

# Review of: "How We've Become Not-Men"

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A very interesting short essay, with much thinking invested in it. The author is clearly a specialist in Cioran's work, and a versatile reader of Nietzsche's work, yet he proposes an essay somehow unequal in style (bringing both new information as well as very well-known facts about Nietzsche's ideas, for instance, or using both formal and informal expressions, which I think should be avoided). I would recommend using quotation marks for the concept of "not-man" throughout the whole article, since this is actually Cioran's term, as the author discloses later on. I would recommend using a more academic style (giving up some oral syntax, sometimes inappropriate expressions that are too informal, unsophisticated, and exaggerated (incidentally he speaks about Cioran's own exaggerations, but he seems to treat us with some of his own as well). I would avoid wordings such as "I believe I can locate" ("I believe" is actually used excessively in the text), "these postromantic poets [...] would like" (I would not go into the intentionality of these writers if I do not bring any proof in this sense), "But enough with the age of dichotomy", etc. Such phrases are more appropriate for an oral presentation but less for a research article (even for a shorter article focusing on a very minute detail/ concept, etc. they are inappropriate). He should also change the word 'paper'. In my opinion, we present 'papers' but we write articles or essays. I know the term 'paper' is more and more used, especially in Social Sciences, but as someone who comes from the Humanities, I would insist on the difference. Perhaps some headings are too vague ("Theory") or too large ("A Brief History of Mankind"). Adding subtitles or narrowing down such vast notions/ claims like the latter title would help the reader understand why examples come from Nietzsche and Eminescu, for instance. Perhaps a subsection in the introduction should explain why the author chose Nietzsche's and Eminescu's works, as well as Foucault's explanations. The author is certainly very erudite but there is no clear method shown throughout this undoubtedly valuable contribution to Cioran studies and this lack of method makes it look disjointed (if the author somehow is interested in presenting his essay in a fragmented form, bringing to mind Cioran's own fragments, then we should be told that). All in all, I would also remark a certain style that shows that Stefan Bolea is such a Cioran lover that towards the end he almost loses his own voice and borrows the philosopher's aphoristic style that becomes quite obscure to the reader. It's unclear whether we read an article on Cioran's concept or Bolea's own ideas about death at the end of the article (Bolea's ideas otherwise remind us of Cioran's). If the end was meant as a creative development of Cioran's concept, we should be announced in an explanatory paragraph at the beginning (this article starts from explaining... demonstrates .... and proposes a subjective exploration of the concept which becomes the author's creative response to ... resulting in a series of ideas that end up on a string of quotations mirroring them). Also, the choice of ending on several quotations should be explained. There are no conclusions, but I think this is part of the intentionality of the author who takes a Cioran stance of *enfant terrible* who plays with his reader's horizons of expectations. I can play along these lines, as far as I know what to expect from the beginning

(although, again, one of the purposes of the article is to shock the reader rather than make him/her feel at ease.) Yet some readers may feel uncomfortable with this style if they are not provided with some explanations.

The bibliography includes titles in Romanian which are translated most likely by the author. That should be mentioned as a note (All translations belong to the author unless otherwise indicated. I happen to know the respective fragments in Romanian, and I can add that the author's translations are excellent, but he didn't even give himself this credit, of disclosing to his readers that he translated some well-chosen fragments that were included in this article).

My review perhaps sounds like one written by an old pedagogue who is trying to tame the creative and flamboyant ideas of an author whose style is very innovative. This style may be very trendy for those interested in reading a post-Cioranian type of *écriture*. But to a more traditional academic like me, although I can see very well what the author is trying to do, this imitative Cioran tone seems less convincing. I know Helene Cixous invented 'critifiction', yet she found her own (original) voice in this style, while in Stefan Bolea's text I see his own voice melted into Cioran's word games and style. As several scholars have emphasized, we need to take some distance from Cioran's texts. Also, on a different note, I do not completely share the author's ideas on Cioran's antihumanism which cannot be proven but in some particular works (yet the author rightly uses only examples from those particular works). I keep my opinion that he may have had some nihilist texts, but he was rather a skeptic overall. For some balance, the author should perhaps mention in a footnote that not everyone agrees with Cioran's nihilistic stance (and provide a few examples like Shane Weller, for instance, among others).

I am not even sure what kind of essays *Qeios* is looking for, how long they should be, etc., since it is quite unclear from the platform itself. And neither am I sure what kind of audience *Qeios* has in mind. Judging from the fact that I was sent a request for reviewing this essay in my institutional mail inbox (which means it is quite clear to the editors that I am an academic who worked on Cioran as well), I would think that they are looking for short pieces of research addressing very precise/ minute topics, which I think is likely to have an audience in the future, since there are very few journals doing this (*ANQ*, for instance, which yet looks into English literature in particular). In the light of the above, perhaps the author has excuses, since he could not make up his mind about his audience. Nevertheless, if he addresses to an academic audience (and the first two parts of the article would justify this conclusion), then he needs to find a more homogeneous overall tone and to document the relation between Cioran and Nietzsche and Eminescu more thoroughly, including looking for more critical references rather than treating us with a long string of quotations at the end of sections 2.2 and 3, which are not explained. I hope my constructive criticism will help the author improve his article.