

TOWARDS A DECENTRALIZED LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT. *Towards a Decentralized Literature.* The purpose of this paper is to discuss how the *History of Contemporary Romanian Literature* by Mihai Iovănel opens new paths both in interpreting literature and towards understanding Romanian cultural identity at large. In this sense, “transnational specificity,” as Iovănel calls it, becomes a most resourceful field that allows, as Vancea shows, important insights into national and global identity in the context of significant technological developments. In the same vein, Vancea draws from Daniel David’s work on the psychology of the Romanian people to highlight new cultural aspects that could lead to changes in literature. At the same time, the paper tries to bring humanities closer to the perspectives that the Web3 phenomenon announce.

Keywords: *cultural identity, decentralized literature, Web3, literary history, NFT*

REZUMAT. *Către o literatură descentralizată.* Scopul acestei lucrări este de a evidenția modul în care *Istoria Literaturii Române Contemporane* scrisă de Mihai Iovănel deschide noi căi de interpretare a literaturii, dar și a identității culturale. Specificul transnațional devine în acest sens un teren ofertant care permite deschiderea unei discuții mai largi cu privire la identitatea noastră națională și globală în contextul profunde dezvoltări tehnologice. În acest sens, voi completa exemplele menționate de criticul literar cu studiul lui Daniel David despre psihologia poporului român pentru a evidenția noi puncte vulnerabile care ar putea să determine schimbări în viitorul apropiat al literaturii. Totodată, lucrarea încearcă să apropie umanioarele de perspectivele pe care le aduce în viitor fenomenul Web3.

Cuvinte-cheie: *identitate culturală, literatura descentralizată, Web3, istorie literară, NFT*

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As has been pointed out, the authority of critics and literary historians is decreasing in front of the unstoppable force of the internet, where virtually anyone can create literature-related content. True, the longstanding tradition of critical culture goes on, as evidenced by almost all magazines in print, which dedicate a section to the latest books. Such sections are relevant as long as its practitioners remain relevant in ideas and do not fall prey to ideological discourse. In fact, criticism is the foundation of theoretical studies, and through its constant interaction with the most current texts, certain patterns become visible. The background and exercise of literary criticism played an important role in the making of the *History of Contemporary Romanian Literature* written by Mihai Iovănel. In relation to the literary field, the decentralization phenomenon evolves around the loss of critics' authority in front of the larger public. Masses do not search for academic criticism anymore in the context of the freedom of quick and facile content social media offers. Nowadays, writers can easily access their public without depending on the bad review in a cultural magazine. The pandemic accelerated the transition to the online environment while technology became a decisive factor in changing the dynamics in the literary field. At the moment, audiences without specialized cultural background represent a decisive factor in establishing whether a book deserves attention or not, solely on their reading experience. The unexperienced reader of whom Umberto Eco talked in *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* has achieved a sort of authority through social media networks such as YouTube, Goodreads, and others. A one-star rating on Goodreads weighs more in this environment than a solid, argumentative review in an online magazine. Therefore, critics' authority is replaced by the ordinary readers' opinions for whom things are simple and either like or dislike a book. Moreover, the writers have seriously taken the role of a PR and promote themselves intensely on their social media pages, which is not a negative aspect as it shows their independence in relation to criticism.

Nevertheless, a history of contemporary literature is of great impact in times of dispersed content. Mihai Iovănel's volume is in sync with Western methodologies and theoretical directions in terms of feminism, gender rights, even psychoanalysis. Such landmarks are reviving the ways of thinking about contemporary literary history, especially in the context of profound socio-cultural changes. Even the subject of identity reaches new highs in the final part of his *History*, as cultural identity is correlated with the World Literature. Moreover, the title of his fifth part "Towards a transnational identity" comes as a reaction to G. Călinescu ending of *History of Romanian Literature* (Iovănel 2021, 11), that positions the literary history in a shifting position, embracing the approach of the transnational paradigm.

Representations of National Identity

In his volume, Mihai Iovănel not only refreshes the idea of contemporary Romanian literature but also explores new patterns in literary research that open a dialogue with the international space, based on the idea that a scholar must engage with the outer world. For the final part, the literary historian focuses his discourse on the world-systems theory bringing to discussion names of the pioneers in the field such as Pascale Casanova or Franco Moretti. Contemporary literary history is a bond to identify the national identity under the auspices of World Literature and transnational studies. This approach does not involve eliminating the national identity even if the author questions it in various cases, linking it to the self-mirroring of our identity as well as the perspectives of outsiders upon us. A first official step for integrating Romanian literature into a transnational circuit was already taken through the collective project coordinated by editors Christian Moraru, Mircea Martin, and Andrei Terian. The national attribute is sustainable as long as it involves international dialogue. The methodologies highlighted by the volume *Romanian Literature as World Literature* announced in this way changes in the future writings on literary history. The contemporary history published by Mihai Iovănel represents a fluctuating ground that announces changes of direction.

Relevant to this matter are the final chapters of the volume as they focus on the global shift in literary theories and literature. Therefore, the first aspect brought into discussion is related to the way an individual, local or foreigner, decides to represent a country. At a first glance, the chapter on *Transnational maps (Hărți transnaționale)* seems to be poorly developed having only a few examples that illustrate a unidirectional perspective on the artistic representations of Romania abroad. The critic offers two examples from cinema referring to *Gypsy Jigsaw* (2000) and *6 Bullets* (2012). Although a welcomed approach, sketching the Romanian portrait using interdisciplinary angles requires more contextualization. From a cinematic perspective regarding the national peculiarities, Doru Pop asks a crucial question in his essay "An analysis of Romanians' self-image in contemporary cinematographic representations": "whether movies 'damage' our image or 'improve' it?" (Pop 138). To answer this question, he invokes the convention of *falsity* stated by Gilles Deleuze that refers to the natural relation between this principle and a film's production (145). This means that while the producers aim to be as convincing as possible, they might use various storytelling strategies to make the viewers fall for the story with the risk of altering reality. In this sense, Doru Pop argues that the reinterpretation of history is a frequent practice in cinematography. He gives the example of Robert

Zemeki's movie *Forrest Gump* (2004), where the main character seems to cross the paths of various prominent figures of the recent past (John Lennon, Martin Luther King Jr., JFK, Elvis Presley). Nowadays, Netflix seems to invade people's screens with various movies that are adaptations of history or social events. The reality is often highly distorted in many ways, but viewers accept the pact of falsity in favor of narrative and emotion. For example, the series of *Bridgerton* (2020) created by Chris van Dusen or *Inventing Anna* (2022), created by Shonda Rhimes, are two very catchy examples that won the spectators' hearts on one side and created controversy on the other. While pleading for a non-racist past, *Bridgerton* depicts the diversification of London's high society characters with the risk of being inaccurate and debated in many American and British newspapers such as *New York Times*, *The Nation*, *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, and many others. Likewise, the miniseries of Shonda Rhimes tell the story of Anna Delvey, a Russian immigrant that proves to be a con artist whose story is inspired from real events. However, important aspects of reality are changed to fit the plot better such as the fictionalization of *New York* magazine into *Manhattan* magazine (Peg 2022) and even the destiny of the main character, who in the real-life ends up in prison. Nonetheless, the producer addresses the spectator with a captivating disclaimer every time an episode begins; this message aligns with Deleuze's falsity hypothesis (Deleuze 126): "This whole story is completely true, except for all the parts that are totally made up." Although they might seem non-academic or commercial examples, these examples are only a few compared to the multitude of films and TV series on the market. Not to mention that the genre of the film plays an essential role in the producer's decision to use certain peculiarities of a culture. *The Bloom Brothers* (2008), a comedy directed by Rian Johnson, uses the Romanian landmark, Peleş Castle, as the main shooting location of the film, where the castle represents the inheritance of wealthy Penelope. However, the truth regarding the location's origins is drastically changed in the story being placed in New Jersey. Therefore, in cinematography, the reality is often a tool used to keep the viewer hooked. The way Romania is depicted in the afore-mentioned movies is also part of the convention of *falsity*.

Coming back to the examples given by the literary critic, they are rather drawing a narrow picture of the foreign perspective upon the Romanian culture. His categorical assumptions on how Romanians see themselves in the eyes of the others (647) focus also on the writings of the Romanian-Swiss author Cătălin Dorian Florescu who uses the rural local background as an exotic attraction for the foreigner reader. Mihai Iovănel assumes that not even Romanian citizens can offer a real, authentic image of the country as they

choose to focus only on its unfavorable aspects of it. Despite that, the singular case of Cătălin Dorian Florescu does not encompass an expanding range of perspectives, especially because the writer declares in various interviews that he especially comes to Romania as a source of inspiration. His focus on the rural space with its rituals, people, and habits comes from an intrinsic need of being in contact with this genuine lifestyle and the magical stories it brings. Being born in the city made him curious about the dynamics of villages, and he tends to add a magical realism vibe over this background, focusing on the exotic imaginary. Here the exotism is designed to impress the foreigner reader who is not familiar with the evoked experiences that are almost inexistent in the Western urban landscape: “to counteract what is missing from life in the urban landscape of the West” (Ioanid 2018). I would say that his approach to diving into the eccentric situation has similarities to Radu Țuculescu’s drama plays. For example, there is a noticeable tendency to equate embarrassing, disastrous, situations to a dark humor type of comic in situations that reveal subsidiary cultural aspects. In theater more than in prose, such approaches are desired and searched for by the public as they are catchy, and they invite the audience to laugh. Țuculescu’s bet is with the absurd situations and a great example in this sense is the play *O balegă în mijlocul drumului*, a play that had its debut in Prague in 2017. It is a comedy about a semi-paralyzed man taken to the streets by Violeta, his girlfriend, who is fed up with him. In the beginning, the other villagers are ashamed of her, but the paralytic’s appearance in the middle of the road becomes profitable later due to the vigilance of Dodo and the Mayor. They see in the disabled an opportunity for agritourist and a chance to European funds. Finally, the paralytic becomes the source of tourism development in a random Romanian village. Iovănel was right to question the ways local artists choose to represent their country in writing as most references are based on country stereotypes and extreme generalization. The reality is that we are living in a mixed territory and our national identity is segregated into two almost equal masses. On one side we have the idyllic depictions of Romania, with its villages and colorful people, on the other side, contemporary Romania seems to enter the digital competitiveness at a global level. According to IMD World Digital Competitiveness Ranking in 2021, the country was ranked 50th in the world, a score that links the national brand to technology. Our past continues to work upon the present, where people are living deeply contrasting realities. It is either the rural landscape depicted by the writers or the technological boom that led to the growth of the corporate area. No matter how great the development of IT, even in the eyes of a foreign writer, their experience compared to other places seems to be, above all, an autochthonous one. It seems

that the lasting tradition of mystical Romanian spirituality, that Lucian Blaga defined as a spiritual matrix of a place (Blaga, 30), still has its relevance.

In this context of the cultural negotiation phenomenon, Tara Skurtu's volume of poems *The Amoeba Game* (2018) represents a significant example. This volume treats the theme of identity through autobiographical poems that take place chronologically, evoking her childhood memories in America and going as far as the moment of making contact with the Romanian space. Tara Skurtu has a double literary identity, an American and a Romanian one. The latter is gained through her experiences as she is currently based in Romania, where she first arrived in 2013 after receiving the Robert Pinsky Scholarship for Poetry. She remained in Romania after being granted two more Fulbright scholarships. The last part of the above-mentioned volume evokes her experience in this foreign country while the stylistic register changes drastically and the atmosphere becomes claustrophobic. She feels stuck in her boyfriend's village "walking a chicken on a leash" (the poem *Scara Richter, București*). Skurtu looks at everything with fantastic curiosity: the stuffed cabbage (*sarmale*), the pile of polenta with cream cheese, the fried brain (*creier pane*), in front of which nostalgia for "home" is almost non-existent. I would say that such a unique perspective refreshes the landscape of Romanian poetry precisely because it comes with the eye of the foreigner, the outsider who focuses on everything that finds defining for this space.

A Mixed-Bag "Auto-Stereotype"

All the examples discussed above attempt to offer an insight into identifying the specifics of our nation. The term identity, so often used, represents such a large spectrum of meanings as it is not something tangible. Anything can be placed under this word or in correlation with it: national, international, Western, Eastern identity—maybe it has also become a preference of sociologists to capture in words a few something so consistent. The frequency of the word began to grow once the term ideology, generally identified with Marxist theories, was replaced in favor of others that do not carry political content within them:

More than any other concept, 'identity' is almost universally regarded as capable of accounting for the direction of the unprecedented social change that has hit our Identity as an Ideology planet. Moreover, this popularity quickly extended beyond academia to politics, economy, culture, the advertising industry, and many other spheres of everyday life. 'Identity' has become more popular than any other social concept. (Malešević 2)

In 1907 Dimitrie Drăghicescu tried to highlight the general directions of what he called the “Romanian Soul” (1907, 19) in order to express the importance of knowing and recognizing ourselves as part of a nation (22). Psychology scholars often speak of a social awareness that seems to differ from the individuals’ consciousness (29) this means that there are differences in how we see ourselves and how we are: “Individual consciousness is itself of social or national nature.”² Other psychologists such as Constantin Rădulescu Motru and, more recently, Daniel David continued Drăghicescu’s related to the psychology of the Romanian people. One major issue that David identifies in his study is the segregation of regions based on the Romanians’ opinions about themselves. The development of the country’s image and branding should not be done independently of the country because the country itself is peripheral and not well known internationally. Probably the only region that has a chance to be recognized as such is the area of Transylvania due to Bram Stoker and the myth of Dracula. Mihai Iovănel dedicates a few pages to this subject, explaining the erroneous use of the myth’s connection to Vlad Țepeș. From this point of view, the volume succeeds in clarifying a major stereotype represented by this myth (Iovănel 2021, 259-264). The concept of identity is strongly bound to all these myths and stereotypes promoted by Romanians and foreigners as well. Daniel David’s work is very comprehensive in regard to the psycho-cultural profile of ourselves as the psychologist tries to offer a clear answer to this portrait using as a foundation the former works of Constantin Rădulescu Motru. The representation of “how we are” versus “what we think we are” was discussed based on specific psychological attributes such as personality, cognitive aspects, subjective-emotional aspects, and relational aspects, that were later customized by zooming on more specific aspects such as work, mental health, children, seniors, Romanian diaspora and others (David 2015, 182).

This study is very complex, but to sum up a few of its main ideas, it appears that our profile is dominated by what he calls “collectivist attributes.” We tend to punish and be against anyone who prospers and tries to make a change. Performance is not rewarded. For example, a group of Americans was compared to a group of Romanians in a common exercise where both groups had to collaborate with their own members to work together. While the members of the American group supported each other and any leadership initiative on the idea that their gain returns as a gain of the group, the second group did the opposite: as soon as one of them had better ideas, the other members tried to bring him down. This attitude represents a clear sign of impediment to the ideal

² Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own. The original Romanian reads: “Conștiința individuală este ea însăși de natură și de origine socială sau națională” (Drăghicescu 1907, 31).

of global connectivity. However, the predictive values of this outcome are mostly underlined for the baby boomers (people that are over 55 years old) that match a more traditional, conservative profile. Rooted in the norms of a generation, the regularities that arise out of a community are adjustable to the needs of younger generations that might not identify themselves with the same stereotypes. Daniel David explains that there is a large discrepancy at a national level between how we see ourselves and how we project this image of ours. A nation's cultural profile is highly complex as people are divided into different clusters, depending on personality traits. It appears that Romania is segregated in two opposite directions that create a mixed auto stereotype both as a whole but also in every each of its eight development regions:

When we compare ourselves with other ethnic groups in Romania, we consider ourselves 'civilized', but when we compare ourselves with other nations of the world, we say that we are 'uncivilized'. From the analysis of the semi-structured interview we notice the presence in auto stereotype of various attributes sometimes opposite in value: 'emotional', 'intelligent', 'less healthy' and 'choleric' [...] we notice that we consider ourselves 'gregarious', 'tolerant', 'hospitable', and 'religious', but also 'undisciplined'; the opposite attributes: 'persevering' vs. 'unpersevering' and 'collectivists' vs. 'Individualists (selfish)' are not significantly different from each other. So, we can conclude that the Romanian stereotype is mixed.³

The identity discourse should not be oriented towards oneself, it should embody a global identity system in which each country works for the benefit of all. For example, the good country index, created by Simon Anholt is a tool of measurement that shows each country's contribution to the global well-being of humanity. The measurements follow the countries' activity and involvement in each of the following domains: Science & Technology, Culture, International Peace & Security, World Order, Planet & Climate, Prosperity & Equality, Health & Wellbeing. On the website of The Good Country Index, Romania is placed on the 41st position with the following scores: 44th on Science & Technology, 45th on Culture, 65th on International Peace & Security, 53rd on World Order, 14th on Planet & Climate, 89th on Prosperity & Equality, 77th on Health & Wellbeing.

³ "Când ne comparăm cu celelalte etnii din România, ne considerăm 'civilizați', dar, când ne comparăm cu alte popoare ale lumii, spunem despre noi că suntem 'necivilizați'. Din analiza interviului semistructurat observăm prezența în autostereotip a unor attribute variate și uneori opuse ca valență: 'emoționali', 'inteligenti', 'mai puțin sănătoși' și 'colerici'. [...] observăm că ne considerăm 'gregari', 'toleranți', 'ospitalieri', și 'religioși', dar și 'indisciplinați'; attributele opuse: 'perseverenți' vs. 'neperseverenți' și 'colectiviști' vs. 'individualiști (egoist)' nu sunt semnificativ diferite unele de altele. Așadar, putem conchide că autostereotipul românilor este mixt." (David 2015, 283)

These numbers show our ranking among the 169 countries included. Therefore, the international image of Romania cannot be described from a singular angle as there is a multitude of fields that construct it. Or, better said, that reconstructs it from an interdisciplinary point of view that offers a complete portrait of the causal chain that leads to a shifting identity.

Coming back to Mihai Iovănel's arguments on the negative self and foreign representations of the Romanian identity, it appears that indeed, on a larger scale, the image of Romanians tends to have neutral or negative attributes abroad. Daniel David shows that the Hungarians see us as patriots, Italians as procrastinating (*nemuncitori*) and the American perspective is often associated with the myth of vampires and Dracula. In addition, other Western Europe countries tend to correlate us with antisocial behavior. It seems that we, as Romanians, share a common opinion with the foreigners that consider us less scrupulous and not very hardworking. However, these external beliefs developed in this direction because the Romanian people often generalize that our identity is in such a way. Therefore, others started to believe the same about us because this phenomenon satisfies the needs of identity and predictability of the present (David 2015, 312). The contemporary individual is disposed more towards the outside world rather than the inside leading to a process of externalization especially for the post-communist countries. The author of the *Contemporary History* discusses this process at the very beginning of its volume. Since the dominant impulse is heading to the West, various forms of intense networking are developing in its direction. This history of literature brings into discussion various topics that brought the contemporary literature in its actual form. The critic emphasizes a series of fragile areas that are underdeveloped and that could give new direction to the future literature. These topics are described in the chapter *Points of Resistance (Puncte de rezistență)* and include the aspects of ecologies, epistemologies, gender, sexuality, LGBTQ+, race, emigrants, disabilities, subcultures, which he understands as "systemic reasons" (Iovănel 273), a phrase for describing the changes of society in all its aspects. They represent, in fact, areas of turning points in mentality, but also in the way of self-understanding and reflection on our own identity. In this sense, he is a visionary because a stabilization of these systemic reasons can lead to the widening of the identity spectrum and can generate a literary shift as well as create a greater closeness to the global space and the world literature.

"Collectible" Culture

National identity in the context of World Literature discussions is not a negligible factor because it conditions the very definition of World Literature,

as Damrosch points out in the first definition of the concept, which is “a refraction of national literature” (Damrosch 2003, 281). This implies that the local roots of any literature are automatically connected to the structures of World Literature. Cultural heritage in the context of the acute globalization of the present time no longer accepts, and probably was never possible, to be framed within immutable boundaries of identity. Of course, the central cultures that have a long history on the literary market inevitably influence small cultures.

In the age of globalization, translation increases the value of goods, and, at the same time, it makes it accessible to a larger market, being the link between the national and the international canon. The literary market is dominated by the immersion of various texts from a wide range of cultures which leads to a phenomenon of the cultural influence of the masses as the text is usually given credit by the giants of the literary market (United States, France, Spain, Germany). However, we must keep an eye on the fact that this age of “dataism” (Harari 2018) redirected almost all services to new digital platforms as a form of “reorganization of cultural production and distribution practices around these platforms” (Poell et al. 2019, 5–6). As I mentioned at the beginning of this essay, any unknown voice, be it the voice of an artist or a consumer, has the power of creating public content. With the help of technology, individuality will be translated into plurality on the basis that many individual approaches generate a plurality of voices. This process is already happening in our daily life through freedom of speech and access to various social media networks. Any individual, known or unknown, can go viral and express their message to the world. A plurality of voices creates diversity, and the main challenge is to find ways of integrating it into a global system instead of diminishing it.

For this latter reason, normative pluralism systems include ethno-cultural normative systems, whereas so far, no governance networks have been described as ethno-cultural systems. This may be because network governance research has focused mainly on process, whereas normative pluralism systems deal with content” (Malloy and Salat 2021, 8).

Mihai Iovănel explains that both in the global and internal market, the Romanian language competes with the other cultures. His *History* ends somehow pessimistically, stating that the Romanian literature will most probably become an echo, a shadow of what it used to be (Iovănel 2021, 680). As dark as it might sound, this scenario has a high chance of being attained. However, this would happen only if the scholars will allow literature and culture to exist only in a centralized manner. Through translation, a culture becomes collectible and gains capital by diversifying the market. The strategy of collecting goes beyond

culture is an economical approach applicable in every field of human existence because adding an object to a collection increases its worth. For example, in video games the characters gather points or coins to move on to the next level. The video game case is given here, especially for its connection to digital technology. Collecting has always been a major cultural activity as “the history of collecting is thus the narrative of how human beings have striven to accommodate to appropriate and to extend the taxonomies and systems of knowledge they have inherited” (Elsner and Cardinal 1997, 2).

The coming of technology transferred collections into digital assets and the trend of NFTs (non-fungible tokens) seems to announce their development into what many people call nowadays, the Web3:

Non-Fungible means something unique, more like one of a kind, which cannot be replaced with something similar to that, and ‘Token’ refers to an ‘asset’ or a ‘unit’. So, combining the words, Non Fungible Token is a unit or an asset that is genuine, unique, and cannot be replaced, representing the ownership of something of greater value. (Royce 2021, 42)

The *Business Harvard Review* offers a brief explanation of what Web3 implies by explaining each step of web transformation. This being said, Web1 was represented by the computer itself “the physical infrastructure of wires and servers that lets computers and the people in front of them talk to each other” (Stackpole 2022). Later, in the 2000s the internet became more interactive and determined “an era of user-generated content” (Stackpole 2022) where social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) became an important tool in expanding the ways of delivering information. This new way of networking entered the second phase of the Web which was also a phase of centralization as many big companies involved in this approach “have produced mind-boggling wealth for themselves and their shareholders by scraping users’ data and selling targeted ads against it” (Stackpole 2022). The blockchains came to cover a need for having an open, decentralized network where the decision no longer belongs to only one entity. In theory, the NFTs are meant to avoid the deterioration of the artistic object and offer the small buyers the opportunity to involve in this process. The act of collecting is no longer limited to the educated elite but becomes accessible from anywhere at any time through the concept of digital wallets which is an “encrypted wallet” that protects your online identity (Stackpole 2022). I do not intend to explain an entire technology, but I will mention a few concepts that the arts might use in the future, including literature. The digital landscape comes as an opportunity for the writers to be in touch with their buyers and future readers. It works as a space to experiment with

various forms, publish and earn money directly from its clients. At the moment, there has been a great demand for visual Art NFT but a non-fungible token can be represented by anything digital, even a novel or a collection of poems.

For example, the Colombian poet Ana María Caballero, who lives in the United States, founded the platform *The VERSEverse* (a pun to the alternative digital universe speculated by *Facebook – Metaverse*). The initiative was shaped by the association with Gisel Florez, an art counselor with whom Ana María Caballero, together with two other poets, Kalen Iwamoto and Sasha Stiles, created a poetry gallery in NFT format. The gallery's mission is to bring poetry on an equal footing with other arts, such as painting or sculpture, based on the premise that poetry involves a constant creative effort that "deserves to be appreciated in the same way, either culturally or at the commercial level."⁴ The poems included in this gallery work with the field of cybernetics and speculate on ways in which the self engages its senses in this interaction. These texts represent an experimental fusion of the elements of semiotics, translation, computer science, speculative design, and visual poetry. A similar platform is called *Crypto Poetry. The Future of Poetry* and was founded by Kai, a poet passionate about technology, whose identity is vaguely presented. The project began with Kai's collection of poetry, delivered with NFT status, and later contacted other writers to join the initiative. Currently, the platform presents itself as a community of poets, where each of them creates a various collection of poems later included for trading on blockchain platforms such as Ethereum, Solana, Tezos, Polygon, and others.⁵

To sum it all up, in the *History of Contemporary Romanian Literature*, Mihai Iovănel rebrands the meaning of literature's contemporaneity and places a milestone for Romanian humanities in an age of disruption and uncertainty. As the critic himself states, the current edition needs improvements and perhaps additional references. Nonetheless, his volume responds to the need for global integration and explores a few examples that show the fluctuations within the representations of Romanian identity while standing for a transnational approach. In this direction, Daniel David's monograph on the psychology of Romanians is essential in the field of international ethnic research. His study can be easily applied within the literary field as it explains why the nation has a mixed psycho-cultural profile. In addition, Iovănel's *History* creates space for an interdisciplinary dialogue. This paper tried to show the strong connection it has to psychology and the information technology using the concept of identity.

⁴ Original text: "El trabajo que va detrás de un lienzo, una escultura o cerámica es el mismo que va detrás de un poema y se deberían valorar de la misma manera, ya sea a nivel cultural o a nivel comercial" (Granados 2021).

⁵ The *Crypto Poetry* platform can be consulted at the URL: <https://cryptopoetry.io/>.

Iovănel's *History* anticipates future changes in meaning that perhaps will redefine local identity in a global context. On top of that, the coming of a new digital era, represented by Web3 and block chain technology might create new opportunities for the field of literature and its history as well. The peculiar disposition for individuality, which is specific to the Western world according to Daniel David, might lead in the global context to a plurality of voices that will perhaps continue to probe their diversity in the digital world.

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