



The Centre for the Research
of the Imaginary **SPECULUM**
Alba Iulia, Romania



The **ASTRA** National Museum
Complex, Sibiu, Romania



Nicolae Bălcescu Land Forces
Academy, Sibiu, Romania

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON

*IMAGES, MASQUES ET POUVOIR:
L'IMAGINAIRE DE LA MANIPULATION EN LITTÉRATURE, ARTS ET SOCIÉTÉ*

*IMAGES, MASKS AND POWER:
THE IMAGINARY OF MANIPULATION IN LITERATURE, ARTS AND SOCIETY*

*IMAGINI, MĂȘTI ȘI PUTERE:
IMAGINARUL MANIPULĂRII ÎN LITERATURĂ, ARTĂ ȘI SOCIETATE*



MAY 22-24, 2026

THE **ASTRA** NATIONAL MUSEUM COMPLEX,
SIBIU, ROMANIA

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

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Questions de mytho-politique: les dérives pathologiques du pouvoir



Professor Emeritus
**Jean-Jacques
WUNENBURGER**

*(Jean Moulin University Lyon3,
France)*

Le pouvoir politique est inséparable d'une construction figurative et narrative et d'une performativité pratique, sources d'institution mais aussi de dérives autoritaires et totalitaires qui témoignent de l'ambivalence de l'imaginaire (Cf notre livre: *Mytho-politique*, op.cit.). Quelles sont les sources et formes d'une dérive psychopathologique tant des gouvernants que des gouvernés?

Mots-clefs: mythe; espace et temps d'un Etat; violence; soumission; culte du chef; totalitarisme.

Issues in Mytho-Politics: The Pathological Excesses of Power

Political power is inseparable from figurative and narrative constructs and from practical performativity, which are the sources not only of institutions but also of authoritarian and totalitarian excesses that bear witness to the ambivalence of the imaginary (see our book: *Mytho-politics*, op. cit.). What are the sources and forms of psychopathological deviation among both those in power and those they govern?

Keywords: myth; space and time in a state; violence; submission; cult of the leader; totalitarianism.



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Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, professeur émérite de philosophie à l'université Jean Moulin Lyon3 (France), ancien directeur de l'Institut de recherches philosophiques de Lyon (IRPHil), préside l'association internationale Gaston Bachelard, l'Association des amis de Gilbert Durand et le Centre de recherches internationales sur l'imaginaire.

A consacré de nombreux ouvrages à l'image, à l'imagination et à l'imaginaire dans leurs relations avec la rationalité, en philosophie, dans le politique, la santé, les médias, etc. Entre autres: *La vie des images*, nouvelle édition augmentée, Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 2002; *Philosophie des images*, Presses Universitaires de France, Coll. « Themis », 1997, 2ème éd.2001; *L'imaginaire*, PUF Que sais-je? 3ème éd. 2016; *Bachelard, poétique des images*, Mimesis, 2012; *L'imagination géopoïétique*, Mimesis, 2016. *Soigner, les limites des technosciences en santé* (2019), *Mytho-politiques. Histoire des imaginaires du pouvoir* (2019), *La philosophie de l'imaginaire chez Bachelard*, PUF 2025 et de nombreux collectifs.



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Ploy vs. Plot: A Universal Paradigm for World Literature



Professor Emeritus

**Thomas J.
COUSINEAU**

(Washington College, USA)

My presentation will eventually become the introductory chapter of my current book-in-progress, “Bypassing The Plot: The Bilateral Ploy of Writing” which itself will be the third and final volume of The Manole Complex, a teaching and writing project that reveals the presence of archaic ancestral practices in literary masterpieces. Each volume focuses on a perennial use of the human body: Vol I, as an expelled scapegoat in a purification ritual; Vol II, as an immured victim in a building ritual: and Vol. III, as the model whose bilateral form is projected onto human artifacts.

Volume III will call attention to the way in which the great writers begin by creating plots that serve to normalize certain ideologically charged beliefs which they then “deconstruct” in two related ways: first, by declining to bring the plot to its socially endorsed conclusion, and, second, by conjuring within the plot the emergence of unanticipated convergences that satisfy no pre-ordained schema. The unsurpassed example of this “ploy vs. plot paradigm” is Homer’s Iliad, which, having declined to conclude by recounting the destruction of Troy ends, rather, by “bookending” Books I and XXIV, which are made into inverted mirror-images of each other.

For purposes of this presentation, I shall explore this paradigm with respect to the deconstruction and substitution of three “naturalized” practices: blaming a scapegoat in Oedipus The King, exacting revenge in Hamlet, and awaiting a savior in Waiting for Godot.

Keywords: plot; ploy; conclusion; convergence; naturalized; deconstructed.



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Thomas J. Cousineau, Professor of English (Emeritus) at Washington College, Fulbright Scholar at the University of Bucharest, and Fulbright Specialist at Lucian Blaga University in Sibiu, was recently placed on The Fulbright Specialist Roster for a tenure of three years. A specialist in the work of Irish writer Samuel Beckett, he served for many years on the Advisory Board of *The Journal of Beckett Studies* and as the editor-in-chief of *The Beckett Circle*; he was also co-director of the “Présence de Samuel Beckett” conference hosted by the Centre Culturel International de Cerisy-La-Salle in Normandy to mark the Beckett centenary. He is the author of *After the Final No: Samuel Beckett’s Trilogy*, *Waiting for Godot: Form in Movement*, *Ritual Unbound: Reading Sacrifice in Modernist Fiction*, *Three-Part Inventions: The Novels of Thomas Bernhard*, *An Unwritten Novel: Fernando Pessoa’s The Book of Disquiet* (Recipient of an “Outstanding Title” citation from The American Library Association), and *The Séance of Reading: Uncanny Designs in Modernist Writing*, which, based on a series of guest-lectures presented at various Romanian universities, was published three years ago in Bucharest by Editura Universitara.

His current book-in-progress – the third and final volume of his *The Uncanny Reading Project* -- is entitled “Bypassing The Plot: The Bilateral Ploy of Writing.” The PDFs of his major publications are available free of charge on the internet, and brief videos related to his current work may be found on his YouTube Channel.

Anti-war and anti-American propaganda or just an exercise in absurd humor?



Professor
Felix Narcis NICOLAU
(University of Granada, Spain)

In the case of Joseph Heller as a novelist, three main types of communication can be identified: war, corporate communication and family communication. This article will focus on communication techniques and the ethical and aesthetic implications of using them. In addition, I will examine types of humor, social criticism and the philosophy of demythification in order to incorporate Heller's work into a literary and intellectual paradigm.

After achieving fame with his first novel, *Catch-22*, the novelist went on to write two more novels about post-war corporate and family life. In terms of his mental and cultural landscapes, Heller imbues his characters with elements of atheism, all-encompassing skepticism, social criticism and in-depth character analysis. His fundamental profile is that of a moralist. Many critics have spoken of negligence and even chaos in his novels; this is a fact that cannot be ignored. In his two subsequent novels, *Closing Time* and *Something Happened*, the Romanesque suspense diminishes in favor of psychological and behavioral suspense.

From the outset of *Catch-22*, the author sets two traps for his readers. Adopting an omniscient perspective, he delves into Captain Yossarian's mind. However, we later realize that Yossarian is neither a churchgoer nor homosexual. In fact, he is quite the womanizer and hedonist. The chaplain, in turn, is well-liked by his equals and subordinates due to his ingenuity and humility. These qualities expose him as a victim to his sadistic and deceitful superiors.

By playing with confusing tracks and supererogatory stupidities, Heller assembles an absurd and ridiculous universe that is pushed to subterfuge, including non-verbal communication.

Keywords: Joseph Heller; absurd; war; bureaucracy; eroticism.



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Anti-war and anti-American propaganda or just an exercise in absurd humor?



Felix Nicolau is a Romanian philologist, lecturer in Romanian studies at the University of Granada, Spain, and PhD professor at the Technical University of Civil Engineering of Bucharest, Department of Foreign Languages and Communication. He also was lecturer in Romanian Studies at the Complutense University of Madrid for three years; lecturer at the Romanian Language Institute in Bucharest; affiliated with the Doctoral School of the University "1 Decembrie 1918" in Alba Iulia, Romania. He is editor of the Swedish Journal of Romanian Studies at the University of Lund, Sweden, where he taught for four years, of the Madrid-based journal *Littera Nova*, and of the *Current Issues of Social Sciences and History of Medicine, Ukraine*.

He holds a PhD in Literary Studies from the University of Bucharest with a thesis in comparative literature. His books include: *Antologia didactică de la literatura clasică română* (with Alba Diz Villanueva); *Știința minciunii responsabile. Tratat de embolie culturală*; *Istoria nucleară a culturii. Cuante hermeneutice*; *Ingen fara pâ take!* *Totul e sub control. Lăr dig rumânska/ Învață limba română*; *You Are not Alone. Culture and Civilization*; *Morpheus: from Text to Images. Intersemiotic Translation*; *Comunicare și creativitate. Interpretarea textului contemporan*; *Take the Floor. Professional Communication Theoretically Contextualized*; *Cultural Communication: Approaches to Modernity and Postmodernity*; *Estetica inumană. De la postmodernism la Facebook*; *Codul lui Eminescu*; *Anticanonice*; *Homo imprudens*.

His research interests include English and American studies, comparative literature, literary and cultural theory, teaching science, communication theory and practice, and Translation Studies.

As a writer, Felix Nicolau is a member of the Romanian Writers' Union and contributes with literary criticism and history to numerous literary magazines. He has published several books of poetry and two novels: *Kamceatka*. Time is Honey; *Pe mâna femeilor*; *Tandru și rece*; *Bach, manele și Kostel*; *Cucerirea râsului*; *Salonul de invenții*.



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