



# IDEOLOGY IS DEAD, LONG LIVE IDEA(L)S: FEMINIST LINGUISTICS, WORLDINGS AND NON-LINEAR GRAMMARS

**Ștefan GHIRAN**

*Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași*

## Abstract

Ideology is a fairly elusive term with broad usage from politics to media to literary studies and critical discourse, often having polarizing meanings. More often than not, however, it carries a negative connotation, likely due to connotations with other concepts, such as doctrine, dogma or agendas. Theorists like James H. Kavanagh and Terry Eagleton analyze its many facets, look into its rise and demise in critical theory and offer comprehensive overviews of its reception and applicability to today's society. This paper will look into one facet in particular, namely the performative aspect of ideology introduced by Kavanagh, which "has the function of producing an obvious 'reality' that social subjects can assume and accept, precisely as if it had not been socially produced and did not need to be 'known' at all" (*Critical Terms for Literary Study*, "Ideology" 311). Following the performative aspect, we will look closely into Judith Butler's concept of gender as performance, combining it with ideological thought, as well as other approaches to gender and language by critics such as Deborah Cameron, Robin Lakoff and Donna Haraway establishing a framework that looks at all three aspects - ideology, language, gender - as a possible identity forming intersection, thus language itself may be seen as (per)formative, not merely a linear production of utterances.

To help contextualize and conceptualize this framework, the paper will make use of Suzette Haden Elgin's *Native Tongue* world and Ted Chiang's *The Story of Your Life* approaches to language, including Haraway's concept of *worlding* as not just world

building but world shaping which invites a reshaping of perception: language itself ceases to be merely expressive and becomes ontological. Coupling both these speculative and metaphorical frameworks with the theoretical base above, we will attempt to step away from a dogmatic approach to either aspect and explore their worlding potential.

**Keywords:** *ideology; gender; language; worlding; speculative fiction.*

The power of creating worlds lies solely within language, at least outside of fantasy and science fiction stories, where god-like characters acquire it by means of magic or technology. A less conventional aspect of this statement becomes apparent when one considers the possibility that these worlds need not be, nor indeed should be, exclusively fictional. Some stories, and here science fiction excels in the alienness of its worlds more than other genres, provide a medium of testing and distilling, besides mirroring various aspects of life, and yet the worlds created outside this space are just as alien even when they seem familiar. An additional aspect language exerts at least influence on, if not power over, is shaping worldviews. Thus world-building and world-viewing become entwined in a blur of expanding and morphing networks of ideas and ideals which ultimately translate into human experience. The task (and art) of the philologist remains then to interpret and perhaps translate these back to the human either directly through works of fiction, or indirectly through criticism and linguistic analysis.

The relevance of the conversation regarding ideology as a concept here is twofold because on the one hand it is one of the driving forces behind shaping worldviews, while on the other it is also empowered by language. In critical studies, ideology moved through several stages from desirable to nuisance, to oppressor, alongside social and (perhaps more obviously) political structures. One thing is certain, however, it cannot and will not be ignored as it is part of the very fabric of society and everyday life one way or another. It is a social act, much like language and as such it must have some form of clause animating it into existence. Without falling into a proper subject-verb agreement conversation, we can use this metaphor to agree upon the fact that if humans are social subjects, then ideology has the potential to predicate at least part of our actions. Proof of its ubiquity can be found aplenty in everyday life from politics to media, yet having a critical approach as both method and scope will be one more

example we shall provide. Terry Eagleton lists in his 1991 *Ideology: An Introduction* possible definitions of ideology from *a* all the way through to *p*, to exemplify how varied the views are, as well as to emphasize the volatility of the concept itself. They are sometimes contradictory, they militate, they criticize, or try to be explanatory. For instance, we can consider the following:

- (b) a body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class;
- (d) false ideas which help to legitimate a dominant political power;
- (i) socially necessary illusion;
- (l) action-oriented sets of beliefs. (Eagleton 1, 2)

There is no common ground to encompass all iterations, but beyond the politically charged nuance of some, the polarizing aspects and Eagleton's own commentaries on the nature of ideology (briefly presented below), there is another conclusion that can be reached here. The multitude of definitions, by no means exhaustive nor definitive, may serve as proof of versatility. In other words, given the large variety of perspectives enunciated, ideology shapes itself to fit the climate it performs in. The use of performance here is intentional since this view, in turn, allows for the creation of a framework around a very dynamic dimension of ideology, one that not only shapes itself, but shapeshifts and perhaps more importantly, can itself shape worldviews.

It is useful to at least mention Eagleton's observations about this list before moving further with this pattern. He first points to the incongruence of the definitions: "not all formulations are compatible with one another. If, for example, *any* set of beliefs motivated by social interests, then it cannot simply signify the *dominant* forms of thought in society" (Eagleton 2). The result is that if we accept a dominant/dominated binary, the reaction to the former is also ideological. He then points out the fact that in some "nobody would claim that their own thinking was ideological" (Eagleton 2) making clear the fact that ideology is denounced and weaponized against opposing factions - ideology is something bad, undesirable and certainly it is something that "the other has" (Eagleton 2), with special attention to be paid here to 'the other' as this is a clear indication that ideology tends to polarizes and divide (i.e. to other - verb, long infinitive), sometimes within the same ideological mindset - too radical or extreme, or alternatively not enough so. Finally, he points out that "some of them involve a sense of not seeing reality properly, whereas a definition like 'action-

oriented sense of beliefs' leaves the issue open" (Eagleton 2). Based on these observations, what was mentioned above as the volatile quality of the concept is made clear since, for instance, some are directly vilifying those who do engage in ideological thought for transgressions, without admitting that their own thinking is ideological, while others are fairly neutral, not radicalizing the concept in any way. With the last observation Eagleton moves the conversation from the quality of the definitions to a reality-defining substrate which allows him a deeper analysis on both the use of ideology as a tool by political powers but also the rejection of ideology in critical studies, perhaps as a reaction to the misuse or abuse of power: "an interesting feature of this 'end-of-ideology' ideology is that it tends to view ideology in two quite contradictory ways, as at once blindly irrational and excessively rationalistic" (4). It does go much further and more detailed than the purpose of this paper, for which we will necessarily leave Eagleton with the following summary: firstly, since the definitions are so different, there is no definitive answer to what ideology is; secondly that ideology is debated as being both good and evil, but that it inevitably exists on both (or all) sides nonetheless, and finally, not explicitly stated by Eagleton here but concluded from the evidence presented, ideology may in itself be an agent of social life.

Another thinker who engages in studying the development of ideology in society is James H. Kavanagh in his chapter titled "Ideology" in *Critical Terms for Literary Study* (first published in 1990 and republished for a second edition in 1995). He offers a thorough overview of how ideology became a field of study and also what ideology came to be in the society of the United States at the time of writing. The overlap of elements between the aspects of ideology identified by the two scholars constitutes the very framework we are building. Ideology is versatile, changing with society and becoming more complex as society advances: volatile as it prompts strong, often polarizing reactions, and performative as it too acts within society. Kavanagh argues that "the first Marxist attempt to understand ideology was inevitably limited by the relatively simple psychology of the social subject and was dominated by closely intertwined philosophical and political criticism of European religious ideology" (309, 310). Earlier in the same paper he states, however, that "in later writings Marx and/or Engels gave more diverse, and less systematic, suggestions about how to understand ideology, thus creating a constitutive set of tensions in the use of the

term that continued to mark its later development in both Marxist and non-Marxist discourses” (307). The evolution towards ambiguity is clear here, which serves to enforce the idea of versatility.

Positioning it in relation to the disavowal of belonging to an ideological mindset or another, as well as a certain degree of realism, Kavanagh proves that: “there is no such thing as a social discourse that is nonideological” (311). Even more, he blends ideological thought and reality as follows:

Indeed, ‘realism’ (whether in politics or literature) can now be understood as the paradigmatic form of ideology, and one’s insistence that s/he (or a given text) is ‘nonideological’ because s/he (or it) disavows any coherent political theory is as silly as would be one’s insistence that s/he is “nonbiological” because s/he has no coherent theory of cell formation. (Kavanagh 311)

The literary (fictional or not) and political worlds thus collide so as to create a whole that is not necessarily subject to, but in permanent contact with ideologies. Here too, ideology can be found as an agent. Like anything in society, ideology moves and acts. If we look at it from this perspective, we can agree with Kavanagh’s point of view that :

Ideology is a social process that works on and through every social subject, that, like any other social process, everyone is ‘in;’ whether or not they ‘know’ or understand it. It has the function of producing an obvious ‘reality’ that social subjects can assume and accept, precisely as if it had not been socially produced and did not need to be ‘known’ at all. (311)

It is precisely this “production-of-reality” aspect of ideology that we are interested in. Returning to language with its role in worldbuilding and now its role in the performance of ideologies, we can certainly and unapologetically place it at the very heart of both, as originator and carrier of ideologies.

According to Deborah Cameron, “the term ‘language ideologies’ is generally used in this literature to refer to sets of representations through which language is imbued with cultural meaning for a certain community” (447). In this paper we are specifically interested in the feminist conversations which question how language ideologies influence or dictate “how women and men use language, and how they ought ideally to use it” (Cameron 448) and perhaps in exploring a question that Deborah Cameron herself asks in her chapter on

“Gender and Language Ideologies”: “How and to what extent do ideological representations of the language/gender relationship inform everyday linguistic and social practice among real women and men” (448)? Two components in Cameron’s study are key to the argument being built here. The first will help complete the idea of production and agency of ideology. Accepting that “ideological representations do not, in and of themselves, accomplish the exclusion, marginalization, or subordination of women” (Cameron 452, 453) does not dismantle the idea of ideology as an agent, but gives it a medium. As seen above in Kavanagh’s work, “ideology works on and through every social subject” (311). Therefore, until enacted (i.e. embodied) ideology remains in a state of potentiality, never becoming actualized. It needs a medium to be able to act in any way. Beyond various forms of mass media itself, which cannot act on its own, that medium is the social subject, the human. A parallel can be drawn here in regards to language which likewise remains immaterial as a social act when unspoken or untransmitted through any other medium. Further, when talking about gender representations in a society which does not allow for speech acts other than those conforming to the ideologically dominant, in other words a society which oppresses segments of its subjects’ existences, this unspoken/untransmitted language remains in a state of limbo, being thus silenced. This brings about the necessity of discussing the second point of interest in Cameron’s paper, the possible division between a men’s and a women’s language and its socio-cultural consequences. If ideologically the two are divided, in a society valuing power, inevitably the imposition of the dominant ideology is close to follow. In a patriarchal society then, silencing may wear different masks, beyond the complete shutting down of the voice of “the other”. Speech acts for women are now allowed and, as proven by Cameron, even praised or found desirable, yet at the same time marginalized. When presenting the fact that sometimes women are seen as better speakers than men in today’s society by leaning into their “feminine” qualities, she also makes clear that “a man who has some of these characteristics - always provided that he remains clearly a man - will often be particularly applauded for his ‘sensitivity’ whereas the same qualities in a woman attract no special approbation, since after all, they are ‘only natural’” (Cameron 463). This is another example of how ideology shifts with the times. If up to Seneca Falls in 1848 it was shameful for women to speak in public, at present that is clearly no longer the case, but somehow across the span of

nearly two hundred years the status quo remains the same, since, in the public eye, ideology manages to hierarchize capabilities and still praise men.

In the same line of inquiry, Robin Lakoff, often quoted for her pivotal role in gender linguistics as a field of study, agrees that within this men-women duality of language, women are both thought of as and taught to be inferior. They are conditioned in their use of language or out of some parts of it. Especially those spaces having to do with power or the public sphere (unequivocally associated with or attributed by default to men) are denied to them: “while both men and women are subject to constraint in the emotions that they may express, the constraint on both seems designed to intensify the preexisting power imbalance between the sexes [...] When women do express anger, its power is denied (‘You’re cute when you’re mad’)” (Lakoff 163). Another example of how language bends reality is the *exampletaphor* (exemple+metaphor) of *witch versus wizard*. For us lay people of the cultures at large, not fully engaged with these arts beyond fantasy novels, wizard, the masculine part, carries a sense of wisdom, arcane, but learned, distinguished, while witch more often than not is perceived as an occult, forbidden magic, cauldron boiling, crossroads dealing, soul-selling woman in popular culture or fiction. Even in such a fantastical realm of magic storytelling there seems to be a separation between the arcane *science* practiced by men and the occult *arts* practiced by women. Gendered conversations about language in a society thus shaped by a certain ideology seem to have one goal then, that of categorization of its subjects not for the purpose of understanding them but for the purpose of hierarchization. There must be a powerplay, there must be an “other” and the position of the other is generally shaped by the main ideology, or dominant as seen above, under the guise of tradition, common sense, natural affinities, etc, never called ideology. However, if the subordinate speaks out against the dominant, their own speech is ideological (i.e. agenda), attempting to upset the natural order, or national credo (i.e. doctrine, seen as dogma).

To complete this particular node of ideology, language and gender in the larger neural network of language and gender, two more voices must be heard. One comes from Judith Butler who presents gender as performance, not as an actor itself, but as enacted by the individual both within oneself and as a social act. If thus far conversations about gender ideologies divided the world into men and women, now the question deepens, asking what dictates these categories

and whether they should be relevant in our understanding of the world. Dismantling or simply reconfiguring gender categories can reclaim power for the subordinated but it also necessarily offers a different worldview by reframing the structure of both ideology and language within the same social context. Additionally, moving away from the conceptualization of gender as being conflated with sex, a sociocultural-linguistic dimension and a biological one, allow for not only the analysis of the two separately, but for a deeper, localized, understanding of each in its own context or environment. If gender is an act, then it “is not passively scripted on the body, and neither is it determined by nature, language, the symbolic, or the overwhelming history of patriarchy” (Butler 531). As we have seen with ideology and language, enacting is the force which actualizes it, at least for the social self. For Butler the inner and social dimensions are equally important as “the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time” (Butler 523). However, this “act that gender is, the act that embodied agents are inasmuch as they dramatically and actively embody and, indeed, wear certain cultural significations, is clearly not one’s act alone” (Butler 525), Butler explains this by making use of theater as a metaphor. Actors on the stage do not act in a void. Indeed, following up on this parallel, we can readily agree that there is a script, there is an audience that may influence the performance, but more importantly there is the performance of the actor. Each actor will play the same role differently. In no small part the script and audience tend to be influenced by ideology but it is not exclusively so, nor is it the focus of this argument. Instead, the core is that each actor will give life to their performance in a dramatically different manner dictated by several factors, one of which being their own interpretation of the source material.

The body is not a self-identical or merely factic materiality; it is a materiality that bears meaning, if nothing else, and the manner of this bearing is fundamentally dramatic. By dramatic I mean only that the body is not merely matter but a continual and incessant materializing of possibilities. One is not simply a body, but, in some very key sense, one does one’s body and, indeed, one does one’s body differently from one’s contemporaries and from one’s embodied predecessors and successors as well. (Butler 521)

A mixture of personal and social, thus, shapes the self, but what is more, “gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent

that it is performed” (Butler 527). This performance, then, is carried out daily, repeatedly, intentionally, in order to actualize towards the outside reality one that has been up until that point latent: “Consider gender, for instance, as a corporeal style, an ‘act,’ as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where ‘performative’ itself carries the double-meaning of ‘dramatic’ and ‘non-referential’” (Butler 521-522). Language is an integral part of this performativity. Gender too is constructed and carried out through language for the most part, yet a body can act its gender without language. The key element to take from Butler’s gender theory, however, is the act itself. Thus far, we have gathered that ideology is performative, and so is gender.

Another voice is that of Donna Haraway, who argues that “the world is a verb, or at least a gerund” (Haraway, *SF* 8). In introducing this concept she does not only transform the abstract, static ‘world’ into action, but effectively shatters the boundaries of perception, shifting it from lofty epistemologies towards lived experiences. Philosophy becomes applied and grammar lived - a grimoire, its wielder a sorceress or a wizard creating worlds (both *grammar* and *grimoire* have a common ancestor in the Old French *gramaire*, when the superstitious saw the learned as arcane) (“Grimoire”, [etymonline](#)). We thus find ourselves at a crossroads of sciences not knowing not only which way to go, but indeed how many ramifications there are. Ever the optimists, we might argue that even in such uncertain waters we need not lose our souls in discovering the way, as it is the very intersection we have as the object of study, with all its shifting parts. A scientist herself, Haraway does not subscribe to theories that place the world in a relative field of powerplays, calling both objectivity and relativity theories into question in her paper, “Situated Knowledges”:

Relativism is a way of being nowhere while claiming to be everywhere equally. The ‘equality’ of positioning is a denial of responsibility and critical inquiry. Relativism is the perfect mirror twin of totalization in the ideologies of objectivity; both deny the stakes in location, embodiment, and partial perspective; both make it impossible to see well. (Haraway 584)

In reality, the true conundrum stems from the fact that we see various theories as infallible objective truths or absolutes, and the world around us (the real absolute) as definitively definable through or reducible to said truths, may they be scientific, philosophical, relativist or otherwise varied. The dominant quality

of objectivity needs no further explanation here, monolithic thought does present itself as objective, in fact silencing anything in disagreement, with relativity seemingly a desirable counter. However, since the point of view is still relative to the dominant, positioning will take shape in the shadow of the dominant, never completely free from it, never separated, never its own. Haraway's own solution is that "the alternative to relativism is partial, locatable, critical knowledges sustaining the possibility of webs of connections called solidarity in politics and shared conversations in epistemology" (584). Part of attempting to achieve this partial, situated knowledge is another concept she creates and proposes, that of "worlding" which she defines as follows: "Partners do not precede the relating [...] worlding is the dynamics of intra-action [...] and intra-patience, the giving and receiving of patterning, all the way down, with consequences for who lives and who dies and how" (Haraway, *SF* 8). Referencing the concept of "turtles all the way down" places a heavy load of responsibility for worlding on the doer who creates the layers of their world, the metaphorical turtles, in reference to "an epistemological issue [...] whereupon one theory is supported by another theory, which is in turn supported by yet another, and so on *ad infinitum*, similar to the belief that the world turtle, rests upon a larger one, which rests upon an even larger one" (Iosif 54). The layering of patterns, ultimately of worlds, then, is never done in isolation. Worlding becomes a creation device, or rather the enactment of creation done, to knit Haraway to another metaphor, by following the example of Spider Woman, who weaves the world into interconnected webs of existence. However, the world itself can be seen as an agent and not a means of production, for resource mining or a resource itself. Donna Haraway proves this linking into feminist theory: "Ecofeminists have perhaps been most insistent on some version of the world as active subject, not as resource to be mapped and appropriated in bourgeois, Marxist, or masculinist project" ("Situated Knowledges" 593). We notice two worlds, then: one supporting life, the agent, the verb in constant movement and one created through worldings at an individual, located level, connected by strands of empathy and awareness to the others' worlds.

We have seen forces that shape the reality we inhabit, the world itself is an agent, ideology is an actor, gender is an act, all necessarily seen as moving parts. The fact that all parts move speaks to the dynamic nature of life. Further, the constant shift implies various ways as they do not always follow the same

preordained pattern. Lastly, that this fluid nature invites to different approaches is indicative of the fact that they do not require absolute conformity to one norm, nor reverence. Instead of obedience, it invites understanding, locating pathways, situating knowledge. It does not mean chaos. The world is after all in constant movement and in a cosmic revolution, from the cells in one's body to the solar-system-forming galaxies. It must, then, follow that language, the medium through which ideology comes into being and one way in which gender as an act interacts with the larger stage, must be an actor too, one that creates a symbiotic relationship with the human. Neither one reaches its full potential without the other. Beyond this, the regular speech act, in today's society, perhaps moved by ideologies, language seems to be a constant negotiation. It is not mandatory, however, that daily negotiation be a power struggle. One can position oneself on either side of the situated knowledge of others and thus reclaim ideology from a tug-of-war to a constructive, even creative force. Idea(l)s, while unattainable, need not mandatorily oppress. This is one of the elements of feminism and feminist linguistics emphasized here. A reorganization or rather a renouncing of hierarchy based on ideology and supposed objectivity, through cooperation. If in a day-to-day conversation the parts engaging are combatants, attempting not to understand, but to control the outcome, more often than not there will either be no resolution, or one side will end up frustrated at best, oppressed at worst. Ideology, gender and language, as seen, an intersection made of moving parts interacting with another, larger, moving part, the world, have the potential to shape smaller worlds, weaving them together or isolating them.

To apply the notion of speech (or text, or simply sign) which can simultaneously be an act and actor as well as show how world-shaping can happen in real (literary) time, we will use two brief examples of worlding from science fiction literature which seem best suited for breaking monolithic patterns of ideology and allow for the creation of worlds that spiral not off course, but into their own localized, situated existences, thus introducing the notion of non-linearity in pattern creation and language. Suzette Haden-Elgin (re-)places the responsibility of creating the world one inhabits on the speaker, much like Donna Haraway, in a slightly different setting. For her *Native Tongue* trilogy, she created Láadan, a language focused on the life experiences of women. A group of oppressed linguist women create the language in the first book of the

trilogy, while Elgin created an actual, functional language from scratch, with a grammar and dictionary for the use of fans or whoever needs/desires to use it. Attempting to embody these experiences through linguistic acts she specifically made the language a tonal one, thus attempting to, as she puts it, “lexicalize body language” (Elgin 152). Further, Láadan uses markers specifically added to convey clear messages on the part of the speaker, thus not allowing for possible excuses of misinterpretation. Another reason is “to reduce the communications labor for the women speaking” (Elgin 152). Presenting Elgin’s vision of feminism and femininity, it gives voice to what she thinks women need more of in a language, from types of possession that do not presuppose ownership to several ways of expressing the same feeling or life experience, depending on context and the lens of the speaker herself. Other than that, it follows a verb-subject word order and agreement, case markers, and moods; thus its grammar is in form like many other grammars of human languages, so in this sense, linear. However, it becomes non-linear as it creates a different reality for its speakers, reality that they inhabit, that they embody, and, eventually, this situated reality morphs to encompass a larger one - that of their immediate families, later in the trilogy, the workplaces. It literally allows for the (re)creation and (re)organization of the worlds around them.

Another example comes from Ted Chiang’s Heptapod B in “The Story of Your Life”. This language breaks from human linguistic patterns in several ways. Being a language written by aliens, “it didn’t follow the pattern of human languages, as expected, but it was comprehensible so far: free word order, even to the extent that there was no preferred order for clauses in a conditional statement, in defiance of a human language ‘universal’” (Chiang 137). The immediate linguistic consequence of this linguistic deviance is that

The language had no written punctuation: its syntax was indicated by the way the semagrams were combined, and there was no need to indicate the cadence of speech. There was certainly no way to slice out subject-predicate pairings neatly to make sentences. (Chiang 134)

The humans interacting with the aliens and attempting to learn this language theorize that this lack of human rules comes as a consequence of the aliens’ embodying reality the way they did, and in turn influences the way they perceive and enact their realities:

What distinguishes the heptapods' mode of awareness is not just that their actions coincide with history's events; it is also that their motives coincide with history's events. They act to create the future, to enact chronology. (Chiang 163)

The implication here is that the aliens live simultaneously in the past, present, and future, or rather that they do not divide time linearly as humans do, because in order to write the message of a semagram as presented above, they must know both the full message and its meaning before delivering it all at once. Thus they do not write in sequence, a word following another in any way, but all words come out at once, their meaning given by various inflections (prearranged as well). What follows is that this must be a symptom of their existence, best explained below:

With performative language, saying equaled doing. For the heptapods all language was performative. Instead of using language to inform, they used language to actualize. Sure, heptapods already knew what would be said in any conversation; but in order for their knowledge to be true, the conversation would have to take place. (Chiang 164)

By looking at these two applications that serve not as blueprints but as metaphors towards a speculative way of *worlding*, as well as various theories on ideology, language and gender, and their performative dimensions, this paper argues that the speaker can create, if not worlds at least spaces, or places within their individual existence that allows for the expression of various congruent worlds without othering them. In other words, Elgin and Chiang offer alternative, non-linear grammars to disrupt *the wor(l)d order* of a fixed rigid grammar given by ideological monoliths. Elgin's heroines step out of the "power game" to completely disengage from any struggle for the center, eventually creating their own center with the help of language, aptly named the language of perception (*lāa* - perception, *dan* - language) (Elgin 96, 104). It is this acuity in perceiving other worldings around the speaker that allows her women of the Lines to cooperatively create a safe space around them and in themselves. The sacrifices they make are beyond superhuman but made possible through the safety of *Láadan*, speaking the situated worlds into coexistence, merging worldings through cooperation. The answer then, seems to be the Movement of

all parts, in harmony not to one ideology, but in conversation with the rest of the lines connecting in identifiable knots.

The non-linear grammars proposed here, both literary, of which one is actually in existence, though hardly used, cannot be applied to real life. That does not mean, however, that they can be used for models that break a mold and a mode of thinking that creates dogma on the right and agendas on the left, while we are stuck in the middle with the worlding, trying to move it from fiction to reality, from abstract philosophical (and philological) thought into being. We can close with the worlding of “She Who Unnames Them”, brought to life through the pen of Ursula K. Le Guin: “my words must be as slow, as new, as single, as tentative as the steps I took going down the path away from the house, between the dark-brenched, tall dancers motionless against the winter shining” (196). It is within the power of our languages to populate the forests of the worlds we word with tall, dark-branched dancers. Not always simple, but always rooted in empathy, in together.

## Works Cited

- Butler, Judith. “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory.” *Theatre Journal*, vol. 40, no. 4, Dec. 1988, pp. 519–531. The Johns Hopkins UP. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3207893>.
- Cameron, Deborah. “Gender and Language Ideologies.” *The Handbook of Language and Gender*, edited by Janet Holmes and Miriam Meyerhoff, Blackwell Publishing, 2003, pp. 447–467.
- Chiang, Ted. *Arrival*. Picador, 2016.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Ideology: An Introduction*. 2nd ed., Verso, 1991
- Elgin, Suzette Haden, and Diane Martin. *A First Dictionary and Grammar of Láadan*. Society for the Furtherance and Study of Fantasy and Science Fiction, 1988.
- “Grimoire - Etymology, Origin & Meaning.” *Etymonline*, [www.etymonline.com/word/grimoire](http://www.etymonline.com/word/grimoire). Accessed 15 Oct. 2025.
- Haraway, Donna. “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.” *Feminist Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1988, pp. 575–599. JSTOR, [www.jstor.org/stable/3178066](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3178066). <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066>.
- Haraway, Donna. “Scientific Fabulation So Far.” *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology*, No. 3. 2013. <https://doi.org/10.7264/N3KHOK81>.
- Kavanagh, James. “Ideology.” *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, 2nd ed., edited by Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, U of Chicago P, 1995, pp. 306–320.
- Lakoff, Robin. “Language and Woman’s Place: Text and Commentaries.” *The Handbook of Language and Gender*, edited by Janet Holmes and Miriam Meyerhoff, Blackwell Publishing, 2003,

pp. 161-178.

Le Guin, Ursula K. *Buffalo Gals and Other Animal Presences*. New American Library, 1990.

## BIONOTE

**Ștefan GHIRAN** is currently a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Letters (Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași), writing a research thesis titled *The Hardly Mentioned Sciences of Science-Fiction: An Intersectional Approach to Suzette Haden Elgin's Native Tongue Trilogy*. He has a BA and an MA in American Studies, and is an associate assistant in the English Department, teaching conversation and text analysis practical courses in the American Studies BA program. To date, Ghiran has published a number of articles dealing with feminism and socio-linguistics. His career aspirations include pursuing teaching, as well as continuing his research in the field of cultural studies, with an interdisciplinary approach, combining linguistics and literature. He has been widely involved in administrative and promotional activities related to the American Studies BA program.

**E-mail:** [stefan.ghr@gmail.com](mailto:stefan.ghr@gmail.com)