While a general survey of modern Romanian literary history must begin with the nineteenth century, there was little literary research in that period. This phase is too recent to benefit from complex interpretation. Even works by competent scholars such as Aron Densusianu, Alexandru Philippide, and Moses Gaster seem insignificant today. Ion G. Sbiera is sometimes still quoted.\(^1\) Retrospective analyses were either polemical in nature or purely philological—such as text editions and rediscoveries of forgotten authors. Literary-historical endeavor in the nineteenth century is, in fact, remarkable only for a few solid anthologies or chrestomathies, often accompanied by detailed introductions; some achieved wide popularity both among Romanian and foreign scholars of the time. The first of these was brought out by the erudite Greek-Catholic canon Timotei Cipariu,\(^2\) the most scholarly (and in many respects still unsurpassed) by the Jewish philologist and activist Moses Gaster.\(^3\) The collections of Aron Pumnul, Alexandru Lambrior, and Gheorghe Adamescu were more in the nature of textbooks.\(^4\)

Paradoxically, comparatist approaches to literature seem to precede Romanian history proper. Most of them are actually studies of comparative folklore, and some are merely the literary spin-off of philological and historical research.\(^5\) A beneficial consequence of this early involvement in compar-

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1. Ion George Sbiera, *Miscărări culturale și literare la românii din stinga Dunării în răs-\[timpul de la 1505-1714* (Cernăuți: Tipografia arhiepiscopală, 1897).
2. Timoteiu Cipariu, *Crestomatie sau analecte din cărțile mai vechi și noi românesci* (Blaj: Tipografia Seminarului, 1858).
3. Moses Gaster, *Crestomatie romana. Texte tipărite și manuscrise (sec. XVI-XIX dialectale și populare*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, București: Brockhaus, Socecu, 1891); notes and introduction are also in French, and a Romanian-French glossary is included.
tist study was the development in the twentieth century of one of the strongest comparatist schools in Europe. A much more formidable negative result was the tenacious concept that a history of Romanian literature was impossible to write except as a series of disconnected episodes, each induced by outside literary or historical influences. The “fragmentary” character of Romanian history was thus, in theory, reflected in the literature. The recent upsurge of Romanian literary (and cultural) history studies can be seen largely as a reaction against this theory and as an attempt to work out Romanian literary history as a coherent developing entity.

The first important history of Romanian literature was by (whom else?) Nicolae Iorga. The tremendous erudition of this great historian makes his work still readable and useful. It is clear, however, that the two volumes on the eighteenth century are better grounded in fact and more creative in judgment than the later ones; those covering the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are, in fact, practically useless, except as literary documents. Iorga’s notorious subjectivity and irascibility are visible at every step—his claim to have been the mentor of Romanian letters caused him to be frustrated when literary events would not follow the course he desired and predicted. The systematic and comprehensive history by Ovid Denasuianu, a leading Romance philologist, suffers from similar limitations of choice and critical frustrations. Simultaneously, great strides forward became possible owing to the pioneering bibliographical work of Ion Bianu. It was only in the 1940s that these works (all basically conceived in the early years of the century) were to be superseded, though meanwhile useful (albeit less than original) syntheses had been provided by Adamescu, Petru V. Haneș, Dumitru

6. This is already apparent in the highly competent studies of Pompiliu Eliade, *De l'influence française sur l'esprit public en Roumanie. Les origines. Étude sur l'état de la société roumaine à l'époque des régnes phanariotes* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1898), as well as his *Histoire de l'esprit public en Roumanie*, 2 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1914); Nicolae I. Apostolescu, *L'Influence des romantiques français sur la poésie roumaine* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1909). Leading scholars of the time, such as Ramiro Ortiz or Charles Drouhet, would appear to have shared this view. It is casually (and brutally) expressed in some Western (particularly German) histories; later, it was taken up in a defiant key by writers such as Eugen Ionescu, Ilarie Voronca, Emil Cioran, etc.


9. Particularly Ion Bianu and Nerva Hodos, *Bibliografia românească veche 1508-1830*, 3 vols. (București: Edițiunea Academiei Române, Socec, 1903-36) and I. Bianu, *Cataloagul manusciptelor românești*, 3 vols. (București: Edițiunea Academiei Române, 1907-31). These and other ventures were energetically continued and expanded after 1950, particularly by Dan Simonescu (the first work quoted) and Gabriel Strempel (the second).