

## **Embracing the Absurd of a Meaningless Life: Edward Albee's *A Delicate Balance***

Andra Elena AGAFIȚEI (PhD student, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, Iași, Romania)

### **Abstract**

The passing of time, the development of technologies and services and the emancipation of women are just some of the elements that have brought their contribution to the shaping of the new American family. In the modern American family, everything has suffered immense transformations, starting with the role reversal between the husband and wife and ending with the altered relationships with the other members of the family. The American home has become just a simple house, a space in which love, affection, mutual respect, comfort, and security are no longer its attributes. The home is not a shelter anymore, but a hiding place; a place in which the spouses, who have grown so accustomed to each other that they have nothing else to talk about, choose to live their meaningless lives, waiting for the final moment of existence – death. One such couple, who fears and denies reality and tries to escape into the comfortable world of illusion, is the one Edward Albee presents in *A Delicate Balance*.

The present paper aims at awakening the readers' consciousness regarding their condition as human beings “trapped” in an absurd world, the purpose being that of bringing forth the social function of the Theatre of the Absurd.

**Keywords:** American cultural studies, American family, Modern American drama, social function, Theatre of the Absurd

## **New Realities of the Contemporary Novel**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of the present paper is to introduce some of the latest developments in the contemporary novel. In order to attain our goal, we shall proceed to firstly survey the cultural background, namely the (post)postmodernist period, then some tendencies concerning the literary genres, with an emphasis on three of the recent modes/genre – “hysterical realism”, “recherché postmodernism”, and the maximalist novel. In contemporary (literary) reality, the past is revisited, reconsidered, repeated, incorporated and modified, given a new meaning, and not necessarily imitated or copied, or negated; a reworking of the past to call for a new way of being in the future. The end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first are characterized by an effusion of many new versions of realism, sometimes hybridized; the multi-faceted realism is a reality.

**Keywords:** post-postmodernism, “hysterical realism”, “*recherché* postmodernism”, the maximalist novel, the multi-faceted realism

## **Perspectives on Imagery: A Text-Image Complementary Relationship**

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### **Abstract**

The work of art exposes the soul of the artist, but it also brings order in the existential chaos. The one that has to complete it has to go through an artistic transformation, travelling to other spaces and times. This happens in Leonardo da Vinci's famous work of art, “The Last Supper” which, having a great complexity of symbols and significations, has always been a source of inspiration for other artists and arts (literature, film, photography), interested not necessarily in the biblical theme, but especially in that particular mise-en-place. The proposed study shows the way in which both renewing art and perceiving it becomes possible and presents the most accurate means of drawing the viewer inside the magical circle of creation. The theme especially aims at the complementary text-image relationship, extended to various verbal or nonverbal arts.

**Keywords:** The Last Supper, imagery, image, arts, creation

## **Dimitrie Bolintineanu's *Manoil*: From Literary Convention to Moralizing Lesson**

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### **Abstract**

This paper analyses the construction of *Manoil*, the eponymous hero of Dimitrie Bolintineanu's novel, in relation to: a number of European fictional models present in the 19th century in the 'very young' Romanian literature; to the non-competitive rapport between the realist and romanticist conventions of the time in point of character authenticity/ verisimilitude, and also to the narrative strategies which include the diary, the epistolary novel and timid attempts at introspection. Set within the framework of the narrative structures of the sentimental epistolary novel, Bolintineanu's character is constructed so as to illustrate the moralizing theme which holds that the representation of femininity may acquire both positive and negative connotations (and functions), intervening in the male character's inner and outer journey as a destructive or, on the contrary, re-constructive force.

**Keywords:** Romanian epistolary novel, early Romanian literature, sentimental novel, diary, influence of French literature

## **Landmarks for the Contemporary Analysis of the Video Games: A new possible general scheme of analysis**

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### **Abstract**

Video games, as a contemporary cultural phenomenon, have drawn the attention of academic scholars, who decrypt them from a cultural perspective (what happens outside the game?) or as cultural object in itself (what happens inside the game?). Nowadays, video games are analysed from multiple research perspectives, such as the economic, political, social or technological, and are decoded with the help of aesthetics, popular culture, gender studies, production and reception studies (Aarseth, 2003; Wolf & Perron, Introduction, 2003; Wardrip-Fruin & Harrigan, 2006). Today's situation fundamentally differs from the one a decade ago, when the academic arena was dominated by the ideational debate known as ludology versus narratology. Yet, there are gaps in the specific literature, depicting a research field in its infancy ("game studies"). The objective of this analysis is to understand the dynamics of games studies in terms of methods and theories used (a critical literature review), and to propose a general scheme for analysing video games as cultural artefacts that may spot out some structures and content descriptors to be used for increasing the games' engagement. The applicability of the scheme of analysis is validated on two video games: DayZ and Heavy Rain.

**Keywords:** video games, ludology vs. narratology, game studies, game theory, engagement

## **Martha Bibescu – *Jurnal berlinez '38*: From History to Self**

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### **Abstract**

*Jurnal berlinez '38* [*'38 Berlin Diary*] is a diary sequence which Martha Bibescu, an emblematic and controversial figure of the political and literary circles in Romania at the turn of the twentieth century, did not intend for publication at the time of its writing, and which presents her visit to Berlin where her husband, George Valentin Bibescu, was invited as the president of the Congress of the International Aeronautic Federation. As she was in connection with many diplomats and historical figures, Martha Bibescu wanted to record in writing a few moments of the history of that time, together with some glimpses of her private story. This travel diary impresses by the subtlety of the author's observations, the inventiveness and originality of the logical connections made in the description of some characters, acid irony, but also by the presentation of the Nazi Reich. The identity of the woman who relives the memories of her youth and remarks the changes in her and the others is built from behind the narrated events.

**Keywords:** Martha Bibescu, travel diary, identity, historical figures, Berlin

## **Modernist Fiction from Sin to Art**

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### **Abstract**

The article highlights the influence of the novelists and philosophers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on the emerging and development of the modern novel as a free and outstanding form of literature, and what is more – as a form of art. The paper points out the impact of such names as Henry James, Virginia Woolf, Joseph Conrad, Arnold Bennett and Malcolm Bradbury, personalities that sought to change the status of the novel through their works. Due to these authors there appeared and flourished the tradition that we now name the “modern” novel. By the turn of the century, the novel was shifting to art; it was becoming a more interesting and more influential form of literature; it was aspiring to become a far more complex, various, open and self-conscious form, one which, in a new way, sought to be taken seriously as “art”.

**Keywords:** modern novel, art, fiction, self-consciousness, stream of consciousness

## **The Symbolic Advertising Communication in the New Integral Reality: A symbolical assessment of the technology impact on a brand icon**

Vasile HODOROGEA (PhD Student, Doctoral School of Communication Sciences, Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences, University of Bucharest)

### **Abstract**

The new impressive technological advancements we are leaving change our cultural, social and economical consumption habits and needs. We have cumulatively evolved, as Hartley (2012) states, from a Newtonian, modern knowledge to a quantum, postmodern one and then rapidly to a network, universal type of knowledge that no longer requires nations, countries or regions but “everything known on earth”, as in Google’s business plan. The brands’ or the companies’ (or governments) communications must adapt to the new vehicles and platforms such as mobile applications and dramatically more dynamic digital endeavors (responsive websites, social-media). In this context, there are several questions that rise up: how does the commercial message of the brand adapt to the new vehicles? Is advertising going to be an integral reality as Baudrillard (2005) described it, filled with perfect images and sounds, ready for an integral man to consume it? In a programmatic communication strategy of omnichannel consumer interaction, is there still a need for message coherence, and correctly targeted audiences? Or will the AI, the big data and the IOT change entirely the whole communication industry? To answer these questions, I examined the impact of the digitalization on a brand icon (the Ursus bear) evolution by assessing the new types of brand content in the relationship with the content consumption and the new types of exposure and new “planes of expression”.

**Keywords:** technological determinism, communication, advertising, culture, semiotics



## **Devised Theatre: A Change of Paradigm in Romanian Theatre**

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### **Abstract**

This paper proposes an overview of the contemporary trends in the creation of dramatic text and performance. Starting from ingrained, traditional practices, which are more often than not centred on the director, it then focuses on a more recent approach to drama and performance, “devised theatre”, outlining its specificities, and commenting on its increasing occurrence in the Romanian contemporary theatre.

**Keywords:** devised theatre, collaborative creation, directing, dramatic text, performance

## **The Imagery of Max Blecher's Text**

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### **Abstract**

Using Hans Robert Jauss' grid, the present paper goes through the three levels of reading (reading, re-reading, post-reading) in order to understand the meanings of the literary work and to discover the metatextual and the hypertextual significances of the novel *Adventures in Immediate Unreality* by Max Blecher.

**Keywords:** imaginary, discourse, psychoanalysis, ipseity, Magritte's paintings

## **American Science Fiction Film – A Bird’s Eye View**

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### **Abstract**

This work approaches the themes and trends, many of which have fundamental social, political and philosophical significance, that have marked the evolution of American science fiction film, and it points out how the genre has influenced and been affected by the culture in which it has been produced, often in a context that makes it more real than reality - problems such as environmental degradation; overpopulation and pressure on space and goods, friction between the sexes, races, and nations; and the difficulties caused by computers, robots, clones, and aliens. The versatility of American science fiction film has allowed it to address a wide variety of audiences, from filmgoers looking for simple, escapist entertainment, to those eager to have their minds challenged. American science fiction film has also moved to the forefront of filmmaking technology, particularly in the field of special effects.

**Keywords:** science and technology, visions of the future, alien invasion, nuclear apocalypse, space travel

## **Truth as Its Counterpoint**

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### **Abstract**

From A. H. Maslow’s remark that “science is the only way we have of shoving truth down the reluctant throat. Only science can overcome characterological differences in seeing and believing. Only science can progress.” (in *Aldous Huxley, Literature and Science*, 1963), to Aldous Huxley’s “we now find ourselves from the very start in the midst of a dialogue between nature and man, a dialogue of which science is only one part, so much so that the conventional division of the world into subject and object, into inner world and outer world, into body and soul, is no longer applicable and raises difficulties.” (*Literature and Science*, 1963), one may realize that truth is to be found rather as a construct oscillating between conventional forms that the régimes of truth characterizing every societal arrangement build and personal interpretations of reality specific to any human creature. In brief, the present article explores the different ‘shades of grey’ that the birth of truth presupposes in a process of transactional interplay which appears most often under the form of contrapunctal exchange, with a reliance on Huxleyian texts read mainly through Foucauldian lenses.

**Keywords:** truth, counterpoint, knowledge, understanding, tension

**“Retro-modernism” in *Viața cea de toate zilele* by Ștefana Velisar Teodoreanu**

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**Abstract**

“Retro-modernism” is a concept coined by critic Paul Cernat (*Modernismul retro în romanul românesc interbelic [Retro-Modernism in the Romanian Inter-War Novel]*, Art Publishing, 2009) in view of defining a type of novel developed during the inter-war period as an alternative to prospective modernism, excessively used at that time. The “retro-novels” identified and analysed by Paul Cernat possess a distinct aesthetic physiognomy, marked by nostalgia for the atmosphere at the end of the nineteenth century, despite the modernist techniques employed at the level of the narrative discourse. Little known in the present day cultural space, Ștefana Velisar Teodoreanu (Lily Teodoreanu) tackles the question of the peripheral and provincial environments, suffocated by the lack of perspective in the characters’ destinies, especially in the case of feminine characters. *Viața cea de toate zilele [Daily Life]* (1940) may be described as retro-modernist, as the writer moderately approaches the theme of the woman’s condition, avoiding the excesses of militant and declarative feminism. The novel’s protagonist overcomes an identity crisis by assuming a superior understanding of the idea of commitment to her family. The reference points of the patriarchal organisation of the world are imperceptibly shaken by the heroine’s drama.

**Keywords:** retro-modernism, femininity, psychologism, identity, discourse

## **Victorian Novel Discourses: Julia Kavanagh's *Rachel Gray***

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### **Abstract**

Many Victorian novels have been shunted to the margin of literary history, as they were written by neglected women writers. The great interest in women's history produces nowadays an increased concern for researching these relatively obscure novels. One of them is Julia Kavanagh's *Rachel Gray*. This paper is intended to show how the handling of Genettian narrative discourse categories helps the reader reach the major themes of *Rachel Gray* and how it is useful in finding out where the novel is situated on the trail between the classical concept of the novel and the modern one. Analyzing *Rachel Gray* according to Gérard Genette's grid, one can notice that his structuralist categorization of narrative discourse is very useful to disclose the novel's preoccupation with family issues. Furthermore, it contributes to determining that *Rachel Gray*, even if a realist novel, is inspired from the previous Romantic Movement and announces the subsequent arrival of modernist fiction.

**Keywords:** Victorian novel, Realism, Gérard Genette's narrative discourse, father-daughter relationship, romantic and modernist influences

## **Aesthetic Desire: Edgar Allan Poe, Nikolaos Episkopopoulos and the Death-of-a-Beautiful-Woman Motif**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of the present paper is twofold: firstly, it aims to shed light on the influence Edgar Allan Poe exerted on the work of Nikolaos Episkopopoulos by providing evidence of the Greek writer having read Poe's short fiction. Specific attention is given to the development of the aesthetic tradition in Greece, a tradition to which both Poe and Episkopopoulos are closely tied. Secondly, it explores the possible intertextual relations and parallels between Poe's female ideal and Episkopopoulos' fictional representation of women as this is exemplified in the latter's *Ut Dièse Mineur* (1893). The side-by-side examination of the female heroine appearing in *Ut Dièse Mineur* reveals significant links between Episkopopoulos' tales and Poe's, highlighting the similar manner in which both writers develop the image of a sensuous female persona.

**Keywords:** Aestheticism, American and Greek short fiction, Greece, intertextuality, femininity

**[PhD Thesis Review]** Pompiliu Ștefănescu, *Representations of Cultural Identities in the Poetic Discourse of Ezra Pound: a Study into the Imagery of the Other* (unpublished PhD thesis, Galați, 2011)

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