalist sphere of influence. In fact, in the very phrase used by Ioana Em. Petrescu (“towards the *horizons* of structuralist interpretations,” the emphasis added) subtly attests to a hesitation in delivering the verdict, as well as a limited confidence in its truth value. Moreover, several lines further, Ioana Em. Petrescu returns with additions and comments meant to relativize, to some extent, the thesis regarding Popovici's structuralism: “In this evolution, started under the aegis of the French School of Comparative Literature, the echoes of . . . the experiments conducted by the Russian Formalist School could be heard.”²

Thus, one of the questions that arise is what was the depth model of Popovici's interpretative practice? If his critical outlook, as I was saying earlier, was that of historicist scientific determinism, then at least one of the literary historians who influenced Popovici is, undoubtedly, Gustave Lanson with his *History of French Literature*, from 1894. Let us consider, for a moment, Lansonism, famous in its own time, yet

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ferently criticized in later years. In *La Troisième République des Lettres*,³ Antoine Compagnon describes Lansonism as an “explanation of the text” by way of an extensive historical contextualization. Compagnon’s text is one of the most comprehensive approaches to work of the French literary historian. From its publication, it became a mandatory reference for studies on Lanson. Simplifying the issue through the eyes of Denis Hollier and R. Howard Bloch, the editors of *A New History of French Literature*, Lansonism means, historically speaking, the end of the war between particularists (rhetoricians) and generalists (literary historians), around the year 1905. Methodologically, it also means the study of sources and influences, as a trans-historical sociology of literature, targeted at the recognition and, possibly, the description of genius,⁴ since Lanson himself spoke, in his history, about critical acts as “approaches to genius.”⁵

A half century later, for New Criticism, the model seems not only to have lost its vitality and relevance, but even more than that, it became a target of polemics. The old age of criticism, in the opinion of Roland Barthes, for instance, committed the ethical sin of using ideology in a covert manner. In his *Critical Essays* of 1964, Barthes comments:

*Lansonism . . . implies certain general convictions about man, history, literature, and the relations between author and work; for example, the psychology of Lansonism is utterly dated, consisting essentially of a kind of analogical determinism, according to which the details of a work must resemble the details of a life, the soul of a character must resemble the soul of the author, etc.—a very special ideology, since it is precisely in the years following its formulation that psychoanalysis, for example, has posited contrary relations, relations of denial, between a work and its author. Indeed, philosophical postulates are inevitable; Lansonism is not to be blamed for its prejudices but for the fact that it conceals them, masks them under the moral alibi of rigor and objectivity: ideology is smuggled into the baggage of scientism like contraband merchandise.*⁶

Late Swiss poststructuralism continues, through Patrizia Lombardo, for example, the attack against that older critical method, reviled from a methodological perspective. In *The Three Paradoxes of Roland Barthes*, Lombardo writes: “Lansonism [as literary history] had nothing historical about it, except the name, because it was a series of monographs on authors who were studied in isolation, a succession of lone men, a canon of great writers. In other words, this history was no history at all. It was nothing but a series of chronicles,”⁷ characterized by a “repressiveness of the style” and guilty of promoting “positivist grayness.”⁸

On the other hand, in more recent studies, Lansonism undergoes positive revisions. Here is, for example, one of the battles fought on the ground of Lansonism in American cultural milieus, around the figure of Irving Babbitt, a conservative American critic (1865–1933), founder of the doctrine of New Humanism (1895–1933, an anti-romantic, antinaturalist, anti-Rousseau doctrine), based on moral character and on reason. Owen Aldridge talks about *neopositivism* as derived from *scientific positivism*. Neopositivism is “a method of objective description allowing for esthetic and moral evaluations and welcoming multiculturalism. . . . Seeking a compromise between approaches based

on analysis of technique and those on culture, . . . such a neopositivism could embrace both stylistically-oriented studies and those tending toward history.⁹

Neopositivism comes from and after the scientific positivism of Auguste Comte, about whom, as Aldridge notes, John Stuart Mill said the following in 1887: “We have no knowledge of anything but Phenomena; and our knowledge of phenomena is relative, not absolute. We know not the essence, nor the real mode of production, of any fact, but only its relations to other facts in the way of succession or of similitude. These relations are constant, that is, always the same in the same circumstances. . . . The laws of phenomena are all we know. . . . Their essential nature, and their ultimate cause, are unknown and inscrutable to us.”¹⁰

This is just one step away from the *literary positivism* of Lanson. In *Essai de méthode de critique et d'histoire littéraire* Lanson declared: “Our main operations consist in understanding literary texts, in comparing them, with a view to distinguishing between individual and collective forms, grouping them by genres, schools and trends and, finally, determining the relations of these groups with the intellectual, moral and social life of our country, as well as with the development of European literature and civilization.”¹¹ Moreover, as Aldridge claims, Lanson firmly separated literature from science, since science was aimed at the general, and remained completely immune to the “particular, to the individual and, consequently, to the concrete, to the sensitive, in short, to life” (the terms Lanson himself used in *Essay on Method*).

From another perspective, Nabil Araújo de Souza challenges what he calls “the cliché of Lansonian positivism fed by Roland Barthes,” opting instead for the assumption of a “soft scientificism,” which represents “the decisive contribution [of Lanson] to the academic perpetuation of literary history in the twentieth century.”¹² According to de Souza, “soft scientificism” means “the imprecise nature of knowledge, which must be protected from all scientific distortions” and which pertains, in Lanson’s view, to two essential things: “the inevitability of an aesthetic experience in relation with the literary text” and “the individual, singular nature of the object that is reconstructed by the historical-literary approach.”¹³

Returning to D. Popovici and his depth model: could this be Aldridge’s neopositivism? No, it cannot be for it involves multiculturalism, as the American theorist contends. It is true that the signs of a multicultural gaze (in the sense of the past decades) on the phenomena of European and Romanian culture can be found in the histories of Popovici. But since the author does not operate with a theoretical awareness of the concept, it cannot be considered as operative in his studies. In addition, related to Babbitt’s doctrine of New Humanism, the ethical manifestations of neopositivism take the form of a *moral positivism* (or a spiritual one), shaping an ethical theory based on which morality derives from the law of the community, the law of the state. Hence, an extremely unsettling ethical relativism, which also led to heated discussions around Babbitt’s theories. This was not at all the case of Popovici.

For the Romanian critic, the field of reference was not neopositivism, but what we might call *post-Lansonism*. If Lansonism was based on historical facts (if we are to simplify a complex field of methodological factors), Popovici’s post-Lansonism would be

based on historical facts coupled with the rhetoric of literary discourse. This is attested by the Romanian critic's keen interest in the Romanian rhetoric and poetics of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For instance, in his study "Primele manifestări de teorie literară în cultura română" (The first manifestations of literary theory in Romanian culture), published in *Cercetări de literatură română* (Studies on Romanian literature),¹⁴ Popovici builds, especially in the final pages, a lucid historical and typological map of the theoretical phenomenon in Romanian culture.

Several basic features can be invoked in the description of the post-Lansonist nature of D. Popovici's literary criticism, some of which are derived from "classic" Lansonism, but with unique twists compared to the French theorist's histories, others arising from the particularities of the Romanian cultural context. First, *the social* as the engine of the birth and evolution of *the cultural*. In *Studii literare* (Literary studies), vol. III, *Ideologia literară a lui I. Heliade Rădulescu* (The literary ideology of I. Heliade Rădulescu), the sixth chapter is entitled "Funcțiunea socială a artei: poetul agent de civilizare" (The social function of art: The poet as a civilizing agent). The study proposes a contextual analysis of the historical frame of manifestation of Heliade's personality, leading Popovici to express an intuition on the personality of Heliade's generation, worded almost in psychobiographic terms: "Through his temperament and especially because of the circumstances in which he lived, Heliade was a fighter. In politics, in culture, his generation was called upon to engage in a sustained activity using all the weapons of the human spirit. Art was one of the most effective tools to that end and the utilitarian conception of art was one of the characteristic features of that generation's literary ideology."¹⁵ Then, about the author I. Heliade Rădulescu: "In terms of his spiritual structure, Heliade was a man who fully met the requirements of his era. Receptiveness was his defining feature. . . . A product of circumstances . . . , what individualized Heliade in the context of his generation [was] the rich array of ideas that he handled in different fields. . . . Determined in part by the whims of his readings, the disturbances and contradictions of Heliade's thought were the result of multiple causes . . . Heliade was, first and foremost, an enthusiastic fighter, who did not hesitate to sacrifice an opinion when the violence of the attack demanded it."¹⁶ Of course, Popovici's "psychobiographism" must be taken with a grain of salt. It was exclusively the accidental byproduct of a methodology that laid emphasis on the philosophical context, and not of some protochronist disciplinary anticipation.

The sociology of culture was given pride of place in his *La Littérature roumaine à l'époque des Lumières* (Romanian literature in the Enlightenment Age), from 1945. His working method was based on a parallelism between local history and universal history,¹⁷ with far-reaching implications for the analysis of the militant nature of the Romanian Enlightenment, in the period up to romanticism.¹⁸ *La Littérature roumaine à l'époque des Lumières* is, in fact, Popovici's export product: it is written in French and is intended, as stated in the very first lines of the Preface, for foreign readers. The typographical methodology reflects this intention, which does not encroach on content or method. The book proposes a history of Romanian literature in successive stages, according to the evolution of aesthetic consciousness, namely: the Enlightenment; the transition from the Enlightenment to romanticism; romanticism; classicism (on romantic ground in poetry, on realistic grounds in prose); conservatism (versus classicism).¹⁹ The part concern-

ing the evolution conservatism-classicism is a somewhat paradoxical terminological suggestion made by Popovici. It must be understood by reading the term conservatism in a local, regional, and national key, in the sense of a return to the Romanian canonical values (Eminescu, romantic nationalism, etc.). To the extent that the canon imposes classical values in the broad sense of the term, I would say that the two literary trends Popovici refers to when he talks about conservatism, i.e. *sămănătorism* and *poporanism*, are both oblique forms of understanding classicism. In the case of *sămănătorism*, classicism is perceived as something a(na)chronic, obsolete, while in the case of *poporanism*, it is seen in a democratist key, linking the ethical to the aesthetic, as a kind of Maiorescian classicism “past its prime,” with different political inflections, a classicism which had, in turn, its own forms of conservatism. Both versions work in the end as turn-stiles between the classical cultural episteme (especially *sămănătorism*) and the modernist one (especially *poporanism*).

When it comes to modernism, Popovici hesitates. Cultural morphology no longer serves here to produce satisfactory answers. The theses concerning a change of religious paradigm, from Orthodoxy to (Greek) Catholicism, and the influence of French culture no longer suffice to explain the explosion of literary forms and ideologies from the first half of the twentieth century, especially as regards the novel (a genre in relation to which Popovici's analyses are marked by many methodological shortcomings). This is because Popovici is not willing to change a *longue durée* explanatory paradigm with a more elastic one, suitable to the modernist age. It was Ioana Em. Petrescu (the daughter of D. Popovici) who put necessary order in the story of modernism, particularly insofar as modernist poetry was concerned, through her analysis of the imaginary structures and of the evolution of literary poetics from *Eminescu și mutațiile poeziei românești* (Eminescu and the mutations of Romanian poetry).²⁰

Of particular interest are several opinions on Balkanism that Popovici proposed in the beginning of this work. His position was balanced, relying on the specific particularity that Balkanism could imprint on a Latin culture/language.²¹ A notable and extremely interesting thesis regards the link with Byzantium through Slavonism; hence, his recovery of Slavonism as a positive factor in the morphology of Romanian culture.²² Later Balkan scholars no longer dealt with this theme, obliterating the in-formative impact that Slavonism might have for Southeast European cultural studies.

Cercetări de literatură română (Studies on Romanian literature), from 1944, belongs to the same category of export products (although it was written in Romanian). It has a chapter entitled “Studii franco-române” (French-Romanian studies),²³ in which Popovici talks about Bolintineanu being commended by Hugo (in a letter Hugo sent to H. Chantel)²⁴ and about the translation of the novel *Ciocoi vechi și noi* (Old and new boyars) by N. Filimon into French.²⁵

FROM ANOTHER perspective, the social is supplemented with the assumptions of a historical and political determinism with consequences for the morphology of culture and of literary genres. In *La Littérature roumaine de Transylvanie au dix-neuvième siècle*, from 1938, the history of Transylvanian Latinism (with a fundamental role in reawakening the national ideal), determined, in Popovici's view, the prevalence of

the narrative genre in the literature of Transylvania. The dialectical machine continues to operate according to this logic: amidst Latinist exaggerations, Latinism was to be definitively replaced with the “nationalism” of the unitary language, Titu Maiorescu taking advantage of the “engine” of Eminescu’s creation as an aesthetic substitute for the obsolete ethics of cultural nationalism in Transylvania. This provides Popovici with an occasion for severe yet voluptuous comments on the victory of the “natural” genius over “erudite construction.”²⁶ Here, however, we also discover risky judgments concerning the axiology of values and the establishment of a literary canon. It’s the case of Rebreanu, who is seen by Popovici “à côté de”... Agârbiceanu, in 1938, after the publication of Rebreanu’s canonical novels *Ion*, *Forest of the Hanged* and *The Uprising* (!). Of course, the critic revises his opinion to some extent, on the next page, bringing Rebreanu implicit praise, but this gesture remains tardy.²⁷

The hypothesis where Popovici comes, perhaps, closest to classical Lansonism is that of the identification and analysis of genius as GENIUS. We discover this in *Poezia lui Mihai Eminescu* (The poetry of Mihai Eminescu). The volume is based on the thesis of Eminescu exceptionality (“An exceptional presence, his destiny was bound to be exceptional”),²⁸ and proposes a study of the influences detectable in Eminescu’s work, accompanied by a thematic analysis of its content. Despite the thesis of his genius and exceptionality, the study of literary influences undertaken by Popovici contains a diffuse, implicit idea of the evolution of literary forms and ideas, which comes close to the contemporary sense of the concept and places Eminescu in the lineage of the historical and aesthetic accumulations that preceded him. The study of influences, in Popovici’s case, is a cog in the dialectic mechanism of cultural forms. This is no coincidence for Popovici, the morphologist of culture, who applies, here, in the case of a particular creator, schemes for the analysis of phenomena with a higher degree of generality. Whether this comes from a professional (more precisely: procedural) deformation or from the theory on the genius of Eminescu is anybody’s guess. The fact is that, in one form or another, the positioning of Eminescu as a descendant of the early romantics, who made it possible for him to become a genius, remains a correct diagnosis from a historical-literary and aesthetic perspective. This shows that despite positivist factology (as a historical method) and thematism (as a critical, analytical method), Popovici’s critical thinking is not devoid of some hermeneutical insights, be they implicit in the act of interpretation. Based on such insights, critical hypotheses can legitimately and systemically substantiate themselves.

On the other hand, thematism and the elements of formalist discourse analysis prevail over the identification and systematization of the structures of the imaginary. The texts of the authors Popovici approaches (Eminescu or others) are self-contained islands in the sea of works that make global sense only under the general species of genius (in the case of Eminescu), or of the social, historical or national-cultural function (in the case of other authors).²⁹ Here we must recall Patrizia Lombardo’s working hypothesis on Lansonism. The result is, in the case of D. Popovici, that the external histories of the works authored by the studied writers, based on contextual *dependencies*, lead to compelling conclusions; by contrast, the internal histories of the same works, based on the *independence* of the texts (an independence generated by the precariousness of a systemic view on the imaginary), lead to fragmented images and rather discontinuous

creative profiles, revealing disparities and discreet inconsistencies rather than evolutions and developments of individual literary organisms. Popovici seems to think that such evolutions are the exclusive preserve of cultural macrosystems, and not of the individual cultural organisms of which they are composed.

This reveals a form of systemic relativism specific to the critic, which is especially noticeable in the analytical parts of his work. For example, a comment on Eminescu's poem *Mortua est*, based on a study of the variants, serves Popovici as support for a polite debate with D. Caracostea, resulting in a somewhat trite conclusion:

*Caracostea states . . . that in **Mortua est** the poet constructs the image of heavens on an upward ladder. On an ascending scale he could only build the image of heavens by admitting that the point of reference is the earth. Indeed, if we admit that the poet is found somewhere between the earth and the sky, then the image of heavenly space could only be built for him on a simultaneously upward and downward ladder, because both heaven and earth enter his field of contemplation. The only viable explanation for me is that the picture that unfolds before the poet is so vast because the clouds, distributed in different fields, must exist without preventing the rain of sunrays and the snow of stars from other sectors and without preventing the ascent of souls among them.*³⁰

We can cite such a fragment only if we consider it, under the species of irony, as a discursive strategy in a polemical context.

The same thematic criticism (p. 197), doubled by factological historicist narrativism (p. 482), is among the dominant instruments of the interpretative discourse in *Romantismul românesc* (Romanian romanticism).³¹ Using the comparative method, as well as insights from the sociology of literature, the morphology of culture and cultural archetypology, Popovici solves the problem of defining romanticism through “the introduction of the social criterion” in the act of synthesis: “Before being a literary current, romanticism is an individual state of mind, which arose at the dawn of human culture among peoples of different races and of very unequal spiritual levels.”³² We can find here the roots of a *spiritual etymon* (in the terms of Auerbach) which is obviously reminiscent of the concept of “semantic basin” applied by Gilbert Durand to the baroque, in *Arts and Archetypes*, from 1989.

A summative factology is associated here with the history of literary ideas³³ and with a typically Enlightenment concern for the moral dimension (see the chapter on “The Moral Image of Society: The Struggle between the Foreign and the Local”).³⁴ In the chapter “Literatura de tranziție” (The literature of transition),³⁵ Popovici reveals the external cultural sources (French, Greek, Italian, etc.) of internal cultural constructions, which are added to the ethics of contextualizing critical judgment, by analyzing less important representatives of early romanticism.

IF THIS was the depth model of Popovici's literary criticism, what were his surface models? One of them was discovered, in part, by Ioana Em. Petrescu in an article published in *Scritori români* (Romanian writers): “the idea of spiritual releases [in the definition of the evolutionary stages of Romanian literature] is taken from M. Roques,

but the dissociation between liberation and integration, and the evolution scheme as a whole, constitute a rebuttal of the French professor's theory.³⁶ Another surface model is Paul Hazard (Popovici's professor in Paris), with *La Crise de la conscience européenne 1680–1715*.³⁷ Minus the essayistic delights of the Frenchman, who turns almost poetic in several concluding pages of his work, when he describes the mindset of continental Europe. Without a doubt, we can find in these pages elements that are somewhat influenced by disciplines such as psychohistory or psychogeography, but the aims of the commentary are not, for Hazard, those of systematizing the features of mechanisms and their operation, but of romanticizing a continental, geographical, historical, political, social and cultural communal image, for a more sensitive stylization of authorial discourse. A few explicit elements through which Hazard influenced Popovici can be found in *La Crise de la conscience européenne*, in Chapter IV, "Social Moral," of Part III, "Reconstruction Attempts," or in Part IV, "Imaginative and Sensitive Values." They can also be encountered in the chapter entitled "From Stability to Movement", of Part I ("Major Psychological Changes"), about the travels of westerners as forms of breaking or overcoming the constraints and the forced stability of classicism.³⁸ In Popovici's work, for example in *Poezia lui Mihai Eminescu*, they appear in the chapter "Momentul literar" (The literary moment), about the travels of revolutionaries in the postrevolutionary era as sources of an often confessional literature about forced or self-assumed exile. Also, Popovici shows his acquaintance with Hazard's commentaries, but also with the reflections of several modern sociologists in *La Littérature roumaine à l'époque des Lumières*. Here he puts forth the thesis concerning the influence of religion on the development of culture, stating that Catholicism is a cultural catalyst and that the conversion of Romanians to Greek Catholicism became a civilizing driving force (for the Transylvanian area and beyond).³⁹ All in all, following in the footsteps of his professor from Paris, Popovici proposes an *intellectual* history, a history of *ideas*.

Therefore, literary history is constructed in D. Popovici's writings as a recuperative sum of many figures of literary life that he often sees as *cultural agents*: writers, trends, literary ideas, historical events, national policies. Representative only to some extent for the Cluj School of Literary History and Criticism, Popovici privileges synthesis over text analysis, the theory of criticism over applied criticism, the canon and the impetus of recanonization over volatile contemporary literature, and the morphology of culture over the interpretation of literature as an autonomous and idiosyncratic undertaking. In keeping with the "anthropological turn" in literary studies of the 1930s, D. Popovici reevaluates not only famous authors, but also peripheral literary destinies, being open to the idea of an alternative canon. The biographism specific to his method is allied with positivist sociological historicism, in a critical act that often has didactic implications. □

Notes

1. Mircea Zăciu, ed., *Scriitori români* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1978), 383.
2. Ibid.

3. Antoine Compagnon, *La Troisième République des Lettres: De Flaubert à Proust* (Paris: Seuil, 1983), passim.
4. Denis Hollier and R. Howard Bloch, *A New History of French Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 820–823.
5. *Ibid.*, 823.
6. Roland Barthes, *Critical Essays*, transl. Richard Howard (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1972), 257.
7. Patrizia Lombardo, *The Three Paradoxes of Roland Barthes* (Athens, Georgia–London: The University of Georgia Press, 1989), 10.
8. *Ibid.*, 13.
9. A. Owen Aldridge, “Babbitt, Literary Positivism, and Neo-Positivism,” *Humanitas* 9, 1 (1996): 65. Of course, this is not the right place or time for discussing the concept of “multiculturalism,” used by Aldridge in 1996, and its insufficiency/inadequacy compared to the more recent use of the term of “interculturalism.”
10. John Stuart Mill, *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte* (New York: Henry Holt, 1887), 10.
11. Gustave Lanson, *Essai de méthode de critique et d'histoire littéraire* (Paris: Henri Peyre, 1965), 102.
12. Nabil Araújo de Souza, “A Revision of Lansonism: Gustave Lanson’s soft scientificism and the academic perpetuation of literary history,” *Revista de Letras* (São Paulo) 52, 2 (July–Dec. 2012): 95.
13. *Ibid.*, 106–107.
14. See D. Popovici, *Cercetări de literatură română* (Sibiu: Cartea Românească din Cluj, 1944), 167–193.
15. See D. Popovici, *Studii literare*, vol. 3, *Ideologia literară a lui I. Heliade Rădulescu*, ed. Ioana Em. Petrescu (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1977) (first edition, Bucharest: Editura Institutului de Istorie Literară și Folclor, 1935), 153.
16. *Ibid.*, 311–312.
17. See D. Popovici, *La Littérature roumaine à l'époque des Lumières* (Sibiu: Centrul de Studii și Cercetări privitoare la Transilvania, 1945), 174.
18. *Ibid.*, 15.
19. *Ibid.*, 17–21.
20. See Ioana Em. Petrescu, *Eminescu și mutațiile poeziei românești* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1989).
21. See Popovici, *La Littérature roumaine à l'époque des Lumières*, 5.
22. *Ibid.*, 7.
23. Popovici, *Cercetări de literatură română*, 105–167.
24. *Ibid.*, 124.
25. *Ibid.*, 144–145.
26. D. Popovici, *La Littérature roumaine de Transylvanie au dix-neuvième siècle* (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului, 1938), 31–33.
27. *Ibid.*, 43–44.
28. D. Popovici, *Poezia lui Mihai Eminescu*, edited with notes by Ioana Em. Petrescu (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1988) (first edition, Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1969), 7. The first edition (1969) reproduces the lithographed course Popovici delivered at the University of Cluj in 1947–1948.
29. See also Dan Simonescu, foreword to D. Popovici, *Romantismul românesc. Partea I-a: prima perioadă romantică (1829–1840), scriitorii de la “Dacia literară,”* forewords by Tudor Vianu and Dan Simonescu, ed. Ioana Petrescu (Bucharest: Albatros, 1972). Simonescu justly understands that what Popovici is interested in are not necessarily the works, but the ideologies to which they are subsumed, such as “socialist-utopian literature and literature with a social mes-

- sage,” “sentimental . . . or progressive-revolutionary and messianic romanticism,” “literature with a national and patriotic character,” “the literature of ideas . . . of the Enlightenment,” and then the big projects “for the development of literature according to the historical evolution of society” (Slavonism, Greekism, the Enlightenment, romanticism, *poporanism*, modernisms) (pp. XVII–XVIII).
30. Popovici, *Poezia lui Mihai Eminescu*, 118.
 31. See Popovici, *Romantismul românesc*, 197, 482. The volume is chiefly made after the manuscripts of the author, in conjunction with the plan of the course held by Popovici in the academic year 1951–1952.
 32. *Ibid.*, 7.
 33. *Ibid.*, 11, 51, for instance.
 34. *Ibid.*, 59–74.
 35. *Ibid.*, 90–138.
 36. See *Scritori români*, 384.
 37. See also Dan Simonescu, foreword to Popovici, *Romantismul românesc*: “Popovici’s conception can be examined and compared with that of F. Baldensperger, and especially with that of Paul Hazard, from *La Crise de la conscience européenne, 1680–1715* [1935]: the integration of the literary phenomenon in the context of world literature, with particular emphasis on individual and national contributions” (XXVIII).
 38. See Paul Hazard, *La Crise de la conscience européenne, 1680–1715* (Paris: Boivin, 1935).
 39. See Popovici, *La Littérature roumaine à l’époque des Lumières*, 9.

Abstract

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Literary history comprises for D. Popovici (1902–1952) a recuperative and summative approach to several sociological figures and agents of culture: writers, literary trends and ideas, national politics. Representative only partly for the Cluj School of Literary History and Criticism, the author of *Romanian Romanticism* privileges synthesis over text analysis, the theory of criticism over applied criticism, the canon and the impetus of recanonization over volatile contemporary literature, and the morphology of culture over the interpretation of literature as an autonomous and idiosyncratic undertaking. In keeping with the “anthropological turn” in literary studies of the 1930s, D. Popovici reevaluates not only famous authors, but also peripheral literary destinies, being open to the idea of an alternative canon. The biographism specific to his method is allied with positivist sociological historicism, in a critical act that often has a didactic component.

Keywords

D. Popovici, history of literature, literary criticism, biographist historiography, literary canon, theory of criticism