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## ABSTRACT

My habilitation thesis, “Theory of Literature as A Means of Knowledge”, is a cumulative one, based on my previous work and research and comprehending the main results of my educational and scientific activities in the last three decades. I have explained in detail my preoccupations and didactic career, which focus on literary theory and contemporary literature. As an intellectual autobiography, the present work aims to put forth the main academic and scientific achievements in my career, especially after I gained my PhD in Philology, in 2000, with a thesis coordinated by Prof. Mircea Martin. My favourite areas of research comprise narrative and critical theory, cultural history and autobiographical writings, along with the study of the main aspects of modernism and postmodernism.

The thesis is divided into ten sections, with reference in the last section to some of the critical opinions on my activities as formulated by noted contemporary critics.

My career began in 1987, as a high school teacher during the communist regime. I had to wait until 1990 in order to start anew as a researcher and academic, at the Faculty of Letters. I have

lead a fruitful academic life since, as follows. I started as a junior assistant, on to a senior assistance position, assistant professor and then full professor (since 2015). During all these years I lectured on poetic and narrative structures, on personal identity at the crossroads of memory and history, on the diversity of autobiographical patterns in literature and beyond it, on the main concepts of literary theory and their relevance for literature. Working with students and guiding them to engage in scientific research was one of my constant aims and joys and I am happy to collaborate with some of my former students who are now my colleagues at the Faculty of Letters or on the board of the cultural magazine that I have been running since 2000.

Throughout my teaching career, I delivered lectures not only at the University of Bucharest, but also at the University of Amsterdam (UVA), from December 1997 till April 1998, and at Charles University, Prague, in May 2010, under the Erasmus Programme. I was also an invited lecturer on the topic of Norman Manea's work at Padua University and Ca'Foscari University, Venice, in September 2017.

I am a member of several national and international professional associations, among which ALGCR (The Romanian Association of General and Comparative Literature), ENN (European Narrative Network), DHLSNA (D.H. Lawrence Society of North America), Hannah Arendt Centre, at Bard College, and PEN Romania.

In 1998, I published my first original book – *Perspectives on the Romanian Postmodernist Novel and Other Theoretical Fictions* –, followed by an anthology of the most relevant opinions on the Romanian novel, issued between the two World Wars, some of which I undug in libraries, from old newspapers and magazines. The publication, in 2002, of *Strategies of Subversion. Description and Narrative in Postmodernist Prose* – originally my doctoral thesis, was the end of a phase of thorough research of modernist and postmodernist narrative structures, followed by

many years in which I focused on publishing and interpreting works by outstanding Romanian writers, such as Gabriela Adameșteanu, Ioana Em. Petrescu, Mircea Cărtărescu, Lucian Raicu, and Carmen-Francesca Banciu. In 2010, I started my work as an editor of Gheorghe Crăciun's books, reprinting new editions of already published titles, in the beginning, and since 2014, both reprints and works unpublished before, which I found in the Crăciun Archive (with the help of Oana Crăciun). This is a vast project which aims to retrieve all his still unknown texts, to reprint all his already published books, and to maintain Crăciun in the public attention.

After many years in which I edited and prefaced many books of contemporary writers, mostly Romanian, but not exclusively, I published in 2017 another book of my own, *Beautiful Stranger. Literature and the Paradoxes of Theory*, in which I reconsidered a few of the main concepts of literary theory (such as author, reader, chronotope, canon, et al.), and questioned several prejudices regarding theory. While I wrote chapters of this books, I participated in many national and international conferences, took part in many cultural projects and got involved in one of the most provocative critical and theoretical workshop, initiated by Christian Moraru, Mircea Martin, and Andrei Terian, in Păltiniș, Sibiu, as a concluding partnership between the “Lucian Blaga” University, Sibiu, and the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. The first edition of the Institute of Critical Theory, in 2015, produced a collective volume, *Romanian Literature as World Literature*, published in 2018 by Bloomsbury Academic. The papers presented in the second edition, which took place in 2018, will come out this year in another volume, *Theory in the “Post” Era: A Vocabulary for the Twenty-First-Century Conceptual Commons*, again by Bloomsbury Academic. Among the contributions of my colleagues from Bucharest, Cluj, Iași, Brașov, and Suceava universities, there are two of my studies: „After Imitation: Aesthetic Intersections,

Geocultural Networks, and the Rise of Modern Romanian Literature” (in 2018), and „Post-Synchronism: Beyond Cultural Complex, or Geohistorical Context and Critical Theory” (in 2021).

My academic publishing covers the years 1987 to the present in areas such as literature, theory of literature, critical theory, cultural studies, and history of literature. All along I have tried to synthesize knowledge from various fields, to make intellectual connections between different areas of knowledge. My intellectual curiosity has helped me discover the work of Richard Kearney, one of the most representative contemporary theoreticians and philosophers in the USA. I translated his book, *On Stories*, and published it last year, with a consistent preface. I am currently translating *Reading After Theory*, a copious study of literary theory by Valentine Cunningham, a famous professor from Oxford University, Romanian version due by the end of this year.

The last but one section of this thesis presents the research directions in my field of specialty in direct relation with the activities and scientific interests described previously. I intend to develop the themes presented in this section – among them, the waiting topos in world literature, realist narrative patterns in Adameșteanu, Cosașu, and Norman Manea, and the role of public intellectuals as against the political power – in consistent studies that will be published as books.

The last section of this habilitation thesis succinctly presents excerpts from the most relevant commentaries which my books and academic contributions have received in the past twenty years.

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