



Editorial Note

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The year 2025 is a quarter-century, a landmark in the passage of recorded time, a moment that invites a thorough academic reflection on the condition of the humanities, particularly the study of literature(s) and language(s) in a century that transcends the paradigm of Humanism into Posthumanism and that of human intelligence into Artificial Intelligence. Therefore, this issue of *Linguaculture* aims to look into the past, present and future of interconnected fields shaped and even morphed beyond shape by ideologies and technologies. Are ideologies and the ideologically informed theories used by academics in the last 60 years or so a threat or just a challenge? How are the academics to navigate the straits connecting text and context without losing sight of either or the compass altogether? What tools can they use to map the protean landscapes of contemporary crises? These are the troubling questions raised in the papers gathered here.

Malpas and Wake, the editors of *Critical and Cultural Theory*, introduce their readers to the complex intersections of literary criticism and what is known as cultural studies (and their theories), contending that “Critical theory has become a necessary element of advanced study in the arts, the humanities and the social sciences because of the now widely shared recognition that meaning is neither natural nor immediate” (viii). In other words, meaning is a construct of the human mind (possibly, of late, the “mind” of a digital computer or computer-controlled robot) that is necessarily and always mediated. The articles

in this issue tackle the problematic interconnections of text and context, text and theory, text, adaptation and performativity. The angles of approach lead their authors to fresh considerations and assessments of aesthetic value, gender and language, and the shifting meanings attached to concepts like femininity, madness and identity.

The place and impact of theory is (re)considered by all the articles in this issue, starting with the assessment of the extent to which Shakespeare studies have been reshaped by the Frankfurt School and by what is called “French Theory” in the past half-century of literary criticism, which has been less literary and more cultural. Adrian Papahagi tackles the English bard’s plays and sonnets in their cultural context, arguing that Shakespeare’s creative mindset generated aesthetic effects and connotations that are more often than not distorted by today’s theories. Thus, the methods Papahagi pleads for in the study of literature in general, and of Shakespeare’s *oeuvre* in particular, are “historical-philological,” and different from what he deems to be contemporary “radical theory.”

Dragoş Ivana argues for a balance between acknowledging and assessing the intrinsic aesthetic value of the literary text and looking at it through cultural studies theories. Bringing to the fore the socio-political understanding of literature as text in context and relying on the conceptual tools and theories pertaining to other disciplines, the author navigates the troubled waters of the heated debates in the academic world without sinking the ship. Moored in the harbour of “literary through cultural studies,” the ship built in this study is ready to brave new journeys through protean canons and schools of criticism. The dialogue with the main standpoints of the theories shaping the study of literature in the last forty years or so and the conclusion that reinforces the complementarity of literary studies and cultural studies are a valuable reflection on the topic of the lens through which literature can be best analysed in the 21st century.

In “The Birth of Literature from the Spirit of Economy,” using the Victorian novel as a case study, Codrin Liviu Cuţitaru deploys an interdisciplinary approach to establish how literature is begotten, rather than merely informed, by economy and economic structures. His discussion of how the Industrial Revolution displaced human labour and centralized authority, producing new narrative forms and reshaping the notion of authorship, feels particularly prescient: As we enter the second quarter of the 21st century, we face

growing uncertainty about the place of non-human systems in the production of meaning, about post-human agency and the future of human creativity.

This concern with the discursive production of meaning is further expounded in Marcela Sulak's "The Sentence Will Be Respected," where close readings of Leila Long Soldier's poetry collection *Whereas*, as "documentary," and as an "act of poetic resistance" which responds to the 2009 U.S. Congressional Resolution of Apology to Native Peoples, examine diction and linguistic structures in relations to issues of (dis-)embodiment and erasure, displacement and silencing, invisibility and vocalisation. Syntax, grammar, punctuation (and language more broadly), Sulak argues, encode mechanisms of power that both reflect and actively shape ideologies and agencies.

The relationship between text and context is finely unpacked in Veronica Tatiana Popescu's "Reimagining Orwell," which positions its argument within the field of performance and adaptation studies. In her discussion of Olăhuț's creative choices in the adaptation of Orwell's *Animal Farm* for the "Luceafărul" Theatre for Children and Youth (Iași), Popescu raises critical questions about audience reception and theatrical efficacy. While the production is attuned to textual nuance and to the contemporary relevance of Orwell's critique of authoritarianism within a contemporary Romanian geopolitical context, its messaging, the scholar intimates, suffers in its attempt to reach too broad an audience and to operate "in different (and competing) theatrical modes simultaneously."

Underpinned by transdisciplinary approaches to madness and literature, Anca-Luisa Viusenco's article delves into the danger zone of madness, femininity and identity in her study of the "madness narrative" written by Joanne Greenberg and its adaptations first to film and later to stage. The author's scope is to question the relevance of Greenberg's confessional writing to contemporary audiences. At the same time, the study is a contribution to the theory of adaptation.

The investigations of these intersecting intellectual pursuits continue along a line that is not far from the mysteries of insanity explored by Viusenco, with Dragoș Zetu's "Beyond Comprehension." However, Zetu's thesis shifts the focus of hermeneutic approach from Bartleby and his (to some critics) incomprehensible behaviour bordering on insanity to the lawyer's ideological incapacity to make sense of Bartleby's demeanour in Melville's classic tale. In his

argument, Zetu relies on Kant's philosophical account of the Enlightenment, a frame of mind based on reason and logic that clashes with Bartleby's alleged Romanticism.

Ştefan Ghiran jolts us back into the zone of ideology, ironically claiming that "Ideology Is Dead," while actually showing that ideology is not a fixed term. He chooses to focus on the performative aspect of ideology. The concept of gender as performance is coupled with approaches to gender and language. He then applies this broader theoretical context to two case studies: Suzette Haden Elgin's *Native Tongue* and Ted Chiang's *The Story of Your Life*. The finishing touch is provided by Donna Haraway's concept of *worlding*, the creation device that shapes the two texts tackled in the paper, making them illustrative of the thesis.

In "Blurring the Line Between Fiction and Reality" Alina Tacu engages in a demonstration that Atwood grounded her dystopia of *The Handmaid's Tale* in fairly recent episodes of abusive systems based on patriarchal oppression: Ceauşescu's Decree 770 in Romania, Stalin's 1936 ban on abortion, and the Nazi Lebensborn program. The paper excels in the intersections it establishes between the fictitiousness of Atwood's Gilead and the pernicious dictatorial ideologies in the recent past, with echoes of Puritan theocracy in early America, the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment in the United States, and the reinstatement of the Mexico City Policy.

In arguing for a decentered, place-focused criticism that responds to global crises intensified by technological mediation, Faith Bates's "A New Map for Literary Criticism: Geocriticism and Its Response to Contemporary Crises" extends the discussion of ideology beyond authors and texts, emphasising its production through spatial relations and representations. Drawing on interdisciplinary research, data analysis, and critical praxis, the paper proposes geocriticism as a model that, by prioritising place and space over authorship, may be better equipped to address ideological discontents and to help ameliorate ongoing crises in the humanities.

The standpoints of the authors engaged in grappling with their own positioning *vis-à-vis* text, context and theory, and their assessments of the state of the humanities today are here convergent, here divergent, but never monolithic. The questions raised and the hypotheses formulated are more valuable than absolute answers, and it is through them that the humanities maintain their dynamics.