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# Habilitation Thesis

## ABSTRACT

This thesis is a summary of the work I have been doing since the late eighties and immediately after December 1989, when I was still working as editor of a Romanian book advertising review and as columnist of the "Viata romaneasca" Journal, in parallel to my new position at the University of Bucharest (1991), as a Professor's Assistant, Junior and Senior Lecturer, University Reader, and finally as full Professor (2002) of the English Department. It surveys the steps I took on the way to the generalized textual semiosis which goes by the name of "discourse analysis", or "interpretation without frontiers" (Monica Spiridon, 1998), as, according to two contemporary Danish semiologists, Jorgen Dines Johansen and Svend Erik Larsen (Johansen & Larsen 2002: 89-129), semiosis, unlike structuralism, examines the meaning structure of a literary text from the level of distinctive features (phonemes, syllables, signs, parts of speech, clause, sentence, section, text) to relevant contexts: "Intertextuality - dialogue with other texts - and shared contexts are fundamental to meaning making"(129). Texts are seen as parts of areas of knowledge (encoded by Foucaultian regimes of knowledge or epistemic regimes), narratively organized. As increase in knowledge cannot be arrested, new cultural narratives and codes will periodically be needed to replace the outmoded, invalidated ones.

My early career was dominated by the attempt to relate linguistic structure and rhetorical function or characteristic troping, epistemology and poetics. *Limbaje si scenarii poetice* (1989), my first book, enlarges upon the cognitivist poetics of Yale-based Gerald Bruns (*Modern Poetry and the Idea of Language*). His Orphic-Hermetic binary of cognitivist mapping of the relationship between mind and world in poetry (world schemata and textual schemata, in Immanuel Kant's acceptance of "schemata": conceptual mapping of the empirical manifold) I extended to include Monism (Lucian Blaga, Ion Barbu and Nichita Stanescu, respectively).

My doctoral thesis, *The Mirror and the Signet. The Shakespearean Search for Archetypes* (1992), is grounded in Gaston Bachelard's poetics of the elements, while *Marin Sorescu si deconstructivismul* (1995) is a study, not so much in the deconstructionist wake (indeterminacy of language), as in metatextuality and intertextuality (G. Genette's *Palimpsestes* is the closest link).

From *Scriitori romani in paradigmă universală* (1998) to *Sensul sincronismului* (2004) and *Genre and Postmodernism* (2008), I applied myself to the study of architecturality (genre as architext), although structuralist Genette can no longer be invoked as source of disciplinary protocol. The comparative study of a number of Romanian writers and their contemporary peers living in countries which were the greatest cultural influencers of the time looks both

ways: at dominant cultural narratives underwriting canonical works and the characteristic generic frames into which they were cast.

A revised (by Frederic Jameson) model of Hjelmslev's *combinatoria*, matching frames of worlds and texts, is used in *Sensul sincronismului, Discursul modernist* and *Discursul postmodern* (2002), the most orthodox version of discourse analysis (as theorized by Norman Fairclough, Guy Cook, Roger Fowler and Paul Simpson) being emulated here in a textbook with exercises and key: *A Discourse Analyst's Charles Dickens* (1999).

The second part of my thesis focuses on ongoing research, which continues to be indebted to New Historicism (the reciprocal negotiations between individual literary works and networks of semantic energy in the historical world), while exploring the interdisciplinary, mutual fertilization of several branches of research, especially of physics, philosophy, and anthropology.

Whereas the books written in the backdrop of cultural studies or discourse analysis, whose birth certificate was signed in the mid eighties, shortly after the launch of M. A. K. Halliday's functional grammar, capitalize mostly on original interpretations of literary works which were already carrying the aura of a very long-standing tradition of literary criticism, the interdisciplinary approaches are as many occasions for an original genealogical hypothesis, quite credible discursive contexts being dug up and demonstrated to have fed into a number of representative literary works.

Several books are based on papers read at international conferences. Such are *Modernismul si psihologia. Modernism and Psychology. An essay in literary epistemology* (2009), *The New Literary History* (2006), *Literary Discourses of the New Physics* (2010), and *Teoria si practica literaturii la inceput de mileniu* (with Marin Cilea, 2010).

The concept of relativity in physics and the discourses it generated at the crossroads of several disciplinary subfields (with emphasis on literature) is the theme of the last but one chapter and the topic of my latest book which came out from Cambridge Scholars Publishing in June: *Relativism-Realativity. An Interdisciplinary Perspective on a Modern Concept* (jointly with physicist Marin Cilea). I also hope to do, in the future, interdisciplinary research with graduates of the doctoral school.