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*In Memoriam Professor Mihaela Irimia:
In Loving Memory of Mickey*

The brain works in mysterious, unfathomable ways. Ineffability describes one of my first evocative images of Mickey that come to mind. It is not the picture of Professor Irimia, the distinguished scholar of outstanding merit and professorial achievement, but that of Mickey, the lively, vibrant, charming, exceptional human being, endowed with a devastating sense of humor. This evocation is more of the person than of the scholar.

Vivid recollections of countless conversations, peripatetic dialogues amid various trainings, conference planning recaps on long train journeys spring to mind, one in particular. One time we were at a conference very dear to our hearts at ABC Studies, "Infinite Londons." We were in a break after a panel, when I realized I had dropped one of my contact lenses. Along came Mickey, asking me (literal from Romanian): "Hey, did you put back your eyes, Neagu?"

In over 30 years since I had the privilege to make her acquaintance, indeed to plot events together with Mickey, we had some memorable laughs, her capacity to illuminate and amuse, in so doing humanizing the exchange, never ceased to amaze me. In parodical vein --we were a bunch of passionate postcolonial studies practitioners-- we went around calling one another 'Centres' and 'margins,' Mickey commending us, the 'province,' on being 'more central than the Centre,' her way of poking fun at the 'po co' jargon. There was an entire ludic dimension about her that enlivened events, quests, personalities.

Beyond the delightfully contagious wit and verve, Mickey was an intellectual dynamo, a 'powerhouse' of productivity and efficiency, her high work capacity doing full justice to her scintillating mind. Her astuteness of judgement and student-oriented mindset turned her into a

great talent spotter who was to build inspiring, long-lasting professional relationships. A natural born mentor, Mickey dedicated over four decades of her life to educating generations of students. Her unwavering commitment to her students' reaching full potential extended beyond the classroom, as she guided whole generations of young scholars, nurturing their intellectual pursuits and shaping their academic paths. Her students fondly remember her as a galvanizing spirit, whose enthusiasm for learning and debate was infectious.

In her pedagogical practice, to Mickey, the pursuit of knowledge was a captivating process and an adventure, never in and for itself. As part of her cooperative argumentative method, she would delve with relish into the complexities of etymology, to uncover hidden histories and connections among concepts across languages. A polyglot of encyclopedic breadth, she amazed her students with these acrobatic etymological feats which she performed to stimulate their independent, critical thinking. Her lectures were a rollercoaster ride, taking you from Greek antiquity to Derrida *impromptu* and with utmost elegance, which made studying under Professor Irimia a mesmerizing experience.

Mickey's academic journey was one marked by brilliance and numerous accomplishments. She authored several groundbreaking research papers, published influential reference works, and delivered stellar, thought-provoking lectures that resonated with students and fellow scholars alike. Her exploits in the fields of culture history, the history of ideas, exegesis of the Eighteenth century, and postcolonial theory garnered widespread recognition, earning her numerous accolades and prestigious awards throughout her career. In the prime of her career, Mickey witnessed a period of momentous change in Romania, in culture, the civil society, and implicitly, in HE. Militant, combatively active, Mickey was a reformer, she was the change she wanted to see. Her reputation extends well beyond English and American Studies in East-Central Europe, she was a leading scholar of worldwide repute indeed of international standing. Above all, Mickey was structurally a formative academic eager to edify long term and pave enduring ways. Her work as Director of the Centre for Excellence for the Study of Cultural Identity, and of the MA degree course in British Cultural Studies, a pioneering

programme that excelled in the pleiad of eminent young specialists that it shaped, represents the quintessence of this.

Beyond her academic achievements, Mickey was a compassionate soul with a genuine love for humanity. She actively engaged in various pedagogical and research endeavors, supporting causes close to her heart, such as education, students' empowerment, and promoting young talent in writing. Her unrelenting dedication to making the Academia a better place resonated with all who knew her. Indeed, Mickey's impact reached far beyond the confines of academia. She was a beacon of wisdom and insight, often sought after by policymakers, diplomats, and experts in her field for her expertise and advice. Her contributions to shaping cross-cultural discourse and fostering transdisciplinarity in the theoretical humanities will forever be cherished.

In the wake of her passing, one student candidly intimated in a university magazine: "I simply cannot believe Professor Irimia is no longer among us. It is so unfair." We all share the sentiment; to us, Mickey was unstoppable and immortal.

She leaves behind a lasting legacy that will continue to inspire and impact countless lives and careers. Her intellectual prowess, single-mindedness and unswerving dedication, her conviviality will be dearly missed. Her contributions to academia and society will endure through the many lives she touched. Her legacy will continue to shape the minds of future intellectuals, as her teachings and insights and laughter continue to reverberate throughout the halls of the University of Bucharest.

She made an indelible mark in the world of academia. Her departure has left a void that can never be filled in the hearts of her family, friends, colleagues, and students who were fortunate enough to have known her. Yet Mickey's jocular spirit, her ludic spirit will forever endure in the hearts and minds of all who were touched by her brilliance, kindness, and dedication to knowledge. May your soul rest in eternal peace, beloved colleague and friend.

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