

Dana Radler*

Bucharest University of Economic Studies

Faculty of International Business & Economics

Department of Modern Languages & Business Communication

Bucharest, Romania

Panaït Istrati's *Après seize mois dans l'U.R.S.S.* (1929) and Eleni Samios' *La véritable tragédie de Panaït Istrati* (1938): testimonies upon the USSR

Journeys and learning are defining multifarious experiences for the French-Romanian writer Panaït Istrati (1884-1935) and his friend, Nikos Kazantzakis (1883-1957). During their trip in the USSR in 1928, Marie-Luise Baud-Bovy and Eleni Samios joined them. Recent studies about their voyage have not explored two related volumes: Istrati's *Après seize mois dans l'U.R.S.S.* [*After 16 months in the USSR*] (1929) versus *La véritable tragédie de Panaït Istrati* authored by Samios (first Spanish edition 1938, French edition 2013). This first comparative analysis presents Istrati and Samios as writers coming from capitalist countries connected by ethnic affiliation (the Greek community) as well as leftist political views.

Istrati and Samios outline the vast and considerable reforms undertaken by the Soviet regime while presenting the opinions of the locals: full commitment, partial support or (un)disclosed resistance. However, Istrati was already an established novelist in France, yet Samios was the partner of a rising author, Kazantzakis. How do such differentiations in terms of gender, age and experience impact their perceptions upon the East-West connections and divide? What are their emotional and intellectual response towards the Soviets where status and power had reconverged values and relationships? Beyond sporadic anecdotic or jocular touches inspired by various events or reactions showing a closer or more distant rapport with *the other*, be it among the four travellers or the locals, the key concern of both authors is to understand how individuals cope with change. Time, distance and confession are the key variables shaping these two works switching from occasional reportage, briefly spiced up by cultural or historical references, to interior monologues or essayistic fragments. Ideological and cultural clashes complement their naturally-driven confluences and interactions. To this day, these two testimonies stand out as particularly able to inspire reflection and transformation across geographical, social and cultural borders.

Bio: A graduate of the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Dana Radler completed her PhD with a thesis on “Memory and Fiction in John McGahern's Works”. Her current research topics combine memory, gender and culture in fiction as articulated components of modern societies. She has published articles in academic journals in Sweden (*Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies*, 2018), Poland (2020), Turkey (*Folklor/edebiyat*, 2018), India (*Rupkatha*, 2021) and Romania (*Philologica Jassyensia*, 2019; *British and American Studies*, 2018; *Synergy*, 2016, 2017, 2018; *American, British and Canadian Studies*, 2016 and others) and various book chapters in collective volumes published in Italy (2020), Poland (2019) and Romania (2020, 2019 and others) on Irish, British or Romanian authors. In 2018, she was co-editor of a thematic issue of journal *Synergy* (Romania), including ten contributions focusing on the theme East and West within Interdisciplinary Frames. Her first co-edited bilingual volume, entitled *Panaït Istrati. Littérature et société. Panaït Istrati. Literature and society*, (Bucharest, 2021) focuses on identity, translation, political influences or hybrid elements coming from the Romanian folklore. At present, she is Assistant Professor in the Department of Modern Languages and Business Communication at the Faculty of International Business & Economics, Bucharest University of Economic Studies.

*Nota Bene: please list my name as “Dana Radler”, as I prefer the short version of my name, even if my name appears in the passport and other documents as “Daniela Radler” .