MARGINALIA TO THE READING OF LITERARY TEXTS

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Abstract

This paper explores the issue of reading literature in the present-day academic milieu, in particular, and in the deeply computerised contemporary public space, in general. After pointing out some of the key aspects that teachers and professors need to observe in order to help students develop their reading skills, the study highlights the specificity that narratives, poems and plays display in relation to the parameter investigated and the functions of language. While explaining the relationship of coordination between literature and linguistics, the paper defends the authenticity of the act of reading, which has suffered serious mutations since the advent of the Internet.[2]

Keywords: education, act of reading, literature, language functions, reader

Barbariarmis semper pugnabunt, clari homines libris certabunt (Cicero).

[…] to have teachers that, by being the first ones to love, could also bring others
to love what people have been in love with for two thousand years […]
(Pleşu&Liiceanu 2012, orig. Romanian).

People read less and less, and this does not solely entail an "information" shortage, as one would believe. Reading is not merely knowledge accumulation. It is "exercise", training for faculties on which our spiritual life depends directly: attention, patience, focus power, emotional receptiveness,
openness towards others and intellectual "cleanliness".
People who do not read (any longer) end up thinking sloppily and stepping out in public unkempt, unclean, indecent and smelling (Pleşu 2015, orig. Romanian).

1. Introduction

1.1. To talk about reading at any time or, better yet, to *still* talk about reading in the computerised twenty-first century might seem uncanny to any uninterested or unknowledgeable person.

For someone whose DNA includes the yearning to read either as a genetic fact or as an implant from one's mentors, a debate on the importance of manifesting a spontaneous reflex is superfluous. I believe that the members of this fortunate race are all of those who, as representatives of the age of printed paper, cannot survive without equally permeating their mind and soul with the most delicate fragrance there is: the perfume of a page being turned.

The occupation we have chosen (teaching) is a professionalised extension of the gift that we have been given. In our job description, the most important duty is to educate students in view of developing their taste for reading, because "[…] literature is not ephemeral and represents an essential part of being human" (Stojmenska-Elzeser 2013).

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[2] I would like to thank Alina Bugheșiu (Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, North University Centre of Baia Mare, Romania) for the translation of this paper.

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A television show produced and hosted by Andrei Pleşu and Gabriel Liiceanu (2012) provided me the opportunity to reflect on the issue of reading (among others). In what follows, I will briefly point out some of the ideas discussed in the show.

1.1.1. What is the role of the *educator in helping students acquirethe practice of reading*?

The verb *aeduca* ('to educate') originates from Latin *duco*, *ducere*, *duxi*, *ductum*, which means 'to take.' When prefixed with *ex-*, it refers to taking an individual out of a crude, rudimentary state and transposing him/her to another state, a refined condition.

The time that we allot to education is not definite. One cannot talk about a specific age when, through education, we are subjected to an overdose of models, followed by their limited application and our stagnation into sufficiency.

The fact that the age of education is not fixed by any dates in the calendar is proven by the behavioural crashes that occur at ages when, *exempla trahunt*, one would expect the growing-up process to have completed.

Being educated is not the same as *being cultivated*. At the most, the former is a preceding phase of the latter. *Being educated* implies constantly looking after one's own social being, *homosocius*.

The Romanian *a fi cult* ('to be cultivated') comprises the Latin past participle of *colo*, *colĕre*, *colui*, *cultum*, a verb whose original meaning was 'to cultivate a field' and which, by means of semantic expansion, means 'to reap, to collect.'*To be cultivated* implies, as etymology shows, to reap the fruits of being an erudite being (see the etymological meaning: *ex-rudis*, *-e*), a *homo sapiens*.

According to the two aforementioned esteemed philosophers, Andrei Pleşu and Gabriel Liiceanu, the enterprise of a future teacher and professor should be envisaged both as

- investing knowledge capital in others, and as

- *instillingrhythm* in others (in Greek, *to educate* means 'to instil rhythm in others'), in the sense of *allowing others to develop at their own pace*.

Education should not solely be construed as delivering knowledge, but also as *moulding characters*. I daresay that one should be a form master before being a teacher, because only by keeping a close eye on the development of future generations will we be able to live safe from each other's indelicacies in a fissured society.

1.1.2. What is the meaning of *a citi* ('to peruse') vs *a lectura* ('to read')?

I find it important to discuss this dichotomy inthe preliminary meeting with first year students, at the seminar of literary theory. On this occasion, one of the familiarisation questions I ask them is "Which book ensures your mental hygiene every evening for at least half an hour, a time that you grant yourselves to replenish your soul at the end of a day that has been spent performing (also) other kinds of activities?" I pretend to start from the premise of their fondness for reading, as otherwise I believe their presence as students reading Philology is irrelevant. More and more often, I can see the surprise on their faces upon realising the fact that the choice of this future professional orientation is underpinned by one's passion for the humanities. Forseveral years, the most common

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answer to my question has been silence or a title that students happened to hear and is frequently almost entirely peripheral to what is supposed to become the scholarly foundation of the development of a future intellectual, in general, and a (learned) philologist, in particular. The way in which the dialogue flows between us provides me another reason to wonder: some of the youth that decided to become teachers, especially teachers of Romanian, phrase their speech in a "brute", unclear manner (see the etymological meaning of the Romanian adjective *nelămurit*) on account of the regional particularities of the Romanian variety they speak at home. They use (abuse) this colloquial language with such pure candour and disarming spontaneity that one wouldbea Don Quixote to endeavour to make them unlearn this old habit. It is difficult for me to correct the "flagrantly" diaphasic element, because the introduction of the subdialectal idiom in language use as the *lingua franca* of communication even outside the family environment was achieved in time. Moreover, if by the age of 18 there was no one to make them aware of the need to switch language registers in the sense of adapting them to a given situation of communication, someone should be accountable for their encouraged ignorance. I can think of no justification for the fact that not even one of the entities responsible with their proper speech corrected their inaccuracies.

I do not chide them, because I like to see how their minds follow my persuasive enterprise in support of deliberately improving the skill of reading, which they have barely begun to develop. At last, I invite them to discriminate between *a citi* ('to peruse') and *a lectura* ('to read'), explaining that the former verb implies an engaging activity, as perusing cannot be performed in an excessively relaxed physical pose or in a mentally discouraging state. Put differently, perusing demands having the psychological and technical tools (pen and paper) at hand. I would equate semantically *a citi* with *a studia* ('to study') and use it in relation to dealing with informational texts in specialised literature (literary theory, literary criticism and linguistics among others), that is, when reading for familiarisation is (at least) doubled by another kind of reading, supported with critical appendices (reading notes). In this respect, one can see in the printed word "the only noteworthy form of textual interaction" (Lehtonen 2013). The same semantic context of the verb *a citi*can be identified regarding formational texts, which underpinone's becoming a *homo intellectualis* (a human being that has the ability to establish connections between things; see reading lists like "100 books to be read in a lifetime").

On the other hand, *a lectura* relates to (written or video) texts that are cognitively purposeless, acting as various forms of entertainment. My trivial example in this respect refers tothe people we see flipping pages between two bus or tube stops (unfortunately, it is true that this activity is not culturally specific to the Romanian people…). I would use this verb in the case of less engaging readings, which can (also) be made in unconventional spaces (see *supra*) in which having to distribute one's attention does not hinder the understanding of a text. Under this umbrella, I would include light books, without metaphysical aspirations or complicated theoretical models, fleeting readings that are not demandinganddo not provide long-term cognitive satisfactions.

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As I talk to my students, I can see their interest growing in a directly proportional manner to my daring to wonder about valid readings. I split literature in two: library shelf literature and tabloid literature. I tell them about the chance of benefiting, based on the field of study chosen, from exclusively high-quality reading lists that easily introduce oneto the intertextuality of great literatures of the world. Furthermore, I explain that now, in the constant present of the moment, is the time to develop one's mental discipline to read orderly and daily and that it is as necessary to be concerned about our mental and spiritual nutrition as we are about the food we eat. I teach them about the imaginary pact we sign after we make a deal with the narrator, how we unburden ourselves of our historically determined physical being and cross as discursive beings the threshold of the fictional world, whose semantic dimension we build together with other fictitious "speakers", saving the text from acknowledged *incompletions* (see Ingarden1978: 50–80).

1.2. Thus, I consider that one of the key responsibilities of teachersand professors of Romanian language and literature is to guide students' reading orientations (naturally, after having instilled into their minds the gusto of such an endeavour by personal example: the teacher's ability to "unfold" like a story in front of the listeners). The first help on the path to knowing essential texts consists of compulsory reading lists, inventories of authors and titles attached to course and seminar materials. Another step in this initiation journey to spiritual enrichment is reading for pleasure and recreation, straying from the canon to earn a safe entrance into a certain community of readers. I would mention here recent books that are yet to become "classics" and "uncanonical" authors by virtue of their age. One's ignorance in this respect endangers the chance of being connected to the intertextuality of the present.

1.3. The moment that seems to truly capture their attention is when I try to "take advantage" of the perlocutionary dimension of my persuasive speech acts, which are deliberately oriented towards formulating our *shared* profession of faith: teachers and professors of Romanian language and literature *ought* to be distinguished especially as regards the skill of "garnishing" their speech. They should be effortlessly identifiable by representatives of other occupations from the first words uttered in a given communication context. To these teachers/professors, *to be* means *to be particularly distinctive on the verbal level*, on the level of oral and written expression. There is nothing more embarrassing for teachers and professors of Romanian than for them to be lost for words, to experience situations of speech gaps brought about by the lack of reading practice and training in using a diverse and nuanced stock of words, to be the owners of a poor, repetitious vocabulary, or to be the agents and patients of "areas of incompletion" caused by the absence of selective and learned reading. Discursive competence is not a datum (like the faculty of speech); it is something one gains after sustained perseverance and relentless effort of a spirit that is thirsty for knowledge and eager to learn the craft of a wordsmith.

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Before their students, teachers and professors of Romanian language and literature adopt a histrionic status: they assume this role by abandoning their mundane self and assimilating a ritual that implies self-censorship. They are a public institution, an "information desk" to which people turn for behavioural advice and which is open around the clock. The exemplarity of teachersand professors of Romanian does not become inoperative at the end of the fifty-minute class, as their "sermon" is extended to all the circumstances in which they interact with the individuals that are under their jurisdiction.

1.4. In the current context of the supremacy of the "glass page", with immediate pragmatic results, and the rebuff of the paper page, with long-lasting emotional-cognitive effects, my plea for reading may appear anachronistic. Nevertheless, I have always believed in the redeeming power of the well-spoken word, with which we are not born but which we acquire from our acquaintance with primordial texts. I have always believed in the power of civilised dialogue. The reinvention of Scheherazade in times of doubt and major existential crisis could postpone or even annul fatal decisions. As a crafter of words to my students' minds and speech, I know I must work to prevent the alteration and corruption of the increasingly fragile body of this "wound of silence" (in the words of Lucian Blaga, a Romanian philosopher and poet).

2. Literary texts as houses where selves live

To quote the Romanian writer Camil Petrescu, I will state that "I cannot step out of myself" and can only speak about reading experiences that I have had uponunmediated encounters with literary texts, with that particular kind of writing that is the *sine qua non* condition for our ability to provide content to referentiality. In order to be able to talk about effective perusal, readers must make a credibility pact (*alsob*) with the producer of the world proffered for exploration: we must pretend to assume the illusion of a figurative world, to appropriate it *as if* we were stepping into a real world where we were also transporting our axiomatic dimension.

2.1. Reading modern poetry

Defined by *constitutive literariness* resulting from *diction* (the form of expression) (Genette 1992), poetry, in general (texts in which the *poetic function* of language is prevalent), and modern poetry, in particular, make up perhaps the most chameleonic literary discourse on the level of dislocations and breeches in canonical grammar (recorded in lexicons and style books specific to every language). The only principle that poetry does not disregard is that of a somewhat consistent division of the poetic material into lines (of varied lengths, sometimes aiming at borrowing the form of narrative printed lines). When it abandons the canon, the poetic text observes a *disjointed syntax* reduced to *deliberately primitive nominal predicates* (Friedrich 1998: 14). The space of "play, bits and pieces" unpredictably changes into a place of lexical-semantic oppositions: the lexical

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spheres from which the operating terms are borrowed are incompatible, generating contrasts between sharp intellectual formulations and everyday, banal ones. According to Friedrich (1998: 14, orig. Romanian), "The current lexical material develops uncanny meanings. Words from the most distant domains are poetically electrified".

The speaking self (different from the "official scribe") is a programmer of metalanguage or a-signified language, whose signifying dimension is "exaggerated." The speaker "participates in the object of his/her imagination not as a private individual, but as a poetic mind and language 'operator'" (Friedrich 1998: 14, orig. Romanian). In decoding the imagined universe, the reader cannot make do only with encyclopaedic information about the empirical (traditional) world and, therefore, turns to inferential competences and cognitive processes to complement the stage of knowledge by means of intuition. This kind of reading implies that the person performing it must possess the "methodology" specific to proper decoding: "In the beginning, the person who is eager to be initiated cannot be given any other piece of advice than to try to accustom his/her eyes to the obscurity that shrouds modern poetry" (Friedrich 1998: 13, orig. Romanian). A pertinent interpretation pierces through form to reach meaning (which is often hanging, unaccomplished, because the purpose – the illocutionary force – of this particular speech act does not consist of its comprehension: in Baudelaire's words, "There is a certain glory in not being understood"). The writing and reading of modern poetry is an Odyssey of searching for the most suitable expression, an adventure of forms, a "confinement" of one's interest in the artefact, on the material level of the object that one wishes to own. Modern poetry is an overestimation of the corporality and sacrifice of content (language is experimental, unfinished and uncouth). It is a hypertext inserted in a traditional intertextual palimpsest.

Built on a verbal structure that consists of contrasts, the modern poem does not reverberate outside itself: it does not display an extratextually identifiable reference, but takes the shape of a nonreferential utterance, turning upon itself: "[…] poetry does not offer readers information about a subject and/or his/her inner world, but givesthem the chance to relive a spiritual experience on their own, to experiment something that is assumed to be similar to the poetic adventure that generated the text" (Comloşan2003: 105, orig. Romanian). "In poetry it does not matter what one talks about (the referent), but how the subject is conceived (grasped) and experienced, and particularly how this conception/experience is expressed. The subjectivity of poetic discourse consists precisely of this individual way of experiencing and perceiving (grasping) the self, a situation that cannot be separated from a special way of expressing this experience" (Comloşan2003: 107, orig. Romanian). "The poetic text must […] be perceived in itself. It is *intransitive*, in the sense that it does not refer to anything outside itself: it is *self-reflexive* and*self-sufficient* […] and its meaning is directly generated by its form, just as the linguistic form alone motivates meaning" (Comloşan 2003: 109, orig. Romanian).

A sender and receiver's sharing the same code and background of knowledge about the world is not (any more)a guarantee ofadequate/valid reception: "[…] the syntactic-

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semantic configuration is performed by the reader, it is the reader's contribution to the making of theperused text. […] The text is endowed with meaning only upon interpretation, as it is designed as an 'object,' as a form. The author's intention, if any, remains a mystery" (Comloșan2003: 115, orig. Romanian). "[…] poetry is an aim in itself […]. Reading poetry does not occasion a dialogue between the subject of an utterance and its receiver. […] A poem no longer behaves like an utterance that 'ties' participants in communication, but like a thing that, simply by existing, allows for contemplation and may become an object of significance/interpretation, but can exist without the latter altogether"[…]. "Reading poetry is similar to the scientific 'reading' of natural objects, by means of which one does not aim at discovering a message 'beyond' an object, but merely at decoding its mechanism, structure and functioning". "[…]Thus, poetry displays a threefold status: *anti-linguistic* (it defies the language code), *anti-rhetorical* (it rejects discursive models) and *nonreferential* (it does not express anything and anyone else except its own form)" (Comloșan2003: 119, orig. Romanian).

I statedpreviously that the proper interpretation of modern poetry is the one in which access to meaning (if there is any) is conditioned by one's experience of materiality, by its deconstruction into "immediate constituents." Literary analysis cannot be oblivious of linguistic analysis. The highlight of any (stylistic) semantic effect must be followed by arguments consisting of supporting language facts. Language and literature are two complementary subdomains and the relationship that can be established between them is copulative coordination, not exclusion. When analysing a text, it is advisable that it first be investigated on the surface (phonological and lexical-grammatical) level and any statement proffered by the interpreter must find justification within the object of study. Otherwise, the interpretation risks turning into literature about pre-existing literature. One reaches the in-depth (discourse-text) level of the "represented world" (see Ingarden1978: 36 ff.) only after spending significant time "underground" (among language signs).

The ideal (act of) reading should not be *made* (decoded) in an oversimplifying manner in view of finding an overlap between the author's intention and audience's reception, because readership varies in time (the writer is a fixed historical figure, whereas the audience changes with every generation and, implicitly, with every politically, culturally, socially, economically and psychologically conditioned mentality). Ideal reading[3] "sticks to the text,"to its letters and surroundings. It does not stray from the thread of the text or develop collateral interpretations.

[3]To be decoded correctly, a literary work must have a *cooperative reader* (Maingueneau 2007: 51), who is able to find in the text precisely what it does not say (but implies), to (re)arrange the text according to its original intertextuality. Umberto Eco (1984: 11) calls this studious reader a *Model Reader* and defines it as follows: "The Model Reader is a textually established set of felicity conditions to be met in order to have a macro-speech act (such as a text is) fully actualised".

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2.2. The reader – a co-pilot in the interpretative adventure of recovering complete fictional universes[4]

2.2.1. In order to function as a complete product, a literary work implies the active existence of two instances[5]: the sender – the narrator – and the receiver – aninstance that can be deemed passive only on the level of graphical "inactivity", but active if one considers the literary work as a whole: "The narrator is not the substitute of a speaking subject, but an *entity that does not fulfil the act of narration unless it is prompted to action by a reader*" (Maingueneau 2007:45, orig. Romanian). In the absence of the narrator's activation, the literary work is merely potential. As an actor (agent), the reader is the one who fills the "indetermination areas"[6](see Ingarden1978: 50–80) introduced/delineated by the voice generating the text. Without interpreters' contributions, literary acts of communication are not accomplished, as communication is suspended upon transmission.

Concrete images that can be identified in a literary text must be reinforced with *invented images*, the fruits of readers' reconstructive ability. The issuer and receiver of a literary text "vie" for a common ground: the mental space where (narratorial) intention and its materialisation (the receiver's contribution) meet. A literary work can be saved from becoming *schematic* through readers' skilfulness to "furnish" (solely) the delimited mental spaces.

2.2.2. The aim of a theatrical text [7] is spectacular par excellence. The "meeting"ofvoicesspecific to dramatic texts should be experienced also/especially visually. In other words, the actual reading must be doubled by viewing the action with the help of reading assistants: the actors. This "proviso" in understanding dramatic discourse can be accounted for by the (composite) diction of the genre: the coexistence of

[4]In addition to *poetic texts* (see above 2.1.), in the class of *constitutively literary texts* one could find, according to Genette (1994), *fictional texts* (*narratives* and *plays*), namely those texts in which the *referential function* of language is predominant. As Hamburger (1986, quoted inComloșan 2003: 45, orig. Romanian) notices, their literariness is provided by "the function [of language] to produce nonreferential representations and to issue statements that, although they cannot be considered true, are not false, as they designate figments of the imagination and do not refer to things that pertain to the real world".

[5]A literary text does not include an annex with a description of the target reader. Put differently, the text does not have an assumed reader, but rather an assumable one. A restriction on the "right to read" may only occur in specialised literature, in which the technical vocabulary may be a serious impediment to an amateur reader's comprehension. "[…] When writing, authors already bear in mind a certain kind of readership, but the essence of literature consists of the possibility of a literary work to circulate in ages and spaces that are remote from the time and place of its writing. This 'decontextualisation' is the result of the fundamental ambiguity of a literary text, which closes in on itself, observing rules that are much stricter than in the case of everyday language" (Maingueneau 2007: 45, orig. Romanian).

[6]"Reading must determine the appearance of an imaginary universe starting from certain vague and incomplete cues. We can but be surprised by the considerable responsibility that a reader has to assume by rebuilding anaphoric chains, completing gaps in the narrative thread, identifying characters and establishing implications among others" (Maingueneau 2007: 46, orig. Romanian).

[7]One cannot talk about direct discourse in the case of theatrical texts, as the author is behind the curtain and the only interacting figures are the characters. In other words, plays contain a type of polyphony in which the speaking subject (the actor) is different from the locutor (the role). Therefore, the dramatic text is a particular kind of literature, which "is not defined by the regular use of language. It implies the encapsulation of a system of communication situations in a context of global utterance, assigned to an *archisender*. The utterance scene is established between the archisender and spectator […]. This situation demands extra work on the part of the spectator, who has to interpret the characters' words on two different levels" (Maingueneau 2008: 173-174, orig. Romanian).

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two types of texts – the main text (characters' lines) and secondary texts(technical details) – provides a particular specificity to the literary genre in question[8]. The aridity and fragmentariness (nonliterariness) of stage directions is annulled by the "reading" of the dramatic performance (the triumph of literariness over factuality). Seeing a *fabula* (dramatic action) on stage will not suffice without prior, direct contact with the written text, consumed by the recipient-turned-spectator. The wholeness of a dramatic text implies the validation of the two types of reading, active (in the above-mentioned sense) and participative, the latter only occurring at the request of the staff involved in the development of the show (see the various forms of modern theatre).

2.3. *Eu* ('I') vs *se* ('it'). The case of narrative fictional discourse

By means of the Romanian pronominal forms*eu* ('I') and *se* ('it') – the formera deicticand the latter a grammaticalised reflexive clitic – one designates the speaking subjects of fictional narratives (without taking into consideration autobiographies and diaries) or, in other words, the *point of view* that generates the story[9].

In the case of *Ich-Origo* narratives, the asserted facts are embraced by the speaking *Self*, who guarantees the truth of the utterances[10]. S/he takes (subjectivised) responsibility for the speech acts performed in his/her capacity as fictional being. The reference to which the Self's narrative is related is not extradiegeticbut abstract, similar to the status of the figures that populate the quoted world (the characters' world)[11]. Within the boundaries of this narrated ("frivolous") world, designation is highly veridical.

[8]"The paradox of the theatre is complete in conversations on stage. The speech acts produced by real locutors (the actors) must be construed as the speech acts of fictitious people (the characters). […] The relationship between dramatic dialogue and conversation is similar to the one between fictional and factual narratives. It is a simulated conversation, but one in keeping with the forms and mechanisms of real conversation. […] The function of dialogue in dramatic texts is to produce fiction: the dialogue allows for the existence of imaginary characters and substitutes action, because facts are often 'narrated' in the shape of exchanges of lines and, very importantly, to converse is the most frequent type of act in theatre" (Comloșan 2003: 209, orig. Romanian).

[9]"The *speech configuration* of a text is based of various strategies of communication, which delimit diverse possible attitudes of the locutor/narrator who takes on the role of speaker. […]

(a) One of the strategies involved in textual polyphony is the *multiplication* of speaking figures (or textual locutors), which is obtained through the markers of the first and second person pronouns, whose occurrences point out different locutors every time the text (textual sequence) introduces a *new referent* in the discourse chain. […]

(b) The *doubling* of a speaker is prompted by the temporal *incongruity* that may exist between the act of uttering, always present, and the act of utterance. The existence of the two distinct temporal dimensions, grouped around a unique voice that says *I*, generates the voice's speaking ambiguity" (Munteanu 2006: 204, orig. Romanian).

[10]"The narrator is not the only voice who can say 'I' in a text. Narratives continually present characters who speak in 'direct discourse' and who, as 'locutors', are therefore responsible for their utterances" (Maingueneau 2008: 172, orig. Romanian).

[11]"The 'real' world that a literary work claims to depict as if it were alien cannot, in fact, be accessed except through the 'world' established by the literary text. The phrase 'the world of the text' has a twofold meaning: the world presented by the text and the world built by it, as a result of the complete nature of the text. Far from being defined by a transparent discourse, the world is actually 'mimed' through the discourse of the text. In a way, the text has 'to be' the universe that it is believed to represent" (Maingueneau 2007: 215, orig. Romanian).

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As the spokesperson of a concrete entity (the *concrete author*), the narrative voice[12] (for narrative instances, see also Lintvelt 1994) achieves a second-degree speech act: as a speaker, s/he disseminates the vision of an original locutor[13]. Thus, the narrator's discursive interventions are polyphonic: there is a single locutor and one or several speakers that keep to or stray from the original viewpoint. The narrative *self* is not semantically saturated; it is a discursive being, a multivocal deictictha plays the role of a host for the visitors of the textual world. S/he is the reading companion of those entering the "narrative woods."Homodiegesisanswers the reader's need to be anchored in an identifiable landmark – the antipode of the impersonal *it* that,under the claim of authenticity, disorients readers and does not allow them to harbour, when decoding a narrative world, in a (view)point of refuge that would guide themtowards a specific, subjectivised direction of reading. In the absence of an "opinion shaper", readershave the freedom to develop (validate/invalidate) their own evaluation: "[…] In neutral narratives, the *storyteller*, as a distinct voice, is replaced with the discourse that seems to be narrating itself, in the manner of a camera recording facts and events in a sequence whose logical motivation is obscure. In the diegetic universe determined by this discourse, the reader must make do on one's own, because orientation centres do not exist" (Comloşan&Borchin2003: 161, orig. Romanian).

3. Conclusion

I believe teachers and professors of Romanian language and literature have got the immense responsibility of unfolding like a text to students' eyes and ears. I consider the teacher's function is illustrative par excellence, as the "raw material" that s/he must refine is at the age when one follows models and imitates prototypes (see also Vandermeersche

[12]The narrator can be located inside the plot (*intradiegetic*) or outside it (*extradiegetic*). Adopting the viewpoints presented in well-known specialised literature, DoinaComloșan sums up the situation of the voices that are manifest in a narrative. Thus, the author revisits the distinction between *narrator* and *character* (*actor*):

> […] when outside the events, the narrator is seen as *different from the participants in the plot* (the characters) and the story is *heterodiegetic*. When the narrator is *inside* the plot, s/he takes part in the events; s/he is an *actor* and the narrative is *homodiegetic*. In the latter case, a *character* assumes the role of the narrator, as in the example of biographical narratives. In other situations, the narrator is a *witness character*: an observer, focaliser and eventually a commenter within the plot. The narrator's role of character in the plot is precisely that of direct knower of events (as a participant or witness). […]
>
> In an *auctorial narrative*, which makes up the frame story, the *character* is presented as an *actor* in a scene – especially in the act of *telling* other characters about certain events in which one was actively involved. Thus, in the diegetic universe, an *actor* assumes the act of narration, which grants one the role of narrator.
>
> The reader becomes acquainted with the character in a twofold position: as a *fictitious person* […] and a *storyteller* –the producer of a discourse about the plot, which delimits a distinct diegetic universe (a fictitious world) within the diegetic world of the frame story. In relation to the latter, the character-narrator's discourse is *intradiegetic*; in relation to its own story, the discourse may be *extradiegetic*, when it narrates other people's lives, or *intradiegetic*, when it refers to the narrator's own acts (Comloșan&Borchin 2003: 162, orig. Romanian).

[13]"[…] the author performs a kind of declarative act that modifies reality by virtue of the powers granted by the auctorial status. The declarative act establishes the state triggered by its utterance. […] Fictional utterances impress onto the reader's mind the world they represent. The speaker directly produces a simulated assertion and indirectly makes a statement ('I fictionally declare that…'), while the utterance also conveys a request ('Imagine that…')" (Maingueneau 2007: 41, orig. Romanian).

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& Soetaert 2013). The humanities teacher must be a spectacular presence, who invites and entices the listeners in the classroomto take the initiation path to acquirethe skill of a wordsmith, just as the teacher him/herself did once upon a time. I do not think that one can incite students to establish an unmediated contact with books by means of punitive constraints or promises of reward; this can only be achieved by our ability to formulate our discourse so attractively that it would prompt the deliberate embracing of the act of reading. We have the right to promise students a single thing – that they can become free in a world that keeps them captive in time and space. As reflexive beings (programmed not only to find pragmatic solutions, but also to engage in redeeming soliloquies), we are trapped in factual schedules and forget to live in fictional worlds every now and again. We can gain the status of winners in one way alone, by being impeccable word-crafters, and this is the best stake in a competitive civilisation. One can defeat opponents only by mastering words. Without reading, we are mere moving wrappers, covering a void. Examples in this respect are abundant in contemporary media prose, be it visual or aural. The teacher and professor of Romanian must be distinguished from other professional categories from the first sounds s/he utters. The markers of the distinctiveness of teachers and professors of Romanian should be the articulation of their discourse, the adequacy and appropriateness of the terms employed, the coherent and cohesive verbal flow, and the absence of lexical breaks caused by deficient vocabulary.

Nevertheless, the actual rolemodel that our students see in us is not only related to the discourse per se, but also to the way in which we *teach them how to express themselves*. Put differently, we can become role models when our students' development is a priority on our agenda (see Pleşu & Liiceanu 2012).

You will say that some teachers' indifference is due to lack of public recognition and material reward. This is true and due to these insufficiencies we take to the streets to cry out our dissatisfaction. However, what if we also took to the streets because we no longer care about building characters but about wages or because our disciples socialise in virtual space instead of reading?

The director who was awarded the grand prize at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival acknowledged his "limitations" in the acceptance speech. He confessed that, as all human beings, he too is flawed, but his failures lie in not having a Facebook or hi5 account. He stated, "I choose to remain an ignoramus".

Thus, one can but concur with Andrei Pleşu's ironic defence: "Here are […] the advantages of progress, of the global Internet and technological advances. It's the hysteria of communication! Loneliness has disappeared. Everyone quarrels with everyone; everyone crowds virtual space; everyone lives a 'shared' existence. A new 'international' comes to life before our eyes: the international of language deciphering. Silence has been extinguished for good. The world of words has finally exploded and it illuminates the earth like a spectre, like fireworks that no one can – or has the right – to control. The preposterous project of the Tower of Babel has been accomplished! The word has got lost among words" (Pleşu 2013, orig. Romanian).

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In the age of electronic publicity, I choose to teach my disciples to remain anonymous citizens of the Gutenberg Galaxy. I believe that this is the most effective therapy for keeping one's soul untarnished.

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