

# A CDA Approach to Anti-Pandemic Protests

Daniela ȘORCARU\*

## Abstract

*We can definitely say that the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has changed our lives in such a complex way that it may take us a long time to investigate the ever-branching consequences upon all aspects of our existence. It has come with restrictions, impositions and limitations, established by the authorities and meant to keep the pandemic under control. It was only natural for such forced requirements to be met with protest, as opposing what one deems as infringing upon one's rights and freedoms is still considered to be a basic human right. Yet, as with everything else in this world, the truth is always in-between, at the intricate crossroads of inter-twining concepts such as human rights, freedom of choice, (mass-)manipulation, conspiracy theories, and individual and mass-psychology. When tackling the numerous and diverse protests that have divided the world over restrictions to be observed or over the vaccination process, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) may be regarded as providing a complex view on such matters, revealing the sub-text of what we see and hear nowadays. And let us not forget that, as far as segregation is concerned, one of the oldest tricks in the book reads "Divide et impera!"*

**Keywords:** CDA, sub-text, communication, subliminal, manipulation

All of us most likely agree by now that the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has altered multiple layers of our everyday life, and that it may take people a long time to grasp the full extent of the phenomenon, or for researchers to analyse its far-reaching impact on the individual, the society and the world as a whole. In such an age, dominated by paradoxes maybe more than ever before, opposing views come head-to-head in a confusing communication exchange, most of which is just one-sided, since the interlocutors have usually already made up their minds about what to believe (in), or they may be easily manipulated into supporting completely different ideas from one day to the next. Paradoxes in the way people are expected to react and the way they actually do, paradoxes in attitudes towards scientific facts or conspiracy theories, paradoxes in social interaction (when, for example, it is too dangerous for children to go to school, but it is all right for them to roam the malls in crowds).

---

\* "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati, Romania, daniela.sorcaru@ugal.ro

The international context being so complicated and complex, there has been an additional strain on the global population, one that authorities had to resort to in order to exert or regain a sense of control on the situation: restrictions, impositions, limitations, under various shapes and forms, from lockdowns to curfews or to green/medical passports/cards/certificates or whatever they may end up being called. Just as naturally, individual and mass-psychology dictate that such harsh requirements enforced on people be met with a certain degree of protest, as this is still considered to be a basic human right, i.e. that of opposing anything that seems to infringe on one's rights and freedoms. Larger or smaller protests have been sparked all over the world, with people voicing their frustrations, discontent, fears, and, why not, sometimes delusions, caught up in this intricate web of mass-media hysteria, conspiracy theories on the rise, shifting medical scientific research data and, in some countries, lack of coordination at the level of national authorities. All these make up a very fertile ground for pragmatic scrutiny, discourse analysis, with a particular focus on CDA (critical discourse analysis), as such concepts stand a higher chance at attempting to shed light on what is genuinely happening in the world right now. But before delving into CDA, let us take a moment and remember a basic concept in discourse and interactions:

The question of the nature of reality has a long and noble history. Stances with respect to that question have constituted some of the most important fault lines in intellectual debates. The perspective that concerns us here is that which characterizes reality as a social construct, and which locates the process of construction in the interaction between an individual and his or her world, most importantly as mediated by interaction with other people. For some, [...] this has meant an empirical focus on the individual's experience of that interaction, and on the consequences of interactional processes for individual development (see Case 1996 for an overview). For others, it has meant a focus on interactional processes themselves, as revealing the social dimension of the construction of reality. (Heller 2003: 251-252)

The present investigation focuses on combining both perspectives identified by Monica Heller in analysing the verbal and non-verbal dimensions of people's reactions under the form of anti-COVID protests, since it is important to analyse both the individuals' building their own (social) reality and the impact of so doing both on themselves

and on the society itself. The reason CDA was selected in tackling the issue of anti-pandemic protests becomes obvious when thinking of the very definition of the concept:

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. (van Dijk 2003: 352)

What is more, adding the non-verbal dimension into the mix would only create a more complex image of both the front picture and the background (which carries an incredible weight in the process of dissecting what is going on nowadays in the world). Moreover, another useful tool is to be found in van Dijk summarizing the main tenets of CDA according to Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 271-280), that are of particular interest for the current endeavour:

1. CDA addresses social problems.
2. Power relations are discursive.
3. Discourse constitutes society and culture.
4. Discourse does ideological work.
5. Discourse is historical.
6. The link between text and society is mediated.
7. Discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory.
8. Discourse is a form of social action. (van Dijk 2003: 353)

The conclusion can, thus, be drawn, looking at the eight dimensions listed above, that discourse does permeate everything, not only language, but culture itself, in all its complexity and intricacy, while serving as a bridge between language and people, between context and the real meaning of any conversation, between the text itself and society's reaction to it or influence in creating it, building or destroying beliefs and manipulating people into taking or not taking action at any given moment in human history. It should be safe to say that, yielded skilfully, CDA and discourse analysis may be looked upon as valuable or dangerous weapons to use in communicating or persuading. Going into further detail, the current research also benefited from the distinction drawn between the micro- and macro-levels that combine within CDA and make it not only fully functional, but also much more encompassing and complex:

Language use, discourse, verbal interaction, and communication belong to the micro-level of the social order. Power, dominance, and inequality between social groups are typically terms that belong to a macrolevel of analysis. This means that CDA has to theoretically bridge the well-known 'gap' between micro and macro approaches, which is of course a distinction that is a sociological construct in its own right (Alexander et al. 1987; Knorr-Cetina and Cicourel 1981). (van Dijk 2003: 354)

However, in perfect concord with the idea that CDA analysts usually take clear stands as to what and how they investigate, a confession is in order to be made here, namely that of sharing the strong belief that, in order for CDA to work its entire magic, we need to be talking about a high degree of interdisciplinarity in conducting research, as other fields can lend a hand in unveiling a deeper, subtler, sometimes surprising reality or social/conversational/political/etc. context (e.g. behavioural and mass-psychology, psychoanalysis, sociology, etc.). Combining several such fields of research provides a clearer picture that can be summarized as follows: it's only about control. Now the question that entails is equally important: control of what? The ensuing case studies will try and figure out the multiple possible answers to this very question. Because, even when being the object of mass-manipulation, some individuals manage to see things for what they are, as a protest sign reads "It was never about health. It's about CONTROL" [1]. Focus on the issue of control is graphically rendered by the use of capitals and the underlining of the word 'control', thus drawing particular attention to it.



Considering all the restrictions and obligations imposed by the authorities on the population at large, we can easily grasp the perception of power as control, but control exerted at levels rarely seen in some countries, or reminiscent of totalitarian regimes in others. Whenever people feel that there is open control of the public discourse, they are bound to react, either because they have never been subjected to such practices out in the open in the past, or, with former communist countries, for example, because it reminds them of the time when they were not allowed to have a voice. This is when we see protest boards reading “This is about TYRANNY vs. FREEDOM”, or “END THE LOCKDOWN” [2].



Things further degenerated, at the level of social reaction, when authorities started considering, or even enforcing, issues such as compulsory vaccination and the obligation to provide a green passport/certificate in order to be allowed to go to work or interact socially in cafés, restaurants, cinemas, etc. Matching the harshness of the measures taken, or to be taken, the protesters’ language and attitude took a turn for the worse, with violence bursting not only at a linguistic level, but also taking physical shape in confrontations with the police, as we can very well see in aggressive signs reading “FUCK THE SYSTEM” [3]; “#NO AL GREEN PASS, #NO ALLA DITTATURA” [#NO GREEN PASS, #NO DICTATORSHIP] [4]; “MON CORPS M’APPARTIENT. TYRANNIE DU PASS SANITAIRE, NON MERCI”

[MY BODY BELONGS TO ME. TYRANNY OF THE GREEN PASS, NO, THANK YOU] [5]; “COVI PASS = APARTHEID” [6].



Along the same lines, some boards are even meant to incite people to rebel against impositions, against authorities, under the useful umbrella of human rights, as they display messages such as: “STAND UP. TAKE YOUR FREEDOM BACK,” or “CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE BECOMES A SACRED DUTY WHEN THE STATE HAS BECOME LAWLESS AND CORRUPT” [7].

What is more, the use of capitals on most protest signs is in no way arbitrary, as many social categories need to shout their frustrations out, frustration which resulted from them feeling silenced in a world

that accepts just one truth, just one view, which is imposed on everybody. Talking about anti-vaxxers and Covid non-believers, as people ended up calling them, such groups experience the crippling realization that they have been robbed of their own voice, of their own free will, of any possibility of operating a choice in the matter. Hence, it is absolutely logical for them to use capitals when expressing their point of view.

And the plot thickens, so to speak, increasing pressure exerted on such vulnerable social groups, and enhancing their perception of being victims of abuse and mind control techniques, if attention and analysis turn to the media discourse during pandemic times. Now, one can surely understand that ratings are what makes the media go round and round, but responsibility, in such troubled times, should have played a vital role in news reports or any sort of media coverage of the pandemic. Although coming from a former communist country, where many are old enough to have experienced a totalitarian regime that they still remember, it comes with great difficulty for any Romanian to say that, perhaps, control of the public discourse should somehow have been enforced to a certain extent (as mentioned before, this is advice reluctantly given, easily noticeable in so many hesitancy-markers: 'perhaps,' 'somehow,' 'to a certain extent'). Just because there usually is a very fine line between control of public discourse for the greater good and disguised dictatorship, at first, which later blooms into out-in-the-open totalitarianism.

Yet, the media could be held accountable for instilling and feeding fear and panic among people all over the world, in a double-layered attempt, one noble, one pragmatic: on the one hand, the noble goal will always be that of keeping everybody informed of what is going on around the globe (an argument which can always put on the coat of pretext); on the other hand, the pragmatic and financial aim, which simply reads higher ratings, more money in the pockets of TV network and newspaper owners. This is another issue in itself, considering that such owners have their own agenda, which obviously translates in the perspective from which news is reported or presented to the masses, most of the times already 'digested' to please the owners' 'sponsors' or business associates. It is a heady mixture that can quickly turn dangerous, when less educated masses are addressed, the same masses that immediately turn to conspiracy theories as defence mechanisms, meant to help them cope with the overwhelming current situation.




Hence, this is why protest signs such as the following could be seen in the streets, addressing the very issues discussed above: “MEDIA IS THE VIRUS” [8]; “FACTS, NOT FEAR,” “FLATTEN THE FEAR,” “LAWS CHANGE, CONSCIENCE DOESN’T,” or the very clever “COVID-1984 IS BEING USED FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES AND PUBLIC CONTROL” [9]. As emphasized before, the capitals are not the choice of the present investigation, but a decision of the authors of such protest boards, as is the different colouring in 1984 (where 19 is written in black, just like the rest of the text, but 84 is written in red, a colour of warning, prohibition, and passion in itself: warning because democracy is at stake, prohibition referring to limiting or cancelling constitutional rights, and passion for defending freedom), obviously intended to draw a parallel to George Orwell’s dystopian novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. This clearly results in a problematic positioning of the oppressed group, namely the fact that they see themselves as victims who are constantly watched by the system, another Big Brother variation, and subjected to aggressive propaganda. The idea of oppression, however, clearly shines through and cannot be denied, not only for those with the adequate literary background required to make sense of it, but also for those intrigued by the numbers added to what they are already familiar with.



In this respect, mention should be made here of two basic truths: 1) “people communicate for two reasons: to transfer facts and to evoke emotions” (Weltman 2015: 120) and 2) “the message that works best in every case is the message with one well-defined goal that knows exactly



what it's being sent out in the world to do" (114). As you may have already figured it out, this has perfect manipulation recipe written all over it, as Weltman's ideas, though primarily thought of as applying to sales, may very well work in everyday life at all levels. 'May very well work' is actually a euphemism for 'of course they work, we are experiencing them at work in contemporary society right now.'

A dangerous combination of such concepts can be easily seen in protest signs making use of the emotional component of manipulation in order to obtain the result desired: "NON aux masques, Laissez les enfants sourire ♥" [NO masks, Let children smile ♥] [10], where not only the use of the noun 'children,' but also the insertion of the heart symbol on the board are meant to elicit an emotional response in the audience at a subliminal level. The same thing happens with "My constitutional rights are ESSENTIAL " [11], where the image of the American flag is deliberately employed as an appeal to patriotism, to the very concept of freedom itself, as we all know the USA to be 'the land of the free,' a subliminal association which only adds extra manipulative weight to the message. Not that there is anything wrong either with children smiling or with being a patriot; the only problem here is that such innocent or noble imagery is employed exclusively to a manipulative end. Then again, everything is fair in love and war, right? We may be witnessing modern verbal and non-verbal guerrilla warfare in the making...





Another instance of manipulating the emotional component of the social context is to be found at a different level that sparked protests all over the world: jobs and businesses. The unfortunate reality is that, because of the far-reaching effects of the pandemic, many people have lost their jobs and many smaller or bigger companies have gone out of business. Again, in this field, as well, people were bound to react and demand a solution that would allow them to pay their bills: “#LAISSEZ NOUS TRAVAILLER” [#LET US WORK], or, even more, a coffin-shaped graphic sign, reading “MORT DES RESTAURANTS, MORTS DES BARS, MORT DES DISCOTHEQUES,” [DEATH OF RESTAURANTS, DEATH OF PUBS, DEATH OF DISCOS], shifting focus even further towards the lack of social interaction that is entailed [12].

No matter how we may choose to look at it, we can say that we have not ‘invented’ social riots against what we perceive as abusive impositions and regulations issued by authorities. There is written proof of over 100-year-old protests against mask wearing during the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic: “ANTI-MASK MEETING. TONIGHT (Saturday) JAN 25 DREAMLAND RINK – To Protest Against the Unhealthy Mask Ordinance. Extracts will be read from State Board of Health Bulletin showing compulsory mask wearing to be a failure. Eugene E. Schmitz and other interesting speakers. Admission Free” [13]. This could actually be regarded as going exactly under the well-known heading ‘those who do not know their history are bound to repeat it,’ as people nowadays do not strike anyone as having learnt from the mistakes of their own past (or, rather, that of their forerunners). Again,

the bold letters and capitals are the original author's doing in creating the notice under scrutiny, serving a double purpose: they are meant to emphasize not only the topic of the meeting, but also the speakers (which give the event extra-weight for people living at that time) and the fact that there is no entrance fee (thus making it more accessible to the general public). This only serves to remember that we have not just invented the wheel, for those arrogant enough to think so.



The problem, nevertheless, is even greater in the present pandemic we are experiencing, as back in the 1918-1920 they did not have a vaccine to rebel against or to contest. This is an issue that can make up the topic of an entire future paper, but protests could not have been discussed, while leaving the vaccination process completely out of it. The debate will probably go on for years to come, as it has been around for over a year already, with each side defending their part of the story. If we were to somehow summarize it, we would have to say that it ultimately comes down to education. Whether it is about (proper) medical education, or being knowledgeable in such sciences as sociology, psychology, NLP (neuro-linguistic programming), it must really be very difficult for people to make sense of it all.

If vaccination campaigns took all these into account or not would again be the focus of a different paper, just because the issue is profoundly complex and intricate, with too many ramifications into both the individual's existence and society's everyday life. In addition, reference will have to be made there of successful vs. unfortunate, or

even futile, manipulative techniques, starting with one of the basic principles in this field, which stipulates that thorough research must be conducted regarding the target audience prior to creating the message, so that such a text might serve its intended purpose and not only reach the addressees, but also make them relate to it and take action accordingly. Yet, just as with any other imposition enforced by authorities, people have rebelled against being obliged, one way or another, to get vaccinated, all the time claiming that they either have no idea what the vaccine is made of, or that its side-effects have not yet been thoroughly investigated, giving rise to protest signs reading “THE ‘CURE’ IS WORSE THAN THE ‘DISEASE’” [14], or “POUR LA LIBERTÉ VACCINALE” [FOR VACCINATION FREEDOM] [15].



Hence, one could rightfully say that authorities in charge of vaccination campaigns should automatically have turned to very good professionals in the field of communication (with particular focus on rhetoric, verbal and non-verbal manipulation, sociology, etc.), which may have resulted in a wider acceptance of the concept and, consequently, in fewer riots on the matter.

Moreover, combining analysis of what has been said and especially what has not been said openly, that is putting both text and sub-text under a CDA lens, another faux pas in managing this pandemic could be identified, which can be resumed under one additional concept: inconsistency. Granted, in the beginning, this could easily be explained by the novelty that the virus brought with it, as even experts in the field did not know exactly what to expect next. Not that they are not still guessing in some aspects, but nobody could possibly hold this against them, considering the ever-branching consequences of the illness itself, or the individual reactions to it, just as with most diseases and medicines.

No, it is definitely not that, and we are all in tremendous debt to all medical professionals who are fighting an unequal war to save lives. When coining the phenomenon of inconsistency, reference was made to political and administrative decisions made and measures taken, which, sometimes, in some respects, cannot be interpreted any other way than illustrating double standards.

One such instance can be seen in schools going on with face-to-face classes, when having tens of thousands of students and teachers getting infected with SARS-CoV-2, or even dying, because authorities did not manage to come up with proper distancing of students or organizing of classroom space or timetable. The same holds valid at the level of universities, that could much easier have switched to online courses, but which are hiding behind autonomy granted to higher education institutions, for reasons that escape logic altogether (as is the case in Romania, where universities are exempt from government ordinances, as they are granted autonomy in deciding their own fate, so to say, via the University Senate, including even state of emergencies).

Another relevant example is to be found in authorities finally closing down schools and businesses but allowing religious pilgrimages involving thousands or tens of thousands of people over the course of just a couple of days (still going on in Romania, at the time I am concluding this study, when we are experiencing almost 20,000 new

COVID cases and about 500 deaths every day). This is in no way to be interpreted as disrespectful towards a basic human right, as it could not be farther away from the original intention in using this argument. It ultimately comes down to one universal truth: it is not about restricting the right to practice one's religion, it is about saving lives...which would surely make God, or Allah, or Buddha, or whatever name you might want to use, much happier.

Last, but clearly not least, the best illustration of double standards that can be identified refers to politicians not having the courage to take harsh, highly unpopular, but desperately needed measures because they are more concerned with getting votes in the next elections than saving people's lives. All the more so as contemporary political discourse displays only their being too caught up in their control and power games, instead of stepping up to their intended roles and leading the country to safety.

Although everyone is, or should be, aware that there is no full-proof recipe that could magically get us all out of this mess, we all harbour the hope that people at all levels of power find it in themselves to put away all petty things in such an hour of great need, and prove to the world that we can emerge stronger, wiser, and better prepared at the other end of this bleak pandemic that has already cost us all so much. Will they be able to live with themselves if they fail (miserably)? After all, even if they are not aware of it, this is their finest hour...

## References

- Alexander, J. C., Giesen, B., Munch, R., and Smelser, N. J. (eds.) (1987) *The Micro-Macro Link*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Case, R. (1996) "Changing views of knowledge and their impact on educational research and practice" in Olson, D. and Torrance, N. (eds.) *The Handbook of Education and Human Development: New Models of Learning, Teaching and Schooling*, Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Fairclough, N. L. (2006) *Analysing Discourse. Textual Analysis for Social Research*, New York: Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. L. and Wodak, R. (1997) "Critical discourse analysis," in van Dijk, T. A. (ed.), *Discourse Studies. A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, Vol. 2. *Discourse as Social Interaction*, London: SAGE.
- Heller, M. (2003) "Discourse and Interaction," in Schiffrin, D., Tannen, D., and Hamilton, H. E. (eds.) *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Holliday, A., Hyde, M., and Kullman, J. (2006) *Intercultural Cultural Communication, an Advanced Resource Book*, New York: Routledge.

- Hutchby, I., and Wooffitt, R. (2006) *Conversation Analysis*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Kiesling, S. F., and Paulston, C. B. (eds.) (2005) *Intercultural Discourse and Communication*, Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Knorr-Cetina, K., and Cicourel, A. V. (eds.) (1981) *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology. Towards an Integration of Micro- and Macrosociologies*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- van Dijk, T. A. (2003) "Critical Discourse Analysis," in Schiffrin, D., Tannen, D., and Hamilton, H. E. (eds), *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, Malden, MA: Blackwell
- Weltman, J. (2015) *Seducing Strangers*, New York: Workman Publishing.
- Wodak, R., and Meyer, M. (eds.) (2006) *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, London: SAGE.

### Webliography

- [1] <https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/protests-against-covid-19-made-the-world-more-dangerous-report-claims-1.1242654>, available on 30/09/2021
- [2] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protests\\_over\\_responses\\_to\\_the\\_COVID-19\\_pandemic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protests_over_responses_to_the_COVID-19_pandemic), available on 25/08/2021
- [3] <https://www.africanews.com/2021/08/08/protesters-demonstrating-across-europe-against-vaccination-and-the-health-pass/>, available on 11/08/2021
- [4] <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/italian-police-warn-armed-attacks-by-anti-vaxxers-2021-09-09/>, available on 13/09/2021
- [5] <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20210801-despite-resistance-to-health-pass-italy-and-france-see-rise-in-vaccinations>, available on 05/08/2021
- [6] <https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/coronavirus/anger-as-french-protesters-compare-vaccines-to-nazi-horrors-1.5514497>, available on 22/10/2021
- [7] <https://yde.neu.edu.tr/politics-of-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>, available on 20/10/2020
- [8] <https://www.dw.com/ro/covid-19-europenii-tot-mai-nemul%C5%A3umi%C5%A3i-de-restric%C5%A3ii-ies-%C3%AEstrad%C4%83/a-56943390>, available on 06/10/2021
- [9] <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-54042003>, available on 21/10/2021
- [10] <https://globalnews.ca/news/7347140/addressing-anti-mask-protests-poses-a-challenge-for-leaders-experts-say/>, available on 04/10/2021
- [11] <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/17/far-right-coronavirus-protests-restrictions>, available on 29/07/2021



- [12] <https://www.euronews.com/2021/01/31/we-ve-had-enough-in-france-spain-and-denmark-anti-lockdown-protests-continue>, available on 25/02/2021
- [13] <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/03/us/mask-protests-1918.html>, available on 16/08/2021
- [14] <https://nbcmontana.com/news/nation-world/anti-lockdown-protests-sweep-europe-amid-third-wave-of-covid>, available on 06/07/2021
- [15] <https://www.dw.com/en/france-italy-see-mass-protests-against-covid-health-pass/a-58794976>, available on 22/10/2021

# *Pleating Stylistic Functions,* Or When Literature and Linguistics Collide

Oana-Celia GHEORGHIU  
Dunarea de Jos University of Galati, Romania



Daniela Șorcaru  
**Ways of Pleating Stylistic  
Functions**

Book review: ȘORCARU, Daniela, 2021,  
*Ways of Pleating Stylistic Functions*,  
Beau Basin, Mauritius: Lambert  
Academic Publishing.  
ISBN: 978-620-3-47272-1, 236 pp.



Many philological study programmes fall under two categories that should intertwine, but which often end up being worlds apart from each other: language and literature. It's in the name; and yet, sometimes, coordination fails, and polarisation makes room for barely disguised disdain for *the other*. Fortunately, they reunite when stylistics 'takes the floor': when literature cannot be construed in the absence of a sound linguistic analysis of its features, and when linguistics cannot find its most complex application without resorting to the most elaborate expressions of the written language, i.e., to fiction. Due to its linguistic and ideational complexity, the Modernist novel is clearly in desperate need of such togetherness when it comes to looking into its intricacies, and Daniela Șorcaru's study, *Ways of Pleating Stylistic Functions* (2021), proves successful in this compulsory endeavour.

Whether it is defined as "depth", a "deviation" or a "choice", whether it is "culturally inherited" (Barthes) or just "contextually restricted" (Enkvist) (in Galperin 1977: 11), style ends up, in Șorcaru's designation (following Riffaterre's), a structuralist crossroads of the encoding and decoding of a message (2021: 14). Will this

characterisation suffice? Hardly, as it leaves out a plethora of in-between elements and focuses only on the poles of communication. Bringing them together is what is sought for, which is why the first chapter sets on a quest for an inclusive definition, resorting to a rich literature, then goes back to deviation/deviance and peculiarity, as well as to their rather antagonist relation to norm, and thenceforth to stylistic features, in an attempt at defining stylistics as an either linguistic or literary academic enterprise. Şorcaru soon reaches the obvious conclusion “that the two branches of stylistics are engaged in a highly interdependent relationship” (28), and it is from this point onwards that her survey of the stylistic functions in the Modernist novel could have already set off on the right grounds. However, Şorcaru looks further for validation and for finding the perfect formula for her subsequent stylistic investigations, in two additional theoretical chapters. The former, *A Different Approach: Stephen Ullman*, focuses on the influential collection of papers gathered under the title *Meaning and Style* (1973), from where the author of the study under the lens here will borrow some of the contextual, psychological and, especially, semantic dimensions required, in her view, in decoding James Joyce and William Faulkner’s insane displays of the stream of consciousness. The latter, *Contemporary Insights on Style and Stylistics*, reviews the groundbreaking *Style in Fiction. A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose* by Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short (1981), with a view to tackling aspects pertaining to the rhetoric of the literary text, to its imitation games (writing-as-speech or, as is the case here, writing-as-thought) and (re)presentational functions.

A fourth chapter has been deemed necessary to introduce the texts from a more literary-oriented perspective: *The Modern Novel*. I would have said *Modernist* to avoid the terminological confusion, as English Literature historians and theorists place this modernity as early as in the Renaissance, and it is the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century High Modernism and Experimentalism that waits for Şorcaru to dissect its ways. The chapter, still heavily indebted to linguistics, focuses on the manifestations of the stream of consciousness as a free use of “unexpected combinations of words and word inventions... unique collocations, usually displaying a high metaphorical dimension” (77), on the features of the interior monologue, “a sustained free direct thought with no overt sign of a narrator” (Wales 432, qtd. in Şorcaru 2021: 76) and on those of the free indirect speech (“a blending of a

variation of reported speech where the reporting verbs are very often omitted, and of direct speech remarks", Şorcaru *ibid*).

The applicative part of the study of the ways in which stylistic functions are combined to create the complex forms and meanings of the Experimentalists is divided into three chapters, each dedicated to a Modernist giant, namely Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and William Faulkner. The distinction that Şorcaru makes between the *styles* of the three authors places Woolf in a category of her own, an artful one that seeks to free the novel discourse from its traditional 'breakdown' into time, setting, characters, etc. Arguing that the discontinuity, fragmentation, and disintegration that characterise the Woolfian universe are consequences of the *means of pleating stylistic functions*, Şorcaru asserts that Woolf's "poetic monologue" is not only metafictional, but also concerned with a linguistic preoccupation with form (82). To prove this point, Şorcaru resorts to a series of close stylistic readings of excerpts from *To the Lighthouse*, taking into consideration lexical, morphological, syntactic and semantic aspects of discourse that combine two, sometimes three or more stylistic functions at once. Though less explicitly so, Şorcaru identifies patterns of gendered language, as she claims that Mr Ramsey's discourse is less burdened with symbolic language and more logical syntactically than Mrs Ramsey's. In fact, all excerpts seem to have been (perhaps unconsciously) selected with a view to pinpointing these man/woman differences at the discursive level, and maybe Sara Mills' *Feminist Stylistics*, could have been a useful piece of theoretical background too. The thorough examination of the nine excerpts under Daniela Şorcaru's lens converges towards the conclusion that Virginia Woolf acquired the purpose of "altering, bending, twisting so as to match the natural and intricate flow of human thought and to convey the inner mechanisms of the complex human mind" (117).

If Woolf is the 'artful', then Joyce is the 'technical' one. I felt, just by looking at these attributes, a need for clarification, perhaps owing to a subjective inclination towards the latter, while having a strong feminist connection with the former. Was this book going to try to make a distinction between feminine art and masculine craft? I wondered. Are we in that domain where the male head/intelligible/logos is opposed to the female heart/sensitive/pathos (Cixous in Lodge 1988: 287)? In fact, Joyce is tackled in all his superb complexity that has been puzzling critics since the publication of *Ulysses*, in all his hyper- and hypotextual

network, in all his vacillation between stark realism, high allusiveness and obscure symbolism. Doctrine is left aside, and focus is laid on the linguistic craft at work in *Ulysses*. Şorcaru quotes Jennifer Levine's statement (1993: 137) that the novel in question may be approached as a poem, as a novel proper or *as a text*. She takes the third path, with a view to proving an intention of "highly encoding the message and making the reader's task all the more difficult" (2021: 131) by means of constantly hindering cohesion and coherence. I confess that I have missed, among the sixteen excerpts, one from the most obvious "violation of the linguistic codes" (161), i.e., from Molly's soliloquy, but somehow Şorcaru manages to make her point without it. I would recommend her comments to any puzzled reader of *Ulysses*, as she cuts her path through the thicket of allusions, ellipses, erudisms, foreign language insertions, meaningless words (and so on) that make the Joycean universe apparently inapproachable.

The next pitstop, and the most 'climactic' one, according to Şorcaru, is in Yoknapatawpha Country, for a thorough vivisection of Faulkner's burdening prose, in which "the dislocation of all rules is the most obvious, whereas the connection among elements is the most obscure" (171). Şorcaru focuses on *The Sound and the Fury*, that "tale told by an idiot [among others, of course] ... signifying nothing". This time, the excerpts have been judiciously selected so as to display the stylistic idiosyncrasies imprinted on the discourse of all four narrators, and the study is highly successful at pinpointing the differences that make *The Sound and the Fury* such a nightmare for many readers and such a rewarding enterprise for many others. As was the case with Joyce too, the stylistic analysis covers all areas, from the phonetic to the semantic, that 'collaborate' and blend styles and registers to "convey thought and speech as authentically and accurately as possible" (212), which is Şorcaru's main argument for the assertion that Faulkner is the author who took the stream of consciousness to its climax.

To conclude, by demonstrating how stylistic functions work towards creating novel forms and complicated, unexpected meanings in the fictional worlds of the three great Modernist novelists, Daniela Şorcaru successfully 'pleats' linguistics and literature, giving the philologists from both 'camps' a valuable research tool and enough ground to believe that reconciliation is not only possible, but also extremely desirable.