**Abstract:** One of the scholars who have provided important contributions to the field of American studies in Romania is Professor Marius Jucan, PhD. The present paper is an attempt to decode, in only some pages, the type of discourse/writing that his books construct. The texts that make the subject of professor Jucan's studies invite the reader and the writer to engage in a type of discovery that conditions understanding and induces revelations of diverse facets of 'truth'– the interplay of text and mind. Since such texts of the past, belonging to Henry James, H. D. Thoreau, Thomas Jefferson, frequently superimpose the aesthetic discourse on the philosophical, sociological, cultural and/or political one, it is understandable why they can be consistently studied only by an erudite specialist.

**Key Words:** the phenomenology of writing, hermeneutics, fiction, authorial intentionality, cultural product, American modernity, Marius Jucan
“The Mask” or rather the “masks” of liberty suggests the relation, the median line, the limit between the individual and the community. The mask could voice the social attributes of the versatile, ingenious and resilient nature of Thomas Jefferson, the games of interest, the impact of passions, the ideals of virtues.

Before considering the authorial figure a question belonging to poetics, connected to the techniques of weakening and subverting literary omniscience, one should look at the authorial figure as at the “mask” of the presence of the author in his own fiction.

Any attempt to portray a scholar in the form of a presentation of his works so as to outline their importance and contribution to the cultural context of today’s academic environment seems somehow futile especially when what is notable and grand is not necessarily in the works but rather in the writing and the type of discourse that the books construct - impressively erudite, dense and elaborated, in more than one field or domain. There is a sense of hesitation in proceeding so, simply because in trying to define such a strategy, any author is to decode that author’s intentions, methods, performances and style. And when the ‘subject’ is one of those scholars who masterly portrayed three American personalities, writing notable books about them, the attempt becomes even more difficult and almost impossible, especially because it is meant to cover, in this case, only some pages. Furthermore, when such a writer acutely mentions, in the first pages of one of his books, the issue of intentionality in assuming some sort of authorship that is to intertwine with the intention of the work as an intentional object, meant to become an aesthetic product in the process of its communication, such a process becomes more than challenging, and the awareness of such difficulty begins seducing the very act of writing.

Marius Jucan, the scholar, is above all a philologist, mastering the word that severely crayons each sentence with pretentious and complex meaning, embodying the discourse of an erudite professor, a prose writer, a literary critic, an aesthete, an essayist, a hermeneutist, a cultural journalist and/or observer, with a careful and strict methodology of analysis, interpretation and criticism. Such a phrase - sometimes seen as “rambling” and “philosophizing” but also “dense”, “with a terminological coherence that our literary criticism rarely uses”, “with an analytic passion that goes beyond our attempts to simplify or summarize” - is meant to provide cultural and theoretical fundamentation to the act of decoding texts, writings and cultural figures, encrypted in (the masks of) their outcomes.
If such reading and writing fascinates, then “who is and where is the fascinator”? This is the question that the book Fascinația științelor sau despre retorică elipsei (On the Fascination of Fiction and the Rhetoric of Ellipsis) tries to answer. It is a book of literary theory and interpretation, consisting in a set of essays that rigorously talk about topics like the author and his strategies, the scene and the idea, the possible narrative worlds, imagination, the subjective wish, reflexivity, identity, the seducer; moreover, all these theorems are applied to some of the works of Henry James, Mircea Ivănescu and Camil Petrescu, in the second section of the book called “A Small Workshop of Interpretation”. To Professor Jucan, fiction (in modernity) exerts a sort of fascination and entrapment through the act of conditioning understanding by using reductive and subjective strategies of representation that invite the reader to astonishingly discover infinities of the ‘real’ while being induced a certain degree of anxiety. Thus, it is the interpreter that is celebrated by and in such fiction, and, most importantly, through such fiction. The interplay of text and mind in modernity is the generator of intriguing and provoking subjectivities that become possible through language. Fiction, literature, becomes the world as discourse and, implicitly, a Woolf-ian “transparent envelope” that yet contains a secret to be discovered in the act of reading. The elliptic discourses that make the object of Doctor Jucan’s study come along with secrets, new meanings, understandings, new significances that are made distinct and unique precisely in and through language, words that are interesting and challenging to decipher. This is the pleasure of the text, the pleasure to know, in the act of discovery of new meaning;<<the famous thesis that confirms there are “no facts” but only “interpretations” launches with Nietzsche the apparition of those singular points of truth, instead of truths, which shows that the real is conceived as “multiplicity, fragment, difference that only art can perceive adequately”>>. What conditions such a revelation and pleasure is the elliptic text that comes in between the author/writer and the reader:

Why the rhetoric of ellipsis? The answer, even if short, before some demonstration, views the capacity of a text to convey the construction of a subjective world, destined to some other subjectivity, and in which the speed of discovery and the amplitude of what is to be presented (narrated) are subject to some encoding through suppression. We believe that such a literary text, in which a kind of rhetoric of ellipsis like this functions, must be a modern literary text.

Ellipsis is meant to intensify the communicative potentiality of the text, by means of ambiguity, and this orientates the reader, stirring his expectations and ordering the steps of his comprehension, gradually
constructing revelation, without which there is no pleasure in understanding. This is the language that the modern author uses in order to produce images (fictions) as alternatives to the world\textsuperscript{12} and this is what differentiates him from the classical author. Thus, it is understandable why such writing, meant to reveal the world (as Sartre put it), invites the reader to decode intentio auctoris and to go beyond it, encompassing the other’s thinking, even if this other is fictive, becoming an owner and victim of his language and eventually coming “to think about the other’s thinking”.\textsuperscript{13} This is the first book of literary theory that Professor Jucan published, four years after his book of short stories appeared. Metafictionally, if such language, fiction and writing exert fascination, it is understandable why the ‘language’ that speaks about it is as encrypted, pretentious and fascinating as possible, and accessible only to specialists.

\textit{On the Fascination of Fiction} explains many of the instruments used by the writer Marius Jucan in his prose, \textit{Un locuitor al oglinzii (An Inhabitant of the Mirror)}\textsuperscript{14}, namely: the narrative technique, a splendid combination of direct speech and interior monologue, a kind of introspection that flows from one character to another, and from writer to reader, constructing a foreground and a background that focalize differently, changing perspectives and clarity, depending on the mind of the character/narrator, recreating images of the past and present, with flashbacks in direct speech, inventing characters that seem to connect events, and yet not meant to provide cohesion in the story but rather only further extensions of the set of ‘images’ that construct a world of intelligent philosophies about the crisis of existence that the characters experience, the workings of the minds of characters and the primacy of their consciousness; and, above all, much of the rhetoric of ellipsis that increases ambiguity, despite the fact that almost all phrases follow the dialogue of characters that do evidently exchange opinions in the very act of interpretation and subjectivization of experience and thought; such characters seem irreal and only connected by their consciousness in trying to make sense of the world:

The old professor will not be coming. Neither the next day, nor the days after, said Gabriel to himself calmly. A kind of wise acceptance slipped into his heart stealing away any gust of hope. The instant warmth of the wine needed some refreshment. The colonel looked at him sympathetically.

- Your silence is like a prayer in a world that lost the dimension of faith, recited doctor Semion approaching …

- Friendship is some miraculous absence for you, said Ganea …
- I will not change at all, replied the doctor. I will always be in my boat, rowing against the current, in the country called Montanialand. Abundant vegetation flooding the blue shore. Phosphorescent fish signaling the ascent to orange caves on their underwater road …

- Why such enchanting fantasies? asked the colonel tiredly, looking far beyond the ballroom. Here is where the dream of the ordinary man ends and the colored nightmare of the exceptional man starts! A saving coincidence? 

The Complex Innocence: A Phenomenological – Hermeneutical Approach to Henry James’s Tales is the doctoral thesis of Professor Jucan, defended in 2000, and coordinated and supervised by Professor Virgil Stanciu, PhD. It is the text that celebrates “the forms of an antagonistic culture”, in Matei Călinescu’s understanding, attributing to Henry James “the question of rendering the workings of the mind, of the phenomenological perception and of their fictional configuration, as well as the underscoring of an inherent meaning in the construction of artistic representations”. Such phenomenological approach is articulated “on William James’s pragmatism or on Henri Bergson’s intuitionism”. Furthermore, as the Introduction announces, Henry James is innovative not only in the epic frame but also in the uses of “the impressionistic aesthetic code in fiction, namely the primacy of consciousness, the analytic perception of reality and the expanding role of self-awareness, through aesthetic symbolization and ethical quandaries”. Obviously, the fiction that Professor Jucan chose to study and write about is absorbing because of being modernist in the attempt “to render artistic immanence”, “to show that conscience is the changing form of an inner experience of living” because experience is “the immediate flux of life which furnishes the material to our later reflection”. The “workings of the minds” are a phenomenological experience that moulds the individual’s conscience, “a personalized form of assuming the consequences of the encounter with the world of life”. It is a sort of representation that implies the “presence of the hidden essence since the writer did not perceive fiction as art”; in the early modernist sense, “the meaning would be made to emerge as the essence of the thing”.

The book is structured in three parts: the first chapter, “The Author and His Narrative Perspectives”, and the second chapter, “The Configuration of the Process of Knowing in Fiction”, delineate the theoretical framework and instrumental corpus; the third part entitled “Complex Innocence” structures the Jamesian short-stories into three categories: (1) “Parables of Art” – about tales of art and the artist because of the “inherent allegorical dimension” that James “strove to endow his
fiction with”, focusing on the question of representation, the dilemma of early modernist fiction, along with the “radical assertion of the artistic ego”\(^24\); (2) “The Experience of Becoming” refers to “the existence of different degrees of self-awareness” according to which the modern individual’s conscience “renders the limitless perspectives bordering on the process of knowing, bringing together the ego and the world in an intersubjective cognitive relationship”\(^25\); (3) “Jamesian Masters and Seducers” analyzes the “complex and innovative figures through which the authorial presence manifests itself”, “building an alternative process of representation”\(^26\). Much of the content of the book reiterates and develops many of the theories and lines of approach that On the Fascination of Fiction formulated three years earlier, in 1998. The option for short stories is justified by Suzanne Ferguson’s ideas that the modernist tale manifests its faithfulness to impressionism more radically than the novel and her belief that the modernist tale renders “more plenary and at the same time more visibly” the intention of the author\(^27\). Moreover, Professor Jucan explains that his choice “relies on the writer’s intention to represent, contemplate and go beyond “an end”>> and, the reader is told, “So, Jamesian tales should be read and interpreted in consonance with the tenets of early modernism”\(^28\). Including 291 titles in the Bibliography and at present being one of the most important books on Henry James, The Complex Innocence is a monographic study that manages to analyze the fictionalization of how the Jamesian characters’ conscience “expands, absorbing newness, converting itself to a new stage of self-awareness”\(^29\), presenting Henry James as an early modernist writer inclined to aestheticize life, to dehumanize art and to continuously uphold novelty in fiction\(^30\).

Singuratatea salvată: o încercare asupra operei lui Henry David Thoreau din perspectiva modernității americane (The Salvaged Loneliness. An Essay on the Work of H.D. Thoreau and the Specificity of American Modernity)\(^31\) is a philosophical inquiry into American modernity from the perspective of one of the most important contributors to transcendentalism, Thoreau, and his standpoint according to which individualism and/or/through loneliness could be, on the one hand, one of the great ideological constructs of modernity or, on the other hand, just the answer of the individual who feels alienated by progress and excess\(^32\), which makes him withdraw from the world into nature. The second interpretation of the Thoreau-nian asceticism makes Walden so contemporary and topical, transforming Professor Jucan’s attempt into “solid thinking (here referring to the strong connection to factual reality) about the modalities of recovery of the resources of the modern ego”\(^33\):

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not
lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.”

Structured in seven chapters (Modern Asceticism, The American Garden, The Example of Experience, The Rhetoric of Liberation, The Horizon of Plenitude, The Anarchic Theme, The Salvaged Loneliness), the book is designed as a critical option generated by the structure of the work of Thoreau, its aesthetic quality, the lyric-meditative excerpts, the prophetic-apocalyptic tone, the peaceful wisdom and, above all, “the intention to find that nature is a code of organicity that is worth deciphering in order to be followed by human behavior.” Thoreau’s discourse, as both literary and non-literary, ironic and of a parodist, scientific and naturalist, ego-centered, and mostly autobiographic, focused on the ego, permanently changes the fore/ and the background of narration because the text offers a philosophical account that places the cultural identity of the individual at the very core of society, from where he prefers to withdraw in order to return self-reformed, with his own subjective timing against the social time. Nature is the saving cultural alternative because of its spiritual plenarity.

How contemporary could this be, especially if Thoreau’s discourse goes beyond the aesthetic register into the political one? Yet, his withdrawal is not renunciation, acceptance of the superiority of society over the individual but rather “the temptation of loneliness is a sign of an optimistic rediscovery of his self, able to edify, through an individual, a new world.” In nature, he is offered the elements of a therapeutic culture.

In between fiction and reality, Thoreau’s Walden is seen by Professor Jucan as a cultural product. Such a product is his The Salvaged Loneliness which, in between philosophy and literary criticism, turns into a cultural study and prospect of both the past and the current modern individual who must know loneliness if wanting to experience and accept the quotidian and if being neverendingly in search for the authentic, unique and personalized self. Moreover, most important is that on the “stage of loneliness one lives not only the experience of what is given but also of what will further become fiction or work of imagination” which means that loneliness is an urge to self-representation, the sign of aesthetic (or of
the aestheticising of) writing – a phenomenology of writing or, in other words, metarepresentation.

Măştile libertăţii. America în scrisorile lui Thomas Jefferson, (The Masks of Liberty. America in Thomas Jefferson's Letters) follows the pattern of The Salvaged Loneliness being a biographical study and, even more, a study of America from the perspectives of the writings of Thomas Jefferson. The book, first published in 2007 and republished in 2008, is seen by Ioan Bogdan Lefter as <<an extraordinary “cultural essay” about Thomas Jefferson: passionate epistolary hermeneutics through which Marius Jucan retraces not only a famous biography but also a vision about the world and history”. The reader is told that the book “does not fit exactly into the framework of a biography” and that the letters of Jefferson, the statesman and the political thinker, are a pre-text meant to “decipher the many-layered context on whose background America was born” and also meant to bring nearer the lessons of the past and to allow “the reader to perceive the present’s untapped possibilities”. It is a biographical “embroidery” that is to lead the reader “in the intricate maze of historical and political events, while stalking the shadow of the main protagonist”.

The book has ten independently constructed chapters that do not necessarily follow a chronological line of Jefferson’s letters. They rather address various themes developed by the politician in his letters: personal education as a cultural ideal, nature and its logics, religion and liberty, trade, peace and war, the Parisian period, political reform, his presidency, slavery, the multiple hypostases of Thomas Jefferson, the epistolary writer, or the fictionalized Thomas Jefferson. It is here that Professor Jucan reiterates, in the sub-text, the concept of authorial intentionality when stating:

If we wonder about how much Jefferson contributed to his own fictionalization, as an author of a huge amount of letters, we want to know, in other words, how much we accepted to “read” in the character created by his epistles and how much we probably forgot about the existence of the real one ... The letters measure the distance between that ‘then’ when Jefferson used his quill pen to write and this ‘now’ of the reader eager to know what was left as ‘memorable’ of the recorded events, that were followed by hypotheses, doubts, variants, scenarios.

Admittedly, the effect of modern cultural hermeneutics makes such texts of the past seem closer, turning into a pretext for the interpretation of the present cultural context, says the professor. The passion for Jefferson’s biography, deeply anchored in the American national symbolism, is the object of numberless studies meant to decipher the
major tendencies of the present modern cultural American pattern. Andrei Brezianu, in his review of the book, speaks about the rigorousness that characterizes Professor Jucan's analysis and his multitude of angles of interpretation in a book filled with erudition. He also mentions the effects that such Jeffersonian theories have had on today's action, organization, politics, thinking, in numerous interpretations and hypostases throughout the globe. The Masks of Liberty is invaluable especially because it is a "substantial and inciting book about understanding freedom" providing a set of critical remarks that are relevant for post-totalitarian Romania, still building the groundwork for solid liberty. The reader is explained in Instead of a summary that "masks" is a generic metaphor for the "undiscovered newness of America and its concrete cultural and political contours", and that the word would voice more truly the citizen, the intellectual, the diplomat, the humanist, the slaveholder and the president of the USA, "the distinctive and pervasive exceptionality of a character" that contributed to the real and utopian American modernity.

Back to why the 'masks' of the scholar. There is one phrase that might envisage the term and this is the statement with which Professor Jucan's ends his review of Matei Călinscu's book, Five Faces of Modernity. Modernism, Avant-Guard, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism:

Don't hermeneutic experiences mirror actually to life, whereas they deal with texts?

Alternatively, if rephrasing is not too daring: life, representation, hermeneutic experiences and texts come to connect in writing.

Probably one of the best texts that stand for this theorem is Professor Jucan's review of Aurel Codoban's book, Amurgul iubirii:

Love at dusk, when the owl started its flight.

I will begin directly with a confession, which I would not have liked to make, hoping that it would eventually depart from this text, while I am reading it, but the text has exceeded me, it closed the door in my face, it became the guardian of my confession, its freshly invested hermeneutist ... The text refuses to restore my intention, it stole my intention, an intention isolated from the world, a beautiful and lithe intention, and it went away to chat with the text ...

When the owl started its flight, love was at dusk and so it is now, it was at dusk when all these happened. What else could I do but understand? ...

What astonishes me is not what happened between my nubile intention and my aggressive
text but the fact that, thinking about my incredible happening, I mistook the splendid title of professor Codoban’s book, The Love Twilight, for Love at Dusk, writing the latter astonished by the cynicism of my violent text …

I feverishly looked for a catalogue of love made up of courtly love poems, Guido Cavalcanti first, then Petrarch’s rhymes, Dante’s visions … Wordsworth, Baudelaire’s sonnets, the vital verses of Whitman, and nothing. The plenary understanding was missing, I moved on to the novel, where I could find something to my taste, Goethe, collective affinities, adultery, divorce and death in Tolstoi, Hardy, Flaubert, the time of femininity in Virginia Woolf, the subtlety of the time of love with Proust, sexuality in Schnitzler and D. H. Lawrence, sarcasm with Huxley, and, eventually, the philosophy of love in Dostoievski and Camus, the impossibility of love in Kafka, Pavese and Sartre, its negation in Sade …

Enough with literature, I needed the myth of the androgyny, the denunciation of the secular in Augustine and Pascal, the mapping of passion with Descartes, the Spinoza-ian dialectics, the Kantian anthropology and ethics, but the volumes were disorderedly arranged and instead I found Rousseau’s confessions, Kirkegaard’s aesthetics of seduction, the subtle prose of the will to power, and I realized that it was becoming late and I was supposed to get here on time and I had no idea where the owl flew …

Here I am at the third part of the story about the relations that are redefined right now, while I read these lines, among me, my intention and my text, under the new title of:

On the Twilight of Love or Some Statements about the Sense of Melancholy. 47

The reader is explained in Post-Scriptum that these lines were written at dusk and read at that moment, which created a passionate bond between the “little text” to be written, as a comment on the book, and the author’s thoughts that emerged while writing. The review is called a ‘text-happening’, or ‘criti-fiction’, “fiction in the form of a critical mirroring of another text”, a risky attempt, says the professor. And then, here is the key explanation, which says it all: “More than proper narration, the fiction
of critical mirroring is an evidence of the allegory (and therefore the fiction) of any text in relation to the Text of Logos.  

The reader finds himself/herself absorbed in such texts, prose and literary criticism and essay and philosophy and diary and literary theory and journalism ... and all these qualities/masks under the signature of a single author. Such a text betrays a style that is animating because of a kind of awareness of the phenomenon of writing/ the conscience of writing and a type of acuteness of understanding that are almost disturbing. It reveals the scholar’s masks, facets that make the ‘language’ of an erudite academic who finds that discourse construction is possible only if entrapped in and enchanted by the very act of writing.

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Jucan, Marius. „Iubirea în amurg”. Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies, No 8 (Summer 2004), http://www.jsri.ro


Notes

1 Marius Jucan, Măștile libertății. America în scrisorile lui Thomas Jefferson (Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2008), 10. All the references and quotations in the present study, from texts written and published in Romanian, are translated by the author of the present paper.


3 Roman Ingarden, Studii de estetică, in Marius Jucan, Fascinația ficțiunii sau despre retorica elipsei (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1998), 9.

4 Member of the Writers’ Union of Romania, Professor Marius Jucan, PhD, is the Head of Department of American Studies at the Faculty of European Studies, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca and the Vice Dean of the same faculty. At present, he is a member of the national committee of The Romanian Association for American Studies. He is the founder of the interdisciplinary master degree in Transatlantic Studies established in 1997 at Babeș-Bolyai University, a program that has benefited from successful partnerships with the Fulbright Commission and the Romanian and American Studies Association, with Michigan State University, Plymouth State University, as well as with the American Studies Seminar in Salzburg, along with those established by European Studies. Professor Jucan has benefited from ten sessions of specialization in British cultural studies, liberal arts, American studies, studies of the USA, and European studies at famous institutions and universities in Europe and the USA. He is the author of five books: Un locuitor al oglinzii (An Inhabitant of the Mirror), prose, 1994; Fascinația ficțiunii sau despre retorica elipsei (On the Fascination of Fiction and the Rhetoric of Ellipsis), 1998; The Complex Innocence: A Phenomenological – Hermeneutical Approach to Henry James’s Tales, 2001; Singuratatea salvată: o încercare asupra operei lui Henry David Thoreau din perspectiva modernității americane (The Salvaged Loneliness. An Essay on the Work of H.D. Thoreau and the Specificity of American Modernity), 2001; Măștile libertății. America în scrisorile lui Thomas Jefferson, (The Masks of Liberty. America in Thomas Jefferson’s Letters), 2007, republished in 2008. He is the translator of Zbiegniew Brzezinski’s book, Marele eșec. Nașterea și moartea comunismului în secolul XX, Dacia Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 1993, and one of the translators of the book Filosofia americană, Volumul I, Filosofia americană clasă, published by All Publishing House in 2000. He is the co-author of books like Cercetarea imaginăriului. Dezbaterile Phantasma edited by Corin Braga, 2007; Philosophy of Pragmatism, 2007; Spirirtualitate și cultură europeană, 2007; Globalism, Globality, Globalization, 2006;


8 Marius Jucan, Fascinația ficțiunii sau despre retorica elipsei, 99.

9 Jucan, Fascinația ficțiunii sau despre retorica elipsei, 99.

10 Jucan, Fascinația ficțiunii sau despre retorica elipsei, 99.

11 Jucan, Fascinația ficțiunii sau despre retorica elipsei, 82.

12 Jucan, Fascinația ficțiunii sau despre retorica elipsei, 10.

13 Jucan, Fascinația ficțiunii sau despre retorica elipsei, 14.


20 Jucan, The Complex Innocence, 10.


22 Jucan, The Complex Innocence, 10.


24 Jucan, The Complex Innocence, 129.


26 Jucan, The Complex Innocence, 237.


29 Jucan, The Complex Innocence, 299.

30 Jucan, The Complex Innocence, 304.


33 Ghiman, 183.

35 Marius Jucan, Singuratatea salvată, 7.
36 Jucan, Singuratatea salvată, 7-8.
37 Jucan, Singuratatea salvată, 9.
38 Jucan, Singuratatea salvată, 169.
39 Jucan, Singuratatea salvată, 178.
40 Marius Jucan, Măștile libertății, 527.
41 Jucan, Măștile libertății, 477-478.
42 Jucan, Măștile libertății, 480.
44 Brezianu, 49.
45 Marius Jucan, Măștile libertății, 528-529.
48 Jucan, „Lubirea în amurg”, 129-130.