Universitatea Transilvania din Brașov

HABILITATION THESIS

Title:

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

Domain: Philology

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FOREWORD

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 fiction[1].

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 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

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[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*". Perspectivele şi Problemele Integrării în Spaţiul European al Cercetării şi Educaţiei, Cahul, R. Moldova. 2017, ISBN 978-9975-88-019-0, pp. 386-391;
• "Dimensiunea alterităţii în romanele *Fundamentalist fără voie* (2007) şi *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.

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 appetence 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, 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.

PART I – SCIENTIFIC AND PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

A. 9/11 AND ITS CULTURAL AFTERMATH

A1. Literature, Politics and the Media. Anglo-American Representations of 9/11 (doctoral dissertation, 2016)

The doctoral dissertation was elaborated from October 2013 to March 2016, under the supervision of Professor Michaela Praisler, at the Doctoral School of Socio-Humanities, Faculty of Letters, "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati, Romania. The viva took place on July 8, 2016, with the participation of the following doctoral evaluators: Professor Michaela Praisler (doctoral advisor), Professor Elena Croitoru (President of the Doctoral Committee), Professor Ștefan Avădanei, Professor Ștefan Colibaba and Associate Professor Gabriela-Iuliana Colipcă-Ciobanu (members of the Doctoral Committee). The Excellent/Summa cum Laude rating was unanimous, and the title of Doctor in Philology was awarded, following CNATDCU verification procedures, by Minister Order 5321/29 September 2016. This subsection briefly outlines the aims and objectives, methods of investigation, results, and findings, and the general structure of the dissertation. The text below has been largely quoted from the abstract of the doctoral dissertation, institutionally archived by arthra.ugal.ro.

On September 11, 2001, the United States of America, and, at the same time, the entire Western world, were struck with the most devastating terrorist attack up to that date, orchestrated by the Muslim fundamentalist organisation Al-Qaeda, in which four planes were hijacked and turned into weapons of mass destruction. Three of them reached their targets, hitting the two towers of the World Trade Center complex in New York and the Pentagon building in Washington DC, and killing around 3,000 people, most of them, civilians. The event, metonymically referred to as 9/11, was live broadcast by televisions around the world, thus entering the sphere of representation and fictionalisation. Its immediate outcome was the military operation in Afghanistan, initiated by the United States and supported by NATO, to overthrow the Taliban regime and capture the mastermind of Al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden. The Western coalition's

military operations are further pursued in 2003 with an attack on Iraq and the deposition of the dictator Saddam Hussein. These events are known in historical and diplomatic sources, as well as in the press, as The War on Terror, a phrase coined by President George W. Bush in his address to the American Congress.

However, the attacks have had an equally powerful impact on the Western collective mindset, determining changes in understanding and accepting the Other, an unprecedented rise of phobia and paranoid reactions to the Muslim Arabs, but also adverse reactions of the Europeans, who saw themselves drawn into a war which not all deemed justified.

In this context, the cultural intertexts and interdiscursive relations have produced a new literary subgenre, 9/11 fiction, which borrows from various text types to create new fictional patterns, some of them neorealist, anchored in the immediate reality of this event, others, still lingering into a postmodern paradigm, and then some looking back to the experimentalism of the first decades of the last century, in a desperate attempt to flee from reality and terror. These literary texts, at the crossroads between war literature and urban fiction, and also at that between trauma and political engagement, represented the focal point of the doctoral dissertation entitled **Literature, Politics and the Media – Anglo-American Representations of 9/11**.

Although it is a critical study of Anglo-American literature, it tackled the subgenre of 9/11 fiction in an interdisciplinary manner, with reference to historical sources (official documents and press articles), trying to identify the ideological markers which may determine identity changes. The theoretical scaffolding was anchored in the related theories of the American school of New Historicism and the British Cultural Materialism, which consider that literary texts are inseparable from the non-literary ones in a given temporal, cultural, and socio-political context. Also, extensive reference was made to the writings of some important ideologists of the twentieth century, chief among whom Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, and Michel Foucault. Equally useful were imagology, the concepts of author and authority, reality and fiction, and the sociological-oriented theories of anti-Americanism, Orientalism, and Occidentalism.

The premise of the study was that the media and political thinking influenced the aesthetics and the discourse of contemporary literature, emphasising the complex reaction between individual and history, constructing individual, national and global

identities, and manifesting, more often than not, a high degree of fictionalisation. The three discourses in the title – journalistic, political, and literary – were therefore considered in terms of the representations provided, and not in terms of a reality that either eludes them or is purposefully altered by them. While the discursive elements belonging to politics and the media abound in twenty-first-century neorealist fiction, it is also true that fiction, in turn, pushes through the journalistic and the political text. These three types establish an interdiscursive relationship, providing trilateral overlapping, allusions and echoes. One cannot claim, in the case of 9/11 fiction, that it is the only one borrowing from the other two discourses, traditionally regarded as objective, which is why the dissertation underlined the fictional elements present in politics and the media, which was not intended to affect their credibility but to create a bridge between fiction and reality based on facts. What seems reality can easily be fictional or, at least, fictionalised and fictionalising – through manipulation, disinformation, etc. Neither is literature, on the other hand, regarded as a faithful, believable mirror of reality, although the immixture of the real into fiction cannot be denied – which is easily proven in relation to the general context and aspects of authorial authority more and more evident at the level of the literary text.

Yet another important aspect taken into account was the reconfiguration of ideas and reconstructed images of reality in a context in which the Western world becomes increasingly aware of the Oriental otherness. The second half of the dissertation argued that, wilfully or not, the three discourses, hybridised and influenced by ideologies and prejudices, accentuate the differences between the East and the West and the demarcation line thereof, even in the circumstances of free circulation and lack of geopolitical boundaries.

Thus, the aims of the doctoral dissertation were as follows:

1.   to recount the historical context (with emphasis on 9/11) by referring to its encodings in official records, in the media, and literary texts;
2.   to prove that reality is accessed through and impacted on by discourse and representation, regardless of the type of text which forwards it, and to map the role of literature among the apparatuses of cultural and social significance production;

3.   to outline the tenets of 9/11 fiction, describing its negotiating between postmodernism's rewritings of modernism and the post-postmodern return to realism;

4.   to discuss the trauma experienced on both shores of the Atlantic and its reflection in literary texts, by opposing American and British attitudinal patterns about 9/11;

5.   to analyse the Western identity as a mutable construct made up of multiple selves, partially reconfigured 'after the fall', underlining the idea that the West, though fragmented and shattered, is still a *Self* in the relation to the terrorist *Other*;

6.   to look into Western Islamophobia at the level of the media and of the public sphere, and to trace the representation of the Muslim Other in literary texts belonging to 9/11 fiction, and identify their stereotyping nature.

It is worth mentioning that 9/11 fiction had already come to the attention of academic researchers and literary critics, papers, and books approaching it from various perspectives having been constantly published starting with 2008. My dissertation aimed to inscribe itself in this still insufficiently explored territory, its main originality elements being: the analysis of the non-fictional texts as discourse and representation, emphasizing their fictionalised/fictionalising nature, the approach to 9/11 as political and not as traumatic fiction, the identification of the elements of ideologically-marked identity and alterity both in the texts in focus and outside the conventional worlds of fiction, in texts generally perceived as forwarding objective truths. The perspective was transatlantic, which was useful in pointing out the differences and similarities of the attitudes to 9/11 in the Western world, under the methodological constraints which only allow discussing British and American texts.

The corpus, selected according to the criterion of relevance, was made up of fictional writings which contained direct references to 9/11 or the war and terror and which embedded elements of political or journalistic discourse into the literary text. It consisted of four novels, one short story and one play: *Falling Man* (2007) by Don DeLillo, *Bleeding Edge* (2013) by Thomas Pynchon, *Saturday* (2005) by Ian McEwan, *Dead Air* (2002) by Iain Banks, *The Last Days of Muhammad Atta* (2006) by Martin Amis, and *Stuff Happens* (2004) by David Hare. Added to these were some political essays and editorials published shortly after the attacks by some of the authors of these literary texts: *Beyond Belief* and *Only Love, and then Oblivion* by Ian McEwan, *Fear and Loathing* (published in a volume with the title *The Second Plane*) and *The Age of*

Horrorism (republished as *Terror and Boredom: The Dependent Mind*) by Martin Amis, and, respectively, *In the Ruins of the Future* by Don DeLillo.

The dissertation was structured into two parts with two chapters each, containing both theoretical and practical aspects. The first part, **September 11: Re-Encodings in the Media and the Literary Text**, opened the path towards an ancient form of critical investigation, reality versus fiction. The two chapters stressed the idea that the boundary between fiction and non-fiction had been blurred and that the reading audience had more and more difficulties in winnowing one from the other. This way, one may discuss reality in fiction at the literary level, in texts profoundly marked by the real – from dealing with some very recent real events to the author's political participation. It is also true that the fictionalisation of the press and political discourse through manipulation, propaganda, ideology, discourse, representation, and power relations may be regarded as fiction in reality.

Chapter I. Re-readings and re-writings of history

Chapter I was structured, in its first part, **Cultural theories as reading grids**, as a review of the ideas formulated by the theorists of the main critical directions which support the analysis, i.e., New Historicism and Cultural Materialism, regarded as having similar but not identical tenets. Starting from Stephen Greenblatt – for the American school of New Historicism – and, respectively, Raymond Williams for the British Cultural Materialism, the chapter outlined the main contributions in the field, the influences which led to the foundation of the critical apparatus for the theorists of the two critical directions and, last but not least, the operational concepts they use. The choice of the theoretical grid was motivated by the interest of the two in exploring the power relations at the textual level and, at the same time, the intrinsic connection between literature and history and by the need to point out the ideological and political ends which permeate the literary text. As neorealist/historical contemporary literature requires inclusion in a large web of texts and the permanent reference to historical context, the investigation of "both the social presence to the world of the literary text and the social presence of the world in the literary text" (Greenblatt 2005: 6) has been deemed necessary, by stressing the idea that the literary and non-literary texts are inseparable and that "no discourse, imaginative or archival, gives access to unchanging

truths" (Veeser 1989: xi). Whilst New Historicism primarily analyses the interaction between state power and cultural forms, Cultural Materialism aims to trace how dominating structures, ideologically marked, influence the identity at the individual level and may also contaminate the national, Western, or even global identity.

The second theoretical subchapter, **Representation of representation: all is representation**, dealt with the concepts of discourse and representation. Discourse, in Michel Foucault's view, is a product of knowledge that makes up the a priori condition of possibility and establishes the formation rules by which the statements acquire unity as a text. The discursive practices are meant to create 'the order of truth' or the truth accepted as reality at a given historical moment. They contribute, together with the power structures (the so-called disciplinary societies) in the creation of the hegemonic or dominant discourses. In short, discourse is understood as a constructed representation of reality, representation having been defined by British cultural theorist Stuart Hall as "the way in which meaning is somehow given to the things which are depicted through the images or whatever it is, on screens or the words on a page which *stand for* what we're talking about" (1997: 6). Therefore, representation is an imperfect form of imitating life, in close connection with some factors outside the text: the author's distance in time and space from the represented real fact, his or her wilful or unwilful subjectivity, as well as various social, political, economic and cultural constraints.

To conclude, the notions of ideology and identity in the contemporary historical context and that of truth as a discursive construct influenced by power structures, together with the critical assessment of the political and journalistic texts, as a permanent source of non-fiction compulsory to the contextual analysis, were the major argument for opting for New Historicism and Cultural Materialism as the main reading grids.

Following the idea of historical conceptualization, of New Historicist inspiration, the latter half of the first chapter, **Making history: politics and the media in the twenty-first century**, was an outline of the serious events which have led to the emergence of new forms of artistic expression meant to engrave them in the Western cultural memory. The attacks on September 11 were documented starting from the official *The 9/11 Commission Report* (2004), corroborated with the way in which the event was presented in the media – firstly in television, through the live broadcast from

the scene of the disaster and President George W. Bush's televised interventions, and, during the following days, in the written press. By emphasising the idea that the attacks had left the real when entering the area of representation as soon as CNN went live, soon followed by all the other important news channels, the subchapter analyses the first few minutes of the broadcast from a literary-oriented perspective, proving that it is just an attempt at obtaining information, and not one of providing it and that the discourse used on television, and not the event itself, ends up being a hypotext for the ulterior references to 9/11. By interviewing eye-witnesses, CNN transforms them into narrators who provide their subjective interpretations and representations of the events, although their role should be that of narratees.

Intended as a transition towards 9/11 fiction, the next subchapter discussed three editorial pieces published by the British newspaper *The Guardian* in the days following the attacks, signed by two important contemporary British authors, Ian McEwan and Martin Amis. It raised the question as to whether this transposition of the author of fiction into non-fiction was an attempt to bring fiction closer to reality or whether it hinted at a reversal of their roles through fiction's coming into the domain of the real. Noting that entire paragraphs from these press articles have further been embedded into the literary texts of the two, the distinction was made between the two authorial stances – the former, emotional, present at the level of the non-fictional text, and the latter, analytical, in the literary text, which is already a contradiction with the text functions – the analysis advanced the idea that contemporary fiction, deeply anchored in the surrounded reality, has an active, participative dimension, and is intertextually inspired from the media.

In brief, the chapter aimed to create a bridge between the communicational spheres in focus: the so-called objective, real-fact-based discourses, and the subjective literature. While fiction can never be taken for reality, the latter can still be altered through discourse and representation, thus acquiring a certain degree/ role of fictionalisation.

Chapter II. Literary re-writings of history and politics after 9/11

The chapter set out with an overview of the most important literary texts belonging to 9/11 fiction, emphasising their heterogeneity in point of genre, style, and narrative

techniques. Moreover, the introductory part briefly accounted for the critics' dilemma concerning the postmodernity or post-postmodernity of these texts, for the attempt at establishing a 9/11 fiction canon and for the symbolism of the attacks, from Habermas's and Baudrillard's perspectives, and also justified the choices made in point of selecting the titles included in the corpus. With consideration to the already mentioned heterogeneous character of the subgenre, which brings together neorealist narratives, almost-experimental novels reminding of the early twentieth-century modernism, metanarratives rewritings of political and journalistic discourses, and representations of trauma, the selection has been made in view of tracing aspects related to mass-media, politics, anti-Americanism, terrorism and Muslim alterity and Western traumas, but, naturally, not all the texts are equally relevant for these focal points. This is the reason why, based on their representativeness for more categories, some texts were analysed from two different points of view, whereas others were relegated to the category which best fit their thematic contents.

This chapter was divided according to the temporal criterion into narratives which are set on September 11 and, respectively, texts whose action is set during the war on terror. It discussed the novel *Dead Air* (2002) by Scottish novelist Iain Banks, the play *Stuff Happens* (2004) by the renowned playwright and scriptwriter David Hare, and the novel *Saturday* (2005) by Ian McEwan.

Banks' novel, which begins with the news of the attacks during a party in London, may be read as a text about identity, the relationship between the individual and history, changes in the collective mindset, media manipulation, and, of course, embedded politics commented by a radio journalist, a character whose views reminds those of the real author. The analysis has revealed a form of neorealism that departs from the rules of traditional realism, nearing, to a certain extent, those of historiographic metafiction. The text presents hypotheses and speculations about the attacks on the World Trade Center and does so with that carelessness of the writer who feels that literature should remain a censorship-free area, which allows him to speak up behind the guise of fiction. A rather transparent aim of the Scottish writer is that of helping his readers to draw away from the manipulation of the media.

A similar undertaking is also David Hare's play, *Stuff Happens*, but this is inspired from reality to a greater extent, borrowing entire excerpts from the real, documented, and archived statements made by important British and American

politicians and mixing them with fictional speeches of the same figures. The play, which its author defined as historical, is close to documentary theatre in point of structure, the dramatization of the events triggering questions about the fact and fiction relationship. Hare's characters are named Bush, Blaire, Cheney, Rumsfeld or de Villepin, and their parts suggest, meta-theatrically perhaps, their functioning as puppeteers of a world represented only by the unnamed, the anonymous: "a journalist", "an actor", "a Brit in New York", "an Iraqi exile", who maintain only the right to comment upon the events whose course has been established by the potentates behind closed doors.

The novel *Saturday* by Ian McEwan provides a completely different perspective, despite its construction as a cultural intertext inspired by mass media, which it also comments. Undoubtedly inspired by Virginia Woolf's writing, *Saturday* is an intellectualised refuge from the painful reality of the new millennium. The novel focuses on the trauma experienced by the Western world after the attacks on September 11, the characters living under the empire of the inexorability of another terrorist attack (which, otherwise, became extremely real for the Londoners on July 7, 2005, exactly in the year of publication of this novel). It is set on a single day, but one extremely resonant for recent history: February 15, 2003, the day of the great protests against the military intervention in Iraq, and (re)presents, through an imagined dialogue between a scientist (the neurosurgeon Perowne) and a woman of letters (his daughters), the two opposing positions of the Western world concerning the American military operations supported by the United Kingdom.

Despite the obvious differences between the three literary texts discussed in this chapter, their analysis has proven that the relation between reality and fiction is bidirectional, in the sense that, on the one hand, apparent reality may contain fictionalising elements and, on the other hand, fiction may be useful in veiling some truths.

The second part of the dissertation, **Ideological Reconfigurations of Identity in the Literary Representations of 9/11**, attempted to determine the way in which these fictional and non-fictional texts influence identity and the collective mindset with the help of ideology. It focused on the changes of paradigm at the individual and national levels after 9/11. The construction of the two chapters that make up this part,

The Shattered Self of the West and **Extreme Otherness – The Muslim Menace** respectively, mirrors the dichotomy between Self and Other, between the West and the East, the West being considered the Self if only because the text analysed are all products of Western civilisation.

Chapter III. The Shattered Self of the West

The third chapter brought forth additional theoretical aspects, setting out from the idea of cultural hegemony, as it was outlined in the Italian ideologist Antonio Gramsci's writings. The premise of the chapter is the West is a Self that is made up of more hypostases, at varied Westernisation levels, the absolute hegemon of the latter half of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first being the United States of America, an economic and cultural colonizer rather than a political one. This is the reason why the Western civilisations east of the U.S. (i.e. the great European powers) experience reactions similar to those felt by the colonized nations during the age of the empire. Imagology has supported the analysis of the Western Self, with a view to identifying the stereotypes which operate at the literary level in the construction of national identity. For methodological purposes, this chapter was divided according to the geographical criterion – America (the USA) and the rest of the world, here represented only by the United Kingdom (because of the restrictions imposed by the field of study – English and American literature only). This way, the subchapter **At the heart of the storm: America after 9/11** discussed the impact of the events of 9/11 on the American people, confronted for the first time since the Civil War with a tragedy of such magnitude on their soil. The literary texts selected for analysis, *Falling Man* (2007) and *Bleeding Edge* (2013), are signed by two of the most important contemporary American writers, Don DeLillo, and Thomas Pynchon, respectively, and provide two complementary variants of the American heteroimages.

On the one hand, DeLillo's novel, ekphrastic, modernist, pointing to the inner dimension and suggesting psychoanalytical investigations into trauma and Freudian mourning and melancholy, provides images of the American who cannot understand what has befallen them and is unable to move on. There are also political and journalistic insertions but they are relegated to a reality from which the characters try to distance themselves. *Falling Man* is not a novel about 9/11 stricto sensu, but rather a novel about the many representations of 9/11. It is a novel of a falling empire,

symbolically represented by the fall of the two towers. The depressing auto-image of the American defeated by history is counterbalanced in Pynchon's novel with that of the inquiring American who at least takes into consideration the idea that the conspiracy theories around the attacks on 9/11 may have a grain of truth.

Bleeding Edge is a political commentary on American cultural hegemony, an alternative history in which reality moves to the virtual domain, a contemporary historeme that does not regard history as the representation of the major events but as a sum of insignificant events and ordinary people. Pynchon's ordinary people are not culturally-impaired Americans (a European stereotype, otherwise), nor DeLillo's beaten men; they represent typical Western cultural models which inhabit a New York seen as an essential space of American (and even Western) urbanism.

The second part of the chapter, **The Big (Br)Other: Anti-Americanism in British Contemporary Literature**, also focused on the American, this time displacing them to the position of a Western Other, from the European perspective. The subchapter featured an outline which reviewed the centennial tradition of European prejudice against America, known as anti-Americanism, which emerged in the eighteenth century and perpetuated throughout the nineteenth as despise for a backward, uncivilised nation, only to turn, with the expansion of the American spheres of influence after World War II and especially after 9/11, into envy, resentment, and even Schadenfreude. The British literary texts considered illustrative for this form of alterity, *Dead Air* by Iain Banks and *Stuff Happens* by David Hare, posit the question as to whether such attitudes reflect a marginal positioning in relation to American imperialism or, on the contrary, a Eurocentric one, which looks down on the Americans. The answer is – as always – somewhere in between, but it is important to stress that both texts provide a rather negative heteroimage of the Americans, be them ordinary people (in Banks's case) or the military and political leaders of the United States (and, by extension, of the entire world in Hare's case. It is also interesting that the European tendency is one of moving on much more quickly after the trauma induced by the terrorist attack. Westerners, sympathising with the American people and worried that they might be the next target, the Brits seem, nevertheless, to easily overcome the shock, which suggests once again that distance and mediation tend to attenuate the negative effects of what happens to somebody else.

However, this second part of the dissertation has been intended to underline the idea that the West, though shattered by political events or by hegemonic claims on the two shores of the Atlantic Ocean, is still a Self in relation to the threatening Other. This Other, represented in the twenty-first century by the Muslim terrorist, is the key element of the final chapter of the dissertation (and has been considered the strongest point of the work by all reviews).

Chapter IV. Extreme Otherness: The Muslim Menace

The fourth and last chapter of the doctoral thesis was structured into four parts, starting from the antithetic description of two theories of representation, anchored in culture, history, and sociology. The former refers to the famous concept of Orientalism, as understood since the publication of the work of the same title by Edward Said (1978), while the latter, Occidentalism, is a reaction to the arguments of the American scholar of Palestinian descent, who completely denies its existence by suggesting that the Western hegemony since the colonial era to the present day has prevented the Orient from offering, in its turn, representations of the Occident. The dissertation borrowed from Orientalism aspects related to the constructed images of the Other, acquired through discourse and representation. In other words, it used Foucault's influence on Said to prove that the products of the cultural sphere are representational, and focused on the identification of the "contemporary Orientalist attitudes which flood the press and the popular mind" (Said 2003: 108), i.e. on the stereotypical representations of the Other projected in the contemporary collective mindset.

Occidentalism, on the other hand, should not be regarded as a grid of analysis, since the texts in focus are Western culture products. It should rather be construed as a reference frame and as an intertextual resource for the construction of the characters embodying Muslim terrorists, be they real or imaginary. The subchapter gave examples from the statements or writings of some important Muslim fundamentalist leaders and thinkers, which would be found, in the second part of the chapter, in the lines or ideas expressed by such characters.

In an attempt at understanding the reasoning of those who choose martyrdom, while also killing a large number of innocent people in the name of Allah, the following subchapter dealt with the society control mechanisms, starting from Foucault's, Deleuze's and Althusser's ideas, and emphasising the influence of r religion as a main

control factor in the Islamic civilisations. Prefaced by a short description of the Islamophobic nature of the press commentaries after 9/11, which had an overwhelming influence on the public opinion, resulting in unjustified attacks on the Muslim in general – stereotyped as terrorists – the literary analyses which make up the applicative part of this chapter focused on two very important texts belonging to 9/11 fiction, more precisely on Martin Amis's short story, *The Last Days of Muhammad Atta* (2006) and, for the second time, on Don DeLillo's novel, *Falling Man* (2007), in an attempt to debunk the criticism that they would be two Orientalist texts loaded with prejudices, and to prove that the stereotypes present in the two texts make up portraits of some fundamentalist Islamists turned murdered through political or religious indoctrination. Amis, a well-known adversary of Islamism, which he differentiates from Islam, exaggerates a familiar stereotype – that of the evil terrorist –, defamiliarising it by constructing his character as an atheist completely uninterested in the Qu'ran's promises for the afterlife. DeLillo takes a different path to reach the same point, namely one of constructing a character which is normal by Western standards, which is manipulated and ends up being one of the nineteen hijackers who were nothing but instruments in the attacks on September 11.

Afterthoughts

The attacks of 9/11 have changed history with the effect they produced at the geopolitical level, becoming represented as soon as their broadcast on TV started. This, in turn, produced a large number of hypertextual representations in the world of politics, in the media, and fiction and art. The political and journalistic discourses work together in imposing their truths and in manipulating history, whereas fiction takes two routes: either following the official, objective, accounts of the two, or subverting them in an attempt at drawing attention to their fictionalism. This is, otherwise, the most important aspect featured throughout the thesis: *the representation of 9/11 takes many forms and comes through varied media, and it should be understood as such, and not as reality, whether it is forwarded by George W. Bush and The 9/11 Commission Report, by CNN and The New York Times, or by novelists and playwrights.*

One of the forms of representing the attacks on the World Trade Center is 9/11 fiction (also featured in the literature as post-9/11 fiction), which is a literary subgenre

which lacks stylistic cohesion, the texts often being political and activist, representative for the trauma at the level of the entire Western civilisation and, sometimes, accused of prejudiced stances against the Muslims. They can be considered as belonging either to urban fiction or to war fiction, creating alternative worlds in an attempt to overcome trauma.

Whether it is here to stay or is just a transient genre born under the empire of emotions, which will soon fade away like yesterday news, 9/11 fiction is worth receiving critical attention for its interplay of reality and fiction, for its provocative realism, and for bringing forth the terror experienced by the West, facing an enemy that they cannot comprehend. The research has been further pursued by discussing other similar texts, and by attempting a more linguistically- and less culturally-oriented approach of the political discourse embedded in the literary one (thus crossing the boundaries towards CDA).

A.2. *British and American Representations of 9/11. Literature, Politics and the Media* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018)

https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9783319752495

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Softcover ISBN: 978-3-030-09182-8
E-book ISBN: 978-3-319-75250
Number of pages: ix, 269

Encouraged by the positive evaluation of the dissertation, I opted for submitting a proposal to world-renowned Palgrave Macmillan, an imprint of the international publisher Springer/Nature. My choice was motivated, aside from the prestige of the press, by their having already published a significant number of scientific books related to the attacks on the World Trade Center, which I had referred to and quoted in my work. The assessment procedure included an initial evaluation of the proposal and of the sample chapters, undertaken by the Subject Editor, who, in this case, was Ben Doyle (currently at Bloomsbury Academic). Under the caveat that Palgrave Macmillan had already published many books on this topic, and it was necessary for another one to stand out to be considered, he accepted the submission of the entire manuscript, which was sent out for external review to the American Professor Joseph Conte, an expert in the works of Don DeLillo and Thomas Pynchon, literature of migration, postmodern

fiction, fiction after 9/11, postmodern theory, transnational literature, and politics, who proposed the following changes:

> While I agree with Gheorghiu's readings of DeLillo's near-obsession with terrorism and his risky representation of the Muslim Other as a terrorist in *Falling Man*, and the conspiracy theory that Pynchon flirts with in *Bleeding Edge*, I can't help but feel that these two senior American writers are, finally, postmodernists made to learn a few new tricks and not strong examples of a new media realism. Perhaps that's accounted for, in Part Two, by the shift in emphasis from NH/CM theory to the more explicitly ideological theories of Gramsci and Foucault. The final chapter on Said's Orientalism, Islamophobia, and the terrorist Other is excellent, but again, Amis's "Muhammad Atta" is not really a neorealist portrait. Though I liked Part Two very much for its reading of politics, ideology, and the East / West "clash of civilizations" argument, it seems not entirely or convincingly connected to the assertion of a neorealist literature in Part One. A possible remedy might be to consider two novels that represent the Muslim Other, Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and Amy Waldman's *The Submission*. […] As devoted as I am to the careers of DeLillo and Pynchon, these two recent works by (Pakistani-UK) Hamid and Waldman might make the case for 21st-century neorealism more explicitly than the aging postmoderns […]. (Joseph Conte, e-mail to Ben Doyle/Palgrave Macmillan, 2017)

Although his review was largely positive, Conte suggested revisions that could not be made without completely altering the entire reasoning and structure. Whilst I could easily dispose of Pynchon's novel, used just as an exemplification of Americanism, and not as a sample of neorealism, I strongly believed that I should have kept DeLillo, as the absence of *Falling Man* would have greatly affected the third chapter (I could not make a point of a split Westernness without dealing with Americans – and Amy Walden was yet to establish herself as an important American writer, so I could use her only to complement DeLillo, not to replace both DeLillo and Pynchon.). In what the revisions of the fourth chapter were concerned, I agreed that Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* was an excellent text for counterbalancing the Orientalist discourse of the Westerners Amis and DeLillo but removing them both would have eliminated the intended contrast. Therefore, my counterproposition to the editor was to include the two authors suggested, keep DeLillo and/or Amis, and remove Pynchon, while also trying

to "convincingly connect [the second part] to the assertion of a neorealist literature in Part One".

Having obtained the approval of the editorial board for the route of revisions laid out above, I embarked on amending the manuscript. Specifically, I substantially revised the *Introduction: Towards Another Reading of 9/11 Neorealist Fiction* in such a way as to situate the New Historicist/Cultural Materialist theory of the turn to new media realism in 9/11 fictions within the context of postmodernism and trauma theory. I also expanded my commentary on related works of criticism on 9/11 literature and media while significantly truncating the history of New Historicism as a discipline. The resultant chapter makes a much stronger and more concise argument for why neorealism has established itself as an important literary response to 9/11 and why the chosen approach has been underrepresented in the dominant trauma-psychology analyses of the literature to date, especially among American writers who are closer to the event itself. The second revision to the manuscript occurred in Part II, in Chapters 3 and 4, as I pursued the suggestion of writing on the quasi-journalistic first novel by former New York Times bureau chief Amy Waldman, *The Submission*, as well as on *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, by Mohsin Hamid. The treatment of Waldman's novel was broken into a discussion of its neorealist journalistic sourcing in Chapter 3 and its treatment of the Muslim Other in Chapter 4. Hamid's novel, which speaks to the "self-radicalization" of some Muslims in the West and the "silencing" of the American interventionism in the Middle East, also contributed to the chapter on western perceptions of a "Muslim Menace". Following the reassessment of the reviewer, who concluded that "Gheorghiu's book on twenty-first-century realism and the representation of 9/11 makes an original contribution to the burgeoning field of 9/11 studies and is of a quality comparable to such books previously published by Palgrave Macmillan on the subject as Kristine Miller's *Transatlantic Literature and Culture after 9/11* or Richard Grusin's *Premediation: Affect and Mediality after 9/11*" (Joseph Conte, e-mail to Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), the book was published in May 2018, with an original cover artwork signed by the Romanian artist Sergiu Mitrofan, which had been previously included in the booklet of the album "Eternal Return" of the alternative rock band Byron (used with permission granted by Universal Music Romania and by the artist).

The blurbs on the back cover were signed by Joseph Conte, in his double quality as an expert in the field and reviewer of the manuscript, by Dr Geoffrey Nash, University of Sunderland, author of *Writing Muslim Identity* (2012), and by Professor Emeritus Stefan Avădanei, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi, Romania, who had previously honoured me with his presence in the scientific committee appointed for my viva.

As the book is, for the most part, based on the doctoral dissertation summarised above, it has been considered relevant to detail, in this section and the next, only the added subchapters dedicated to Amy Waldman's *The Submission* and Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*.

Artpolitik and Journalistic Manipulation in Amy Waldman's *The Submission*

(in *British and American Representations of 9/11. Literature, Politics and the Media*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 106-122)

Since "Amy Waldman was co-chief of the South Asia bureau of the *New York Times* and a national correspondent for *The Atlantic*" (*The Submission*, 2012), one might expect to find an elaborate pseudo-journalistic undertaking disguised as a novel. Even more, as it is the first novel by this author, one could reasonably presume that her journalistic skills could not be completely wiped out while writing fiction. Rather than just look at the New Yorkers' endeavours to cope with trauma and resume their lives, Amy Waldman delves into a new-media form of realism, somewhat related to the feed filled with news posts on social media. *The Submission* is "a new kind" of 9/11 fiction, as some reviewers venture to call it, although it seems too soon to talk about the second wave of 9/11 fiction. Granted, if one considers 9/11 fiction an all-American affair, taking into consideration only its early literary products signed by DeLillo, Foer, Claire Messud, texts whose common denominators are mourning and trauma, one may assert that *The Submission* is different. However, if one relates to the transatlantic approaches to the subgenre, as is the case here, one easily remarks the novel's great indebtedness to political and journalistic discourses, much in the way the British Iain Banks employed them in the construction of his 2002 novel, *Dead Air*.

'Social realism' seems to be another keyword with Waldman: the novel would be "more a synthesis of her first-hand experience as a reporter than an examination of

collective memory" (Witt, *The New York Observer* 2011). The author's propensity towards the supposedly objective journalistic discourse is what draws her both praise and harsh criticism, and also scepticism with regards to her "determination to place the book in a purely fictional realm (and assert again that it was not her intention to write a 9/11 novel)" (Witt 2011). A strategy used to that end is not mentioning September 11, 2001 even once. Does this omission place *The Submission* in an undetermined space or time, as an aftermath of some tragic unnamed event? Not at all. Actually, if one considers Versluys's classification of 9/11 fiction into four categories – "the novel of recuperation, the novel of first-hand witnessing, the great New York novel, and the novel of the outsider" (2007: 65), where the last category refers to European 9/11 fiction, and is, therefore, inapplicable, *The Submission* may be ascribed to all the other three. Its premise, regarded either as metafictional, owed to the fact that "the novel itself is invested in the question of how to remember and represent 9/11" (Keeble 2014) or as ekphrastic, referring to the way in which memorialising should keep the event in the memory of the Americans, is one of recuperation. This is not a far cry from DeLillo's fictional excursion into how 9/11 should be represented.

The Submission sets out from the fictional account of a juried contest with anonymous submissions for a memorial monument intended as "a national symbol, a historic signifier, a way to make sure anyone who visits – no matter how attenuated their link in time or geography to the attack – understands how it felt, what it meant" (Waldman 2012: 6). Coming to a tie between two finalists – and it is perhaps the moment to mention that the actual memorial at Ground Zero is somewhat remindful of both – the jury votes for the project entitled The Garden, which proves to have been designed by a Muslim architect, Mohammad Khan. This, rather predictably, triggers a never-ending debate in which every representative American figure feels entitled to have their say. The ethical debate as to whether Khan should withdraw his project out of respect for the victims of the tragedy covers the entire plot, involving characters standing for the family of the victims (first-hand witnesses, in a way), but also people from all American strata, politicians, journalists, activists, Christians and Muslims, radicals and moderates – in a phrase, the melting pot that is America. According to Amir Khadem, "the novel's polyphony, a laborious product of cataloguing almost every political voice, from the far-right xenophobe to stark defenders of tolerance, is visible in numerous fictional simulations of news reports, radio and television shows, op-ed

pieces, and press conferences" (2015: 68), which comes to support the notion that, in twenty-first-century neorealism, fictional and non-fictional discourses inform one another. This multiplicity of voices may be what qualifies *The Submission* as heir apparent to that tradition of "the great New York novel", less in a geographical sense, and more in that of a conglomerate of discourses in the public sphere. Waldman aptly directs the critics on this path by intertextually alluding early in the novel (2012: 7) to that famous epitome of contemporary social realism that is Tom Wolfe's *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (1987). As Sonia Baelo-Allué (2016: 170) rightfully remarks, "upon publication, reviewers first tried to establish a literary context in which to place the novel, they largely ignored 9/11 literature and focused instead on big political and social novels like Tom Wolfe's *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (Kakutani 2011; Witt 2011)".

The novel is less concerned with the urban space, as is the case with DeLillo and many others, and much more, in the spirit of literary geographies, with an "aesthetic conjunction between socio-spatial, economic, political and cultural practices" which should determine "the formation of a peculiar and singular urban consciousness" (Neculai 2014: 48). However, this urban consciousness is not singular but kaleidoscopic. Post-9/11 New York City is realistically depicted as a multiverse in which the perspective is shifting according to a delineated social classification. If one chose to analyse Waldman's *petite histoire* through a Marxist-oriented lens, one could not refrain from noticing that *The Submission* carries its readers along a spectrum of social strata: from the upper-class representatives – the governor, artists and art critics, stars like Susan Sarandon and Robert de Niro, architects and lawyers with an Ivy League education – to openly Islamophobic Irish workers and single mums turned activists, on the one hand, and minorities bent on defending their rights to be equally treated as Americans, on the other. Down below, unacknowledged even in death, are the illegal Bangladeshi migrants, living undocumented in their enclosed "little Dhaka", speaking little to no English, yet trying to live the American dream. The 'cast of characters' is polarized between these two extremes, which may be indicative of the "us versus them" effect that the novel acquires, despite its not being regarded as "Orientalist" as other American-authored texts.

The liaison of these many "small worlds" is the Fourth Estate, represented in the novel by the newspapers *Daily News* and *New York Post* – through the paparazzo-

natured journalist Alyssa Spier –, *The New York Times* and *The New Yorker*, the television network Fox News, and "Lou Sarge, New York's most popular right-wing radio host [who] in the months after the attack had added the tagline 'I Slam Islam' to his show" (Waldman 2012: 50). The press stirs reactions through anonymous sources, blackmail, false or exaggerated, and incendiary statements. It is that hegemonic power Gramsci described as not imposing, but persuasive, although its techniques verge on imposition at times. With a rather conservative narrative technique – it employs an episodic construction, analeptic here and there, and an omniscient third-person narrator who focalises on each key character in turn – the novel brings, nevertheless, an innovation at the character level: the Muslim architect Mohammad Khan is only apparently the main character. That is either the media or the American people after the attacks, with their trauma, fear, and intolerance.

Social fresco through its renditions of the way of the many American social/cultural/racial worlds, political through its implications for the intercultural communication in the US, traumatic and cathartic at the same time, an introduction to American journalism through its frequent reference to the media and, last but not least, so American that it might appear as having regional, limited addressability, Amy Waldman's *The Submission* is, perhaps, one of the best examples to date of how fact and fiction tend to mingle in the scaffolding of the neorealist representation of America and the Americans after having been confronted with a tragedy.

A3. Otherness in Images and Words. Representations of Islam in 9/11 Fiction

As shown above, among the many effects which triggered both geopolitical and cultural reshaping at world level, accentuating the gap between Eastern and Western cultures, the attacks of September 11, 2001, on New York and Washington DC brought forth the emergence of 9/11 fiction, whose tenets place it at the crossroads between fiction and reality, which, in turn, deems its analysis inescapably interdisciplinary. Literary criticism can no longer afford relegation to the ivory towers of the past, future, or of an elusive *illo tempore*, as the temporal coordinates are set in the immediate present, requiring recourse to contemporary history, politics, cultural, sociological, and media studies. The narratives of 9/11 display a commonality of mentality shifts imported from reality and ranging from trauma-induced terror to hatred against the offenders. The latter attitude soon comes to translate as Islamophobia, which manifests at all societal

and cultural levels and which most often targets people whose only 'fault' is their sharing an ethnic and/or religious background with the terrorists. In the words of novelist Kia Abdullah, "9/11 was not good publicity for Muslims. It created a palpable tension between us and the rest of the world" (2006: 53).

Alongside the degrees of fictionality at the discursive level of both fictional and non-fictional texts concerning the events of September 11, 2001, I have analysed the reconfiguration of the Western identity in relation to the Eastern otherness, from the perspective of the West regarded as a unified Self against the threatening Muslim Other, a demonstration supported by two opposing theories of representation, Orientalism and Occidentalism, which relies on the New Historicist credo that literary and non-literary texts effect bidirectional intertextuality on each other. In the present-day international context, discussions on Muslim otherness in relation to the [predominantly Christian] West tend to use notions such as *terrorism* and *religious fundamentalism*, as well as to hastily generalise, for the entire Muslim population, the deeds of organisations like Al-Qaeda and ISIS. It is, therefore, rather difficult to avoid the pitfalls of 'Orientalism' in the understanding the term has acquired after the publication of Edward Said's homonymous work when adopting a Westerner's point of view. That is why, the most appropriate approach envisaged has been that of not finding justifications for one party or the other, but demonstrating that societal control mechanisms, together with psychosocial imprints and cultural constructs, function for both.

This area of research has been geared towards attaining the following objectives:

1. to look into the Western Islamophobia at the level of the media and of the public sphere, tracing its interweaving into the fictionalised accounts of 9/11 which feature Muslim characters;

2. to account for the Muslim diaspora's perception of the historical context of 9/11 by referring to its literary encodings in relation to non-fictional texts;

3. to trace the representation of the Muslim selfhood in literary texts belonging to 9/11 fiction written by so-called 'hyphenated authors';

4. to trace the auto-stereotyping nature of these texts, their views on the Muslims as persecuted by an Islamophobic West, and their Occidentalism, not in the extremist sense of the *Gharbzadegi* coined by Jalal Al-i-Ahmad, but rather based on a

postcolonial view which holds that "decolonisation will not be complete except after the […] transformation of the observed in an observer" (Hanafi 1991 qtd. in Esposito and Voll 2001: 88).

The research was intended to complement the findings of the doctoral dissertation concerning the identity reconfigurations in point of selfhood and otherness after the events of September 11, 2001 and their aftermath. While the dissertation contrasted the West as a Self which is made up of multiple selves which may and do become conflicting and display a form of inner alterity with the East perceived as Other, with all that entails, the more recent additions – some, included in the 2018 book, other, published as scientific articles, contrast the views of the Westerners towards the Easterners with those of the Easterners inhabiting the West towards their host cultures.

#NotAllTheSame. American Muslims from Hybridity to Difference in the Wake of 9/11

in *British and American Representations of 9/11. Literature, Politics and the Media*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 207-224

The Submission unfolds as an expansion of a powerful anti-Islamophobia statement: the famous #NotAllTheSame, posted all around the new media every time a terrorist attack strikes one part of the Western civilisation or another. It is common sense that Muslims are not all the same and that they are not all terrorists, but emphasising this aspect over and over again has become, in the last years, a matter of importance to the politically correct media. Perhaps fed up with the Americans' negative stereotyping of Muslims in the post 9/11 decade, Amy Waldman advances this declaration as early as 2011, with a novel featuring an array of Muslim characters that… are not all the same but are nevertheless regarded as dangerous and avoidable by the media and the public sphere. Waldman's Muslims are not embodiments of the barbarians who embarked on the four planes to bring death upon Manhattan, Washington and Pennsylvania. Her Muslims are nothing like the psychopath villain Muhammad Atta from Amis's short story or even like the insecure, sexually-repressed Hammad from DeLillo's novel, who still ends up boarding on the mass-slaughterhouse that crashes into the World Trade Center. Her construction of the Muslim identity is less interested in counteracting the 'Orientalism' of the established Western novelists, like Amis, DeLillo or Updike, and

much more in producing a piece of social realism along the lines imposed by liberal media. Two characters stand out: Mohammad Khan, the architect who won the anonymous contest for the memorial of the unnamed tragedy, and the Bangladeshi woman Asma Anwar, widow to one of the illegal workers in one of the towers, who has to endure even more apprehensions, due to her legal status, but also to her gender, in the context of her religion.

"*The Submission* begins its examination of post-9/11 cultural division and racial prejudice by evoking the Clash of Civilizations or "Islam versus the West" discourse, re-calibrated to also evoke one of the other popular War on Terror conceits - the enemy within" says Keeble (2014). But not only does it begin it, but it also leaves it open to the interpretation of history, as the novel provides no resolution for the great divide that affects the American melting pot. It has indeed an ending, set twenty years after the events in the book, which is, presumably, around 2023, in which an elderly Mohammad Khan has long withdrawn from the memorial competition in New York and relocated to the Extreme Orient. Khan's auto-imposed exile back to his native territories may suggest the regaining of his ethnic identity, far from the United States, which denied him the right to a home and a hybrid/ multicultural identity. In this respect, the character's trajectory mirrors that of yet another fictional representation of the Muslim who cannot find his place in post-9/11 America, namely Changez, Mohsin Hamid's *Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Had it not been for this ending, as ambivalent in intentions as the entire characterization of Mohammad Khan, Waldman could have indeed passed for that exception of a Westerner writer who has not let herself seduced by the mirage of Orientalism and who, consequently, has not given up to the simplicity of Muslim-stereotyping.

Khadem has a point when he remarks that "Amy Waldman's *The Submission* (2011) is among the first politically engaging post-9/11 American novels that not only avoid the faulty head-on approach in the depiction of the Muslim terrorists but also counter the general reduction of public life to private affairs by creating a narrative of the American moral panic in the encounter with its Muslim minority" (2015: 68). While not missing any of the most common Islamophobic stereotypes in circulation after 9/11, *The Submission* renders them as phonies, malicious statements and misinterpretations, simply because Muslims are *not all the same*. However, readers and critics had better

not read this novel as a Vindication for the Rights of American Muslims of sorts, no matter how seductive this idea might seem to liberals, because, regardless of what the novelist might want, the novel hardly reaches this aim. It can indeed be read as a social commentary addressed to the Americans' reactions to virtually any Muslim in the wake of 9/11, but it can also be read as a crafted exercise in othering. Because Waldman constructs a gradual otherness, endowing Mohammad Khan with a moral ambivalence impossible to understand by his fellows Americans, despite the repeated claims that the architect, son of a couple of Indian migrants who raised him with little to no regard to the teaching of Islam, is a born and raised secular American citizen.

Sociological considerations aside, what remains worth of mention is that Waldman's Other, Mohammad Khan, is doubly alienated. Firstly, he is different from the other Muslims in the novel, who meet the stereotype-imposed requirement of being religious and displaying the migrants' propensity for preserving their ethnic, religious and cultural identity. Secondly, he is "almost the same, but not quite" as the WASP Americans, who cannot break with a centennial tradition of white superiority and distrust of the others, especially after a tragedy provoked by said others. Mohammad Khan is characterised by in-betweenness, hybridity, by his being neither fully American nor a stereotypical Muslim. This draws the character near mimicry, as famously outlined by Homi K. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994), close to an ambivalence which produces difference. Khan is portrayed as ambivalent, as a "sign of the inappropriate, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance and poses an imminent threat to both 'normalized' knowledge and disciplinary powers" (Bhabha, 1994: 85).

In *The Submission*, New York City is only at the surface level a space of cultural diversity, viewed as "recognition of pre-given cultural contents and customs, held in a time frame of relativism; [which] gives rise to anodyne liberal notions of multiculturalism, cultural exchange, or the culture of humanity" (Bhabha 2006: 155). In fact, the city is a space of cultural difference, which the different ones can freely inhabit, either mingling among the representative of the dominant culture, as is the case of Khan, who is a respected architect working for an important firm and who feels – declaratively, at least – as entitled as any other American citizen to pay his respects to the dead in the attacks by submitting a project for a memorial, or hiding in its slums, together with other migrants, as is Asma's case. While Asma and the entire "little

Dhaka" in the Brooklyn-Queens area do not even attempt at hybridising, at acquiring customs and traits of the host culture – many do not speak English, and their relocation is only geographical, not cultural –, Mohammad Khan, who, until the attacks considered himself a Westerner, who happened to be Muslim, but did not trouble himself too much with this, is suddenly thrown in a third space which he does not fully acknowledge until later in the novel.

The other central Muslim character, Asma Anwar, is a Bangladeshi illegal, living in Brooklyn, in an area mostly inhabited by her countrymen. The neighbourhood is an enclave and has an unofficial political hierarchy. At the time of the attacks, Asma, a pregnant woman married to a Bangladeshi with higher education who used to work under a fake name and Social Security Number as a genitor at the World Trade Center (perhaps an oblique critique at the opportunities of the American Dream), finds herself not only confronted with her husband's demise but also with deportation. From her abrupt introduction into the plot, in the eighth chapter, to her dramatic exit, in the twenty-second, Asma is constructed as a subversive reinterpretation of the submission of Muslim women.

Asma's construction as a representation of otherness is less focused on her being different from the American majority, which she hardly meets. Hers is an otherness within her displaced Bangladeshi world, among her peers, whose focalisation translates into a disapproving understanding of her difference. Mrs Mahmoud, her landlady, tells her that she has "been listening to the men talk again" (2012: 174) when she attempts a parallel between Khan's potential deprivation of his achievement and the Pakistani intervention in Bangladesh, the Liberation War and the proclamation of Bangladesh's independence, in 1971. Not only does she speak and think, but she also acts at times. Her sense of justice prompts her to approach a neighbour abused by her husband, Kabir, and suggest that she find a shelter for women in her situation. Needless to say, the interference is frowned upon in the Muslim community, as is her adventurous walk beyond the borders of her neighbourhood during the "headscarf crisis". Muslim women, frightened by the aggression of the white male claiming to perform an act of liberation by pulling their scarves, refuse to step outside their houses.

Alyssa Spier, the tabloid journalist, reveals Asma's illegal immigrant status. Facing deportation, despite her lawyer's promises to fight for her, Asma decides to

leave America and return to Bangladesh. Her last moments before departure, when she tries "to fit a whole country, the idea of a country, in her luggage: Nike shoes, T-shirts with Disneyland and the White House… glossy magazines and American flags, history books, tourist brochures…", in an attempt to "create for her and Abdul a Little America back home" (322) is the last glimpse into her Occidentalisation, the last touch in the construction of a woman who has been and has remained an Other all along, but who has always wanted to become an American woman, to be able to speak and think without constraints. Surrounded by neighbours and press gathered to see her leave, Asma is stabbed to death in front of her blockhouse, as a tragic response to her hamartia. The novel ends without the readers finding out whether the anonymous murderer was an Islamophobe, a xenophobe, or "a Wahhabi offended by a woman playing a public role" (333), but leaving them with a strong accusation against the press corps in general and Alyssa Spier in particular, as the one who exposed the young Bangladeshi woman to danger.

In the end, it all comes down to the media. They started and ended the conflict of a novel that speaks of Muslim otherness without traces of Islamophobic passion, a novel that tries to illustrate the idea that not all Muslims are the same. The pun in the title remains unresolved, as the two Muslim characters never submit and the submission is illusory. Muslim otherness, however, was not an illusion in post-9/11 America and is not an illusion in fiction, either.

I am the Other: Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

in *British and American Representations of 9/11. Literature, Politics and the Media*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 224-237

Having looked at the representations of Muslims constructed by Westerners, in various degrees of acceptance or prejudice, in the analyses of Martin Amis's short story *The Last Days of Muhammad Atta,* Don De Lillo's *Falling Man*, and Amy Waldman's *The Submission*, I strongly felt that I should let the Other speak, that I should include the perspective of the writers who are commonly referred to as *hyphenated* in the literature. While I agree with Dominika Baran's assessment of the hyphenated identity as "an example of Bakhtinian heteroglossia, for it is inhabited by contested and conflicting meanings that refer to each other synchronically" (2017: 107), I could not but wonder

which side of the hyphen gets, ultimately, to prevail in such an Islamophobe context as the post-9/11 one. In other words, did these writers feel inclined to take sides with their peers of the same race, ethnicity, religion, more often than not wrongfully accused and persecuted in response to the murderous attacks on Western civilisation conducted by a handful of fanatics? Did they feel threatened despite their being citizens or residents of the Western countries, like Waldman's character above? To what extent does their inner dialogism remain impartial and objective or how much do they side with the latter word of the hyphenated construction, the one which denotes the host culture? A good case in point for this latter attitude could be that of Salman Rushdie, who has all the reasons in the world to give up the hyphen for good and stick with his acquired identity. But Rushdie was careful enough to steer away from too in-your-face 9/11 fiction, and he still got reprimanded by Arab critics even for the critique of the Islam in *Shalimar the Clown*, which nevertheless opens with the telling Shakespearean epigraph "A plague on both your houses". Though an allusive historiographic metafiction, in the vein of his more famous *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie's sole contribution to the 9/11 literary debate is considered to "continue the European Orientalist tradition" and "reinforce the rhetoric against Islam".

> In this novel, rather than deconstructing the common ahistorical assumptions about the Islamic terrorist, one which is nowadays highly accepted in the Western collective conscious, Rushdie, the winner of the Booker of Bookers award, the most prestigious literary prize of England, represents Islam as an ideological hotbed for terrorism. In *Shalimar*, Rushdie applies almost all of the major characteristics of Orientalist discourse, defined by Said as the "distillation of ideas about the Orient—its sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its aberrant mentality, its habits of inaccuracy, its backwardness" (1978, p. 205). It is argued that Rushdie reinforces, empowers, and licenses the neo-Orientalist discourse of the axis of evil perpetuated by the Bush administration (and now continued by US President Donald Trump through his anti-Islamic rhetoric) by applying the stereotypes and clichés about the East, without engaging in an attempt to understand the Other. (Akman 2018: 214)

With Rushdie off the proverbial table, as he is no longer *the Other*, apparently, but a European Orientalist who does not even make the effort to understand the Eastern Other (!), the next best option seemed to be the rising star of Anglophone fiction, the

Pakistani-British or Pakistani-American or just Pakistani writing in English, Mohsin Hamid, who had arrested the interest of the literary world with his piece of 9/11 fiction, the monological novel *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007).

The Reluctant Fundamentalist, this *soi-même comme un autre* fiction, weaves numerous autobiographical elements in the construction of a narrative delivered by an unreliable narrator. It allows, besides the commentaries on profiling and stereotyping in the wake of 9/11, therefore, on the Muslim persecuted by an allegedly Islamophobic West, an elaboration on Occidentalism, along the lines of the postcolonial view which holds that "decolonization will not be complete except after the transformation of the observed in an observer" (Hanafi 1991 qtd. in Esposito and Voll 2001: 88). Hamid actually remarks in an interview that "*The Reluctant Fundamentalist* would be a look at America with a gaze reflecting the part of [him]self that remained stubbornly Pakistani" (Hamid in Solomon 2007). No longer an observed, he becomes, in a way, a colonist of the West, which he admits to observing from his innate Eastern position, despite his Westernisation (reflected in his studies in the US, his writings in English, his British citizenship and his identity as a global citizen). In many respects, Changez, the narrator and main character, is constructed as Hamid's alter ego. Although this autobiographical stance indeed validates its description as being deterritorialized (in point of global citizenship rather than uprootedness)/hybridized/westernized, it may also hint, conversely, at the author's awareness of his otherness.

Based on the dramatic monologue, which calls to mind great poems of the nineteenth century, signed by Tennyson, Browning or Arnold, or the twentieth century's *Prufrock* by T. S. Eliot, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* is among the few pieces of prose which employ this form. However, the reader is made to eavesdrop on a unilateral conversation that unwinds like the one imagined by Albert Camus in *The Fall*. Even the setting is similar: in a bar, except the bar is now in Lahore instead of Amsterdam, with an unnamed stranger, of whom the reader learns only that he is an American, whose lines are completely omitted from the conversation. The American interlocutor's silence could be interpreted as silencing America, as a way of asserting that they should not have a say in the South-Asian territories. This is not subject to interpretation, since Hamid admits it openly. When asked by the *New York Times* interviewer "why did you choose to silence the American?" he replies that, for him, "in the world of media, particularly the American media, it's almost always the other way

round", as Muslims who are made heard "mostly seem to be speaking in grainy videos from caves" (Solomon 2007).

       In correlation with the plot development, this could lead to the assessment of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as an anti-American piece of fiction, but that is just one side of the story. The other, much more poignant, is that this anti-Americanism is born from resentment, from being othered by a civilisation which, at least in theory, is the space of reference for "the dilution of alterity and the absorption of transculturation" (Bhattacharjee 2015: 5). The story framed by the conversation is simple, linear and easily narratable. Criticism generally classifies Changez as an unreliable narrator on account of the one-sidedness of his story, which "performs the archetypal novelistic trick of taking us inside the head of the character but, in so doing, refusing the normalizing consolation of a dialogue" (Morey 2011: 139), on the degree of formality of his too educated language, and on his initial statement – "I am a lover of America" (Hamid, 2007: 1), an incipit with the force of simplicity comparable with that of "Call me Ishmael". This statement is contradicted when the "lover of America" becomes an advocate of "disengagement from your country by mine", persuading his students to participate in "demonstrations that the foreign press would later, when our gatherings grew to newsworthy size, come to label anti-American" (203). Nonetheless, the 200-odd pages between these two statements may be in truth unreliably narrated and one-sided, but they may also be plausible and reflective of a reality outside the text which had (or has had?) a negative impact on the Muslims in the US after 9/11. Changez, a young man from Pakistan, is granted a scholarship at Princeton, one of the Ivy League universities, landing after graduation on a coveted job as a financial analyst at Underwood Samson, a corporation whose initials are self-explanatory. He starts to feel American, both in the adoptive country and abroad, and even at home. He is set on a course of becoming an image of accomplished hybridization, one that Žižek (2006) termed "neighbour": the integrated other. However, this integration is incomplete and illusory and may crumb to pieces because "the position of the Neighbour is tolerated at best. This politically correct tolerance is hypocritical as it could potentially turn into hostility at any time." (Seval 2017: 103). Changez receives signals of his otherness even in moments when he feels "a young New Yorker with the city at [his] feet" (Hamod 2007: 51). During a conversation on what each of the students would like to become,

Changez says, that he hopes "one day to be the dictator of an Islamic republic with nuclear capability" (33), a joke met with shock which could, as Seval rightfully notices, turn his tolerated/ accepted position into "a bizarre, unwanted, and dangerously alien one" (2017: 106) of an absolute Other.

This undesirable outcome is not delayed much, as the events of September 11 intervene in Changez's life as unexpectedly as they did in everybody's. Hamid places his character far from New York, in a delegation in the Philippines, thus ensuring the distance required to grasp the event in its filmic unreality. "I turned on the television and saw what at first I took to be a film. But as I continued to watch, I realized that it was not fiction but news. I stared as one—and then the other—of the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center collapsed" (82-3). Nothing new here: this was, as already mentioned, the sensation reported by Martin Amis, Don DeLillo, Ian McEwan, Jean Baudrillard, Jacques Derrida and so many others in the days after the attack; it is, as also mentioned, the reason why my book was written.

New York in the days after the attacks is depicted in Hamid's novel with the evocative force of what could be termed as photorealism if one borrowed the term from the area of visual arts and transposed it to fiction. Just as the artists of the 1960s-1970s would photograph an image and then paint it as realistically as possible, as a counter-reaction to Abstract Expressionism, Hamid "draws" the streets of New York from media images, perhaps from a realist impulse to hypertextually access the world outside the text:

> New York was in mourning after the destruction of the World Trade Center, …. Your country's flag invaded New York after the attacks: it was everywhere. They all seemed to proclaim: We are America … the mightiest civilisation the world has ever known; you have slighted us; *beware our wrath* (Hamid 2007: 90).

Although he starts to feel threatened, Changez still considers that the persecutions of Muslims cannot affect him, owing to his status. "The crumbling of the world around [him] and the impending destruction of [his] personal American dream" (106) are anticipated with a detachment that prevents him from accepting that "Pakistani cab drivers were being beaten to within an inch of their lives; the FBI was raiding mosques, shops, and even people's houses; Muslim men were disappearing, perhaps into shadowy detention centres for questioning or worse" (107). In an article entitled

"Denied Citizenry and the Postnational Imaginary: Arab-American and Muslim American Literary Responses to 9/11", Andrea Carosso provides a similar list of what he terms "dis-identification" based on racial profiling and stereotyping:

> A crude anti-Muslim video circulated on the Internet suggesting the existence of a Muslim plot to take over the West; a mosque was burned down in Missouri; an acid bomb was thrown at an Islamic school in Illinois; one speaker at the Republican primaries accused Muslims of harbouring plans for "stealth Sharia;" and a group of Republican House members, led by Michele Bachmann, conducted a witch-hunt against two prominent Muslim federal officials for alleged loyalty to Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. The allegations turned out to be groundless, but the pruriency for a revival of McCarthyist obsessions stuck. (2014: 194-5)

Hamid's novel does not refer to the media when it briefly reports the "framing Muslims" atmosphere (Morey and Yaqin 2011); instead, it addresses the public opinion and the hostile attitudes in the streets, metro stations and parking lots. As Morey puts it, "the stereotype tends to be articulated through an implicit distance between the viewer (normalized subject) and the Muslim object of the gaze, whose difference is always in view and never in doubt" (2011: 266). Relevant in this respect is Changez's attempted assault by a man who calls him a "fucking Arab" (Hamid 2007: 134). This is an illustration of the common misconception according to which all Muslims are Arabs and all Arabs are terrorists, widespread in the years after 9/11. This abuse is shortly followed by many others and even by his colleagues' change of attitude because of his decision to grow a beard during his visit to Pakistan. He gradually, yet completely disengages from the host culture.

It can be argued that Changez's disentanglement from the United States – doing away with the Occidentalist image of the Muslim who discovers his Islamic fundamentalist drives due to exposure to the evils of the West – is a result of his being denied the complete integration he was aiming at during the years he spent there. There is a sense of frustration that induces resentment. However, the explanation provided by the narrative is that Changez's change of heart is owed to his increasing discontent at the United States' response to the attacks, the War on Terror in Afghanistan, regarded as disproportional and verging on the boundaries between the real and the simulacrum.

Towards the end of the novel, the anti-American discourse becomes acute, the narrator now openly critiquing the American superiority and its waging war against entire innocent populations. The gaze of the Other is probing, and what he sees is realistic, in accordance with the image the United States showed to the entire world immediately after 9/11: "You retreated into myths of your own difference, assumptions of your own superiority. And you acted out these beliefs on the stage of the world so that the entire planet was rocked by the repercussions of your tantrums" (Hamid 2007: 199). With this strong political statement inserted into an unreliable fiction and drawing it to the edge of the real, as well as with the final debunking of stereotypes on both sides – "you should not imagine that we Pakistanis are all potential terrorists, just as we should not imagine that you Americans are all undercover assassins" (208), Mohsin Hamid seems to have finally attained that goal mentioned above, of becoming a keen observer of the Other. Except that not only does he observe the West, but he also observes the East (and hardly can he be accused of Orientalism). Aside from its literary qualities, what makes *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* a success is neither the Muslims' quest for identity in an America prone to react negatively against all that stands for its symbolic bringing on its knees nor the poignant anti-Americanism of some of the political statements it makes. It is precisely its objective positioning between the two cultural and political hemispheres, its demonstration that otherness exists and functions two ways.

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*. Berlin: Peter Lang, 2019, pp. 47-58

If the first two titles in this category deal with the Islamophobe reactions of the general American population in the wake of 9/11, the one summarized here is related to the persecution, profiling and prejudicial standpoints on the part of the authorities. The unprecedented rise of Islamophobia after 9/11 gives the US government leeway to act towards indiscriminate punishment, by involving the nation and its allies in a global conflict known as the War on Terror. At home, the adoption of the Patriot Act and Homeland Security Act, with the purpose of defending the country against the terrorist threat, results in abuse and mistreatment of citizens and residents of Eastern origin.

Always a close follower of the media and political discourse, contemporary literature mirrors this history of the recent past, taking avenues that range from Orientalist representations of the Other to fictional denouncement of Muslim framing. A good case in point for the latter category is Egyptian-American dramatist, Yussef El Guindi's play *Back of the Throat* (2006), a one-act black comedy with Kafkian accents.

The chapter draws from a theoretical apparatus designed by Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin in *Framing Muslims: Stereotyping and Representation after 9/11*, who trace the so-called "structures of representation", in fact, another name for stereotypical heteroimages: "the bearded Muslim fanatic, the oppressed veiled woman, the duplicitous terrorist who lives among 'us' to bring about our destruction (2011:2), as well as on two volumes of Edward Said's 'Postcolonial Trilogy', namely *Orientalism* (1978) and *Covering Islam* (1981), with 'updates' which incorporate contemporary Islamist/Islamophobic issues. Emphasis is laid on aspects of framing, profiling, racism and backlash against Muslims in the United States, as reflected in the literature of those times. Is it too soon to speak of *those times* when only twenty years have passed? Owing to the fast developments at the global level, in terms of geopolitics and mentalities, I contend that today one could speak of fictional Islamophobia anchoring it in a past that is, nevertheless, still worth commenting on, if only from a literary-cum-historic perspective.

Soon after 9/11, this wave of persecution was legislated by two documents issued by the Bush administration. The former is the famous PATRIOT ACT, an Act of Congress signed into law in October 2001, whose name is an abbreviation for "Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism," The Patriot Act states its intentions to "improve counter-terrorism efforts" by allowing law enforcement "to use surveillance against more crimes of terror," "to conduct investigations without tipping-off terrorists," facilitating "information sharing and cooperation among government agencies so that they can better connect the dots" (https://www.justice.gov/archive/ll/highlights.htm). The latter, the Homeland Security Act, was introduced one year later, in November 2002, creating the Department of Homeland Security, with the same aim of protecting the United States from terrorist threats at any cost and using all means available. One of the problems with these two acts is that they often led to persecution, profiling, and

racist treatment against people of certain ethnicities and religions who had previously been normal citizens or residents of the United States.

In the fictional mirror of reality, this is the case of Khaled, the main character of *Back of the Throat* by Egyptian American dramatist Yussef El Guindi. As many other characters in literary pieces that feature Muslims living in the United States in the aftermath of 9/11, Khaled suddenly becomes a person of interest. In terms of postcolonial theory, such figures are characterized by in-betweenness, hybridity, being neither fully American nor stereotypical Muslims – a *locus communis* is the fact that none of these characters is religious. Mohammad Khan from *The Submission*, Changez from *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, and Khaled from *Back of the Throat* are young or middle-aged highly educated professionals. If before the attacks they were Americans who happened to be of Arab/ Indian/ Pakistani/ Palestinian origin, in the atmosphere of terror that shadows the lives of the US dwellers after September 11, 2001, they find themselves to be inhabitants of a third space. It is a thin demarcation line between the hybrid minorities that borrow the American way and the enemy within that the political and media discourses portray, largely as a justification for the ensuing war on terror. The transformation from *different* in a menacing *other* takes the avenue of their being acknowledged as *strangers*.

To return to *Back of the Throat*, the play has been described by the press as "a section of the US Patriot Act as dramatized by David Mamet and Franz Kafka" and as "the post-9/11 play we've been waiting for: the sum of all our domestic fears, played for uneasy laughs and piercing dread" (Dramatists Play Service Inc. 2006). Set by the stage directions "sometime after the attacks" (El Guindi 2016: 10), this one-act play unfolds, for its most part, as an investigation pursued by the FBI agents Carl and Bartlett in the apartment of Khaled, an Arab-American citizen. It is noticeable that 'the attacks' are so present in the American consciousness that their particularization as 9/11 or WTC is already superfluous.

Based on the books in his room – one of them being, incidentally, Edward Said's *Covering Islam*, Khaled is labelled "a left-leaning subversive with Maoist tendencies who has a thing for bestiality and militant Islam" (21), which is a telling linguistic representation of the absurdities concocted by the national trauma that the attacks on the World Trade Center ensued – because it takes a traumatized mind to put together such ideologically-diverse aspects in order to create a profile of a suspect or, at the very

least, of a person of interest. Islamophobia is clear in a longer line uttered by Bartlett, which expresses the "us versus them" principle that made George W. Bush exclaim "either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists":

> At no time should you think this is an ethnic thing. Your ethnicity has nothing to do with it other than the fact that your background happens to be the place where most of this crap is coming from. So, naturally, the focus is going to be on you. It's not profiling, it's deduction. You're a Muslim and an Arab. Those are the bad-asses currently making life a living hell and so we'll gravitate towards you and your ilk until other bad-asses from other races make a nuisance of themselves. Right? Yesterday the Irish and the Poles, today it's you. Tomorrow it might be the Dutch (23).

To draw a conclusion, one should return to the old matter of the personal versus the political, or better said, to that of the personal as political. Khaled's drama may well be the drama of every Muslim profiled and harassed in the United States after 9/11 based on nothing else than their ethnicity and religion. At the same time, however, El Guindi's play stresses the national and global consequences of the US government's response to the attacks on the World Trade Center. Very much a reality of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the rise of Islamophobia in the United States, manifest at all levels, from the presidential administration to the simple populace, can be one of the factors that allowed for many irregularities and abuses to take place both during the so-called war on terror, i.e. in Afghanistan and Iraq, and at home, with the large support of the organism created for that purpose, the Department of Homeland Security, whose methods have been repeatedly demonstrated to resemble those denounced by Yussef El Guindi in *Back of the Throat*.

As if by Magical Realism: A Refugee Crisis in Fiction

Cultural Intertexts. Vol. 8/2018, Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință pp. 80-93

This last entry of this section could well have been the first of the next one, as it focuses equally on otherness and contemporary politics, which should not come as a surprise since they are currently intertwined. However, since it makes reference again to Mohsin Hamid, who was cast as 'the voice of otherness' in my ideologically-oriented research, and since the novel referred to below is sooner magical and metaphorical than realistic

and downright political, I have decided to allow Saeed and Nadia, the main characters of the novel, to join Mohammad Khan, Asma Anwar, Changez and Khaled in the fictional gallery of average Muslim Others facing the frightened and frightening Western world, and leave the global, less personal issues take precedence in the following section.

After the worldwide bestseller, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and its successful feature film adaptation made the author a celebrity, Mohsin Hamid is no longer a citizen of the world, a "Mongrel. Miscegenerator. Half-breed. Outcast. Deviant. Heretic" (2014: xvii) according to his own sarcastic characterization in the introduction to his volume of essays, *Discontents and Its Civilisations*, but again a citizen of Pakistan, preoccupied with the fate of his native country in a global context:

> I think Pakistan matters, not just for myself and other Pakistanis, not only because it is beset with terrorism and possesses nuclear weapons but because Pakistan is a testbed for pluralism on a globalizing planet that desperately needs more pluralism. Pakistan's uncertain democracy and unsteady attempt to fashion a future in which its citizens can live together in peace are an experiment that mirrors our global experiment as human beings on a shared Earth. (xiv)

An experimental novel follows, a bildungsroman shaped in the form of a self-help book and written, unusually so, in the second person, *How to Get Filthy Rich in Rising Asia* (2013), set in an unnamed Asian territory which is visibly Pakistan. In 2017, inspired, probably, by the humanitarian crisis in Syria, the fall of Mosul and the Yemeni Civil War, Hamid publishes his most accomplished novel to date, the piece of magic realism entitled *Exit West*. The analysis undertaken in the article published in 2018 in *Cultural Intertexts* focuses on the relation between the personal and the political, tracing the role of magical realism in opening the doors towards the painfully realistic construction of otherness.

Questioning my initial assumption that the novel had been inspired by the events in Syria exclusively, the paper reiterates its aim to discuss *fiction* and not historical realities of the twenty-first century. However, as defined in the 1970s, in the full bloom of postmodern reassessment of the grand metanarratives, the historical work is narrative discourse as much as any other body of texts that are heard, reported, informed by ideology and that impose a reading and an interpretative strategy (White, 1973). At the

same time, however, the fictionalism of history, its deceitful, totalizing and manipulative nature, is actually a contestation of the phrase historical reality. Literature, in its turn, can be history by other means, but it is deceiving by definition. Therefore, starting from these two premises, that history is fictionalized/ fictionalizing, while fiction may touch upon historicity, one reaches back to the overused concept of Lyotard – that of the "incredulity towards metanarratives" (1984).

Many of the twenty-first-century political phenomena are connected to the most recent wave of migration, with people fleeing from war and terror-ridden territories in a desperate attempt to save what is left of their lives, both physically and psychologically. This is a significant part of the history of the last decade, and this is also the historical background of Mohsin Hamid's novel. But does this make *Exit West* a historical novel? Yes and no. In the classical sense of the term, it does not. The spatial and temporal coordinates are undetermined, heroes are missing, antagonistic forces are barely mentioned, and even the conflict that triggers the déroulement of the plot is somewhere in the background, the novel foregrounding a love story of two unexceptional characters. The entire scaffolding of the novel "break(s) with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable" (Derrida 1977: 185 qtd. in Hutcheon 1989: 7).

Therefore, Hamid's fictional work challenges "the (related) conventional forms of fiction and history through its acknowledgment of their inescapable textuality" (Hutcheon 1989: 11) and through the multiplicity of potential contexts. The absence of the elements that could make up a historical novel and the presence of some very topical "intertexts of the world" embedded in the narrative, especially in the second half of the novel, when the space turns from indeterminate to precisely mapped, may justify the inclusion of Exit West in the fuzzy category of historiographic metafiction, even without overt signalling the meta- dimension.

"We are all migrants through time", says the narrator of *Exit West* (209), that is to say, the world around us changes whether we move through space or not and that we need to constantly adjust to change. In today's world, migration, a phenomenon as old as human civilisation, appears to lead to the redefinition of borders as we have known them since the formation of national states. It is probably in this key that Mohsin Hamid's latest opus should be read, after all – as a contribution, with the tools writers

of fiction have at their disposal, not to the identification of a solution to a world crisis, but to a new understanding and acceptance of the Other.

B. POLITICS AS CULTURE/ FEMINISM AS CULTURAL POLITICS

B1. Politics, contemporary history and fiction

Traditionally regarded as a playground where 'the limits of interpretation' (Eco) are pushed to the boundaries of psychoanalysis, to an almost grammatical parsing of the narrative structure, to deconstructing the binarism, opposition, and hierarchies of form and meaning, to symbolically 'killing the author' to grant all the power to the reader, or to embracing militant causes in the fashion of the age, the area of literary theory and criticism has become, since the twentieth century, a discourse-oriented endeavour. Resting on the binary categories of truth and reality, postmodernism questions both their very truth and reality at the level of fiction and not only. It is this "not only" what brings in New Historicism and Cultural Materialism, two critical theories which deal, aside from literature, with fictionalisation through discursive practices in texts that are customarily perceived as pertaining to the domain of reality, such as history books, political speeches and, above all, the media. Twenty-first-century political fiction, for instance, seems realistic at first sight; however, due to this influence, as well as to the ideological and contextual constraints added to its essence as representation, it employs layers of fictionalisation: created worlds that describe other created worlds which are marketed as reality to their audience, and which contribute to creating and imparting knowledge.

Literature too has become participative. Writers should "rebuild their readers' belief in argument from factual evidence and do what fiction has always been good at doing – to construct, between the writer and the reader, an understanding about what is real" (Rushdie 2018). A good example is Salman Rushdie's treatment of his most famous novel, *Midnight's Children*, exposed in ''Errata': or, Unreliable Narration in *Midnight's Children'* (1983). He observes that history is always ambiguous and that literature is not history, but plays with history forms. Analysing his goals pursued in writing this novel, Rushdie asserts that he was, at first, in a Proustian search for lost time. In time, however, he realised that he was searching for a way to reconstruct the past so as to suit his ends, using memory as a tool. Saleem Sinai (the central character

and narrator), far from being an objective historian, attempts to "cut up history to suit himself, just as he did when he cut up newspapers to compose his earlier text" (Rushdie, 1991: 24). It is thus obvious that the author's motivation is to endow his narrator with a cultural materialist type of reasoning. In admitting the unreliability of his narrator, Rushdie lays emphasis on the fact that *Midnight's Children* is a novel, and not "some sort of inadequate reference book or encyclopaedia" (1991: 25), however, as he stresses in another article ('Outside the Whale', 1984) in which he polemicizes with Orwell's 'Inside the Whale' (1940) and 'Politics of the English Language' (1946), the need of politics in literature is very actual: "it becomes necessary, and even exhilarating, to grapple with the special problems created by the incorporation of political material, because politics is, by turns, farce and tragedy" (1991: 100).

Yet another one of Rushdie's observations, namely that the writer "need not always be the servant of some beetle-browed ideology" and that "he can also be its critic, his antagonist, its scourge" (1991: 98) is also close to the cultural materialist discussion of literature in terms of compliance versus resistance to ideology and superstructures. In *Literature, Politics and Culture in Post-war Britain*, Alan Sinfield enlarges upon society being forced "to reproduce itself both culturally and materially by putting in circulation stories of how the world goes" (1989: 2). Various institutions considered dominant structures are responsible for this (the media, religion, education, the political parties), and so is literature, which may either reinforce or contest the narratives of these structures. This contestation occurs when literature resists the ideology imposed by the State apparatus and focuses on "dissident politics of class, race, gender, and sexual orientation" (Sinfield, 1992: 10).

As a parenthesis, the word dissident underlines the Foucauldian concept of subversion constructed within the discourse of power. Sinfield notes in *Faultlines – Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* (1992) that "dissidence operates necessarily in reference to dominant structures; it has to invoke those structures to oppose them and therefore can always, ipso facto, be discovered re-inscribing that which it proposes to critique" (1992: 47). At the same time, dissidence represents a statement of intent made by the cultural materialist critics. It challenges the idealist view of literature as being somehow placed above the material conditions of production and reception, society, and politics. This is because such an "honourable placement" would confine literature to an area of "limited influence, marginality, even

irrelevance" (Sinfield 1989: 28), denying its status as an actual institution, a significant "cultural apparatus" or a source of knowledge.

More recently, in the article entitled "Truths, Lies and Literature", Salman Rushdie refines the ideas he has been advocating since the 1980s, maintaining that "the world can perhaps best be explained in terms of conflicting and often incompatible narratives. In Kashmir and the Middle East, and in the battle between progressive America and Trumpistan, we see examples of such incompatibilities. The consequences of this new, argumentative, even polemical attitude to the real have profound implications for literature – that we can't, or ought not to, pretend it isn't there. I believe that the influence on public discourse of more varied voices has been a good thing, enriching our literatures and making more complex our understanding of the world" (2018). It is, then, a reiteration of the idea that literature should, now more than ever, have "overt political ends in the contemporary world" (Brannigan 1998: 98)

In contemporary fiction, some literary texts foreground a tight relation to non-literary contemporary events which constitute topics of discussion for political and journalistic texts. Therefore, the choice for a critical theory informed by the necessity to regard literature in a wider context comes naturally. The focus could not be laid on either author or text; neither could marginal and marginalising issues be underlined, as that would render the analysis incomplete. This is not to say that issues informed by principles of exclusion and differentiation should be disregarded, but rather that they are inscribed within a wider frame of cultural dynamics, and that laying emphasis exclusively on particular aspects (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, etc.) might hinder access to the bigger picture. The textual analysis proposed by New Historicism/ Cultural Materialism/ Cultural Studies points to a form of virtually encompassing everything that may go under the term culture. In this context, the awareness of culture allows an expanded target audience unhindered by possible misapprehensions owed to incomprehensibly formulated theories. Whether termed interchangeably based on geographical and/ or ideological criteria or considered individually, in point of specific traits which differentiate them from one another, New Historicism, Cultural Materialism or Cultural Studies represent actual and rewarding modes of critically approaching the (literary) text, owing precisely to this weaving of influences which constitutes their common core. The combination of Poststructuralism, cultural theory,

analyses of discourses of otherness (postcolonial and feminist studies, with their subsequent developments and ramifications), and Marxism leaves no stone unturned in the process of identification and understanding of the general context, whose conditions are, at the same time, abided by and replicated by discourse and representation. Without proposing a definitive grid of analysis, New Historicism, Cultural Materialism (and/or Cultural Studies) provide the readers multifaceted possibilities to look into the text[2].

B1.1. Brexit and European (Dis)integration

Using the theoretical apparatus outlined above, one can expand the discussion of cultural approaches to any kind of breaking news, all the more that the twenty-first century made us witness quite a significant number of turning points and potential catastrophes since its making an entrance with a (literal) bang in 2001. As it was too soon and too complicated to start critically commenting on everything the media presented and the fiction appropriated in the second decade of this agitated century, I envisaged the possibility of coordinating a collective volume, that was to feature different perspectives on history-making events while keeping for my analysis the one that I felt, at the time, as most unsettling: the possible dissolution of the European Union as a result of the UK's decision to leave its structures. The volume was completed in the first days of the worldwide lockdown imposed by the outburst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is why it does not have any contributions on the topic, but only incidental undercurrents and marginal references to it.

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[2] This advocacy of New Historicism, Cultural Materialism and Cultural Studies as the critical modes most suited for the analysis of twenty-first century engaged and political fiction has been presented, in an invited address, at the international multidisciplinary conference "Dialogue between Sciences & Arts, Religion & Education" (Tîrgoviște, Romania, June 2021). An extended version of it has been published in the Proceedings volume https://doi.org/10.26520/mcdsare.2021.5 under the title "Encoding Reality into Fiction/ Decoding Fiction as Reality: Postmodern Historiography as Critical Theory", in anticipation of this work, to which it was initially conceived as an introduction.

Shifting Twenty-First-Century Discourses, Borders and Identities

https://www.cambridgescholars.com/product/978-1-5275-5775-8

This collection is a step taken by literati in the present post-postmodern era of fiction heavily impacted by the geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century. The interdisciplinary path should expand the discussion of the historical, sociological and political imagination transposed into fiction, film or other communication vehicles. While at first focus was laid on datable political events, in time, realization that history can no longer be regarded just as a list of dates has settled in. Therefore, the result is an approach to world contemporary history from the perspective of literature scholars, one that cancels borders and brings together civilizations. Emphasis is laid on migration, geopolitics, global citizenship, the EU and the Arab world, East and West, as represented in fiction, drama, poetry or television. The first part of the volume deals with migration and the changes in the Arab world, with constant references to September 11 and the Arab Spring revolution, the (Syrian) refugee crisis, and then focus shifts to the migration host, the European Union, discussing its expansion to the East, French President Macron's call for renewal, and lastly, the beginning of the end, announced by Brexit.

This book is looking at the world with new eyes. Eyes of many a civilisation united as one in the advent of a new world. The keyword, as obvious from its title, is shifting. When borders shift, people shift with them – identities take new shapes and discourse follows suit. Since 9/11, nothing is as it used to be but the world keeps spinning around us, and we are spinning with it.

Tributary to the duality that characterises our worldviews despite the multicultural, multi-layered, multiform and polyphonic voices that make up the new Weltliteratur, cultural hegemony is perceivable in the two-part structure of the book.

The East-West dichotomy is still an axis around which borders and identities revolve, changing places, and finally shift, if only for a little while, within predetermined frameworks. Accordingly, this volume is shaped as a critical heteroglossia that aims to assess the dual nature of the contemporary worlds and words of magic, as well as their insertion into 'the real'. The first part, entitled **Heart(s) of Darkness**, a self-evident tribute to Joseph Conrad's novella, gathers commentaries on the current trends in postcolonial writing, which seem to have overcome the anxieties of being subject of one colonial empire or another, shifting towards finding their place in the remains of those days. Jocularly entitled **To Europe or Not to Europe – That Is the Question** in an attempt to interact or, in millennial lingo, 'inter-text' with the obsolete Western canon, whose cradle, now virulently contested, is 'the old continent', the second part still lingers on migration, so as to create a link between worlds, but focuses mainly on the European Union, integration, expansion, renewal and, since every empire is eventually doomed to fall, disintegration.

History in the Making: Literary and Filmic Snapshots of Brexit

Michaela Praisler, Oana-Celia Gheorghiu. In *Shifting Twenty-First-Century Discourses, Borders and Identities*, 2020, 147-170

Prefaced by the publication of a theoretical article that focused on Brexit as a historical and political event[3], which was reused for the historical background in this chapter, the closing 'border shift' in this book dedicated to contemporaneity is an analysis of two cultural representations of the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union: a novel and a film. Firstly, an analysis of what is left unsaid/unseen from within the minds of the characters in the HBO drama film *Brexit: The Uncivil War* attempt to disclose the historiographic metafictional stances of looking at and commenting on history (in the making). The dialogic, multi-voiced film allows the interaction of distinct standpoints, at once shocking the audience out of biased complacency and subverting each position formulated only to replace it with another, in turn subvertible one. Within the broader frame of voices (and collage of visual images) in the

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[3] Gheorghiu, O. 2019. "Brexit Framing in British Media". Proceedings of the International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on the Dialogue between Sciences & Arts, Religion & Education. Ideas Forum International Academic and Scientific Association ISSN 2601-8403, pp.321-325 https://doi.org/10.26520/mcdsare.2019.3.321-325

scaffolding of the filmic discourse, there runs the double-voice of the protagonist, advancing his dichotomic views – a politically 'correct' artistic choice which opens up to plural interpretations, offering food for thought rather than pronouncing judgements.

Secondly, to counterbalance the professed realism and objectivity of a film that was, at times, advertised as a documentary, the unrealistic and satirical reversal of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, the novella *The Cockroach* by Ian McEwan, is tackled. The novella is structured into four untitled parts: the metamorphosis; an explanatory analepsis crowded with historical and scientific references (a McEwan trademark), the narrative of the political and diplomatic courses taken by the British Government in their pursuit of implementing "the will of the people" (the result of the referendum) – with the support of the US President; two additional subplots – a conflict with France sprung from an invented assault of the latter on six 'English heroes' (in fact, fishermen who had entered the territorial waters of France illegally, and whose boat had been sunk by accident by the French), reminding of the century-long history of animosity between the two countries, and a demonstration of Machiavellianism and manipulation through the media, aimed at eliminating a political adversary. The last section steps a few months into the foreseeable future – after the most absurd faux pas ever made by the Brits entered into effect. McEwan's accusations underpinning this text are found to be as straightforward as his position assumed in press editorials, yet fiction cannot do anything about it, except show how time has run out and is now heading backwards.

B1.2. Romanian Politics and Policies, Then and Now

Though an Anglophone by formation, the interest in politics and social history and the awareness of the world around me, complemented by a cumulus of factors, such as an inclination towards Memory Studies, strong anti-communist feelings, and, perhaps, the need to make our local realities known to others have prompted me to take occasional scientific incursions into Romanian non-literary texts, which I approached from various cultural and linguistic perspectives. The most important outcomes in this category are summarized below.

The Odyssey of Communism. Visual Narratives, Memory and Culture

https://www.cambridgescholars.com/product/978-1-5275-6902-7

This edited collection, indexed by Clarivate Analytics in Book Citation Index, features 14 chapters based on presentations delivered by their authors at the international conference "Thirty Years since the Fall of Communism: Visual Narratives, Memory and Culture", held in Galati in November 2019. It is, nonetheless, more than a volume of conference proceedings because of its intertextual structuring around a Homerian (or rather Joycean) journey through various Scyllas and Caribdas of the communist totalitarian regimes around the world, as visually represented in feature films, TV series and non-fictional documentaries.

As was the case with the volume presented above, the outline of the contents cites from the prefatory chapter, entitled "Re(Presenting) A Latter-Day Odyssey". With obvious propagandistic aims, the films produced in the Eastern Bloc and in China 'rewrite' history in the making, providing their home audiences with the image of a system that should have been perceived as victorious against the evils of the corrupt, capitalist West, and as a blessing for the ones fortunate enough to be under the protection of the Party. Equally worth commenting on are the few cultural products of the age that escaped censorship in their attempt to fight the regime, either by subtle insertion of disruptive elements in the communist visual indoctrination or by 'emigration' to a free world that was more than willing to find out what was going on behind the Iron Curtain.

In the wake of the communist era, cultural memory has been set in motion to 'show and tell' how it really was, in visual(ised) artefacts which have painted 'the age of horrors', 1945-1989, as even darker than it had actually been. With freedom of expression newly guaranteed, art creators have, since then, struggled to re-textualize the imposed narratives of the recent past, thus re-producing a history of communism. An Odyssean journey of remembrance through visual means and techniques, this collection assembles chapters contributing to the above-mentioned re-textualisation and re-production. Its goal is that of assessing the latter half of the twentieth century from

a cultural perspective, since thirty years after the fall of most communist regimes, there are still questions that await an answer. The analyses converge towards the idea that art has always been a powerful propaganda tool. While marginally covering other areas (China), as a means of pointing out the differences from what communism meant in Europe, the focus is primarily laid on the impact of the regimes in the former USSR, in some of the signatories of the Warsaw Treaty – namely Romania, Yugoslavia, Poland – and in Orsinia, an avatar of Czechoslovakia.

The Odyssey of Communism: Visual Narratives, Memory and Culture looks into the ways in which film has contaminated and re-shaped culture(s) and the collective unconscious, at both local and global levels, arguing that our lives have been impacted by the 'then' that we keep revisiting, lest we forget. Contributors from Hong Kong, Turkey, Poland, Ukraine, Serbia, Romania, the Netherlands and the USA refer to artistic products in/on communism, either emphasising their propagandistic force or bringing forth ostalgie, nostophobia, etc. It takes the reader from the Berlin Wall to China, and from the terror of communist political prisons and labour camps to the rosy image promoted by propaganda. A key point is the interdisciplinary nature of the project, which brings together literature and film scholars, directors, sociologists and philosophers, who employ their respective methods and views in studies whose overall conclusion is that communism, lingering in mentalities, still needs interrogation. (Praisler and Gheorghiu 2021: x-xiv).

Anecdotal Takes on Social History: *Tales from the Golden Age* Told and Re-Told

In *The Odyssey of Communism. Visual Narratives, Memory and Culture*, 2021, pp. 89-107

This chapter tries to prove the point that fiction – whether written or, in the case of feature films, multimodal –, participates in the economic, social, political, and cultural play staged at one point or another in history, using 'actors' belonging to the respective economic, social, political, and cultural environment. Moreover, this participation could not be farther from being peripheral when it comes to "the more or less systematic effort to manipulate other people's beliefs, attitudes, or actions by means of signs and symbols" – this being the definition of propaganda. The initial assumption is that

chronologically speaking, at least, the filmic text under the lens may be characterized as postmodern. But it is saddening and amusing at once to conceive that postmodernism would have been allowed to enter the Eastern European space, with all its interrogation, disorderly uncertainty, and incredulity (Lyotard 1979/ 1984), given the metanarrative nature of the communist ideology. This would, apparently, doom to failure the reading of one of the texts selected for analysis here, namely *Toamna bobocilor [The Freshmen's Autumn]* (1975), as postmodernist. It can be argued that its producers were not aware of this ideology. And yet, the unmistakably parodic intentions of the text in question point to its unconscious postmodernism. Could it be the result of a subversive zeitgeist that somehow managed to 'trespass' the physical and ideological borders of the communist space? An unexpected effect of situating the cultural text "within historical discourse without surrendering its autonomy as fiction"? (Hutcheon 1989: 4). Or the fact that it is a pseudohistorical source that 'documents' its time in the way of social history, but with celluloid beings instead of real people as protagonists? Definitely postmodernist, on the other hand, is the other film, *Amintiri din epoca de aur [Tales from the Golden Age]* (2009), which is set in contrast with the communist production with a view to showing how communism was represented then and now, during and after, pointing out the twist in the myth of the propagandistic nature of the former and the exaggerations of both, thus demonstrating the level of their unreality and fragmentation and their telling preference for parody and intertextuality.

     To some extent, social history, too, as representative of postmodernity, may be equated with abandoning the grand narratives and with the postmodernist preference for disjointed and fragmentary petits récits, as Lyotard labelled them. "Postmodern knowledge [of history, in this case] is not simply a tool of the authorities; it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable" (1984, xxv). Social history favours fragmentation in that it focuses on small aspects in the lives of ahistorical everymen (and everywomen), which leads to larger structures being "broken in pieces, the pieces altered, inverted, and rearranged" (Greenblatt 1990, 166), with a view to rewriting history in a manner that defies its alleged objectivity, and helps the contemporary reader better comprehend its (inter)textual machinations. These broken pieces, whether they are called 'little narratives' or 'anecdotes', redesign historical 'reality' and its "epitomizing of epochal truth" (Gallagher 2000: 51) by making recourse to the everyday, the banal, and the ordinary.

The first film is parodic, open-ended, metafictional, and speaks about the lack of choices in an imposing system. It may indeed be socialist in what concerns the setting and the time, but its realism is questionable. Situations like that presented in the film were factual, but the people's well-being or happiness were grossly and parodically exaggerated. A local social fresco of a small world in the 1970s Socialist Republic of Romania, *The Freshmen's Autumn* seems to have aligned with the requirements of the July Theses, but did so by 'advertising' a golden cage whose bars, though subtly hinted at, were perceived exactly as they were: imprisonment and the impossibility of getting out. The Freshmen's Autumn is nothing than a misleading tale of the Golden Age, one that gets to be told simultaneously with the events it depicts, but a tale, nonetheless. More clearly postmodernist in its fragmented structure and intertextuality employed at the level of the short narratives announced as "urban myths of the communist age" in fact, small pieces of social history with insignificant everymen as characters –, is Cristian Mungiu's *Amintiri din epoca de aur*, released in 2009. Worth mentioning is the fact that the Romanian title should be translated as "Memories from the Golden Age", and not as *Tales from the Golden Age*, as it was, which may be suggestive of an attempt at *real-ising* the absurd stories it tells, from a mediating distant perspective (twenty years after).

In both cases, the flamboyant, sententious discursive patterns employed in the simplest utterances, the preference for the lives of the irrelevant clogs in the machine, the day-by-day, anecdotal take to these lives, and the imitation game of the hierarchies at the higher levels through the relations established at the level of the small world of villages may indeed lead to the two conclusions that this chapter has strived to debunk. The first one is that *The Freshmen's Autumn* was a simple piece of propaganda, and not a very good one either, despite the film's success. The second is that *Tales from the Golden Age* moved beyond resentment and turned to communism nostalgically, mildly amused, and even warm-hearted at the naiveties of a system long gone. The irony, which is not always subtle, seems to be lost on such readings.

Based on the film architectures, which fragment the anecdotal narratives, on the metafictional instances embedded both overtly and covertly, on the subjectivity of narrating social and historical aspects of the communist age from extremely limited perspectives, and also on the abundant use of parody (both in the traditional sense of

mockery and ridicule and in that of self-reflexivity and ironic inversion – see Hutcheon 1985), one could regard the two productions as historiographic in their "echoes of the texts and contexts of the past" (Hutcheon 1989: 3): at once presenting glimpses of the history of an era and inquiring on its veracity, of its reality.

Speech Acts of #REZIST Movement

In *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov, Series IV: Philology and Cultural Studies.* Vol. 11 (60) No. 2 –2018, ISSN 2066-768X, pp. 109-128

This article is also a result of my anti-communist views, one of the few which were intended to take an exclusively linguistic path, an aim that was, however, unachieved, as it too has a marked interdisciplinary nature, resting on history, and pinpointing intertextuality. It set from the adoption of the Emergency Ordinance no 13/ 2017 in the evening of January 31st, 2017, which prompted the most powerful manifestations of popular protest Romania had witnessed since the Revolution of December 1989. The illocutionary force of slogans such as "Like thieves in the night", "PSD – the red plague", "Corruption kills", and hundreds of other slogans heard or read on placards and widely distributed in the social media, as well as the massive presence of peaceful protesters drew the undivided attention of the media throughout the world. This paper employs pragmatics in discussing the speech acts which make up the core corpus of the slogans of the #REZIST movement, in view of revealing their contribution to the creation of a positive image of Romania in the international media.

The corpus is made up of 75 slogans, some collected by the author directly, others, selected from a book of photographs, edited by Curtea Veche Publishing, entitled *#rezist. Proteste împotriva OUG 13/2017*. By cataloguing the slogans according to Austin's five classes (Verdictives, Exercitives, Commissives, Behabitives, and Expositives), the construction pattern and the intentionality behind the political slogans used by Romanian protesters were identified.

On the other hand, by critically and intertextually assessing the meanings and content of the same bits of discourse, their specificity within the broader, cultural context was in focus. The slogans used during the 2017 protest make constant reference to similar events that the country has witnessed since the fall of communism, the inference being that the adversaries, i.e., the communists, are still in power as they were

at the time of the earlier events. To this end, but also to demonstrate the cultural and implicitly, the political awareness of the utterers, the texts employ intertextuality to a large extent, paraphrasing statements attributed to great historical figures, philosophical propositions, novels, poems, plays, the Bible, and lyrics of various songs. In point of national stereotyping, the analysis of the 75 texts underlines the fact that the Romanian who has chosen to protest and defend democracy, thus gaining the admiration of the entire world, is no longer the fatalist who passively accepts his demise, as depicted in the Romanian folklore ballads. The texts bear, in many instances, an aggressive tenor, that of a nation that has had enough.

B2. 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, a distinct direction of my research into representations. Femininity and its social and cultural discourses, shaping traits and norms that are not universal but shaped, in their turn, by "a socializing ideology that organizes material ways of life, particularly practices related to gender and sexual relationships" (Windsor 2015: 893), have long become a scholarly concept concerned with and related to the notions of representation – both as *represented* and *representing*. The normative gender ideologies – how a man/ a woman should be, act, behave – are constituted as pluralities and not as a single, unifying definition or 'law'. Ricciardelli is right when she remarks that "[m]asculinity and femininity have been conceptualized as multidimensional constructs which include gender role stereotypes, adherence to traditional gender role norms, gender role conflict, and gender role stress. These constructs reflect stereotypes about the beliefs and behaviours typically attributed to males and females, which are acquired as they learn about the world and their roles in it. They also contain social norms that prescribe and proscribe what males and females should feel and do" (2012: 181).

In an article which discusses cross-cultural research on gender roles and the degree of cross-gender similarity within cultures in comparison to the substantial variability often observed across cultural groups, Best and Foster (2004: 51-63) identify two universals: "(i) To varying degrees, every society assigns traits or tasks based on sex, and (ii) the status of women is inferior to the status of men in every society" (61),

with the latter having been perpetually reinforced by patriarchy – which should not be seen exclusively as a male territory but which has both male and female agents since the dawn of time – in general terms – and since the birth of a child – in more particular terms. In her seminal "Understanding Patriarchy", feminist activist, bel hooks, reminisces:

> When my older brother and I were born with a year separating us in age, patriarchy determined how we would each be regarded by our parents. Both our parents believed in patriarchy; they had been taught patriarchal thinking through religion. At church they had learned that God created man to rule the world and everything in it and that it was the work of women to help men perform these tasks, to obey, and to always assume a subordinate role in relation to a powerful man. They were taught that God was male. These teachings were reinforced in every institution they encountered-- schools, courthouses, clubs, sports arenas, as well as churches. Embracing patriarchal thinking, like everyone else around them, they taught it to their children because it seemed like a "natural" way to organize life. (2010: 1)

Such generalized understandings of gender stereotypes and impositions of gender roles are among the main causes of the emergence of feminism, with its four (to date) waves very much rooted in their respective political, social, and cultural contexts of emergence, as will be shown later in this subchapter. If patriarchy still dwells, this should not be regarded as a complete failure of feminism as a destroyer/underminer of this oppressive system of thinking, but sooner as a justification for the latter's perpetuation and resurfacing well into the 21st-century, even though its initial gender equity agenda has been – for the most part, and not in the entire world – accomplished. In the area of expertise that I have embraced, literary/cultural studies, this manifests at a level of supporting women in being able "to express themselves openly and to voice with authority issues formerly silenced or ignored. Fiction now seems to have taken up the task of creating alternatives to authority and its ability to impose and intimidate" (Praisler 2003: 49) or, as I have been arguing throughout the subchapters above, seems to have earned its right to be inscribed among the cultural apparatuses of social significance, having the power to either reinforce or subvert the traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Feminist cultural theory and feminist literary criticism acquire a new legitimacy in this context, one which no longer calls for appeasing the hurt feelings of previously marginalised or for a form of historical restitution (unearthing cultural pieces

produced by women throughout history, to prove the existence – and value – of feminine world literature – written by women, for women, about women, etc.). We are past this aim at the moment, thanks to Gilbert, Gubar, Showalter, Moi, etc[4]. Gynocritics has firmly imposed itself as a sound critical pattern, and so has the feminist critical approach to literary works written by men with little or no understanding of the woman they portray, an aspect which Virginia Woolf, their great forerunner, had rightly remarked since 1920:

> It is true that women afford ground for much speculation and are frequently represented; but it is becoming daily more evident that Lady Macbeth, Cordelia, Ophelia, Clarissa, Dora, Diana, Helen, and the rest are by no means what they pretend to be. Some are plainly men in disguise; others want what men would like to be, or are conscious of not being, or again they embody that dissatisfaction and despair which afflict most people when they reflect upon the sorry condition of the human race. […] Some of the most famous heroines even of nineteenth-century fiction represent what men desire in women, but not necessarily what women are in themselves (1977: 28-9).

Woolf is a sensible and unvictimising enough feminist critic to realise that "Rochester is as great a travesty of the truth about men as Cordelia is of the truth about women" (29), which begs the question as to whether a gender representative can ever accurately represent its *Other* without falling prey to prefabricated assumptions and inherent stereotyping. Most assuredly not, but this is what representation is about, after all. Everybody misrepresents, which deems the prefix superfluous. On a side note, perhaps one needs to posit oneself somewhere at a gender crossroads – in Fowles's words, to be "a sort of chameleon genderwise". "I am a novelist – he says – because I am partly a woman, a little lost in mid-air between the genders, neither one nor t'other. I certainly think that most novelists are a result of being not clearly typed sexually" (1996: 14).

Summarising, if it is not about stigmatising patriarchal literature, fiction (or any cultural artefact) where women are misrepresented by the combined worldview and

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[4] Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own*, 1977, *A Jury of Her Peers*, 2009, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *Mad Woman in the Attic* (1979), *Norton Anthology of Literature by Women*, 1985/1996, *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century*, 1988-1994, and the Palgrave Macmillan ten-volume series *The History of British Women's Writing*, edited by Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan, 2010-2015, are just a few representative examples.

'genderview' of their opposing pair in the gender dichotomy (from an assumed/ tradition-induced superior stance), nor about trying to prove the existence of the so-called feminine writing and subsequently impose it as part of a male-dominated canon (gynocritics and its histories of women's literature have already attained this objective in the 1970s and 80s), what is the social and cultural role of feminist criticism nowadays? Has it outlived its usefulness? Don't women have now that *room of their own*, that quiet space, far from domestic duties, that economic independence, and that encouragement that Virginia Woolf was deeming compulsory for a woman's literary creativity almost a hundred years ago? Are they not stepping deep into traditionally male territories, writing about world politics or about dystopian futures, cataclysmic events, all kinds of ends of the world, instead of quietly restricting their writings to diaristic self-contemplation, kitchen/drawing room/boudoir universes, or everlasting romances and *happily ever afters*? They certainly are, one should not need more than a quick peek at the bookstores' shelves, in sales charts and tops, or at the established literary prizes to see if not the supremacy of women's fiction, then at least that long-sought for gender equity. Fiction for/by women has become a mainstay of contemporary literature, which of course calls for specialists in the field, capable of deciphering and discussing it, but there is another, more important argument in favour of the existence of the latter, and this is – once again – the cultural context. We are going through the fourth wave of feminism at the moment. "History, which is indebted to a certain extent to a masculine appetency for order, linearity, and hierarchy, lists the feminist waves in a diachrony of aims and purposes, which are briefly mentioned here. The first wave (late 19th to early 20th centuries) focused on acquiring equal rights, including the right to vote, on the grounds that women have the same minds and interests as men. The second (the late 1960s and beyond) followed the post-war decades of women's being re-assigned the traditional domestic roles of (house)wives and mothers and emerged against a background of intellectual activists who protested politically, in writing as well as in the streets. The third wave (towards the 1990s and well into the noughties) acknowledged that equality had been accomplished and that new raisons d'être had, therefore, to be found. The predilection of academic gender studies for the posts of the time (postmodernism, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism) highlighted difference and *différance* and, predictably, introduced postfeminism as a mark of the third wave. The fourth wave, which now seems to be

settling in, is at the same time different from and similar to both the second and the third ones. Baumgardner (2011: 72) claims that it is "an almost-return to some of the thinking of the second wave, with a greater emphasis on identity politics that were dismantled within the third wave" (Gheorghiu and Praisler 2020: 88). The fourth wave has founded its core values in fighting women's objectification, sexual harassment, and abuse, against the background of the worldwide movement #MeToo, in denouncing the toxic sexism of political figures like former US President, Donald Trump, while also adding to its agenda contemporary issues, like equal pay, equal opportunities, political insecurity, climate change. "Feminism fits/competes within this broader agenda, as gender equality has become a widespread social policy concern, recognised as a key factor in alleviating poverty, improving women's health, and achieving economic growth", assert Philips and Cree (2014: 940). Literature will soon follow (or is already following) suit by incorporating such issues into its fictional textures – if one looks at Margaret Atwood's and Bernardine Evaristo's latest novels, *The Testaments* and *Girl, Woman, Other*, respectively, both awarded the Man Booker Prize in 2019, to give just two examples, one should find the answer to the question of importance and impact of literary women studies on the present-day (non-fictional) world stage.

Admittedly, however, my scientific contribution grounded in feminist criticism does not focus, as in the case of politics, on very topical issues exclusively: though geared towards similar aims, the case studies have targeted texts and contexts from various ages of the history of literature, starting with William Shakespeare, as a scholarly tribute to a passion for his plays that has been a constant since my early adolescence. Nonetheless, it was probably the interest in postmodernism and contemporaneity that which determined the approach not to the Shakespearean (hypo)text directly but to its 20th-century multimodal intertextual 'offspring' – the literary and film adaptations of his plays.

B2.1. Femininity and feminine power

William Shakespeare's Macbeth on Film. From Interpretation to Revision
Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing. ISBN 9783659675386, 140 pp. Worldcat

The first scientific outputs, gathered under the 140-page monograph titled *William Shakespeare's Macbeth on Film: From Interpretation to Revision* (Lambert Academic Press 2015), aimed at filling a gap in the study of *Macbeth* films – usually marginalised by Shakespearean scholars and film critics, which is partly accounted for by the alleged misogyny of the play. The book tackles controversial issues related to the various meanings of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* that literary criticism has insisted upon, the art of adapting literature for the screen, and, within a wider frame, cultural dynamics. Since the play allows psychoanalytical and feminist readings next to other numerous interpretations, these conceptual apparatuses are also applied for the investigation of the filmic texts, focusing upon a series of elements concerning mainly the characters of Lady Macbeth, Macbeth himself, and the three witches, as represented in four films, stressing the hypostases of feminine power over the weaker male. Where applicable, aspects like globalization versus localization, directorial involvement at a personal level, space as an element of inherent violence, Satanism or profanation of Christian symbols, Tarot, and divination, are brought into discussion. The first subchapter outlines the Freudian theories on the mechanisms of repression and defence, dreams and sexuality, identity development since early childhood, the Oedipus and Electra complexes. It also contains Freud's analysis of *Macbeth*, as well as the theories of the Symbolic and the mirror stage developed by Jacques Lacan. The subchapter dealing with feminist criticism dwells on the most relevant feminist critiques of Freudian and/or Lacanian psychoanalysis, relying mainly, yet not exclusively, on the theories of the French School of Feminist Criticism, including Julia Kristeva's and Hélène Cixous's, but also Juliet Mitchell's bidirectional studies in psychoanalysis and feminism.

The chapter "In Shakespeare We Trust" is dedicated to interpretations as relatively accurate transpositions of the Shakespearean text into film, dealing with the classical *The Tragedy of Macbeth* (1971) directed by Roman Polanski, and with the 2006 Australian production *Macbeth* directed by Geoffrey Wright. Emphasis is laid on the character of Lady Macbeth and the mechanisms of gender power. While the former film has remained a point of reference and a source of inspiration for fifty years, *Macbeth* (2006) passed unnoticed and fell into oblivion soon after its release, because of its shallow approach to the Shakespearean themes and its declared commercial purpose. The investigation has revealed numerous resemblances between Polanski's and Wright's productions, the conclusion being that the latter connects both with the

Shakespearean text as hypotext and with its classical 1971 adaptation, up to the point of plagiarism.

The analysis of *The Tragedy of Macbeth* has revealed that the interspersion of autobiographical elements had a cathartic function for Roman Polanski. Gory, violent and mildly sexual in its depiction of naked female bodies, the film has managed, nevertheless, to encapsulate the essence of the Shakespearean tragedy and to cast a new light upon the gender power mechanisms at work in the play.

The chapter discussing the revisions was entitled "A Tragedy in the Present Tense" in order to pinpoint one of the most important features of this type of adaptation, that is the displacement of the storyline in a different time and space frame, most frequently, in the contemporary world, which helps the modern audiences relate better to the themes of the original play. The films analysed adapt the storyline to a contemporary environment and effect an intralingual translation, from Elizabethan English to Irish slang and American colloquial English, respectively.

Billy Morrissette's *Scotland, PA* has the merit of proposing a fresh revision of the themes of ambition, greed, feminine power, evil, madness, and suggestibility, while commenting satirically upon the shortcomings and superficialities of modern-day society. *Scotland, PA* fights the globalization and commercialisation of Shakespearean drama with their own weapons and manages to catch the essence of the problematic *Tragedy of Macbeth* with the devices of a completely different genre, the comedy[5]. Though the analysis of *Scotland, PA* has relied mainly on feminist criticism, the film has also offered the possibility of tackling postmodern issues like metafiction, displacement, and consumerism, which generated a daring and unexpected perspective upon such a traditional topic as the (adaptation of) Shakespearean drama.

On the other hand, *Mickey B* proved, despite its huge departures from the original text in point of language, setting, and characters, as close to the Shakespearean hypotext as the Polanskian rendition. The analysis of this production has resorted

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[5] This transposition from tragedy to comedy, which Genette terms architextuality (1997: 1-3) has been dealt with in connection with this film in a draft version of this chapter, entitled 'Metafiction and Architextual Translation: From *Macbeth* to *Scotland PA*'., published in *Translation Studies. Retrospective and Prospective Views*. 10/2011, Galati: Galati University Press, pp. 38-43. ISSN: 2065-3514. PDF

partially to queer criticism, instead of feminism, due to the specificity of the avatar of Lady Macbeth, who was a transvestite homosexual man in this production.

From 19th-Century Femininity in Literature to 20th-Century Feminism on Film: Discourse Translation and Adaptation

Hamburg Academic Publishing
ISBN 978-395-489-9609,
252 pp.
WorldCat

This book, initially published as a textbook entitled *Representation and Translation of Femininity: Louisa May Alcott's Little Women*, is, as its two alternative titles show, the scientific work that best combines my relatively divergent interests. It set out from linguistically-oriented grounds to perform translation analyses from a feminist stylistics perspective inspired by Sarah Mills' study of gendered language, discussing both the translation of the novel and the subtitles of the film adaptation, which were innovatively associated with a constricted and constrained form of literary translation.

Notwithstanding, its placement under this section is due to the fact that the study carries through the idea of feminine power that the book on Lady Macbeth forwarded, of course, from different perspectives, with consideration to the construction of the feminine characters under the lens. Aiming at both identifying the representation of femininity – as a social construct – and analysing the way in which it can be translated into film adaptations, this book focuses on the interpretations of a famous and, at the same time, problematic literary work, namely the 1994 film *Little Women* (dir. Gillian Armstrong), reworking the classic nineteenth-century American best-seller *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott. In particular, drawing on the critical apparatus of feminism(s), the paper lays emphasis on the way in which the metafictional texture of the novel incapsulates instances of reality into fiction, glimpses of autobiography and, of course, femininity at the level of the filmic text.

Culture and mentalities are subject to alteration and differentiation both synchronically and diachronically. Examining *Little Women*, one may best observe how the latter principle functions. It is also important to remark that, although American and dealing with American issues – i.e., the Civil War or, to a very limited extent, abolitionism – Alcott's novel is so much indebted to Victorian Realism that, seen in retrospect, the cultural difference between Europe and America does not seem striking.

Nonetheless, without an approach to the historical conditions in which the novel was written – which adds to the interdisciplinarity of the undertaking – the analysis would not be conclusive.

Dealing with a group of feminine characters, the novel makes extensive use of metafictional practices to "foreground the gap between art and life" (Praisler 2005: 70), in other words, to obscure the borderline between reality and fiction, and incorporates autobiographical elements. Alcott's novel may be, starting from the title, considered demeaning to women. However, gynocritics tends either to excuse its limitations on the grounds of her times' expectations or even to overbid by regarding *Little Women* as a feminist writing *avant la lettre*. Irrespective of the critical approach employed, the nineteenth-century novel is a piece of feminine writing within its time frame, with specific modes of representing femininity, to the same extent as, say, *Jane Eyre*. Elaine Showalter was right to remark, in *A Literature of Their Own*, in reference to Charlotte Brontë's works, that "the Victorians expected women's novels to reflect the feminine values they exalted, although obviously the woman novelist herself had outgrown the constraining feminine role" (2003: 7). It is proven that the situation was no different in the United States either at the time when the novel is set, by making use of an analysis of the context of production and reception in America during the Reconstruction (1865-1877), after the Civil War (1861-1865). Relying on the contextual analysis advanced by Elaine Showalter (*A Jury of Their Peers*, 2010) and on the views of the famous feminist historian Barbara Welter (*The Cult of True Womanhood 1820-1860*, 1966), the volume ventures to provide new historicist explanations for the problematic issues in the novel in respect to womanhood. It also lays emphasis on the representation of femininity from a linguistic stylistic perspective and the relationship between reality (autobiography) and fiction, both aspects being highly relevant for the filmic production of 1994, but also for the decision-making during the translation process. Focus is laid on the feminine characters, decoded in feminist terms, framing the novel in the category of women's literature. The self-reflexivity component of the novel also argues the regard of *Little Women* as children's literature and its rendition into Romanian under the constraints imposed by this specific literary type.

The latter part looks into the feminist film adaptation released in 1994. The film does not 'synchronize' or 'recontextualize' by placing the four March girls and their

mother in a present-day context; it brings, nevertheless, some glimpses of modernity into the script, so that the obsolescence of certain mentalities and moral values in the novel could be effaced. It is interesting to note how the meta-dimension in the novel is rendered in film and how the intersemiotic translation helps with the representation of femininity. These scenes analysed have been selected so as to provide insights into femininity and metafiction; as a result, they centre around Jo March, the character mirroring the real self of the author, and her literary productions, in all their forms: read to her sisters, dramatised, published or refused for publication due to the gender of the author. In addition, some of the scenes selected deal with identifying some ideas of second-wave feminism artfully transposed in the nineteenth-century mentality and context. Each scene is analysed in filmic and cultural terms, aiming at pinpointing the representation of femininity through character types, contextual meanings, intertextuality, and film-specific analyses of the content of images, sounds, camera movement, frames and their sequencing, according to a scheme designed by Michaela Praisler, borrowed with her permission.

Traditionally, an adaption analysis looks in the hypertext and approaches the film in terms of differences and departures from the original. Nevertheless, the aim of this book was that of looking back at the novel and finding in its text and in related contemporary texts (author's biography, diaries, historical accounts of the period) justifications for various decisions of the film-makers, which may seem inopportune or even improper at first sight. The textual evidence identified in the aforementioned sources supported, for the most part, the arguments against the critique brought to the film by various feminist critics who considered the very feminism of the film as damaging to the image of the feminine struggle carried out in the second half of the nineteenth century.

B2.2. Retellings of *The Handmaid's Tale*

Having done refuting Shakespeare's misogyny or questioning the inherent patriarchy at work in nineteenth-century women's literature, I regretfully took a different research avenue, which reflects in the books and articles described in the first chapter of this presentation. However, as the passion for femininity and feminism remained kindled throughout these years and as I had acquired significant theoretical baggage of feminist criticism/philosophy/activism, the interest in this subfield could be reinitiated, this time

with an emphasis on contemporary literature and politics, which brought it in line with my main area of expertise. Margaret Atwood's 1985 novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*, probably the most terrifying dystopia for any feminist (or woman, for that matter), proved to be a fertile playground for the collaboration with my mentor, Michaela Praisler, with whom I worked on the metatextual and cultural-political intricacies of this novel, its sequel, *The Testaments*, and its TV series adaptation. A work in progress that may evolve, eventually and hopefully, into a book-length study, this co-authorship includes, so far, three extensive articles that are briefly accounted for below.

The Art and Politics of Rewriting. Margaret Atwood's Historical Notes on *The Handmaid's Tale*

The Handmaid's Tale, whose title is a direct reference to the stories in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, as acknowledged in the novel (Atwood 2010: 313), is a speculative narrative of a possible world taken over by religious fundamentalism. A political novel, Atwood's writing focuses on the domestic sphere which is, nevertheless, easy to extrapolate to the entire social milieu under the regime in force. "The family is an interior in crisis like all other interiors" (Deleuze 1992: 4), and the Gileadean family is a space of confinement of a "carceral texture" that "allows the body to be captured and observed" (Foucault 1995: 304). By extension, the entire country is a prison, and not one that "thinking makes it so" (*Hamlet* II, 2) but a very actual one.

Among the many frameworks of interpretation that this dystopia (or ustopia, as she calls it) allows, challenging is its reading in/as a palimpsest. Choosing not to favour an attempt at hierarchizing the narrative construction and the fabula contained in Offred's spoken tale – transcribed from audiocassettes two centuries after the deployment of the Christian fundamentalist coup d'état that turned the United States into a horrifying inferno for women –, this paper focuses on metafiction and the rewriting of "herstory", in an analysis of the 'Historical Notes' that conclude the novel, going backwards rather than forwards in tracing its art and politics.

Though oblique, the politics advanced by Atwood in this addendum is clear, as is her criticism: history is *his story*, overlooking hers; the academia is a structure of authority, shaping the grand narrative of who we are, in disrespect of the personal *petites histoires* which go into its making. Historical Notes on The Handmaid's Tale – the disclaimer interrogating the very nature of fact vs. fiction – brings literary art to cover political ground via an authenticating endeavour, which focuses on 'the commander' (Judd, Waterford – male characters based on real, documented people), not on Offred – female undocumented narrator, therefore unreliable.

Rewriting Politics, or the Emerging Fourth Wave of Feminism in Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments*

The year 2019 brought the long-awaited sequel to *The Handmaid's Tale*, although Atwood played with her readers' expectations, choosing not to continue Offred's story from where she had open-endingly let in the 1980s. *The Testaments*, which is set fifteen years after the events in *The Handmaid's Tale*, only mentions this character in passing, focusing instead on her two lost daughters (one of them having actually been lost in the TV series, with which the new novel establishes a dialogic connection) and on the frightening Aunt Lydia, in an attempt to justify her lack of humanity towards the handmaids and, eventually, to offer her rehabilitation as both a woman and a feminist nemesis.

Published in a special issue of *ELOPE*, a Slovenian journal dedicated to Atwood's 80 anniversary, the article investigates *The Testaments* (2019), tracing, in this case too, the rewriting of politics embedded in the narrative. Whilst the inspiration for *The Handmaid's Tale* came from the rise of Christian fundamentalism, it is obvious from Atwood's recent statements that she considers the Trump era "a rollback of women's rights" (2018). The second-wave-feminist slogan, 'the personal is political,' cited in the title of this section, is now as topical as it was in the 1960s, and *The Testaments* may well become a literary manifesto of a new (fourth) wave as part of the storm surge of feminism. Therefore, before turning to Atwood, an outline of the chronological clashes of feminism(s) and a discussion on women and language is presented.

An important aspect that the article deals with is, once again, feminine power, this time the power that emerges from reading and writing, which all Gileadean women except for the Aunts had been deprived of. "Women's minds were too weak for reading. We would crumble, we would fall apart under the contradictions, we would not be able to hold firm" (2019: 303). The *écriture féminine* that will eventually overthrow men's power and help women fly away from the imposing patriarchal paradigm of the regime is Lydia's. If "a woman must write her self, must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies" in order to evade "the discourse that regulates the phallocentric system", as Cixous

states in "The Laugh of the Medusa" (1976), then Atwood's option for the stereotypically feminine diary may be interpreted as a transposition of this theory of destabilizing phallocentric hierarchies into practice. Aunt Lydia writes herself in diaries addressing, metafictionally, an unknown reader; she writes her-story, which becomes the history of the totalitarian Gilean itself, and brings women back to writing (or writing back to women) by creating a genuine order of feminine power, one that will regain language and power.

The Handmaid's Tale (Visually) Re-Told

This contribution focuses on the Hulu successful adaptation in a TV series that seems to be responsible both for reinitiating the discussions on women's rights and for Atwood's decision to write a sequel. The political core of Margaret Atwood's 1985 novel is reloaded, some thirty-five years later, in a series for which the projected future has already happened and has left indelible traces in the world we now inhabit. In daring a continuation of Offred's story beyond Season 1, which follows the convoluted structure of her nomological testimony, the TV series is less a multimodal adaptation and more an appropriation of a late 20th-century novel that has become a political and cultural overarching statement.

Toying with the antithesis between endings and (new) beginnings, in literary practice, this article posits the idea that Offred-from-the-novel's monstrous future is Offred-from-the-TV-series/June's and our present. It contends that *The Handmaid's Tale* was given a new beginning with the success of this televised production. Ultimately a novel about human rights lost at the hands of a group of fanatics, Margaret Atwood's famous opus could not have returned to the spotlights by itself to warn us that its future is now. Granted, women are not stripped of their rights, they are not forced to carry other families' children following wife-assisted rape; they can read, work, live outside wedlock, etc., but other, more insidious dangers lie ahead (or are already here). Reality awaits retribution, and if a TV show departing from its source text, with a touch of twenty-first-century superficiality, sensationalism and sentimentalism, can avenge and deliver its audience from real perils, then this one should be positively regarded as a new beginning.

C. LITERARY TRANSLATION:
CREATIVITY THROUGH INVISIBILITY

C1. Literary translation activity

My career as a translator precedes and accompanies my professional activity in higher education, spanning 17 years in general translations and 10 years in literary translation. Incidentally (or perhaps not), my first encounters with literary translation were also related to my interests in the representation of femininity. The first book in my translation was a collection of juvenilia by Jane Austen, *Love and Friendship*, published by ALL Press in 2012. Soon after, I was commissioned by the same publisher to translate Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*, a translation which was never published because of the publication of the same title by another press, at the time when my translation was undergoing editing and proofreading. Notwithstanding, this translation constitutes the applicative basis for the book described in the section above, *From 19th-Century Femininity in Literature to 20th-Century Feminism on Film: Discourse Translation and Adaptation*, and for my theoretical approaches to literary translation, which connect the latter with questions of time and voice of the narrative and also focus on aspects of dialectal use in literary translation.

As the list of translations has become exhaustive throughout the years – 23 titles, available in the Annexes section – I will not go into much detail, except for the titles which can be considered to have a connection with my research interests laid out in the sections above. For symmetry purposes, the titles have been arranged not chronologically, but thematically, under the following categories: history, politics, Renaissance drama, metafiction, literary theory.

Historiographic metafiction, a category which, by and large, subsumes almost all the literary texts I have critically approached, can also be found in my translated books. A title worth mentioning is the debut of the American novelist, John Wray, *The Right Hand of Sleep* (2001), which covers horrific events from the First World War, the Bolshevik revolution, which the main character witnesses as a prisoner of war in Ukraine, and the rise of fascism in interwar Austria, in the 1930s. Highly introspective, with free indirect discourse interspersed throughout, numerous flashbacks, and an overall poetic and philosophic narrative style, Wray's novel is a difficult but rewarding read and a complicated task for the translator. The translation of the book was published

in 2016 under the imprint *Romanul secolului XXI* of Univers Publishing House, under the pen name Celia Ilieș. Another complex translation of a historiographic metafiction which accounts for the Indian Wars and the American Civil War, from the perspective of a young Irish migrant fled to the United States to escape the Great Famine, *Days without End* by the Irish author, Sebastian Barry, which was awarded the prestigious Costa Book Award in 2016, was published in 2018 by Litera Publishing House. The novel, which, aside from the horrors of the war, touches upon the relationship with the natives, and displays elements of homoeroticism and cross-dressing, is considered "a miracle of a book – both epic and intimate – that manages to create spaces for love and safety in the noise and chaos of history" (*The Irish Times* 2017). Its dense, poetic, and depressing style made it one of the greatest challenges in my career as a literary translator.

A third novel translated for Univers Publishing House (2017) is the 2011 political thriller *Agent 6*, by the British novelist Tom Rob Smith, which, under the guise of spy fiction, tackles very real aspects related to the Cold War, the invasion of Afghanistan by the USSR in 1979 and the subsequent involvement of the United States, deemed responsible, at least morally, if not effectively, for the rise of the Taliban in this country.

Another important category is historical and political non-fiction written by authors from English-speaking territories about Romania, which greatly tried the translator faced with the obligation of rendering accurately, with consideration to the authors' intentions, various stereotypes, and prejudices present throughout the text. These two texts, a memoir and a 350-page long political essay, have been translated in collaboration with historian Constantin Ardeleanu and published by Humanitas. The former is entitled *Twenty Years in Romania* and was written in 1922 by Maude Rea Parkinson, a former Irish governess of children of members of the Romanian high class, including prime ministers, which facilitated her access to the turn-of-the-century high life in Bucharest and Sinaia, alongside the royal family. Although not complicated in what concerns the translation proper, the book allowed me imagological considerations, from the perspective of a Self, as viewed by a foreign Other, which resulted in a scientific article informed by imagology ("Romania as Exile: Stereotyping the Other in Maude Rea Parkinson's *Twenty Years in Romania*", *Communication Interculturelle et*

Littérature, 2014), and also in a chapter in a book published by University of Cordoba Press (Spain), *Translation in and for Society: Sociological and Cultural Approaches in Translation* (2019). My chapter, which will be discussed in the second subsection, focuses on my challenges in point of national identity, which I encountered in translating both this book and Robert Kaplan's *In Europe's Shadow. Two Cold Wars and a Thirty-Year Journey Through Romania and Beyond* (2016, also published by Humanitas under the title *În umbra Europei. Două războaie reci și trei decenii de călătorie prin România și dincolo de ea*). Kaplan's book is not literary but historical and political, yet its style mixes the journalist's objectivity with an almost literary subjectivity of an aficionado of Romania, who, as British historian, Dennis Deletant noticed, "understands contemporary Romania like no other" (2016), which means that the translator had to deal much less with Western prejudice, as in the previous case, but which also entailed greater documentary efforts and the impression of a style remindful of academic writings, while remaining accessible to the general reader.

Much of my translation catalogue can be categorised as women's writings, which is, again, in keeping with my scientific interests. Aside from Jane Austen's and Louisa May Alcott's titles mentioned above, I have translated mid-twenty-century American novelists, such as Virginia C. Andrews, Shirley Jackson, and Grace Metalious, whose novels, without being great, canonical literature, have nonetheless the merit of casting a new light on the fiction written by women through their serious topics of abuse, insanity, violence against women, psychoanalytical insights, and through discursive patterns which may justify the feminist linguists' consideration of the existence of a 'female language'.

Postmodernist, displaying complicated metafiction and an intricate intertextual web, are two other novels that I translated commissioned by Univers Publishing House. The former, John Wray's *Lowboy*, is evidence for the return to Modernist Experimentalism, accentuated in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The main character, Will Heller, nicknamed Lowboy, is a schizophrenic teenager caught in the urban maze of the New York Underground, whose map is "drawn" with Joycean precision by the novel. Stream of a confused consciousness, interrupted by alert chapters inspired by detective fiction, *Lowboy* alternates the subconscious level with that of the real in a one-day expedition for the imaginary salvaging of a world doomed to extinction by global warming. Linguistically speaking, the text is very complicated,

including ciphered codes, invented words, and a large number of technical terms. The latter, *The Mannequin Makers* by the New Zealander young author Craig Cliff (*Creatorii de manechine*, Univers, 2015, translated under the pen name Celia Ilieş), is an exploration of beauty and horrors, a confrontation between art and life, lie and truth, love, and madness employing multiple narrative voices and patterns, remindful of Charles Dickens through the richness of detail and the theme of abused children, and, in sub-text, a veiled rewriting of William Shakespeare's *Winter Tale* and *The Tempest*.

It is this interest in postmodernism and (historiographic) metafiction, but also the belief that I had reached the skills required to approach literary theory in translation that prompted me to work with the text written by one of the most prominent theorists of postmodernity, Linda Hutcheon, whose *Politics of Postmodernism* had been the single title previously translated into Romanian before my translation of *A Theory of Parody. The Teachings of the 20ᵗʰ-Century Art Forms*. The volume "assembles, parodically somehow (thus cleverly supporting the content through form), perspectives and views derived from the artistic practice of the period that provided the most numerous and most valuable experiments, placing under the lens the pragmatic sphere, associated with parody, the paradox which defines it, its shared codes, and the role of the parodic text in the relationship between 'the world and the critic'" (Praisler in Hutcheon 2021: ix, my translation). In point of complexity, it is the most challenging translation I have ever attempted, one which also supports, as a case study, the presentation delivered at the PETRA-E Conference in Dublin, Ireland (November 2021), "From Literary Theory and Criticism to Literary Translation", which is currently undergoing changes and annotations with a view to transforming it into a paper worth submitting to an ISI journal of Translation Studies. At this point, it is high time I mentioned that this area of translation studies, dedicated to the approach to this complex type of text, has been scarcely discussed in the literature and represents one of my research directions for the future.

Last but not least, an important hallmark of my activity as a literary translation practitioner is the project, ongoing at the moment, of Professor George Volceanov, who, having finished retranslating Shakespeare's plays for contemporary staging and twenty-first-century readership, aims to translate or retranslate other Renaissance playwrights. Honoured by the acceptance of the renowned translator to be part of his

team, I embarked on the retranslation of Robert Greene's comical play *George-a-Greene, The Pinner of Wakefield*, which was translated in 1964 by the most prominent Romanian translator, Leon Levițchi, and which was considered worthy of an updated version. At present, I am retranslating Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine the Great (parts I and II).* All texts in this category entail careful consideration of the iambic pentameter, which needs to be rendered in the Romanian version, as well as thorough documentation of the words and meanings no longer in use in contemporary English. As in other cases, these translations too will constitute case studies for scientific papers in the field of Translation Studies, and inputs into my courses in translation.

C2. Metatranslation

When one is a theorist, i.e., a linguist with expertise in Translation Studies, one creates intertextual scientific outputs mostly based on previous theoretical works, which are taken further, improved, nuanced, argued with, and on the pursuit of translation analysis of texts translated by third parties. Possibilities are endless: comparisons of two translations of a certain text (usually decades apart from each other, or destined to different geographic spaces that use the same language), minute searches for the translator's approach to the *little* things (for example, his or her dealing with the metaphors, idioms, phrasal verbs in the source text), approaches to translation as cultural mediation, inquiries into the purpose of the translation or its intended audience, or, more traditionally, attempts to reveal the translator's strategies and techniques. The history of translation is a millennial one, the history of translation commentary has, in its turn, been around for several centuries, although it is generally admitted to have emerged as a full linguistic discipline in the latter half of the twentieth century, therefore contemporary with Structuralism (with its *post,* Deconstructivism), Postmodernism and Cultural Studies, whose glimpses can be traced at the level of postmodern translation theory. When one does translate, however, one becomes able to look at his or her translations self-reflexively, to analyse the process of translation and the product thereof from an authorial, perhaps narcissistic perspective. The term I have chosen as the title of this subsection, which I thought I coined by association, has been previously employed by several (few) translation scholars to denote various aspects, most of them relating to translation, not to its critical assessment. In a doctoral dissertation defended at Oxford University, Polish linguist Katarzyna Szymanska focuses on metatranslation

as "a self-reflexive literary strategy in which the translator (or a group of translators) exposes the process and act of translation by producing different parallel variants, placing them next to each other as legitimate versions of the original, and presenting them jointly as an artistic work" (2016). An interesting literary game which was also termed metatranslation (Chard-Hutchinson 2011) is Jonathan Safran Foer's debut novel, *Everything Is Illuminated* (2002), narrated for the most part from the perspective of a Ukrainian translator, Alex, who… "fatigues the thesaurus" in search of more pretentious words, which transforms the novel into a Babel of confusable semes and meanings, as apparent from the very title (which, in fact, should have been a too simplistic 'everything is clear'). I would, however, stay with metafiction for the said volume, although 'the author in the text' (who incidentally is called Jonathan Safran Foer) is accompanied by a translator who often twists the words he is to decipher for the American in a comically inadequate manner.

In an article on the translation of proper names, Russian theorists Ludmila Kushnina and Yaroslav Glagolev come closer to my intentions and understanding, claiming that metatranslation is concerned with "the translator's creation of an independent text" alongside the "creation of a translation metatext connected with the proper [text]", via associative, explicative and actualising strategies (2020: 60). My scientific works concerning translation are self-reflexive, in the sense that they explain my strategies and choices above word/phrase/sentence level, with consideration to the text as literary discourse, or elaborate on my struggling with the translator's invisibility in an attempt to remain objective and true to the author's intentions when the text made me feel uncomfortable.

I have pondered for some time whether this chapter belonged with the others or not, probably under the influence of the incorrect (but often made) distinction between *language* and *literature*. From J. C. Catford and Eugene Nida onwards, translation has been regarded as (mainly) linguistics territory, although the cultural aspects involved could never be completely disregarded. The *cultural turn* in translation studies, initiated in the 1990s by Snell-Hornby, Basnett, Venuti and Levefere, and the literary scholar formation, which is visible in my approach to translation with regard to 'the grammar of literature', intertextual networks, subtext(s) and context(s) seem, in the end, to justify

its inclusion among my *cultural* preoccupations with representation, as well as its regard as a structuralist process of encoding and decoding.

Translating Books about Romania into Romanian

In Beatriz Martínez Ojeda & María Luisa Rodríguez Muñoz (Eds.) 2019. *Translation in and for Society: Sociological and Cultural Approaches in Translation*. Cordoba: University of Cordoba Press. ISBN 978-84-9927-492-8, pp. 240-254[6]

Romania has had a long history of fascination for foreign travellers, who have shared their opinions about its lands and people since the dawns of Antiquity. Some of these narrators are ridden with prejudice, others are looking for peculiarities, and then some try to render an objective perspective and make their original readers understand the basics of Romanianness, as they interiorized it during their unmediated experience. All these texts, at the crossroads of fiction and non-fiction, published as diaries, travel journals, short stories or, in some cases, novels, can be reread through an imagological lens. The stereotypes at play in these books can be inventoried, reinforced or debunked.

Much more problematic proves, in this context, the translation of the Other's views about the national Self. In the more recent years, attempts have been made at growing the Romanians' awareness with regard to their national and cultural representation abroad. Humanitas Publishing features a collection of such writings, from various ages (late 19th century, early and mid-20th century, after the collapse of the communist bloc, and in the present day). It is not easy to read oneself through the eyes of another, and this task is two times more complicated for the translator, who has to side with the author in order to hand in an objective translation, and not a rewriting, to the publisher.

The chapter sets out to discuss the approach to translation in an imagological context. To this effect, it outlines some choices made in translating certain aspects that might raise imagological questions, encountered in Robert D Kaplan's 2016 book, *In Europe's Shadow: Two Cold Wars and a Thirty-Year Journey Through Romania and Beyond* and in Maude Rea Parkinson's 1921 memoir, *Twenty Years in Romania*.

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[6] This chapter was initially published in *Translation Studies: Retrospective and Prospective Views*, year XI. Issue 21(2018) under the title "Imagology and Translation. Rendering the Other's Perspective on Romanianness". Reprinted with permission.

With consideration to the invisibility of the translator, the translation of texts that have to do with the translator's own ethnicity may prove demanding. As Bassnett and Lefevere assert in *Translation, History and Culture*, "there is always a context in which the translation takes place, always a history from where a text emerges and into which a text is transposed. […] Translation is always doubly contextualised, since the text has a place in two cultures (1990: 11). But it is two times more difficult when one is required to triangulate, in the sense used in contemporary politics, i.e. to place oneself above both the culture they translate into and the one from which they translate. A translator of a text that speaks in prejudiced terms about his or her country must fulfil the role of a cultural mediator, swinging between cultures in a never-ending merry-go-round: my culture seen through the subjective lens of your culture and then transposed objectively into my culture as it were an element of your culture. Here is the point where imagology comes to the rescue, the translator, always a cultural mediator, being – ideally, at least – familiar with the mental structures of the source culture and aware of the serious error of "using static approaches or positing stable or essentialist views of cultures and their practices" (Flynn, Leerssen and van Doorslaer 2016: 3).

In turn, understanding the non-fixedness of the stereotype helps in construing a national representation at a given time, in a given context, as a mutable discourse, rather than frustratingly regarding the gaze of the Other as a patronising representation of inferiority. Thus, the translator should grasp the source text "in terms of the ways in which the political, social and cultural context of [its] production determined the discursive strategies which lay behind the images of collective self and other that they contain" (McKinnon 2016: 24) in order to be able to produce an acceptable reworking of the text, given that translation is never "ideologically neutral" and that is "always shaped by its social, economic and cultural context," as Lefevere (1992: 1-10) asserted. In other words, minimum two contexts and two ideologies clash in any translated text, but when the ST makes reference to the target culture, the task of the translator becomes more complicated, as the latter must disregard the cultural and ideological constraints of their own context, and render the representation of their culture as seen through a foreign mirror.

In an age of acute sensitivity with regard to the way one nation is perceived by the foreign Other, the translation of fictional and non-fictional texts concerned with the

national representation should rely on imagology, the theory of national representation coming from the field of comparative literary studies. While there is consensus among translators that the text should not be altered so as to suit the readership's preferences, it is nevertheless important that the translator, aware of the local mental framework, anticipate the readers' response to a text about themselves, and avoid the pitfall of misinterpreting the author's intention.

Little explored in Romania so far, aside from the studies initiated by Professor Rodica Dimitriu and her doctoral students at the University of Iasi, this is a potential path to be taken towards a more felicitous encounter of linguistic and literary studies in the work of a Philology scholar who does not regard them a priori as coming from different worlds.

The last two 'meta-translations' worth adding are currently undergoing transformation and elaboration, which is why their presentation here is more schematic.

From Literary Theory and Criticism to Teaching Literary Translation
Delivered at the PETRA-E Conference 2021, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland. 2021

There is a common prejudice that literary translation, just like literature and creative writing, cannot be taught in a traditional, frontal manner. Certainly not in what teaching theorists call 'lockstep'. It is contended that the apprentice-translator either has talent and a flair for language or not, and that, at a first glance, the teacher cannot do much about it. It is partly true, as literary translation requires flexibility, clarity and accuracy (Duff 1994) but also creativity. However, it is not entirely true. The literary translator must also possess strong knowledge of stylistics, literary criticism and cultural patterns, in order to be able to convey the meaning *in style*. Pun intended – if only to stress the relation to stylistics. As Hyde-Parker puts it, literary translation has "links with a variety of other disciplines in higher education, such as modern languages, linguistics and language studies, comparative literature and cultural studies" (2009). Therefore, this study outlines an approach to teaching literary translation, asserting that a course must encompass all the above and some more: comparisons, analyses of STs and of their published translations, awareness of the ideologies in place at the time of writing and at present, and a lot of hands-on practice. The study cases employed in this study are my translations of Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Parody*, instances of meta- and

intertextuality in Fay Weldon's feminist novel, *Big Women*, and David Lodge's *The Art of Fiction*.

Re-writing *Hamlet* as Subversive Anti-Totalitarian Discourse: Cultural Appropriation and 'Back-translation'
Delivered at the ESRA International Conference *Shakespeare's Nature, Art and Politics*, Athens, Greece, 2021

This work focuses on cultural aspects and geopolitical realities of Eastern Europe in the latter half of the 20th century, which is why the methods employed combine a New Historicist approach with the "cultural turn in translation studies" (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990) and theoretical elements of drama translation. In order to prove a case of cultural appropriation through translation – in both literal sense and in the broader sense of intertextuality – the paper analyses a play inspired by Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, namely *Polonius – A Political Farce in Two Acts*, written in the 1980s by Romanian playwright, Victor Cilincă, and published after the fall of communism, in 1996.

A piece of 'drawer literature', i.e., literary works written during communism and hidden by their authors for fear of consequences, Polonius makes use of a loose Hamletian plot to expose and critique the Soviets' pretence of `liberating' the Eastern Bloc. Some subversive allusions to communism and the USSR embedded in the dramatic text are easily detected by the original target audience but may be lost in translation due to unawareness of the cultural and political factors at work in the play. Therefore, aside from introducing these less obvious extratextual intertexts, the main objective of the paper is to trace the problematic cultural issues in the translation into English, published by Borgo Press (2011), by the effort of a renowned Romanian translator, Petru Iamandi, with the support of an American writer, Richard Wright.

D. NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

The research activity outlined above has been constantly complemented by additional inroads into the scientific world of the Humanities through involvement in various activities of editing, reviewing, evaluation of papers, participation in and organisation of events.

D1. Conferences, invited lectures and book launches

At present, the list of conferences in which I delivered presentations includes 42 entries, both at home and abroad (in France, Spain, Ireland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ukraine, etc.). Among the most prestigious events, I would mention the ESRA biennial conference "The Art Itself Is Nature – Shakespeare's Nature, Art and Politics", organised by the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece (June 2021), where I presented a paper entitled "The play's the thing": A Farcical Re-writing of *Hamlet* as a Subversive Anti-Totalitarian Discourse", which concentrates my research directions (metafiction, postmodernism, political discourse and Shakespeare Studies) in a single study, during the seminar "Shakespeare and Central/Eastern Europe", and where I also convened another seminar, "Well Are You Welcome in the Open Air": Shakespeare Staged Outdoors" alongside the Ukrainian Shakespearean scholars, Daria Moskvitina and Bohdan Korneliuk. For this latter purpose, I reviewed twelve proposals and I accepted seven of them, which were successfully presented by their authors.

Another hallmark and almost compulsory pitstop for any researcher with an interest in English Studies is the biennial conference of the European Society for the Study of English (ESSE). Postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 edition, in Lyon, France, was held online in 2021. I participated alongside Michaela Praisler in the panel entitled "Hybrid Transtextualities: Adaptation and the Aesthetics and Politics of Form", with the paper "*The Handmaid's Tale* Visually Re-Told", which was subsequently published in the ERIH Plus journal *Cultural Intertexts* and whose contents were briefly summarised above. The next edition, which is to take place in Mainz, Germany in September 2022, will feature a seminar organised in collaboration with the same researcher and a colleague from Serbia, Professor Vladislava Gordić Petković (University of Novi Sad). "The area of research delineated under the seminar Women Writers and their Writings on Writing is that of women novelists having inscribed their

fictional and non-fictional contributions in English within the frame of postmodernism. Simultaneously using and abusing the canon, writers like Margaret Atwood, Antonia Susan Byatt, Ursula Le Guin, Doris Lessing, or Angela Carter, to name but a few, make their voices heard via metafiction, literary theory and criticism, newspaper articles, reviews, lectures and recorded/televised interviews – demarches which are quintessentially technical, therefore automatically/stereotypically associated with men. The seminar aims to bring together various case studies, with a view to outlining a renewed and updated theory on metafiction. Ideally, the contributions will jointly prove that the anxiety of authorship generated by the lack of models for women writers in the Victorian age and their perilous propensity towards specific gender roles – already famously deconstructed by Virginia Woolf a century ago in A Room of One's Own – is now part of the ancient 'herstory' of literature and that women writers of the second half of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century are now on equal footing with their male colleagues in point of the complexity of styles, techniques, thematic content and, not least, in point of their being successful on the literary market." (Praisler, Petkovic, Gheorghiu 2022).

My Americanism finds its perfect 'stage' at the conferences organised by the Romanian Association for American Studies (RAAS) in collaboration with the Fulbright Commission, held in Constanta, Romania every other two years. Thus, a piece of my research on ideology and otherness was presented at the 2018 edition, with the topic "Ideology, Identity and the US: Crossroads, Freeways, Collisions", and was subsequently published in the homonymous volume edited by Eduard Vlad, Adina Ciugureanu and Nicoleta Stanca (Peter Lang 2019). A more challenging topic, "Eco-Consciousness in American Culture", prompted me to look (again) into the works of Margaret Atwood, this time placing her famous novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*, in a complicated intertextual relationship with T. S. Eliot's masterpiece, *The Waste Land*. The paper resulting from this presentation has been submitted for publication in a volume edited by the organisers and is currently under review.

Among other conferences that are worth mentioning for their connection with my scientific activity in the areas of Translation Studies, I would add the PETRA-E Conference 2021 at Trinity College Dublin, Ireland, where I presented the paper "From Literary Theory and Criticism to Literary Translation" in the panel: "Recent

developments in literary translation training and pedagogy, particularly with reference to the PETRA-E framework". PETRA-E is an innovative assessment form for literary translators/translations, originating in a collaborative Erasmus research project and extended at a pan-European level, to which I completely adhere in my activity as a translation trainer. Equally relevant for my translation activity was my participation in the conference "Translation in and for Society: Investigating Sociological and Cultural Aspects in Literary and Specialized Domains", held in Cordoba, Spain (2018), which was subsequently published as a book chapter, 'Translating Books about Romania into Romanian', in Beatriz Martínez Ojeda & María Luisa Rodríguez Muñoz (Eds.) *Translation in and for Society: Sociological and Cultural Approaches in Translation*. University of Cordoba Press.

To cover my tangential relationship with linguistics, without abandoning my interest in politics, I have also participated in conferences that focused on aspects of discourse, namely in the Fourth International Congress on Discourse Studies, organised by the European association DiscourseNet, where I presented, alongside my colleague, Alexandru Praisler, a paper on the discursive similarities of two extremist political organisations (the National Legionary Party, in the interbellum and during the Second World War, and the Alliance for the Unity of Romanians, in our time), currently under review for publication in an ISI journal. At home, for similar interests, I am a constant participant in the conference Structure, Use, Meaning, organised by Transilvania University of Brasov.

My first participation as a keynote speaker at an international scientific event was in 2021, in the itinerant conference organised by the Ideas Forum International Academic and Scientific Association (IFIASA), an independent promoter of interdisciplinarity in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Their conferences focus on the Dialogue between Sciences, Arts, Religion and Education. After the first participation, in 2019, with a paper entitled "Brexit Framing in British Media", which ended up to be the theoretical background for the chapter on Brexit film and fiction co-authored with Michaela Praisler (detailed above), last year I was invited to deliver a keynote presentation, which had the title of this habilitation thesis, "Encoding Reality into Fiction, Decoding Fiction as Reality", and focused on the critical theories which govern my entire research, namely New Historicism and Cultural Materialism. In 2020, I was honoured to receive the invitation of Professor Anca Gâță, who teaches Romanian

Language and Culture at Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz, Germany, to deliver a guest presentation to her students and colleagues. This guest lecture was part of a series that brought together international researchers of language learning, history, civilisation, film studies, literature, etc., everyone's focus being on Romanian culture.

In 2018, my regretted colleague and friend, Gabriela Iuliana Colipcă-Ciobanu and I were invited to deliver public speeches (for a non-specialist audience) at the book launch of the Hogarth Shakespeare novel series, at the Humanitas Bookstore from Galati, where I discussed Margaret Atwood's intertextual reworking of *The Tempest*, the novel *Hag-Seed*. The event was covered by the local media: https://www.viata-libera.ro/educatie/104652-despre-rescrierea-pieselor-lui-shakespeare . Later that year, Professor Ion Cordoneanu (Faculty of History, Theology and Philosophy) and Professor Florin Tudor (Faculty of Law) organised the launch of my book, *British and American Representations of 9/11. Literature, Politics and the Media*, in an event entitled "9/11 - The Tragedy of a Nation that changed the World", with the participation of Prof. Michaela Praisler, Prof. Radu Carp (Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Bucharest) and the representative of the US Embassy to Romania, Mr David A. Schaefer, political counsellor. This event was also covered by the local newspaper, *Viaţa Liberă*: https://www.viata-libera.ro/educatie/116861-la-universitatea-dunarea-de-jos-din-galati-dezbatere-pe-o-teza-de-doctorat-despre-11-septembrie

The most important accomplishment, this time as an organiser, was the international conference "Thirty Years since the Fall of Communism", jointly with Professor Michaela Praisler, then-Dean of the Faculty of Letters, and Professor Ion Cordoneanu, then-Dean of the Faculty of History, Theology and Philosophy of "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati. Symbolically held in November 2019, as a commemoration of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the conference gathered researchers from the USA, China, Greece, Turkey, Germany, the Netherlands, Ukraine, Romania, etc., and was followed by the publication of the volume *Thirty Years since the Fall of Communism. Visual Narratives, Memory and Culture*, edited by Michaela Praisler and myself, published by Cambridge Scholars (UK) and indexed by Clarivate Analytics in Book Citation Index (2021).

D2. Editorial and reviewing activities

Aside from the two edited volumes whose structure and contents have been detailed in the appropriate sections, I have been permanently involved in the editorial work for scientific journals and presses. During my doctoral years, in 2014, my then-advisor, Professor Michaela Praisler, founded the journal *Cultural Intertexts* (www.cultural-intertexts.com), with a view to supporting doctoral candidates in the publication of their findings. The journal has evolved from this aim to becoming a respected journal indexed by numerous international databases (ERIH Plus, Ebsco, DOAJ, Index Copernicus, MLA, ProQuest, Open Aire) and accredited by the National Council for Scientific Research (CNCS) during the 2020 evaluation. Acting firstly as an editor and, since 2020, as executive editor, I have dealt with all aspects pertaining to the publication of this type of scientific material (editing, peer-reviewing, proofreading, website and social media page administration and maintenance, calls for papers, correspondence with authors and members of the scientific board, indexing, etc.). I can affirm that *Cultural Intertexts* is among my most valued accomplishments, one that I intend to carry on with and help it become more and more relevant at the international level of Cultural Studies oriented serial publications.

As part of my job description, I am also the editor-in-chief of ACROSS, the journal of the Cross-border Faculty of "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati (www.across-journal.com). This journal publishes peer-reviewed scientific research from a wider area, in four different fascicles (International Relations and Economics, Discourse and Communication Studies, Engineering and the Quality of Life, and Sports and Physical Education), which largely correspond to the domains in which the faculty members specialise. The journal is indexed in ERIH Plus, DOAJ, Index Copernicus and MLA.

I am a member of the editorial board of the Kyiv-based scientific journal *Renaissance Studies*, edited by T. H. Shevchenko Institute of Literature of the National Academy of Science of Ukraine, and of the scientific advisory board for the British academic press Cambridge Scholars Publishing, where I am in charge with evaluating book proposals in the field of Literature and deciding on the opportunity of their publication. From 2015 to 2019, I was an Associate Editor with DOAJ (the Directory of Open Access), in charge of the quality assessment of the scientific journals based in Romania and their subsequent indexation with DOAJ. I have also carried out peer-reviewing activities for Palgrave Macmillan, which commissioned the review of the

book project, *Sleeping Threats: The Sleeper Agent in Post-9/11 Media* by Dr Vanessa Ossa, and I am a member of the scientific boards of Transilvania University Press (Brasov, CNCS B) and of the Scientific Bulletin of B. P. Hasdeu Cahul State University (the Republic of Moldova). In 2020, I was appointed by competition evaluator for the Romanian National Council for Scientific Research during the national evaluation of the journals and publishing houses specialising in the Humanities and Social Sciences, anonymously assessing five academic journals, four academic presses and two commercial, independent presses.

D3. Reviews and citations

Owing to a great extent to the prestige of the academic presses which accepted my scientific output for publication, my presence in international databases and catalogues is rather significant. For exemplification purposes, two of the most important indicators of research visibility currently considered by CNADTCU, KVK - Karlsruher Virtueller Katalog and WorldCat, feature between 110 and 120 mentions of my titles. Five of my articles or chapters have been indexed by Web of Science and three, by Scopus. My translations are present in all the relevant academic libraries of Romania.

Google Scholar has indexed 48 scientific works, acknowledging 36 citations, with a Hirsch index of 4 (as of February 2022). Among the most important citations, worth mentioning are Susan Edward's book *The Political Appropriation of the Muslim Body*, Palgrave Macmillan 2021, Geoffrey Nash's chapter in *Contesting Islamophobia: Anti-Muslim Prejudice in Media, Culture and Politics* edited by Peter Morey, Amina Yaqin, Alaya Forte. Bloomsbury 2019, Claire Taylor's book *Electronic Literature in Latin America. From Text to Hypertext. Revitalising Legacy Media: Carlos Labbé's Pentagonal: Including You and Me (2001)*, Palgrave Macmillan 2020, J. Norledge's article "Building The Ark: Text World Theory and the Evolution of Dystopian Epistolary" (in *Language and Literature*, an ISI journal published by SAGE), Eva Kowal's article "Immense Risks: The Migrant Crisis, Magical Realism and Realist Magic in Mohsin Hamid's Novel 'Exit West' (*Polish Journal of English Studies* 2020), Danel Olson's book *9/11 Gothic: Decrypting Ghosts and Trauma in New York City's Terrorism Novels*, Lexington Books (2021), Delia Oprea's chapter "Intellectuels, journaliste ou blogueur? Changement et évolution des pratiques professionnelles à l'ère

du numérique : le cas de journalistes roumains transformés en blogueurs", in *Intellectuels et médias à l'ère numérique*, edited by Camelia Cușnir, Nicolas Pélissier and Rémy Rieffel, L'Harmattan 2021, Johan Schimanski's chapter "Border Utopias, Border Dystopias" in the volume *Grenzüberschreitungen und Grenzüberschreibungen in Theorie, Literatur und Kultur*, edited by Vera Faber and Barbara Seidl. Wien: Praesens, 2021, Gabriela Debita's chapter "Rewriting the World. The Healing Magic of Ecriture Féminine in Nnedi Okorafor's Who Fears Death" in Gheorghiu, O. (ed.) *Shifting Twenty-First Century Discourses, Borders and Identities*, 2020, Florian Andrei Vlad's book *Light and Shadows in the Post-9/11 Age. Literature, Trauma, Geopolitics*, Bucharest, Editura Universitară 2021, and many others.

The review of the book *British and American Representations of 9/11. Literature, Politics and the Media* has been included in the 2020 volume of *The Year's Work in English Studies* ("the qualitative narrative bibliographical review of scholarly work on English language and literatures written in English" and "the largest and most comprehensive work of its kind and the oldest evaluative work of literary criticism", according to its editors.) This review is published annually by Oxford University Press.

> Fiction that reflects upon 9/11 receives new attention in Oana Celia Gheorghiu's *British and American Representations of 9/11. Literature, Politics and the Media*. Usefully, Gheorghiu's monograph traces how literary authors engage with journalistic and political accounts on the attacks on the World Trade Center and the 'Global War on Terrorism' (p. 11). *British and American Representations of 9/11* 'bridges… the communicational spheres of the so-called objective, real fact-based discourses, and subjective literature', thereby bringing important media coverage and governmental reports like the 9/11 Commission Report into conversation with literary texts that reflect upon them (p. 13). Gheorghiu also explores how authors engage ideological formations in the wake of 9/11 in their neorealist fictional texts in ways that show the need to reconfigure identity following the tragedy and the West's response to it. (Vol. XVI *American Literature: The Twentieth Century* 2020: 1054)

Another review of the same book was published in 2021 by Catalina Neculai (Coventry University) in the influential journal *Discourse and Society*, edited by Teun van Dijk, included in the list of high-impact factor journals in Web of Science. Neculai considers that "conjuring up the representational baggage that combines political, critical, creative, mediatic and experiential discourses is key to engaging with Gheorghiu's

book, which makes of this discursive intertextuality its very rationale. The book shows that understanding the 9/11 historical, political and cultural conjuncture is afforded, and made possible, by the porous and intersectional nature of the various discursive fields in which the events exist" (2021: 766), evaluating it as "a good addition to the 9/11 academic literature that is manifestly materialist and political, opening up spaces for thinking about the interface between discourse and society in the aftermath of historical crises and traumas" (768).

Florian Andrei Vlad, Associate Professor in charge of a course in 9/11 fiction, includes the volume in the bibliography for students and assesses it as an attempt of representing the unrepresentable in a review published in the *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Studies and Environmental Communication*:

> Almost two decades after the dramatic events of September 11, 2001, echoes and repercussions of the collective trauma brought about by that day are still afloat in a very young third millennium. Although an initial response from writers claimed that it is all but impossible to represent the unrepresentable, the apparent meaninglessness of those chaotic moments, fiction writers, journalists, sociologists, politicians and political analysts, historians have invested since then what came to be briefly called "9/11" with particular power dimensions. Oana-Celia Gheorghiu, in her turn, and from the vantage point of the end of the second decade of the present century, defies the unrepresentable through her lucid but involved scholarly intervention. *British and American Representations of 9/11: Literature, Politics and the Media* is required reading for anyone interested in the literary and extra-literary phenomena linked to an event that dramatically heralded a new age, prompting reappraisals of the world we live in (Vlad 2020: 104)

Lastly, Delia Oprea, a journalist and lecturer in Communication Studies, looks at the volume from the perspective of a scholar completely unfamiliar with literary studies, concluding, in her review published in *Cultural Intertexts*, that "being built as an inroad in what triggered the attack on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center, in the spirit of the age, the volume opens more Pandora boxes, which seem, at times, unfathomable and impossible to superimpose. They remain different from each other, while still completing a yet unfinished picture of social-psycho-political history" (2019: 223).

Other publications which were considered worthy of extensive mention by other researchers are *The Odyssey of Communism. Visual Narratives, Memory and Culture*, edited by Michaela Praisler and Oana-Celia Gheorghiu, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2021, evaluated by Corina Dobrotă, and the translation of Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Parody*, reviewed from the perspective of a translation theorist by Ana-Maria Pâcleanu, both published in the journal *Translation Studies – Retrospective and Prospective Views* (2021: 132-134, 140-143).

I will conclude this section by listing the professional and academic associations of which I am a member. At the national level, the most important ones are the Romanian Writers' Union (*Uniunea Scriitorilor*) and the Romanian Association of Literary Translators (ARTLIT). In both cases, membership is not granted by request but one needs to qualify for inclusion, bringing their publications and the impact thereof as evidence. In what concerns the scientific associations, I am a member of the European Society for the Study of English, ESSE, (with its Romanian branch, RSEAS, the Romanian Society for English and American Studies), the European Association for American Studies, EAAS (again, with its Romanian branch, RAAS), the European Shakespeare Research Association (ESRA), the Central European Association for Canadian Studies (CEACS), and the Discourse Net association. All these affiliations are important for the major conferences and publications to which they grant access and for the academic networking necessary for any researcher nowadays.

E. TEACHING, CURRICULUM DESIGN AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Another important aspect that should be taken into consideration when the ultimate aim is that of acquiring experience for helping and encouraging the development of future researchers is the didactic one, all the more that our higher education system is generally geared towards specialising its staff in two directions: teaching and research. Accordingly, this section will provide an account of my teaching activities, emphasising the parts which I consider to be in close connection with the general aims and topics of the present habilitation thesis.

E1. Courses taught

The early days of my teaching career, as a research/teaching assistant, doctoral candidate, and then as a teaching fellow PhD (2013-2017) found me at the Department of English, Faculty of Letters, my *alma mater*, where I taught English for Specific Purposes to students in History, Philosophy, Sociology, Acting and Performance Studies, Visual Arts, and English Literature (the Elizabethan Drama) to students at the Faculty of Letters. Since the academic year 2017-2018, I have been a tenured member of the Department of Socio-Humanities, the Cross-border Faculty, where I teach disciplines from the areas of Cultural Studies and Translation Studies to students in Applied Modern Languages (B.A.) and Translation and Interpreting Studies (B.A., M.A.). As the subjects taught varied throughout the years according to the necessities of the faculty, ranging from Culture and Civilisation and Cultural Representations to courses in Terminology and Translation of Specialized Languages, this presentation will focus exclusively on three courses that constitute the core of my teaching load, and which overlap my research interests, outlined above.

E.1.1. English and American Culture and Civilisation

This course is intended for first-year students in both Applied Modern Languages (schooled in Cahul, the Republic of Moldova and Ismail, Ukraine) and Translation and Interpreting Studies (Chisinau, the Republic of Moldova). Designed to cover 28 hours for lectures and 14 hours for seminars, on both semesters, it aims at helping students

become familiar with the main stages in the history and literature of Britain and the United States in view of correlating them with the understanding of the British/American mentality and cultural patterns as a whole. While the ultimate aim is that students become better translators and cultural mediators through giving them enough information concerning the source culture from which they will translate in the following years of study, the course focuses on developing their skills in synthesising and abridging fundamental cultural concepts and critically assessing literary and non-literary texts from all periods of the historical development that has led to the present-day United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

The course is structured diachronically, starting from Prehistory and Antiquity in the British space (up to the Norman Conquest), with an overview of Anglo-Saxon Literature. The Middle Ages is tackled historically, from the Plantagenets to the Tudors, emphasis being laid on the two great wars of the time, The Hundred Years' War and the War of the Roses, and socio-culturally, with references to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, the Arthurian cycle and mediaeval drama, placed in relation with elements of mentality and religion. The Tudor dynasty is approached in connection with the English Renaissance, with its representative playwrights and poets, William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe and Philip Sydney. The seventeenth century is the point at which England's history starts being presented in parallel with that of the (future) United States of America. On the cultural side, the course introduces Ben Jonson, John Donne, John Milton and John Dryden, compulsory pitstops in every course in English Literature, but also adds women poets, such as Aemilia Lanier and Lucy Hutchinson, anticipating the development of women's writing in the centuries to come. The history of the eighteenth century focuses on the Act of Union, the colonial expansion during the Hanoverians (to culminate in the next century), but also the loss of the American possessions (including here the War of the American Independence and the Constitution of the United States). Culturally, this period is tackled in relation to the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, Neoclassicism and the rise of the novel. The 19th century has been split, for methodological purposes, into two halves: the Romantic Age, roughly corresponding with the Napoleonic Wars, the Regency and the 1830s reforms, with a discussion limited to the 'founding fathers' of Romanticism, Wordsworth and Coleridge, and the 'High Romanticism' represented by Byron, Shelley

and Keats, and the Victorian Age, approaching the reign of Queen Victoria and the expansion of the British Empire on the one hand, and the American Civil War, on the other. As this is the richest period in the history of English literature, the course retains only Alfred, Lord Tennyson and Robert Browning from the wide constellation of Victorian poetry, focusing instead on the great Victorian novelists (Dickens, the Brontës, Eliot, Thackeray and Hardy), the emergence of popular genres, children's literature, penny dreadful, crime fiction and drama (Wilde, Shaw). American literature is present with brief references to New England Transcendentalism, American Victorianism and American Gothic/Romanticism. The last courses, dedicated to contemporaneity, discuss the two world wars, the Cold War, the fall of the British Empire, globalisation, and the rise of the United States as a superpower, being concluded by an incursion into the 21st century, with the attacks on the WTC/the War on Terror and with Brexit. Socio-culturally, the course focuses on feminism, equal rights, the Roaring Twenties, the emergence of cinema culture, the cultural and sexual revolution of the 1960s, etc. Lastly, from a literary perspective, the course introduces students to Modernism (E. M. Forster, V. Woolf, J. Joyce, T. S. Eliot, F. S. Fitzgerald, E. Hemingway) and Postmodernism (J. Fowles, D. Lodge, M. Atwood, K. Vonnegut, T. Pynchon) and contemporary literature (including successful genre fiction like *Harry Potter* or *Game of Thrones* and their adaptations).

In order to avoid making things too complicated for students, who only need glimpses into literature and history, and not thorough literary knowledge or the ability to approach the texts from the perspective of literary criticism and theory, the literary and historical periods, the cultural movements and the individual texts are presented in a general, schematic manner, with the declared aim to persuade them to read (willingly!) at least some of the most outstanding works of English and American Literature. While the course material is currently delivered in the form of elaborated PowerPoint presentations, I am also considering gathering the information in a *lecture notes* type of volume.

E1.1.2. Cultural Representations in the English-speaking World

This course, having the status of compulsory study for third-year students in Applied Modern Languages and that of an elective course for third-year students in Translation and Interpreting Studies, is structured along 28 hours of lectures and 14 hours of seminars, during the winter semester. It is the teaching activity closest to my research interests and academic training, in connection with my two books and numerous articles on representations, which constitute, in a simplified manner, the theoretical and applicative support for students.

Students, who have been previously trained, during their second year of study, in the theory of culture, are guided to enter the territory of representation and fictionality, set in opposition with objective reality, through a conceptual apparatus that comprises elements such as Cultural Theory, Cultural Materialism, Cultural Studies, high/low culture, mimesis, substitution, imitation, social identity, imagology, postmodernity (multiplicity, palimpsest, fragmentation, intertextuality, parody and pastiche, mixing of styles, metafiction), new media, commodification, consumer identity, simulacrum, etc., in an attempt to help them find answers to a number of questions: What is culture, what is representation, what is cultural representation? Who or what is culturally represented in visual or written art forms, by whom and for whom? Which representations confirm our ideas of factuality and reality and which subvert them and how? What is meant by politics of representation? To this end, the theoretical lectures are complemented by applicative approaches to films and TV series (selected for ease of access and faster acquaintance of students to the topic than in the case of literature), namely by case studies which focus on representations of Britishness and Americanness, nation and narration, historical events, otherness (race and ethnicity), gender (mostly femininity but also masculinity and LGBTQ).

The objective of the course, which is to make students aware of the societal relevance of the analysis of cultural objects and practices, from the perspective of representation and reflection of culture and society, is an ambitious one, and the material taught seems, at first, complicated and highly theoretical. However, this latter part and especially the evaluation form, which requires that students produce the analysis of a filmic representation of their choice, make it one of the favourites of students, which is accounted for by the large number of graduates who choose topics related to it for their graduation paper, under my supervision.

E1.1.3. Translation Theory and Practice (and other translation-related subjects)

This course, designed for second-year students in Applied Modern Languages, to which 28 hours of lectures and 28 hours of seminars are allocated, represents the students' introduction to Translation Studies and focuses on their understanding of translation as both a process and a product, the role of the translator as a cultural mediator and, most importantly, equivalence at the level of meaning and form (in as much as the latter is possible without altering the text flow and making it sound foreign and artificial). The course approaches translation strategies and techniques, domestication, foreignization, archaization versus synchronization, translation of dialects, cultural elements, idioms and other fixed expressions, etc. A distinct section of this course deals with audiovisual translation, i.e., with film subtitling procedures. The course is based on the PETRA-E framework of reference for the education and training of literary translators, which lists 8 competences (transfer, language, textual, heuristic, literary-cultural, professional, evaluative and research competence) at 5 levels (beginner, advanced learner, early-career professional, advanced professional and expert), aiming to help students reach the second, and in the best cases, the third level for each competence. Seminars are designed as a hands-on method, students being confronted with literary texts of low and medium difficulty, which they need to critically evaluate at a basic, beginner level, then translate and explain their choices and strategies. A significant group project is the translation of a short story, previously untranslated into Romanian, at students' choice from a collection edited by Malcolm Bradbury (*The Penguin Book of Modern British Short Stories*). So far, the following short stories have been translated into Romanian: Muriel Spark's *The House of the Famous Poet*, Fay Weldon's *Weekend,* Julian Barnes's *One of a Kind*, Ian McEwan's *Psychopolis*, and Rose Tremain's *My Wife Is a White Russian*, the last, as a graduation paper which connected translation studies with applied narratology. The publication of an edited collection is in sight once the copyright issues will have been resolved. Other graduation papers and M.A. dissertations included the translation of cultural elements of a Moldovan wedding, the translation of women's language in the works of Edith Wharton and Margaret Atwood, the translation of Ukrainian cultural elements (from the area of gastronomy and dishes), a comparison

between two translations from Russian of Mikhail Bakhtin's seminal study, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, etc.

Based on the translation aspects dealt with in my book, *From 19th-Century Femininity in Literature to 20th-Century Feminism on Film*, and in the articles and chapters summarised above, this course has been replicated, with the appropriate additions required by both level and course specificity, at the master's level, in the Translation and Interpreting Studies programme, where I taught Translation and Style, Translation as Cultural Mediation, and Drama Translation.

E2. Curriculum design

Having been assigned the completion of the accreditation files for ARACIS visits since the early days of my academic career, I have come to enjoy this activity and, moreover, to allow it to become one of the main directions in my profession. I contributed to the accreditation or temporary authorisation of a number of study programmes of the Cross-border Faculty (Romanian Language Preparatory Year for Foreign Students, B.A. in Ukrainian and Romanian Language and Literature, B.A. in Applied Modern Languages) and to the accreditation of the master's degree study programme domain (Philology), being responsible for the master's in Translation and Interpreting Studies (Cahul).

The true challenge, however, was the new study programmes that the faculty wished to implement, which entailed the complete design, from curriculum, aims, teaching loads assignation to subject outlines/syllabi, and the self-evaluation report. The first was the master's programme **Modern Languages in Intercultural Dialogue**, which, having been specifically tailored for Moldovan students, has been authorised for functioning in Chisinau, starting with this academic year. The master's programme, with a linguistic component, approaches the Romanian, Russian and English languages in an interconnection generated and imposed by the social, political and cultural context in which it is delivered – almost all students are bilingual (Romanian and Russian), and the impact of English in Moldova is increasing as a result of the country's European ambitions. The first year of study comprises subjects in the Linguistics area (Morpho-Syntax, Lexical Semantics) and in Intercultural Communication, including a course in Culture in the Age of New Media. The second year of study becomes more applicative, providing courses and seminars in Discourse Analysis, translation of specialised

languages, interpreting, subtitling and dubbing (the audiovisual translation of choice in the Republic of Moldova).

The other study programme that I have designed from scratch (curriculum and objectives), for which I was in charge of elaborating the complete file for authorisation, and of which I am also the coordinator is the undergraduate programme in **Translation and Interpreting Studies (English and French)**, which was meant to complement the existing programme in Applied Modern Languages that the faculty has been offering in the Republic of Moldova since 2013. Although there is an obvious common core of the two study programmes, especially for the first year, I have designed the new one – which will start schooling students in the 2022-2023 academic year, in Chisinau (Moldova) – on two directions that students may take starting with their second year of study: either the literary/cultural route, which aims to train literary translators and which includes electives in English/French Literature, literary translation, contemporary culture, representations, New Media, etc., or the specialised languages route, which focuses on translations of legal, economic, scientific, administrative texts, terminology, CAT tools and information technology applied to languages. A necessary addition was the introduction of courses in academic writing, documentation techniques and online resources, and methodology of philological research, which have been taught until now only to students in Language and Literature and which were repeatedly requested by students in Applied Modern Languages, provided that they too need to write an extensive scientific paper for graduation.

E3. Extracurricular activities

Supporting my students to expand their horizons, overcome their limits and learn new, less usual things related to their domain has always been a driving force in my profession. I was involved in the organisation of nine editions (2010-2019) of the "William Shakespeare" National Students' Symposium, an event that was an annual tradition of the Faculty of Letters since the 1990s, supporting my colleague, Gabriela Iuliana Colipcă-Ciobanu, the soul and main organizer in these last years, in selecting and editing scientific papers for presentation, awarding prizes, 'directing' abridged theatre performances of Shakespeare's plays in collaboration with the students of the Faculty of Arts, etc. I am involved in the organisation of the Students' Scientific Session

at the Cross-border Faculty, where students under my supervision have constantly been awarded prizes for their scientific contributions.

The silver lining of the COVID-19 pandemic was the possibility to organize online live events with guests that would not have travelled to share their expertise with our students otherwise. A few examples of such events include *The Long Way of the Book from the Author to the Reader*, with a guest working as an editor for a famous Romanian publishing house and another, a very young published novelist, who gave the students a taste of what happens throughout the entire editorial process of launching a book, *The Magic behind the Stage*, with guests from a Hollywood film company, who offered insights into scriptwriting, *Keys to Information Literacy* and *Academic Exchange Opportunities in the United States*, with the support of the Fulbright grantee, Katherine Ruprecht.

Translation workshops represent yet another type of extracurricular activities in which I have been constantly involved. In 2020, I concluded an agreement with an international consortium, Global Digital Library, that provided, volunteer-based, electronic books for children in disadvantaged areas. The international project was called *Translate a Story*. Our students were delighted to deliver the translation of the respective titles in Romanian and Ukrainian and have their names published on the title page of a book for the first time in their lives.

I could not conclude this section without mentioning a more ambitious project, the literary translation contest *Galațiul din poveste*, successfully carried out in 2021, boasting the participation of contestants from the University of Bucharest, "Transilvania" University of Brașov, "Babeș-Bolyai" University of Cluj, Moldova State University of Chisinau, Ismail State University of Humanities (Ukraine) and, of course, "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati. The participants, aided and supported by a mentor from their home faculty, translated a cultural text, a short story about the interwar Galati, into English or French. The jury was made up of professional literary translators, members of the Romanian Association of Literary Translators (ARTLIT).

PART II

F. CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Autobiography, whether it is organised as a report or an account, or whether it employs various fiction-specific techniques to narrate the past, remains a self-reflexive genre that requires a significant level of self-awareness, perhaps an arrogant one, based on the assumption that *writing the self* can be made interesting to *others*. It falls under the inexorability of the past tense forms of the verb to do. *Autofiction*, on the other hand, may point to desires, ambitions, perhaps promises made to oneself or to others, and is placed, antithetically, in the region of the future, the conditional or the subjunctive of the same verb.

"Each society has its own regime of truth, general politics of truth, the types of discourse it harbours and causes to function as true" (Foucault, *The Political Function of the Intellectual,* 1976). These regimes of truth emerge, among others, from scientific discourse, being constantly laid out and redefined by the educational system, the media and other ideology-informed structures. In the academic context, which I include, inspired by the French philosopher, in the area of power structures/regimes, this habilitation thesis is at the intersection between verifiable truths (Part I) and… *great expectations* (Part II). The exhaustive account of the past and present accomplishments and activities should be complemented by a natural follow-up, under the sign of mental level projection, of future actions. Thanks to this complementariness, the plans laid out below preserve imprints of intersectionality and hybridity, which educational theorists would term 'interdisciplinarity', while cultural theorists include under the notion of in-betweenness. In other words, my future research activities will be carried out along the same lines of passion for literary studies combined with the more pragmatic drive to make literature available to more people through adaptation and re-telling on the one hand, and translation, on the other.

For symmetry purposes, this *I will* presentation will mirror the *I have done* one above, focusing on research, conferences, teaching and syllabus design, to which the component that the process of obtaining the habilitation certificate targets: attaining the necessary skills and experience required to become a doctoral advisor.

F1. Present and prospective research

In the closing paragraphs of my dissertation/book, I was raising the question of whether 9/11 fiction, which is, in the end, a marginal subgenre of contemporary fiction, albeit a significant one if the number of fictional works and the reputation of many of the authors who have approached are taken into consideration, "has found or will find a steady place among 'war' literatures" (Gheorghiu 2018: 253). Having in mind other catastrophic events (the two World Wars, the Holocaust, the Sovietisation and the ensuing persecutions and deportations) which had a major impact on twentieth and twenty-first-century fiction, one could assume that this event too will arrest the attention of writers and critics, at least for the upcoming years. Fortunately, the raging Islamophobia of the first decade after the cataclysm has worn off for the most part but the trauma of the loss of 3,000 lives in an illogical and absurd blink of an eye will stay with us. I intend, therefore, to pursue my research in this direction, either by returning to titles that I had to leave out due to various constraints at the moment of writing the dissertation or by looking for new material to see how the perception of 9/11 has changed over the years and whether is there in truth a second-wave of 9/11 fiction or not. Having already included the 2011 film adaptation of the traumatic *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer among the case studies presented to students in the course on Cultural Representations, I could return to it in a more thorough manner, for an article or book chapter.

A more ambitious plan, which has been postponed because of the pandemic, is to apply for a Fulbright grant and conduct research on the representations and memorial sites of 9/11 in New York City. Grounded in Memory Studies, this study would be my most interdisciplinary to date, including analyses of visual representations, from the official ones, like the monument at Ground Zero, to thematic graffiti and murals spread throughout areas like the Bronx and Queens, and accounts of twenty-years-after testimonials, of how the distance in time heals wounds or even helps oblivion or carelessness. The political world will not be left out, nor will be literature and film or digital media. Ideally, this looking back, which remains to be seen whether is still in anger or just with moderated grief, will shape as a chapter in a collective volume, in which I intend to invite to contribute significant 9/11 fiction scholars, such as Joseph Conte, Timothy Gaultier or Michael C. Frank, with whom I have been in correspondence since the publication of the book.

Along the same lines, I intend to maintain and expand my academic network

and expertise through participation in relevant international conferences, summer schools, invited lectures, Erasmus mobilities and transnational collaborative research projects, etc. I will also continue to submit projects, applying for grants offered by the UEFISCDI or other national or European funding bodies.

With regard to projects underway at the moment of writing this section, I should start by briefly mentioning the research studies already under review. The former is the chapter "Re-Imagining *The Waste Land*. Infertility, Barrenness and Ecocatastrophe in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*", submitted to the editors of the volume *Eco-Consciousness. Imperatives in American Culture*. It is contended that the many ecofeminist readings of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* out there – rather duly observant of the textual politics advanced by the critical theory that brings together nature and womanhood, and considers woman as Earth/Gaia/Mother of all humankind – focus on matters of infertility/ barrenness, which indeed constitute a core element of the novel. Without departing too much from this approach, the proposed chapter re-reads the Handmaids' status in Gilead, and that of the Unwomen in the dreaded Colonies by using the 'chessboard' of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* as an intertextual reference point. The allusion to the legend of the Fisher King's infertility in the Modernist poem could be an influence for Atwood's both wasteland and waste land, while the coveted births in Gilead may represent a genuine quest for the Grail. Eliot's "unreal city under brown fog" seems to have been relocated across the Atlantic, to what is left of the United States after suppressing womanhood and abolishing women's rights following a series of environmental and political catastrophes.

The latter piece of research awaiting its assessment is the article co-authored with Alexandru Praisler, "Ideologies of Hatred in Romanian Political Discourse: From the Legion of the Archangel Michael (1927-1941) to AUR (2020)" submitted to the ISI journal *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* (Palgrave/Springer). The research starts from the empirical observation of the rise of new extremist forces on the Romanian political stage. In December 2020, on the evening of the Parliamentary Elections in Romania, the public opinion was shattered upon their finding out, from the results of the exit polls, that a significant number of votes (c. 9%) had been cast in favour of an extremist political party, Alianța pentru Uniunea Românilor (AUR)

[Alliance for the Unity of Romanians]. Ultra-conservative, ultra-Orthodox(ist), nationalist and xenophobic (anti-Hungarian), advocating "family, nation, Christian faith and liberty", the party had campaigned in an insidious manner, both in social media, in groups counting thousands of users with nationalist predilections, and in the poorer rural areas of Romania, gathering a momentum that few could foresee. While the rise of (far-right) extremism in recent years is undeniable if one looks at similar results in elections across Europe, it is in the hands of discourse experts to deconstruct such hate speeches and warn both policymakers and the general population against allowing them to proliferate in the public sphere. Accordingly, drawing on the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) proposed by Reisigl and Wodak, and on historical sources, the article discusses samples of speeches of the leaders of AUR, comparing them with the inflammatory discourse that paved the way to the Legion of the Archangel Michael's coming to power in 1940.

A work still in progress, in collaboration with Michaela Praisler, is the chapter "From Postmodernism, with Love: Neo-Victorian 'Sexual/Textual Politics' in Fiction and Film", intended for a volume of Victorian and Neo-Victorian Studies. The research focuses on one of the best-known feminine characters of postmodernist literature, Sarah Woodruff, the *French Lieutenant's Woman*. Her story, inside the story of 'the author', inside the story Fowles sent out in a world that had recently been through Paris 1968 and Woodstock Music and Art Fair (1969) but that was still living under the provisions of the Obscene Publications Act of 1959, deconstructs and reconstructs Victorian modes and moods of storytelling/novel writing, femininity, sexuality, in an almost feminist vindication of women's rights to be more than just dully, righteously, greyly represented in fiction. The novel has been dissected ever since, its encodings decoded, its pretences refuted, its meta-dimension accounted for, its parodic intentions unveiled, which makes one wonder whether there is anything left to add, fifty years later. Based on revisits and new perspectives, our chapter attempts to frame Fowles's novel at the same time 'within and against a Neo-Victorian canon, in an approach that will rest on the criticism available, reinterpret and give it 21st-century nuances and textual/sexual politics now in place.

Other works in progress are related to Margaret Atwood. The former, also in collaboration with Michaela Praisler, is to be presented at the seminar we are going to chair at the ESSE Conference in Mainz, Women Writers and Their Writings on

Writing, and concerns her non-fictional essays on the role of the very much alive author in contemporaneity, from the volumes *Negotiating with the Dead. A Writer on Writing* (2003) and *Burning Questions: Essays and Occasional Pieces, 2004 to 2021* (2022). The latter, based on the novel *Hag-Seed*, a rewriting of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, will be delivered at the 9th Triennial International Conference of the Central European Association for Canadian Studies (Budapest, Hungary, October 2022).

Always faithful to "my authors", I will continue to stay to date with their most recent titles, providing critical evaluations in articles and conference presentations. A first example will be Ian McEwan's *Lessons* (2022). The publisher, Jonathan Cape, advertises it as "a powerful meditation on history and humanity told through the prism of one man's lifetime" which explores "what can be learned from the traumas of the past, what parenthood can teach us about ourselves, and how global events shape our lives and memories" (*The Guardian*, Jan 19, 2022), which brings it very close to my scientific interests.

Another title that I look forward to (critically) reading is Mohsin Hamid's long-awaited new novel, *The Last White Man*, a new reworking of Kafka's *Metamorphosis* after McEwan's 'Brexit novella' *The Cockroach*, this time from a racially-charged perspective very much in keeping with the cultural and political trends in the United States and not only (woke, Black Lives Matter, etc.). The incipit, present in the media teasers, reads: "One morning Anders, a white man, woke up to find he had turned a deep and undeniable brown." *The New Yorker* claims that the novel "feels immediately canonical, so firm and unerring is Hamid's understanding of our time and its most pressing questions". Starting from the studies on the two novels that I have already tackled extensively, which will be reused with permission from the publishers, and adding his other fictional and non-fictional writings, I intend to produce a Mohsin Hamid monograph, for which Palgrave Macmillan already gave me their expression of interest.

In what concerns my editorial activity, I will continue to strive for excellence in my work alongside the *Cultural Intertexts* editorial team, with a view to expanding its international authorship and board of reviewers, to increasing its quality through exigent review, and to promoting it for better visibility and a larger number of

quotations in order to have it indexed by prestigious databases such as Scopus or Clarivate Analytics.

F2. Translations in progress or in sight

I am waiting for the publication of the re-translation of the Renaissance playwright Robert Greene's play, *George-a-Greene, The Pinner of Wakefield*. In the meantime, I am working on the translation of *Tamburlaine the Great*, parts I and II, by Christopher Marlowe, for the same project of Renaissance drama recuperation initiated by Professor George Volceanov, and translate by commission novels for Litera Press.

In the area of literary criticism, I have expressed interest in continuing what I started with Linda Hutcheon's *Theory of Parody* with the translation of a critical work written by another important representative of postmodernism, David Lodge. The manager of Transilvania University Press, Professor Răzvan Săftoiu, is trying to acquire the translation rights from Penguin Press (UK), his objective being that of starting a series of translated works of Anglo-American criticism, with my and other translators' support.

F3. Teaching and course design

In relation to my teaching activity, the short-term objectives refer, on the one hand, to the publication of a textbook for the course in British and American Culture and Civilisation, based on materials collected in the last few years, and on the other hand to the preparation of a new course in English Literature with Narratology and Critical Theory applications. The course is included in the curriculum of the B. A. study programme in Translation and Interpreting Studies for the second year, as an elective for the students interested in taking the literary and cultural translation avenue. The course aims to make students familiar with the operational concepts of literary theory and criticism and to guide their understanding of the *grammar of literature*, using the Genettian model from *Narrative Discourse* as a prerequisite for becoming competent **literary** translators. I will continue to supervise graduation papers and master's dissertations, which I regard as very important first steps into scientific research, provided that guidance is offered with a certain degree of exigency and zero tolerance for academic misconduct.

F4. Doctoral scientific coordination

Anglo-American contemporary political fiction, feminine writing, critical theory, film adaptation and Elizabethan drama may constitute starting points for supporting postgraduate students in pursuing their academic careers. Future research topics could include monographic studies dedicated to the work of contemporary novelists or playwrights, restricted linguistically to the 'territory' of the English language but freed from geographic constraints, with a view to giving a voice to the unheard or to easing the understanding of hyphenated identities through fiction. Rewritings, intertextual reworkings, metafictional games, translations and trans-lations could also represent approachable topics – from postmodernist refashionings of older writings – where my knowledge of the Renaissance could be helpful – to reinterpretations of history or transformations/transpositions of history, politics and cultural spaces into alternative, new or parallel worlds/universes represented either in fiction (including genre fiction) or in any narrative form of popular culture. Along similar lines, research projects on cultural/literary representations of gender identity, supporting or contradicting the feminist debate, might also benefit from my insights into the topic. I would also recommend comparative studies of various directions or authors.

In point of theoretical background, I would supervise works based on modern literary theory and criticism, from psychoanalytical criticism, going through Marxism, critiques of modernity, deconstruction, feminism, ideology and theories of the public sphere, and ending with emerging theories on the new media, or on stringent contemporary issues, as is the case of ecocriticism and posthumanism.

Since I acknowledge and would gladly embrace my advisor's style of scientific coordination, which functioned perfectly for me when I was a doctoral student, I would encourage open dialogue with students, sharing ideas in one-to-one conversations, trying not to impose my views on them, but helping them become aware of and develop aspects they might have overlooked. Lastly, at the risk of losing popularity points, I would insist on strictly observing deadlines.

In what concerns potential shared projects, I would be open to co-authorship, guiding them through the academic world dominated by the "publish or perish" principle. I would include them in larger-scale projects and in editorial activities, which may prove helpful in improving their clarity and their general academic writing skills.

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At the end of this overview of my scientific and professional achievements, I feel compelled to show my gratitude to a number of people in the academia who helped me shape it, one way or another.

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