

## Exploring the Infra-Ordinary (the “Oblique Glance” as Autobiographical Strategy)

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### Abstract

This article aims at analyzing the relationship between intertextual and autobiographical memory in Georges Perec and Radu Cosașu’s writings, revealing several of their characteristics, similarities and paradoxes. Starting from the assumption that almost every book Georges Perec ever wrote (regardless of whether essays, autobiographical accounts, travel sketches, screen plays or novels), carries the stamp of his struggle to construct a plural identity (trying to harmonize his Jewish-Polish origin, the legacy of traumatic past-experiences – his father’s death on the battle field when he was less than six, his mother’s deportation to Auschwitz and her subsequent death etc.), and that for Cosașu the identity “quest” is central, too, I intend to demonstrate that *obliquity* represents in both situations a key-concept. Moreover, when reading their childhood recollections, Georges Perec’s notes on his journey to London or Radu Cosașu’s account of his puzzling travel to Moscow in 1968, we notice that the strategy of the *oblique glance* gradually generates a sort of “industrial production” of screen-memories or rather the memory of a whole generation. Besides, we can envisage the possibility of understanding their exploration of the “infra-ordinary” as an occasion for reconsidering the various interplays between writing and remembering, intertextuality and imagination, or – as Perec puts it – between “space as inventory” and “space as invention”.

### Keywords

Autobiography; Obliqueness; Infra-ordinary; Travel literature; Everyday life.

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## 1. Theoretical fictions

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and especially during its second half, one can notice an obvious change in the features and functions of the generic category still usually named – mostly by force of habit – “travel literature”. Among those who drew attention upon this phenomenon was Phillippe Lejeune, one of the most praised contemporary researchers of what is known as life-writing. In an essay included in the volume *Signes de vie* (Lejeune, 2005: 161-167), the “inventor” of the *autobiographical pact* rightly notices that we can speak about “a travel diary” only when we are dealing with a text which is clearly marked by a departure date – written on the first page – and a return date – placed at the end, hence discussing about an isolated text whose coherence is given not by the topic of the personal self, but by that of the journey (which makes it similar to the war diary). How else could one explain the fact that only travel diaries had been published up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, only for the genre to become obsolete afterwards? Obviously, for a long time, the experience of discovering new lands was considered exemplary, therefore worthy to be shared with others, its social, thus non-literary importance, strongly contributing to the recognition of the genre: “*Moi seul, c’est nul et haïssable. Moi et l’Amérique, ça marche. Surtout si on l’a découverte*” (Lejeune, 2005: 162), Lejeune writes in the same essay.

The fact that perspectives have changed is shown by the higher and higher number of pseudo-travel texts which have appeared in the last decades, many of them being openly subversive, and mocking the actual genre. Many contemporary authors choose to “travel” within the ordinary, or the infra-ordinary, in the literary universe or in the past, preferring the game of perspectives and the unique spectacle of the search/display of the self to the changes of scenery, or exotic places. The real goal of many of these texts, even when they start from the pretext of an actual journey, is to retrace the journey of an autobiographical or identity *quête*, hurrying to leave the land of *simile* in order to enter an aria of quick sands, where illusion is built and subverted almost simultaneously. It is needless to say that, in such a context, it is not the destination which is important, but the endeavour of the quest itself.

In the following pages we shall concentrate upon two concepts: the

infra-ordinary and the obliqueness, starting from the writings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century authors Radu Cosașu and Georges Perec.

At first sight, putting two very different authors together may seem surprising, so it is necessary to clarify certain aspects, from the very beginning. The common ground on which they meet is, on the one hand, that of dissembled autobiography, of obliquely recalling certain more or less traumatic past events and, on the other hand, the translucent area of an existentially undertaken inter-textuality.

Although the intertext may rather seem to represent the opposite of “life”, for both authors, it not only manages to stimulate passion for inner travelling, but also – something which is even more important – it facilitates a sort of an upstream return, a reflection upon one’s own biography and, in the end, upon the origins of experience and language as such.

For the Romanian author who enthusiastically quoted “Le plus beau livre est pour moi le monde” (Cosașu, 1987: 8), “écrire la vie” means – do we still need to say it? – rewriting, in a personal note, literary experiences which are, in turn, pre-inscribed into the web of reality. In other words, the memory of literature comes to complete and embellish the unwritten world; far from being mistaken for the solipsist autoreferentiality, with the text closing upon itself, this memory represents a way to assimilate manifold languages of the world, the diversity of aspects of reality and experience<sup>1</sup>. As for Georges Perec, it has been noticed that his texts contain both an autobiographic thread and a formalist-experimentalist one, which overlap. Claude Burgelin is one of the critics who mainly insisted upon this aspect<sup>2</sup>, while Philippe Lejeune, in his 1991 study, *La mémoire et l’oblique. Georges Perec autobiographe*, comes to rather unexpected conclusions regarding the relation between the author and the autobiographic genre: “Si le genre autobiographique n’est pas central chez Perec, en revanche Perec est peut-être central pour le genre autobiographique.” (Lejeune, 1991:16)

This is a statement of a crucial importance for Lejeune’s argumentation, and, at the same time, it is useful enough for understanding Perec’s creative method *per se*. First of all because it values the notion of obliqueness (*obliquité*), and with it, also that of marginality. Moreover, Perec’s strategy of oblique recall is supported by a

fragmentary writing, able to capture the “infra-ordinary”, dis-membering and re-membering spaces, scences, objects, faces of the “real” world.

Not only that various scenes, spots, species of spaces, events more or less significant, or more or less disturbing, voices of a haunting, traumatic past, as well as adventure stories, descriptions of photographs, places or sequences of ordinary objects, commonplace gestures or everyday habits etc., can be found everywhere in his texts, being everytime “technically” described, but gradually we become aware they are part of a great performance, a sort of “industrial production of screen-memories” (“production industrielle des souvenirs écrans”), that is, memory of a whole epoch and of a whole generation. More significant still is that Perec returns to the same episode several times, rewriting it from different perspectives, if he considered it necessary (the account of the mysterious recollection connected to a Hebrew letter ג [Gammeth or Gimmel], rewritten at least seven times, represents just one example, among many others, that could be mentioned here). I shall return to this aspect later on, especially because it is one of the characteristics that the two authors have in common.

## 2. The Infra-Ordinary. Hints for a definition

To start with, I think it is interesting to approximate the meanings of several key concepts, such as “infra-ordinary”. If we take the etymological path, we will notice that the compound element INFRA – coming from Latin means “under”, “below”, “beyond” (used with a similar meaning when making bibliographic notes).

In the given context, we cannot ignore the connections between *infra-ordinary* and everyday foreseeable existence, and especially the connection with “one of the most common meanings of everyday life [...] that of repetition, routine, platitude which usually ends up as boredom”(Mihali, 2001:129) We must mention that the term, as such, was coined not by Perec, but by his friend Paul Virilio at the launch of the *Cause commune* magazine, whose purpose was to programmatically describe that white noise (“bruit de fond”) of human existence, usually ignored.

According to Georges Perec, the infra-ordinary eventually ends up signifying that very means of fighting against everyday boredom and predictable existence, a paradoxical method to escape routine by

assuming and deepening what is only apparently repetitive, ordinary, dull, boring. In the end, it all depends on the capacity of the viewer to (re)learn to watch, to see that part of reality which is hidden to the naked eye and to the conscience, that part which escapes us especially because it is in plain sight, being overexposed, trivialized and belittled through repetition. It all comes down to a certain “discipline” of the viewer, to practising the act of watching, of systematically trying to see differently. The French author talked, more than once, about “our everyday blindness” (“notre cécité quotidienne”) and, in connection with it, about the therapeutic and reparatory role played by sidelong observations or oblique glances, by the detour, by retaking the same steps backwards, by sinking into insignificance. Here, one can find answers to questions seemingly unanswerable, which preoccupy epistemologists nowadays: What exactly makes the quotidian a common and repetitive place? What exactly repeats itself from the quotidian? Is the quotidian anything else than repetition? Does repetition lead to banality by erasing difference? Isn't difference what actually repeats itself? (Mihali, 2001:130)

### **3. Georges Perec's London and Radu Cosașu's Moscow**

At the same time, in *Espèces d'espaces*, in the chapter dedicated to the city, Perec proposes a few remedies meant to correct our incapacity to see. One of them, which he considers extremely efficient – enumerating the more or less significant, more or less derisory details – implies both the programmatic practice of seeing and a more rigorous method. It is only in this way that a tentacular, polymorphous entity as the city may correctly be inscribed and defined:

Don't be too hasty in trying to find a definition of the town; it's far too big and there is any chance of getting it wrong. First make an inventory of what you can see. List what you are sure of [...] Force to talk about it as simple as possible, obviously, familiarly. Get rid of all preconceived ideas. Stop thinking in ready-made terms, forget what town planners and sociologists have said.(Perec, 1997: 60-61)

Enumeration and description become, this way, the key words of the poetics of the infra-ordinary, while oblique observation facilitates both projections from the space horizontal to the time vertical and sliding

towards possible worlds, having simultaneously a function of map making and another one of rendering reality unwonted.

*Promenades à Londres* is an example of the way in which these mechanisms work. Here, Perec starts by recalling his first journey to the capital city of the United Kingdom, when he was thirteen, when – as he admits – the city seemed plain ugly to him. In time, he has come to consider it “the city of all cities [...], the ultimate symbol of the idea of metropolis: something tentacular and unsettled, a mix of order and anarchy, a microcosm where everything humanity has produced for centuries has been stored”(Perec, 1989: 78)

What is significant in this case is the fact that identifying unique perspectives does not imply the elaboration of a sophisticated strategy, since the traffic regulation and the famous red double-deckers offer ready-made solutions to those looking for new perspectives and variations to the famous “pas de côté” theme which characterized the environment at *Cause commune*.

Getting accustomed to the paradox may start by simply putting to a test all the habits one acquires through routine, or by vexing reflexes.

Two surprises await the mainland traveller who arrives in London, for the first time. The first one is related to reflexes: before crossing the street, he will instinctively look to his left, while the cars will come from his right. It takes a while for the muscles of the neck to get used to this completely new situation; because, undoubtedly, this, too, is one of the reasons which make London seem such a “uncanny” city; this tiny difference which ever so slightly changes the relation between the drivers and the pedestrians, a relation which has been long established in the rules governing our cities. (Perec, 1989: 79-80)

Similarly, Moscow appears just as uncanny for Radu Cosașu, when he arrives there in the late 1960s, as a member of a team representing the Film Distribution Committee, at a time when the political turmoil caused by the Prague Spring in 1968 had not completely faded.

Although we are dealing with two different texts as regards their construction and discourse (expository and descriptive in Georges Perec’s case; narrative with theatre play inserts – in Cosașu’s), what brings the two authors together is, unmistakably, the uncontested ability

to spot that amusing or significant detail, as well as to understand the role, not at all trifling, played by enumeration in grasping the infra-ordinary. In Cosașu's text, everything that may escape careless or superficial observation is organized in long and scholarly enumerations, meant to melt together the present and the memory, the prosaic quotidian and the unusual, role-play and debilitating honesty. Here is an enlightening paragraph from the "self-criticism" regarding the Moscow journey: a Cehov concert, one of the happiest musical moments of the one who confessed that he does not like "museums, waterfalls, pyramids, only coffee shops and book shops"(Cosașu, 2001: 123) and that, for him, as a Schubert lover, happiness is exclusively measured in musical moments:

The hall was full [...] and, most of all, quiet, like a church; there were young people and old people, girls in leather miniskirts and grumpy geeks, elderly comrades whom you could as easily call ladies, judging from their neat, almost ceremonious clothes, and sturdy men whose chin resembled Beethoven's, when frost came over Moscow. (Cosașu, 2001: 123-124)

The rhetoric of the inventory may be identified not only in Perec's description of London, but almost everywhere in his writings, from *Species of Spaces* to *Attempt to Exhaust a Parisian Spot*, from *Penser/ Classer* up to *Two Hundred and Forty-three Postcards in Real Colour* ("space as inventory, space as invention", was actually one of the writer's favourite axioms, both terms playing a crucial part in his "theatre of memory" ). This happens because the inventory represents some sort of multitasking device, a way of taming the (real) space and a strong antidote against forgetting, an instrument for capturing the present in all its amazing diversity, as well as a stimulus for the imagination.

#### **4. The past as a foreign country. Exercises against oblivion**

In *Supraviețuiri* [Survivals], Radu Cosașu also resorts to different two edged swords, from (self)irony, to theatricality and the dialogization of recall. Against this background, resorting to memory represents not only a method, among others, to recover and harmonize different aspects of the polymorphous self, caught in the vortex of perpetual transformation, but also a privileged tool belonging to that "creative shrewdness" praised

by the author in an 1980 article, called *Suflul prozei*.

The fragment entitled *Proust-ul din fiecare*, included in the volume *Sonatine*, written with a mix of joy and sadness, of light melancholy and nostalgic humour, worthy of a master of “doloradiographia” stands proof this:

I am not a passeiste, but I can easily spot – no matter how fast the photopgraph is taken – *Sfântul Gheorghe* square. Give me a corner of a boulevard and I can remake an entire childhood and adolescence. Not everything dies – on the one hand. And not everything is to be self-criticized - on the other hand. I do not have the sumptuous Bucharest bibliography of Radu Albala [...], or of Radu Berceanu nor do I have his skills regarding everything made of velvet and parchment, still, through namesakes, I can connect and vibrate – to the extent my wavelength and age allow me – with the restless youth of the great city, with the new royalties of Bucharest, stretching from *Calea Victoriei* to *Cuza Vodă*, with those older and more experienced cousins who, in long summer mornings, would tell one another about what they’d done the night before at *Lido*, *Răcaru*, *Alhambra*, *Barașeum*. (Cosașu, 1987: 207)

“La douceur de la vie” in Bucharest emerges as an emanation of past reality, rather magic than art, leaving us to identify either echoes of light, foamy modernity (like in Camil Petrescu’s prose), or traces of a crepuscular, secret world, like the one in Mateiu Caragiale’s writings. The author confesses, both jokingly and seriously, that he usually answers the question ‘How are you feeling?’ with ‘Thank God. Inter-war’ (Cosașu, 1998: 10)

His passion for Bucharest topography (which can hardly be separated from his other passion, for literature) was also commented by Ion Ianoși: “Radu Cosașu usually uses “Bucharest dweller”, beyond nation or ethnic group. He wanders with great delight, as a literary character, the family and familiar neighbourhoods, just as another Leopold Bloom. His memory is prodigious and this could be readily certified by the connoisseurs of the old city.”(Ianoși, 2008: 7)

It is no coincidence that, against this background, he chooses an autobiographical form; nor is his continuous revision of the structure and the content of the volumes in the cycle *Supraviețuiri*, nor his



systematically proclaimed preoccupation for “true life”, which is, in the end, just as literary a construction as the other, as it has been noticed (Zamfir, 1978: 56).

Because, in the end, “real life” comes to be mistaken for “the life of the word”. “It was much later that I realized that, if I didn’t get to live like in the books, life would be meaningless”(Cosașu, 1983: 41-42), the writer confessed once, leaving us to read between the lines, to see beyond the waves of self-irony, to think about the serious meaning of his words.

Perec’s *W or the Memory of Childhood* could be considered another exercise against oblivion. The quest for the lost time and, simultaneously, for the lost self is in the centre of this unusual autobiographical account, in which the “autobiographer” tries hard to recall and assemble the traces of a lost childhood. Perec had repeatedly underlined the fact that he had no memories of his early childhood. In *Species of Spaces*, for instance:

I have an exceptional, I believe even fairly prodigious, memory of all the places I have slept in, with the exception of those from my earliest childhood – up until the end of the war – which have all merged in the undifferentiated greyness of a school dormitory. (Perec, 1997:20)

In this context, *W or the Memory of Childhood* appears to be, above all, a genuine therapy against the possibly insidious effects of an apparently forgotten trauma. The *montage* is so sophisticated that some critics have even claimed that the book could hardly be considered an autobiography (John Sturrock, in his introduction to the English volume *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* states that *W* [...] is “all-but-autobiographical”, “an unnaturally poised attempt to come to terms with the tragic aspects of Perec’s early life” (Sturrock, 1997: VII). Lejeune prefers to speak, as we have seen, of an *oblique* autobiography.

One of the narrators in this unusual double-coded autobiographical narrative tells the fragmentary story of a wartime childhood, a tale – as Perec himself defines it – “lacking in exploits and memories, made up of scattered oddments, gaps, lapses, doubts, guesses and meagre anecdotes.” (Perec, 1997: 21)

Gradually, we find out that this narrator was orphaned early – his father died as a soldier when he was four, his mother died in the camps when he was six and what he keeps saying is that he has actually “no childhood memories” or that he has at best “implausible memories” of his childhood up to the age of twelve.

The other account of *W* [...] is an adventure story of two Gaspards Wincklers and of an uncommon place where curious things happen. Undoubtedly, what we read is a spectacular account, which, compared to the first one, might seem “grandiose”, or maybe dubious, as the author warns us. If, at first sight it seems to celebrate some sort of Olympic ideal, gradually this “elaborate phantasy” of a society oriented toward sports, “turns more and more into an allegory of the camps” (Martens, 2011:38), so that, in the end, the reality of camps surfaces in all its horror, albeit in a highly oblique fashion.

At the same time, in the parallel narrative we come across one of the most meaningful episodes of Georges Perec’s “implausible memory”, the one woven around the Hebrew letter  $\square$  (Gammeth or Gimmel), a letter which resembles a square or rectangular figure with one open corner or a G turned upside down.

At first sight, the reader is tempted to consider this first memory reliable, given that it possesses a certain emotional consistency: the narrator’s family is assembled in the living room of his parents’ home in Rue Vilin – everybody is there: parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles – and all of them become enthusiastic about the child’s precocious brains when he deciphers the respective letter from the pages of a Hebrew newspaper. Yet, in a second stage, this comforting family picture will be submitted to a critical examination which will end up by *dis-member-ing* and *de-construct-ing* it. Few readers would have noticed the two microscopic figures sending to some references or (foot)notes, a practice not so much familiar when we talk about fiction or autobiography.

It will be only after reading the second recollection (with its burlesque variations), that we will discover two notes, very much similar to those used in academic essays (with the difference that they are not separated by any marks from the text itself. Their main function seems to be that of blowing up the coherence and the emotional consistency of the entire episode. Lejeune’s comment is correct: “Voilà le souvenir en

miettes!”(Lejeune, 1991: 57), he says. And, we could add, here memory is not only broken in pieces, but also deprived of its history. For the two notes, combining elements of philological study and detective investigation, bring to the fore details that contradict almost every single assertion of the previous account, casting doubt on such circumstances as time and place, on the number and identity of the characters, and finally on the existence of the “magic” letter itself. Actually, there are no reliable references, only shards, displaced elements of an incomplete puzzle

Yet, this dis-membered recall is not entirely deprived of its authenticity (at least if we conceive authenticity, in the spirit of post-Freud paradigms, as being concerned less with the category of “truth” and more with that of “probability”<sup>3</sup> In our particular case, even if Perec’s account is far from being faithful to factual truth, it allows us to discern lots of characteristics or features that have to do with a sort of probable or rather *oblique* truth. For the mistake actually casts light on the truth of another instance: that when the recall had been constructed by an adult (or an adolescent) who didn’t know Hebrew very well, in search of his (Jewish) identity. And more significant still seems to be the following aspect: by taking this *oblique* path the narrator indirectly equates his calling for writing and his Jewish origin.

## **5. Playing with time and space (about recovering the infantile voice)**

As we can notice, in Perec, as well as in Radu Cosașu’s writings, the pretext of space-mapping often aims at retracing a journey in time, which takes the form of an identity quest. Ultimately, foreign cities are not so different from one’s home town, or the town one has chosen to live in, but the relation to them may be so. This difference is less connected to the object, and more to the fight against time, to the desire to save something from the indistinct flow of everyday routine and daily predictability (“to preserve something, to make something last”, Perec wrote somewhere). It is not all unlikely that a journey around the room, à la Xavier de Maistre, or one into the world of literature and fantasy (as we are proposed in one of Perec’s best pieces of prose, entitled *Voyage d’hiver*), may prove a kind of antidote, just as efficient against oblivion as

telling the story of a journey to Moscow or London. As a matter of fact, in the chapter *On tourism*, included in the volume *Species of Spaces*, Percec advises his readers, both jokingly and seriously, “rather than visit London, stay at home, in the chimney corner, and read the irreplaceable information supplied by Baedeker (1907 edition)”.

Either way, among the strategies used by the two writers, besides practising the act of observing, the essential thing remains finding the right voice, the most suitable tonality, able to materialize the discoveries of oblique observation. Because enumeration implies not only minutely recording details, but also a linguistic strategy, an effort to convey image into words. We may even say that we are dealing with a sort of Cratylism *sui-generis*; for Percec, as well as for Cosașu, the life of words remains, under any circumstances, essential, as it is a strategy to recover the primary word, that authentic, undistorted word. And it is not only about that melancholic intuition of literary immanence, of the fact that everything has already been said, in a book, in a text, in a film. There is also an existential, even therapeutic aim, each person discovering their own remedies – often similar – against oblivion and anxiety. Because, as philosophers of the quotidian have noticed (Mihali, 2001: 131), the main idea is that of going back and forth between ontological security (understood as familiarity, as certainty, as protection) and its opposite, ontological insecurity (anxiety, uncertainty, unfamiliarity, etc). It is here that we are faced with the stake of repetition and enumeration in everyday life (stylistically supported by literary enumeration, which is, at the same time, characteristic of children’s play, a way to contradict the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign and to maintain the illusion of the connection between words and things).

Within this context, the tendency towards play, present in both writers, should not surprise us. Neither should their choice of formula in the “let’s pretend” category, which Lewis Carroll loved so much. Cosașu has this tendency almost everywhere in his work, from the novel *Maimuțele personale* (where the character intentionally makes his stories confusing, by using formula of the hypothetical), to his volume *Povești pentru a-mi împlânzi iubita*, where the author’s voice sounds both tender and sassy, pathetic and taunting, sentimental and sarcastic: “what more can you ask of me, than to forget myself and my ways, to return with

you, taken in by every day packing of pencil sharpeners and ashtrays, coffee cups and medicine, photographs and eyeglasses/ to make 365 coffee packs in velvet for 365 eyeglasses with two lenses each, you make the math, you travelling ladybug ...” (Cosașu, 2008: 216)

In Georges Perec we discover the same preference for play, which does not necessarily mean giving up a serious ontological goal (it is known that revelations may be caused by insignificant details); we also find, as we have already seen, the same conquering “poise” of the person who’s just out of childhood, leaving the status of *infans*, able to be surprised and to question things which are, for many, taken for granted.<sup>4</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

Considering everything which has been said so far, it is quite clear that, beyond the melancholic intuition of the immanence of literature, the works of the two authors have the capacity to surprise exactly those particularities of everyday life, in all its inconspicuous and unnerving complexity. For this reason, reading their texts offers a necessary exercise against oblivion. It is not an overstatement to say that it may even have a prophylactic role at the level of the collective mind frame. In regards to the perecquian endeavour, 1980’s French critics mentioned, for example, a sociology of the infra-ordinary (“industrial production” of screen-memories or rather the memory of a whole generation).

At the same time, researchers preoccupied with the relation between individual memory and collective memory, especially when it comes to everyday life under a totalitarian regime, may very well use the “material” contained in the many volumes of the *Supraviețuiri* cycle. We shall not insist upon the inherent tensions between those versions of the past forged by external events and imposed on the individual and the personal style of keeping and reactivating this common background, depending on personal history and evolution, on their preoccupations and education.

What is essential is the way in which each author makes use of the illusion-like potential of the play and draws upon the consequences of different twists of perspective. Since, before anything else, exploring the infra-ordinary implies fresh perception and relinquishing ready-made ideas. If one looks at it from a different point of view, obliquely, reality

ends up resembling that net about which Barnes said that it can be regarded one way, or another, depending on one's personal point of view. Normally, one would say that it is a knitted tool, used to catch fish. But, one could just as easily give it a twist and define the net in the same way a playful lexicographer once did: as a collection of holes, connected to one another by a thread.

<sup>1</sup> Regarding this aspect, see also M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination. Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist; trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, University of Texas Press, 2006, 445 p. In the glossary at the end of the volume the editor specifies that “dialogue and its various processes are central to Bakhtin’s theory and it is precisely as verbal process (...) that their force is most accurately sensed. A word, discourse, language or culture undergoes ‘dialogization’ when it becomes relativized, de-privileged, aware of competing definitions for the same things. Undialogized language is authoritative and absolute.” (p.427)

<sup>2</sup> Claude Burgelin, *Georges Perec*, Paris: Seuil, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> On this topic, I have to mention the article of Sara Collins, “On Authenticity: the Question of Truth in Construction and Autobiography”: «Therefore, *authenticity* is about the likelihood and approximation of historical truth, rather than its certainty. In that respect, it links with Freud’s musings over “probability”. Developments on writing “truths” in autobiography mirror those in reconstruction, and lend corroborative support from another source. » in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 92/ 2011: 1391-1409

<sup>4</sup> Consider the following example (which may serve as argument): “The buildings stand one beside the other. They form a straight line. They are expected to form a line, and it’s a serious defect in them when they don’t do so. They are then said to be ‘subject to alignment’, meaning that they can by rights be demolished, so as to be rebuilt in a straight line with others. The parallel alignment of two series of buildings defines what is known as a street. The street is a space bordered, generally on its two longest sides, by houses; the street is what separates houses of each other, and also what enables us to get from one house to another, by going either along or across the street.” (*Species of Spaces*, 46)

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## Biographical note

Catrinel Popa, lecturer Ph.D; member of *The Literary Studies Departament* (Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest); doctor of literature since 2007, she teaches history of Romanian literature and Romanian culture and civilisation. Her main field of research is Romanian modern and contemporary literature. Between octomber 2002 - june 2004 – “Vasile Pârvan” fellow at *Romanian Academy in Rome*); between february 2012 and july 2012 – postdoctoral research grant at INALCO (Institut des Langues et Civilisations Orientales), Paris.