

## COGNITIVE WAR CARTOGRAPHIES IN HORTENSIA PAPADAT-BENGESCU'S NOVEL

### *Hypothesis*

War polarizes the two points of view on conflict, the masculine one, generated by active involvement on the battlefield and the feminine one, peripherally expressed, on a secondary level. War novels, 20<sup>th</sup> century confessions, were overwhelmingly written by authors who were involved in battles or for whom battle served as a pretext for developing certain obsessions. These texts were subjective confessions of the internalization of conflicts. If we were to refer only to WWI prose, we would observe that “canonical” novelists wrote at least one novel dedicated to this topic, an essential conclusion for the manner in which reality breeds fiction or, as Ernst von Glasersfeld put it, for observing the capacity of knowledge, and implicitly of literature, “to empower us to act effectively in the world of our experience”<sup>1</sup>. We are thus dealing with a form of internalizing fictional information on the part of the reader, in order to relate it to one’s own manner of being in the world. This amounts to an attempt to cognitively map out an actual phenomenon, experienced with terror and anxiety during any era.

The essential hypothesis we start out from is connected to the manner in which cognitive cartographies are constructed in the novel *Balaurul [The Dragon]* (1923) by Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, a novel that brings up various key elements for our study: the war theme and short-term memory, the feminine internalization of war trauma, cognitive schemes arising out of dangerous experiences. The knowledge gained by the reader is constructed as a cognitive cartography made up of key spaces placed on a map imagined by the writer. The “traumatic memory” of war is constructed by means of an exclusively female vision, comparable to the one employed by Virginia Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) or *Three Guineas* (1938)<sup>2</sup>. In their *Uncomfortable Connections: Gender, Memory, War*, Ayşe Gül Altınay and Andrea Pető expressed an idea that could also apply to the work of Papadat-Bengescu:

History is too much about wars; biography too much about great men, she exclaimed, and in her diverse body of writing, Woolf practiced new methods for simultaneously challenging the ways in which women had been written out of human

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<sup>1</sup> Ernst Von Glasersfeld, “Farewell to Objectivity”, *Systems Research*, 13, 1996, 3, p. 238.

<sup>2</sup> The question from which Woolf starts (How to prevent war?) can be found in the meditations of Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu’s character, who wonders how women can prevent a war or what their role is in this historical event, excessively masculinized.

history, and for constructing alternative narratives to encourage, inspire and empower women<sup>3</sup>.

This complements “modern memory” as theorized by Paul Fussell in “The Great War and Modern Memory”<sup>4</sup>. Another difference pointed out by Fussell is the one regarding

this obsession with the images and myths of the Great War among novelists and poets too young to have experienced it directly. They have worked it up by purely literary means, means which necessarily transform the war into a “subject” and simplify its motifs into myths and figures expressive of the modern existential predicament. These writers provide for the “post-modern” sensibility a telling example of the way the present influences the past. In eschewing the Second War as a source of myth and instead jumping back to its predecessor, these writers have derived their myth the way Frye notes most critics derive their principles, not from their predecessors but from their predecessors’ predecessors<sup>5</sup>.

To address the insufficient knowledge regarding war literature written by women, anthologies or volumes were created<sup>6</sup>, such as *Women Writers of the First World War. An Annotated Bibliography* by Sharon Ouditt<sup>7</sup>, which led to an enriched perspective on the manner in which the global conflagration shaped literature.

Certainly, novels such as *Balaurul* by Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu deserve to be included into a larger global context. Apart from the reference to Virginia Woolf, to whom the Romanian writer has been compared before, another term of comparison could be texts such as Sylvia Thompson’s *Chariot Wheels* (1929), Mary Borden’s *The Forbidden Zone*<sup>8</sup> (1929), expressing feelings related to being around the wounded, just like the character of Laura from Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu’s work, or Radclyffe Hall’s novel, *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), which stirred well-known controversy during its time<sup>9</sup>. In *Women’s Autobiography. War*

<sup>3</sup> Ayşe Gül Altınay, Andrea Pető (eds.) *Gendered Wars, Gendered Memories. Feminist Conversations on War, Genocide and Political Violence*, London, Routledge, 2016, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1977.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 886.

<sup>6</sup> See literature like Daniela Gioseffi (ed.), *Women on War*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1988, or Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War*, New York, Basic Books, 1987.

<sup>7</sup> For more details about the women experience in the war, testified in books, articles, memoirs, diaries and letters, see Sharon Ouditt, *Women Writers of the First World War: An Annotated Bibliography*, New York, Routledge, 2000.

<sup>8</sup> See Mary Borden, *The Forbidden Zone*, London, Heinemann, 1929, p. 117: “There are no men, only body parts; as far as she is concerned ‘Everything is arranged. It is arranged that men should be broken and that they should be mended’. Combines a haunted sense of the absurdity and pathos of nursing the wounded in Belgium, but occasionally spills over into melodramatic phraseology”.

<sup>9</sup> See Radclyffe Hall, *The Well of Loneliness*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1928. It is the story of the “invert” Stephen Gordon, who responds (just over half-way through the novel) to the call of war: “England was calling her men into battle, her women to the bedsides of the wounded and dying, and

*and Trauma*, Victoria Stewart concludes that such trauma cannot be assimilated by traditional means, and the narrative endeavour sometimes appears fragmentary:

The attempts by these writers to assimilate source material – whether in the form of their own earlier writings, news reports, or historical texts – often emphasize the impossibility of narrative completion, but this lack of unequivocal closure is not a signal of the failure of the autobiographical project, rather of a refusal to allow traditional narrative trajectories to smooth over the exigencies of individual experience<sup>10</sup>.

*Balaurul* was published in 1923, when the memories of war still lingered, seemingly continuing a state of anxiety which was fully experienced by the European countries. This novel has always been considered by critics an interstitial type of writing<sup>11</sup>, included either in a class of first-stage prose about to lose its lyrical character, or in a class of prose texts evincing an obvious tendency towards objectivity. *Balaurul*, however, does not advance a unique relation in the universal literary landscape, but a complementary one, while adding knowledge from the South-East European space<sup>12</sup>. Looked upon as a marking point of the transition from the “Viața Românească” literary circle, and the complete affirmation of the adherence to the “Sburătorul” literary salon to which the *Homage* of the first edition is dedicated, the novel stirred interest, but also condescending attitudes. Many of its chapters were published in the *Sburătorul* magazine under different names before they were finally gathered in one volume. The published fragments are not identical to the novel’s final form. The latter features various changes, omissions or reinterpretations. For instance, the chapter entitled *Omul căruia i se vedea inima* [*The Man Wearing His Heart on His Sleeve*] was published in the May 8 issue of the *Sburătorul* magazine, and from the text published in the magazine certain formulations are eliminated such as “a pronounced Swedish type”, “removed from the prestige of idolatry”, or the war “which periodically stirs the temporary tranquility of mankind, as well as the peaceful lives of ordinary

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between these two chivalrous, surging forces, she, Stephen, might well be crushed out of existence” (p. 271). She joins an ambulance column, however, and “finds herself” in a role that demands authority, courage, strength, is awarded the *croix de guerre* and receives three mentions in despatches. The period of self-fulfilment, though, is brief: “Great wars will be followed by great discontents – the pruning knife has been laid to the tree, and the urge to grow throbs through its mutilated branches” (p. 298).

<sup>10</sup> Victoria Stewart, *Women’s Autobiography. War and Trauma*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 196.

<sup>11</sup> See E. Lovinescu, *Istoria literaturii române contemporane* [*History of Romanian Contemporary Literature*], vol. IV, Bucuresti, Ancora S. Benvenisti, 1928, p. 335.

<sup>12</sup> See also the analysis concerning the space in Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu fiction’s in Alina Bako, “The Romanian Inter-War Novel – A Geocritical Perspective”, in Alina Bako (ed.), *Spatial Readings and Linguistic Landscapes*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2022, pp. 18-50.

people”; similarly, “she covered her face” replaces “she hid her face”, elements of nuance with the role of stylistically perfecting phrases.

Referred to as “hospital papers” or “war journal”<sup>13</sup>, *Balaurul* reflects an experienced reality, vivid impressions by means of daily notes the author took during the time she voluntarily cared for the wounded on the front, between 1918–1919. The main protagonist, Laura – Laurenția, offers to voluntarily care for the wounded in an ad-hoc field hospital in a train station in the South-Eastern part of Romania, identified by means of the author’s biographical data as Focșani. The feminine vision transposes the traumatic experience of war by means of recording the encounters with the “dragon”, the train carrying the wounded from the front lines. Unlike Camil Petrescu’s novel *Ultima noapte de dragoste, întâia noapte de război* [*The Last Night of Love, the First Night of War*] no details regarding geographic spaces or places or frontline positions are included. Instead, they are exposed by means of a process of internalization obvious in the employment of a witness perspective and in the scars that war imprints on the mind and body.

The publication of the novel did not stir much critical attention. The critics either questioned the novelty of the composition or spoke about a new stage in the author’s prose writing. Thus, T. Teodorescu-Braniște speaks about the “‘flaw’ of ‘confused’ novelty, of the composition’s not being characterized by classical rigor, of the disorderly style saturated with French lexical items and barbarisms”<sup>14</sup>, associating it with the anecdote of the old maiden reconciling two rival families by means of “the parents’ joy of finally ridding themselves of the ‘burden in their household’” or accusing the novel of “putting on too pompous a dress, a dress not suitable with its stature! But the worst thing is that the author does not seem to have read Maiorescu’s criticism, especially the chapter entitled ‘The Drunkenness of words. A study of literary pathology’”<sup>15</sup>.

Thus, a point of view is expressed which does not overstep the traditional analytical line. Moreover, it resorts to analogies regarding the status of women writers, thus proving the critic’s reluctance towards the text’s novelty. Apart from such criticism, other perspectives, such as the one belonging to Silvian Iosifescu, hold that the novel’s great merit is that of having “overcome ‘biologism’” (“the idealization of war, rooted in the same biologism which we will encounter in the later novels, is gradually dissipated by terror”)<sup>16</sup> – a quite imprecise perspective, as we will prove by means of arguments from the novel, especially since here we can

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<sup>13</sup> See Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, *Opere* [Works], vol. I: *Romane* [Novels]. Edited by Gabriela Omăt and Eugenia Tudor Anton, București, Academia Română, Fundația Națională pentru Știință și Artă, 2012, p. 1195. Unless otherwise stated, the quotations are translated into English by the author of this paper.

<sup>14</sup> T. Teodorescu-Braniște, *Oameni și cărți* [People and Books], vol. I, București, Socec, 1922, p. 80.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>16</sup> Silvian Iosifescu, “Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu”, *Viața Românească*, 10, 1957, 1, pp. 169-170.

encounter the narrative nuclei developed in the novels published later on. Another critical hypothesis attempts an inclusion into the large European family: Valeriu Ciobanu writes that it is “rather a war novel seen through the analytical, meditative and humanitarian eyes of Laura, than Laura’s novel in the circumstances of war”<sup>17</sup>, and associates it with *Vie des martyres* by Georges Duhamel. Mircea Zăciu considers the novel “an inner fever pushed to the boundaries of hallucination and paroxysm, occasionally not estranged from expressionism [...], the confessions of a Remarque, Dorgeles, Barbusse, [...] Liviu Rebreanu [...], Camil Petrescu [...], war as a collective drama and experience – as the final destination of egotism”<sup>18</sup>. Mention should also be made of Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu’s perspective, who highlights the feminine point of view, developing his analysis of the text’s novelty only halfway:

the intimate journal of a woman, Laura, a voluntary nurse during the war. The typically female realm of preoccupations is not absent from this novel either. [...] She experiences personal suffering when faced with human misery, a suffering similar to romantic disillusionment [...]. *The Dragon* pushes Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu’s prose towards a more objective type of character, in the sense that social reality with its inherent drama erupts in the author’s pages<sup>19</sup>.

Attempting to trace the same direction for the volume, Constantin Ciopraga notices the element of novelty in European literature, the fact that

it is an ample journal, the confessions of a consciousness, maybe the first one in the European landscape reflecting the tragedy of war by means of the female vision. One year after the publication of *The Dragon*, other indirect confessions surfaced, this time authored by male writers: *Les Gardiennes* by E. Perochon and *La guerre des femmes* by Antoine Redier<sup>20</sup>.

We wish to conclude our overview of the criticism the novel received by resorting to a series of ideas belonging to Gheorghe Crăciun, who in 1986 noticed a couple of original aspects, starting from the analysis of Papadat-Bengescu’s novel: the therapeutic value of writing (“a cathartic scriptural gesture. The literary product thus obtained is therefore the result of a therapeutic procedure”), textual polymorphism and experimental writing achieved through “becoming aware of the evolving process of transformation and recurrence of literary forms”<sup>21</sup>. He refers to

<sup>17</sup> Valeriu Ciobanu, *Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu*, București, Editura pentru Literatură, 1965, p. 84.

<sup>18</sup> Mircea Zăciu, “Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu”, in *Masca geniului [The Mask of the Genius]*, București, Editura pentru Literatură, 1967, p. 209.

<sup>19</sup> Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu, *Literatura română între cele două războaie mondiale [Romanian Literature Between the Two World Wars]*, vol. I, București, Editura pentru Literatură, 1967, p. 436.

<sup>20</sup> Constantin Ciopraga, *Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu*, București, Cartea Românească, 1973, p. 113.

<sup>21</sup> Gheorghe Crăciun, “Recitind *Balaurul* sau despre un exercițiu de căutare și descoperire” [“Rereading *The Dragon* or on an Exercise in Search and Discovery”], in Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, *Balaurul [The Dragon]*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, București, Editura Militară, 1986, p. 9.

the novel as “a novel about the direct experience of life, about an auctorial psycho-sensualism which is always alert and of a remarkable moral astuteness”, as well as to the innovations arising from “observations pertaining to the sphere of the body, which are of psycho-somatic nature”<sup>22</sup>. We can thus notice a diversity of approaches that nevertheless outline two fundamental ideas which are of particular interest for the present study: the novelty of the feminine vision in Eastern European literature and the idea of an experiment the author undertakes by means of her incursion into wounded corporality.

For the female protagonist – Laura (also referred to in the novel as Laurenția) the first contact with war is connected to an obsessive temporality, a nervousness arising from the persistence of the conflictual situation. Memory thus focuses on the impossible prediction regarding the restoration of balance, which brings about anxiety: “How long it was! By means of repetition, it imparted a state of anger, an endless prolonging of the misfortune it brought about, an amplification of the cruel law that it enacted. Always, always ... War!... War!... War!...”<sup>23</sup>. Consequently, “repetition” is employed as a unique element, as it is bereft of any perspective, standing for an action that “annoys”, that is internalized to the point of obsession. We can notice the perspective of “modern memory”<sup>24</sup>, according to which a distinction should be made between the manner in which war was previously perceived from Homer to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a vision dominated by heroism, arising from the desire for freedom, and the 20<sup>th</sup> century perception, when humanity’s major trauma unfolds. Papadat-Bengescu explains it also by means of a dichotomy which connects the text to the dominant European ideas of its time. The two diametrically opposed symbols, the bugle versus the *bucium* (alphorn), the ideal versus the obligation, give voice to this transformation as war is depersonalized, bereft of the ideal of unity or independence:

Were there really only bugle players, or was there some noncom walking beside them, saying something in a clear, harsh, monotonous voice? Like a herald, but one who did not bear resemblance to heralds of yore, the same way the bugle did not resemble the *bucium*. Of course, he was not saying: “Rise up, people! The long-awaited hour of battle and joy is finally here!”... He also did not say: “Rise up, people! Danger and carnage are upon us!”. What he said was: “All people eligible for military service from these contingencies ... have to enroll ... Today, August 14... war has been declared!...”<sup>25</sup>

What is continuous in this narrative intervention is the fundamental change of perspective on war, which proves the writer’s obvious modernity. Perceived in all

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 1220.

<sup>23</sup> Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, *Balaurul* [*The Dragon*], in *Opere*, p. 180.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, p. 888.

<sup>25</sup> Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, *Balaurul*, p. 180.

its ugliness, bereft of the aura of glory that it enjoyed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, war appears absurd, its only observable aspects being the trauma caused to the human being, too fragile when faced with this immense and merciless machinery.

The incursions into the character's psychology are connected to the conscious experience of tragedy, of an impossible resolution to conflict and the lack of any horizon of hope:

...It was unbearable! Again and again! After surprise, emotion, fear, came irritation, a darkening of the mind, an all-encompassing sense of worry, a conflict of energies, a feeling of estrangement, which demanded the silencing of that voice which kept biting into the all too clear consciousness of a harsh reality and crushed under the weight of sounds any semblance of illusion regarding those thoughts<sup>26</sup>.

Through the protagonist, as well as through the other aspects of femininity faced with a world thrown profoundly off balance, the reader constructs their own image of war, whose novelty derives from the variety of perspectives it relies on. The unforeseen, the lack of vision, the chaos perceived by the human mind caught up in an unstable situation, translate into synaestheses: "the long, harsh and sinister siren" and "the more they advanced towards the heart of the cave, the more it stank. Laura could feel it in her hair and ears [...] Her eyes were burning, not from the smoke, but from that morbid emanation filling up the wagons"<sup>27</sup>. Throughout the novel, ways of relating to the past are brought up which are however not meant to soothe the soul, as the "new" war is different, it is fought on another battlefield, with completely different weapons:

This was to be the War, unlike any battles the *bucium* called to, unlike any other battle before. A dull, blind, endless peril, dragged along time and crossroads, always threatened, always threatening, cruel, terrible! Longer than one could conceive of or bear. Producing a metallic, sinister sound. Advancing with heavy, determined steps<sup>28</sup>.

Perceived as society's major evil, the global conflagration produces, before battles start, the anxiety caused by the concrete threat of fatal action: "Nothing resembled the endless talk, ideas, illusions, calculations that had been previously made"<sup>29</sup>. To this, political speeches are added "choir-like and from the top of the Capitol" and "predictions", as well as the inhumane practice of dividing the world into spheres of influence ("people, intrigues and the division and fight over the prey")<sup>30</sup>.

What appears original to us is the female vision dividing the world of politics according to intrigues, to "fights", thus creating a domestic vision of the military

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 180-181.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 252.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 182.

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

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 195.

phenomenon. The exclusivity of the female point of view is proven also by the bringing up of a “girl”, one of the “young ones”, suggesting a solidarity of gender subordinated to excessive sensitivity: “War! One of the young girls seemed to ponder inside Laurenția’s thoughts, insider her very soul, on the meaning of the word”<sup>31</sup>. The relationship between what it means to be a witness of such events and transposing those events into writing, the internalization of a cruel reality, were studied by Shoshana Felman, who concludes that

the appointment to bear witness is, paradoxically enough, an appointment to transgress the confines of the isolated stance, to speak for others and to others. [...] By virtue of the fact that the testimony is addressed to others, the witness, from within the solitude of his own stance, is the vehicle of an occurrence, a reality, a stance or a dimension beyond himself<sup>32</sup>.

Laura is a witness-character and a character who acts, as well as observes what is happening behind the frontlines and transposes in a literary manner the prolonged experience of war.

The novel actually confronts two fundamental experiences: a personal one, the one of romantic disillusionment, a sentimental cliché of the 19<sup>th</sup> century novel, and a collective one, seen through the female gaze:

To such conflicts war offered a solution. A huge one, proportional to her revolt. It seemed like her inner turmoil, which was searching for a resolution and failed to find one, had created, precisely for her pain and need, this colossal tempest, in the power of which all other powers would dissolve<sup>33</sup>.

The solution to personal turmoil is plunging into a collective one where all references to individuality are erased, because

Laura indeed thought that the war had come/precisely for her, at the time and hour when she had been waiting for something to set things straight. A force of things had arrived which was clearing up her questions and was connecting her, alongside everybody else, with unknown destinies. This thought was maybe not altogether absurd<sup>34</sup>.

The feminine point of view refers to this connection to the entire humanity by means of trauma, and relating to it is achieved in different ways, according to the inner states that shape the character’s feelings:

Had she been happy yesterday, the war would have appeared to her as it had done before, during her days of vitality and joy. In the name of all that’s good and of Human

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 198.

<sup>32</sup> Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, *Testimony. Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, New York and London, Routledge, 1992, p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, *Balaurul*, p. 223.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 198.



Beauty, she would have considered it a monstrosity robbing humanity of its superb heritage. The scourge would have replied with its merciless reality. Now she perceived the red Plague differently. She saw it as an elementary force unleashed in order to bring about destruction and creation<sup>35</sup>.

Chaos corresponds to the first stage of creation, and war is seen as a civilizing force, as ushering in a new era. It seems to be “the loud overture of a heroic symphony”<sup>36</sup> as the cityscape is perceived from the center to the periphery: “liveliness reached its peak in the center, but it extended to the edge of the city”<sup>37</sup>. Elements of urban imagery are inserted here (automobiles “as small provincial events”)<sup>38</sup>, and the war brings a gregarious mood to the capital, with both the population and the army multiplying. The prefecture and the “telephone vibration”<sup>39</sup>, the gathering of the Red Cross members, are events meant to shape the narrative framework.

### *Cognitive Cartographies*

War is experienced by the protagonist under the form of a journey, a dense one, the map of which is metaphorically traced according to the knowledge incorporated into the details provided. Thus, psychological elements are inserted into the text which adhere to the global image of the war landscape. The creation of such a map is achieved by analysing the tiniest details meant to create a panorama of the world fallen prey to war, where only the state of emergency matters:

Like waters, like storms, the only thing you could do was circumnavigate them with the help of a compass; to identify small fords in the great current and, once incorporated into it, go along with it to the *Other Side*. This was what War would be like. People and their determination, everything she thought would rule over her and guide her, were to be scourged by its elementary force, and that determination was just a small ford inside a big one - a desperate steering guided by the deviation axis of the compass. Caught up in the primordial carnage, normal sufferings were laid out for Laura. Like the times, her energies were tinier than this new tyrant. She was no longer battling the impossible. The impossible was now the tyrant<sup>40</sup>.

The woman perceives the war as the center of power, positioned in a hostile environment the primary trait of which is violence and oppression in all domains of life. G.T. Moore and R.G. Golledge speak about *environmental cognition*

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 184.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 189.

related to the possibility of subjectively analyzing the external environment, in this case, war. In their 1976 book, they state that apart from direct, real observations, witness of war “have impressions about their character, function, dynamics, and structural interrelatedness, and that they imbue them with meanings, significance, and mythical-symbolic properties”<sup>41</sup>. This dual characteristic, simultaneously cognitive and affective, also shapes the manner of relating to war in the Romanian novel. The origin of the phrase *cognitive map*, theorized as early as 1948 by Edward C. Tolman by means of the *rat in the maze* analogy with human beings, meant to describe an itinerary, is well known<sup>42</sup>. Similarly, the manner of describing war corresponds to a relative representation of reality, exemplifying Golledge’s theory, who defined a cognitive map as an “incomplete, distorted, mixed-metric representation of real-world environments, but they can also be maps of the imaginary environments represented in literature folk tales, legends, song, paintings, or film”<sup>43</sup>. The female character imagines the new reality with the help of data pertaining to the old one, and the starting point of her experience is introduced simply: “she applied for the position of nurse at the train station, where a first aid point had been set up”<sup>44</sup>.

In spite of being as old as humanity itself, war is experienced differently according to the ages:

Just like war was a topic taken up again and again while its proclamation was in fact a new reality, so preparations for it appeared unexpected. The monotonous and traditional mechanism of all authorities suddenly turned to new endeavours. Faced with them, it trembled, shaken to its core. Phones were ringing wildly, seeking to create order in the midst of a feverish disorder. It was an all-encompassing chaos<sup>45</sup>.

Like any other phenomenon, it is judged from the perspective of historical knowledge, to which an arid experience is added, divorced from the direct one. To the external chaos corresponds a subjective observation of the world, as the map created by the character is made up of the subjective details perceived by Laura, a nurse in the Focșani train station. The novel has also been praised for its documentary aspect, as Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu cared for the wounded in 1918, an experience she spoke about in her letters to Garabet Ibrăileanu:

When, with my luggage at the station and a hired carriage, I remained here after suffering what I suffered, I believe I also saw everything that could be seen of what

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<sup>41</sup> G.T. Moore, R.G. Golledge (eds.), *Environmental Knowing: Theories, Research and Methods*, Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, Dowden, 1976, p. 34.

<sup>42</sup> Edward C. Tolman, “Cognitive Maps in Rats and Men”, *Psychological Review*, 55, 1948, 4, pp. 189-208.

<sup>43</sup> Reginald G. Golledge, Robert J. Stimson, *Spatial Behavior: A Geographic Perspective*, New York, The Guilford Press, 1997, p. 234.

<sup>44</sup> Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, *Balaurul*, p. 191.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 199.

was happening, I must say that it maybe was a twist of fate to be placed at the most interesting observation point, because it has always been my destiny to observe interesting things by paying for it with my very soul. I did not shy away from it. I offered myself as an object of experimentation for the most painful things, because I believed in a deeper meaning. I observed as well as I could and I suffered greatly<sup>46</sup>.

Consequently, war trauma is directly experienced, and the piecing together of events is done through the character of Laura. One essential idea arises out of both the direct and the fictional experience: the idea of war as erasing individuality and as an act of connecting with collective tragedy. The memory of experienced events is employed for the fictional merging of the hideous imagery of war. What is also unique is the manner in which the woman relates to what war stands for. Experiencing her own personal drama, Laura internalizes the external situation, turning it into a pretext for her own process of metamorphosis:

It was for her that the war had broken out, to change the meaning of things, and along with this meaning into which her malicious misfortune was carved, to remove that misfortune from its evil roots. In order to change the meaning of her pain, the overall meaning of things had changed! Nothing short of a plague had been required to cure the moral suffering of mankind, nothing short of a hurricane to shatter the layer of mold on the flaws of humanity. This is what Laura believed! The war had been created for her and she was its humble serf. Could she possibly not take part in it?... This evening?... From her position?...<sup>47</sup>.

A sort of Stockholm syndrome takes over the woman who perceives war as an all-powerful master, as a form of curing a disease. This moral cleansing, the therapy people submit to, a harsh and categorical one, is a new vision on the WWI. We are dealing with the dissolution of evil through evil, Laura believes, while also thinking that the “hurricane” is meant to bring order into the world.

The male characters are shown in different guises: the unsatisfied prisoner, the soldier shown from different vantage points, coming or leaving from the front. The nurse’s eyes capture such situations, turning them into moments meant to help to sketch out portraits: “very tall”, “the count... in the service of the imperial Austro-Hungarian army, a prisoner in the northern Carpathians!”<sup>48</sup> or to express discontent: “You treat your prisoners poorly! The Hungarian replied again arrogantly. We do not even have some hay to sit on, even though there should have been benches!”<sup>49</sup>, to which there is a “rebellious” reply: “We are not rich enough to offer prisoners luxuries. But we do not mistreat anyone”<sup>50</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, *Scrisori către G. Ibrăileanu [Letters to G. Ibrăileanu]*, vol. I. Edited by Mihai Bordeianu, București, Editura pentru Literatură, 1966, p. 63.

<sup>47</sup> Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, *Balaurul*, p. 209.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 230.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 282.

The narrative description of such situations is reminiscent of the social attitudes towards the Austro-Hungarian army and the manner in which writers had related to it previously, such as for example Liviu Rebreanu, who in 1922 had published *Pădurea spânzuraților* [*Forest of the Hanged*]. We might add other war novels, such as the one written by Mihail Sadoveanu, *Strada Lăpușneanu. Cronică din 1917* [*Lăpușneanu Street. A Chronicle from 1917*] (1921), Camil Petrescu and his well-known novel *Ultima noapte de dragoste, întâia noapte de război* [*The Last Night of Love, the First Night of War*] (1930), *Roșu, galben și albastru* [*Red, Yellow and Blue*] (1924) by Ion Minulescu, *Întunecare* [*Darkening*] (1927) by Cezar Petrescu or *Fata moartă* [*The Dead Girl*] (1937) by Ioan Missir. War literature is created, in most cases, through direct experience, as most of those who write it have taken an active part in battles.

The novelty of Papadat-Bengescu's approach thus lies not in the central theme tackled, but in the feminine point of view that she applies to unknown situations. Until that point, war had been an exclusively masculine trauma, with women being perceived as victims only through the lens of their suffering at home<sup>51</sup>, in the absence of the men who had left for the front. In Papadat-Bengescu writing's, masculinity is perceived as bearing two essential traits identified as follows: "with men gone, life had lost its two meanings: the quest for money and the quest for love", the only thing remaining being the survival instinct, "the need to exist"<sup>52</sup>. On another occasion, the scout called M., a sub-lieutenant of the infantry who had voluntarily helped her to care for the wounded and had died on the front, is a brief presence. The same can be said about Gore the teacher and the crisis that fills Laura with fear, about Vintilă who protects her and persuades her that "children, just like puppies, just like women, are small domestic animals, led by voices and smells"<sup>53</sup>; about Dobre whom she perceives as a "solemn pilgrim"<sup>54</sup>; about the Russian captains Wasia and Iwan and their everlasting friendship; about Cojocariu, "an intellectualized peasant"<sup>55</sup> and Dumitru who cares for him; about Ion Cizmaru "the merry goatherder"<sup>56</sup>; about the old silversmith. The uselessness of belonging to a nation when faced with war and death is expressed as follows: "buried Romanians and Russians, Germans and French"<sup>57</sup>. It is a tragic conclusion to what a global conflagration stands for that destroys comrades and enemies alike.

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<sup>51</sup> See the study about geofeminism in Alina Bako, "Geo-feminism in Romanian Fiction. An Introduction", *Transilvania*, 2020, 11–12, pp. 113-119.

<sup>52</sup> Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, *Balaurul*, p. 230.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 230.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 330.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 339.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 383.

The other attitude Laura acquires is the result of multiple experiences, shifting from a toned-down perspective on war to a more radical one. Her outrage is sincere and springs out of a powerful experience of war-time trauma. Contaminating humanity like a pandemic, war leaves behind victims and horrors:

Beast! Hideous beast! Who will ever sever its monstrous heads at the root, when they grow back again and again from the spot they have been severed? War! Everyone was now a soldier and all places were camps. The enemy was lurking somewhere in the shadows, thoughts and movements were aligned with the meanings of battle and the general paradigm was that of carnage<sup>58</sup>.

The female characters are perceived as an all-seeing and unforgiving eye, acid and devoid of any subjectivity. We are introduced to the “mundane nurses” of the Red Cross, such as Milly, “tall and busty”, who takes up an important place in “surgical medicine, or in other words in wartime butchery”<sup>59</sup> Dudu, about whom the reader finds out that she was “handy, devoted and virile, a precious frontrunner of the bandage room”<sup>60</sup>, the director and other nurses present at the front.

The time she spends in the infirmary prompts Laura to undertake several analyses developed by Papadat-Bengescu in her later novels: “For the same law there were, however, two different realities. In the back-prison of cities, the unlawful births, the ones outside of marriage, were full of misery and sadness. Frail and pale like midwife’s Dorina or like Ancuța’s poor child”<sup>61</sup>, these births announce the future fate of the “disheveled maidens”, female figures that populate the author’s coming-of-age novels, characters who are far from the feminine ideal and harboring sins of youth.

The discontinued narrative contains fragments of gossip which form a sublayer of the text. There are claims that “The trenches between Bucharest and F. were full of bodies [...] for a longtime weird gossip was going around, irritating people”<sup>62</sup>, and the presence of Russian troops grants her the opportunity to state that “she had never before seen anything as foreign-looking as them”<sup>63</sup>.

Events that trigger emotional reactions, such as the one involving the girl whose body had been thrown off the train so as not to infect others, are brought up in order to showcase a different facet of war outside the frontlines:

Mielușica was one of those soldiers fallen on the battlefield that no one has time to pick up, because the duty of moving forward commands harshly. A soldier among

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 239.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 240.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 212.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 232.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 245.

those left in the trenches to the dogs and crows, a place on the white apron to hang a new toy, a cross with a green bow<sup>64</sup>.

The idea of experimentation is also obvious from the mixture of magic realism and historical documentation:

Dobre had finally arrived. Stumbling forward and destitute, of course, on the road, like the poor that gypsy he was, he had reached the good Lord with his beard so big and white that in its whiteness all his religious amazement resided. He had reached the place of those supreme convergences of universal harmony, with echoes of vibrations connected to human existence<sup>65</sup>.

Another character surrounded by the same magical aura is the old silversmith. In the midst of the trauma of war, he continues his mission, and his portrait is sketched with the help of contrasting details. Laura notices him working on a “necklace”, thereby introducing his craft. His prudence corresponds to the woman’s lack of patience – he works quietly, without haste, enjoying the process of creation. Details regarding his large family, his nine children of which four take part in the war (“One is a sailor... one is an aviator... two are artillerymen”) are provided, as well as the fact that he works for the Germans because “one has to make a living”<sup>66</sup>. His origins are mixed: “My father was a gypsy... my mother... a Moldavian...”<sup>67</sup>. His portrait is reminiscent of Mephistopheles’, the old silversmith appearing to be in possession of the secrets of alchemy, as magic is inserted, we might state accidentally, into the cruel reality of war. The character evinces a dual nature, presented with the help of the image he projects, camouflaged in the image of a “Florentine jeweler” is added, one descended from magic realism, mumbling curses and owning cryptic volumes, reminiscent of the characters created by Mircea Eliade, or, earlier on, of Ruben – Riven from Mihai Eminescu’s prose:

He was always smirking, a diabolical smile, with eyes restless like flames lit inside old lamps. A weird old man! A few moments ago, weighing that modern plaything of a necklace with love and contempt, he had seemed a Florentine jeweler, and now he appeared to be a gypsy blacksmith, who, putting horseshoes on his enemy’s horses, was mumbling curses that would cause the wagon to flip.

– Come over some day if you like! I will show you some books that nobody except the old silversmith has... I live over there in that old house at the back of the street... Poor people! Who is working with silver anymore? ... Everything can be bought in shops<sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 239.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 396.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 241.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 245.

Such passages are rare in the prose of Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, but they attest to the need to escape the traumatic reality of war. The character's portrait, naturally integrated into the Romanian context, remains however insufficiently explored, with only a brief description in the narrative context. In spite of this, we notice the same opposition, sometimes more strongly perceived, at other times rather discretely, between the modernity generated by that which is new and tradition with its endless, magical mechanisms. Although her work is indebted to new creative processes and the objectifying process of prose, by means of such passages the writer points to a prolonged tradition in character construction, to some extent advancing a reinterpretation of the manner in which the creation process itself is perceived.

### *The Dragon*

The dragon imagery is employed to personify a terrifying view, namely the train carrying the wounded coming from the front. The station is presented both before the onset of the war, with the "endless maneuvers of convoys towards multiple destinations"<sup>69</sup>, with "wagons showcasing the fashion of the day consisting in heroic inscriptions"<sup>70</sup>, and after the war had started, when trains were bringing the wounded from the front.

The dragon's first sighting is depicted as follows: "after 20-30 hours of travel, stuck in the darkness, in the asphyxiating steam inside the Dragon, pumped full of morphine in their misery, they were now slowly awakening"<sup>71</sup>. The wounded are taken care of, some pass away, some get well, and the observations are sprinkled with psychological inserts, with the dragon's appearance acquiring beastly proportions:

with a dull hoot, the long-awaited train, feared, terrible, now decrepit, with its stomach emptied of its hot entrails, started moving again, and slowly, powerlessly, emptied of the blood and flesh it had thrown out there, it retreated into the dark chaos of the warehouse. A monster that had now turned into a prisoner<sup>72</sup>.

Each of the "dragon's" arrivals brings about a trauma that adds to the other individual physical and psychological traumas.

Each new experience is mediated by the hideous projection of the dragon. "The Dragon's huge and hideous head was still far away. Far away was also the hell of its full and overflowing entrails. Only its severed tail, carrying people as in

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<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 192.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 222.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 229.

fairy tales, was cheerfully moving”<sup>73</sup>. The Dragon appeared to them like its correspondent in the Bible; like the one in the primitive drawings of the Testament: “a beast with a greyish head and scales, with red-painted nostrils and black whiskers...They were the white archangels, frail, clean and tranquil alongside the subdued beast”<sup>74</sup>. The representations of the train-dragon vary from folklore-like descriptions to biblical allusions such as the one to the Apocalypse of Saint John the Theologian (ch. 12), who presents the image of the woman and the large red dragon, war being associated in eschatological studies with the end of a world order. What is also interesting is the allusion to creation and destruction through evil. The symbolic transposition of the dragon into the train carrying the wounded and the association with “the white archangels” are allusions to the biblical battle between Archangel Michael and his fellow angels and the dragon embodying absolute evil.

The apparition of the “dragon” is associated with an intermediary space, where light and darkness, good and evil, suffering and sacrifice meet, the station being a point of arrival and departure:

The station was, of course, a privileged space. Trains were passing there daily. The entire war was on display there, loaded unto the crowded and noisy freight wagons. The long convoys of refugees were passing with their picturesque and humiliating pain; mysterious official trains with blinds closed on the sad equivocal circumstances; long, never-ending military trains heading towards who knows what and who knows where, but certainly towards something exulting and causing sadness at the same time, which excited the soldiers who were unaware of the pain awaiting them as if they were gazing above it, above themselves, above life’s suffering and sacrifice, towards the joys to come<sup>75</sup>.

Meditations on human nature provide the novel with existential undertones, this point of view being taken over from biologism as it was explained, perceived and applied at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1921, Oscar Hertwig advanced a theory contradicting the Darwinian idea of evolution, offering the example of war seen as an “unalterable necessity of nature”<sup>76</sup> that could be avoided through adaptation by human beings who, through evolution, might find peaceful resolutions to conflict. The perspective taken up by Papadat-Bengescu offers a biological source, the capacity of killing being tied to the very condition of being human. Thomas Hobbes identifies it as an essential condition of being human, thus

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 255.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 292.

<sup>76</sup> See Reinhard Mocek, “Two Faces of Biologism: Some Reflections on a Difficult Period in the History of Biology in Germany”, in William R. Woodward, Robert S. Cohen (eds.), *World Views and Scientific Discipline Formation: Science Studies in the German Democratic Republic Papers from a German-American Summer Institute, 1988*, Amsterdam, Kluwer Academic Publisher, 1991, pp. 279-291.



able to kill<sup>77</sup>, while Robert Sidney Bigelow speaks about the human being “defined not as the toolmaker, but rather as the war maker”<sup>78</sup>. The idea is not new. War has been perceived as part of human nature since Aristotelian times, while antiquity was indebted to this heroic vision on war. Emmanuel Levinas also takes up the idea of a human being’s innate power to kill<sup>79</sup>. The Romanian novelist identifies this primary characteristic, while trying to find a justification for war:

Man, humankind, are born assassins. The power of destruction is just as present within them as the power of creation. Being born, man gives birth; being mortal, he is able to kill. Out of these two elementary forces, one is denied to him by moral laws as long as he does not rebel against it. He does not kill. But his powerful threats are wasted on verbal manifestations: “I shall kill him!” And sometimes that is what he does!... Now people everywhere had stood up in rage and heat, ready to kill each other. It was war. To kill... in order to improve things... This idea of “improvement” that grew like poisonous mushrooms in the minds of people on the shores of all waters, from the dough of all shores<sup>80</sup>.

The power to kill is seen as a basic instinct that people are born with and that is repressed throughout one’s existence, remaining dormant inside us until at some point, when reason clouds over, a positioning is created in reality where there are no more moral laws. The vision advanced in the novel *Balaurul*, synchronized with the evolution of society fallen prey to the major phenomenon of war, is a valid one, all the more so as the two fundamental principles of existence are presented as binary opposites here: creation and destruction, birth and death. Like the biblical text that advances the image of the woman giving birth to destructive threats, this prose text presents us with a coherent vision of a world on the brink of chaos. Loss of reason is seen as the reason for the outbreak of war by means of the allusion to submerging oneself in the irrational bereft of any control, once the “heat” takes over the human mind. This position connects the pathological with war seen as a deviation from normal behaviour. The human being is under the spell of a malady, the loss of reason, as madness multiplies and takes over the whole of humanity. Beyond the primary interests of nation-states, war brings about the loss of all moral and social milestones, causing the destruction of human relationships but also the impossibility of relating to one’s own self. The perspective offered by the novel’s female character is interesting also because she finds herself in a position which disrupts her initial status: from creation, she starts observing destruction, fighting for her life alongside the others. The position of the

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<sup>77</sup> See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan: Parts One and Two*. With an introduction by Herbert W. Schneider, New York, The Liberal Arts Press, 1958.

<sup>78</sup> Robert Sidney Bigelow, *The Dawn Warriors: Man’s Evolution toward Peace*, Boston, Little, 1969, p. 43.

<sup>79</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991.

<sup>80</sup> Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, *Balaurul*, p. 223.

protagonist as witness also implies a tracing of limits and feelings when faced with death, and especially with the suffering of the body. More than death, Papadat-Bengescu's novel speaks about the body that suffers, that is wounded, that goes through the destructive process of physical suffering. The wounded observed and cared for by Laura are, in fact, versions of the suffering body, with war becoming a pretext for discussing human nature. The novel's text contains references to the chaos brought upon human beings, a profound one, an abandoning of the self that, even though sought by the female character at the beginning, is later on understood to be a form of loss of individuality. The unique vision advanced by the Romanian writer is grounded in the fact that war is perceived as a malady, progressively infecting the collective body of a nation, with the pathological aspect being essential to the observation of the entropic process. Vanities are seen, biblically, as the supreme sin leading to war, to loss of balance, to lack of reconciliation:

Destroying balance and suspended above themselves, they were making their way through death towards something better – crushing all that was standing in their way towards rebirth and ennoblement. For the icons inside churches – for the light reflected on the foreheads of idols – for the wounds, out of which puss is streaming to decongest the brains of nations – for ambition and passion – for the triumph of egotism<sup>81</sup>.

The triumph of “egotism” alludes to sacrificing the collective interest, the interest of common people caught up in the Great War machinery where each one is just a speck of individuality, part of a whole moved by the frontline.

Each time such reflections on the nature of war appear, the chance is seized to recall all fundamental moments in human existence, because alongside love and death, war too had shaped new world orders. The two fundamental attitudes the writer places at the root of human existence are connected to “the heroic sentiment” and “the humanitarian sentiment”, seen as two forces succeeding each other “without replacing each other”. From time to time, the narrator remarks that “humanity had followed the wild call of the blood and as soon as it had completed it, the feeling resurfaced proclaiming its generous supremacy”<sup>82</sup>, a sort of necessary crisis for the re-establishment of order. The dividing line between peace and war seems awfully frail, with each reiteration of conflict proving the fragility of human nature. The observation according to which both the state of war and the state of peace are connected to blood, “the same wonderful fluid”, is yet another allusion to the discussion of corporality and biologism. If evolution entailed renouncing war and moving towards a new era, then the Darwinian hypothesis, with its emphasis on instincts proving that violence is still very much present inside the human being, would have no ground. Papadat-Bengescu identifies as

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 300.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 301.

alternative moments the crises brought about by “blood”, by the biological element of human nature that rejoices both in war and in the tranquility of peace:

Laura thought that the spiritual law was the serene climate of the blood and the red instinct the crisis of the same marvelous fluid. Feelings, freed from the conflicts of the day, were slowly taking up again their delicate joys, first turning towards nature, towards the delights of light, the caress of air, the various marvels of the surroundings where the soul could find refreshment in order to start anew the miracle of its games of lights and shadows<sup>83</sup>.

We can thus note that the novel *Balaurul* advances a new and unique vision in the European literary landscape by presenting a feminine point of view on war, in accordance with the literary directions of the times. The trauma experienced by Laura, Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu’s protagonist, is first and foremost a personal one, experienced when there still was “a serene climate of the blood”, however, the second one that marks her existence is lived out inside a crossroads space penetrated by war, as the modern train brings in the wounded. Participation in war is achieved from behind the front lines, by means of observing the effects of battle, with corporality becoming a mirror of the immense trauma brought about by war. The wounded body is a metaphor of humanity turned into a victim of its own pettiness and loss of reason and even of its survival instinct. The novel’s starting point, overcoming a personal tragedy by immersing oneself in a collective one, morphs into a pretext for sanctioning war, seen as a major trauma of humanity, a malady born from temporary loss of reason. The feminine diary arising from this becomes the confession of a traumatic event from a novel perspective, different from the ones the reader had been accustomed to before, a modern vision of a world where diversity of points of view was a rare thing. We can safely state that Papadat-Bengescu’s novel is part of European literature and represents an important contribution to understanding the manner in which the feminine point of view matters to the description of events considered as pertaining exclusively to the sphere of masculinity.

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<sup>83</sup> Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, *Opere*, p. 303.

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COGNITIVE WAR CARTOGRAPHIES  
IN HORTENSIA PAPADAT-BENGESCU'S NOVEL  
(Abstract)

This research endeavour is part of the study of feminine points of view on war and the manner in which they are internalized. Concepts such as “*modern memory*” (Paul Fussell), *testimony and witness* (Shoshana Felman), *new methods for writing about war* (Ayşe Gül Altınay and Andrea Pető) or *the impossibility of narrative completion* (Victoria Stewart) are employed, all of them connected to the rendition of the war experience through the female voice. The Romanian novel fulfils the generative function of creating “cognitive cartographies”. Thus, mental activity generates both the literary work and its interpretation under the form of a map represented individually by each character. The manner in which cognitive cartographies are constructed is studied in the novel *Balaurul [The Dragon]* (1923) by Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, a novel that displays various key elements for our study: the war theme and short-term memory, the female internalization of war trauma, and cognitive schemes which are the result of dangerous experiences. The knowledge the reader gains is constructed under the form of a cognitive cartography made up of internal key spaces placed on a map imagined by the writer.

*Keywords:* trauma, Romanian fiction, WWI writings, war, gender studies.

CARTOGRAFIERI COGNITIVE ALE RĂZBOIULUI  
ÎN ROMANELE HORTENSIEI PAPADAT-BENGESCU  
(Rezumat)

Articolul se înscrie în seria studiilor care analizează perspectivele feminine asupra războiului, precum și modul în care aceste puncte de vedere sunt internalizate. În cadrul cercetării sunt utilizate concepte precum „*memoria modernă*” (Paul Fussell), *raportul mărturie-martor* (Shoshana Felman), *noi metode de a scrie despre război* (Ayşe Gül Altınay și Andrea Pető) sau *imposibilitatea completitudinii narative* (Victoria Stewart), toate acestea fundamentând înțelegerea modurilor în care este redată experiența războiului prin vocea feminină. Romanul românesc îndeplinește funcția generativă de a crea „cartografii cognitive”. Astfel, activitatea mentală generează atât opera literară, cât și interpretarea acesteia sub forma unei hărți reprezentate individual de fiecare personaj. Modul în care se construiesc cartografiile cognitive este studiat în romanul *Balaurul* (1923) de Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, un roman care prezintă diverse elemente-cheie pentru mizele acestui articol: tema războiului și problematica memoriei recente, interiorizarea feminină a traumei războiului, respectiv schemele cognitive generate de experiențele traumatiche. Cunoștințele pe care le dobândește cititorul sunt construite sub forma unei cartografii cognitive, alcătuite din spații interne cheie, plasate pe o hartă imaginată de scriitoare.

*Cuvinte-cheie:* traumă, roman românesc, scrieri despre Primul Război Mondial, război, studii de gen.