Ibrăileanu and the Idea of a Romanian Classicism

The paper investigates the formation of the Romanian literary canon starting from the „nucleus” of this canon, i.e. the „great classic” authors in the last quarter of the 19th century. Debating the reason for the stability of the nucleus, one observes that the reasons are not only aesthetical, but also political, even though the main literary historians of the 20th century appeared to deal with exclusively aesthetic criteria for literature. In order to solve this puzzle, one has to return to the origin of this process of canon formation, which took place at the turn of the 20th century. This is why the focus of this paper lies in the studies and articles of G. Ibrăileanu on the idea of the „classic”. Ibrăileanu’s concept of canonicity is inherited from the (mostly French) culture wars of the 19th century (as described by Prendergast 2005), and therefore it is marred by the unintended confusion between the aesthetic and the political (national). The conclusion is that the aesthetic canon needs to be further investigated for the indelible traces of extra-aesthetical reasons that lie therein.