



Book review: *Ascensiunea autorului în epoca globalizării digitale* [The Rise of the Author in the Age of Digital Globalisation].

Alex Ciorogar, Ascensiunea autorului în epoca globalizării digitale [The Rise of the Author in the Age of Digital Globalisation]. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2025. 395 pp.

Oana Celia GHEORGHIU

“Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati

Alex Ciorogar’s *Ascensiunea autorului în epoca globalizării digitale* offers a comprehensive reassessment of authorship theory. The volume, a revised doctoral dissertation, positions itself at the intersection of literary theory, cultural studies, sociology of art, and posthumanist philosophy, aiming to rethink the figure of the author beyond the familiar binary of “death” and “return”. The result is an erudite investigation that proposes a new conceptual framework, an “ecology of authorship”, capable of accommodating the multiplicity and heterogeneity of contemporary creative practices.

Ciorogar revisits the rupture introduced in the 1960s by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, whose essays “The Death of the Author” and “What Is an Author?” remain essential starting points for any discussion of authorship. While recognising the fundamental importance of these texts, he notes, with regret, that they have become “more quoted than actually read”¹ (2025: 2), thus fossilising a debate that has not significantly progressed over the past six decades. The introduction, therefore, aims to map the main strands of contemporary research on authorship across various disciplines and to examine the ideological assumptions that have shaped these strands, including the tendency of theory to replicate its own forms of authority even as it challenges the authority of the empirical author.

The theoretical core of the volume consists of two substantial chapters on Barthes and Foucault. Although these essays have been widely examined, Ciorogar’s close readings reveal their internal tensions and inconsistent afterlives. Ciorogar considers the “death of the author” not as a definitive theoretical conclusion but as a historically situated act that has been selectively misunderstood or misinterpreted. “‘The Death of the Author’ circumscribes, I daresay, the most frequently quoted phrase in modern literary studies and, at the same time, the least often read analysis of literary modernity” (145).

Unarguably, however,

The humanities, in general, urgently need social legitimacy. Contemporary politics demands that artistic forms do more than merely offer subjective experiences to individuals. So, how do literary forms (and their study) serve society? From a contemporary stylistics perspective, literary forms organise human lives, thereby constructing the idea of the collective. (2025: 193)

This (utilitarian?) paradigm also shifts the focus to the conditions that reshape and complicate the author's role. Ciorogar discusses authorial intention, agency, and methodological paradigms throughout the book. Taken together, his analyses reconstruct the broader conceptual histories that have influenced authorship studies, demonstrating how intertextuality, digital models, and the theory-driven priorities of the late twentieth-century academy have contributed to the marginalisation of the author as a critical category.

Ciorogar observes that the processes of globalisation and digitalisation alter both the literary landscape and the author's expression, noting that "globalisation affects the structure and role of literary institutions, while also changing the dynamics of copyright and how digital technologies influence writers' ability to express themselves." (134)

At the same time, digital technologies have expanded the modes of literary production, thereby affecting authorial visibility. Claims are made about the participatory and collaborative potential of online environments, citing the argument that the reader may become a "co-creator" ("the reader would have become the writer's real associate"). while suggesting that such assertions remain mainly prescriptive and lack sufficient support (320). Elsewhere, Ciorogar emphasises the need to expand the theoretical framework to incorporate digital and algorithmic agency, arguing that additional categories dedicated to "authorial technologies" could clarify "the question of digital-algorithmic authorship." (369).

These discussions align with his broader reflection on the instability of authorial identity in posthumanist conditions. In this context, the author becomes increasingly challenging to define, given the emergence of a "spectral or dispersed identity" (118) and the ongoing tension between contemporary cultural and political frameworks that still depend on identifiable authorial positions.

Ciorogar's most compelling contribution is his proposal for an "ecology of authorship," inspired by Atsushi Akera's work on the "ecology of knowledge." The book maps information, agents, institutional trajectories, technological mediations, and discursive practices. This enables Ciorogar to account for the multiplicity of authorial manifestations without reducing them to either structuralist functions or individual psychological profiles.

Thus, the rise of the author reflects the ambiguity that the era of digital globalisation appears to have imposed on the state and the conditions of existence for the creative subject. Of course, we cannot revert to biographical criticism; however, we cannot fully dismiss the new conceptual efforts either, especially as the current directions in literary studies are, in one way or another, aimed against the epistemologies that led to the death of the author theory, namely, against the Romantic genealogy. A theory of an ecology of authorship would, therefore, facilitate the development of a postcapitalist understanding where diverse authorial positions can be organised and interpreted without entirely eliminating contradictions or contrasts. An ecological approach to authorial theories would primarily require the peaceful coexistence of the different manifestations it encompasses. (Ciorogar 2025: 302)

The scope of this book, which discusses literary theory, sociology, philosophy, digital studies, and more, can become so complex that it risks overshadowing the author's voice amid the vastness of the scholarship presented. I agree with Braga's dilemma in the foreword: "Alex Ciorogar proposes the concept of ascension of the author in a work in which he himself refuses to embrace the author (theorist) stance, but remains dispersed in the multitude of signs, apostrophes, and marginal authorial commentaries scattered along an extended process of source-inventorying" (Braga in Ciorogar, 2025: xviii), although I wonder whether this cannot be deliberate, in line with that democratic/democratising ecology of authorship.

Ascensiunea autorului în epoca globalizării digitale stands out, nevertheless, as a significant contribution to contemporary authorship studies. It provides a broad overview of the field and an innovative framework for reconsidering the author within the context of digital globalisation and posthuman transformation. For scholars interested in literary theory, cultural sociology, world literature, and digital humanities, Ciorogar's volume will be essential reading.

Notes

¹All translations in the text are mine.