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**Stories of Suffering.  
Bodies and Illness in Post-communist Romanian Literature**

**Abstract**

The fall of communism means liberty of expression, among other things. Contemporary writers tackle topics that were either considered taboo, or were censored under communism, and they portray an immediate reality that reflects everyday society. One important element is the depiction of disease in the works written after 1989, namely from a perspective that pays great attention to the body. Diseases such as AIDS and syphilis terrify people, even though they are treatable and being kept under control. Departing from Susan Sontag's main idea from her essay *Illness as Metaphor*, in this article I explore the role of disease in contemporary society as depicted in two recent novels: *Cruciada copiilor* by Florina Ilis and *Lizoanca la 11 ani* by Doina Ruști. Romanian post-communist society still avoids speaking about disease, because it is considered taboo. This avoidance most often frustrates the people afflicted by disease. One of the novels discussed in the article observes the relation between the disease and its symbolical meaning in post-communist society, and this is indicative of the problems people run into in their everyday lives. Thus, I demonstrate why disease is an important element in the reality depicted in the aforementioned novels, and I also highlight how illness becomes more than a metaphor. It shows the institutionalized or structural arrangements in society.

**Keywords:** illness; vulnerability; post-communist Romanian literature; women

**Histoires de souffrance. Corps et maladie dans la littérature roumaine postcommuniste  
Résumé**

La chute du communisme signifie, entre autres, la liberté d'expression. Les écrivains contemporains s'attaquent à des sujets qui étaient tabous ou censurés sous le communisme, et ils dépeignent une réalité immédiate qui reflète la société au jour le jour. Un élément important est la représentation de la maladie dans les œuvres écrites après 1989, à savoir d'une perspective qui accorde une grande attention au corps. Les maladies telles que le SIDA ou la syphilis terrifient les gens, même s'ils sont traitables et gardés sous contrôle. À partir de l'idée principale de Susan Sontag dans son essai *Illness as Metaphor*, on se propose d'explorer le rôle que la maladie joue dans la société contemporaine dans deux romans récents : *Cruciada copiilor* de Florina Ilis et *Lizoanca la 11 ani* de Doina Ruști. La société post-communiste roumaine évite toujours de parler de ces maladies car elles sont considérées taboues. Cette façon d'éviter la réalité frustre, très fréquemment, les personnes touchées par la maladie. Dans les romans sur lesquels on discute dans l'article on peut observer la relation entre la maladie et le symbolisme qu'elle porte dans la société post-communiste, et cela parle des problèmes auxquels se heurtent les gens au quotidien. Ainsi, on va montrer pourquoi la maladie est un élément important dans la réalité décrite dans les romans susmentionnés, et on va également souligner comment la maladie dans les deux romans devient plus qu'une métaphore. Elle montre aussi les arrangements institutionnels ou structurels dans la société.

**Mots-clés :** maladie ; vulnérabilité ; littérature roumaine postcommuniste ; femmes

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Romanian literature underwent a transformation concerning the portrayal of political and social change brought by the fall of Communism in 1989 and the subsequent transition to a capitalist society. The first ten years up to 2000 were relatively uneventful literature wise (recuperation of prohibited literature, exile writings, or dissident memories)<sup>2</sup>. However, after the year 2000 the goal was to find new ways to draw attention to themes that were forbidden or heavily censored during the Communism. Writers have begun to tackle controversial subjects such as the role of the individual in society, which helps to restore the authenticity of communication and emphasize social issues such as power, wealth and poverty. Florina Ilis and Doina Ruști are two of the most important writers who emphasize the importance of female strength and friendship through violent circumstances, and provides important insight into Romanian culture. Ilis attempts to illustrate the dynamic themes of race, class, gender and cultural change during the Post-communist transition. Ruști writes an expansive novel in which a girl resists violence and discrimination in the rural part of Romania. Her writing is insightful, honest, unpretentious, and eye opening.

One of the most important characteristics of the Romanian literature is the representation of the crippling STDs. In the novels written by Florina Ilis<sup>3</sup>(2005) *Cruciada copiilor* (Children's crusade) and Doina Ruști<sup>4</sup> (2009) *Lizoanca la 11 ani* (Lizoanca at eleven years of age), illness is used as a metaphor for most of the changes occurred after the fall of the regime in order to critique the social issues inherent in a culture based on taboos and prohibitions.

In this article, I will argue that the girls who are ill (Irina is diagnosed with HIV infection and Lizoanca is infected with syphilis) are depicted both as victims and agents of change; they make use of their vulnerable condition in order to survive in their specific communities and they reinvent new spaces of habitation where they can act free or at least without always being considered victims. In this sense, vulnerability is not a hierarchic position and the persons who are vulnerable should not be seen as passive victims, who are weak and submit to aggressor's demands, but subjects endowed with capacity of resilience and resistance.

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<sup>2</sup> Simuț, I. "Ce s-a întâmplat cu literatura română în postcomunism – Simptomatologie generală", in România literară, nr.62008, [http://www.romlit.ro/ce\\_sa\\_intamplat\\_cu\\_literatura\\_romn\\_n\\_postcomunism\\_-\\_simptomatologie\\_general](http://www.romlit.ro/ce_sa_intamplat_cu_literatura_romn_n_postcomunism_-_simptomatologie_general), (22.02.2017).

<sup>3</sup> Florina Ilis is a contemporary writer who has published haiku volumes and novels: *Haiku și caligrame* (Haiku and Calligrammes), 2000, *Coborârea de pe cruce* (The Descent from the Cross), 2001, *Chemarea lui Matei* (The Calling of Matthew), 2002. Her well-known *Cruciada copiilor* (The Children's Crusade), 2005, was awarded numerous prizes, including Book of the Year 2005. Her latest work is *Viețile paralele* (Parallel lives), 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Doina Ruști is writer, screenwriter and film director. Her novels are very famous: *Fantoma din moară* (The Ghost of the Mill), 2008, *Zogru*, 2006, *Lizoanca la 11 ani* (Lizoanca at the age eleven), 2009, received the Romanian Academy Award Ion Creanga. The latest novel is *Manuscrisul fanariot* (The Phanariot Manuscript), 2015.

**Illness and vulnerability. Some theoretical aspects.**

Illness is one of the oldest themes in literature. There are many examples of works that portray diseases in detail. Some Romantics were particularly fond of morbidity, and they understood literature as a wound. The modern aesthetics promoted by Charles Baudelaire is associated with illness through writing which implies an explicit subversion of the classical beauty. In her well known *Illness as Metaphor*, Susan Sontag<sup>5</sup> analyses the metaphors that describe serious illnesses like cancer, AIDS, or tuberculosis. She argues that the metaphors and mythology created around these diseases make the ill people seem evil and mysterious. Sontag disagrees with the use of illness as metaphor and seeks to prove that cancer or AIDS are not curses or punishments for bad character but simply diseases who can be perceived mainly from a medical point of view. Sick people are considered vulnerable and they are reduced to a condition where they need to depend on someone else. Judith Butler<sup>6</sup> writes about the body vulnerability as a starting point to think on issues such as moral responsibility. Generally, the subject who suffers from a disease is reduced to a marginalized minority and occupies a subordinate position.

In this context, I will explore the particular case of girls, especially the case of one girl who was infected with HIV, which is portrayed in Florina Ilis' novel *Cruciada copiilor* (Children's crusade) and the main character from Doina Rusti's novel *Lizoanca la 11 ani* (Lizoanca at eleven years of age) who suffers from syphilis. The people close to the girls try to reduce them to silence, but the girls are also overprotected because of their age and illness status. In the first novel, I will analyse the particular case of a girl who perhaps contracted the virus from injections with improperly sterilized equipment.

The girl comes from a poor and religious family who considers her daughter as something magical, an angel sent by God. To this day, thousands of Romanian children and youth living with HIV face discrimination<sup>7</sup>. They do not have access to education, health, privacy and many times their parents have to take care of them. More often than not, they are kept in their homes and they are not allowed to be seen on the streets not even nowadays. This situation became a serious problem when Ceaușescu took power; Romania had a declining birth rate and one of the highest rates of abortion and divorce in Eastern Europe. To counteract these undesired situation, this Romanian dictator instituted a number of radical policies including banning abortion, restricting divorce and providing financial incentives for working mothers. Through these measures, Ceaușescu managed to increase his control of the population, especially of women's bodies in order to boost the birth rate. However, the

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<sup>5</sup> Sontag, S. *Illness as metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors*, Picador, United Kingdom, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Butler, J. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, VersoBooks, 2006, p.13.

<sup>7</sup> UNICEF : "HIV and AIDS in Romania : taking stock", *The quarterly newsletter of UNICEF Romania*, nr.3, 2009, [https://www.unicef.org/romania/United\\_for\\_children\\_3.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/romania/United_for_children_3.pdf) (22.02.2017)

implementation of his policies resulted in many infants born with disability or infected with HIV.<sup>8</sup> Thus, a combination of unsound medical practice, the absence of single-use syringes, ignorance, completed by a refusal of the regime to acknowledge the presence of the virus resulted in an unprecedented epidemic. Even after the fall of the regime, many of these problems were not solved. Immediately after 1990, these cases were brought to light, but even then, because of sheer ignorance the fear of infection was blown out of proportion. Thus, the children were over-sheltered and isolated by their families, partly because of the stigma associated with their disease.

In her novel, *Lizoanca la 11 ani*, Doina Ruști plays with the cultural subtext of the disease and what it means to be healthy (thus normal) or ill (abnormal) from society's point of view. She makes use of a sexually transmitted disease, syphilis, as a metaphor through which she showcases the social and moral problems in contemporary society. Susan Sontag explains that anytime an illness is demonized, the person suffering from that illness is inevitably equated with the "evil" represented by the illness, and sick people are thus blamed and stigmatized for their condition. Sontag argues: "What makes the viral assault so terrifying is that contamination, and therefore vulnerability, is understood as permanent. Even if someone infected were never to develop any symptoms – that is, the infection remained, or could by medical intervention be rendered, inactive – the viral enemy would be forever within"<sup>9</sup>. Ruști's novel presents a girl who is forced to adopt a libertine lifestyle with the complicity of adults in order to escape from the domestic violence in her household. Once people find out that the girl has syphilis, she becomes a danger to society in the villagers' eyes.

Judith Butler criticizes the fact some individuals matter in our cultural, political and historical field more than the life of others, and some of them are judged to be healthy or sick, normal or abnormal, beautiful or ugly, powerful or weak. She asks: "How, then, can one think through the matter of bodies as a kind of materialization governed by regulatory norms in order to ascertain the workings of heterosexual hegemony in the formation of what qualifies as a viable body? How does that materialization of the norm in bodily formation produce a domain of abjected bodies, a field of deformation, which, in failing to qualify as the fully human, fortifies those regulatory norms? What challenge does that excluded and abjected realm produce to a symbolic hegemony that might force a radical rearticulation of what qualifies as bodies that matter, ways of living that count as "life," lives worth protecting, lives worth saving, lives worth grieving?"<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> There are few articles about this topic. After 30 years, a Romanian public television researched about this issue. More than 13.000 of children were infected with HIV from 1988 to 1992. More details about this are in this tv report: <http://www.digi24.ro/Stiri/Digi24/Special/Reportaj/Generatia+HIV+Criza+secretar+a+Romaniei> (January 2017)

<sup>9</sup> Sontag, S. *Illness as metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors*, Picador, United Kingdom, 2001, p.108.

<sup>10</sup> Butler, J. *Bodies that matter. On the discursive limits of "sex"*, Roudedge, New York, 1993, p.16.

In order to see the construction and representation of the female children as “bodies that matter” (Judith Butler), I will take a very close look at the figure of the girl in the two novels and I will argue that female vulnerability is a social construct. Many times, female subjects are considered weak and submissive and that is how society expects them to be. This holds true in the context of childhood as well. In these novels, vulnerability is a social construct rather than being something inherent in the characters’ physical or cognitive constitution. This makes little girls confront society’s power over their lives each day as they are expected to fulfil abridged choices and blocked access to resources because they fulfil the condition of “adult”.

### **Between religion beliefs and contagious illness.**

Published in 2005, Ilis’s novel depicts the Romanian society after the Communist regime. The novel is constructed from bits of life, suggesting a transversal analysis of a nation at the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium. *Cruciada copiilor* (Children’s crusade)<sup>11</sup> is about a group of children accompanied by their teachers on a trip to the seaside by train. Each compartment of the train describes the issues each person has to have to deal with. In this presentation, I am particularly interested in Ilis’ depiction of illness and her vision on the relationship between religion and disease. Irina, a young girl infected with HIV, was raised by her parents who overprotected her until she became convinced that she is the messenger of God. She believes that her mission is to go to a church far away in the mountains because Mary, Mother of Jesus, appeared to her in a dream and promised her that she will be cured in heaven. But before that she has to endure many hardships, because she has been chosen one to suffer for the people:

“Irina’s parents from Moinești would not just sit around and wait helplessly for their 16-year old daughter to die, they would carry out the girl’s wish and the Holy Mother’s commandment to bring the girl to that secret place in the mountains that, according to the Virgin, will drip with pure and innocent blood, where their daughter will be cured, these were the words spoken by the Mother of God, as She appeared in the dream of Irina from Moinești.”<sup>12</sup>

In post-1989 Romania, religion has played an increasingly important role in the society. The deliberately orchestrated absence of any religious elements during the communist times sparked a powerful return of the Church after the fall of Ceausescu’s regime. The sudden shift from an existence where God was banned from people’s life by the communist government, to post-1989 found spiritual dimension where God became omnipresent is because society equated communism with atheism, and

<sup>11</sup> Both novels are not translated in English. Unless otherwise indicated translations of the paragraphs are mine.

<sup>12</sup> Ilis, F. *Cruciada copiilor*, Polirom, Iași, 2005, p.28 “Părinții Irinei din Moinești nu puteau sta cu mâinile în sân să aștepte neputincioși moartea fiicei lor de șaisprezece ani, vor îndeplini dorința fetei și porunca Maicii Sfinte de a o duce în acel loc neștiut dintre munți care, după spusele Preacuratei, va picura de sânge nevinovat și curat, acolo se va vindeca fata lor de boala, erau cuvintele rostite de Maica Domnului, așa cum îi apăruse Irinei din Moinești în vis.”

in order to banish any trace of communism the belief in God had to be reintroduced. The girl is considered extremely vulnerable because she readily accepts the fact that her destiny is organized by a higher being.

Ilis explores the combination between religion and illness in a slightly irreverent way from the Church's point of view. She uses irony to make the reader ask questions about sensitive issues that are traditionally unchallengeable. Ilis' scope is not to describe the girl as a weak person, but rather to try to point out an ethical dilemma; society is portrayed as lacking the sense of responsibility. In Judith Butler's words: "[...] if one seeks the resources for moral response in the self, then we assume an inner world that is composed of moral fibre or moral capacities. (...) My understanding is that our «resources» are to be found in our responsiveness, and that this is not an «internal» resource, but a feature of our relations to others"<sup>13</sup>.

On the other hand, Ilis creates a political space to discuss some issues considered taboo before the fall of Communism (religion, sexuality, talking about body disease etc.). People traditionally expected that institutions (religion, the Party) would solve their problems, and thus they lack the sense of responsibility and lack initiative. As Boris Buden points out: "Eastern Europe after 1989 resembles a landscape of historical ruins that is inhabited only by children, immature people unable to organize their lives democratically without guidance from another. They see themselves neither as subjects nor as authors of a democracy that they actually won through struggle and created by themselves"<sup>14</sup>. In this sense, the girl infected with HIV is taught to consider herself as a pure, innocent human being because of her disease. The infection was transmitted through contaminated blood products, syringes and needles and potentially by unsterilized instruments and this was done by the Romanian nurses in the hospitals without knowing that they were infecting the children. Lack of information about risk and preventive measures increased the rate of transmitted infections. This was a major problem because not even parents knew what kind of disease was HIV. Thus, HIV/AIDS has long been a taboo topic in Romania during and after Communism and this lack of creative output has left its imprint on the academic field and literary writings. The virus and the syndrome have been imbued with meanings in everyday life and most of the people still skirt their way around the issue rather than confront it directly:

"The Holy Mother always told her in her dreams that she will be healed. When She had spoken the word healing the girl's gaze betrayed an impossible hope that she secretly hoped would be confirmed by the monk, Did She actually say that you will be healed? asks soft-spoken brother Emanuel, and the girl tries

<sup>13</sup> Butler, J. "Vulnerability as a strength", in *Reset Doc*, interviewed by Elisabetta Ambrosi, 2007, <http://www.resetdoc.org/story/0000000307> (23.01.2016)

<sup>14</sup> Buden, B. "Children of postcommunism", in *Identity. Move! Research Platform for Contemporary Dance in the Eastern Belt of the European Union*, 2014, p.7 <http://identitymove.eu/boris-buden-children-of-postcommunism.html> (8.01.2016)

to recall her suffering “if I went to a specific place, Yes?! A place surrounded by big mountains, a place where evil cannot enter and innocence will bleed, this is what She told me!”<sup>15</sup>

In this case, the girl finds solace in religion. On the other hand, her character’s purpose is to make the reader question what we feel and what we perceive regarding these hidden subjects. In order to find resources to fight prejudice against those infected, most people ignore the problem altogether and look for a spiritual cure. The writer uses the infection to show the impact of religion in society, and people’s behaviour concerning the fact that HIV is a taboo topic. Instead of treating children as vulnerable and “special” by offering them too much protection, it should provoke a reflection on roles, attitudes and behaviours towards silence and occultation of the truth about this illness. Thus, the body is discursive, in the way in which religion and illness are interlinked as proof of resisting against social death. This means that is a precondition for the development of resources that are necessary for transforming visions of how it is possible to live. In the novel, Irina’s body is also understood as a site of death and contagion, an entity suspended between health and sickness. This is why many times, a body living with HIV is perceived as an invasive agent in a “healthy” society<sup>16</sup>. Taking into account this duality one can explain why Irina’s parents make her to believe that she is “special”, so she does not perceive herself as a threat to others. Moreover, for this girl, living with AIDS is to imagine the possibilities of constructing a life contemplating the meaning of divinity, to imagine new ways of relating that can incorporate other “realities”.

### **Sexual disease in the contemporary discourse.**

In the second novel, *Lizoanca la 11 ani* (Lizoanca at eleven years of age), the main character is infected with Syphilis, a sexually transmitted disease that has always been directly related to something forbidden, often associated with adultery, sin or divine punishment. The action of the novel takes place in a village with strong traditional values (heterosexual family, religious background, strict education). When the girl goes to the doctor for a check-up, she finds out that she contracted a very dangerous disease. The doctor suddenly triggers all the alarms and the girl becomes the centre of attention in her community. Doina Ruști explains the idea of the story on the cover of the first edition of the book: “I read this horrendous headline in a newspaper: *Eleven-year-old prostitute infects entire village with syphilis*. Then I saw the same story in all the rest of the press. The girl, who had parents

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<sup>15</sup> Iliș, F. *Cruciada copiilor*, Polirom, Iași, 2005, p.142 “Maica Sfântă îi spunea mereu în vis că se va vindeca când rostise cuvântul vindecare privirea fetei trăda o speranță imposibilă a cărei confirmare o aștepta parcă de pe buzele călugărului, a spus chiar așa, că te vei vindeca? o întreabă fratele Emanuel cu glasul blând, și fata încearcă să-și amintească de suferință dacă voi merge într-un loc anume, Da?! Un loc înconjurat de munți mari, un loc unde răul nu va putea să intre și inocența sângera, așa mi-a spus!”

<sup>16</sup> Bunting, S. M. “Sources of stigma associated with women with HIV. *Advances in Nursing Science*”, PubMed.Bethesda: 1996; 19(2): 64–73.

and an average standard of living, was held responsible for almost all the cases of syphilis in her village. The tone of the newspaper articles, the unanimity of the accusations, and the repetition of the same headline from one newspaper to the next determined me to investigate the situation and to write this novel”<sup>17</sup>.

Modern society has established medical standards that encourage individuals to take some responsibility for body care. Raising awareness to personal hygiene has helped society progress and control itself. Both biomedicine and bioethics play pivotal roles in this constitution and normalization of society. Foucault sustains that “the health and physical well-being of population” appeared in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries “as one of the essential objectives of political power”<sup>18</sup>.

Syphilis is the direct result of lack of protection in sexual relationships, implying abuse and exposure to poor sanitation. This is a clear alarm that something has gone wrong. As Deborah Hayden argues:

“Syphilis was life's dark secret. The word was taboo, with the terrifying diagnosis at most whispered to an intimate friend, and then only with assurances of utmost secrecy. It was too shameful to record by name in a diary and was alluded to in correspondence only in code”<sup>19</sup>.

After having sexual contact with nearly every man in the village, all the men discover that the “innocent” girl has syphilis. The problem is accentuated when the men realize that the illness of the child (apparently invisible) is about to reveal all the secrets concerning their sexual relations with her. Thus, the only doctor in that village takes advantage of the situation: she starts looking for the guilty persons by making a list in which she tries to identify those who may have contracted the disease, but she also wants to discover who has been the girl’s “lover”. Although she represents the medical authority, she compromises her professional ethics to pursue her personal vendetta against one of her former lovers. An important feature of the village is that everybody knows everybody, and this helps create connection between the unexpected illness of the girl and the men involved in this situation. In this sense, Lizoanca is presented as a very vulnerable victim who needs protection and care, firstly from her parents. However, instead of protection she only receives savage beatings from her father, Cristel.

“Cristel had reached the front door and he opened it, pushing Lizoanca against the rather musty wood planks. Florența, who was in the courtyard, hurried to open the house door. ‘Bring some rope, woman, to tie up the demented!’ It was dark in the house, and the child whimpered, unseen. Lizoanca felt the rug on the wall against her back. Her father let her go for a moment to switch hands, and as he went on he smacked her. Presently he grabbed her again by the neck with one hand, and with the other

<sup>17</sup> Ruști, D. *Lizoanca la 11 ani*, <http://doinarusti.ro/en/> (23.01.2016)

<sup>18</sup> Foucault, M. ‘Body/Power’, in: Foucault, M. *Power-Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, ed. C. Gordon, New York: Pantheon, 1980, p.170.

<sup>19</sup> Hayden, D. *Genius, Madness, and the Mysteries of Syphilis*, Basic Books, Unites States of America, 2003, p. XV.



hand he strokes her across the lips without force, as if they were playing, but she felt very humiliated and all she wanted was to dig her teeth into his hand.”<sup>20</sup>

Secondly, she requires help from the local authorities, who forget that they are dealing with a young and innocent person and choose instead to have sexual relations with her. However, the girl decides not to reveal the name of the people with whom she had sexual intercourse. She already knows that her body represents both attraction and pleasure but also something forbidden. These men paid significantly more attention to Lizoanca than her parents did, and encouraged her sense of independence. At this point, she destabilizes the situation. Although everybody sees her as a victim, she decides instead to hold her ground against all the people who made her suffer. Traditionally, society forces the individual to accept whatever is imposed upon him/her in the name of the law, but Lizoanca refuses to play a submissive role. Instead of helping her, the local authorities “conspire” against the girl and want her to follow that “right” way as they define it:

“All of a sudden, a window opened in Lizoanca’s mind through which one could see the reporter’s true nature. So this is what she was up to! She had smiled at her, leaned over her, only to let her mask drop and ask her the same thing the Nurse had. As if that was the thing that mattered! Those men were nothing but good hosts who had sheltered her when the nights were cold and who fed her.”<sup>21</sup>

In this case, the victim is vulnerable due her age, gender, size, physical condition but she still acts dynamically. The girl tries to protect herself from harm through her openness to the men from the village but she has limited capacity to protect herself and to escape danger.

**In conclusion**, the two examples of characters show how illness highlights the relation between victim and agent of change. Illness also points out the narrow way in which a victim is seen as weak, and how sometimes, for the sake of protection and dependency, it erases the right of the girls to act freely in a specific context. Irina and Lizoanca highlight how illness implies different metaphors about the body in the contemporary Romanian society, depicted in the two novels: on the one hand the divine body, pure and innocent and on the other hand, the stigmatized body which creates pleasure, desire and erotic feelings. Drawing on the work of Judith Butler on vulnerability it is important to rethink the body ontology so that the vulnerability of the girls due to their illness is not opposed to their agency, but is rather element of sociality, constituting a call to ethical engagement from the people near them.

<sup>20</sup> Ruști, D. *Lizoanca la 11 ani*, Polirom, Iași, 2009, p.55, “Cristel ajunsese în fața porții și-o deschise împingând-o pe Lizoanca în scândurile cam putrezite. Florența era în curte și alergă să deschidă ușa casei. - Adu, fă, o funie, ceva, s-o legăm pe nebuună! În casă era întuneric, iar copilul scâncea nevăzut. Lizoanca simți în spate covorul de pe zid. Taică-său i dădu drumul o clipă, cât să schimbe mâna, și din mers îi și rase o palmă. Acum o ținea din nou de gât, iar cu cealaltă palmă o lovea încet peste buze, mai mult așa, în joacă, dar ea se simțea foarte umilită și nu voia decât să-și înfigă dinții în mâna lui. În ochii ei negri, bărbatul simțea scrâșnetul roților de camion care îi torturaseră copilăria.”

<sup>21</sup> Idem, ibid. p. 58, “În mintea Lizoancăi se deschise brusc o fereastră prin care se vedea adevărata față a reporterei. Vasăzică aici voia s-ajungă! Îi zâmbise, se aplecase asupra ei, ca apoi să-și dea arama pe față și s-o-ntrebe același lucru ca și Sanitara. De parcă asta conta! Bărbații ăia nu erau decât gazdele bune, care o adăpostiseră în nopțile friguroase și-i dăduseră să mănânce.”