



## **Ioan Petru Culianu**

**Lives, Works, Legacies**

COLLOQUIUM

**Iași, 21-23 October 2022**

Aula Magna "Carmen Sylva", Universitatea Tehnică "Gh. Asachi", Bd. Carol I, nr. 11 A, and Online

Conveners: Sorin Antohi and Alexandru Dan Ciochină

Organizers: Asociația „Orbis Tertius”, Institutul de Studii și Cercetări Simbolice, Universitatea Tehnică "Gh. Asachi"

Partners: Societatea pentru Cultura și Literatura Română în Bucovina, Asociația “Al. I. Cuza”, Biblioteca Centrală Universitară „Mihai Eminescu”, Editura Polirom

Media Partners: *Trivium*, *Timpul*, *Observator cultural*, *Suplimentul de cultură*

Almost a historical generation after his brutal death, Ioan Petru Culianu is an enduring, seminal, and haunting presence. This colloquium examines him in a liminal situation, that of someone standing on the threshold of History, in a fluid space, engaged in a rite of passage from a memory that is mainly living, fragmentary, passionate (ranging from hagiography to slander) to a predominantly historicized, comprehensive, critical, and calm memory (the one that Paul Ricoeur called *mémoire apaisée*).

The following years seem decisive for the long-term fate of Ioan Petru Culianu's ideas, works, projects, lives (real and fictional). Taking stock of the first three decades of Culianu's posterity, and looking into the future, we meet and talk in his native town, in a historic hall inaugurated by his grand grandfather. In various ways, material and immaterial, many people from several generations, countries, and cultures are going to be there...

The working language is English, with some contributions in Romanian. A collective volume based on this colloquium and on some of its past and future extensions is planned for 2023.

This is the first event in Romania and South-East Europe under the auspices of the Academia Europaea. On behalf of the conveners, partners, and sponsors, I would like to thank the leadership of the prestigious forum for immediately granting us their symbolic support. I hope we are thus getting a step closer to the realization of an important strategic project, the Bucharest Academia Europea Regional Knowledge Hub.

Prior to the opening of the Colloquium, on 21 October, from 16:30 to 17:30, at the "Orest Tafrali" Bookshop (UAIC, corp A, parter), all participants and the public are invited to a book launch: Elena Bondor, *Ioan Petru Culianu. Bibliografie* (Polirom, 2022, 2 vols., 1,044 pp.). Interventions: Elena Bondor, Emanuela Stoleriu, Liviu Antonesei, Ioan Milică, Sorin Antohi.

## **Friday, 21 October**

18:00-20:00 II. **Lives**

Sorin Antohi, Opening Remarks

Grazia Marchianò, *Culianu on Cognition: Prophetic Conjectures* (read by Sorin Antohi)

Dorin Tudoran, *"He Wrote Books, Then He Died"* (read by Sorin Antohi)

Liviu Antonesei, *Diptych: biografii alternative* [Diptych: Alternative Biographies]

Ted Anton, *Thirty Years Later* (online)

Pablo Maurette, *The Ludibrium: Ioan Petru Culianu Revisited in Fiction*

Discussion

## **Saturday, 22 October**

### **10:00-12:00 III. Works 1**

Roberta Moretti, *History is Not a Matter of Time: Towards a New Paradigm for Knowledge*.

Giovanni Casadio, *Ioan Petru Culianu: From the Historical-Comparative Method to the Games of the Mind*

Gabriel Badea, *Ioan Petru Culianu and His Theory of Magic*

Discussion

12:00-14:30 Break

### **14:30-16:30 IV. Works 2**

Eduard Iricinschi, *How to Become a Magister of the Art: Magic and the Art of Memory in Culianu's Fiction* (online)

Igor Tavilla, *A Synoptic Look on Culianu's Trees of Gnosis* (online)

Horia Corneliu Cicortaș, *Remarks on the Literary Fortune of Ioan Petru Culianu* (online)

Discussion

16:30-17:00 Break

### **17:00-19:00 V. Legacies**

Nicu Gavriluță, *Actualitatea lui Ioan Petru Culianu* [The Topicality of Ioan Petru Culianu]

Elena Bondor, *Note despre receptarea operei lui Ioan Petru Culianu în România* [Notes on the Reception of Ioan Petru Culianu's Oeuvre in Romania]

Andrei Oișteanu, *Ioan Petru Culianu despre dualismul religios în Europa de Sud-Est* [Ioan Petru Culianu on Religious Dualism in South-East Europe] (online)

Discussion

## **Sunday, 23 October**

### **10:00-12:00 VI. Synthesis**

Mircea Dumitru, *Is There a Role for Epistemology in the History of Religion(s)?*

Moshe Idel, *Ioan Petru Culianu. His Works and His Lives* (online)

Sorin Antohi, *The Games of a Mind. A Portrait of Ioan Petru Culianu*

Discussion

## Participants

1. Sorin Antohi
2. Ted Anton (online)
3. Liviu Antonesei
4. Gabriel Badea
5. Elena Bondor
6. Giovanni Casadio
7. Horia Corneliu Cicortaș (online)
8. Florin Cîntic (discussant)
9. Mircea Dumitru
10. Nicu Gavriluță
11. Moshe Idel (online)
12. Eduard Iricinschi (online)
13. Grazia Marchianò (text)
14. Pablo Maurette
15. Roberta Moretti
16. Andrei Oișteanu (online)
17. Alexandru-Florin Platon (discussant)
18. Igor Tavilla (online)
19. Dorin Tudoran (text)

## BIOS

**Sorin Antohi** (b. 1957) is a historian of ideas, essayist, and translator. He has conducted research, taught, published, attended/(co-)organized conferences, and (co-)led academic associations, institutions, and networks in thirty countries. Former member of the Board, International Committee of Historical Studies. Member of the Academia Europaea. Over the last four decades, he has constantly read, quoted, translated into Romanian, edited, critically engaged, memorialized, and promoted Ioan Petru Culianu's work in Romania and abroad. More at [www.sorinantohi.org](http://www.sorinantohi.org).

**Ted Anton** is Professor of English at Chicago's DePaul University, director of the graduate program in writing, and author of four books, with a fifth due in 2023. As

a Fulbright Senior Research Fellow and Fund for Investigative Journalism reporter, he came to Romania twice in his investigation of the Culianu case. He taught magazine writing at the University of Bucharest and spoke on the crime at the American Cultural Center. His forthcoming book, to be published by Columbia University Press, is *Programmable Planet: The Synthetic Biology Revolution*.

**Liviu Antonesei** (b. 1953) is an acclaimed author and media personality, a former researcher in, as well as a teacher and professor of, Psychology, with a remarkable track record of pre-1989 dissidence and post-1989 civic and political activism (including two and a half years as party leader and senior public servant). He was editor (up to editor-in-chief) in the pre-1989 (largely countercultural) student press of Iași, and in the leadership of various post-1989 periodicals and publishers. He has published widely, especially poetry, fiction, and essays in the fields of sociology, psychology, cultural studies, current affairs, intellectual history. Some of his over thirty books were published in Spanish, German, French, English.

**Gabriel Badea** (MA and PhD from the University of Bucharest). His 2013 dissertation dealt with modern art as art of memory in Eliade and Borges. He carried out research internships at the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris; Università degli Studi di Torino; Istituto Romano di Cultura e Ricerca Umanistica, Venice; Accademia di Romania, Rome, Italy. He has published articles and studies in *Anastasis. Research in Medieval Culture and Art*; *Brukenthalia*; *Images. Journal of Visual and Cultural Studies*; *InterArtes*; *Observator cultural*; *Orizzonti culturali italo-romeni*; *Transilvania*, as well as in collective volumes. Currently, as a researcher at the Institute of History and Literary Theory "G. Călinescu" of the Romanian Academy, participates in the editing project of Mircea Eliade's literary and essayistic work, coordinated by Eugen Simion and Sorin Alexandrescu. He also collaborates to the *Dictionary of Romanian Moralists*. Last work published: *Mircea Eliade, între tradiționalism și modernism. Posteritatea critică în Italia* [Mircea Eliade, between Traditionalism and Modernism. Critical Posterity in Italy], 2022.

**Elena Bondor** holds MA and PhD degrees in Philosophy from the University of Iași, where she also attended advanced studies in logic and hermeneutics; postdoctoral studies of bibliology and information science at the University of Bucharest. Author of *Ștefan Lupașcu în perspectiva logicii „dialectice”* (2005) and *Adrien Le Corbeau – biobibliografie* (2006). Co-author of many collective volumes in the fields of history of Romanian logic, history of Romanian press, media studies, historiography, censorship. In September 2022 she has published a Culianu bibliography: *Ioan Petru Culianu. Bibliografie* (Polirom, two volumes, 1,044 pp.).

**Giovanni Casadio** (b. 1950) is a Professor of history of religions and cultural anthropology and the University of Salerno. Former Vice-president of the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR), Secretary of the Società Italiana di Storia delle religioni (SISR), member of the American Academy of Religion, and Life Honorary Member of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR). Has taught and delivered papers and lectures all over the world, including at Eranos meetings in Ascona. His main fields have been Dionysianism and Orphism (also in connection with Plato and Plutarch), Near-Eastern mythology, ancient Gnosticism and Christianity, Manicheism, ancient anthropology (woman, sexuality, family), and lately mostly the history and methodology of the history of religions, focusing on Pettazzoni and Eliade. He moves from comparison and historical typology to an interpretation/understanding that respects the demands of historical-philological criticism. Among his numerous publications: *Storia del culto di Dioniso in Argolide* (1994); *Vie gnostiche all'immortalità* (1997); *Il vino dell'anima* (1999); *Ugo Bianchi: Una vita per la storia delle religioni* (ed., 2002); *Mystic Cults in Magna Graecia* (co-ed., 2009); *Lo sciamanesimo prima e dopo Mircea Eliade* (2014), and more than 170 papers, including four entries for the second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Religion* (2005) initiated by Mircea Eliade (he was also an Associate Editor of this major collective work).

**Horia Corneliu Cicortaș** (PhD from Università “L’Orientale”, Naples) is a scholar in the field of history of religions and Eastern philosophy, specialized on Mircea Eliade’s works and legacy. In the last ten years, he has held courses on Eastern religions at Trento (first at the Bruno Kessler Foundation, then at the University and at the “Romano Guardini” Institute of Religious Studies). He translated from Romanian to Italian and edited, for several Italian publishing houses, works of Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran, Ioan Petru Culianu, and Matei Vișniec.

**Florin Cîntic** (b. 1962) is a historian and an essayist. Since 2012, Director of the Iași National Archives. He holds a PhD in the history from the University of Iași, under the supervision of Alexandru Zub. Postgraduate studies at INALCO, Paris. Visiting Senior Researcher at the Remarque Institute, NYU (2004) and Fulbright Visiting Professor at the University of Chicago (2005-2006). Member of the Writers’ Union (from 2004), he is the author of seven books, of many scholarly studies and of over four hundred essays and articles in cultural journals, both in Romania and abroad. Has edited four collective volumes. Has received the „Mihai Ursachi” Prize of the Writers’ Union (Iași branch) for *Memorie și uitare în cultura română. Cazul Vasile Conta* (2003). An expert on public policies for culture, with over twenty years of

experience in cultural management, has coordinated several major international projects for Iași, focusing on culture and the creative industries. Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (2011).

**Mircea Dumitru** is a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Bucharest (since 2004). Vice-president of the Romanian Academy since 2022. Executive Director of Romanian-US Fulbright Commission (since 2020). Rector of the University of Bucharest (201-2019). President of the European Society of Analytic Philosophy (2011-2014). President of the International Institute of Philosophy (2017-2021). Fellow of Academia Europaea (since 2019), Corresponding Fellow of the Romanian Academy (2014-2021). Fellow of the Romanian Academy (since 2021). Minister of Education and Scientific Research (July 2016-January 2017). Visiting Professor at Beijing Normal University (2017-2022). President of Balkan Universities Association (2019-2022). He holds a PhD in Philosophy from Tulane University, New Orleans (1998) with a topic in modal logic and philosophy of mathematics, and another PhD in Philosophy from the University of Bucharest (1998) with a topic in philosophy of language. Invited Professor at Tulsa University, CUNY, NYU, Lyon 3, ENS Lyon, University of Helsinki, Pekin University, Renmin University (Beijing), CUPL (Beijing), Xi'an University (Xi'an, China). Main areas of research: philosophical logic, metaphysics, and philosophy of language. Main publications: *Modality and Incompleteness* (UMI, Ann Arbor, 1998); *Modalitate și incompletitudine* (2001, in Romanian; the Mircea Florian Prize of the Romanian Academy); *Logic and Philosophical Explorations* (2004, in Romanian); *Words, Theories, and Things. Quine in Focus* (ed.) (Pelican, 2009); *Truth* (ed.) (Bucharest, 2013); article on the Philosophy of Kit Fine, in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, the Third Edition, Robert Audi (ed.) (Cambridge University Press, 2015), *Lumi ale gândirii* (2019), *Metaphysics, Modality, and Meaning. Themes from the Work of Kit Fine* (ed.) (Oxford University Press, 2020). *Thinking It Through. Selected Papers of Kit Fine* (Oxford University Press, in progress), *Modality and Incompleteness. An Account through Correspondence Theory* (Springer, in progress).

**Nicu Gavriluță** (b. 1963) is a Professor at the University of Iași, former Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences, current Director of the Doctoral Schooleste. A sociologist, anthropologist, and essayist, member of the Writers' Union, former president and vice-president of the Society of Sociologists of Romania.

Books: *Mentalități și ritualuri magico-religioase* (1998); *Culianu, jocurile minții și lumile multidimensionale* (2000); *Imaginarul social al tranziției românești* (2001); *Fractalii și timpul social* (2003); *Hermeneutica simbolismului religios* (2003); *Mișcări religioase orientale. O perspectivă socio-antropologică asupra globalizării practicilor yoga* (2006); *România în starea bardo. Publicistică și dialoguri culturale* (2006); *Antropologie socială și culturală* (2009); *Mama proștilor e mereu gravidă. Sociologia patologiilor cotidiene* (2010); *Sociologia religiilor. Credințe, ritualuri, ideologii* (2013); *Mit, magie și manipulare politică* (2015); *Noile religii seculare. Corectitudinea politică, tehnologiile viitorului și postumanismul* (2018); *Viața, un ritual inițiativ. Interviuri și dialoguri culturale* (2020); *Homo magicus. Camuflări, mistere, soteriologii*, (2021); *De ce ne plac supereroii? Mitologia și simbolistica filmelor Marvel* (2022). He has contributed to many collective volumes and shorter pieces. In 2017, he was awarded the essay prize of the Writers' Union (Iași branch), and the „Vasile Conta” Prize of the Romanian Academy (both for *Mit, magie și manipulare politică*).

**Moshe Idel** (b. 1947, Tîrgu-Neamț) is a Senior Research Fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute and the Max Cooper Professor of Jewish Thought Emeritus at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He has been a visiting professor and research fellow all over the world. He has published over one hundred books and thousands of shorter texts, including the volumes *Kabbalah: A Neurocognitive Approach to Mystical Experiences* (2015); *Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism* (2007); *Kabbalah and Eros* (2005); *Messianic Mystics* (2000); *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic* (State University of New York Press, 1995); *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (Yale University Press, 1988). Among other honors, he was a recipient of the Rothschild Prize for Jewish studies in 2012, and was elected to the Israel Academy for Sciences and Humanities in 2006. In 1999, he became an Israel Prize laureate for excellent achievement in the field of Jewish philosophy. Honorary doctorates from many universities around the world.



**Eduard Iricinski** received his doctorate in 2009 from Princeton University, the Department of Religion. He specializes in ancient Christian heresiology, the Nag Hammadi literature, late antique Manichaeism, and methods and theories in the study of religion. His latest publications include a thematic dossier on “Spiritual Scholarship and the Study of Religion as Self-Improvement: The Search for a Personalized History of Religion at the Eranos Meetings,” co-edited with Marianna Ferrara, in *Asdiwal: Revue genevoise d’anthropologie et d’histoire des religions*, 16/2021. Over the past two decades, Iricinski published various academic articles, both in Romanian and English, devoted to Ioan Petru Culianu. Currently, Iricinski is an associated member of *Laboratoire d’Études sur les Monothéismes* (UMR 8584, CNRS, Paris) and a postdoctoral researcher at Ruhr University Bochum. More at <https://rub.academia.edu/EduardIricinski>

**Grazia Marchianò** is a scholar of Comparative Aesthetics and Indian and Buddhist studies, formerly Professor of Aesthetics and East Asian History and Civilization at the University of Siena-Arezzo. Due to a long familiarity with Asian thought and its relation to Western European thought, she has brought to light a number of ideas in monographs and essays in both English and Italian, in particular a work in two volumes *Sugli orienti del pensiero. La natura illuminata e la sua estetica* (1995). She has been working since then on formulating an epistemology derived both from the Perennial Philosophy, and from the evolving cognitive results of the so-called fringe sciences. Curator of the complete works of Elémire Zolla published by Marsilio, Venice; in 2009 she established, and chairs the International Association for Research Elémire Zolla – AIREZ, directing the new series of bilingual interdisciplinary journal of Religious Knowledge, founded by Zolla in 1969. She introduced to Italy and edited the works of Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and Nisargadatta Maharaj, and is the author of an intellectual biography of Zolla, *Il conoscitore di segreti*, (2012). In recent years she has followed meditation practices in a monastery in Koyasan Shingon (Japan), which was started under the name of Shogen, whose double ideogram meaning is “reunion with the origins”.

**Pablo Maurette** (Buenos Aires, 1979) is Assistant Professor of English at Florida State University. He is the author of three books of essays (including *The Forgotten Sense: Meditations on Touch*) and the novel *La migración* (forthcoming in Polirom). He is also author of numerous essays on premodern literature and Neoplatonism. In 2018, he was a year-long fellow at Villa I Tatti, the Harvard University Center for

Italian Renaissance Studies. He writes for the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica* and lives between Florence, Italy, and Tallahassee, Florida.

**Roberta Moretti** is an independent researcher. She graduated with a thesis on Ioan Petru Culianu, discussed with Grazia Marchianò. Conducted research in the United States as a Senior Fellow Center for the Study of World Religions (Harvard Divinity School) and in Romania (University of Iași). She has published various articles on Culianu, edited and translated *Il rotolo diafano e gli ultimi racconti* (Elliot, Rome 2010). In 2019, she published *Il sacro, la conoscenza e la morte. Le molte latitudini di Ioan Petru Culianu* (Il Cerchio, Rimini). Has co-edited the volume, *Ioan Petru Culianu. Argonauta della quarta dimensione* (Antarès n. 18, Bietti, Milan 2021).

**Alexandru-Florin Platon** (b. 1957) is a Professor of History at the University of Iași, where he was a Dean of the Faculty of History. Many leadership positions in academic administration and coordination at local and national levels. Numerous visiting professorships and research fellowships at universities in France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, and the United States. He specializes in historical anthropology, history of mentalities, history of Medieval Europe, and Romanian social history (nineteenth and twentieth centuries). In recent years, he has also worked on modern and contemporary Romanian Jewish history. He has authored, co-authored, and (co-)edited over twenty volumes, and a large number of shorter pieces. Member of various editorial boards and research groups in Romania and France. Chevalier de l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques (2002). Among his awards, the „A.D. Xenopol” Prize of the Romanian Academy (1999). Member of the Academia Europaea.

**Igor Tavilla** (PhD from the University of Parma, Italy) is a Kierkegaard scholar affiliated with CERISK (Central Europe Research Institute Søren Kierkegaard, based in Ljubljana). In the field of Kierkegaardian studies, he is devoted to deepening Kierkegaard's theory of communication related to new media, and the influence of the Bible on Kierkegaard's categories of “repetition” and “life's stages”. More recently, he has focused on the Romanian philosophy in the interwar period, with special regard to Nae Ionescu's experientialism. As a translator, he edited various works and articles from Danish and Romanian to Italian.

**Dorin Tudoran** (b. 1945) is a writer, journalist, blogger and an international consultant based in USA. He emigrated from Romania in 1985 after a 45-day hunger strike and years of constant criticism of the communist dictatorship.

Between 1993–2008 he worked for IFES, first as country director for Romania and Moldova, then as senior director for communications and research and member of the executive management team. He also launched and was the editor-in-chief of Democracy at Large, a quarterly designed for professionals interested in democracy development worldwide. Prior to IFES, Tudoran founded and ran two democracy magazines, *AGORA* and *Meridian*, worked as an international broadcaster with Voice of America, was a guest lecturer at the University of Connecticut, a research fellow at The Catholic University of America, served as a Board Member of International PEN CLUB – Writers in Exile (1986-1992) and has been a member of the permanent jury for Janus Pannonius Grand Prize for Poetry considered by The New York Times “The Nobel for Poetry”.

Tudoran has written for and been interviewed in a wide variety of international media outlets including: McNeil/Lehrer News Hour, CNN, ABC, CBS, NBC, International Herald Tribune, The Journal of Democracy, Le Monde, the Washington Post, the Washington Times, and Orbis. A well-known political dissident of the 1980s, Tudoran has been a leader of the East-European civil society movement. He launched CENTRAS (Romania) and ADEPT (Moldova), two well-respected NGOs of the region, and served on their boards of directors.

For some of his more than twenty books of poetry, political and literary essays and interviews he has been awarded The Romanian Writers’ Union Prize (1973,1977, 1978 and 1998), The Special Prize of the Romanian Writers’ Union (1992), The Grand Prize of the Romanian Professional Writers’ Association – ASPRO (1998) and the Special Prize of the Moldovan Writers’ Union (1998). In 2009 he received The National Prize for Poetry “Mihai Eminescu” – *Opera Omnia*. In 2020 he received The Order of The Star of Romania, the highest distinction offered by the Romanian state.

Current affiliations: Romanian Writers’ Union (since 1974), French PEN Club (since 1984) and American-Romanian Academy of Arts (since 1986). Tudoran holds a master of arts in Romanian Literature from the University of Bucharest, Romania.

## **ABSTRACTS**

**Sorin Antohi** attempts to give a synthetic, comprehensive portrait of Culianu, looking at his oeuvre (from the viewpoint of the history of ideas and of science studies), biography, and legacy, and also placing him against the backgrounds of Romanian, European, and global recent intellectual history.

**Ted Anton**, author of the National Magazine Award-nominated *Lingua Franca* investigation of the murder of Culianu, and of the Northwestern University Press Carl Sandburg Award-winning book on the same subject, *Eros, Magic, and the Murder of Professor Culianu* (1996), explains how his investigation of the assassination of a writer of fiction and scholarship changed his own life and career. This talk updates the key facts and lasting significance of a crime against humanity.

**Liviu Antonesei** revisits two of his autonomous texts inspired mostly by Culianu's life, and written a decade apart from one another. The first text starts from the vision of possible worlds, and places two of them in parallel. One we know: departure to Italy, international career, and tragic death in Chicago. In the second, Culianu stays in Romania, becomes a dissident, plays an active role after 1989, but tragedy catches up with him. In Bucharest. In the second text, the author reminisces on his only long encounter he had with Culianu, shortly before the latter's emigration. It was a fateful encounter for the author, who acknowledges Culianu as his magister.

**Gabriel Badea** discusses the contribution of Culianu to the theory of magic, respectively his position in relation to the genealogy of important authors in this field of research, with references to his most important work on this subject, *Éros et magie à la Renaissance. 1484* (1984), respectively to the context in which it was written and published, as well as the relationships with works with a similar topic, due to names such as F. Yates, D. P. Walker, P. O. Kristeller, G. Agamben. Badea looks at the originality of the book from 1984, the way in which Culianu related to certain *topoi* of the Renaissance: the figure of the magician-philosopher (Ficino, Pico Della Mirandola, Bruno, Cornelius Agrippa); the relations between magic and natural philosophy; the opposition between Neo-Platonism and Hermeticism, on the one hand, and Aristotelianism, on the other; the distinction between spiritual magic and demonological magic; the relations between Eros and magic. Culianu developed in his works the theory of the suppression of the imaginative and fantastic spirit of the Renaissance by the scientific and rationalist currents that were in full force after the 15th century (he fixes this beginning of the decline in the year 1484, the year in which it is assumed that Luther would have been born). At the level of the Renaissance culture, there was an animistic vision of the cosmos, based on a long philosophical tradition, especially on the Aristotelian philosophy of the soul and Neoplatonic emanatism, which attached great importance to phantasms and the human capacity to actively operate on and through them above the world. Other articles with a similar theme will be mentioned, in which Culianu

studies the relationship between art and magic in the context of the Renaissance, as well as articles published shortly before his disappearance ("Magic and Cognition", 1991; "Alcune riflessioni sulla magia e la sua fine", 1991), a fact that attests that over time he kept an attachment to this theme of reflection.

**Elena Bondor:** The reception of Culianu's work in Romania has been context-dependent. After his departure from Romania in 1972, his very name was banned from publication, and his family was under pressure from the regime. Until 1989, the reception of his work in Romania was extremely modest, while from 1973 on his name and texts became increasingly present in exile periodicals. After 1989, the publication of Culianu's work in Romania has been steadily expanding, while Romanian readers gained better access to his publications abroad. Also, scholarly and public interest resulted in a multitude of publications and research projects (at MA, PhD, and postdoc levels). In 1994-2000, Tereza Culianu-Petrescu and Dan Petrescu have coordinated an editorial project at Nemira (Bucharest), which was continued by the former, with the assistance of the latter, at Polirom (since 2002). The series with Polirom, Biblioteca Ioan Petru Culianu, includes Romanian originals and translations into Romanian, some of previously unpublished material, cover the whole spectrum of Culianu's production, as well as significant trends in exegesis.

**Giovanni Casadio** attempts to reconstruct aspects of the academic career and intellectual and emotional development of Culianu through the (unpublished) letters addressed to the present writer. Letters studied and interpreted on the background and in the intertwining with other more relevant correspondences: those with the two mentors Eliade and Bianchi (mostly unpublished letters), with the biographer of Eliade, Mc. L. Ricketts, and with other minor correspondents. In the conclusion we try to assess Culianu's contribution to the historical and scientific study of religion in close connection with his human route.

**Horia Corneliu Cicortaș:** Culianu's first book, *The Art of the Fugue* (short stories), should have been published in 1971, in Romania. Yet, the debut took place with a book published in Italy (1987) on his master Eliade, prepared during his stay in Italy (1972-1976) but released when Culianu was living in Groningen. The real turning point, which brought the author some notoriety, was accomplished due to the French volumes published in 1984: *Expériences de l'Extase* and, mainly, *Eros et magie à la Renaissance: 1484*. The apex of Culianu's scientific, academic and publishing career was reached during the years spent in Chicago (1986-1991). After his unexpected and violent death there was an expansion of the "mythical" dimension of the author, as Umberto Eco had reported five years after the (still unsolved) murder; on the other

hand, an increasing decline of his literary fortune occurred. With the exception of Romania, where his works have been translated and systematically published, and of Italy – a country with whom he had close relationship –, in the rest of the world Culianu is actually an almost forgotten author. I attempt an overall examination of this situation and try to trace the different phases and aspects of the Romanian author's literary fortune, identifying, in particular, the reasons for oblivion, as well as the recent trend reversals and, more generally, the coordinates of a possible reevaluation of his work on an global scale.

**Mircea Dumitru** examines the works of some contemporary epistemologists in relation to the way Culianu uses their concepts and ideas to configure a philosophy and history of religion(s).

**Nicu Gavriluță** shows the topicality of Culianu's work by direct references to the intellectual model the author proposed and to some of his seminal major theses. The latter include the new hypostases of the nihilism of Gnostic origin; the anthropic principle and the relevance of multidimensional worlds in quantum physics; the understanding of current political phenomena with the help of the binary-fractal method and, last but not least, the new forms of magical phantasms in contemporary society.

**Moshe Idel** offers synthetic view of Culianu, based on decades of familiarity with the work and life of his friend (theirs was an instant, deep, if brief fraternal encounter), and with most of, if not all, their contexts..

**Eduard Iricinschi** analyzes the fiction Culianu wrote between 1981 and 1991, and connects it with his studies on magic and the art of memory in the Renaissance. The titles discussed include Culianu's short stories collected in *Le Rouleau diaphane*, as well as his novels *Hesperus*, *Toz grec*, and *The Emerald Game*, co-written with Hillary S. Wiesner). The working hypothesis of this paper is twofold. It first holds that Culianu advanced and refined his research in Renaissance magic and the art of memory both in academic writings *and* literary texts; the latter probably, but not exclusively, operating as a mind-games workshop for the former. Secondly, it suggests that Culianu's fictions hold valuable clues about his intellectual and personal development during the 1980s.

**Pablo Maurette**: In the fall of 2014, during my second year as Collegiate Assistant Professor at the University of Chicago, I discovered the story of the assassination of Culianu through a chance encounter with Ted Anton's book. This discovery led me to familiarize myself with the life and work of Culianu. Inspired by Culianu's own

fiction writing and on his love of metanarrative games, soon after I started writing a novel that is centered on the story. *La migración* (2020; in Italian, *Il tempo è un fiume*, 2022) tells the story of Aaron, an Argentine student at the University of Chicago who comes across the chronicle of Culianu's demise and decides to investigate further hoping to solve the crime. Having inserted himself in the Romanian community of the Windy City, one day the student vanishes without a trace. Twenty-five years later, his friends in Buenos Aires receive an anonymous package that contains Aaron's diaries. Over the course of a night of drinking and reminiscing, they look for clues in the text which contains, among many other things, a pseudo-biography of Culianu. In an homage to Culianu, the novel is conceived as a *ludibrium*, i.e., an ancient riddle that some thought contained the key to important secrets about the universe. In particular, the book explores the mystery of metempsychosis, and advances the notion that literature functions as a sort of transmigration, by which images, motifs, and stories travel across time and space embodying the most diverse forms.

**Roberta Moretti:** The highlights some concepts introduced by Culianu in his later writings, showing a growing interest in the relationship between the mind and reality. I'll examine these concepts' impact on his historical research methodology, supported by a keen epistemological perspective. Particularly interesting are his considerations on the concept of myth, whose conception of time is supposed to stand in opposition to "historical time", offering a perspective of a time "out of time". To Culianu, it was crucial to adopt the relativistic space-time perspective introduced by Albert Einstein together with the idea of a fourth dimension. His analysis of myth was also important, and may also an interesting correlation with the concept of interdependence, as it appears in his *Out of This World* (1991). In the academic year 1989-1990, Culianu held a seminar group at the University of Siena-Arezzo, based on the myth of Faust, entitled "Faust: un mito alle radici dell'Occidente", for which he used a draft he gave to the students (still unpublished) that is mainly based on his *Dr. Faustus, Great Sodomite and Necromancer*, published in Romanian (translated by Sorin Antohi) and French in 1990. In these two essays, exploring the extremely wide field a myth can cover in history, Culianu came to define myth as an "empty scheme that adapts to every message". I think this definition may have significant implications which should not be neglected by researchers of myth, and humanities generally considered. It raises the question of whether this "empty scheme" can explain the countless variations of myths. Furthermore, can the concept of emptiness explain also the various forms of cultures in human history? We should recall that in the later years of his life the scholar was exploring the morphology or "the theory

of forms”, and in *Eros and magic in the Renaissance* of 1986 (pp. xx-xi), he states that “in the final analysis every cultural system rest on myths”, even the positive sciences.

**Igor Tavilla:** The “last Culianu”, or the “American Culianu”, is generally reputed to have marked a turning point in the interpretation of Western dualisms, meaning that the Romanian historian of religion has shifted from a philological-historical approach to Gnosis to a cognitive one, according to which religious systems are nothing but ideal objects whose functioning and reproduction are basically regulated by a mental rule which tends to implement all its infinite possible variations. This presentation focuses on the main “permutations” in Culianu’s interpretation of Western dualism, from *I miti dei dualismi occidentali* (1989), through *Les gnosés dualistes d’Occident* (1990) to *The Tree of Gnosis* (1992).

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### **Culianu on Cognition: Prophetic Conjectures**

Grazia Marchianò

«The Humanities may not even exist in their present form within a few generations». This conjecture by Ioan Petru Culianu has proved to be a prophecy across the three decades after his passing. In my opinion this depends on the rise of the so-called systems thinking, deeply affecting a conception of life wherein brain and mind, consciousness, and the very process of knowing dictate terms to face the post-modern complexity in a fully radical way. As a thinker eager to explore interactions and connections among all domains of life, Culianu dugged into the inner roots of cognition--a key concept in his lexicon--, recognized as a powerful matrix of all kinds of creative processes taking place in the multi-levelled worlds investigated by natural sciences as well as by the humanities--anthropology, history, history of religions, etc. After Culianu’s death this courageous global approach opened the way to the advent of what scientists like Fritjof Capra and Pier Luigi Luisi called the *Systems View of Life* in their homonymous treatise (*The Systems View of Life: A Unifying Vision*, Cambridge University Press 2014). It is a view meant to integrate ideas, models, and theories into a single coherent framework embracing a broad range of research fields--from mathematics and economy to biology, to social and environmental sciences--, extending the systems approach to consciousness, brain and mind, ecology and education, religion and spirituality. In the inaugural issue of *Incognita* (I:1,1990), Culianu foresaw the advent of an epistemology seen as an interactive and dynamic field capable to instill a unifying vision of life, matter, and



mind. He writes: «In cognitive studies, human history may take shape as an incessantly branching system in infinite dimensional space. [This] can be divided in subsystems which, in their turn, are branchings in an illimitable span of space-time. This is the system of language, thus is the system of knowledge of past human ecology, settlements, technologies, and beliefs».

Capra's and Luisi's systems view of life adopts exactly Culianu's presaging perspective by expanding it in terms centered on *autopoiesis*. This is a term of Greek origin (from the verb *poiein*) wherein the act of 'making', taken in holistic terms, involves an in-built capacity to produce, organize, evolve, transform itself and interact in global networks. The conceptual scheme of the autopoiesis theory was developed by biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela in the 1970s. According to them, the main characteristic of life is self-maintenance due to the internal networking of a chemical system that continuously reproduces itself within a boundary of its own making. The additional, most relevant aspect of this own-making is that it involves cognition. This epistemic notion, pioneeringly envisaged by Culianu in his *Incognita* project, was meant to modify in a radical way the old notion of knowledge, whose two players are the knower and the known, dualistically taken in an exclusively anthropic context. He prophetically understood that the very notion of 'I' is an emergent property arising from the simultaneous occurrence and resonance of feelings, memories, and thoughts, so that the 'I' is not localized anywhere but rather is an organized pattern without a center. By making mine Francisco Varela's words, I would say with conviction: «I will never discover a neuron, a soul, or some core essence that constitutes the emergent self of Ioan Petru Culianu or any other person».

I entrust these inadequate reflections on someone whom I consider a pioneer of present-day cognitive science to the distinguished colleagues convened in Iași, with a special homage to Tereza Culianu-Petrescu, deeply appreciating her life mission to stubbornly support, promote, and interpret the magnificent legacy of her brother, a heroic son of the Romanian motherland.

October 2022

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**“He Wrote Books, Then He Died”**

Dorin Tudoran

My friend Néné (aka Ioan Petru Culianu) was a man of many hats: historian of religion, culture, and ideas, philosopher and political essayist, and writer. Since his untimely, tragic and absurd death more than thirty years ago, friends, scholars and admirers of his work have published thousands of pages about his extraordinary, multidimensional personality. I'm sure that during this gathering, some of his erudite friends and admirers will further detail his already extraordinary scholarly portrait. Please allow me – probably Néné's most unlearned friend -- to be more relaxed and less academically inclined.

I would like to start by confessing that what I miss most keenly is not so much Culianu's encyclopedic knowledge, but Culianu the human being, Néné's incredible sense of humor. And now, two episodes.

First. We discovered very soon, and discussed at length, our common fascination for authors like Adolfo Bioy Casares and Jorge Luis Borges. Casares' novel *La invención de Morel* (The Invention of Morel) published in 1940, and the Introduction in which Borges placed the novel of the twenty-six-year-old author in the same league with Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*, Franz Kafka's *The Trial*, and Jules Verne's *Voyage to the Center of the Earth*, were constant topics in several of our conversations.

One evening, we spent more than an hour talking about the role of translations, starting from the classic “Traduttore, traditore,” the idea that translation is always a betrayal of the original's true meaning. We debated if the English translation of a paragraph from Casares's novel is or is not a betrayal of the

After a couple of days, I asked Néné what he thought about the first collaboration between the seventeen-year-old Casares and the thirty-year-old Borges. I was certainly referring to the “semi-scientific, semi-commercial pamphlet about the virtues of yogurt” the two Argentinian authors wrote in 1935 for *La Martona*, the largest Argentinian dairy chain, owned by Casares's uncle. Of the four recipes offered by Borges and Casares in their pamphlet, one became famous – *Pan de Maíz con Leche Cuajada* (Cornbread with Yogurt).

Néné's answer was prompt and detailed: “Dorin, we must write a 150% scientific and 200% non-commercial pamphlet that glorifies the virtues of the Romanian dish *polenta* with-cheese-butter-milk-and-sour cream (mămăliguță cu brânză-unt-lapte-și-smântână), underscore its role in the consolidation of Romanian patriotism, and offer our own recipe for this most-patriotic Romanian dish. Then, we should send our pamphlet for publication to *Scînteia* [The Spark]. But first, we need to go to

Buenos Aires and collect as much information as possible about the history of *La Martona* and have a *café cortado* with *medialunas* at Café Tortoni. Deal?” “Deal.”

Of course, we sent nothing to *Scînteia* and never found the time to travel together to Argentina, but due to Néné’s essay *Cultură română?* published in *Agora*, Néné, as an author, and I, as an Editor-in-Chief of the magazine, were declared, even by some common acquaintances, haters of Romanian culture, showing a shameless, unpatriotic lack of respect for it.

Second. Being five years older than him, one day I exercised this privilege, and proposed that Néné and I should switch from the formal way of addressing one another (*vouvoiment*) to using our first names (*tutoiement*). He accepted graciously. Three days before, I had returned from a Congress organized in Blois by Jacques Lang (at the time French minister of Culture and mayor of the city), sponsored by the wife of President François Mitterrand, Danielle. I told Néné that due to some logistical mishaps, I had to share a flat, for one day and one night, with Roman Polanski. The famous movie director asked me a lot of questions about Ceaușescu and Romania, but refused to give me an interview for Voice of America since, for well-known reasons, he hated the US Government. All he wanted me to have on tape was “À bas Ceaușescu! Vive la Roumanie! J’aime mon nouvel ami Dorin!”

During the official closing dinner, Jacques Lang introduced me to Danielle Mitterrand. Then I had a private talk with Gilles Martinet, an old *camarade d’armes* of the President -- for whom I had a message from one of his friends still in Romania who was constantly being harassed by the Securitate. We also talked a bit about François Mitterrand, and I confessed to Martinet that I found the French President a little bit boring, humorless. Martinet told me that I was wrong, and offered a story: one day, a member of the French Socialist Party asked Mitterrand: “*Je peux te tutoyer?*”. Mitterrand answered: „*Si vous voulez.*”. Néné was amused and we talked a little bit about the difference between *le tutoiement* and *le vouvoiment*. After several years, in 1993, I found the short dialogue mentioned by Catherine Aubry, too, in her book *Dites-moi tu*.

Next time when he called me, Néné started by „Bonsoir, Dorin. Je peux te tutoyer?”. „Si vous voulez, cher Néné.” He replied: „À bas Ceaușescu! Vive la Roumanie!”

As I write, it is now almost 4 o’clock in the morning. I’ve just finished to read again Casares’ novel. I look at the phone. Somehow, I am waiting for it to ring, and to hear Néné’s soft voice: „Dorin, je peux te tutoyer?” I know -- it will never happen. All

I'm left with at this early hour are Dante Gabriel Rossetti's verses quoted by Borges at the end of his introduction to Casares' book:

“I have been here before,  
But when or how I cannot tell:  
I know the grass beyond the door,  
The sweet keen smell,  
The sighing sound, the lights around the shore.”

I'm not sure that Malraux was right saying “The terrible thing about death is that it transforms life into destiny.” I would rather say that some people have lives, while some have destiny. I know to which category Néné belongs.

A year after the death of her husband John Gregory Dunne, Joan Didion discovered, in a volume called *Lives of '54*, that had been prepared for the fiftieth reunion of his class at Princeton University, a couple of lines written by Dunne himself: “*William Faulkner once said that a writer's obituary should read 'He wrote books, then he died.'*”. That would suffice.

Obviously, this is not an obituary, it is a celebration of a brilliant man. Still, the inexorable truth is that after he wrote books, he died. It's as simple as that.

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