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Foreword

From gender issues in literature to the role of intertextuality in digital games and to individual and collective identification in political speeches, the articles in this volume analyze various aspects of literary and cultural studies, foreign-language teaching, and linguistics. The volume opens with three articles that look at representations of masculinity, women challenging expected gender roles, and young boys interrogating adults' outlooks on life. Sohaib Malkawi examines the behavioral patterns of the male characters in Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* in order to illustrate how this type of representation anticipates "the postmodern deconstruction of gender identity." Conversely, Ana-Blanca Ciocoi-Pop analyzes the significance of the female characters in Monica Ali's novel *Brick Lane*, highlighting their quests for self-determination, agency and individual identities in terms of their relationships with men, in a multicultural setting. Mădălina Larisa Kimak, in turn, discusses the ways in which Cormac McCarthy's young boys in his novels *Blood Meridian* and *The Road* interrogate the validity, authority, and the limitations of the worldviews represented by the adult male characters.

Combining literature and culture, Estella Ciobanu's article looks at how various facets of the absurd are reflected in cultural and literary contexts, by drawing parallels between fragments from Romanian texts – by Urmuz, Ion Creangă, and I. L. Caragiale, among others – and fragments from Lewis Carroll's work. Anca-Luminița Iancu also focuses on Romanian authors, as she examines the ways in which the complexity of the social and cultural landscape of the United States is reflected in the late twentieth-century travelogues written by Radu Enescu, Ion Dinu, and Viorel Sălăgean.

Furthermore, Diana Melnic and Vlad Melnic look at the ways in which digital games can become sites of intertextuality, by exemplifying how games “reference” other games, and how “they connect with texts from other media and specifically with literary texts.” Ewelina Mierzwa proposes an examination of foreign-language classroom anxiety through the lens of positive psychology, in order to illustrate how anxiety and enjoyment influence or complement one another, and how they impact the learners’ academic achievement in the foreign-language classroom. Finally, Iilina-Mihaela Stănculete employs a comparative approach to demonstrate how the use of the personal pronouns “I” and “we” in the investment speeches of two prime-ministers, of Romania and of the United Kingdom, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, reflects their individual approaches to their governmental responsibilities and duties, as well as to democracy, in general.

The Editors

The Darling Men of Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*: An Early Postmodern Representation of Masculinity

SOHAIB MALKAWI
Independent Scholar

Abstract

This article examines how Sean O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock*, written in 1924, anticipated the postmodern conception of gender, or more accurately, the postmodern deconstruction of gender as merely repetitive patterns of behavior. The focus is on how the play dramatizes the Foucauldian notion of the death of man in the neurotic and irresponsible behavior of the male characters. Taking the psychological vertical approach in the analysis, the article adds to the scholarly work that has been written about the play, which mostly focused on its sociopolitical and religious aspects. The analysis this article sets forth shows how O'Casey's representation (or perhaps mal-representation) of male characters was symptomatic of the cultural upsurge that later came to be known as postmodernism. In so doing, the article makes a curious link between O'Casey's representation of neurotic men and the more recent inception of postmodernism and its deconstruction of gender. This link, in other words, is between neurosis and deconstruction, between psychological disturbances and the much-celebrated postmodern theory that came later. Thus, the article concludes with the peculiar question of how much of postmodern thought was, albeit unconsciously, predicated upon psychological degeneration, especially when it comes to its deconstruction of gender dynamics.

Keywords: Sean O'Casey, *Juno and the Paycock*, psychology, postmodernism, gender, deconstruction, modern drama, Irish drama, masculinity, feminism, gender roles

“She Isn’t Going to Give Up”: Women’s Resilience in
Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* – A Feminist Reading

ANA-BLANCA CIOCOI-POP
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Abstract

While Monica Ali’s novel *Brick Lane* is most often analyzed from the vantage points of postcolonialism as a text dealing primarily with the plight of the Bangladeshi immigrant community in London, it is difficult, if not downright impossible, to overlook the crucial role women and feminine resilience (in the face of not only patriarchy, but also racism, religion and social unrest) play in the novel. In actual fact, the story can much easier be read as the plight of women in their quest for self-determination and identity than as a novel about cultural clashes in the multicultural metropolis. The present essay sets out to prove that feminism is actually at the forefront of Ali’s novel, and that the feminine characters in *Brick Lane* stand for a post-feminist reflection on the (still) gasping abyss between theoretical gender equality and real-life sexism.

Keywords: Monica Ali, *Brick Lane*, feminism, postcolonialism, culture clash, emancipation, immigrants, feminine resilience

“See the Child”: Representations of Childhood in
Blood Meridian and *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy

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Abstract

This essay aims to illustrate the way in which the American writer Cormac McCarthy constructs the role of the children in his novels *Blood Meridian, or the Evening Redness in the West* and *The Road* to challenge the discursive reality elaborated by the two adult protagonists. The premise of this endeavor is that both Judge Holden and the man offer a logocentric vision of the world, which the young characters resist by questioning its validity and exposing its limits. The Post-Structuralist criticism of Jacques Derrida and Friedrich Nietzsche represents the theoretical foundation of the text analysis proposed below.

Keywords: childhood, Cormac McCarthy, Jacques Derrida, logocentrism, Post-Structuralism

Give Us This Day Our Daily Absurd, As We Also Have
Given It to Our Absurd-mongers!
One Look at the Absurd in Romanian Culture

ESTELLA CIOBANU
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Abstract

An unpublished piece of prose in the style of Romanian writer Urmuz has rekindled my interest in absurdist writings and/or absurd cases which, in Romanian culture, are associated with the likes of Urmuz, Caragiale or Ionesco. I will ponder here, with the aid of the aforementioned authors and also by comparing their work with Lewis Carroll's, the absurdist spirit of certain Romanian literary and dramatic pieces, or only of certain scenes therein, to propose a typology of the absurd as distinct from satire (the latter often a companion piece to the former). Mine is an investigation that criss-crosses texts, cultures and ages more than it offers an in-depth analysis by recourse to concepts and theories; asks questions more than it offers answers; plays more than it does sober research; and laughs – lest it should weep.

Keywords: absurd, uncanny (*unheimlich*), Urmuz, Eugène Ionesco, I. L. Caragiale, Ion Creangă, Lewis Carroll, J. L. Borges

Cultural Encounters: Glimpses of the United States in Late Twentieth-Century Romanian Travel Narratives

ANCA-LUMINIȚA IANCU

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Abstract

Travel narratives are complex accounts that include a significant layer of factual information – related to the geography, history, and/or the culture of a particular place or country – and a more personal layer, comprising the author's unique perceptions and rendering of the travel experience. In the last thirty years of transition from a communist to a democratic society, the Romanians have been free to travel to any country they choose; however, during the communist period, especially during the 1980s, travelling to Western, capitalist countries, such as France, Great Britain, Canada, or the United States, was rather limited and fraught with complex issues. Still, Romanian travelers during that time managed to visit the United States, on diplomatic- or business-related exchanges, and published interesting travel stories of their experiences there. Therefore, this essay sets out to capture, from a comparative perspective, the impressions and encounters depicted by Radu Enescu in *Between Two Oceans* (1986), Ion Dinu in *Traveler through America* (1991) and Viorel Sălăgean in *Hello America!* (1992), with a view to analyzing how their descriptions and perceptions of two major urban spaces, New York City and San Francisco, reflect the complexity of the American social and cultural landscape in the late 1970s and mid-1980s.

Keywords: Romanian travel narratives, perceptions of the United States, cultural encounters, American urban spaces, late twentieth century, New York City, San Francisco

‘The Cake is (Not) a Lie:’
Intertextuality as a Form of Play in Digital Games

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Abstract

Since Julia Kristeva’s first use of the term in the late 20th century, intertextuality has given rise to one of the literary theories most frequently applied in the interpretation of texts across different media, from literature to art and film. In what concerns the study of digital games, however, the concept has received little attention, in spite of the fact that the new medium offers a more than fertile ground for its investigation. The aim of the present essay, therefore, is to propose that digital games can be and, indeed, are intertextual in at least two ways. First, we argue, games deliberately refer to other games, which may or may not be a part of the same series. Secondly, they connect with texts from other media and specifically with literary texts. In both cases, the intertextual link can be a sign of tribute, a critical comment, or a means of self-reflection. Ultimately, however, these links are a form of aesthetic play that reveals new similarities between digital games and traditional media for artistic expression.

Keywords: intertextuality, aesthetic play, digital games, game criticism, game philology

Anxiety and Enjoyment in the Foreign Language Classroom

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Abstract

To balance the research that has been carried out on negative emotions, the researchers in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) have recently focused on the role of positive academic emotions and their role in the process of acquiring a foreign language (FL). The aim of the present article is to examine the relationships between foreign language enjoyment (FLE), foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) and students' academic achievement in English in order to prove that these two emotions do not constitute opposite dimensions but may converge and diverge from time to time during the learning process. This article calls for a more dynamic approach to studying emotions and investigating whether and to what extent these two emotions may mutually shape one another and thus affect learners' achievement in the foreign language classroom.

Keywords: foreign language enjoyment, foreign language anxiety, SLA, positive psychology

I vs. *We*. First Person Personal Pronouns in Political Speeches

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Abstract

The present article reports on a case study that focuses, comparatively, on the extent to which Romania's Prime Minister Adrian Năstase and UK's Prime Minister Tony Blair reveal their intentions and thoughts in their investment speeches, by the use of the personal pronouns *I* and *we*. The number of occurrences of each of the two first person pronouns and the way in which they are used will be considered in an analysis that is both quantitative and qualitative. The overall aim of the comparative approach is to highlight how democracy is seen in the cases scrutinized, based on the activation by the speakers of the principle of cooperation in oral communication.

Keywords: cooperative principle, political speeches, oral communication, personal pronouns, power relations