



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

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To the Coordinator of the
International PhD Programme
Studies in English Literatures, Language and Translation
Joint research doctoral thesis
Sapienza University of Rome and University of Silesia in Katowice

Re: Report, doctoral thesis "On the Frontlines of Fiction: Authority and Fictionality in American Veteran Narratives of the War on Terror". Candidate: Angelo Arminio. Supervisor: Prof. Paolo Simonetti. Academic year 2023/2024.

Angelo Arminio's doctoral work proposes a convincing and well-articulated investigation of "post 9/11 *authofictions*", an interpretative idea that he convincingly proposes through a sound exploration of the target sources and of a well chosen and articulated critical apparatus.

From the introduction, the work appears original and well reasoned, designed to fill what is identified as a gap in the post-9/11 American literary world; that is, the lack of both a literary and a critical corpus useful for mapping and exploring the literary productions that describe the GWOT from the perspective of the veterans. As the candidate suggests, such a corpus would contribute to a better understanding of some controversial aspects of contemporary American society. For example, it could enlighten on the gap that exists between civilians and war veterans who fought (in fact are fighting) for the US army in the twenty-first century; a situation that, with respect to important political-military actions, is problematic in terms of national identity cohesion. The candidates therefore proposes an interesting corpus of novels written by veterans, classified here as *authofictions*, a term proposed by the candidate himself to address the interpretative gap and initiate a transversal reflection cross reading narratology, memory and trauma studies.

The working hypothesis is introduced in a clear and coherent way, as are the theoretical challenges that are proposed, aimed at overcoming some interpretative categories characterized and inscribed in a national paradigm that needs to be rethought in the post-9/11 American reality. The first chapter presents, in a convincing and complete way, the literary and cultural context in which the genre examined here is introduced; the proposed thematic overview is interesting and not merely illustrative, since the sources examined are analyzed in a comparative and in-depth way. Particularly interesting is the concept of "moral injury", developed starting from the acknowledgment of the fact that, in the 21st century, for the American soldiers to choose the military career is a voluntary act which conditions all the subsequent experiences, regardless of any trauma eventually suffered at the front. In the following chapters, the primary sources are analyzed in-depth and in a manner consistent with the research hypothesis, through a sound comparative methodology and with clarity of diction. The final short coda is interesting, as it introduces other

variables (i.e. novels written by non-American veterans) for the *autofictional* mode, in fact suggesting the possibility of exploring the path further.

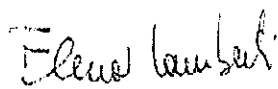
Small typos have been reported directly in the text (they do not affect the clarity of diction). The bibliographical apparatus is convincing; However, the reference system adopted in the text must be checked, as it does not always seem coherent (sometimes the reference is made to the author, sometimes only the page number is given but the work is not indicated – even when in the bibliography there are more texts by the same author, e.g. p. 75, Scranton – etc.).

I consider the work excellent and eligible for defense.

I state, here below and in no particular order, some suggestions in view of a possible future publication as a book (no changes are necessary to the text of the dissertation at this stage):

- The parts on Plato and Aristotle, although interesting, seem to me to be excessively long and, at times, redundant. I would simplify them (we can take the ideas of the two philosophers almost for granted), reducing them to the phrase highlighted on p. 55 (or a little more).
- I would give more prominence to the new ideas of Welsh or Meretoja and I would simplify those by P. Ricoeur and H. White, as the former are opening up new interpretive paths, whereas the latter are already well known (even if I see the utility of their exploration in the doctoral thesis, given the fact that the three interpretative moments of the *autofictions* here proposed are in dialogue and expand some of the ideas of the two 20th century scholars)
- I would introduce/deepen some reflections on the transmedia potential of these *autofictions*, as they are evolving within a complex communicative ecosystem that leads to a close dialogue between literature, cinema and television series.
- I would further explore the registers adopted by the various authors, as well as their language (in the thesis, many examples seem to reveal a marked use of 'dark irony' - and irony is discussed in the thesis when probing the postmodern continuity/discontinuity. It could be interesting to delve deeper and understand if there is a 'code', i.e. a 'register' that dominates and why).

Yours truly,



Prof.ssa Elena Lamberti
Letterature Anglo-Americane
Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna