

ANDRADA FĂTU-TUTOVEANU

**THE ELECTRIC MIRROR. MEMORY, SELF-FICTION,  
POSTURES AND POSES.  
*THE DISTANCE BETWEEN ME AND ME (2018)***

*Introduction. Performing the Self. Literary Postures behind the (Iron) Curtain*

The life-writing accounts published since 1990 (and particularly, in the case of women writers, since 2000) that cover, in the form of memoirs, diaries, correspondence (and less in that of biofiction or autofiction), experiences in Cold War Romania reveal extremely interesting phenomena regarding the figure of the writer both historically but also as “parallel lives” or (his/her)stories<sup>1</sup>. In the politically redesigned post-war Romanian culture, the writers that previously functioned on their own or in relatively small literary circles became a central category, organised in massive institutional structures, controlled, punished or rewarded according to the political and no longer aesthetic relevance of their work:

Within the redesigned post-war Romanian cultural and social system, intellectuals represented a vital segment. ... Thus, a major marginalised category consisted of those who were not accepted by the new regime due to their social origin and/or previous activities. Those who were later ‘excommunicated’, following some ‘deviations’, were added to this segment. The opposed category, the “engaged” intellectuals, benefitted ... from numerous social and financial advantages or “privileges”, which led to the formula the “priviligentsia”, used by Antohi (2005) and Macrea-Toma (2009)<sup>2</sup>.

Thus, a new elite emerged, shaped from two categories of writers: those already famous that had to be persuaded by the regime to “join in”<sup>3</sup> and young authors, fabricated by the regime (through projects such as the “Mihai Eminescu” School of Literature). Both the category of the “engaged” writer and their writings were fabricated, constructed, while institutionally they were

a sort of paid clerks or ‘workers with the mind’ forced to respect plans, official documents, and attend meetings. These meetings were typical institutional events serving for performances of faithfulness (actually of conventionalism and

---

<sup>1</sup> The concept of *herstory* has made history itself, if we are allowed a pun, since the 1970s second-wave feminism, having been revisited frequently and criticised as well as reinforced, especially on spaces outside the Western world, such as post-communist Eastern Europe.

<sup>2</sup> Andrada Fătu-Tutoveanu, *Personal Narratives of Romanian Women during the Cold War (1945–1989): Varieties of the Autobiographical Genre*, New York, Edwin Mellen Press, 2015, p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> Malte Rolf, “A Hall of Mirrors: Sovietizing Culture under Stalinism”, *Slavic Review*, 68, 2009, 3, p. 628.

simulacrum) or for demonstrations of power and scapegoat rituals, re-enacting or re-staging at local level the ones already organised in Moscow (Cordoş 2012, 69)<sup>4</sup>.

Illustrative for the implementation of the Marxist-Leninist paradigm, the involvement of women writers in the process was essential, although the figure of the “woman writer” underwent a major shift in the mid-1960s from the militant, “engaged writer” towards more individualised, even rebellious figures in the 1960s and 1970s (and culminating with the 1980s, the so-called the Eighties Generation “optzeciști”), a sort of *hippie/beat* public figure. The politically controlled media recorded and reflected these changes which also affected the women writers (“as a professional category related to the above mentioned intelligentsia and as a minority that was necessary in order to legitimise the success of the ideological emancipation paradigm”<sup>5</sup>).

#### *Postures and Memory. Rehearsals and Setting Readjustments*

In previous research dedicated to Romanian women’s life-writing during the Cold War<sup>6</sup>, Nina Cassian’s multi-layered diary (started in the late 1940s but revisited and annotated successively in the 1970s and 1980s)<sup>7</sup> illustrated “the engaged writer” in a series of parallel lives or voices in the volume. It was the emergent class after the fall of the Iron Curtain and youth like Nina Cassian, with some former underground Communist activity, became essential propaganda tools. Nina Cassian’s case is perhaps the most relevant from this point of view because not only did she return successively to her diary<sup>8</sup> (*Memoria ca zestre [Memory as Dowry]*) after different political shifts taking place in the country but she was also given the change of revisiting at an older age her performances on television, recorded in different moments of her career, and analyse these visual *personae*. The diary is a genre that, in itself, and like life-writing in many cases, “cannot avoid fiction”<sup>9</sup>, whether intended for publication or not: “The written representation is always constructed, partial, mediated, even, to an extent, fictional”<sup>10</sup>. This process of diary writing involves building a self-narrative which is paralleled by a self-fiction (“the obvious voluptuousness of creating a convenient

<sup>4</sup> Andrada Fătu-Tutoveanu, *Personal Narratives*, p. 62.

<sup>5</sup> Andrada Fătu-Tutoveanu, *Building Socialism, Constructing People: Identity Patterns and Stereotypes in Late 1940s and 1950s Romanian Cultural Press*, Newcastle-upon-Thyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014, p. X.

<sup>6</sup> Andrada Fătu-Tutoveanu, *Personal Narratives*.

<sup>7</sup> Nina Cassian, *Memoria ca zestre [Memory as Dowry]*, I–III, București, Editura Institutului Cultural Român, 2003–2005.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>9</sup> Liana Cozea, *Confesiuni ale eului feminin [Confessions of the Female Ego]*, Pitești, Paralela 45, 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Rebecca Steinitz, “Writing Diaries, Reading Diaries: The Mechanics of Memory”, *The Communication Review*, 2, 1997, 1, p. 55.

fiction about herself"<sup>11</sup>. It also involves the biased perspective and the tendency to beautify the facts, conflicts, or perceive them subjectively"<sup>12</sup>. In Cassian's case we encounter an emphatic story of a fascinating, yet inflated self, "a fictionalised autobiography"<sup>13</sup>, as Laura Pavel writes, or at least exaggerated for dramatic effect.

Cassian added a first layer of comments in 1975, and a second one in the mid-1980s. By then, she was already in the US, and therefore writing with no self-censorship like, she says, happened in the 1970s. However, the diary was started in the late 1940s and spanned over the 1950s. A significant mentioned that has to be done here is that Cassian, who left to the US with a fellowship, decided to remain there and seek asylum. This decision was triggered by a friend's arrestment (the famous case of engineer G. Ursu, who died in prison) and the confiscation of the latter's diary, in which Cassian felt there might have been information incriminating or endangering her.

Returning to her own diary, Cassian's strategy concerning the diary was to maintain the previous notes, however "spontaneous, childish and unselective" she found them decades later when revisiting them but replace "the emotional impetus ... by the intelligent comment on them"<sup>14</sup> in order to give substance, as well as add facts that would perhaps interest literary historians and audiences<sup>15</sup>:

My hope is that this "document" will be revealing (especially for the years of the 'obsessive decade' [the first decade of the Cold War] but also for those before and after. And if the biographical details will accompany [...] my bibliography [...] it means I fulfil my conscious duty in exposing them<sup>16</sup>.

The mentioned specificity of the personal account is that of a multi-layered work, in which a new diary of the diary is overlapped decades later (as mentioned, in the 1970s and the again in the 1980s) with explanatory purposes. The author adds "stories" with both the meaning of narrative and levels or the projections of the self, which she keeps believing insufficiently explained. Cassian herself speaks of *revealing* "in what I would call an *exhibitionist* manner" of her superior being, possessing many gifts but also self-perceived as underdeveloped, incapable of

<sup>11</sup> Laura Pavel, "Cazul 'Ninicuța' – estetica realismului socialist și politica 'amorului'" ["The 'Ninicuța' Case: The Aesthetics of Socialist Realism and The Politics of Love"], in Gheorghe Perian (ed.), *Studii de literatură română recentă, II. Contribuții la istoria realismului socialist* [*Studies of Recent Romanian Literature. II. Contributions to the History of Socialist Realism*], Cluj-Napoca, Limes, 2017, p. 98.

<sup>12</sup> Andrada Fătu-Tutoveanu, *Personal Narratives*, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Laura Pavel, "Cazul 'Ninicuța'", p. 98.

<sup>14</sup> Alex. Ștefănescu, "La o nouă lectură: Nina Cassian" ["A New Reading: Nina Cassian"], *România literară*, 2003, 13, [www.romlit.ro](http://www.romlit.ro). Accessed on November 2021.

<sup>15</sup> Andrada Fătu-Tutoveanu, *Personal Narratives*, p. 75.

<sup>16</sup> Nina Cassian, *Memoria ca zestre*, p. 42. Unless otherwise stated, the quotations are translated into English by the author of this paper.

growing up or becoming mature<sup>17</sup> (which, she explains elsewhere, made her a good author for children – not in a motherly but in a playful way).

The need to expose, to explain, to reveal “to the world” is explicit in these successive comments and additions to the original text (left unchanged yet explained, like an intangible old picture). The author explains:

Without altering (just reducing) the existing notes, I felt the imperious need of some comments that would surpass the fragile contour of “personal experience” and which, although not being able to cover the entire “context”, would explain somehow my attitude, my behaviour, my enthusiasm, my revolt, my perplexity [...] when the absence of lucidity would not have had an excuse anymore<sup>18</sup>.

This concern for offering explanations or motivations through the multiple metatexts to an implied audience reinforce, if necessary, the intention to publish the diary, despite being perhaps the most private type of life-writing. Cassian’s actions seem in general to happen “in public”, due to some special awareness towards the public figure of the writer. After adding a first layer of comments and annotations in the mid-1970s on the diary written in the 1940s–1950s, a third layer was added to the text after her move to the United States in the mid-1980s. The author later explained that, aware of the danger of political surveillance or house searches, the previous comments had been written with a sort of “self-censorship” and encoding of her language. Thus, a third layer was added, a “comment to the comment”, “like in a corridor with parallel mirrors, infinitely multiplying myself, in an exhausting exercise”<sup>19</sup>.

Cassian builds, therefore, in her diary these galleries of mirrors in which to narcissistically contemplate her different auctorial postures, a situation that was clearly staged and exploited to the full later in the documentary. This tendency towards narcissism (visible in the pride or sad contemplation of her younger self in the film) has been emphasised more than once in relation to the author. “Narcissistic by definition, the woman diarist finds in the private diary... the propitious space for the endeavour to acquire a proper sense of identity, representation and evaluation of self, as well as a sense of the latter’s continuity or discontinuity”<sup>20</sup>. Alex Ștefănescu emphasised Cassian’s narcissism but also her lucidity when referring to the diary, while Laura Pavel argues that Cassian “reveals herself with a kind of acute narcissistic exaltation, staged with intelligence and sense of humour [emphasis added]”<sup>21</sup>. The setting for this gallery of theatrical characters is the diary, which instead of manifesting as an intimate, private space of reflection becomes a display case filled with mirrors and personal artefacts placed

---

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 33.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> Liliana Cozea, *Confesiuni*, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> Laura Pavel, “Cazul ‘Ninicuța’”, p. 98.

in plain sight. The life-writing documents (here the diary, together with interviews or speeches of the writer) participate in this staging, or, in Jérôme Meizoz's words, production and control of their image in an age dominated by the "performance and image marketing [in which] any person thrown into the public space is pressed to build and manage the image he or she projects"<sup>22</sup>.

This staging mentioned above can be related with the concepts of "auctorial scenography" or "mise en spectacle" about which José-Luis Diaz speaks when mentioning the staging of different auctorial postures: those of "imagining oneself as writer", "inventing oneself as writer", "naming oneself writer", "posing as writer"<sup>23</sup>:

The auctorial identity, defined in terms of representation [...] has therefore for me a double usage: discursive but also existential (and thus in the same time biographic and social). Between these two poles, the body that I call "imaginary", but that we could just as well call – and that I also call "representative" or even "spectacular", or better still "scenographic" – is there to make the connection<sup>24</sup>.

Nina Cassian is a master in exhibiting in this theatrical manner the character she is so narcissistically fascinated with, even when she speaks of her "ugliness". A plastic artist herself, she renders her literary and existential posture – in Laura Pavel's words – like in a painting with thick, dramatic or dramatized lines<sup>25</sup>. Both the title of the diary and some poems (such as *Orgoliu [Pride]*) make reference to what she possesses (and exhibits) as to some riches (or dowry, again, not one of many but as a goddess or diva). She chooses to exhibit, place this in plain sight, contradicting the doubts in the mentioned poem about keeping these riches for herself: "There is no time for me to give everyone proof/ of my great, amazing virtues [...] The time is quick. I still have here and there a precious gift to give/And search for recipients under the stars./ I might search in vain/And get buried, like the pharaohs, with my riches"<sup>26</sup>.

#### *Woman in Front of a Mirror. Posture but not Imposture*

The diary mentioned above was therefore not a private document but the setting for a gallery of theatrical selves exposed and explained to the audiences<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> Jérôme Meizoz, *Postures littéraires. Mises en scène modernes de l'auteur*, Genève, Slatkine, 2007, p. 15.

<sup>23</sup> José-Luis Diaz, "De l'écrivain au traducteur imaginaires. Entretien avec José-Luis Diaz au sujet de sa théorie de l'auteur", propos recueillis par Karen Vandemeulebroucke & Elien Declercq, *Interférences littéraires/Littéraire interferences*, 2012, 9, pp. 212-213.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>25</sup> Laura Pavel, „Cazul 'Ninicuța'”, p. 100.

<sup>26</sup> "N-am timp să dau tuturor o dovadă/ a marilor, uimitoarelor mele virtuți. [...] Timpul e iute, mai am câte un dar de preț/ Și caut destinatari sub stele./ S-ar putea să-i caut în zadar/ Și-am să mă-ngrop ca faraonii cu bogățiile mele”.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

Cassian's main character (assuming this theatrical language), that of the Writer (creative, intense, sometimes problematic) does not eventually or simply fit in the patterns, despite her genuine (even "mystical", as she calls it) political belief in Communism. Both her diary and the 2018 documentary directed by Dana Bunescu and Mona Nicoara, *The Distance between Me and Me*, reveal that she surpasses the role she embodies (the "engaged writer") and that she tries to convincingly play, enjoying the theatrical representation.

The documentary premiered in Romania at the *Les Films de Cannes à Bucarest* festival and won an audience award, while its first international projection was in January 2019 at the *Trieste Film Festival*. A very thorough and insightful review by Iulia Popovici<sup>28</sup> noticed that its reception was polarised between those emphasising the poet's privileges and those captivated by her originality, lack of conformism, what was considered an early feminist activism etc<sup>29</sup>.

The narrative of the documentary is based on the look into what I call the electric mirror: the elderly Nina Cassian, in her New York apartment (accompanied sometimes by her husband, Maurice Edwards) comments on video archive material that is heterogeneous, not dated or chronologically organised but rather a collection of diverse materials (like in a box with memorabilia) that one comes across by accident and revisits them with curiosity and nostalgia. The "memorabilia" here contains fragments of interviews, of propaganda films, of music written by her and performed in these films, as well as poems recited by Cassian or other performers, excerpts of news reels and a visit to a factory<sup>30</sup> of several writers and a dialogue with the workers, moderated by Adrian Păunescu, (anticipating a bit his famous performances in the *Flacăra* large-scale events). It is the perhaps most interesting footage in the documentary because we can see the poet performing her literary persona in a staged, very stereotypical dialogue in which she stands out through brilliance and charisma. The convention is, therefore, similar to the approach in the diary: a dialogue with her younger persona, commenting with curiosity, tenderness, irony or sadness her performances (not actions, but the image she projects in the materials). The interviewer is there, naturally, the editing eliminated Mona Nicoară's questions and image, providing only the pretext or context for this dialogue with herself. A dialogue that, as Ionuț Mareș emphasises, either complements or contradicts official memory, that of the archives, complementing or undermining each other but it is never redundant<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> Iulia Popovici, „Distanțele dintre noi și noi. Și Nina Cassian” [“The Distances Between Us and Us. And Nina Cassian”], *Observator cultural*, 2019, 963, <https://www.observatorcultural.ro/articol/distanțele-dintre-noi-si-noi-si-nina-cassian/>. Accessed on November 2021.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>30</sup> IMGB (Întreprinderea de Mașini Grele).

<sup>31</sup> Ionuț Mareș, “Distanța dintre mine și mine. Nina” [“The Distance Between Me and Me. Nina”], *Ziarul Metropolis*, 2019, <https://www.ziarulmetropolis.ro/distanța-dintre-mine-si-mine-nina/> (Accessed on November 2021): “However, Mona Nicoară and Dana Bunescu take a step further.

The use of this mixed archive footage reminds the viewer (as others have also noticed) of another documentary, largely distributed and currently available on Netflix, *Ceaușescu's Autobiography*. This documentary, based on a collection of official footage, news reels or propaganda films does not contain Ceaușescu's own comments, an impossible thing to do due to the circumstances of his death, but it is nonetheless autobiographical through the fact that all the footage had his official approval. It is a life how "the regime publicly preserved it"<sup>32</sup>, to use Iulia Popovici's words on the documentary on Cassian, with the difference that Cassian also revisits this official recording of her life and can make annotations and add a new dimension and, why not, the charismatic persona of her older self.

Despite her talents in diverse genres (from explicit political activism to children's literature) and arts (drawing, music, reciting/performing), the main *role* of her life, so to speak, is the essential *posture of the Writer* (understood as "persona... and 'literary identity' constructed by the author him/herself" externally and internally<sup>33</sup>, through both behaviour and discourse<sup>34</sup>). As the diary and even more so the collection of interviews and other footage in the documentary, Nina Cassian's literary *persona* perfectly embodies Meizoz's vision about literary posture and writer's image as "publically promoted and negotiated by means of discourse (stylistic choices, culture, moral physiognomy), on the one hand, and by means of non-verbal elements (looks, gestures, behaviour, habits), on the other hand (Meizoz 2007)"<sup>35</sup>. She excitingly plays the part of the engaged citizen-Writer ("écrivain citoyen"<sup>36</sup>) but her vibrant personality and creativity surpass it and she projects a whole gallery of literary *personae*, whose public image is projected via portraits and self-portraits (visual-recordings, photographs and paintings/drawings but also discursive). These reveal that she does not conveniently fit a monotonous

---

They suggest an elaborated editing in which Nina Cassian's personal memory enters a dialogue, sometimes completing and other times contradicting official memory, the latter as present in the archives. The archives [used] are rather diverse as well, from photographs from her secret police file, literary interviews and readings recorded for television to fragments of news programs and propaganda documentaries produced by the Sahia film studio based on her texts or using her musical compositions. But the two perspectives never become redundant: they either complete or undermine each other... Sometimes this dialogue between the personal memory and official archives is direct, resulting from the *mise-en-scène* designed by Mona Nicoară and Dana Bunescu, like in the emotional scenes in which Nina Cassian is shown video or audio recordings with herself from a few decades before. The spontaneity of her reactions – which vary from the natural impulse of nostalgia to playful self-irony that suggest a full reconciliation with herself – is disarming. As well as the entire film".

<sup>32</sup> Iulia Popovici, „Distanțele” [“The Distances”], <https://www.observatorcultural.ro/articol/distantele-dintre-noi-si-noi-si-nina-cassian/>. Accessed on November 2021.

<sup>33</sup> Jérôme Meizoz, *Postures littéraires*, pp. 18-21.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 21.

<sup>35</sup> Maricica Munteanu, “The Bodily Community. The Gesture and the Rhythm as Manners of the Living-together in the Memoirs of *Viața Românească* Cenacle”, *Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies*, 2, 2019, 1, p. 14.

<sup>36</sup> Jérôme Meizoz, *Postures littéraires*, p. 25.

and stereotypical script. Thus, even in a highly rigid context (the footage in the 2018 documentary that reveal a “scene” of the Writers’ dialogue with the workers in an elaborated propaganda setting of a factory) her character transgresses the script. The Poet called to “explain” literature and the message of contemporary literature appears on screen as a goddess-like figure, a diva wearing a pearl choker (in itself a symbol of female power or associated with powerful female figures, from Ancient Egypt to Anne Boleyn or emancipated women in the 1940s).

Despite the official intention and effort of projecting the literary image as part of the community, very relevant for the construction of a literary posture in general which is most visible in the factory scene in which a collective character (the Writers) are supposed to establish a dialogue with another one (the Workers as Readers), Cassian stands out as a sort of undisputable star from the very pen name<sup>37</sup> that has an interesting sound and spelling, as in the Hollywood style of renaming actors. The contrast between this brilliant, sophisticated woman and the stereotypical questions being asked is intentional:

the editing choices from the documentary by Mona Nicoară and Dana Bunescu lean towards recontextualising Nina Cassian’s publicly creative life in a recurrently activated contrast/opposition with the representative worker, invariably suspected of being ridiculous through language, artistic ambitious or simple cinematic representation<sup>38</sup>.

This depiction of Cassian in the documentary as a star has been noticed more than once and was also supported by a sort of cult surrounding her charismatic person, even after her “Golden Age”. Cristina Stănculescu<sup>39</sup> talks about going to the seaside at 2 Mai, the iconic place of Nina Cassian’s holidays, hearing, decades later about her legend: “they would say ‘here is where Nina Cassian used to party’, ‘here is where she used to eat’ with a sort of religious feeling. I [...] wished I could have spent at least an evening in her company”<sup>40</sup>. This star or legend quality is also explored in the documentary. As Andrei Gorzo argued, “the main principle based on which Nina Cassian is treated by the authors of the documentary is that of the *star-system*: she is isolated from common people [...] partly taken out the literary world of which she was part of, a world with its institutions, hierarchies and privileges and – in fact it is only here on the screen, a *one-woman show*”<sup>41</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> Real name: Renée Annie Cassian-Mătășaru.

<sup>38</sup> Iulia Popovici, “Distanțele”.

<sup>39</sup> Cristina, Stănculescu, “*Distanța dintre mine și mine*, filmul cu Nina Cassian mi-a adus aminte de mine și de distanțele mele” ” [“*The Distance between Me and Me*, the film with Nina Cassian reminded me of myself and my distances”], <https://cristinastanculescu.ro/experienta/distanta-dintre-mine-si-mine-filmul-cu-nina-cassian-mi-a-adus-aminte-de-mine-si-alte-distante/>. Accessed on November 2021.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>41</sup> Andrei Gorzo, “Pentru *Scena9*, despre filmele *Distanța dintre mine și mine*, *Caisă și Să nu ucizi*” [“For *Scena9*, about the films *The Distance between Me and Me*, *Peach and Do Shall Not Kill*”],



As both the footage from the Cold War Romania television used in the documentary and the diary (we call it so although it has a genuine structure) reveal, Cassian liked to try different roles, costumes or settings to see where her (literally) unusual profile would fit and the performance amuses her, as the film manages to capture. As Iulia Popovici emphasises, the video archives of the Romanian television or film studio have been insufficiently explored and made public (with certain exceptions of New Year's Eve sketches, comedy or historical film and not much else). Thus, she argues, these archives, especially in the segment not related to entertainment remain still

unexplored and unfamiliar to the majority of the audiences and the effect of “real life” they produce when watched is that of fascination (for the past elements preserved on the reel – urban landscapes, fashion, hairdressing, interiors, details... that once fixed [by the camera] are untouched by time<sup>42</sup>).

This is even more fascinating when centred on this charismatic female figure and her numerous *personae*, roles and costumes. Besides some contextual explanations (the most relevant of which remains the emphasis on the fact that she had made not an ethical compromise only aesthetical with the regime), the documentary is not politicised (having been called ambiguous from this point of view<sup>43</sup>) or not particularly focused on the ethical issues but, as emphasised before, on this *one-woman show*.

### Conclusions

Departing from previous research on women's life-writing, particularly Nina Cassian's multi-layered (constructed and deconstructed in several phases) diary, the current paper has focused on the complex manner in which literary postures are performed and discussed by the protagonist herself in the 2018 documentary directed by Dana Bunescu and Mona Nicoara. *The Distance Between Me and Me* reinforces, with cinematic tools, the literary postures constructed externally and internally, in Meizoz's words, through appearance, behaviour, public image (via the media also present heavily in the archive footage in the documentary) and discourse. Having in the centre the posture of the Engaged (Woman) Writer in Communist Romania, the documentary, based on a self-contemplation and dialogue of the elderly Nina with her younger *personae*, reveals an interesting, dynamic gallery of numerous postures, in specific, yet compelling theatrical

---

2019, <https://andreigorzoblog.wordpress.com/2019/04/02/pentru-scena9-despre-filmele-distanta-dintre-mine-si-mine-caisa-si-sa-nu-ucizi/>. Accessed on November 2021.

<sup>42</sup> Iulia Popovici, “Distanțele” [“Distances”], *Observator cultural*, 2019, 963, <https://www.observatorcultural.ro/articol/distantele-dintre-noi-si-noi-si-nina-cassian/>. Accessed on November 2021.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*.

settings (such as the factory). These multiple postures (from children's literature writer and storyteller to the author reflecting on the contemporary writers' reception or the female condition in literature, all depicted through a star-system approach) make Nina Cassian an extremely relevant case for an inquiry on literary postures in Cold War Romania.

The writer was, perhaps, in top five public literary figures of the time (with Marin Preda, Eugen Barbu in the 1950s and the emergent Adrian Păunescu in the 1960s) and the first woman to be this visible and significant to embody the Writer figure (followed later by the younger Ana Blandiana). The theatrical performance takes place at a double level: the postures on the screen and the reactions and dialogue of the aged protagonist with her *persona* on the screen. The paper has aimed to discuss the manner in which diverse scenographies and numerous postures are re-enacted in this genuine formula, reflecting its relevance for Romanian Cold War writer figure.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- CASSIAN, Nina, *Memoria ca zestre [Memory as Dowry]*, I–III, București, Editura Institutului Cultural Român, 2003–2005.
- CORDOȘ, Sanda, *Lumi din cuvinte. Reprezentări și identități în literatura românească postbelică [Worlds Made of Words. Representations and Identities in Post-War Romanian Literature]*, București, Cartea Românească, 2012.
- COZEA, Liana, *Confesiuni ale eului feminin [Confessions of the Female Ego]*, Pitești, Paralela 45, 2005.
- DIAZ, José-Luis, „De l'écrivain au traducteur imaginaires. Entretien avec José-Luis Diaz au sujet de sa théorie de l'auteur”, propos recueillis par Karen Vandemeulebroucke & Elie Declercq, *Interférences littéraires/Littéraire interferences*, 2012, 9, pp. 211-227.
- FĂTU-TUTOVEANU, Andrada, *Building Socialism, Constructing People: Identity Patterns and Stereotypes in Late 1940s and 1950s Romanian Cultural Press*, Newcastle-upon-Thyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014.
- FĂTU-TUTOVEANU, Andrada, *Personal Narratives of Romanian Women during the Cold War (1945–1989): Varieties of the Autobiographical Genre*, New York, Edwin Mellen Press, 2015.
- GORZO, Andrei, “Pentru Scena9, despre filmele *Distanța dintre mine și mine*, *Caisă* și *Să nu ucizi*” [For Scena9, about the films *The Distance Between Me and Me*, *Peach* and *Do Shall Not Kill*], <https://andreiGORZOBLOG.wordpress.com/2019/04/02/pentru-scena9-despre-filmele-distanta-dintre-mine-si-mine-caisa-si-sa-nu-ucizi/>. Accessed on November 2021.
- HARVEY, J., “Re-Theorizing Emancipation: Remembering and Rethinking ‘Gender Equality’ in Eastern European Womanist Thought”, *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, 20, 2002, 1, pp. 27-39.
- HELLBECK, Jochen, “The Diary between Literature and History: A Historian's Critical Response”, *The Russian Review*, 63, 2004, 4, pp. 621-629.
- MALTE, Rolf, “A Hall of Mirrors: Sovietizing Culture under Stalinism”, *Slavic Review*, 68, 2009, 3, pp. 601-630.
- MAREȘ, Ionuț, “*Distanța dintre mine și mine*. Nina” [“*The Distance between Me and Me*. Nina], *Ziarul Metropolis*, 2019, <https://www.ziarulmetropolis.ro/distanta-dintre-mine-si-mine-nina/>. Accessed on November 2021.

- MEIZOZ, Jérôme, *Postures littéraires. Mises en scène modernes de l'auteur*, Genève, Slatkine, 2007.
- MUNTEANU, Maricica, "The Bodily Community. The Gesture and the Rhythm as Manners of the Living-together in the Memoirs of *Viața Românească* cenacle", *Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies*, 2, 2019, 1, pp. 10-23.
- NICOARĂ, Mona, BUNESCU, Dana (dir.), *Distanța dintre mine și mine* [*The Distance Between Me and Me*]. Screenplay by Mona Nicoară, Ada Solomon. Production by Hi Film Productions, Sat Mic Film (US), 89', Romania, United States, 2018.
- PAVEL, Laura, "Cazul 'Ninicuța' – estetica realismului socialist și politica 'amorului'" ["The 'Ninicuța' Case: The Aesthetics of Socialist Realism and The Politics of Love"], in Gheorghe Perian (ed.), *Studii de literatură română recentă, II. Contribuții la istoria realismului socialist* [*Studies of Recent Romanian Literature. II. Contributions to the History of Socialist Realism*], Cluj-Napoca, Limes, 2017.
- POPOVICI, Iulia, "Distanțele dintre noi și noi. Și Nina Cassian" ["The Distances between Us and Us. And Nina Cassian"], *Observator cultural*, 2019, 963, <https://www.observatorcultural.ro/articol/distantele-dintre-noi-si-noi-si-nina-cassian/>. Accessed on November 2021.
- STĂNCIULESCU, Cristina, "Distanța dintre mine și mine, filmul cu Nina Cassian mi-a adus aminte de mine și de distanțele mele" ["*The Distance Between Me and Me*, the film with Nina Cassian reminded me of myself and my distances"], <https://crstinastanciulescu.ro/experiente/distanta-dintre-mine-si-mine-filmul-cu-nina-cassian-mi-a-adus-aminte-de-mine-si-alte-distante/>. Accessed on November 2021.
- STEINITZ, Rebecca. "Writing Diaries, Reading Diaries: The Mechanics of Memory", *The Communication Review*, 2, 1997, 1, pp. 43-58.
- ȘTEFĂNESCU, Alex. „La o nouă lectură: Nina Cassian” [“A New Reading: Nina Cassian”], *România literară*, 2003, 13, [www.romlit.ro](http://www.romlit.ro). Accessed on November 2021.

THE ELECTRIC MIRROR. MEMORY, SELF-FICTION, POSTURES AND  
 POSES. *THE DISTANCE BETWEEN ME AND ME* (2018)  
 (Abstract)

Based on previous research on women's life-writing, including Nina Cassian's multilayered (constructed and deconstructed) diary, the current paper focuses on the complex manner in which literary postures are performed and discussed by the protagonist herself in the 2018 documentary directed by Dana Bunescu and Mona Nicoara. *The Distance between Me and Me* reinforces, with cinematic tools, the literary postures of the Engaged Writer in Cold War Romania, among many other postures (from children's literature writer and storyteller to the author reflecting on the contemporary writers' reception or the female condition in literature). The theatrical performance takes place at a double level: the postures on the screen and the reactions and dialogue of the aged protagonist with her *persona* on the screen. The paper discusses the manner in which diverse scenographies and numerous postures are re-enacted in this genuine formula, reflecting its relevance for Romanian Cold War writer figure.

*Keywords:* life-writing, Cold War, Romanian literature, women writers, postures, Nina Cassian.

OGLINDA ELECTRICĂ. MEMORIE, AUTOFICȚIUNE, POSTURI ȘI POZE.  
NINA CASSIAN: *DISTANȚA DINTRE MINE ȘI MINE*  
(Rezumat)

Pornind de la o cercetare anterioară și un volum (2015) vizând literatura autobiografică feminină, lucrarea de față este interesată de modul în care posturile literare sunt performate și discutate de protagonista însăși în documentarul regizat de Dana Bunescu și Mona Nicoară în 2018. *Distanța dintre mine și mine* reia, cu instrumente cinematografice, posturile literare ale “scriitorului angajat/scriitoarei angajate” din perioada comunistă, alături de alte posturi pe care le abordează Cassian (scriitoarea pentru copii, de pildă, sau scriitoarea care problematizează condiția femeii în literatura contemporană). Punerea în scenă după modele teatrale ia loc pe două paliere: posturile de pe ecran și reacțiile și dialogul protagonistei aflate la senectute cu personajul de pe ecran. Studiul discută maniera în care diferitele scenografii și numeroasele posturi literare sunt repuse în scenă în această formulă inedită, reflectând asupra relevanței lor pentru o figură de scriitor din perioada Războiului Rece.

*Cuvinte-cheie:* scriere autobiografică, literatura română, Războiul Rece, femei scriitoare, posturi, Nina Cassian.