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SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS

**A SEMIOTIC AND AESTHETIC APPROACH TO THE
MEDIATIC DISCOURSE IN MODERNIST FICTION**

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INTRODUCTION

If anything, modernist and postmodernist aesthetics is about signs, sign systems, the nature, the possibilities and limits of signifying practices. Setting out from the premise that “humankind cannot bear very much reality,” (Eliot, n.d.) persuaded by the turn of the twentieth century psychologists – whether of the pragmatist, physicalist, psychoanalytic or intuitionist school – that man lives in his own, perception-dependent, dream of reality “each mind is a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world,” (Pater, 2012) – and, finally, confronted with the disappearance of the concept of matter in light of Max Plank’s quantum mechanics, writers got disenchanted with the positivist aesthetics grounded in reality and history, and completely doubtful of the credibility of the omniscient narrator as a literary device. They looked at the world as twice removed from it, that is, through the mediation of some already encoded representation thereof. From among the intertextual practices one can identify under the two period terms, the language of the media is increasingly present in fictional discourse to the extent that, in the 80s of the last century, Jean Baudrillard attributed this channel of communication an ontological dimension. According to this French philosopher, his contemporaries live in a hyperreality, which is a vicious circle turning between an indistinguishable objective reality and the culture of images that frame the former, stealing into its sphere.

Interested in this major topic of present philosophy and taking note of the massive presence of the mediatic discourse in contemporary literature, we have decided to probe into it so as to be able to cast light on the changing status of the media along the last century.

Semiotics and studies in representation are the main grids through which we are trying to identify the reason for this mix of fiction and non-fiction in an age reputed for its obsessive preoccupation with beautiful form and organic, self-sufficient, and stylistically unified structure.

The research questions to be answered underwrite a theory into practice type of approach.

1. The epistemological / ontological function of mediatic discourse in the literature of late modernity (modernism versus postmodernism).

In 1988 Graham Swift published a novel, *Out of This World*, whose title is ambiguous: it may mean exiting this world or, on the contrary, something derived from reality. The main character is a photographer reporting on warfare for the benefit of media channels. He is fully

aware of the misuse of his material, the distortion of the original report through cuts and exclusion of context.

As we shall see, modernism uses media as a semiotic displacement of the reality from which it feels estranged. As Charles Sanders Peirce had disseminated the idea that we think in signs, straightforward contact with events is replaced with encoded versions, including the media.

2. Charles Sanders Peirce's interpretant versus Roland Barthes's metalanguage

Peirce makes explicit here the passage from "Code Semiotics" to "Interpretation Semiotics" which he enlarges upon in his exchange of letters with Victoria Welby. The binary (Saussure's signifier / signified) relationship between sign and object is complexified by the intervention of an interpretant which accounts for the change of meaning in time and in different contexts. Depending on the relationship of signs to their objects, Peirce distinguishes indexes (based on contiguity: smoke as indexical sign of fire), iconic (based on likeness) and symbols (based convention).

The natural language signified becomes a signifier for the metalanguage of the colonial myth. As Barthes explains, the meaning of the metalanguage is accessible to those who are familiar with the realities of French imperialism. This is not an abyss of interpretants but a formation of discourse sharing in common the encyclopaedic knowledge (or "field of vision", as Swift says) necessary for understanding the meaning of the message.

For Saussure, there is a relation between signifier and signified, and also between one sign and all the others. Reality is put into brackets, or displaced by a system of signs.

As we have seen, in Swift's novel, the signifier is displaced from the signified, becoming simulacra. A victim of war becomes emblem of military triumph, simply by manipulation of the camera.

In this way, the relationship between sign and referent, replaced by Saussure with one inside language, between signifier and signified, of a conventional nature, is replaced by the thirdness of representation (object as represented).

3. The distinct function of the media intertext in modernism in comparison with the postmodern hypertext

Homer's *Odyssey*, the anterior text, is the hypotext of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which is modified to suit a modern world of trade, media, and advertisements. Heroic Ulysses becomes the foil of another traveller, this time, through Dublin and cast into a tradesman's mould which draws him closer to trader and voyager Sinbad. The two frames of reference remain distinct,

with the ancient precedent serving as ironic mirror of what T S Eliot, in his essay, “*Ulysses, Order, and Myth*,” calls the contemporary “panorama of futility and anarchy.”

The postmodernist hypertext benefits from the technology of the digital era, which allows of an indefinite number of links to other texts from all disciplinary fields, the result being a cultural artefact of an encyclopedic character. As Graham Allen says in his book on *Intertextuality*, “hypertexts can consist of one ‘text’ divided into lexias with connecting links, or can consist of a text with a range of other texts embedded within it, access to which is made by links activated by the reader on the screen.” (Allen, 2000, p. 200)

Postmodernist hypertextuality is not limited to interactive books. *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, by John Fowles, is a novel which “browses” a great number of texts of the Victorian age – from medicine, philosophy, biology, literature – the reader being also allowed to operate any link to the three available endings.

As everything connects with everything else in a postmodern hypertext, genre no longer counts. On the contrary, the modernist appeal to the media as a distinct genre served several implied aims: to attack on the consumerist society whose voice came in the way of advertising (see Bloom’s obsession with topics for his advertisements which included planting clocks in graves), a modality of approaching reality through precoded language, an example of low style symptomatic of mass culture contrasting with the aesthetic refinement of high art (see Eliade’s or Wolfe’s doubling of the narrative thread as reportage on facts and as fictional construction). It is only in modernism that media language is used as a literary device.

4. Case studies: the media in canonical modernist fiction

By reading a number of modernist novels, we have come to the conclusion that the authors’ perception of meaning in the media corresponded to Peirce’s semiotic models. The subdivisions of the hypoicon, for instance, allowed for distinct types of fictional encoding. On the one hand, the icons borrowing from the media could invite an impression of likeness to real objects. On the contrary, other icons could be of a metaphorical type. We come upon fiction written both in a journalistic style and in an imaginary, tropical style. Such is Thomas Wolfe’s short story, *The Return of the Prodigal* (1943), or Mircea Eliade’s novel, *Maitreyi / Bengal Nights* (1933).

In the opening of the novel, *Maitreyi*, a Bengali girl still in her teens, is the object of two narratives. The narrator, Allan, goes to her home accompanied by a French journalist, Lucien, who wants to publish an article about his Indian experience upon his return to Paris. Lucien’s attention is directed exclusively to the exotica of an Indian home: the girl’s attire, the food on the table etc.

CHAPTER 1.

A sense of reality: the realistic function of the mediatic discourse in comparison to the mediating role of the omniscient narrator

Alex Goody, Reader in Twentieth Century Literature at Oxford Brookes University, is probing into a theory widely spread, but, in her opinion fallible, that the alliance of literature and technology can only be identified in postmodernism, while modernists were totally adverse to the intrusion of technology into the realm of the arts. While it is true that Adorno and Horkheimer (*Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, 1944) expressed in an unambiguous way their perception of consumerism, mass culture, technology and the media as something threatening, Martin Heidegger, in his 1938 lecture, "The Age of the World Picture", published in *Holzwege* (1950), identified the progress of technology even into the academia, with the method-bound researcher replacing the erudite scholar. Alex Goody brings up persuasive arguments in support of the substantial impact also on the earliest movements of the twentieth century. She quotes Jonathon Crary who endorses the same view: "modernism, rather than being a reaction against or transcendence of processes of scientific and economic rationalization, is inseparable from them". (1990: 85).

Modernism combined a sense of fragmentariness of human lives with a desire to present totalizing pictures of their age. Eliot's "panorama of futility" ("*Ulysses*, Order and Myth") is a polyphonic panorama nevertheless. It was the media that seemed to record history in a piecemeal fashion – covering all the events of the world in a single day, without any apparent connection among them. Dos Passos's characters evolve independently, as if their lives were put down in a newspaper's latest news. In this way, individual lives add up to a national epic. It was, however, a disjointed one, which, for the first time, revealed the chaotic progress of history. Traditional narratives had always provided some overall frame, projected by the writer's perspective, within which history seemed to have a why and a wherefore and even a teleological design, whereas now the reflection of history in the cacophony of public discourses resembled the fragmented images of a broken mirror.

Whether a reading of Dos Passos from the perspective of mediatic discourse is more adequate than the tools of more traditional narratology is a question that can be answered through experiment. As strange as it may seem, the experiment has already been done, with disastrous effects. "Without the multimedia, *U.S.A.* isn't a multimedia masterpiece", remarks Fredrik Tydal, Vice President of the John Dos Passos Society in the United States.

The juxtapositional structure of the novels, in the case of Dos Passos, does not regard subjective points of view though, but discourses. For instance, in the opening of *The 42nd*

Parallel, the cinematic species – newsreel, actually consists of headlines and cuts from the media interspersed with a popular song about the victory of the American military – the “emancipated race” – in the war against the Philippine insurrectionists who had rebelled on hearing that they had exchanged Spanish with American colonialism.

Narrative theory of the last two or three decades has become interdisciplinary, Dos Passos being now analysed in the light of new technologies, such as netting, hypertextuality, digital media. Using the author’s own description of his narrative method as a “four-way conveyor system”, Wesley Beal defines the Dos Passos method “network narration”.

The trilogy *U.S.A.*, *The 42nd Parallel* (1930); *1919* (1932); and *The Big Money* (1936) is experimental by its use of four narrative techniques: narratives wherein twelve fictional characters are discontinuously biographed, biographies of public figures of the epoch, newspaper clippings and songs assembled into “Newsreels” and semi-autobiographical stream of consciousness, fragments entitled “Camera Eyes”, the author’s state of mind being conveyed to the reader by leaving for the former the position of mediator between the subjunctive and objective modes in the trilogy. This experimental composition, vastly influenced by the filming techniques of the era, is a glossary of the medial possibilities of the time. The *voices* of the many part, much like in his previous novels, a much grimmer reality of industrialized America, than the one served to us by the media.

The 51 Camera Eyes are intended, according to the author, to isolate the subjectivity of the author from the other parts of the book. Goods were mass produced using moving assembly lines, which Dos Passos replicated in his “four-way conveyor system”. The laissez-faire policy had led to overproduction, which, followed by surplus – another key concept in the trilogy, would prove one of the major factors which fused the Great Depression. Overproduction and overpriced shares triggered the stock market crash in October 1929, when, over the course of two days, around \$30 billion was lost, which was more than WWI had cost the USA. It is in this context of surplus prevention, which in Dos Passos’s case meant that his own experiences had to be prevented from mixing with what was intended to be an objective overview, that the Camera Eyes were created. Once ensuring that subjectivity has been taken “out of circulation”, the safety valve would only deploy again when the narrator needed to let off a little steam. In other chapters, we shall examine the role played by Camil Petrescu’s fear of overappraisal – a key factor behind the economic crisis in Romania – in his dismissal of the narrator’s presence to the subtext.

The courage to obstinately avoid punctuation in Camera Eyes results in a speeding of the scenes while adding to their fluency, but first and foremost they are written in the shape of

their re-emergence, in an effort which postpones pauses in favour of truthfulness to spontaneous, tidal impulses. Stops, commas, semi-colons, capital letters are renounced in a bid to translate the memory into signs more accurately, and if we were to consider the human brain medium which records, as if on film, As the novel evolves, so does the style of the narrator, punctuation is gradually renounced and where there are no other marks to use after this ballast dumping, capitalization is discarded, as well.

It is a train trip from the previous narrative piece that triggers the memory in the second Camera Eye, the passengers in the same rush to arrive on time, “and the conductor all aboard lady quick lady”. This unconventional reported speech, wherein no verb is found, aims to preserve the more accurate atmosphere of the account. By skipping a reporting verb, such as told her/us, advised, shouted, directed, etc, the narrator speeds up the events, while maintaining the integrity of the information. Everything is intended to flow seamlessly, as if inside a dream. The compound instruction ”all aboard” melts into a phonaesthetic to substitute the onomatopoeia of the conductor’s whistle. The sentence is fully intelligible, no commas required, no full stopping the involuntary memory.

Camera Eye 20 is of capital importance, holding evidence which influenced Dos Passos’s syntax in all of the other 50 such interludes in the trilogy. Three arrests were made following the 1912 Lawrence Strike, of the textile workers, which led to social supportive street movements, as the immigrant labourers, who manned the textile mills, were joined the International Workers of the World.

Two Harvard students, Merle DeWitt Britten and Arthur William Wilson responded to the call, but the first was fatally injured by the streetcar in an accident.

Along with Dos Passos and E. E. Cummings, Arthur Wilson was a member of the *Harvard Monthly* board of editors. He would become an established painter who signed his works as Pico Miran. A close friend and later a roommate of E.E. Cummings, the latter would dedicate to him one of the *Three Portraits* (I. Pianist, II Caritas, III Arthur Wilson) published in 1922 in the “Broom: An International Magazine of Arts. (Catherine, 2017)

Similitudes to Dos Passos’s syntax, orthography and spatial arrangement of the Camera Eyes are obvious even at a first glance. Cummings only capitalizes his own name and that of his friend and the word “Earliest”. Read as such, the poem would translate into an indissoluble friendship. Stops are replaced by spaces, in a visual reproduction of the pause, allowing more time to digest the lyrics. Commas are seldom used, but not totally renounced, in an unconventional fashion. Cummings makes use of compound words such as ”woolworthian” or

”hibernative”. The poem is characteristic to Cummings’ experimental writing, which bears a major influence on Dos Passos’s Camera Eyes.

The Camera Eye is suggestively juxtaposed over President Wilson’s – “MEESTER VILSON” biography, notably a firm believer in God and the holder of “a correct syntax”, signing the armistice (deal), “dealing the cards” of global policy with “five million troops [who] stood on attention”.

The narrator’s reactions in general are confined to the Camera Eyes, which respond with personal memories to the fictional biographies in the narratives. To the reader, they may have little or nothing at all to do with these narratives, as often the trigger for the stream of consciousness lies beyond our reach. At times, this archaeology into the mind of the author is hampered by the author himself, whose arbitrariness is evident beyond the apparent randomization these episodes. (Maine, 2005, p. 140)

CHAPTER 2.

Positive Assessment of the Mediatic Discourse and Hybridization of Literary Discourse

Before the theoretical bloom of the late twentieth century, which saw the rise of cultural studies, media studies and discourse analysis, modernist literature used to be read and canonized from a formalist perspective which laid an emphasis upon the artist’s commitment to aestheticism, the cult of art replacing the realist school’s focus on society, history and politics. Recent revaluations of the literature published in the earlier half of the twentieth century have brought to public attention the political relevance of texts which had previously served as illustration of the aesthetic Bible of modernism, such as *Finnegans Wake*, *Ulysses*, *The Waste Land*, or *Mrs Dalloway*.

Another line of argument concerns the characteristic discourse of modernism, which had traditionally focused on the construction of aesthetic form (for instance, Philip Weinstein; Betty Alldredge, "*Spatial Form in Faulkner's 'As I Lay Dying'*", or Joseph Frank, "*Spatial Form in Modern Literature*", the latter supported by Stephen Spender) and on tropes, such as a penchant for **metaphoric** versus metonymic structure, with incremental / recurring metaphors, which characterizes the technique of imagism (Pound, Yeats), **objective correlatives** (T S Eliot defines this trope in his essay on “Hamlet and His Problems”, 1919), epiphany (Joyce, *Stephen Hero*) or **moments of being** (Virginia Woolf, *Moments of Being*).

Recent approaches have drifted away from these formalist concerns choosing to study the language of literary works from the point of view of discourse (institutional relevance,

relation of text to real life scenarios) or genre (language within social contexts and from a functional perspective).

2.1. Cultural-Materialist Revisions of Modernism

Walter L. Adamson sees modernism and avant-garde as “two sides of the same coin”, and identifies modernists with pioneers of the “cultural renewal” movements fevering Europe between 1905 and 1925. Modernism’s primary use still determining an “aesthetic” or “cultural” movement, is regarded as allowing that “a political theory might be attached”.

The heated controversy over modernism’s implication in politics is, in our opinion, motivated, on the one hand, by the difficulty of modernist form which acts like a filter for the understanding of modernist art’s agenda; on the other hand, as there are at least two radically distinct modernist poetics, that of high modernism which capitalized on the cultural heritage of the West in an attempt to bridge tradition and innovation, while the vanguard movement evolved from a total rejection of cultural affiliations; there were also political oppositions, not only between modernism and the vanguard, but also inside each of them.

Whereas Woolf, Forster and Joyce expose the bourgeois class and imperialism (*Mrs Dalloway*, *Ulysses*, and, especially, *Finnegans Wake*), D. H Lawrence legitimizes force and revolution.

And yet those who deny modernist implication in society and history are not altogether mistaken about the assumed, stated ideological agenda of the period. The difference, as Paul Peppis has intuited, lies in the kind of contextualization which modernists are open to. They criticize the liberal model which had been the political framing of the realist school, and they certainly showed little interest in the reality of everyday life or the grand narrative of history which had been the main concern of the long nineteenth-century, but they did not opt for solipsism either. Their preferable context is cultural. Somehow they transcend the immediate social environment trying to interpret the cultural codes generated by economic and political facts. Peppis explores the networking of humans facing dilemmas of cultural cross-dressing, identity related to dialects rather than standard language, resistance to canonized modes of behaviour, the self-assertiveness of unorthodox sexuality, the attempt to cope with trauma in a world devastated by a world conflagration and the show of unprecedented violence and mass destruction. A C Haddon, Claude McCay, Havelock Ellis, John A Symonds, Mina Loy, Rebecca West or E M Forster are shown to have sought for answers in their fictional universes.

As the city is the stage for modernism, art also needs repositioning, in order to remain vendible. The modernist fiction saw written translation, or “assimilation”, as Fairclough calls it (Fairclough, 2003, p. 35), of various generic forms, the outcome being complex hybrids. Novels rendered information from various media, such as articles, radio hits, advertising posters, brochures, flyers, newspaper headlines, films, all of which opening channels for *propaganda*, which, until the second half of the 20th century was associated with the art of convincing rather than deceiving.

2.2. The Bloom World of Advertising

The language of advertisements imparted on all persons and things a market value. One could not read the poster in Fig. 1 without feeling that the bidding, the offer of arrangements for boarding had completely emptied of significance what used to be the supreme civic virtue: the readiness to give one’s all for one’s homeland and for the king impersonating it. It is only in the context of these posters that the quote from *Ulysses* acquires a parodic meaning.

Joyce’s parody of imperial figures (Napoleon and Wellington) in the quoted paragraph from *Finnegans Wake* takes the form of a string of portmanteau words: they belong to no spoken language, being the fruit of chance associations. This broken language imitates an empire in dissolution, with the centre giving way to an incongruent mass of parts torn loose. The lions in the blazon of the Empire are emblems of supremacy, of an absolute power which is now in a position to beg for help (*The Empire Needs Men*).

Dos Passos’s fascination with recreating the environment of the moving pictures in a written medium led him to study the work of Russian director and theorist Sergei Eisenstein, the montage pioneer and Eisenstein, himself employed as a “canvasser”, would inflict a heavy influence on the structure of the *U.S.A.* trilogy. Eisenstein, who briefly worked for the Red Army to aid in the propaganda machinery by designing posters, would be haunted by the aftermath images of the Dvinsk corpse scattered battleground. (Goodwin, 1993)

Recruitment posters gain interest across the Pond, once the USA join the Great War, in Dos Passos’s *U.S.A.*, as Joe Williams, the globetrotting sailor, freshly disembarked, roves around the New York downtown in search of a drink, his idea of time being Woodrow Wilson’s having just invoked democracy to declare war against Germany.

The two very different antiheroes, Leopold Bloom and Joe Williams sailor, shared, at least transitorily the same ideal, since Bloom’s appetite for meat casually drives him to read the commercial on its wrapping, advertising shares in an agricultural company overseas.

A product of the industrial revolution, shaped by the technological advancements thereof, the advertisement poster is essentially a blown-up classifieds entry which rapidly changed the scenery in European metropolises, opening them for added commercial value to spaces whose primary function creates opportunity for advertising. The success of such selling techniques has involved blending in an imaginative message with eye-catching graphics, placing both the educated and illiterate on equal footing. As advertisers cared little for the refinement of their audience, as far as their selling strategies were successful, they soon employed established artists to design posters. This led to an abrupt surge in the popularity of the medium, posters becoming themselves a solvable product, as noted by Elizabeth Guffey.

William Wrigley Jr, a former travelling salesman with some 30 dollars in his name started his own company, quickly shifting from selling soap, to baking powder and finally chewing gum, sales quickly expanding the operations into the multi-million range. Not only did the company change the American economic landscape, but it also changed the face of cities, asphalt and rail roads across the country, above and underground. As early as the 1920s automatic vending machines covered the New York City subway stations, as the company had been sold the rights to 10,000 of them. (Smith, 2006, p. 288)

By 1926, there was a vending machine for every 100 people in America. These machines generated a million dollars per day. At that time, the largest single operator was William Wrigley, who installed 10,000 slot machines in the New York City subway system. (Prescott, 1924, p. 4)

The company's owners would not refrain from enlisting the gum as "good for the troops" during WWII. In 1920 Wrigley ran a nation-wide campaign boasting the newly installed electric billboard in Times Square, lauded fittingly.

Dos Passos could not have ignored Wrigley in his writing, since it epitomized the American dream of prosperity and overnight growth. But it was also a sign of dehumanization (automation), as all individuality is lost in the script acted to perfection by the background performers. Ellen's Fifth Avenue bus ride "smelled of spearmint and talcum powder, and perfume from the couples that juggle closer and closer together on the seats of the bus". (Dos Passos, *Manhattan Transfer*, 1987, p. 130)

For the larger part, unmanned machines control the production, packaging and retail processes, creating a semi-autonomous entity, whose electric billboard featuring grinning spearmen has just eliminated one more human link in the chain: the billsticker.

CHAPTER 3.

Queen of Ointments: The Language of Advertising in James Joyce

The standardized femininity imposed by media and advertisement is ubiquitous and all too familiar to us. Nevertheless, over the past hundred or so years, the industry has changed some of its practices, while maintaining others. In a recent article (Emeksiz, 2021), Gulcin Ipek Emeksiz explores the cosmetic advertisements in *Women's Health* magazine and manages to identify a wide array of methods in its pages used to convince women to buy certain products. According to her, advertising agencies will often rely on inducing to their prospective consumers an idealized version of society. In parallel, readers are led to believe that a perfect version of womanhood is available to them by simply going along with the counselling provided in the pages. White-collar women who reside in urban environments are more prone to fall for the role models who typically showcase similar features. They are attractive and slim, they are particularly preoccupied with their health and physical shape, wear expensive items, thereby inviting their onlookers to do the same so as to fit into the “white beauty ideal”.

Gerty is portrayed in the simple, vulnerable roles, traditionally allotted to women. One by one, she turns into a deserted lover, a babysitter, a maid, a cook, an unobtrusive, forgiving and submissive lover, available at will, all of which are in line with the traditionally convenient image of women, designed by advertising agents.

When Gerty reads, the stories that capture her are textbook examples of benevolent sexism, which promote the image of a vulnerable woman, whose role is to gain the attention and through that, the protection of a male, fitting into an advertisement cliché still in use today. Similarly to the heroines of the penny dreadfuls that feed her spirit, Gerty herself fits the profile of a modern *damsel in distress*, awaiting her salvation not from *Prince Charming*, but from a man older than her, making her conveniently available for someone around Bloom's age.

Bloom can also be regarded as someone to cater for the financial expenses associated with being a fashion victim, as keeping up with the latest trends is anything but budget-friendly. In what became a tradition throughout the 20th century, women were underrepresented in advertising in report to their real social contribution. Women were showcased as housewives, housekeepers, mothers and generally fulfilling other domestic roles, whereas men were more likely to play the role of career-oriented, more successful individuals. Gerty, too, fails to imagine anything beyond becoming a wife.

The first half of *Nausicaa* offers us only a limited glimpse into Gerty's physiognomy, which lies rather hidden behind a montage of lotion bottles and cream containers. The individuality in Gerty has been replaced by the consumer. Perhaps her only personal

contribution lies in the choice of the brands that serve to her similar products, in an illusory freedom of choice, similarly to car drivers who can opt for a particular colour in Barthes' *Mythologies*. These consumer choices could also provide a lot of insight on the shopper's (Greenfield, 2019) – here, Gerty's complexes.

By allowing her to choose from a range of products, Gerty is provided with a false sense of freedom, hence her appropriation of the media jingles which she uses to describe herself.

We know from Gerty herself that she has only come to terms with her “eyebrowline”, once she took the advice of Madam Vera Verity, an alias Joyce uses for one of the authors behind the *Princess's Novelettes*. In short, the strategy relies on first creating a problem and then providing a solution which had been devised beforehand, at a certain cost to the consumer. Harald Beck identifies the cosmetic as *Eyebrowlin*. It is a trademark which agglutinates eyebrow and line and then contaminates the term by dropping the final e to make the end result sound like true medication, such as *quinine* or *aspirin*. This strategy, of compiling two vulgar words into a name with a pseudoscientific resonance has become prevalent in advertising dietary supplements. This is also visible in the so-called “cosmeceutical” industry, where the cosmetics are advertised as medically-supported products.

Gerty represents the common female reader of the era. Her eyebrows are not only shaped according to Vera Verity's advice, as seen in *Princess's Novelettes*, but her looks and clothes are described in the idiom of fashion magazines. The subtle dissatisfaction with their language is reduced to clichés, superlatives and comparisons that invite the superlative. Piece by piece, the reader puts together a Gerty by empty slogans, as she recites them. Her obsession for perfection becomes exhausting, as it lacks a personal touch. Gerty is unable to comb her hair, to contour her lips or to choose her clothes without her literature of choice. Her absence in any of these decisions fails to concern her, so she gladly reproduces the short outburst chants, specific to media channels. Having received her much sought confirmation by the media, Gerty then undertakes its discourse as her own, becoming its disciple and awaiting her reward.

From the ad, we note that a beautiful skin had to be soft, smooth and white. It was only in the late thirties that sun tan became popular. In the Victorian era a tanned skin was the trademark of an outdoor labourer, thus Gerty would have certainly used the cosmetic before adopting a suggestive posture on the beach. After all, “the most Irish blue eyes” can only stand out against a perfectly white Irish skin – and the skin tone in advertising was whitening at the time (Greenfield, 2019). We should also consider the derogatory “queen of ointments” title awarded to Gerty in relation with Bloom's self-erotic act and the discomfort he experiences thereafter.

Dos Passos chooses the funeral of the American unknown soldier as a fitting end for *1919*, the second book of his trilogy. (Keneth, 2021, pp. 139-140) The scene is a manifest against war, racism, hypocrisy, and class cleavage. The decomposed body of a military John Doe, who, to be sure was carefully selected to be neither a “guinea”, nor a “kike”, offensive WWI monikers for Italians and Jews, is adorned, among other distinctions, by “the *Virtutea Militara* sent by Queen Marie of Romania”. (Dos Passos, U.S.A., 1937, p. 473)

The sequenced posters of 1922 and 1923 boasted features which were quite advanced for the advertising techniques of the time. Celebrity endorsement had already proved itself as an established approach, nevertheless the *Houbigant* posters are an early example of advertisement campaigns endorsed by such high-calibre celebrities. Though slightly different from year to year, the essential message was the same: the European aristocracy wears our fine French products. A different photograph of Queen Marie featured in each poster and there was a different testimonial from year to year, yet the poster was arranged in similar proportions – photo in the upper half, text and branding in the lower, and, to further enhance the recognisability of the brand, the font’s style and size were maintained throughout the campaign.

Mon Boudoir stayed on the market from 1918 to 1938 and soon after it was launched it came to define the entire state policy of interwar Romania, in exterior politics, where Queen Marie’s presence at the Peace Conference in Paris proved providential for Romania and domestically, where, in Chapter 5 we shall look at how the intricate circle of power around the Hohenzollers was reflected in Camil Petrescu’s novels. In 1924, Her Majesty starts an advertising agreement with *Pond’s*, mainly targeted at the American buyers. Her employment came at a time when the company’s sales were dropping, indicating it was high time for a change of strategy. Where *Pond’s* was acknowledged as largely affordable, it was now at risk of losing the bulk of the market. The company thus turned to “crowned heads”, in order to boost their image. The print that featured Queen Marie quickly became the most popular ad run by the company.

In *The Last Night of Love, the First Night of War*, Queen Marie’s *Quelques Fleurs* was also Ela’s fragrance of choice. Ștefan is both seduced and alerted by the unmistakable essence when he crosses paths with his now divorcing wife in a store.

Ela fits right into this pattern of beauty. She is fair-haired, has blue eyes, Ștefan declares her one of the most beautiful students in their university. She is pleasant and unique, we are told that her classmates appreciate her presence and that she uplifts the spirits of the people around her.

We note how the condition of the urban woman changes in Petrescu's interwar novels, though published within only three years from one another. Camil Petrescu manages to maintain the social realities of the era in each novel – WWI in *The First Night...* and interwar in *Procrustes's Bed*. A bourgeois promoted to gentry by her husband's unexpected inheritance, Ela now uses expensive creams and royal perfumes. Around a decade later, Emilia, in a fishwife argument she makes against her cousin in order to justify her refusal to pay for the dresses she ordered, lets us in on some interesting details. Among others, she threatens 'to give her cousin a *Perm*', which later became quite a socially widespread triviality.

In Sebastian's *For Two Thousand Years*, Marin Dronțu, the student's humorous companion to the oil fields near Ploiești is described as a ladies' man and an unrefined pragmatic – he has just enough studies to be given the job and he is a much keener outdoorsy worker than he is an office staff, he is also a city peasant, a sort of blue-collared planner, whose deliberate bad grammar and rough language probe his commitment for his rural origins. We are told he treats his mistresses with American peanuts during their outings at the cinemas, whereas on special occasions he gifts "jars" of *Flora* hand moisturiser and red carnations.

Ioana Pârvulescu identifies actress Leny Caler as the model for both Emilia and Madam T. Leny is a genuine diva in Bucharest's highlife circles. The prototype is developed in Sebastian's *The Accident*, where Paul asks Ann, a charming white skinned, blonde, short girl, with a messy hairdo to show him what a *femme fatale* looks like. In Sebastian's *Journal* we see Leny Caler attending dinner parties with Aristide Blank – holder of *Adevărul* and *Dimineața*, son of the president of Marmorosch Bank and after his father's death, the major shareholder in the bank.

As an actress, Leny is dedicated parts, or entire plays by the most prominent literary men of the 1930s. Her beauty is revered in poems and men confess their love for her more or less openly. In her childhood she had long periods of absence from home, helping either the army or in some hospital – is she a model for Ela, as well?

In the industrialized urbanity, the individual is constantly on the verge. Mihail Sebastian's Paul ponders casually on whether he should pick up a taxi or put a bullet through his head. Where Ladima settles to perpetually wait a hopeless return of Emilia, Sebastian's Paul finds himself in a similar situation when he sees Ann's small, blue car parked outside a stranger's house. What arouses his suspicions is an opened pack of *Chesterfields* on the dashboard.

CHAPTER 4.

The War through the Lens of the Media

When another of Camil Petrescu's heroes, Ștefan, leaves Câmpulung after his last night of love, heading for the mountains to be reunited with his company, just in time to take part in the 1916 offensive to reclaim Transylvania, in one of the last views over the peaceful mountain town he spots a couple of rooftop billboards. One advertisement reads *Pneu Michelin*, the other *Vermouth Cinzano*.

Just three years before Romania's entry into the War, alongside the Allies, in Paris Cinzano had become the first brand to advertise on a neon sign. But in this pristine mountain town, where women still wear Romanian blouses and handcrafted moccasins, who ride horses on wooden saddles coated in sheepskin along the streamside paths, the placard seems like a brutal intrusion of market economy in the traditional society.

Days before the war, a general inspects Ștefan's battalion and a regular banquet is thrown. Two soldiers are sent for drinks, as the general is particular in his tastes – we are told he only drinks “Mumm Very Dry”. In the epoch, this champagne bottle was on the tables of official receptions on such a regular basis, that we might intuit that some form of an endorsement agreement was in place at some point. We find it advertised by its proper name – *Mumm Extra Dry*, along with several side products in the pages of *Mișcarea* – A National-Liberal Newspaper.

In the epoch *Adevărul* was running a section by the title Romania's guests – the banquets held yesterday. Alongside the list of celebrities it was customary that the paper publish the menu served for the occasion. Both the guest list and the menu changed regularly, yet the champagne producer stayed the same. Simultaneously, under the heading “From the Champaign Drinking World...”, the daily newspaper *Universul* was publishing a list of the recent events which featured *Mumm*.

At war, propaganda is an arm in itself. Where Dos Passos's three soldiers are angered by faked newsreels and emotional testimonials to the point that they want to rape the women of the Huns, Hemingway exposes *The War Bulletin* as a similar piece of agitprop and Petrescu brings his own frontline readings. Ștefan reads “New Lessons Learned from the Western Front”, “The Artillery's Role In The Present-Day War”, and “The Notes of a German Army Captain”, propagandistic booklets which nevertheless, as Ștefan thinks, overestimate the intelligence of the army leaders. Of course, Ștefan has no prior wartime experience, so a theoretical leaflet on war tactics must seem to his eyes a reasonable battle analysis. Ștefan's war-catalysed maturity is observable through the change in his readings. Where at first, he takes

a crash course in warfare through the propagandistic publications available for the new recruits, the horror of the battlefield would send him to first-hand wartime accounts in foreign novels.

There is a stark contrast between the success of the Romanian campaign in Transylvania, witnessed by second Lt. Ștefan Gheorghidiu and the heavy losses affecting the Romanians after the first offensive of the Central Powers to capture the fortress city of Turtucaia. It was here that Romania was first confronted with the mass destruction of WWI.

This first major defeat, corroborated with the defeat from the Argeș-Neajlov meant that the capital had to be moved to Iași and, along with it, as we have seen, so was the national treasure (along with the jewellery pawned by Ela's aunt at *the Piety Mountain*), lost to this day. The defeat was magnified in the collective mind of the Romanian people, but it also opened the way for the "many victories in the papers" during the 1917 campaign, which Hemingway's Tenente reads about.

Following his injury by a mortar shell, on the hospital bed, Lieutenant Frederic Henry is informed by Rinaldi that he is being considered for a war medal. The heroic events were published, to Rinaldi's enchantment, in "the bulletin". Rinaldi's formula is vague enough to match a number of publications of the era.

The *Official Bulletin* was one of the many tools initiated by the Committee on Public Information (CPI), an organisation born to co-ordinate by means of media, so as to influence the public opinion. It functioned solely during WWI and, as a consequence of its reputation decline among the American public following the end of the war, it was ultimately cancelled.

For the American propagandistic machine, the wounded showed little importance, unless they could be used themselves to propagate the heroic image of the soldier. As a rule, in lack of major news, any petty event could represent first-page material for the *Official Bulletin*. The editions of 9 and 10 July, 1918, the days surrounding Hemingway's injury by a mortar shell on the Italian front, his name does not appear among the Americans soldiers wounded, nor does the paper include a section for the names of injured Red Cross volunteers. The cover is held by articles around the capping of cotton prices, war stamps, stocks and the abolishment of the War Council. The paper also grants extensive coverage for the Fourth of July detailed events and congratulations sent in by various leaders around the globe, as well as adverts for small-pox and typhoid fever vaccines.

Again, Hemingway applies changes meant merely to conveniently stray the text from an autobiography per se. In the summer of 1918, Hemingway was treated for his right leg injuries in the Hospital of the American Red Cross. Nevertheless, his romance with Agnes von Kurowski, whom he met while being treated as the first patient on the hospital bed in Milan, in

what we now know was quite a luxurious establishment, served as the inspiration for Henry's Catherine Barkley, aside from all the details that must have seemed unfit for the resume of a wartime hero. Furthermore, Hemingway's healing evolved similarly to those of Lieutenant Henry. First operated, then moving in crutches and then aided by a cane. There are, nevertheless, substantial similarities between Hemingway's summer of 1918 and Lieutenant Henry's that of 1917, as depicted in Chapters 19-21. As in Dos Passos' *U.S.A.* trilogy, the real-life press titles provide a time frame for fiction. Hemingway however is more withheld when it comes to actual days. We are able to retrace Henry's one-year backshift from Hemingway's experience from the press he reads.

In Chapter 21 of *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway constructs Henry's homeliness around letters from his loved ones, a three-week discharge note from service and the *Corriere della Sera*, a paper which Henry seems to hold at high regard. The daily published an article, praising the contribution of the volunteers on the Italian front. (Florczyk, 2002, p. 242) As Henry changes décor through this episode, the presence of newspapers remains the only constant. He leaves the late September issue of the *Corriere della Sera* on the table, moving to his room where he reads Boston papers, which herald Chicago White Sox's win of the American League pennant in baseball and the dominance of the New York Giants of the National League.

Where they are allowed to interfere with the narration, brand names act as mechanical death machines, sent by the government to sniff out and obliterate any revolutionary forces. In the austere environment of the camp, where life is returned to its basic functions, there is no room for luxurious drinks and brand cigarettes. The band of guerrillas take refuge in a cave, use animal skins to keep wine, heat and cook using firewood. The tranquillity of this re-enacted tribal environment is disturbed by the specific hums of *Heinkel*, *Junkers* and *Fiat* bombers. *The Sun Also Rises* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* stand witness to the creation of two distinct Spains. To this contrasting depiction, advertisement plays a significant role. While the first one abounds in fine liquors, cigarettes, designer clothes, expensive hotels, tabloids and billboards; the second Spain, roughly a decade later, has been stripped by all of these commodities. Through the cataclysm of war everything has returned to an elementary status.

This self-interrogation on the morality of war, which defines not just the intellectual prototype, but are the reflections of all reasonable minds when faced with the absurdity of the battlefield, splinters Robert Jordan's credibility as a revolutionary, adding instead verisimilitude to him as a human being, capable of independent reason.

CHAPTER 5.

The Media that Kills: a Journalist Sinks under Mediatic Onslaught

Romanian interwar writer Camil Petrescu, himself a journalist, lends his journalistic perspective not just to George Ladima, a character in *Procrustes` s Bed*, but to the whole of the book, turned into a personal investigation of Fred Vasilescu following Ladima`s suicide note. Ladima follows in Ștefan Gheorghidiu`s footsteps, in that he falls into the gallery of misfits prepared by Petrescu for his male avatars. The character is more complex, in that while Ștefan is “erotically crippled”, as George Călinescu defines him, in Ladima`s case, the same deficiency originates in his professional inadequacy. He is, admittedly not for long, but definably so, an investigation journalist reimbursed with the dirty money which he comes to investigate. His writing skills are certainly sought after – we are told he extends the readership of the paper beyond the expectations of its owners – thus he could make a decent living as a man of letters, but his goods morals prevent him from it. The printing press requires capital in order to turn and Ladima is shown as unwilling to compromise.

Gheorghidiu is in the ammunitions business both in *The Last Night...* and in *Procrustes` s Bed*. Ștefan, the narrator from the former novel, finds out that Naé Gheorghidiu and the Candlemaker run quite a lucrative business together, producing ammunition, which they then sell for overpriced sums to the Romanian army. If Dos Passos`s economics were centred around the concept of overproduction, acquisitions and appraisals are key in Camil Petrescu`s own hybridity of literature and journalism. Naé Gheorghidiu lays his hands on an underprized brass factory in Galați, following a staged auction. What happens from here is a demonstration across two novels on the Romanian politician`s crooked methods of earning a living. In Petrescu`s subtext and intertext, underprized purchases are then subsidised, financed through bad loans, given dubious contracts, questionable bail-out and, after everything else fails, they are repurchased by the state.

For Gheorghidiu, an experienced politician, we are told he had twice held office in the ministry, it is time to hire someone who has the ability to switch sides and lead paid campaigns against his political rivals. The press is openly regarded as nothing but an instrument to influence the masses.

Fred Vasilescu`s make of choice, *Breguet aeroplanes* is not beyond suspicion, either. We read in an article (Groaznic accident de aviație la Iași – doi ofițeri morți, 1924, p. 1) published in *Universul* that on 14 July 1924 a *Breguet aircraft* had crashed in Iași. As it stands out, the plane`s engine broke down in mid-air during steering, the aircraft stalled, tailspan into

the ground and was engulfed by flames on impact, killing its occupants, Romanian airmen Buzoianu and Andreescu.

The Romanian officials developed a habit of accepting overpriced deals and signing for the reception of aircraft which were underequipped in report to their contracted specifications. The story, as we shall see, repeats itself in later state-run acquisitions. If Gheorghidiu was behind the reception of such fraudulent contractual makeshifts, it is small wonder he needs his own paper to repair his image.

His “reception of the aircraft” also sends to the *Armstrong – Fokker* scandal. In 1924, Romania begins the procedures to buy military aeroplanes. Crown Prince Carol, who would later become King Carol II, presses for the purchase of *Siskin V* prototypes, which had never gone into mass production, nor had they been ordered by any other aviation in the world before. The negative report on the model issued by the acquisitions committee fails to impress Prince Carol and the Romanian government. All the tests that are conducted show a clear inadequacy of the aircraft compared to the technical conditions that a fighter needs to meet airworthiness conditions. Aviation major Sănătescu crashes during the test flights and dies – his plane breaks in two due to the structural design faults, after he decides to obey orders which were given to him in ignorance of his verbal and written warnings made out to the same officials who forced him to fly. Nevertheless, Prince Carol pushes onward and the agreement is paid to the dime.

But since the aircraft are never delivered in the conditions of the signed agreement (some second hand, timeworn aeroplanes are sent instead), Romania finds itself in an even direr need of operable planes.

Instead of finding an ally in Ladima, who, after all, is on his payroll, Gheorghidiu becomes the target and sponsor of Ladima`s investigations at the same time. In *Veacul*, Ladima looks into the collapse of the *Banca Elino-Română*, uncovering suspicious credits in the range of multi-millions. The 1927 fall of the bank, followed by the suicide of its general manager, is marked in the pages of the novel. Camil Petrescu operates here with a slippery concept of time, as critics have noted.

Ladima`s article, which we know “was harsh on the industry and the parasitical banks” strays from the official line and states that the liquidity shortage occurred due to the loans which had been given to politicians, but which were never intended to be repaid. In other words, what Ladima is saying is that loans are really a form of legally covered bribery. A part of the Romanian press of the time shares a similar outlook. Under the title “On the Disaster at the Banca Elino-Română from Brăila”, (*Dezastrul Băncii Elino-Române din Brăila*, 1927, p. 1)

Dimineața publishes several headings, which are telling: “A Disaster Was Foreseeable”, “Loans Without Collateral”, “Who Is Alexandru Lambu”, and so on.

Ioana Pârvulescu remarks that *Procrustes's Bed* was first a political article's heading and only then a novel's title. The article, published shortly after Lenin's death, equates the Bolshevik revolution to a traumatic experience for the Russians and Lenin, its father, to an “undead dictator”. Communists are a half-literate breed who fail to see work beyond “crested hands”. Petrescu's political universe would have in its centre the “intellectual workman”, an oxymoronic concept which he coins. (Pârvulescu, *Întoarcere în Bucureștiul interbelic*, 2003, p. 25)

In this intricate pattern of power relations, it is small wonder that a journalistic mind like Camil Petrescu needed an avatar, which he found in Ladima. This is supported by the similar confessions they make in relation to their writing.

Ladima showcases a reporter who fails to comply not only with the economic, but also the political prerequisites of the paper he runs. When his budget is drawn, Ladima is given an early taste of capitalism in his conversation with Tănase Vasilescu. The funder's puppet stand-in begins by a quick lesson in cutting costs.

We note that though sketched by an uneducated man, the calculations are more down-to-earth than Ladima's. For the successful capitalist, numbers foreshadow letters, which are to be produced, much similarly to any other commodity, only if the production costs are kept reasonably low. Tănase Vasilescu proves to be an able, unscrupulous capitalist, one who remembers to calculate his sales income, although he aims for influence, rather than profit when he starts the paper. Herein lies the answer to the success of politically bought off papers (and the dismissal of Rando's earlier claim). They will always dispose of an extra source of money when compared to their independent rivals. And when things fail to go according to plan, their potential losses will be covered by the party. In time, this strategy ensures to take over independent media. Income from advertising does not replace political funding, but adds to it.

In *Procrustes's Bed*, the novel is a both an ultimate refuge and a journalist's last resort. Exiled from the mass media by the circles controlling their agenda, for the journalist salvation comes in the form of a novel. In that, we can also regard the novel as an announcer of the “post-truth” era, in which fictional narratives come to replace factuality for individuals, simply because they are more convenient to accept than truth and because reality can only be understood through representations. In *The Order of Discourse*, Foucault speaks of the reluctance of individuals to accept arguments, as they are keen on information which enforces

their false premises. This is key in devising acceptance mechanisms for contemporary media organizations. Social media was shown to use the browsing history, tendencies, preferences, social background of the consumers so as to select the content supplied to them, be it news or other commercial products. The media works by repetition and / as validation. A narrative will replace the truth by virtue of its official approval which gains it legitimacy.

References to real-life persons are multiple. During his conversation with a former minister, Ladima avoids his nominalization by using an antonomasia – “former and future minister”, gaining us a peephole towards the inspiration behind the character, for the phrase originates in Alecu Constantinescu’s anecdotal self-introduction during an official inquiry. According to historian Anton Caragea, for Alexandru C. Constantinescu – an unscrupulous Liberal who did not mind hearing his moniker – “the Swine”, the bribe sometimes took the form of a place in the managing board of a bank, no other than *Marmorosh*. (Caragea, 2004, p. 75) Credits are given where they are due, since the phrase *former and future minister* comes to us enclosed in quotation marks. When Ladima addresses the Liberal using this label, consciously casting upon the latter a phrase used by Alexandru C Constantinescu in his own introduction, he tragically accepts reality – all his efforts were futile. By quoting Constantinescu, Ladima shouts his desperation with the status quo. WWI had not changed much in Romanian politics and with each scandal that he uncovers, Ladima grows increasingly hopeless. Ladima explains his investigation principles, which are always based on exploring the link between money and politics, predating the infamous “Follow the money!” from the 1976 documentary *All the President’s Men*. Politicians are seen as representatives of the big business, with an access to public funding. Depleted of its resources, the state crumbles down. At times, Petrescu abandons his novel altogether in favour of the newspaper. If his readers were to look in the archives of *Universul*, they would find that indeed, on Thursday, 10 October 1932, the paper published a letter signed by the Romanian railway general manager, which is quoted in *Procustes’s Bed* almost verbatim. The document replies to a denouncement accusing the state’s overpriced acquisition of *Astra Industries*, a railway car manufacturer, during a period of severe economic depression and a consequent steep turnover decline in railway transport. General M Ionescu, the railway general manager, explains that the state was tied to the contract by a *clause of minimum revenue guarantee*, whereby it was indebted to pay sums in the hundreds of millions as penalties for not sending in enough work for *Astra* and its subsidiary, *Romloc*’s workshops. A committee appointed by the board of executives decided that buying the factory was a better option than paying a similar amount as penalties, thus *Astra*’s operations were purchased by the state. It is also worth noting that around one third of

the paid price represented inherited debts to National Bank. The answer to the state's generous subsidy might lie again in Vintilă Brătianu's participation as shareholder.

The article in *Universul* uncovers the mystery of the letter "M" in the novel. It is the Peasants' Party Ministry of Finance, Virgil Madgearu. Keeping their promise, *Universul* print an article on the following day entitled "Leonine Agreements with the Government and the Responsibility of the Ministers – On the Purchase of Enterprises *Astra Arad* and *Romloc*".

Nonetheless, Petrescu's M character – whom through the complete article in the paper we identify as finance minister Virgil Madgearu, proves to be the thread which leads to the scandal, since we know the Romanian politician was on Marmorosch's paid friends list, by means of an unreturned sum given to him by Aristide Blank. (Caragea, 2004, p. 76)

Unsurprisingly then, the League of Nations assessed the bank's debts to around 1.8 billion lei and stated that even in such conditions, "supporting the bank was in the best interest of the state". We know from Petrescu's novel that M "had perched himself onto the League of Nations", taking advantage of his political affiliations and historically speaking, Madgearu did represent Romania in the organisation.

Omitting this article from the current study – the scandal started out in 1930, but held the headlines until 1932-1933 – would be to ignore the political, economic and social context surrounding *Procrustes's Bed's* publication. The document is all the more important, as it foretells the historically documented failure of the Romanian establishment in governing the country. This failure to govern of the democratic forces would ultimately lead to the rapid emergence of the far-right movements in Romania.

The stark opposition between everyday people – *us* and politicians – *them* is made through Ladima's proprietary style: the author picks his side and his position is enforced repeatedly throughout the article, the reader has little room for manoeuvre, as the choice was already made for him. Dramatic effects come in handy: the politician's name is turned into a metonym for the corrupt, money comes from the hungry and the many, millions are traded for nothing.

By sending to the article in *Universul* which attacks Madgearu, Camil Petrescu also sets Ladima beyond the suspicion of being a member of the Peasants' Party and exonerates him of an immediate political interest, especially as the country was dominated by these two political poles: the Liberals and the Peasants' Party. This clarification was needed, as most of the scandals unravelling in the novel revolve around Liberals. In the meantime, both Madam T and Fred Vasilescu remain avid advertising consumers. Their passion for what is in trend both drains them of resources and helps them stay afloat in the demanding societies they are part of.

The generous sum Fred entrusts to Madam T, who is now his interior designer, is to be spent on his newly refurbished flat. Amenities include paddles, a boxing bag, fitness gear – to cover for much of the Olympic firmament. The radio, the *pathefon* and the telephone are not included, though they are required to make things comfortable. Small wonder, since a radio would cost about five medium wages in interwar Bucharest. Also, prospective radio owners first had to apply for a special permit and the police had to issue first a certificate of good character. (Pârvulescu, *Întoarcere în Bucureștiul interbelic*, 2003, p. 195)

Though brand names are not especially commonplace in Camil Petrescu's novels, sometimes his characters smoke *Luckies* and have their wine poured in *Murano* glasses. We are also familiar with Fred Vasilescu's choice in cars, although Fred's particular model - the eight-piston engine on the *Austro-Daimler* he drives might be a technical addition by Petrescu's innovative mind. We are also told that he owns a *Breguet* aeroplane, which he custom-fit to match his globe-trotting dreams. But similarly to Dos Passos's *U.S.A.*, flying machines turn out to be death traps for their occupants.

When Fred meets Penciulescu in a café to discuss Ladima's recent death, the latter asks for *Tomis cigarettes*. A close friend of Ladima's, who describes him as the holder of an impressive culture, incredibly intelligent, but similarly unwilling to compromise. However, Fred buys his company in exchange for a pack of unfiltered *Tomises* and a hundred lei. The premium cigarettes were advertised in the epoch as a high-end product, made exclusively from Turkish tobacco. Launched in 1930, one cigarette came in at 3 lei, when *Regale* cost around 2. We get a sense of proportions from an article published in *Universul*, which informs us that one *Tomis* cigarette equates to 5 square metres of farming land, whereas for the equivalent of 500 cigarettes, one could become the owner of half a hectare of land in the vicinity of Bucharest.

Petrescu's two novels are riddled with Gheorghidiu's demagogic speeches, all of them aimed to defuse tension caused by the political scandals of the time. Uncomfortable facts – the lack of our artillery – are countered with appeals to the mythical “bravery” of the Romanian soldier. They should be ready to surpass German canons with bayonets. German soldiers are reduced to “Kraut” dummies, their heads are perfect targets for Romanian troops.

In lack of arguments, politicians resort to emotions: “patriotism”, “our troops”, their “morale” in order to distract public attention from a real problem – the poor condition of the army, which is a direct result of the public acquisitions made by public officials. The situation is absurd. Romanian soldiers are required to maintain the same spirit regardless of the side their government chooses to join. Behind the pompous wording in the Parliament, it is business as

usual for politicians. We are told that Gheorghidiu and Candlemaker produce overpriced ammunition for the army and legislate monopolies in their favour.

Petrescu tends to show the social crisis specific to the modernity by the trajectories of these characters. Innate scoundrels, the sorts of the Candlemaker, Gheorghidiu Sr¹ and, why not, Alecu Constantinescu, as characters who transcend the boundaries of novel and novels, are rewarded with money and influential positions. Additionally, they remain a constant in Petrescu's interwar prose. Gregoriade is a small-time journalist (but his few texting samples are distasteful and trivial) and a swindler (he touts the tickets of the Caruso concert he himself organizes) who manages to play his tricks while building up a reputation as a heartbreaker in the process. Unlike Ladima, Gregoriade was pragmatic enough to pursue law.

Beyond the condition of one of Romania's richest men and the manager of the Royal estate, Barbu Știrbei was Queen Marie's some 30 year-long romance. The relationship was auspicious for the finances of the royals and for Romanians as a nation. Appointed by King Carol I in 1914, Barbu Știrbei managed to double the profits of the Royal House. Some historians suggest that Știrbei fathered two of Queen Marie's youngest children. In 1918, when Romania managed to fulfil its national aspiration of uniting all its historic provinces of the old fatherland, Barbu Știrbei entered Bucharest alongside Queen Marie. After Știrbei's sister married Ion I. C. Brătianu, it is safe to say that most of the political power in the state was transferred away from the royals, towards the Liberals. All these intricacies will have been well known by Camil Petrescu, who chose this prototype of a symbiotic love for Fred's affair with Madam T.

Fred and Ladima's conversation is the classical for and against debate centred around fashion. The characters either fall short of proving they are not ignorant on the subject – Ladima, or that they are regular fashion *aficionados* – Fred Vasilescu. Ladima remains blocked in disenchantment. For him, fashion clothing equals snobbery. He goes pale when Fred explains to him that the reason why he buys expensive socks is because the cheap ones are dyed using a toxic chemical. It is safe to say that Ladima is an early anti-fashion supporter, one who dresses accordingly. The separation goes further. While Fred drives an expensive and powerful *Austro-Daimler*, which was nothing short of a supercar in its own right, used up *Fords* seem to be custom-made for the newly unemployed.

¹ We can speak of an economy of names in Petrescu's novels. Note also notable the generation gap, with a moral ascendant for the young Ștefan and Fred over Nae and the Candlemaker.

5.1. The Rebellious Prototype of Fred Vasilescu

Despite smoking the cigarettes of an everyday man, Fred stands out through the car he drives to Techirgiol, along with his extraordinary pastimes – we know he practices boxing and rowing, that he is a formidable air pioneer or that he breeds racehorses:

A passionate airman, Fred was equally interested in aeroplane engines. Throughout the novel, we are let in on the various customizations Fred brings to his Bréguet – he adds additional petrol tanks to double the quantity he can fly with, in order to allow him to travel the record-breaking distance and the resulting extra four tonnes call for changes in the plane's landing gear.

The take-off for Capetown is covered by all the significant press and it proves the perfect occasion for Fred to bring up his testament, in which he leaves most of his fortune (his horses, his aeroplane, or whatever may be left of it, a plot of land) to Madam T. In his description of the *Bréguet*, Fred uses the same term as for his *Austro-Daimler*, “a torpedo”, this time a flying one. Defined as an underwater piece of ammunition, the torpedo is taken out of its environment and relocated by the narrator – first on the road, then in mid-air.

George Valentin Bibescu is one of the pioneers of Romanian aviation and, as we shall show, the inspiration behind Fred Vasilescu. Before Fred, George V Bibescu certainly lived a life on many of the sporting coordinates adopted by Petrescu's character in the novel. George Valentin Bibescu is the founder of the Romanian Automobile Club, which in 1914 became the Romanian Royal Automobile Club, and organizer of various rally races in Romania and abroad. Later he founded the Romanian Air Club and set up Airfield Băneasa. Admittedly, Fred Vasilescu was also a keen racehorse trainer – and by 1900 horse riding had become an Olympic sport. But the official organ published by the Romanian Automobile Club, *Automobila Magazine*, boasted for covering car races, aeronautics, horse races and athletics. To put it shortly, it covered Fred Vasilescu's precise interests. It is now time to remember Fred's newly equipped flat, covering a range of Olympic sports. George V Bibescu was the president of the first Romanian Olympic Committee and the first Romanian member of the International Olympic Committee.

When *Procrustes's Bed* was published in 1933, prince Bibescu was the president of the *Fédération Aéronautique Internationale*, an organization in whose founding he played a key role. During an air trip he made to India in this capacity, prince Bibescu's flying machine crash landed, capsizing in a roadside ditch and burning down completely. Bibescu and the others were wounded, but made it out alive. (Țintea, 1931, p. 17) Nevertheless, one of the passengers

would die shortly after the crash, whereas prince Bibescu would never fully recover from his burns.

CHAPTER 6.

Mediatic Discourse in the Novels of Thomas Wolfe, Earnest Hemingway, Camil Petrescu, John Dos Passos, Virginia Woolf, Mihail Sebastian

In a recent study published by Maria-Ana Tupan, she notes that the fleetness of emotions is a central theme in Thomas Wolfe's works. In *Look Homeward, Angel*, Eugene Gant struggles to recover memories from the past, only to find that memories are temporary and that we are unable to fully reconstruct them. Emotions seem to be as transient as experiences. To capture the past entirely turns into the "the motif of the impossible return".

Preserving its memory through a novel was the counter-intuitive purpose of Hemingway's 1925 presence in Pamplona, following Gertrude Stein's encouragement to do so. Hemingway wrote *The Sun Also Rises* during a period when he was fascinated with bull fights and attended them in Spain, while in the company of his first wife, Hadley Richardson, which was always supplemented with the seasonal presence of Hemingway's friends, including Harold Loeb, writers Dos Passos and Donald Ogden Stewart, but also Lady Duff Twydsen or Pauline Pfeiffer. Though the names were changed, the novel is clearly based on the eventful holiday which Hemingway's group took in the Spain of 1925. (Blume, 2016)

Santiago, the ageing fisherman, has little control over the trademarks that are brought before him. Along with food, Manolin fetches for him bottles of *Hatuey beer*, which, since it comes in bottles, fails to rank among Santiago's favourites. Here, a subtle note is made. Chief Hatuey was a Cuban indigenous leader who fought the conquistadors through guerrilla tactics. When the Spanish finally did capture him, he was burnt at the stake. This sacrifice makes him Cuba's first national hero and would seemingly qualify him as Santiago's hero, as well.

In addition to the obvious upper hand held by cold beer over its competition, in a fishermen's village ice would have been highly appraised for its essential role in preserving fish. Thus, it is not far-fetched to claim that in fact *Hatuey beer* was the bonus product and a by-product of ice, since we can think of it as an incentive for buying ice rather than the other way around. We can only imagine that *Cerveza Hatuey* was affordable enough not to affect significantly the package sale, and thus to become the most popular beer in Cuba. With Manolin's help, the other fishermen, whom we imagine younger as more successful than Santiago, treat the old man to a bottle of beer, which was plentiful in the village.

In posters, painted metal boxes, on labels, *Hatuey* promised the carefree life of American marines overseas, outside the reach of the still effective 18th Amendment of the Prohibition. As Greg Myers points in his *Words in Ads*, we tend to identify with the things we buy based on our association of meaning to commodities. A Hatuey drinker must thence be a financially and socially successful womanizer, who leads a carefree life. The beer, alongside its twin brand, Bacardi, advertised through openly patriarchal strategies. In one poster, a spruced up navy captain enjoys a poolside snack in the company of a scantily dressed young woman, while in another an open-chested beauty parachutes from the sky carrying bottles of liquor in one armpit and ale in the other one.

For Santiago the fisherman, newspapers are the gateway of American culture to Cuba. Joe DiMaggio becomes his reference in masculinity. While conducting his epic battle against the giant marlin, Santiago is motivated by DiMaggio's heroic media-constructed image. Similarly to Tenente from *A Farewell to Arms*, Santiago is a lonesome figure, who takes refuge in the print. Tenente is uprooted first from home, when he joins the military, then taken from war by his injuries. He connects to both of these lost environments through the media. Santiago, in turn, is more part of the media-conversed reality he is exposed to through papers, than is he, for instance, a member of the little fishing community, to which he returns only for what seems like a momentary, makeshift shelter. Here the newspapers on the clay floor are the only thing that connect the landscape to civilization.

The dramatic face-off between Santiago and the marlin – during which Santiago repeatedly invokes the Yankees' legendary baseball player – is a re-enactment of DiMaggio's last season as a professional athlete, in which he battled a number of nagging injuries, before finally retiring. For Santiago, too, the confrontation takes mythical proportions. The narrative perspective changes dynamically, while, as in the commentary of a game, everything is augmented, from the intensity of the pestering bodily tortures of the athletes, to the length of their standoffs, and naturally, the size of the adversary.

It seems that the new, tangible gods of the secular world, where Joe DiMaggio is dubbed the new Mars extract their sap from their believers. The old fisherman is carried forward by his belief in the supreme conqueror, whose greatness he can only dream to benefit through his own asceticism. The magic is everything but gone. As in the book of Jonah, to please his god, so as to stand a chance against the great fish, Santiago's torments will last him for three days and three nights.

Published in Romanian in 1934 and in English in 2016, *For Two Thousand Years* is remarkable in that the novel, which tells the story of the Jewish student who is trapped in the

gloomy atmosphere of the decades anticipating the Holocaust, allows readers access to an unparalleled level of intimacy to the events of the epoch, as they were lived by an anonymous Jewish student, in whose experiences it is easy to discern a young Joseph Hechter – Sebastian's name, by birth.

The Jewish student is trying to integrate into a Romanian society defined by an underlying, (now we know that it was also emerging) anti-Semitism. (Cioculescu, 1934, pp. 141-159) His personal idols all prove to be polarized by the various political movements. The beatings, the shame, the desperation, the casting out merge into the day-to-day reality of the law student, but he accepts and bears them in dignified silence. What drains the student is his ongoing battle with the depersonalizing effects of everything around him. In these overcast premises, newspaper advertisements are timely distractions for the exhausted youth. The explosive atmosphere is rendered by a textual collage made up of visuals where, again, the political slogan is indiscernible from commercials.

Advertisement in Sebastian's novel comes as a breath of fresh air, but it is also the call for Romania's industrialization. The fire extinguisher anticipates both the plot unravelling in the background - Ralph Rice, a wealthy British investor, is building an oil refinery in Uioara, Prahova; and the social turmoil of the 1930s in which the Jewish student is held captive.

CONCLUSIONS

The paper set off to explore the relationship between the industrial advancements and how they influenced the aesthetics of modernist fiction. The study focused primarily on the works of James Joyce, Earnest Hemingway, Camil Petrescu, but references are also made to the works of other modernist writers, such as Virginia Woolf, Mircea Eliade, D. H., Lawrence, Thomas Woolfe, Graham Swift, Mihail Sebastian.

In Dos Passos's *U.S.A.*, of the "network narration" or the "four way conveyor system" (Newsreels, Camera Eyes, biographies and main narrative), our first chapter concentrated on his patented means of draining off the stream-of-consciousness into Camera Eyes. The fragmented technique is Dos Passos' response to the new technologies, and in particular, the Camera Eyes take Ford's conveyor to the medium of the novel. The idea was for the four narrative modes to function independently, the though we found that this is not always the case.

The second chapter looks at the Bloom's world of advertizing. The aesthetic of the poster comes is represented in *Ulysses* and, when contextualized, it becomes a means of expression for Joyce's disillusionment with war – present in Bloom's epiphanies, fused by the poster and the headlines he reads – with the occupant, with its rulers. Both Dos Passos and Joyce

denounce the use of powerful national motifs and slogans in the questionable war rhetoric. In a later chapter we look at how Camil Petrescu denounces, in turn, the chasm between the official mobilizing and interventionist discourse and the frontline experience of Ștefan. In *Finnegan's Wake*, an entire chapter is written in the aesthetic of a poster. In *Manhattan Transfer*, the photographic medium is reproduced in the pages of the novel, when a lawyer's signage is read from the inside of his office. We follow how historical newspaper headings come to be fictionalized in the *Manhattan Transfer*, in an experimental technique which would later be perfected in *U.S.A.'s Newsreels*. We sample, how, through the mediation of *Finnegan's Wake*, the cartoon characters Mutt and Jeff shall become Beckett's Vladimir and Estragon.

We look at this in detail in Chapter 3, where Gerty MacDowell - Joyce's modern version of Nausicaa is an early victim of the fashion discourse, in a chapter written in the aesthetic of advertising. We look at how the effects documented in present-day studies can be observed on Gerty, to the point that she becomes a full-sized representation of a man's magazine or a Mutoscope model.

Her literature of choice – the penny dreadfuls induce to her a fragility and a feeling of incompleteness and inappropriate outside a marriage. As (temporary) solution, the answer is shopping. We look for the cosmetics used by Gerty and explore the linguistic mechanisms whereby some of the products that Gerty uses were labelled (*Eyebrowlin*).

We follow the present of the Romanian royal Queen Marie (one of Bloom's lines for Gerty is queen of ointments) as she defines the changes in the new, daring woman. In Camil Petrescu's *The Last Night ...*, it is the language of advertising that best describe Ela's hands or her royally endorsed perfume.

Chapter 4 looks at the modernist's war representations through the media.

Earnest Hemingway – *A Farewell to Arms*, John Dos Passos – *Three Soldiers* and Camil Petrescu – *The Last Night of Love, the First Night of War*, all document the difference between official discourse and frontline experiences. For Dos Passos, the thirst for war is aroused in recruits after they watch staged war crimes documentaries, whereas in Tenente and Ștefan have to turn to the press of the enemy, as the frontline press is irrelevant in reflecting the battles they have fought.

The absurdity of warfare is documented in Ștefan's reading of Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, quoted abundantly in the subtext. For Ștefan, the wartime pressman is deceitful. His wife's alleged lover is a censor employed by the government. We follow Tenente's wartime experience through the heading in the press of the time.

Chapter 5 looks at the intertextual relations in Procrustes's Bed, unravelling a web of affairs, largely overlooked in Romanian criticism, which undermine Ladima's entire existence and give way to a subterranean novel.

Dozens of references to the historic press scandals create a web which can be read as a self-standing parallel archive. Fred's inquiry of Emilia his and subsequent investigation in the Ladima case leads him to uncover political scandals which would shatter the entire status quo, from MPs to the King himself. We run an alternative investigation using archives and available books on the subject, which lead us to the following conclusions. Banks are run by politicians appointed to their administration boards. This leads to the following scheme: banks finance overprized acquisitions, which in turn are used as overassessed collateral to obtain loans which are never meant to be refunded. Ladima's lack of good sense prohibits him from occupying such a sinecure.

The encyclopaedic resources which fed into some of the most celebrated canonical modernist fiction were provided by the media, perceived by the authors as a faithful mirror of the rise of mass society which meant annihilation of the individual subject, of inwardness, of empathetic identification with the things in the world which got into a system of objects codified by social activities. Even class distinctions vanished, the new fashion industry and consumerist economy accapartating the energies of the aristocracy, and even royalty, while making room for vulgar upstarts to work up their way in society and politics.

Modernist fiction filtered reality through its reflection, or rather, construction in the media, because reality itself had vanished into a semiotic utopia of socially codified behaviour and patterned speech.

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