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IMAGES OF TOWN LIFE
IN THE WRITINGS OF ION
CĂLUGĂRU, ISAC PELTZ
AND URY BENADOR. ASPECTS
OF THEIR RECEPTION¹

CONTEXT

Isac Peltz, Ion Călugăru, Ury Benador – and other important writers, particularly M. Sebastian, who will not be discussed in this paper, though – published their most representative work in the fourth decade of the last century. At the time, Romania faced a strong surge of nationalistic political movements, which led to multiplied and intensified anti-Semitic acts. More and more voices of the time² – among them some public figures of a rather liberal line, and representatives of the church – were requesting the “cleansing” of Romania of its Jews and even the review and annulment of the citizenship granted to them in 1923. Under the party name of “Totul pentru Țară” (“Everything for the Country”), the Garda de Fier (Iron Guard) obtained in the 1937 elections 16.5% of the votes of the electorate, thus becoming the third political power in the country. When the PNC (Goga-Cuza) government came to power in 1937, they imposed an anti-Semitic legislation that deprived more than 200 000 Jews of their civil rights.³

The media campaigns for a “Romanisation” of society – as pursued by Pamfil Șeicaru in *Curentul*, Nicolae Iorga in *Cuget clar* and *Neamul Românesc* – are proof that the anti-Semitic ideas and language were common in many circles.⁴ In December

¹ A version of this paper was presented at the Conference “I Am a Romanian: the Bucharest – Tel Aviv Route”, organized by The Romanian Cultural Institute in Tel Aviv, in partnership with the “Ben Gurion” University in Beer Sheva, 29.03–1.04.2011.

² *Antisemitismul universitar în România (1919–1939)*, edited by Lucian Nastasa (Cluj: Kriterion, 2011) is very important for the understanding of the anti-Semitic attitudes in interwar period in Romania. It offers many documents which reveal the anti-Semitism in everyday academic life. See also Ovidiu Morar, „Intelectualii români și «chestia evreiască»”, *Contemporanul. Ideea Europeană*, Nr. 6 (639) Iunie 2005; and Gabriel Moisa, „Tulburări antisemite în Oradea anulului 1927”, *Analele Universității din Craiova, Seria Istorie*, Anul XIV, nr. 2(16) (Craiova 2009): 269

³ See Neagu Djuvara, *O scurtă istorie a românilor povestită celor tineri*, București: Humanitas, 2010: 242.

⁴ International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, http://www.ushmm.org/research/center/presentations/features/details/2005-03-10/pdf/romanian/chapter_01.pdf (access: October 2011).

1935, Octavian Goga had two interventions in the Romanian Parliament against “the foreign element” in Romania,⁵ and in 1937 he delivered a conference at the Romanian Academy against the “Judaisation” of Romanian culture.⁶ N. Iorga spoke against Judaic “pornography,” Nechifor Crainic, head of the Christian orthodox magazine *Gândirea*, who also supported the idea of an ethnic state, denounced in 1935, in a book review to the volume of nationalist figure A.C. Cuza, the domination of the “foreign element” that allegedly corrupted the “Romanian soul [...] even more than in the times of Turkish or Hungarian domination.” N. Roșu and N. Davidescu, author of the *Gândirea* circle, placed any manifestation of modernism in Romania under the sign of the “Judaic spirit” and pleaded for a healthy approach towards guarding the interests of Romanianism – simply the elimination of Jews from Romanian culture: “we believe it is necessary to forbid them the use of Romanian written word, both in the journals and in literature.”⁷ As E. Lovinescu notes in his *Memoirs*, “The issue of the contribution of ‘heterogeneous’ elements within our [Romanian] literature becomes concrete only when referring to the Jews, thus becoming one of the essential aspects of the anti-Semitic issue.”⁸

An *Antologia poezilor de azi* (1925–1927) (Anthology of Today’s Poets) put together by poet Ion Pillat and literary critic Perpessicius, illustrated with drawings by Marcel Iancu, was under violent attack at publication because it included Jewish writers. At the time, Perpessicius replied to the nationalists and anti-Semites of the cultural world, in the press, even in the pages of *Cuvântul*, literary magazine that he was to leave shortly, as it was leaning towards the extreme right. In an article entitled “*Numerus clausus în literatură*” (*Numerus clausus* in literature) – the title itself is significant for our understanding of the cultural and political environment at the time –, specifies firmly that the ethnicity of a Romanian language writer is not a valid selection criterion: “we cannot exclude a poet (...) based simply on his nationality documents, Nationality is less relevant. Eventually, it is that of the people in whose language he writes. What is certain, however, is that what really matters in a literary work is the distinctive sign of art.” In a radio conference in 1934 (when anti-Semitic reactions in the Romanian environment were strengthened by the Nazi ascension to power in Germany), with remarkable lucidity, Perpessicius restates the position he had taken almost a decade before. Regarding “the Jewish issue”, he comments on several novels which, in his opinion, should be counted among the best of the time: Mihail Sebastian’s *De două mii de ani* (It’s Been Two Thousand Years), Ury Benador’s *Ghetto, veac XX* (Ghetto, 20th century), I. Peltz’s *Calea Văcărești* (Văcărești Road). He notes the particular position of these prose writers, “at a crossroad of histories and ethnicities” and their tendency to present the circumstances of a Romanian-Jewish intellectual caught between the two communities. The critic states that the true value of the above-

⁵ See *România a Românilor, Discurs rostit în Camera Deputaților în ședințele din 5 și 9 decembrie, 1935* de Octavian Goga, *Președintele Partidului Național-Creștin*, Sibiu: “Tipografia săteanului”, 1936.

⁶ See Zigu Ornea, “Publicistica lui Octavian Goga”, *România literară*, no 2, 1999.

⁷ See Leon Volovici, *Ideologia naționalistă și “problema evreiască” în România anilor ‘30*, București: Humanitas, 1995: 181.

⁸ Eugen Lovinescu, *Memorii*, București: Minerva, 1998: 212.

mentioned books resides in the way in which they depict “different ages in the life of our Jewry.”⁹ But this radio conference of Perspessicius offers today’s reader more than exegetic input. One of the most lucid voices of the time,¹⁰ he denounces the anti-Semitism in Romanian literary world, in nationalistic and extreme right journals (*Sfarmă Piatră*, *Buna Vestire*, *Neamul Românesc* etc.), which gives us an idea of the spread of the phenomenon.¹¹

The few elements mentioned here are generally known, and they can only emphasise the weight and role of *extra-literary* factors (political and ideological) in the formation of a “horizon of expectation” specific for the period, and in the confrontations in the cultural arena. It was the ethnic criterion, and not the language of the text that ended up being proposed as the essential factor that determined whether or not an author belonged to Romanian literature. In the third and fourth decade of last century, the debates over the “non-Romanianism” of part of the literature written in the Romanian language by authors living in Romania intensified.

ASPECTS OF RECEPTION

Ion Călugăru, Isac Peltz and many other Jewish authors in Romania were published as part of the *Sburătorul* literary group led by E. Lovinescu, a promoter of modernism and of synchronicity between Romanian literature and the Western one. Unlike N. Iorga and N. Crainic, E. Lovinescu has, as he confesses in his *Memoirs*, “no racial prejudices where art is concerned,” which caused him many attacks from the rightist press of the period.¹²

E. Lovinescu view of the modern novel is unfortunately rather vague and marred by contradictions. The critic militates for “the prose of the city”, meaning a prose of the large city, practically non-existent in a mainly rural Romania, he wants synchronicity with the modern West, without producing any kind of specifics. But, as Sorin Alexandrescu rightly notes, the West was not and could not be “on the hole” modern.¹³ By imposing the canon of modern prose to Romanian literature, based on debatable thematic criteria, by asking for an “objective” of prose in a time when European literature was going towards psychological analysis and subjectivity, E. Lovinescu places the writings dealing with the life in provincial towns or even at the periphery of Bucharest in the area of minor, non-modern productions.

Lovinescu does not use ethnic criteria to exclude the Jewish writers from the core of Romanian literature, but his restrictive view of modernity (the topic of the great city is

⁹ At http://www.romanianjewish.org/ro/antisemitism_in_romania_10.html (access: October 2011).

¹⁰ See Ioana Pârvolescu, „Jurnalul lui Perspessicius. Necunoscutul din strada Eminescu”, *România literară*, no 19, 2002.

¹¹ See Zigu Ornea, *Anii treizeci. Extrema dreaptă românească*, București: Editura EST, 2008.

¹² The mini-portraits of Jewish writers presented in Lovinescu’s *Memoirs* include some “ethnical characterisations” that prove – as L. Volovici notes (p. 181), that even the discourse of liberal promoters had been tainted by negative stereotypes of the period. Such contamination indicates the generalization of anti-Semitic discourse in Romanian society.

¹³ Sorin Alexandrescu, *Privind înapoi modernitatea*, București: Univers, 1999: 127.

a sign of modernity in prose; the topic of the provincial town is passé) takes them out of the debate regarding modern prose. His *Istoria literaturii române contemporane*¹⁴ (History of Contemporary Romanian Literature) dedicates only a few paragraphs to the novels of I. Peltz, I. Călugăru and Ury Benador. A reader familiar to the critic's idiosyncrasies (specifically a total rejection of Moldavian prose condemned in its entirety for its "lyricism") can easily identify the negative character of many considerations on *Calea Văcărești* (Văcărești Road)¹⁵ and *Ghetto, veac XX* (Ghetto, 20th century).¹⁶ The critic, who values prose according to its degree of objectivity, considers I. Peltz "a great lyrical poet" specifying, at the same time that "his creation is not really objective and does not belong to pure epic, as does the work of L. Rebreanu." Lovinescu sees Ury Benador's novel *Getto, veac XX* (1934) as failing in the accumulation of "traditions, customs, legends, folklore, of such a particular character and with so obvious fanatical didacticism that most of the book, in its viable part, escapes the emotional interest of a Romanian reader." E. Lovinescu had never wondered, though, if the Transylvanian customs from before the 1918 Union, or the world of Hungarian clerks in Transylvanian little towns depicted in the writings of Liviu Rebreanu might have "escaped the emotional interest" of readers in the Old Kingdom.

The literary critic and historian G. Călinescu is to be credited for including Romanian Jewish writers in his monumental *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent* (History of Romanian Literature from Its Origins up to the Present Day).¹⁷ He was extremely virulently attacked for this precise reason in the rightist and extreme-right press. The way Jewish writers are presented in Călinescu's *Istoria...* (published exactly at the time of the racial laws) is most significant and important for the understanding of the general set of mind of the period. Although he does not accept the confusion between ethnic and aesthetic criteria and he appreciates "the perfect artistic maturity" of I. Călugăru's novel or the vast dimensions of the landscape of Jewish life in Ury Benador's novel, G. Călinescu also often leaves the level of aesthetic considerations in order to refer to "the racial specifics." He treats these writers as "perfect illustrations of the Jewish specifics."

Although E. Lovinescu and G. Călinescu are definitely responsible for the introduction of Jewish writers in Romanian culture between the two world wars, their exegeses – which have in time acquired overwhelming authority and have not yet been subjected to any applied critical study – had the unhappy result of blocking ant (re)readings or debates on the literary canon. Since during communism nearly anything related to the period between the two world wars had become taboo, the understanding of the social-political context was very vague and inclined towards the creation of a mythical (and compensating) inter-war "golden age." After decades, the overlooking of Jewish writers in debates on inter-war literature either remained unnoticed or was (quite innocently) attributed, by the younger generations of readers, only to some

¹⁴ Eugen Lovinescu, *Istoria literaturii române contemporane*, I–VI, 1926–1929, București: Minerva, 1981.

¹⁵ Isac Peltz, *Calea Văcărești*, București: Minerva, 1989.

¹⁶ Ury Benador, *Ghetto veac XX*, București: Alcalay & Co, 1934.

¹⁷ George Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent*, București: Minerva, 1987.

potential aesthetic flaws of their novels. Since 1989, many intellectuals have constantly reinforced the mythical image of the Romanian interwar period,¹⁸ which means that rational studies of the literature from the decades before the Second World War, including the political options of some important personalities of the time are quite rare.¹⁹

FOR A NEW READING

When read today, without thematic or any other kind of prejudice, the novels of I. Peltz, I. Călugăru, Ury Benador prove both their narrative complexity and their sociological value, their importance in our understanding of the general context of the inter-war period.²⁰ Each of the three authors offers an image of the Jewish world and culture in Romania. Ion Călugăru recreates the world of the Jewish small town in Moldova, I. Peltz offers in *Calea Victoriei* a monographic presentation of the Jewish slums of Bucharest, and Ury Benador, in *Getto veac XX* portrays the Jewish universe in Brăila, with incursions in the specific of Moldavian little towns. The novels mentioned above, while related in regard to their narrative formula, are also complementary. Together they produce a complex image of Jewish life in Romania, of the mutations and dislocations experienced by traditional communities due to war, the beginnings of modernization, and also by the re-emergence of anti-Semitic acts.

Published in 1935,²¹ Ion Călugăru's novel *Copilăria unui netrebnic*²² (Childhood of a Good-for-Nothing Kid) is of the *puzzle* type, build by juxtaposing episodes in the life of the Buiumaş family and in the Jewish world in a Moldavian little town (Dorohoi), at the beginning of last century, in the period between the 1907 peasants' uprising and the year 1917, which meant the end of Tsarist Russia. The *Bildungsroman* dimension suggested by the title combines with the depiction of social realities and the creation of a particular atmosphere. Each chapter, headed by the respective year, reflects the Great History in the way it is manifest in the lives of anonymous characters and particularly in the mind of the character-witness Buiumaş. Seen through the eyes of the child and interpreted in his own words, the most common events, most decrepit places, sickness and death acquire a quasi-magical dimension, which does not allow the novel to be burdened with naturalistic surplus. The book has some paragraphs of remarkable linguistic subtlety where the Jewish child Buiumaş tries to make sense of what is happening around him – birth, wedding, death, violence, war –, to understand the meaning of words in Romanian language and to identify the relation between words, people, things and events.

¹⁸ Bogdan Murgescu, *România și Europa. Acumularea decalajelor economice (1500–2010)*, Iași: Polirom, 2010.

¹⁹ See Marta Petreu, *De la „Junimea” la Noica: studii de cultură română*, Iași: Polirom, 2011.

²⁰ Moshe Idel & Sorin Antohi, *Ceea ce ne unește. Istorii, biografii, idei*, Iași: Polirom, 2006: 166.

²¹ The topic of the novel proved uncomfortable for the communist regime. The second edition of the book – in 1954 – is rewritten in order to adapt it to the demands of the 50s.

²² Ion Călugăru, *Copilăria unui netrebnic*, București: Hasefer, 1996.

For Țipra's family, the 1907 uprising meant only hunger and fear – “ever since the *warprisings*, no Jews go into the countryside anymore.” Without any bias, simply by describing events in the life of poor families, the writer captures the anti-Semitic dimension of the peasant uprising in Moldova that would later on disappear from all official presentations of the historical events. The authorities' hostility towards the Jews is visible in the events of the day-to-day life (like Rabi Peisich's school being closed down, or the Buiumaș child being excluded from the ceremony at the Queen's reception) that are a natural part of the narrative structure. A vague fear – of actual events, like the war breaking up or the “orders” from the authorities, but also of changes announced by rumours, that are about to disperse that world – is felt among those present on Saturdays and other holidays at the synagogue. Many dream of America, some manage to leave – like one of the characters, “via Mihăileni, then the village of Siret, through Cernăuți, up to Rotterdam where the steamer was waiting for her.” Old people receive postcards from New York, Montreal, Calcutta etc., where their sons and daughters had ended up. Ion Călugăru masterly captures the twilight atmosphere of the little town, of a Jewish traditional world that is doomed to disappear.

Planned as an answer to a best-seller of the time, Cezar Petrescu's *Calea Victoriei* (Victoria Road), *Calea Văcărești* (Văcărești Road) is a novel built up of dramatized sequences, attempting to describe all aspects of the immense ‘panoptic’ of the Bucharest ghetto, seen as a super-character. Starting from the dramas of one Jewish family living in the slums, the writer enlarges his perspective, intending to depict “all facets of the neighbourhood.” Using his strong sense for the dramatic, he mobilizes an impressive number of characters with just a few strokes of the brush, succeeding in making them memorable. The succession of snapshots creates a complex image of “a mixed and fallen people.” The connection between sequences is produced by the character-witness Ficu, the child “who hears everything and understands everything.” The lyricism notes by E. Lovinescu as a specific feature of Peltz's prose belongs, more often than not, to just one of the many characters in the book. The interventions of the omniscient narrator manage to introduce a certain distance from the events of the story and even a degree of irony. The concision of the sketches, the notes made of minute gestures, the memorable lines give the prose a near-cinematographic.

“A novel without a plot”,²³ *Calea Văcărești* has a documentary and sociological interest for today's reader. It captures the impact of slow, chaotic urbanization, on the world of the periphery, the way in which the ghetto residents – waiters, couriers, seamstresses, porters, office workers and other anonymous figures – try to adapt to changes and survive. Most of the Jewish tradition has already faded in *Calea Văcărești*. The rabbi's teachings are treated diffidently when they are not even turned into a joke, the funeral of one of the characters turns into a grotesque spectacle mixing prayers with gossip and arguments. The old Talmudist Flamm, the only one still reading the sacred Hebrew books has strange neighbours, starving anarchists and people just out of jail. His teaching does not seem to interest anybody anymore.

The “centre” of Bucharest has a certain fascination for the people of the slums who – although they know themselves to be excluded from its life – still try to copy its

²³ See Ovidiu Morar, *Scritori evrei din Romania*, București: Ideea Europeană, 2006.

“splendour” (the soirees at the “Green Tree” with waltzes or the dream one of the characters has of opening his own dance school). Little perfume and glassware shops, photo shops, squalid grocery shops are being opened. Doctors return to the ghetto after studying in Berlin, Vienna or Paris want to use the newest methods they learned – like self-suggestion in treating diseases – on the unhappy Ester. The characters’ lines are sprinkled with French words so fashionable in Bucharest’s society, which is proof not only of imitation, but also of an effort to assimilate. Some, like the waiters and failed actors try to behave like the residents of central Bucharest, others dream of going to America or Africa. (Moritz leaving for San Francisco is an important event for the entire neighbourhood.) The tea shops and cafes house long debates between Zionists, socialists and libertarians on the pogrom in Chişinău, on the ideals of the proletariat, on the war and Palestine.

The world of the Jewish neighbourhood in Bucharest is threatened. German soldiers are deployed at the “Green Tree”, a mob from other areas attacks the ghetto yelling “Kill the Jews! Death to the traitors!” The writer is successful in building up these dramatic scenes by focusing on the reactions of anonymous characters, on visual elements, on capturing details, registering remarks, thus avoiding any bias or didacticism. These pages have a remarkable narrative power – constructed with an almost cinematographic technique and an excellent intuition of mob psychology – capturing the violent outbursts against Jews by the residents of Bucharest.

Expedited by G. Călinescu only two lines, labelled “a chronicle of Iron Guard terror” the novel *Israel însângerat* (Blooded Israel, 1946) is an important book – unfortunately almost unknown to the Romanian public – for the understanding of Romanian Holocaust. The death trains and the camps in Transnistria are described in images and notations close to a news coverage, often with the objectivity of a film camera, where the tragedy of the recorded details makes the author’s comments almost unnecessary.

With a modernist narrative structure, Ury Benador’s novel *Ghetto, veac XX* (Ghetto, 20th century) from 1934, the first of a planned but not finalized trilogy, adds a new dimension to the writings of I. Peltz and Ion Călugăru: that of the Jewish cultural and intellectual tradition and of debating ideas. Baruch Landau, Benador’s protagonist, is a much more intellectual figure than the characters in *Copilăria unui netrebnic* or *Calea Văcăreşti*, a descendent of reb Burich’l, whom the Hasidim considered “Tzadik”. His “romanticized” life, the author indicates, “is less his own life and rather the life of his times and of the Jews.” By recreating his life journey, the author recreates that special, cosmopolitan atmosphere of little Moldavian towns, with miracle-working Tzadikim who came to these parts from Galicia, which rabbis who would “judge” even God. The demure tailor Mendl Landau, Baruch’s father, meditates on the legends spun on the life of his grandfather reb Burich’l, wondering if he could be the carrier of the tenacious soul of Lewi Iţhok from Bardicew. He remembers the prayers that thousands of people in Bucovina, Galicia and even Russia used to say in those times. Young Baruch dreams of going to Ştefăneşti – “a rabbinic town right in the middle of the 20th century” – convinced that he would find “Messiah’s room” there. People in Botoşani read books in Yiddish and in Hebrew, but also in German, in parks people discuss, among other things, about Mihail Sadoveanu or Schopenhauer. Yiddish newspapers are published in (most of them short-lived), wealthy families order books from Leipzig

and Vienna. Many examples can be given here. The reader of Ury Benador's books discovers a world that is almost unknown today, finds out that Moldavian little towns (often presented as "the place where nothing happened" and where human spirit dies a lingering death) used to be important Hassidic centres and home to a rich cultural life.

Following Baruch's tribulations – an oversensitive character with a disposition for self-study –, Ury Benador takes his reader into a variety of social milieus in Brăila, the town where the Landau family has moved. The episodes presenting meetings in socialist clubs are very interesting – and very different from the propagandistic presentations of the communist period. The speeches there mix slogans, clichés, naive-vulgarised visions of art. People sing *The Internationale*. Literary soirees are organised for workers, with the participation of some female comrades without much education but with a lot of enthusiasm. Won by the ideas of Litwak, a Russian deserter, Baruch takes part in the adventure of publishing a Yiddish newspaper, *Morgenroit*, he even wants to start a Jews-only socialist faction, in Yiddish. Ștefan Gheorgiu (who had become, in the communist decades, an emblematic figure of the fight of the proletariat) and Panait Istrati (who would become a well-known writer) are shown here as completely veridical characters, lacking any kind of heroic halo.

Beyond its documentary value, we should note the novel's modernism, the fact that it centres on a character with a city-type sensitivity, inclined towards self-analysis, more complex, we would say, than many of the characters in novels that are part of the canon of Romanian inter-war period.

CONCLUSIONS

Although their novels cover the themes of the town, all three writers (I. Călugăru, I. Peltz and Ury Benador) figured only marginally, if at all, in the inter-war debates on the town and city prose and on Romanian modernism. Communist censorship turned these novels undesirable: they were covering topics that had been decreed taboo, like the anti-Semitic dimension of the 1907 uprising, the Chișinău pogrom, the attacks on the ghettos in many towns and Bucharest. Even when they were covering the beginnings of the socialist movement, they were contradicting, in their unaffected descriptions, the "heroism" proposed by the communist movement. The presentation of the Jewish tradition in Moldavian little towns could not be accepted by the national-communist regime involved in "human trafficking" by selling their citizens of German or Jewish descent²⁴. The "systematization" of towns and cities during communism also meant the almost complete destruction of Jewish neighbourhoods.

A new reading of Jewish authors in the inter-war period in Romania has to be accompanied by careful analysis of their political, social and cultural context and by a re-evaluation of the modernist theory proposed at the time by E. Lovinescu. The overview of Romanian inter-war literature has to recover the works of these authors, which, besides their aesthetic merits, also have definite documentary value.

²⁴ See Radu Ioanid, *Răscumpărarea evreilor. Istoria acordurilor secrete dintre România și Israel*, Iași: Polirom, 2005.

Résumé

Image de la vie en ville dans les œuvres de Ion Călugăru, Isac Peltz et Ury Benador.
Aspects de leur réception

On nous propose dans cet article de discuter des aspects de la réception de la prose de trois écrivains roumains d'origine juive, Ion Călugăru, Isac Peltz, Ury Benador. On considère que pour comprendre et analyser la « marginalité » de la littérature écrite par les auteurs roumains d'origine juive il faut questionner le modèle de littérature nationale, le rôle du contexte historique, politique et idéologique roumaine dans la constitution du canon littéraire. On a souligné le fait que, malgré leur valeur littéraire, les œuvres des auteurs roumains d'origine juive restent encore une « littérature invisible ». Dans notre approche, on a préféré les perspectives offertes par le « nouvel historicisme » américain et la critique postcoloniale.

Streszczenie

Obrazy miejskiego życia w twórczości Iona Călugăru, Isaca Peltza i Ury'ego Benadora.
Aspekty ich recepcji

Autorka tego artykułu postawiła sobie zadanie omówienia pewnych aspektów recepcji prozy trzech rumuńskich pisarzy o żydowskich korzeniach: Iona Călugăru, Isaca Peltza i Ury'ego Benadora. Uważa, że aby rozumieć i analizować „marginalność” literatury pisanej przez rumuńskich pisarzy pochodzenia żydowskiego, trzeba zakwestionować model literatury narodowej oraz rolę rumuńskiego kontekstu historycznego, politycznego i ideologicznego w konstytuowaniu się literackiego kanonu. Autorka podkreśla fakt, że dzieła rumuńskich pisarzy o żydowskich korzeniach – mimo wartości literackiej – pozostają jeszcze „literaturą niewidzialną”. Temat został ujęty w perspektywie, jaką daje amerykański „nowy historyzm” i krytyka postkolonialna.