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## INTRODUCTION

The articles included in this second volume are based on the papers presented by the students of the Doctoral School of Literary and Cultural Studies, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Bucharest, at their annual International Conference in May 2011. They reflect the various preoccupations of these students in the fields of British literature, American literature, Canadian literature, Romanian literature and culture, Comparative literature and Chinese and Japanese Confucian culture. Simona Dovleac is interested in the Confucian moral concepts guiding human relations and their adaptation in the writings of Kaibara Ekken and the Japanese tradition. Confucian thought highlights the relational human as part of a community, as part of a whole, the individual takes a stand in society only by performing a ritual conduct in relationships with others. Dovleac dwells on Kaibara Ekken's discourse on a few Confucian concepts such as human, humaneness, ritual conduct, and the Five Moral Relationships. The political uses of romantic irony has attracted the interest of Cristian Vijeac who discusses this topic in *Kenilworth* and other novels by Walter Scott. The author sees *Kenilworth* as a rewriting of *Othello*, arguing that the novelist uses the ironic discourse as a means of maintaining political and cultural fluidity and dispelling the inner tensions of the "nation". Laura Balomiri makes a comparative analysis of Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* and Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* reading literary metamorphoses as dramatisations of physical and psychological exile, a reading justified by their respective biographies, both being members of ethnic, national, cultural and religious minorities and

writing in a pluralistic context that can be fruitfully explored from the perspective of postcolonial criticism. Quite a number of the essays centre round gender issues, from a narrative feminist angle (Catrinela Andreea Lazăr), the angle of victimization (Cristina Nicolaescu), and the angle of multicultural hybridity adopted by postcolonial and diasporic criticism (Lucia Grosu) or the angle of the Gothic tradition used to subvert the myth of the (patriarchal) family as a site of male domination and female submission. Examining the temporal, moral and social dimensions of the *self* and exploring the female character's identity crisis, Lazăr demonstrates the importance of narrative as a form achieving repair of female self-identity in its behavioural and psychological aspects as mirrored in Doris Lessing's *The Summer before the Dark* and Margaret Atwood's *Life before Man*. Nicolaescu investigates cases of both male and female characters' victimization and victimhood in Carol Shield's *The Stone Diaries* and Alice Munro's *The Love of a Good Woman* from cultural and psychological perspectives. Grosu analyses two novels, Uma Parameswaran's *Mangoes On The Maple Tree* and Anita Rau Badami's *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* and selected short stories from Shauna Singh Baldwin's collections *English Lessons and Other Stories* and *We Are Not in Pakistan* in order to explore the immigrant characters' shifting their views of intimacy when in contact with the host-country or maintaining an ultra-traditional (often patriarchal) view of marriage and relationships. Oproiu too discusses the way in which Joyce Carol Oates's postmodern Gothic novel *Bellefleur* fundamentally revises the traditional Gothic definition of "family" by weakening the masculine dominion over the household and the surrounding world. She argues that the metamorphoses and bodily transformations that abound in the novel can be read as a radical, ecofeminist revisioning of the concept of "family" and that the various shape-shifting characters are employed as disruptive forces meant to undermine the linearity and predictability inherent in the Law of the Father, which the novel exposes and attacks. The postmodern passion for writing historiographical metafiction and for rewriting old stories is the common denominator of Iulia Bindileu's and Daniela Călinescu's papers. Bindileu analyses David Lodge's novel *A Man of Parts*, a biographical novel centred on the life of H.G. Wells, identifying in it the seemingly paradoxical blend of homage and resistance typical of postmodernist vision. Using Hayden White as a reference, she pinpoints the borderline

between fictitious and factual elements, as well as the reasons for the popularity of biographical fiction about writers. Călinescu focuses on the story-telling technique that Codrescu uses in his latest narrative *whatever gets you through the night*, aiming to demonstrate that the “body” functions as fuel to the narrative text, generating Sheherezade’s “story-born corporality” and foregrounding Codrescu’s choice of highlighting the ontology of story telling. The volume concludes with a cultural topic: Americanization as reflected in post-communist Romanian print media. Irina David’s analysis focuses on the relevance of cultural assimilation in the discussion of Americanization, demonstrating that in the post-Communist age Romanians appropriate aspects of American culture on the basis of their own experience, hoping that the consumption of American products will be a means of modernization giving them free access to America. The articles illustrate the doctoral students’ analytical insight and power of synthesis, their efforts at deep-going research and original interpretation.

The Editor

# **The Relational Human in Kaibara Ekken's Discourse**

**Maria-Simona Dovleac**

Supervisor: Prof. dr. Florentina Vişan

## **THE RELATIONAL HUMAN IN KAIBARA EKKEN'S DISCOURSE**

### **Abstract**

From the Confucian perspective, being human (*ren/ jin* 人) means endeavouring to reach Humanness (*ren/ jin* 仁) through ritual conduct (*lǐ/ rei* 禮), performing the Five Moral Relationships (*wǔlun/ gorin* 五倫). Confucian thought highlights the relational human – as part of a community, as part of a whole – who takes stand (*lǐ* 立) in society (and in universe) only by performing a ritual conduct in relationships with others. This paper attempts to discuss the discourse of Kaibara Ekken (1630-1714) on the human, along two constants that are in a dynamic relation: Humanness and ritual conduct. The goal of this article is to introduce the Confucian perspective on the human by endeavouring to translate and interpret a few Confucian concepts such as human, Humaneness, ritual conduct, and the Five Moral Relationships.

**Key words:** human, relational, Humaneness, ritual conduct

# **The Political Uses of Irony in Walter Scott's *Kenilworth***

**Cristian Ștefan Vîjea**

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Mihaela Irimia

## **THE POLITICAL USES OF IRONY IN WALTER SCOTT'S *KENILWORTH***

### **Abstract**

In this paper I will analyze the political manifesto offered by Scott in his rewriting of *Othello*, *Kenilworth*, arguing that the author proposes an ironic discourse as a means of maintaining political and cultural fluidity and dispelling the inner tensions of the “nation”. Scott proposes the model of an intelligent ruler who allows his people a certain Spielraum and allows the play of irony by the fool as ways to diminish the tensions accumulated inside the British nation. The role of irony as political tool here comes from its being the expression of freedom and fluidity, as opposed to the radical, uptight discourse in politicians who have succumbed entirely to their views and can no longer question or allow their views to be questioned. The people involved directly in the tragedy are those who have lost the force of ironic discourse, and with it freedom, and gradually turn into automata (Scott's word when referring to Leicester). Lack of ironic discourse engenders tragedy and political tension, blocking the cultural flow between the social strata. Scott's X-ray of Elizabeth's reign brings to the fore no few spaces and situations in which the wise Elizabeth allows laughter and carnivalesque to take over. Without glossing over the social frictions and selfish divergent political interests at the court of Elizabeth, Scott proves that despite the high potential for political instability which existed, a sense of common purpose was achieved. Ironic discourse, the carnivalesque and its freedom restore fluidity to a world which could otherwise grow excessively stern, stiff and eventually violent.

Although the author observes the plot-line of Othello and comes up with a tragic end, Scott offers a novel with a comic mode of emplotment, studded with moments of side-splitting laughter, confining the tragedy only to the people who lost the ability to create, decode and enjoy an ironic discourse.

**Keywords:** social space, ironic discourse, conservatism, play-frame, comic emplotment, cultural transfer, political safety-valve.

# **Metamorphosis as Dramatised Exile in Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* and Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses***

**Laura Balomiri**

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Radu Surdulescu

## **METAMORPHOSIS AS DRAMATISED EXILE IN FRANZ KAFKA'S *THE METAMORPHOSIS* AND SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *THE SATANIC VERSES***

### Abstract

Both in its modernist version, as illustrated by Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, and in its postmodernist variant, exemplified by Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, literary metamorphoses can be read as dramatisations of physical and psychological exile. Harold Skulsky duly sees the state of metamorphosis as "the mind in exile". In particular, human-animal transformations as described in the two texts perhaps constitute the most extreme identitary exilation, with the de-centering and re-centering of what is essentially human acting as a means to fictionally explore scenarios of radical otherness. In the metamorphosed state, the Hegelian "Constitutive Other", or, in more recent terms, Edward Said's "Otherness" are paradoxically and quite literally incorporated in the Self. Beyond textual affinities, another justification of the comparison between Kafka and Rushdie is provided by their respective biography: both Kafka and Rushdie are members of ethnic, national, cultural and religious minorities and write in a pluralistic context that is also linguistically equivocal. Both their perception of otherness is a very acute one. Due to this "marginal" situation of Kafka's work, recent Kafka criticism – scholars such as Boa, Fuchs, Zilcosky, Goebel and especially Deleuze and Guattari in their well-known study *Towards a Minor Literature* – has convincingly placed Kafka in an avant-la-lettre

postcolonial context, while Rushdie himself counts among the most important postcolonial writers, with exile figuring as one of his most persistent literary themes. As typical for the so-called “minority literatures”, the preoccupation with otherness and the overthrowing of traditional hierarchies and conventions predominate. This paper therefore attempts to explore both the literary and the historical/biographical dimension in the connection between metamorphosis and exile.

**Key words:** metamorphosis, exile, Kafka, Rushdie, writing, biography, otherness

# **The Dimensions of the Female Self in Doris Lessing's *The Summer Before The Dark* and Margaret Atwood's *Life before Man***

**Lazăr Catrinela- Andreea**

Supervisor: Prof. dr. Monica Bottez

## **THE DIMENSIONS OF THE FEMALE SELF IN DORIS LESSING'S *THE SUMMER BEFORE THE DARK* AND MARGARET ATWOOD'S *LIFE BEFORE MAN***

### **Abstract**

This paper seeks to investigate the female self as a narrative source in connection with wider constructions of femaleness with particular reference to the lifestyle women have chosen, the socialization they have experienced and interpersonal relationships they may establish through their lives. Starting with Paul Ricoeur's ideas that narrative relates with time and self

is a form of <<being aware of existence>>, I shall take into consideration the

constructions of the three dimensions of self – temporal, moral and social, as they were identified by the sociologists Anthony Kerby, Charles Taylor and Anthony Giddens. Constructing the three dimensions of the *self* and exploring the female character's identity crisis, I intend to demonstrate the importance of narrative as a form expressive of individual experience, a way of communication and understanding of the world around us- a confused

one in which we try to be coherent. In order to support my assertions and make my point, I will give examples of how female self (behavioural and

psychological aspects) is mirrored in Doris Lessing's *The Summer before the Dark* and Margaret Atwood's *Life before Man*.

**Key words:** (female) self, dimensions of self, narrative

## **Victims and Victimizers in Carol Shield's *The Stone Diaries* and Alice Munro's *The Love of a Good Woman***

**Cristina Nicolaescu**

Supervisor: Prof. dr. Monica Bottez

### **VICTIMS AND VICTIMIZERS IN CAROL SHIELD'S *THE STONE DIARIES* AND ALICE MUNRO'S *THE LOVE OF A GOOD WOMAN***

#### **Abstract**

This paper seeks to investigate the cases of victimization and victimhood as they appear in *The Stone Diaries* and *The Love of a Good Woman*. I focus on the different types of victims embodied by their male and female characters from a cultural and psychological point of view. Some of the main causes may be associated with inequalities or low self-esteem and lack of the desire to fight. Sometimes it is hard to decide who the victim is and who the victimizer, since all people involved are affected in one way or another by the conflict circumstances. The second reason for writing this paper is to present the ways in which the characters are constructed and react in the analyzed books written by the two renowned Canadian writers. They cover the whole spectrum of human behaviour, whilst the stories/novels are pervaded by the characters' positive and negative attitudes both towards the others and their own life.

**Key words:** victim, victimization, victimhood, gender, identity, intersectional

# **Hyphens and Identity Negotiations: Diasporic Experiences and Private Lives in the Prose of Uma Parameswaran, Anita Rau Badami and Shauna Singh Baldwin**

**Lucia-Mihaela Grosu**

Supervisor: prof.dr Monica Bottez

## **HYPHENS AND IDENTITY NEGOTIATIONS: DIASPORIC EXPERIENCES AND PRIVATE LIVES IN THE PROSE OF UMA PARAMESWARAN, ANITA RAU BADAMI AND SHAUNA SINGH BALDWIN**

### **Abstract**

The present article deals with the much debated issue of hyphenation in the diasporic space. It aims at proving that in the chosen corpus of literary works, one can notice immigrant-characters either shifting their views of intimacy when in contact with the host-country or maintaining an ultra-traditional (often patriarchal) view of marriage and relationships. For the purpose of this study I analyze two novels, Uma Parameswaran's *Mangoes on the Maple Tree* and Anita Rau Badami's *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* and selected short stories from Shauna Singh Baldwin's collections *English Lessons and Other Stories* and *We Are Not in Pakistan*. The literary analysis will follow the methodological guidelines of postcolonial and diasporic critics such as Stuart Hall, Kalra, Kaur, Hutnyk and R. Radhakrishnan.

**Key words:** hyphenation, identity, intimacy.

# **Shapeshifters and Grotesque Bodies: An Ecofeminist Revisioning of the Gothic Family in Joyce Carol Oates's *Bellefleur***

**Raluca Oproiu**

Supervisor: prof. dr. Rodica Mihăilă

## **SHAPESHIFTERS AND GROTESQUE BODIES: AN ECOFEMINIST REVISIONING OF THE GOTHIC FAMILY IN JOYCE CAROL'S *BELLEFLEUR***

### **Abstract**

Construed as a site of domination and submission rather than as a nurturing and shielding environment, the (patriarchal) family arguably represents the fundamental Gothic myth. It is almost always the patriarchal family that finds itself under scrutiny in traditional and recent Gothic fiction, with generations of fathers and sons perpetuating abuses and struggling to impose the Law of the Father on voiceless, defenseless, yet spirited heroines. The aim of this paper is to discuss the way in which Joyce Carol Oates's postmodern Gothic novel *Bellefleur* fundamentally revises the traditional Gothic definition of "family" by weakening the masculine dominion over the household and the world surrounding it. Dealing with the trials and tribulations of a century-old failed American patriarchal family, the novel transfers the emphasis to the generations of mothers and daughters who have traditionally been backgrounded and who emerge as a vigorous, resilient community. I will argue that the metamorphoses and bodily transformations recurrent throughout the novel support a radical, ecofeminist revisioning of the concept of "family" and that the various shapeshifting characters are employed as disruptive forces meant to undermine the linearity and predictability inherent in the Law of the Father, which is under attack in the novel.

**Key words:** gothic, shapeshifters, the grotesque, ecofeminism, magic realism.

# **David Lodge's *Man of Parts* between Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation**

**Elena-Iuliana Bindileu**

Supervisor: Prof. dr. Lidia Vianu

## **DAVID LODGE'S *MAN OF PARTS* BETWEEN NARRATIVE DISCOURSE AND HISTORICAL REPRESENTATION**

### **Abstract**

The present paper is an attempt to assess David Lodge's novel, *A Man of Parts*, in the light of the complex relationship between history and fiction, with an emphasis on the limits and possibilities of the hybrid genre of the biographical novel. Based on factual sources related to the life of H.G. Wells, the novel offers new perspectives on the problem of writing about creativity in a creative manner. Given the postmodern insistence on the constructed nature of all narrative and using the arguments of Hayden White as a reference point, the paper aims to identify the borderline between fictitious and factual elements, as well as the reasons for the popularity of biographical fiction about writers. It also attempts to prove that, besides the epistemological purpose of story-telling, a fictionalized form of historical narrative is – or should be – nonetheless endowed with moral value. In David Lodge's novel there is a seemingly paradoxical blend of homage and resistance, typical of the postmodern stance.

**Key words:** history, fiction, narrative, fictionalized biography/ biofiction

# **The Story-born Corporality in Andrei Codrescu's *whatever gets you through the night***

**Daniela Mihaela Călinescu**

Supervisor: Professor dr. Lidia Vianu

## **THE STORY-BORN CORPORALITY IN ANDREI CODRESCU'S *whatever gets you through the night***

### **Abstract**

My article entitled focuses on the story-telling technique that the writer makes use of in his latest narrative. The “body” is a very important concept that Codrescu works with: the “body” functions as fuel to the narrative text, it be comes, in his narrative, generative of the “story-born corporality”. Sheherezade’s technique serves as inspiration, yet Codrescu chooses to put aside the epistemology of story telling, in favor of its ontology. The writer acknowledges Sheherezade’s reference frame as inescapable, yet he finds that she allows her multiple exegetes to generate particularity through their own storytelling.

**Key words:** storytelling, retelling, ontology of storytelling, corporality, frame

# **Americanization as Modernization: Readings of American Culture in Post-Communist Romanian Print Media**

**Irina David**

Supervisor: prof. dr. Rodica Mihăilă

## **AMERICANIZATION AS MODERNIZATION: READINGS OF AMERICAN CULTURE IN POST-COMMUNIST ROMANIAN PRINT MEDIA**

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this article is to discuss several perceptions of the United States of America and its culture, as they are reflected in post-Communist Romanian print media. Starting from the idea that the encounter between two different cultures is based on negotiation of meaning and significance rather than on direct unmediated influence, my analysis will focus on the relevance of cultural assimilation in the discussion of Americanization. Attention will be paid to ways in which Romanians appropriate aspects of American culture based on their own experience in the post-Communist era.

One of the main aspects of this appropriation is represented by people's hope that the consumption of American products would allow them free access to America itself, becoming a means of modernization.

**Key words:**Americanization, cultural assimilation, modernization.