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A JOURNEY BETWEEN EAST AND WEST IN CARMEN FIRAN'S *THE LOST SHADOW*

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Abstract

The increasing interest in the prominent theme of cognitive semantics, which promotes conceptual mappings, has become a favourite topic analysis both of literary and non-literary texts. Following the theoretical cognitive-semantic studies of George Lakoff, Mark Johnson, and others, the article highlights the conceptual metaphors in the latest novel of a Romanian-American writer. Carmen Firan's "The Lost Shadow" is a book of love and adventure, a psychological exploration of the emigrant between two ages who is caught in between identity dilemmas. The stylistic analysis traces the directions in which the conceptual metaphors can lead us in exploring the possible interpretations of the novel, as well as the characters' attitudes and actions. The research analyses the conceptualisation of life as a journey, of time as money, of vertical space as mental processes, as well as money and freedom throughout the book. It is the story of a Romanian couple settled in New York, a writer and a ballerina, who face the challenges of the new world with different intensities and perceptions. The novel thoroughly examines the paradigm of the eternal emigrant, of the man who ran away from his own success, from his own identity and his own country for no reason, and who no longer fits into any society. Therefore, the present research shall decode and interpret the conceptual metaphors LIFE IS A JOURNEY, TIME IS MONEY, and various orientational metaphors UP vs. DOWN.

Keywords: conceptual metaphors; semantics; eastern vs. western cultural stereotypes.

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1. Introduction

This study investigates how the cognitive-semantic approach can deconstruct the literary text of *The Lost Shadow* and reconstruct its meaning into conceptual metaphors. Hence, the present research is a scientific endeavour to decode the conceptualisation of life as a journey, of time as money, of vertical space as mental processes, money and freedom throughout the novel. It is the story of a Romanian couple settled in New York, a writer and a ballerina, who face the challenges of the new world with different intensities. *The Lost Shadow*, the 2018 novel of the Romanian-American writer Carmen Firan represents the narrative of success and failure, as it is the story about how you can fulfil desires and make the American dream come true, but it is also about the pitfalls and anxieties of the city, both bright and energy-consuming. Two young immigrants, who find themselves on expat territories, stay together for many years, but end up living separately, each observing and judging the same society in a different manner, according to their own perceptions, ambitions, or fears. How does a Romanian man settled in New York feel about living in the US thanks to his wife's business after having fled Romania during

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communism? How does a Romanian writer of some success in communist Romania feel after not being able to write anything notable as an immigrant? The novel explores the paradigm of the eternal emigrant in depth, it highlights the pattern of the man who runs away from destiny, but who no longer fits into any society. The history pencilled by Carmen Firan is a sad reflection on leaving and finding, the opposite poles of a single existence.

The novelty of the paper relies on the freshness of the novel and the highlighted need to analyse it from a cognitive-semantic approach, which “represents an approach to the study of mind and its relationship with embodied experience and culture. It proceeds by employing language as a key methodological tool for uncovering conceptual organization and structure” (Evans, Green, 2006, 180). Despite its acknowledged importance, the issue of conceptual metaphor or schema mapping remains insufficiently explored, or rather it becomes a necessary tool in the semantic analysis of literature. A conceptual mapping is a process by which someone creates a visual aid to organize ideas and concepts in order to show their relationships and connections. Gilles Fauconnier (1997) emphasizes the role of mappings, that he describes as “local connections between distinct mental spaces, conceptual ‘packets’ of information, which are built up during the ‘on-line’ process of meaning construction” (Evans, Green, 2006, 189). Following the theoretical cognitive-semantic studies of George Lakoff, Mark Johnson (2003), and the above-mentioned scholars, the article depicts the conceptual metaphors in Carmen Firan’s *The Lost Shadow* (2022) – a book of love and adventure, a psychological exploration of the immigrant facing two ages on two continents, who is caught in between identity dilemmas. The stylistic analysis traces the directions in which the conceptual metaphors can lead us in exploring the possible interpretations of the novel, as well as the characters’ attitudes and actions.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory has been highly influenced by cognitive linguistics and social sciences, and that is why it is an important tool in decoding literary, as well as non-literary texts, so as to better understand the encoded messages and the implied meanings. In conceptual theories, metaphor is defined as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain. The conceptual domain from which we draw metaphorical expressions corresponds to the source domain; and the conceptual domain that we try to understand corresponds to the target domain. According to cognitive semantics, conceptual structure is embodied, semantic structure is conceptual structure, meaning representation is encyclopaedic, meaning construction is conceptualisation. The first principle marched on one idea that has emerged in order to explain the nature of conceptual organisation on the basis of interaction with the physical world and it is called the embodied cognition thesis. This thesis stipulates that the nature of conceptual organisation comes from bodily experience, which makes conceptual structure become meaningful by the association with that particular bodily experience. Thus, concepts associate and the result is an instance of what cognitive linguists call an image schema. In the cognitive model, the image-schematic concept represents one of the ways in which bodily experience gives rise to meaningful concepts and turns the abstract into more concrete so it may be understood. “When using metaphors and analogy two things are compared as one is said to be similar to, though it is different from, another” (Aubusson, Harrison and Ritchie, 2006, 12).

Cognitive semanticists assert that words and meanings together form only a subset of possible concepts. The other concepts which do not have a correspondent word associated with meaning stand proof for the fact that thought precedes language. It is important to point out that cognitive semanticists are not claiming that language relates to concepts internal to the mind of the speaker and nothing else. Cognitive semantics therefore leads the way to bind the opposing extremes of subjectivism and the objectivism of traditional truth-conditional semantics by affirming that concepts relate to lived experience.

2. A cognitive stylistic analysis of *The Lost Shadow* conceptual metaphors

Conceptual theories state that verbal metaphor is a manifestation of pervasive modes of thinking in which people “map” one conceptual domain onto another or “blend” the systems of terms in which they conceive two different domains. An early finding by Lakoff and Johnson (2003) was that conceptual metaphors interact with each other and can give rise to relatively complex metaphor systems. These systems are collections of more schematic metaphorical mappings that structure a range of more specific

metaphors like LIFE IS A JOURNEY. In their study, Evans and Green observe that: “Lakoff and Johnson also observed that there are a number of distinct roles that populate the source and target domains. For example, JOURNEYS include TRAVELLERS, a MEANS OF TRANSPORT, a ROUTE followed, OBSTACLES along the route and so on” (2006, 295). In this sense, there is a particular conceptual metaphor, LIFE IS A JOURNEY, which is projected all along the life story of the Romanian couple. A journey is a common metaphor for life, as it reminds us that the destination is not our only goal. Taking into account that the journey may come in its many forms, there are times when there are roads involved and times when there are rails, or tracks, or even waters that stand as surfaces for the occurrence of that particular journey. At a first glance, this core conceptual metaphor, which defines the entire book, speaks about LIFE AS A JOURNEY. The novel is a constant movement between the east and the west, whether it is a dream journey, or a real one. The main character’s memories represent the triggers for imaginary time travelling back to communist Romania. Thus, the western predilection for comfort and the nurses’ inelegance on page 2 where Fred is waiting to be called into the doctor’s office is the first click down the memory lane. Then, there is the air conditioning and the proverbial eastern fear of air flow which call for a second instant teleportation to Romania, followed by nicknames, his constant loss of voice, the library window displaying *Harry Potter*, or the moment of the Romanian 1989 Revolution.

Moreover, east and west do not only represent the journey metaphor, but also the cultural stereotypes related to the two geographic areas, which permeate the text of the entire story and render it rather humorous at times. Thus, we can notice the eastern stereotypes in the paragraphs which enlarge on elegance – wearing stockings (“A lady never puts her shoes on bare feet, she used to say” Firan, 2022, 2), as a distinct mark of ladies’ refinement – drafts (“Fred was sensitive to drafts; he had to avoid them; that’s what his mother had repeated dozens of times in his childhood while pulling his hat over his ears” Firan, 2022, 6), or the air conditioning as a means to catch a cold; fear of intelligence police (“When he looked up, he noticed that a short man with a mustache had pointed his camera toward him. He went numb for a moment. The man pushed the button, and Fred had enough presence of mind to partially cover his face with his hands. The hammers kept beating in his temples with dizzying speed” Firan, 2022, 84), superstitions connected to drinking water and growing frogs (“When I was young, my mother used to tell me that frogs would grow in my belly if I drank too much water” Firan, 2022, 93), the earthquake in 1977 (“...he made out the rebuilt building of the former Scala apartment complex, which had collapsed during the big earthquake in 1977” Firan, 2022, 116), the 1989 Revolution (“It was an indescribable mess, a mixture of fevered enthusiasm, uproar, and a joyful romp. Men carried small children on their shoulders; flowers were being thrown off balconies, women laughing hysterically, the elderly crying for joy. Everyone made the victory sign with their raised fingers, and danced in the streets, flowers fell from every window. Cars honked non-stop, flags waving from their windshields” Firan, 2022, 115), taxi drivers who try to rip off foreign tourists, or seatbelts and their optional use in eastern countries.

On the other hand, we have the western stereotypes described in the passages where the main character’s narrative, or even the author’s, make reference to fake smiles (“next to an elderly woman who smiled generically” Firan, 2022, 6), to the big pharma (“More than half of America is on Ambien and pain killers, so why should she be so afraid?” Firan, 2022, 8), the habit of enrolling in psychoanalysis therapy (p. 19, p. 208), the use of headphones (“Between the beauty sessions, Jessica had her ear-phones on and kept time with one leg...” Firan, 2022, 92), which used to be a significant feature of the overdeveloped western IT society – in the novel the interpretation might suggest self-isolation, as the person who wears headphones is disconnected from the outside world – the new age trend of practicing yoga and transcendental meditation (“Deepak Chopra’s books, tapes with relaxing music, new-age guides about how to achieve any goal in ten steps, how to become rich overnight, how to fight against stress and defeat your opponents in business, how to manifest your dreams and stop old age had made their way to the nightstand” Firan, 2022, 216), as well as keeping one’s body fit (“Their bedroom looked like a battlefield now. Weights, fitness balls, exercise bands and bricks” Firan, 2022, 216), skyscrapers (Firan, 2022, 83), Christmas decorations on houses (“Christmas was closing in and the gardens in Forest Hills were decorated with colored lights. Skeletal deer sparkled by deformed dwarfs with green and red hats” Firan, 2022, 110), the simplicity, or shallowness of the Americans as described by the Europeans

(“These folks aren’t made for metaphors. You need to speak to them as clearly as possible, in simple statements” Firan, 2022, 170), the American Dream (“America has fulfilled my dreams. Let’s drink to this country” Firan, 2022, 176) and the obsession with lawsuits (Firan, 2022, 126-127, 130-131). These cultural differences and stereotypical interpretations of each society create a deeper gap between the two points of the journey from east to west and backwards.

However, the central issue of the present study is conceptual analysis. “Meaning construction is equated with conceptualization, a dynamic process whereby linguistic units serve as prompts for an array of conceptual operations and the recruitment of background knowledge” (Evans, Green, 2006, 189). The journey of stereotypes opposing east and west leads us to the first mapping – LIFE IS A JOURNEY, which is also decoded from the estimated values attributed to east and west throughout the book. East and west are envisioned as past and present, or here and there, which gives them spatial-temporal specifications, as well as the perception of different identities for the main character:

Stay **there**.² Take care of your life. You have nothing to do **here**. I have everything I need; it’s enough for me to talk with you on the phone, to write and know you’re healthy. I only want to see you happy and successful. She never mentioned New York or America. This **there** was a vague territory in his mother’s mind, without an identity (Firan, 2022, 212).

East and west are constant ends of the journey back and forth, either one being the starting point, or the destination. The present moment, the character’s real space is in the west, whereas the imaginary world, the character’s memories trigger a perpetual mental journey back to the east. Thus, the west is projected as a negative perception of the character’s reality compared to the idealized east, which represents the lost fame, the familiar environment, the mother tongue, but also the oppressive regime and the fight against the system. On the other hand, the west is depicted as the final destination, a place where one cannot escape from, as there is nowhere else to go to:

Where had Fred left his life? In his insomniac nights **he obsessively relived his way** from Bucharest to Paris and, finally, to New York. From there, **there was nowhere to go**. ‘Final station. Terminus,’ Mimi had told him as soon as they landed at Kennedy Airport almost 20 years earlier (Firan, 2022, 46).

According to Evans and Green conceptual structure is the cognitive system that represents and organizes experience in a form that can serve as the input for processes like reasoning and expression in language. “Semantic structure is the system wherein concepts are conventionally encoded in a form in which they can be externalized by language” (Evans, Green, 2006, 201). In order to analyze and interpret the novel at a lexical-semantic level I will make use of the componential analysis or semantic decomposition approach, which specifies that word meaning is modelled in terms of semantic features. In this case, the journey conceptualization is externalized from the mind into uttered/written language and supported by the semantic markers [+MOVEMENT, +ROAD, +END POINT] of the words “his way”, “nowhere to go”, “final station”, “terminus”. However, the entire story relies on the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, whether it is a walk, a run, an obstacle contest, a car trip, a train trip, a bike-ride, or a sea voyage; as in the examples below:

In retrospect, **that road** seemed the beginning of the end (Firan, 2022, 47).

When he did go out, he **walked prudently** and heavily, as if he wanted to see how solid the cement on which Mimi **hopped and clattered** ceaselessly was (Firan, 2022, 55).

He’d started **exploring the city**. During the day, when Mimi was working, he’d **wander through** libraries and museums, drink coffee in the East Village, read on a bench in Central Park while eating a sandwich ... (Firan, 2022, 100).

In essence, **you’d be going in the same direction** as me for a change (Firan, 2022, 166).

² The author of this article has marked the words related to the semantic analysis in bold.

I don't know what's wise. You're the wise one, the mindful one, the mind-person. I'm just **a leg-person**, aren't I? (Firan, 2022, 243)

The money went into her bank account mere days after she threw out her crutches. She finished her recuperation and physical therapy program, and **her legs** regained their vigor and form. Perfect for **the race that was about to unfold** (Firan, 2022, 160-161).

These quotes deal with a journey on foot which is triggered by the use of verb phrases such as “walked prudently and heavily”, “exploring the city”, “wander through” and the noun phrase “leg-person”, which project the semantic markers [+MOVEMENT, +ROAD, +WALKING]. Moreover, the verbs “hopped and clattered” also contribute with the extra markers [+ENTHUSIASM, +EXCITEMENT] so as to project Mimi's pleasant journey as opposed to Fred's miserable mood during the same journey. Mimi's legs are constantly mentioned in the novel to suggest both her former qualification as a ballerina, and her present pro-active role in the western society. In this respect, Mimi's journey resembles a walk, a running contest or a reason to extort a lot of money from a restaurant following a lawsuit, that secures her financial success and makes her American dream come true:

The terminal stop that Mimi spoke about **didn't close off the road; it raised him above intersections** from whence he could theoretically go in any **direction**. Only that **the crazy traffic** paralyzed one's movements, the noises covered one's desire, barely whispered from fear that in that crowd one could easily take the wrong path (Firan, 2022, 131).

In addition to walk-mapping, the following examples illustrate the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY in terms of driving. Thus, for LIFE IS A CAR TRIP or A JOURNEY BY CAR, the use of “intersections”, “traffic” and “direction” fit in the semantic sphere of road trips. As cars are typical for any western metropolis as main means of transportation, we may read the above quotation as being related to the car as the agent to project the journey metaphor.

According to Evans and Green: “[i]f meaning construction cannot be divorced from language use, then meaning is fundamentally pragmatic in nature because language in use is situated, and thus contextualized, by definition” (2006, 216). Therefore, understanding involves a mental process of decoding the contextual meaning and extrapolating it to a form where it no longer literally means only one thing. Thus, conceptual metaphors help us categorize meaning. From a narrative perspective, the kinds of mappings that constitute the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY suggested above fit well into the model relating *a traveller* as Subject/Receiver to a desired destination as Object (Kövecses, 2005, 123). The following quotations continue the conceptualisation of life as being a journey where the main means of transportation is the train – the object that will accomplish the movement to the destination point. With the lexical choice of “the terminal stop”, “train” and “compartment” LIFE IS A JOURNEY becomes LIFE IS A TRAIN TRIP due to the semantic markers [+STOP, +RAILS, +MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION, +DELIMITED SPACE]:

‘What's missing inside your soul, my love?’ ‘I don't know,’ Fred answered calmly, as if it had been the most normal question between spouses that **traveled on the same train, in the same compartment**, facing each other but glancing in different directions (Firan, 2022, 202).

To support the conceptual analysis of metaphor decoding Evans and Green agree that a common system for modelling knowledge representation is the feature list approach. “This entails listing the range of distinct features or attributes associated with a particular concept” (Evans, Green, 2006, 223). From this perspective, we might theorize that the concept of TRAIN, for instance, has a range of features or attributes associated with it that relate to its parts. Nevertheless, in this case, “train” and “compartment” specify the means of transportation and project the linear movement which is mandatory for the journey metaphor thanks to the semantic markers [+MOVEMENT, +TRAVEL, +TRANSPORTATION].

The next vehicle which is used to trigger the journey conceptualization is the bicycle, that is suggested in the employment of the verb “to pedal”. This action forces the mental image to rely on a means of transportation with pedals in order to project the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY: “Fred

was pedaling in place, and Mimi perceived this as her only failure. She saw him as a locked iron bunker, whose key she could not find” (Firan, 2022, 238). But Fred’s bike-ride is a static one, “was pedalling in place” as if he were using a stationary fitness bike and it was obvious that he could never advance in his career, or move on with life in America. This fitness allusion, which can also be interpreted as a western stereotype, builds a bridge towards the following mental association of life in terms of a race. Thus, if we enlarge the semantic sphere of the journey metaphor, we also come across the journey imagined as a competition, or an obstacle race. In Mimi’s view life is like a race you must run. It is a race against time in order to become successful – to make it in the west, as suggested by the author:

I’m preparing **to overcome obstacles**, not to reflect on them (Firan, 2022, 214).

She forced open doors behind which Fred had hidden his inability, and he slammed closed the ones that **might have led**, if not to a solution, at least to the illusion of salvation (Firan, 2022, 238).

Thus, the use of the noun “obstacles”, or that of the verb “to force open” face the reader with the mental images of competition, as being the target domain. The markers [+STRENGTH, +FORCE, +DETERMINATION] project another conceptual metaphor – LIFE IS A CONTEST. The antagonistic approaches to life of the two main characters are highlighted here by the opposing fight vs. freeze attitudes – Mimi crushes obstacles, and forces open doors, while Fred contemplates life and shuts those particular doors.

The final conceptualisation of life as a journey is disguised as LIFE IS A CRUISE, as we are confronted with the boat as the main vehicle and different references to water as the main substance, or way of advancement. Therefore, the use of the expression “at sea” triggers the semantic makers [+NAVIGATION, +WATER, +DISTANCE, -LAND], while the following quotation “you’re wallowing in shallow water” suggests the semantic sphere of water movement, without the navigation element:

Do something. Save yourself!” Mimi said to him one evening. “Save myself from what? **I’m not at sea**. No storm threatens me. Quite the opposite. Nothing is happening.” “Exactly. **You’re wallowing in shallow waters** (Firan, 2022, 239).

Then, the protagonist refers to his wife by using the expression “you’re on a wave”, that projects a mental mapping of success and accomplishment through the markers [+HEIGHT, +FORCE, +MOVEMENT UPWARD], which continues with her analogy to a huge, shiny cruiser that is far away from the shore. Therefore, Mimi is on the rise, her success is suggested by the image of being on top of a wave. Moreover, the use of adjectives such as huge and shiny, create a mental image of something admirable and a little scary, because of her oversized proportions. On the other hand, Fred’s failure is antagonistically projected by his association to a shipwreck, a damaged ship that is unable to float any longer because it is stuck in shallow waters:

But **you’re on a wave**, Mimi. Sometimes **I see you as a huge, bright-blue ship** passing over the horizon. My eyes can no longer follow you (Firan, 2022, 239).

But he had neither a purpose nor a direction. He was **like a ship stuck onshore, a wreck** that passersby glanced at curiously, trying to imagine how he had looked some time ago. Before (Firan, 2022, 232). Evans and Green have mentioned the ability of humans to think about or “simulate a conceptual entity, such as an action involving a particular object, based on a particular frame” (Evans, Green, 2006, 225). For example, one can mentally simulate the float of a boat at sea and mentally attribute the features of a voyage, or the physical-spatial surprise of how big a ship is, which can lead us to experience feelings of fear, smallness (insignificance). Thus, the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A CRUISE is triggered by the analogy of both our protagonists to boats – one shiny cruiser and a shipwreck. This interpretation is derived from the same semantic makers [+NAVIGATION, +WATER, +/-DISTANCE]. The distance marker is present in Mimi’s case – “a huge, bright-blue ship passing over the horizon” (Firan, 2022, 239) – which may also be interpreted as her huge success, further away from his inability to adapt. In

Fred’s version, the ship is a ruin and it is also described as being close to the shore [-DISTANCE], projecting his failure – “a ship stuck onshore, a wreck” (Firan, 2022, 232).

As Lakoff and Johnson state, “here the basic metaphor is that of a JOURNEY, and there are various types of journeys that one can make: a car trip, a train trip, or a sea voyage. There is no single consistent image that the JOURNEY metaphors all fit. What makes them coherent is that they are all JOURNEY metaphors, though they specify different means of travel” (Lakoff, Johnson, 2003, 45). Describing life as a journey is a metaphor that works in a straightforward and predictable way. It is very common to take a concrete idea (a journey) and use it to describe an abstract concept (life). It is a metaphor that most people would understand as well as use. The conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY is one of the oldest in literature, answering one of our oldest questions: Why are we here? The concept of travel helps us understand novelty and change, for it is a wide world, and the traveller is not exactly the same person that he was at the beginning of the journey. Life is a journey about growing and changing and coming to terms with who and what you are, and actually making more than what you are in Mimi’s case, while Fred barely tackles this concept, and is rather motionless, stuck between two worlds. His journey is a mental one and it leads towards the end of it all – death by suicide.

However, if we follow the story line, there are two more directions of conceptualization – one related to money and the other, more inclined towards mental processes. The obvious spatial dimension that permeates the text, at the beginning of the novel, is the vertical line. *The Lost Shadow* is a novel about Romanian immigration to America, a land where, in Fred’s opinion, you can hardly adapt. That is why spatial conceptual metaphors are relevant to our research, because they decode continual everyday body functioning. In other words, the structure of our spatial concepts emerges from our constant spatial experience, that is, our interaction with the physical environment. Concepts that emerge in this way are concepts that we live by in the most fundamental way. Therefore, the story is abundant in orientational metaphors conceptualised as UP vs. DOWN that are used to project the source domains of mental illness – in Fred’s case – and profit – in Mimi’s case.

Lakoff and Johnson (2003, 57) claim that most of our normal conceptual system is metaphorically structured; that is, most concepts are partially understood in terms of other concepts. This raises an important question about the grounding of our conceptual system. Are there any concepts at all that are understood directly, without metaphors? If not, how can we understand anything at all? The prime candidates for concepts that are understood directly are the simple spatial concepts, such as UP. Our spatial concept UP arises out of our spatial experience. We have bodies and we stand erect. Almost every movement we make involves a motor program that either changes our up-down orientation, maintains it, presupposes it, or takes it into account in some way. Our constant physical activity in the world, even when we sleep, makes an up-down orientation not merely relevant to our physical activity but centrally relevant. The centrality of up-down orientation in our motor programs and everyday functioning might make one think that there could be no alternative to this orientational concept. Objectively speaking, however, there are many possible frameworks for spatial orientation, including Cartesian coordinates, that do not, in themselves, have up-down orientation. Human spatial concepts, however, include UP-DOWN, FRONT-BACK, IN-OUT, NEAR-FAR, etc.

The space-related, or orientational metaphors we are dealing with in this analysis are UP VS. DOWN conceptual metaphors whose source domains are Fred’s mental challenges, and Mimi’s profit. They are conceptualized on the vertical axis, alternatively taking each of the two poles: MENTAL ILLNESS IS DOWN, or MENTAL ILLNESS IS UP. “When you can no longer stand it, **you sink into earth or you rise to the sky**. Simple defense mechanisms” (Firan, 2022, 1). The opposite semantic markers of “you sink into earth” [+INNER MOVEMENT, +INSIDE, +DOWNWARDS] vs. “rise to the sky” [+OUTER MOVEMENT, +HEIGHT] project the antonymic up-down vertical orientation of possible reactions to the failure of adaptation:

I speak louder, but instead of coming out, **my voice goes down inside me**. It falls into my body (Firan, 2022, 26).

Fred stared at her suspiciously. Her face didn't seem at all horrified, but **he felt fear gnaw at his bones** (Firan, 2022, 245).

Moreover, MENTAL ILLNESS IS DOWN also comes from Fred's loss of his voice, as well as the appearance of his fear. The verb phrase "to go down" together with the space adverbial "inside" provides an orientational frame that encompasses the vertical perception, as well as the location of the voice. Fred feels as if his voice is hiding inside himself, thus blocking his expression, whereas his fear is hiding inside his bones, which is preventing him from taking any kind of action.

As opposed to the downward movement, we may also come across the upward projection of Fred's mental condition, in the form of suicide by flight. Thus, MENTAL ILLNESS IS UP is decoded from the verbs "to take off" and "to fly":

Fred's mind **took off** thinking of something else, far away (Firan, 2022, 23).

Fred's body tensed. He opened the window, rushed forward and **flew** (Firan, 2022, 270).

Along the way, as we advance with the narrative of the American dream, the UP VS. DOWN conceptualization becomes even more of a key element. As Fred becomes smaller, as he is going down, Mimi's image becomes more and more polished, her profit seems to increase and she is definitely going up, as in the excerpts below:

While Fred **sank in** the back, Mimi's neck **strained** with curiosity. **He grew smaller as she grew taller**, as if they had both sipped from a miraculous drink that caused opposite effects (Firan, 2022, 47).

The terminal stop that Mimi spoke about **didn't close off the road; it raised him above intersections** from whence he could theoretically go in any direction. Only that the crazy traffic paralyzed one's movements, the noises covered one's desire, barely whispered from fear that in that crowd one could easily take the wrong path (Firan, 2022, 131).

It's like **you're smaller**, I don't know. Shorter. Straighten your back, look how you're walking! (Firan, 2022, 148)

Mimi was right: **he was getting smaller and smaller** (Firan, 2022, 234).

Are you stupid? What inner peace? My IRS nightmare has just ended. What peace with you **stuffing that chair** like a shriveled up vegetable? I hope that damn chair will crack one day and **you'll crash with it into hell!** (Firan, 2022, 260)

While Mimi identifies herself more and more with the American dream and builds the conceptual metaphor MIMI IS UP, Fred becomes more and more alienated and doubtful of his decision to settle in the USA and he is conceived on the conceptual metaphor FRED IS DOWN. The UP-DOWN orientation helps us emphasise the idea of success and failure, as being two sides of the same story. On the one hand, Mimi is eager to conquer the new world – "strained with curiosity", "she grew taller" – and this portrays her on the vertical axis going up, and on the other hand, Fred is going down. He becomes more and more suspicious and insecure facing the unknown – "sank in the back", "he grew smaller".

The ability to adapt and turn any hostile situation into an opportunity to make a fortune or to be happy show Mimi as the successful immigrant who is proud of her achievements. This attitude and her success story further propel the conceptual metaphor PROFIT IS UP. In terms of understanding the metaphors, Evans and Green suggestively note that: "[w]hile the primary reference object is usually explicitly encoded by a lexical item, the secondary reference object need not be, but can instead merely be implied" (2006, 96). Whereas the growth is the primary reference on the vertical axis, the "inflated ball" and the "empire" represent the secondary spatial reference which implies projection on the vertical, as well as lateral expansion from a smaller to a taller/wider size:

And **the profit grew** like an inflated ball (Firan, 2022, 168).

With each passing year, **the profits** at Mimosa I and II beauty salons **grew considerably**. Mimi was now the president of a veritable **beauty-empire** (Firan, 2022, 237).

The American society is a business-oriented one, and therefore, any migration from the east to the west involves some kind of reshuffling of one's values. As the novel mainly explores the two opposing versions of immigration – success vs. failure – the second most important conceptual metaphor that is present from the beginning to the end of the book is TIME IS MONEY. Since the starting point of their life in America, the two main characters have been faced with money matters. Nevertheless, Mimi was the only one to assume a pro-active role and produce some money, but in the beginning she expected Fred to do the same. So, when she found him a desk, she actually forced him to start writing: "It's done! Now you have a desk: **go write!**" **ordered** Mimi, with a triumphant gaze" (Firan, 2022, 54). In this case, TIME IS MONEY is suggested by the order given to Fred "go write", that can be interpreted as a variant of "ready, steady, start!" and it implies the lack of time, or the urgency of immediate action. Then, Mimi becomes rather jaded with Fred's passive attitude and starts criticising him and pointing out that TIME IS MONEY basically represents her time and her money:

You live on my money. From what I've seen, your words haven't come to amount to two cents (Firan, 2022, 66).

Leave it alone, Fred. Your speculations annoy me. How would you like me to involve myself? **I pay for everything**; isn't that enough? (Firan, 2022, 217)

Time is one of our most precious assets as it is a non-replaceable resource, and lost time is gone forever so we must use it wisely. Money is another one of our most important aspects of life, because it gives it real value in terms of affordability. That is why the conceptual metaphor TIME IS MONEY is spread throughout the novel, as it relies on the obvious need to consume one resource – time – in order to accumulate another one – money. People need to spend a lot of time working, creating, managing different needs, so as to be able to save money, not only spend it after earning it. Thus, Mimi is the one using time so as to make a lot of money to fulfill her needs of making her dream come true, while Fred is one who is wasting time, who is not producing anything and who finally ends up as the loser, as in the following fragments:

Stop trying to be a smartass. I'll tell you what time is, in my own words: void. Why the hell shouldn't you split hairs about time when **you have all the time in the world**? What else do you have to do? No worries. **Mimi will work** since she's the dumber one; that's all she can do... (Firan, 2022, 67).

Fred, you know what? Till now things have gone like this: I took the backstage in our marriage of my own free will; **I work so you can have time** to write, to think, to reflect, to see people from whom you could learn something or get something from (Firan, 2022, 138-139).

I don't have time, Fred. You can see that **I work all day** (Firan, 2022, 210).

"I'd go to Bucharest with you," Mimi said to him, halfheartedly, "but **my business is more important**, my dear. **It pays for our needs and pleasures** (Firan, 2022, 217).

"You're the last person who should talk about time. **You had all the time in the world**", she answered sharply... (Firan, 2022, 259)

In fact, they are both losers, but Mimi has no time, or rather she spends her time to earn money, while Fred has no money, but he has a lot of time. Mimi is surrounded by the semantic sphere of money – "work/will work", "business", "pays" – while Fred is accompanied by the semantic sphere of time – "you had all the time in the world", "so you can have time to write, to think, to reflect". Her lost time is translated into the accumulation of wealth and the affordability of a luxurious life, that is also to be enjoyed by Fred, who does not contribute anything. He is the thinker, while she is the doer.

The start of Mimi's financial success is suggested by the conceptual metaphor BUSINESS IS A CRUISE, which can be further interpreted as MONEY IS A JOURNEY. The use of the verb "to launch" invites the reader to decode the semantic markers [+MOVEMENT, +WATER/SPACE,

+SHIP/SPACESHIP], thus the meaning may be interpreted as being part of the navigation semantic sphere, or rather as a space journey. “Sheppard kept his promise and helped her **launch her business** sooner than she had expected” (Firan, 2022, 163). In this example, moneymaking, or doing business is envisioned as a journey at sea. If we take into the account that the American dream is a concept that genuinely originated from the need to survive, which turned into the need to become richer and richer, LIFE IS A JOURNEY basically turned into MONEYMAKING IS A JOURNEY.

The Lost Shadow is also a novel about the writer's condition and the way he looks at the literary world in America, from communism or from present-day Romania; it is also a novel about the mental challenge of not adapting, the overwhelming American consumerism and shallowness, the mental breakdown of being far from one's own country. The main character's struggle with his misplacement and lack of success is in harsh opposition to his wife's financial accomplishment, and that is why we constantly encounter the conceptual metaphor IMMIGRATION IS MONEYMAKING in Mimi's discourse. At times she represents a moralizer who explains the business-oriented nature of the American society to her husband:

Can't you see that in this world, **if you don't have money, you're nothing** (Firan, 2022, 66).

I made the money. I'll spend it all. I made the money not the other way around! Because **we're only talking about money here** (Firan, 2022, 243).

Other times, she portrays herself as the successful diva who has sacrificed her free time for the sake of family wealth and pride:

But my teeth are white, strong and beautiful, my dear,” she said, as if answering Fred's silent thought. “With these teeth I fought and clawed for years to make things work for us, **for you to now fly business-class back to the homeland, to show them all!** (Firan, 2022, 216)

Thus, the conceptual interpretation IMMIGRATION IS MONEYMAKING comes from the expression “fight with one's teeth” that symbolizes working hard, but is also propelled by the semantic markers [+WEALTH, +PRIDE] of the business class concept, which represents a display of one's prosperity, as well as pleasure of boosting one's self-esteem though the instant comparison to the people in the economy class. The semantic marker [+PRIDE] is reinforced by the expression “to show them all” that also triggers markers such as [+SUPERIORITY, +FORCE, +WIN] – an actual representation of Mimi's success which is taken back to the mother country and proven by her unadapted husband. At the end of the story Mimi bursts and turns into a nagging wife, criticizing Fred for not wanting to be successful, for not caring about money-matters:

You're as clean as a tear, a tiny Jesus descended to Earth to give me lectures. Why didn't you put your soul and back into it then, **to make money, to make it, since that's why we came over here**, didn't we? (Firan, 2022, 245)

In this quotation, the conceptualisation IMMIGRATION IS MONEYMAKING is clearly stated by the female character, who has taken her mission very seriously and is only frustrated by her husband's inability to perform his archetypal role of the provider.

3. Conclusions

Since this article aims to apply a cognitive-semantic approach to the analysis of the latest novel written by Carmen Firan – *The Lost Shadow* – the findings can be summarised as follows. The main purpose of the discussion is to show that the results clearly lead to the conclusion that Fred's life was projected as a journey of non-adaptation and in this view, the results relate to the initial research questions – How does a Romanian man settled in New York feel about living in the US thanks to his wife's business after having fled Romania during communism? How does a Romanian writer of some success in communist Romania feel after not being able to write anything notable as an immigrant? According to the above

interpretation, the most important conceptual metaphor throughout the novel is that LIFE IS A JOURNEY between east and west, where the characters find out that TIME IS MONEY and take different, or rather opposing stances in this situation. The male protagonist's reaction triggers the conceptualization MENTAL ILLNESS IS DOWN, and thus he is proving his lack of adaptability, while the main female character's attitude claims the target domains of money, abundance and happiness to be mapped onto her image, thus the conceptual metaphor PROFIT IS UP. These conceptual metaphors also mingle and mix together along the decoding of the embedded messages belonging to the literary text and change form LIFE IS JOURNEY and TIME IS MONEY, to MONEY IS A JOURNEY, MONEY IS UP or DOWN, IMMIGRATION (i.e. the journey) IS MONEY.

To sum up, the journey of migration from Eastern Europe to the “Wild West” has challenged both Firan's main characters into becoming different people, and ultimately committing suicide, in Fred's case. Therefore, *The Lost Shadow* is a story of conquest, survival, or suicidal death.

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