



Universitatea
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din Braşov

HABILITATION THESIS

SUMMARY

**Title: Encoding Reality into Fiction / Decoding Fiction as
Reality: Representation, Adaptation and Translation of
Cultural and Political Artefacts**

Domain: **Philology**

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ABSTRACT

The six years that have passed since my being awarded a doctorate in Philology may seem a short period for a researcher to consider herself experienced enough to be able to guide other, less experienced researchers, on the same path. However, as there is a first time for everyone, and as my scientific output throughout these years has been substantial and acknowledged at an international level, this habilitation thesis is intended as a natural follow-up to and coronation of my research efforts to date. Moreover, as I have benefited from the rare and precious opportunity of receiving guidance from an excellent advisor, with whom I have developed a subsequent and sustained collaboration, the logical pursuit was to attempt to become for others what she represents for me.

If I were to identify the keywords that define my scientific activity, I would settle for *[cultural] representation*, *[film] adaptation*, and *[literary and multimodal] translation* as overarching terms. Owing to various external factors that have influenced my career, but also to my inquisitive nature, the list has naturally expanded under these umbrella terms in various directions, which constitute the structural scaffolding of this habilitation thesis. This interdisciplinarity across the field of the humanities, which spans from literary theory and criticism to critical discourse analysis, from film studies to palimpsest adaptations, from text to context, all complemented by approaches to the theory and practice of translating literary prose, drama, and film, can be further exploited in as many possibilities of supporting novel and innovative scientific efforts. This is the reason why, with consideration to the required components of a habilitation thesis, the present one, entitled *Encoding Reality into Fiction/ Decoding Fiction as Reality: Representation, Adaptation, and Translation of Contemporary Cultural and Political Artefacts*, is structured as follows:

PART I – SCIENTIFIC AND PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

A. 9/11 AND ITS CULTURAL AFTERMATH

The first part outlines the most important findings of the doctoral dissertation entitled *Literature, Politics and the Media. Anglo-American Representations of 9/11*, elaborated under the supervision of Professor Michaela Praisler and defended at “Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati on July 8, 2016. The dissertation was unanimously appreciated by the defence committee with the highest-ranking accolade, Excellent, corresponding to the Summa cum Laude rating. On its path from doctoral dissertation to publishable book, the work has undergone a thorough peer review, assumed by the renowned American professor and literature scholar, Joseph Conte, author of *Transnational Politics in the Post-9/11 Novel* (Routledge 2020) and *Design and Debris: A Chaotics of Postmodern American Fiction* (Alabama UP 2002). Following his suggestions, the dissertation underwent a few modifications and two significant additions in terms of literary texts brought under the lens, which led to its publication, in 2018, by one of the most prestigious academic publishers worldwide, Palgrave Macmillan, with a slightly altered title: *British and American Representation of 9/11. Literature, Politics and the Media*. The second subsection elaborates on these additions and differences. Another subsection focuses on several articles or chapters that feature research based on the representation of the terrorist and that of the refugee and/or migrant *Other* in post-9/11 fiction¹.

B. POLITICS AS CULTURE/ FEMINISM AS CULTURAL POLITICS

B.1. Politics, contemporary history and fiction

With a constant interest in the representation of the political, and to prove the presence of literature and other cultural artefacts, like film, on the contemporary stage as genuine ideological apparatuses capable of influencing at least the mindset of their audience, if not the development of the events per se, I have edited and coordinated several critical essays

¹ • “Extreme Otherness: Representations of 9/11 in Two Anglo-American Writers”. *Journal of Intercultural Inquiry*, vol. 2, issue 1, 2016, University of Sunderland, UK;
 • “On the Edge of History: Thomas Pynchon’s *Bleeding Edge*”. *Perspectivile și Problemele Integrării în Spațiul European al Cercetării și Educației*, Cahul, R. Moldova. 2017, ISBN 978-9975-88-019-0, pp. 386-391;
 • “Dimensiunea alterității în romanele *Fundamentalist fără voie* (2007) și *Exit West* (2017) de Mohsin Hamid”. *Communication Interculturelle et Littérature*, vol. 26, issue 2, 2018, pp. 40-51;
 • “As if by Magical Realism: A Refugee Crisis in Fiction”. *Cultural Intertexts* vol. 8/2018, pp. 80-93.
 • “Framing Islam in Post-9/11 US. A Literary Account: Yussef El Guindi’s *Back of the Throat* (2006)”. In E. Vlad, A. Ciugureanu, N. Stanca (eds.) *Ideology, Identity, and the US: Crossroads, Freeways, Collisions*. 2019. Berlin: Peter Lang, pp. 47-58.

focusing on the phenomenon of migration and other relevant and topical issues of the twenty-first century, as seen in and exploited by contemporary fiction. The volume, entitled *Shifting Twenty-First-Century Borders, Discourses and Identities*, was published in 2020 by a British press, Cambridge Scholars Publishing. The subsection briefly outlines the chapters included and focuses on my contribution, co-authored with Michaela Praisler, on the literary and filmic representations of Brexit. This book has brought me the proposal to become a member of the scientific advisory board of the publishing house, as well as a new book deal, for another edited collective volume.

Prompted by the same concern with the political, but owing to an increased appetite for memory studies, regarded as compulsory lest we should forget the near past, in 2019 I organised, alongside Professor Michaela Praisler, then-Dean of the Faculty of Letters, and Professor Ion Cordoneanu, then-Dean of the Faculty of History, Philosophy and Theology, the international conference “Thirty Years since the Fall of Communism: Visual Narratives, Memory and Culture”, which gathered researchers from China, USA, Germany, the Netherlands, Ukraine, Poland, Turkey, and Romania. The contributions focusing on visual narratives, that is, on films and documentaries, were subsequently collected and edited by Michaela Praisler and myself, being published in 2021 by Cambridge Scholars Publishing under the title *The Odyssey of Communism. Visual Narratives, Memory and Culture*. Just as the previous subsection, this too outlines the contents of the book, providing details on my contribution, which refers contrastively to the representation of the so-called “Golden Age” in films produced during the communist era and after 1989.

Contemporary politics, this time from linguistic perspectives, has also been approached in an article dedicated to the pragmatic dimension of the slogans used during the protests held in 2017 in Romania against the government in office at that time, published by the Bulletin of Transilvania University, Brasov in 2018, and in a CDA-driven paper on the re-emergence of the far-right in contemporary Romania, co-authored with Alexandru Praisler, delivered at the fourth edition of the DiscourseNet Congress (Budapest 2021) and submitted for publication to a renowned journal indexed by Web of Science/Clarivate Analytics.

B.2. The personal is political: Feminine/feminist fiction and film

Equally political, although along more personal and sociological lines, is my interest in feminism and women's writing, which represents a distinct direction of my research. Setting out during my B.A. and M.A. years, it has so far materialised in a significant number of scientific contributions. The first, published in 2015 by Lambert Academic Publishing (Germany), focuses on Lady Macbeth's feminine power in film adaptations of the Shakespearean play, analysed from a psychoanalytical-cum-feminist perspective. Also published in 2015, by Anchor Academic Press (Hamburg, Germany), is the volume *From 19th-Century Femininity in Literature to 20th-Century Feminism on Film: Discourse Translation and Adaptation*. While still confined within the area of literary criticism, from a New Historicist perspective, this book, which tackles the evolution of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* from a novel considered literature for children or, best case scenario, a patriarchal representation of womanhood, to a piece of 'feminist rewriting' of the late 20th-century, in its homonymous film adaption of 1994. The volume also focuses on the two types of translation employed, respectively literary and multimodal. It is important to note that this volume also represents the basis of two of my courses taught to students in Applied Modern Language at the Cross-border Faculty of "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati: Cultural Representations in the English-speaking World and Translation Theory and Practice.

I will resume this subsection by mentioning that, in the last three years, history, politics and women's writing have been found to have a common ground in the works of the Canadian novelist, Margaret Atwood, to whom I have dedicated, so far, four contributions, presented or published either as a single author or in collaboration with my former doctoral advisor, Michaela Praisler: "The Art and Politics of Rewriting. Margaret Atwood's Historical Notes on *The Handmaid's Tale*" (*Cultural Intertexts* 2019), "Rewriting Politics, or the Emerging Fourth Wave of Feminism in Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments*" (special issue, *Atwood at 80*, ELOPE, Slovenia), "*The Handmaid's Tale* Visually Re-Told" (presented at the ESSE International Conference, Lyon 2021, *Cultural Intertexts* 11/2021), and "Re-Imagining *The Waste Land*. Infertility, Barrenness and Ecocatastrophe in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*" (RAAS-Fulbright Conference, Constanta, Romania 2021). Lastly, my interest in feminine metafiction finds its expression in the collaborative research project "Women Writers and their Writings on Writing", submitted in 2020 to a

national research projects competition (88/100 points), not funded, but carried through in the form of a seminar proposal submitted alongside Michaela Praisler and Vladislava Gordić Petković (University of Novi Sad, Serbia) for the 2022 edition of the ESSE Conference, to be held in Mainz, Germany.

C. LITERARY TRANSLATION: CREATIVITY THROUGH INVISIBILITY

C.1. Literary translation activity

This section elaborates on the most relevant titles published in translation, with emphasis on Linda Hutcheon, Robert Greene, and Christopher Marlowe, within the Renaissance Dramatists project of George Volceanov, contemporary novels with a historiographic component – by John Wray, Sebastian Barry, Craig Cliff, Tom Rob Smith, women’s writing, political and academic non-fiction, etc.

C.2. Metatranslation

Several papers, chapters, and conference presentations on translation theory and practice are summarised here, from a semi-authorial perspective (of the translator as an author without his or her own ideas and imagination, a recreator of forms).

D. NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

This section revolves around the activities adjacent to my published scientific research, respectively the participation in conferences, as a keynote speaker, presented, panel or seminar convenor, conference organiser, and invited speaker in book launches or international courses. The second subsection outlines my editorial activity and that of a reviewer/evaluator for a number of international journals, academic presses and databases, as well as for the National Council of Scientific Research. The last subsection focuses on the research impact, mentioning aspects related to the presence in international databases and library catalogues, the most relevant citations, and quoting fragments of the reviews written by other researchers about my publications.

E. TEACHING, CURRICULUM DESIGN AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

This section contains a short description of the courses that match my scientific research interests, namely English and American Culture and Civilisation, Cultural Representations in the English-speaking World and Translation Theory and Practice, elaborating mainly on contents of learning and objectives. Then, a brief account of my activity as a curriculum designer and programme coordinator is provided, followed by several examples of extracurricular activities carried out with the students at the Cross-border Faculty of “Dunarea de Jos” University of Galati.

PART II – CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

F. THROUGH THE FUTURE’S LOOKING GLASS

Customarily, this section outlines future publications and career plans, enlarging, as in a mirror, on the same aspects that have made up the core of the first part of this thesis. Emphasis is laid on future research, detailing scientific productions already submitted for evaluation, works in progress and new directions. A distinct subsection deals with potential paths of PhD supervising, in point of possible topics for future dissertations and support provided to PhD candidates.

PART III – BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ENTRIES

This closing section comprises a selection of references cited in this habilitation thesis and complete lists of my scientific works and translations.