



**THE RESEARCH CENTRE ON THE IMAGINARY. TEXT, DISCOURSE, COMMUNICATION.**  
*IMAGINES*

**THE CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY LITERARY, LINGUISTIC AND DIDACTIC STUDIES  
(CCLLDS)**

of the  
**FACULTY OF LETTERS**

**UNIVERSITY OF PITEȘTI**

in collaboration with

**THE DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE  
of the  
UNIVERSITY OF IZMIR, TURKEY**

and

**ALBANIAN SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF ENGLISH (ASSE)**

organizes between 13-15 June 2014

The Annual International Conference

## **LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE – EUROPEAN LANDMARKS OF IDENTITY**

The theme suggested for this year:

### **IDENTITY AND ALTERITY IN THE EUROPEAN CULTURAL IMAGINARY**

The 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the annual conference organized in 2014 by the Faculty of Letters, University of Pitești, traditionally held under the title *Language and Literature: European Landmarks of Identity*, continues its research and debate series initiated in the previous editions on the paradigms of the imaginary. Establishing a link between the concepts of *identity*, *alterity* and *cultural imaginary*, the present edition aims at rethinking the concepts of identity and alterity from the perspective of the European cultural imaginary.

One of the main principles in the treatises on logic, **identity** does not apply to natural languages and other forms of culture as an abstract form, but as a *principium identitatis et discrepantiae*. Apparently antagonistic, the concepts of *identity* and *alterity* presuppose each other, being the two poles between which the human self-consciousness is formed. Circumscribed to the subjectivity of the self, the concept of *identity* is inseparable from that of *alterity*, regarded in terms of difference or opposition, as well as interior alterity. The *identity – alterity* couple, materialized under the form **I – the others**, plays a major part in understanding cultural diversity. Any linguistic and literary space constructs its identity through the impact of alterity perception. To show openness towards alterity means to become aware of both identity and identity within alterity.<sup>1</sup>

The papers presented at our conference are aimed at contributing to the research on the manner in which the antinomy *identity-alterity* glides towards the transgression of oppositions in the cultural imaginary by revealing identity dimensions and levels, awareness of the differences, intercultural dialogue, and the challenges of identity/alterity. The interdisciplinary perspective: text linguistics, discourse analysis, imagology, literary criticism and hermeneutics, cultural anthropology, philosophy, didactics, gender studies, communication studies etc. will allow a rethinking of the above-mentioned concepts.

### **Identity and Alterity from a Linguistic Perspective**

Language is the place where the relation between *you* and *I* becomes manifest; it facilitates the process of knowing the self and the other.

Abstract identity is highlighted through the reiteration of the object, its hypostasiation (the object which is identical with itself) and has denotative applications in the constants of artificial languages. Through the principle of concrete identity, natural languages double the perspective of knowledge: “The language mechanism, according to Saussure, is wholly based on **identities** and **differences**, some being nothing more than the counterweight of the others”.<sup>2</sup> Logicians have proved that objects are manifest through specific properties which liken one to the other, thus delimitating the class they are included in. These properties differentiate them from objects belonging to other classes, but any object has extra properties which differentiate it from the other objects of the same class. In view of the above, it has been demonstrated that natural languages reflect the knowledge of the classed order of reality, in various configurations and to various degrees, from one idiom to the other. The componential paradigms of the semantic fields, the sememe structures and other means of semantic configuration “reproduce”, in the area of meta-linguistic representation, the classed order of reality. Lexical and grammatical classes and, in general, all the criteria of classification and sub-classification constitute the areas where identities and differences are to be distinguished. Within the area of knowledge, subjectivity generates the aesthesis generating the artistic universe in all its diversity and, at the same time, the thesis that (in addition to scientific, religious and philosophical knowledge) opens the way for the creativity of argumentative roles and strategies. No object of knowledge as a field of culture can be understood as unity in diversity without Saussure’s terms regarding language.

In E. Coşeriu’s opinion, language is governed by two universal principles: **creativity** and **alterity**. Significance has been, from the very beginning, intended *for the other* and has belonged *to the other*, therefore language is the essential way and the primary manifestation of man’s *being-with-the-other*. Due to alterity, language appears under the form of languages and traditions that are shared. Alterity is the feature that distinguishes the linguistic act of signifying from other types of content of the expressive forms and, subsequently, it represents the basis of language historicity, which is the constant manifestation of the solidarity with a community of subjects and with its traditions and thus, of the social essence of man’s intrinsic historicity.

As a consequence of such a diversity of perspectives on language, we propose as main topics of reflection and research: **the identity of vernacular languages in the context of globalization; the effects of linguistic interferences; the evolution of linguistic transfer; emotive meaning, implicit meaning, polyphony; dialogal/dialogic, argumentative roles.**

### **Identity and Alterity in Literature**

Although quite broad and permissive, the concepts of *identity* and *alterity* in literature can be circumscribed to a referential definition: in essence, it is about the relationship between the self and the other, about identifying the

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<sup>1</sup> For E. Levinas, the first theoretician in philosophy on the relation between *I* and *the other*, the appeal to the other represents the act of self-identification (*Totalité et Infini: essai sur l'extériorité*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, The Hague, The Netherlands, 1961).

<sup>2</sup> *Curs de lingvistică generală*, Iaşi, Polirom, 1998, p. 123, transl. ours.

similarities and the differences in order to reach knowledge. In other words, neither identity nor alterity could exist outside a relation of comparison. Therefore we should establish the criteria for comparison.

The two concepts describe the relationship between the writer, as the author of the text, and the reader, as the receiver of the same text. In Umberto Eco's vision, [the empirical author/the model author](#), [the empirical reader/the model reader](#) respectively, can define the different types of relationships that exist between these two participants in the literary act of communication. What do they seek in each other? Identity or alterity? What does the model author search for when constructing his/her model reader: identity or alterity? And what does the reader want to find in the fictional world: a world identical to that in which he lives or the alterity of another?

*Identity* and *alterity* can also be helpful in analyzing the mechanisms for seeking the self in autobiographical texts: autobiography, diary, memories, or in the hybrid genre called auto fiction. The problem here is that of the relationship between the narrator's and the author's ego. Is it about identity or about alterity? Likewise, an investigation of the boundary between the real ego, the fictitious one and the fictional one would be very interesting: is it about identity or about alterity?

Finally, *identity* and *alterity* can define the relationship between the self and the other considered as two entities belonging to different mentality codes (national, racial, political, religious etc.). Does knowing or, on the contrary, ignoring the Other mean searching for identity or for alterity? What does alterity consist of and what are the criteria that help us define it? Can the roles of identical or of another be swapped? In this respect, the exotic, travel literature or the travel memoirs can provide fertile ground for research.

For this year's proceedings, we propose several axes of reflection, certainly without assuming them to be exhaustive: [identity and alterity in the reception of literary texts](#); [identity and alterity in the literature of confession/religious literature](#); [identity and alterity in the representation of the self and of the other](#).

## **Identity and Alterity from a Sociological and Communicational Perspective**

Identity occurs in society as a permanent process of construction and reconstruction that is always related to the [Other](#). "We exist for one another and interact with one another as far as we communicate: we send and receive signals, encode and decode messages"<sup>3</sup>. Thus, communication (through language, languages or culture) goes beyond the language level and emerges as a relationing process, identity being directly influenced by the relationships, positions and roles we fulfill in relation to another person.

Identity construction involves several steps (search, construction, assertion, recognition), and the experts in the fields dealing with this topic focus their research on various levels: national identity, cultural identity, personal identity, social identity, etc.

Starting from these benchmarks, we shall further list a few of the many possible reflection axes: [European identity - European communities: enlargement, integration, diversity](#); [I and the Other / we and the Others](#), [identity and alterity in the current paradigmatic changes: modernity, postmodernity, multicultural, intercultural, transcultural and so on](#); [identity differences: geographical](#) (rooting, grubbing, places of belonging), [temporal](#) (melancholy, nostalgia, oblivion, memory reconfiguration), [cultural, linguistic](#), etc.; [meeting places for self and other: reality and virtuality](#), [media representations of the Other in times of crisis](#) (economic, religious, military confrontations, etc.).

## **Identity and Alterity in the Didactics of Languages**

The changes occurring nowadays on the social and economic level, changes that are also reflected by the European linguistic policies, lead to the necessity for people to learn at least two foreign languages, besides their native one. Teaching and learning represent a "discovery of the Other"<sup>4</sup>. "The didactics of languages has to go beyond the objective of merely developing the learners' linguistic skills towards enriching their representations of

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<sup>3</sup> Drăgan, Ioan, *Comunicarea: paradigme și teorii*, vol. I, Bucharest, RAO International Publishing Company, 2007, p. 5. The original quotation is: "Existăm unii pentru alții și interacționăm unii cu alții în măsura în care comunicăm între noi: transmitem și primim semnale, codificăm și decodificăm mesaje".

<sup>4</sup> Siebert, Horst, *Pedagogie constructivistă*, Iași, Institutul European, 2002, p. 216, transl. ours.

and attitudes to the countries whose languages they study and their inhabitants.”<sup>5</sup> The teaching and learning of a foreign language implies, among other things, the contact with another cultural system that has to be assimilated. Consequently, this process needs to be prepared starting with the ones that will conduct it, the teachers. They should be trained and should train, in their turn, in the spirit of the **pedagogy of interculturality**, laying the stress on the development of the intercultural communicative competence.

Consequently, we suggest the following axes of reflection, the list not being exhaustive: **the teaching process as an intercultural dialogue; the integration of aspects of culture and civilization in the teaching of languages as a means of valuing identity (knowing one’s own culture) and alterity (knowing the culture of the Other); the didactics of plurilingualism; the initial training of the foreign language teachers from an intercultural perspective; the role of the authentic documents in the teaching and learning of languages; methods of assessing intercultural competence.**

**The debates are organized into several sections.** To send the summary or the paper, or to get any other information, please contact the person in charge of the respective section:

**1. Romanian Language; Romanian Literature; Comparative Literature; The Didactics of the Romanian Language; Communication and Cultural Studies; Performing Arts** - Lavinia GEAMBEI ([geambeilavinia@yahoo.com](mailto:geambeilavinia@yahoo.com))

**2. French Language; French Literature; Francophone Literatures; French Cultural Studies; Canadian Cultural Studies** - Liliana VOICULESCU ([lilgoilan@gmail.com](mailto:lilgoilan@gmail.com))

**3. Spanish Language; Spanish Literature; Hispano-American Literature** - Adriana APOSTOL ([silvadius@yahoo.com](mailto:silvadius@yahoo.com))

**4. English Language; English Literature; Anglophone Literatures** - Paula PIRVU ([gratielapirvu@gmail.com](mailto:gratielapirvu@gmail.com))

**5. Language for Specific Purposes (French, English); The Didactics of the French/English Language; Translation Studies (French, English, Spanish)** - Carmen BÎZU ([camy8078@yahoo.com](mailto:camy8078@yahoo.com))

#### **THE CALENDAR OF THE CONFERENCE**

- **April 5, 2014** - submission of the registration form;
- **May 5, 2014** - confirmation of the acceptance of the paper;
- **May 20, 2014** - sending the registration fee;
- **June 13-15, 2014** - proceedings of the conference;
- **July 25, 2014** - sending the paper in extenso.

**NOTE:** The papers will be written in **English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese or Spanish**. **Only the papers that have been presented and, subsequently, accepted by the peer review committee will be published** (in the journal *Language and Literature – European Landmarks of Identity*, IDB-indexed and CNCS-classified). The time allotted to the presentation of a paper is 15 minutes.

After the papers are accepted, their authors will receive information about the accommodation and the bank coordinates in view of their paying the tax (**50 €** for the foreign participants, respectively **200 RON** for the Romanian participants).

For any additional information, do not hesitate to contact us:

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<sup>5</sup> Colles et al, *Espaces francophones. Diversité linguistique et culturelle*, Cortil-Wodon, 2005, p. 135, transl. ours.