

Babeş-Bolyai University

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**A Reconfiguration of Modernism. The  
Romanian Novel Facing a Culture of  
Modernity**

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## Summary

**Keywords:** Modernism, Modernity, Postmodernism, Postmodernity, Community, Memory, Cosmpolitism, Corporeality.

The subject of this thesis can be claimed by several fields: literary history, cultural studies, literary sociology, literary theory. We believe that the one that it best fits in is theory – a theory of a corpus, of some practices and a poetic that are known in Western literary culture, mainly Anglo-Saxon, under the name of modernism. Nonetheless, modernism is closely related to another concept, one that's broader and more difficult to grasp, namely that of modernity.

The platform on which modernism and modernity meet and collaborate is that of Anglo-American Modernist Studies, which have attempted in the last three decades to revisit the connections between the aesthetic and social dimensions of literature. We comprehend modernity as a long, "scientific" modernity, as defined by Bruno Latour (1991) or by a successor of the Frankfurt School such as Hartmut Rosa (2013). Modernity understood in this way is born along with the natural sciences in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, is amplified and sharpened against the backdrop of the Industrial Revolution (1760-1840) and then expands throughout the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century, up to today, through the means of information dissemination, image multiplication and an infrastructure that allows the acceleration of the rhythm of existence. We do not relate to modernity as a vector of progress and therefore of novelty. We in fact understand modernity in terms of a composite and dynamic reality, one in which the social and, later, the living body replaces the sacred and allegorical body of the Church, and in which the political, the economic, and the scientific become the frameworks of pragmatic thought that substitute the onto-theological dimension. Without denying the transcending of the nature-culture binomial, postulated by Philippe Descola in the 2000s, we believe that what we manage to build, applied to a Romanian corpus, is a culture of modernity.

In the first chapter of the work, one designed with an introductory role, we start from the tools provided by Modernist Studies and aim to map a Romanian modernism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We show why American postmodernism failed both as a theoretical and cultural discourse and as a conceptual category designed to transcend modernism and modernity, but also why this failure is relevant today in the ecology of Modernist Studies. Finally, we dwell on "neomodernism" and show how postmodernist debates on the term contribute to a monumentalization of Romanian modernism, whose only role would have become that of being overtaken by postmodernism. In the second chapter, we sketch the lines of a literary sociology, starting from the configuration of the community, the status of the family and from how the two dimensions of social existence – the private and the public – are represented in the post-industrial world, from the perspective of Kinship Studies. In the third chapter, we start from wider time frames, provided by Memory Studies, and analyse the dialectic between memory and history during the 20th century, and also the way in which "a novel of memory" is understood by the Romanian critics. Finally, we take a look at the much deeper ramifications of a discourse on memory that is contemporary with Maiorescu and that enters Romanian literature through rather informal frameworks, which finds its appropriate form through the import of the Proustian novel. In the final chapter we anchor our research to the theory provided by cognitive narratology and in the tendencies of ecocriticism, in order to follow the mobility of the body in the Romanian modernist novel, as a relational element between the "psychological" character of the novel and the social environment.

Our bringing of Romanian modernism into complex laboratories – of community and society, of memory and history, of the embodied mind – is done to explain a dialectic of modernity, which instils the same dynamics in modernism, but also to show that modernism is a discourse that occupies an equal place among the other discourses of modernity, a living form that emerges from the dispute with postmodernism, but also from the conflict between committed and autonomous literature.