

ROXANA PATRAȘ

A DIARY OF WILD EAST: CODRIN-LIVIU CUȚITARU'S CREATIVE LOCALISM

Introductory remarks: bold extrapolations and unavoidable reductions

One of the most esteemed professors of English and American literature from Iași, Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, has already published several books, valued for their comprehensive reading, acute cultural observation, pungent reply to reality shifts, and – a feature rather uncommon among scholars, for an articulate critical style, conveying at all points the author's unmistakable signature. Stated with mature assuredness in his PhD dissertation published in 1997 under the title *Istoria depersonalizată* (*The Depersonalized History*), Cuțitaru's reflection on the subject's displacement from history grows into a more nuanced vision, enhanced by a bitter awareness of literature's role as a discipline within the changing curricula experimented by the Romanian universities after the fall of Communism. Yet, in spite of casual hesitations, the scholar of "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași became one of the most authoritative spokespersons of cultural opening. A champion of loan, adaptation and affiliation to Western democratic tradition, he is among the first who provided the Romanian public with a close reading of Derrida's theory of dissemination, with a synthetic understanding of both postmodernism and postmodernity, as well as with updated versions of new historicism, psychoanalytical criticism, and gender studies.

Nevertheless, his approach to miscellaneous theoretical inputs can be organized into three stages. First comes the disciplinary specialization (teaching English/ American literary and cultural studies); second, the theoretical loan and adaptation (favoring the recent critical theories and keeping a keen interest in the debates of the contemporary world); third, the resistance to theory (preferring immediate experience and working with non-bibliographic, individual memory). To use shorthand conceptualization, all these preliminary observations can be gathered around the Latin noun "locus", which has lead, into English, to derivatives such as *locality*, *localization*, and *localism*. As long as sketching a virtual progress from *locality* to *localism* (passing through theoretical *localization*) represents the main objective of the present analysis, the author of these lines is perfectly aware that, for the sake of paradigmatic organization, she proposed a fabricated image of the critic's evolution and left aside the juiciest bits. In doing so, jokes, experiments, caprices, laboratory variants, and even failures have been saved for further, more hedonistic, readings.

The secret chambers in the great House of History: developing a taste for the historeme's duality

By and large, what developed into a pertinent conceptual scenario – running through “masked”, “physical”, “metaphysical” and, eventually, “depersonalized history”, resulted from theoretical adaptations of Derrida, but also from Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru’ spatial perception of time, which will slowly grow into an interest for history’s little aisles and chambers, that is to say, for *historemes*. In *The Depersonalized History*, this is illustrated through the allegory of the Chinese box, also found in Poe’s archetypal image of the crypt in *The Cask of Amontillado*¹; the more intricate a spatialized model of history, the greater the concept’s depersonalization. Similarly, the more adapted a theory (Derrida’s, for instance), the greater its depersonalizing force and therefore its inclination towards re-personalization through local affluence. However, the research on depersonalization should be related to the critic’s deeper acquisitions, especially to the conceptual memory of Romanian scholarship and to its constant thematization of “personality”. From G. Călinescu’s organicist approach², going through Vasile Băncilă’s concept of “personance”³ and Constantin Rădulescu-Motru’s “energetic personalism”⁴, to C. Ciopraga’s view⁵ on the enclosed (“round”) personality of Romanian literature, the local criticism paid a tribute to the epitomes of centrality. Therefore, re-read within a wider frame of local habits of mind, Cuțitaru’s debut book can be taken as a polemic with an entire tradition of critical thought, relying exclusively on prominent, institutionalized, and even Messianic personalities.

Most certainly, at the publication of his first book, the critic had been fully aware of the correspondence between Daniel Aaron’s remark on “the House of History”⁶ and Henry James’s influential theory on “the House of Fiction”⁷, as well as of other Romantic spatializations of either time or fiction. Whereas time (thence fiction) can be conceived architecturally as a solid reality, perceivable in the form of a building, the critic’s eye will turn towards “the historeme”, which will become

¹ Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, *Istoria Depersonalizată [The Depersonalized History]*, Iași, Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 1997, pp. 10-11.

² G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent [The History of Romanian Literature from Origins to Present]*, second edition, București, Minerva, 1982.

³ Vasile Băncilă, *Lucian Blaga. Energie românească [Lucian Blaga. Romanian Energy]*, Cluj-Napoca, Gând Românesc, 1938.

⁴ Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Personalismul energetic [The Energetic Personalism]*. Edited by Constantin Schifirneț, București, Albatros, 2005.

⁵ Constantin Ciopraga, *Personalitatea literaturii române. O încercare de sinteză [The Personality of Romanian Literature. An Attempt to Synthesis]*, Iași, Junimea, 1973.

⁶ Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, *The Depersonalized History*, p. 32.

⁷ Laura-Carmen Cuțitaru, *Naratorul la rampă. O incursiune în poetica jamesiană [The Narrator on Stage. An Incursion into Henry James’ Poetics]*, Iași, Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2012, pp. 14-15.

his favorite object of inquiry in *Historeme* (*Historemes*, 2009) and *Prezentul discontinuu* (*The Present Discontinuous*, 2014). Inspired by Joel Fineman's remarks in *History of the Anecdote: Fiction and Fiction*⁸, Cuțitaru's take on the *historeme* goes even further. For the Romanian scholar, the *historeme* is not only a pretext for beautifying reality but a conceptual and moral effort to internalize gaps, to encapsulate paradoxes, to burn out dualities and, why not?, to bring together essentially different worlds. The *historeme* is a mentalitary whirlpool, a cultural crossroad, a place of essential tensions.

Consequently, in the ensuing books, the critic discovers both a mediating voice and the vocation of a cultural mediator. First, the reader's attention directs toward cultural complementarities on a large scale: on the one hand, the Romanian scholar endeavors to complete a cultural phenomenology of American Romanticism⁹, on the other, he offers a close reading of the post-Romantic European novel¹⁰. Edward W. Said himself zooms in the 19th-century picture, providing as a point of departure for his insight the transfers between Western and Eastern civilizations occurred in this period. At the beginning of the century, says Said, Western civilization was prompted by a transcendental view of the world coming from genuine Oriental thinking, whereas coming close to its end, the Orient starts implementing Western societal models¹¹. Filtering Said's theories from *Orientalism*¹² and other texts through his own experience and cultural *donnés*, Cuțitaru's approach of the American culture draws closer, perhaps unconsciously, to the Romanian philosopher Lucian Blaga's vision of the "descending transcendence"¹³ from *The Trilogy of Culture*.

Indeed, *Jurnalul Vestului Sălbatic* (*The Diary of Wild West*) lays ground for "a project of cultural communication"¹⁴, formulated later, in the opening studies of *Reprezentări critice* (*Critical Representations*¹⁵) under a more general casuistic of post-modernity and post-history. So far, this vision seems to converge with other Romanian scholars' who, letting themselves influenced by Western literary/

⁸ Joel Fineman, "The History of the Anecdote: Fiction and Fiction", in *The New Historicism*. Edited by H. Aram Veeser, New York – London, Routledge, 1989, pp. 49-76.

⁹ Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, *Transcendentalism și Ascendentalism. Proiect de fenomenologie culturală a Romantismului american/ Transcendentalism and Ascendentalism: a Project of Cultural Phenomenology of American Romanticism*, Iași, Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2001.

¹⁰ Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, *The Victorian Novel. A Critical Approach*, Iași, Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2004.

¹¹ Edward W. Said, "Traveling Theory", in *The World, the Text and the Critic*, Harvard, Harvard University Press, 1983, pp. 226-227.

¹² Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, London, Penguin, 2003.

¹³ Lucian Blaga, "Spațiul mioritic" ["The Mioritic Space"], in *Trilogia culturii* [*The Trilogy of Culture*], București, Humanitas, 1994.

¹⁴ Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, *Jurnalul Vestului Sălbatic. Un studiu de mentalități* [*The Diary of Wild West. A Study of Mentalities*], Iași, Junimea, 1999.

¹⁵ Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, *Reprezentări critice* [*Critical Representations*], Iași, Standart, 2004.

cultural studies, explore dualisms through various frames of thought: the postural experience of “the exiled”¹⁶, the cultural “hybridization” and “marginality”¹⁷, the imaginary of “borders”¹⁸ and so forth. For Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru instead, John Harmon McElroy’s ideas from *Finding Freedom* (1989) are of great help because, distancing the young scholar from his recent experiences, they succeed in objectifying the harsh post-communist realities as well as the mesmerizing American dream. The Romanian Fulbrighter acknowledges, with McElroy, that European totalitarianisms and radical nationalisms were generated from the tribal instincts deposited in this continent’s cultural memory¹⁹. However, he is not ready to accept McElroy’s radicalization of cultural differences. This is why the diarist emphasizes that, beyond the awareness of cultural alterity, America helped him to attain a sort of “neutral emotional state”, a point of view wherefrom the dualities can cohabitate without dissolving each other into Hegelian synthesis.

Underlying scholarly aspirations, one can already feel in *Transcendentalism and Ascendentalism* (2001) a discrete methodological dispute between the young critic’s temptation to build a critical system and the resignation to the fragment’s diffuseness. Like the finest connoisseurs of 19th century literature – naming Northrop Frye, Harold Bloom, Geoffrey H. Hartman, Arthur O. Lovejoy, M. H. Abrams, and Jerome McGann is here necessary –, the Romanian scholar trained his critical faculties by following the most intricate ways of the Romantic mind, either in Emerson’s, Thoreau’s and Whitman’s case or in that of Poe’s, Melville’s and Hawthorne’s. Here too, Romanticism educated a taste for speculation, philosophic pose, and for what Shelley, speaking about the aesthetic construction of reality, calls “Intellectual Beauty”. No wonder that Plato, Schopenhauer, Kant, Hegel, Fichte are among the critic’s favorites²⁰. Additionally, his own vision of contemporary Romanian literature claims the writer’s need for academic standards and intellectual practices²¹.

In one of his texts, Harold Bloom explains how the formal patterns of romance stories are “internalized” by the entire Romantic literature²²; nevertheless, an

¹⁶ Andrei Codrescu, *Dispariția lui „Afară”. Un manifest al evadării [The Disappearance of the Outside: A Manifesto for Escape]*. Translated by Ruxandra Vasilescu, prefaced by Ioan-Petru Culianu, București, Univers, 1995.

¹⁷ Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer, *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia, The Johns Benjamins Company, 2004-2010.

¹⁸ Romanița Constantinescu, *Pași pe graniță [Steps on the Border]*, Iași, Polirom, 2009.

¹⁹ Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, *The Diary*, pp. 108-118.

²⁰ Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, *Prezentul discontinuu [The Present Discontinuous]*, Iași, Institutul European, 2014, p. 96.

²¹ Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, *Critical Representations*, pp. 15-30.

²² Harold Bloom, “The Internalization of Quest-Romance”, in *Romanticism. Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, vol. 1. *Definitions and Romantic Form*. Edited by Michael O’Neill and Mark Sandy, New York – London, Routledge, 2006, pp. 102-121.

“internalization” of Romanticism(s) and its/ their *plural nature*²³ can also be argued in the case of critics committed to this period. Beyond any remedy, such love for Romantics bears with the intellectual destinies of their commentators, who learn how to accommodate paradox within the core of critical insight and how to taste dualities of all sorts.

The mediating voice from “Nomansland”. The critical discourse as a sort of home

Familiarized with both Romanian and American culture, with both communist and post-communist societies, Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru reads the “conflicts” marked by strong geographical traits (North vs. South, East Coast vs. West Coast, Western Civilization vs. Orient, Western Europe vs. South Eastern Europe) in terms of phenomenological co-existence and philosophical mediation. However, the scholar’s perception on cultural dialogue and transfers becomes truly original in his overt option for anchoring ideas into Romanian language, whose expressive resources are convoked with great skill. It seems that the Wild West has awakened, in the ex-Fulbrighter, neither the gold nor the theory rush. On the contrary, the young academic returned home with what Barthes coined as the state of “active Neutrality”²⁴. Subsequently, he began to write, perhaps without even knowing it, a diary of the wild East.

In a Europe troubled by the raising nationalisms and by the controversy between global English and national idioms, Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru’s refusal to claim his professional and cultural identity may serve, I believe, as relevant ground for this paper’s hypotheses on *locality*, *localization* and *localism*. According to Edward Said, “locality” should be defined as exclusive “specialization” as compared to Goethe’s inclusive approach to humanities²⁵. Specialization falls back on disciplinary, methodic or linguistic closures; it is linked with the critic’s “terrorist” need to legitimize the field of humanities and to give it a “material” consistence²⁶. Actually, the author of *The Depersonalized History* feels himself pushed to clarify his own “situatedness”. As a Romanian critic, he tries to tame the excesses of bohemian literature and impressionist cultural journalism:

...renunțarea la convingerea că literatura este un apanaj al boemului social și reconcilierea cu experiența academică; denunțarea clișeului patologic, conform căruia criticul rămâne prin excelență un cronicar literar, iar virtutea exegetică supremă este

²³ Arthur O. Lovejoy, “On the Discrimination of Romanticisms”, in *Romanticism. Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, pp. 36-56.

²⁴ Roland Barthes, *Le Neutre. Cours au Collège de France (1977-1978)*. Edited by Thomas Clerc, Paris, Seuil/ Imec, 2002, pp. 116-122.

²⁵ Edward W. Said, *Traveling Theories*, p. 228.

²⁶ Geoffrey Hartmann qtd in Edward W. Said, *Traveling Theories*, p. 229.

foiletonul de hebdomadar și îndreptarea fermă spre teoria critică și exegeza culturală, singurele variante de emancipare ideologic estetică²⁷.

As a teacher of English, he searches for topics where the two languages could share a common conceptual line: history vs. historeme, center vs. periphery, cultural memory vs. anxiety of influence, evolution vs. retard/ disability, present vs. past, biology and technology, national language vs. lingua franca, authority vs. submission, elites vs. sham-elites, misanthropy vs. philanthropy, master vs. disciple, discipline vs. bohemianism, and so forth. As a Professor of an old institution of higher education, he reflects on the destiny of provincialized universities. On the top of all, he is an ambassador of English and American cultures in a post-communist country, where local identity is asserted aggressively. While the virtues of folkloric stylistics and the treasures of our mother tongue keep on stirring the Romanian public's sympathy, barely can the poor speaker of Shakespeare's language reach to the masses. Moreover, the semi-rural mentalities of the Romanian laboring class as well as the various complexes of Romanian elites make communication even more difficult. Both poles of society – elites and masses, regard localization of foreign theories (either as exercises of admiration or as loan and adaptation) as mere snobbish stuff.

While disciplinary *locality* and theoretical *localization* still pack up with different degrees of mimetism, *localism*, and particularly *creative localism*, becomes the main concern of the critic's last books. Like his precursors from Iași (The "Junimea" circle, The *Viața Românească* Journal), Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru developed his own approach of *localism*. The attitude occurs, even though polemically, in the critic's earlier definitions of Romanian "postmodernism". Failing to spread geographically, Cuțitaru explains, Romanian postmodernism must be treated as culturally inconsistent because, unlike other postmodernisms, it derives legitimacy only throughout Bucharest's centrality:

O altă particularitate a fenomenului în aria românească – valabilă probabil și pentru celelalte țări ale blocului socialist – pare a fi disproporția geografică. Fiind introdus artificial și nu prin diviziune naturală (culturală), postmodernismul românesc depinde fundamental de centrul academic unde s-a creat, la un moment dat, un grup (o generație) apt(ă) din punct de vedere cultural de a-l prelua ideologic și de a-l impregna – în limita posibilităților „clonării” – cu specific național. Precum altădată Iașul, care a reușit o similară coagulare intelectuală, sincronă cu lumea vestică, în

²⁷ Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, *Critical Representations*, pp. 24-25: "the renunciation to the tenet that literature is the social bohemian's perquisite and the reconciliation with the academic experience; the denunciation of a pathological cliché which states that the critic is exclusively the literary reviewer, whose the supreme virtue is to make criticism in installments in weekly reviews, and the decided heading toward critical theory and cultural exegesis as the only variants of ideological and aesthetical emancipation" (my translation).

secolul trecut (prin "Junimea"), Bucureștiul a dat, în anii optzeci, prima generație postmodernă din literatura română²⁸.

Consequently, the peripheral allegiances to this aesthetic paradigm, especially in the city of Iași, are threefold inadequate. First, losing contact with academia and lacking the minimum of culture required for a writing career resulted into an "academic incompatibility" of provincial literature. Second, practicing literature as a launching platform for administrative positions and drawing regional authority from unconditional praising of satellite dilettantes' groups lead to a "deontological incompatibility" of provincial literature. Third, the over-production of poetry and the rejection of other literary genres implying a higher critical consciousness gave way to an "aesthetic incompatibility" of provincial literature²⁹.

With all his denunciation of uncultivated, semi-rural, and sometimes disabled Moldavian types, Cuțitaru's belonging to the local tradition of criticism is still tremendously important. For him, the Moldavians' paralyzing sense of failure and their pretenses of intellectual superiority stem from a cultural and psychological tension, accumulated gradually by the frustrated Capital of the Principality of Moldavia after the establishment of Romania's central administration in Bucharest. However, the city of Iași, the critic believes, entertains a *recherche*, construed feeling of marginality³⁰, which, if one looks closely, was actually fought back by both "Junimea" and "Viața românească" literary circles. In fact, previous literary schools brought to the fore an image of opened-up periphery, able to house in, if necessary, the whole world.

Already theorized as a norm of individual behavior by Titu Maiorescu³¹ and amplified into a cultural feature by G. Ibrăileanu³², "the critical spirit" of Romanian culture (which is critical consciousness and discursive creativity at the same time) is a concept apt to transcend the ethnic definitions of *localism*. Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru learns the lesson of his antecessors and defines the critic's "home"

²⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 16-17: "Another particularity of this phenomenon within the Romanian area – which probably is also true for the other countries of the ex-communist block – seems to be the geographical disproportion. Being introduced artificially and not through natural (cultural) division, the Romanian postmodernism is fundamentally dependent on the academic center where, at a certain point, a group (generation) had formed, then showed itself apt from a cultural point of view to undertake the ideological aspects of Postmodernism and to impregnate them – within the possible limits of "cloning" – with national specificity. Like the city of Iași, which succeeded, during the last century, to set off a similar intellectual coagulation that was synchronous with the Western world (through the "Junimea" Circle), Bucharest gave, during the 80', the first postmodern generation from Romanian literature" (my translation).

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 23.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 33.

³¹ Titu Maiorescu, *Opere [Complete Works]*, I. *Critice*, București, FNȘA – Univers Enciclopedic, 2005.

³² G. Ibrăileanu, "Spiritul critic în cultura românească" ["The Critical Spirit in the Romanian Culture"], in *Scrieri alese [Selected Writings]*. Edited by Roxana Patraș and Antonio Patraș, Iași, Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2010.

not in terms of a native region/ people/ language, but in terms of a localized critical idiom, summing up the universality of ideas and their historical linguistic embodiments. Besides that, the critic's job is not only to harbor foreign theories, but also to anchor his individual voice. By far the most complex approach to theory localization, the critic's "resistance to theory"³³ occurs when he decides to open up the fiddly channels of individual memory:

...cred că, științific vorbind, nu sîntem dotați [...] să ne schimbăm abrupt și radical. Ceea ce unii numesc „obtuzitate”, alții „spirit refractar”, iar alții de-a dreptul „retard” nu constituie altceva decât un impuls legitim de autoconservare, înscris în codurile noastre genetice de adâncime. Voi găsi semnificația noutății doar în măsura în care aceasta îmi va explora, delicat, sensurile atașate deja, de mine, intervalului obsolet³⁴.

It is not at all incidental that the author of *The Present Discontinuous* mentions frequently mnemonics and casual inserts of memories into the present³⁵.

Creative localism. Saving a “sectorial” language from martyrdom

The scholar's last two books focus on the paradoxical condition of cultural criticism delivered into a “sectorial” language such as Romanian. In *Historemes* (2009), it seems a perfect method to stay opened in both ways, like the ancient God *Janus Bifrons*, towards both system and fragment, towards both scholarship and cultural journalism³⁶. All in all, it looks like an intelligent way to catch the specialized attention of various readerships. In *The Present Discontinuous* (2014) instead, the problematized critical “situatedness” turns into a moral mission: releasing (hence, saving) the critic's casual memories and integrating them into the continuous texture of immediate reality. As Frank Lentricchia notices, criticism should undertake the mission of turning unfamiliar, frightening and objective reality into a sort of homely, familiar feeling³⁷.

For Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, the specialization of languages follows the same track as the evolution of species. While English and Romanian do not share the same glory, both of them are experiencing the menace of conversion into ideograms by the post-historic man and by rapid advancement of communication

³³ Edward W. Said, *Traveling Theories*, p. 242.

³⁴ Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, *Prezentul discontinuu [The Present Discontinuous]*, Iași, Institutul European, 2014, pp. 88-89: “I believe that, scientifically speaking, we are not endowed [...] with the ability to change abruptly and radically. What some call ‘dullness’, others ‘refractory spirit’, and others call it squarely ‘retard’ is nothing but a legitimate impulse toward self-preservation, written on our deepest DNA. I will assign novelty with a signification as long as this explores, gently, the meanings I have already appended to the obsolete period” (my translation).

³⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 37, 109, 159, 196, 237-240, 275.

³⁶ Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, *Istoreme [Historemes]*, Iași, Institutul European, 2009.

³⁷ Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1980, p. 24.

technologies³⁸. Thus, several of the texts from the critic's last book revert to the language's loss of figurative force. Former names of people turn into conventional unimaginative mail/ telephone IDs of friends, students, colleagues, neighbors and casual acquaintances. Exploring the phonetic and semantic resources of paradoxical associations, the critic wins back – like the Romanian I.L. Caragiale, the Czech Hašek, and the American Melville – the essence of anthroponomy. A long inventory of essentially untranslatable names can be provided for illustration. “Mafia Sicilia”, “Midnight Caller”, “Midnight Lover”, “Random Killer”, “Pișpirică”, “Puiache”, “Bubuleț”, “Măcăleandru”, “Porcul Cerșetor”, “Momârlanul Anglofil”, “Mormolocul Penetrant”, “Traficantul de Chiloți”, “Nenea Sulfit”, “Pelicanul Homofob”, “Mirodon Protopopescu”, “Angela Pilon”, “Alina Bucluc”, “Domnul Cucache” *aka* “Nea Franzelă”, “Nache Popache”, “Bobârname Popache”, “Mielache Popache”, “Monache Popache”, “Nea Mortache”, “Nea Doctorache”, “Bulache-Căcace”, “Prof. Moroiu”, “Ion Mirescu”, “Miorel Ciobănaș”, “Grigore Maimuț”, “Purceanu”, “Frecăuțeanu”, “Mamel”, “Căcăboi”, “Smoc”, “Pîrțac”, “Pasarelă”, “Aurica Prună”, and suchlike prove that, before becoming a thorough study of physiognomies, Balzac's *The Human Comedy* must have been also a comedy of languages, dialectical articulations and class idioms. At his full capacity, Cuțitaru mimics the funny sound of the Moldavian accent as well as the social and economic retard of Moldavian lumpen-proletariat.

While funny names are unconvertible from Romanian into English, other words must be subjected to translation's splendors and miseries. If formulated into Romanian or into other languages with sectorial circulation, the typical “desperate appeals” of hackers read as funny chains of random words, and consequently the internationalized thief can be uncovered more easily through means of linguistic identification³⁹. Not only new global technologies – from the most ordinary screwdriver to the iPad, iPhone and tablet⁴⁰, but also the autochthonous realities – from dishes to illnesses⁴¹ require the services of a fine cultural interpreter, whose job is to mediate/ negotiate the tensed relationship between the source and the loan languages. When everyday language gets perverted by unassimilated loans (Anglicisms), unchecked neologisms or abundant diminutives, this surely indicates “the fragility of identity”, “the personality's irrelevant outline”⁴².

Frequently, Cuțitaru's *historemes* refer to Andrei Pleșu's editorials from “Dilema” cultural magazine. One of the essayist's interventions on “the martyrdom of Romanian language” is particularly stimulating for the younger columnist of the

³⁸ Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, *The Present...*, pp. 105, 167-170.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 179-182.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 89, 135-139.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 225-228, 233-237.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 153.

same periodical. Surely, says Pleșu, our native language should be revered for its untranslatable treasures and be defended against degradation and promiscuity. Subscribing to this view, the scholar from Iași believes that Romanian must be preferred to others for its assertive identity, which legitimizes the right to be spoken within international contexts and to be written/ read into international academic journals. For a Professor of English and American studies (who could have pleaded for exile, massive import or denial of inconvenient national features), the options to deposit ideas into his native Romanian and to perform, through a gallery of characters, his dialectal particularities support, as two strong pillars, the cause of *creative localism*. Developed by the schools of criticism of Iași, *creative localism* travelled through time and adapted its profile to contemporary challenges. Providing necessary resistance to theory, the critic's personal remembrances represent thus the most adequate bibliography.

Epilogue. Localizing "the last man"

For Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, individual memory and present experiences are not engaged into a submissive relationship. On the contrary, memory mediates and enhances the interest for a volatile and variegated present. While the present continuous tense of English verbs expresses actions that happened recently and still continue in the present, the "present discontinuous" of critical reflection addresses, in spite of cultural, linguistic, social, economic and historical discontinuities, the continuity of cultural memory and its resonant, continuity patterns. Avoiding the perils of subjectivity (specific to "personal" genres such as historical account/ narrative, memoirs and diary), Cuțitaru's texts also bear a localizing force through their generic difference.

The *historeme* comes with the awareness of impossible synthesis and with the ethical mission of cultural mediation; perhaps it is – and the great chain of ideas can go on and on, endlessly – a Romanian localization of theories announcing the end of history.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ADAMS, Hazard, Leroz SEARLE (eds.), *Critical Theory since 1965*, Tallahassee, Florida State University Press, 1990.
- BĂNCILĂ, Vasile, *Lucian Blaga. Energie românească [Lucian Blaga. Romanian Energy]*, Cluj, Gând Românesc, 1938.
- BARTHES, Roland, *Le Neutre. Cours au Collège de France (1977-1978)*. Edited by Thomas Clerc, Paris, Seuil/ Imec, 2002.
- BLAGA, Lucian, "Spațiul mioritic" ["The Mioritic Space"], in *Trilogia culturii [The Trilogy of Culture]*, București, Humanitas, 1994.
- BLOOM, Harold, "The Internalization of Quest-Romance", in *Romanticism. Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies. I. Definitions and Romantic Form*. Edited by Michael O'Neill and Mark Sandy, New York and London, Routledge, 2006.

- CĂLINESCU, G., *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent* [*The History of Romanian Literature from Origins to Present*]. Second edition, București, Minerva, 1982.
- CIOPRAGA, Constantin, *Personalitatea literaturii române. O încercare de sinteză* [*The Personality of Romanian Literature. An Attempt to Synthesis*], Iași, Junimea, 1973.
- CODRESCU, Andrei, *Dispariția lui "Afară". Un manifest al evadării* [*The Disappearance of the Outside: A Manifesto for Escape*]. Translated by Ruxandra Vasilescu, prefaced by Ioan-Petru Culianu, București, Univers, 1995.
- CONSTANTINESCU, Romanița, *Pași pe graniță* [*Steps on the Border*], Iași, Polirom, 2009.
- CORNIS-POPE, Marcel and John NEUBAUER, *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe*. Amsterdam – Philadelphia, The Johns Benjamins Company, 2004-2010.
- CUȚITARU, Codrin-Liviu, *Istoria depersonalizată* [*The Depersonalized History*], Iași, Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 1997.
- CUȚITARU, Codrin-Liviu, *Jurnalul Vestului Sălbatic. Un studiu de mentalități* [*The Diary of Wild West. A Study of Mentalities*], Iași, Junimea, 1999.
- CUȚITARU, Codrin-Liviu, *Transcendentalism și Ascendentalism. Proiect de fenomenologie culturală a Romantismului american* [*Transcendentalism and Ascendentalism: A Project of Cultural Phenomenology of American Romanticism*]. Iași, Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2001.
- CUȚITARU, Codrin-Liviu, *Reprezentări critice* [*Critical Representations*], Iași, Standart, 2004.
- CUȚITARU, Codrin-Liviu, *The Victorian Novel. A Critical Approach*, Iași, Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2004.
- CUȚITARU, Codrin-Liviu, *Istoreme* [*Historemes*], Iași, Institutul European, 2009.
- CUȚITARU, Codrin-Liviu, *Prezentul discontinuu* [*The Present Discontinuous*], Iași, Institutul European, 2014.
- CUȚITARU, Laura-Carmen, *Naratorul la rampă. O incursiune în poetica jamesiană* [*The Narrator on Stage. An Incursion into Henry James' Poetics*], Iași, Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2012.
- DERRIDA, Jacques, *Despre Gramatologie* [*Of Grammatology*]. Translated by Bogdan Ghiu, Cluj-Napoca, Tact, 2009.
- FINEMAN, Joel, "The History of the Anecdote: Fiction and Fiction", in *The New Historicism*. Edited by H. Aram Veesser, New York and London, Routledge, 1989.
- IBRĂILEANU, G., "Spiritul critic în cultura românească" ["The Critical Spirit in the Romanian Culture"], in *Scrieri alese* [*Selected Writings*]. Edited by Roxana Patraș and Antonio Patraș, Iași, Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2010.
- LENTRICCHIA, Frank, *After the New Criticism*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1980.
- LOVEJOY, Arthur O., "On the discrimination of Romanticisms", in *Romanticism. Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*. I. *Definitions and Romantic Form*. Edited by Michael O'Neill and Mark Sandy, New York and London, Routledge, 2006.
- MAIORESCU, Titu, *Opere* [*Complete Works*]. I. *Critice*, București, FNȘA – Univers Enciclopedic, 2005.
- RĂDULESCU-MOTRU, Constantin, *Personalismul energetic* [*The Energetic Personalism*]. Edited by Constantin Schifirneț, București, Albatros, 2005.
- SAID, Edward W., "Traveling Theory Reconsidered", in *Reflections on Exile: and Other Literary and Cultural Essays*, Harvard, Harvard University Press, 2000.
- SAID, Edward W., "Traveling Theory", in *The World, the Text and the Critic*, Harvard, Harvard University Press, 1983.
- SAID, Edward W., *Orientalism*, London, Penguin, 2003.

A DIARY OF WILD EAST:
 CODRIN-LIVIU CUȚITARU'S CREATIVE LOCALISM
 (*Abstract*)

The essay endeavors to apply Edward Said's remarks on traveling theory by sketching a three-stage model, grounded on the evolution of critical consciousness from locality (specialization and selection of theory), to localization (loan and adaptation of theory) and creative localism (resistance to theory). Our analysis addresses Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru's books, from *The Depersonalized History* (1997) to *The Present Discontinuous* (2014), which contain pertinent illustrations of traveling theories, mainly localizations of Derrida's "dissemination", Fineman's "historeme", and Fukuyama's "post-history". Cuțitaru's reflection on the subject's displacement from history grows into a more nuanced vision, enhanced by a bitter awareness of literature's role as a discipline within the changing curricula experimented by the Romanian universities after the fall of Communism. Experiencing both the locality of his own specialization (Professor of English/ American Studies), and the localization of foreign theories in a provincialized academic center ("Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași, established in the capital of the former Principality of Moldavia), the Romanian scholar arrives at a very original theory of creative localism. This provides the critic not only with arguments for resisting foreign theory, but also for opening himself towards the tradition of previous schools of criticism from Iași.

Keywords: Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, locality, localization, creative localism, loan/ adaptation of theory, resistance to theory.

UN JURNAL AL ESTULUI SĂLBATIC:
 LOCALISMUL CREATOR ÎN VIZIUNEA LUI CODRIN-LIVIU CUȚITARU
 (*Rezumat*)

Esul de față își propune să aplice ideile lui Edward Said despre teoria migratoare schițând un model în trei etape, întemeiat pe evoluția conștiinței critice de la localitate (specializare și selecție a teoriei), la localizare (împrumut și adaptare a teoriei), apoi la localismul creator (rezistența la teorie). Analiza noastră se concentrează asupra cărților lui Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, de la *Istoria Depersonalizată* (1997) până la *Prezentul Discontinuu* (2014), care conțin ilustrații pertinente ale teoriilor migratoare, în principal localizări ale „diseminării” lui Derrida, ale „historemelor” lui Fineman și ale „post-istoriei” lui Fukuyama. Percepția lui Cuțitaru asupra situației subiectului în afara istoriei se dezvoltă într-o viziune mai nuanțată, sporită și de conștiința rolului precar al literaturii ca disciplină în cadrul programei școlare din universitățile românești după căderea comunismului. Conștient atât de caracterul local al propriei sale specializări (profesor la departamentul de studii engleze și americane), cât și de localizarea teoriilor străine într-un centru academic provincial (Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași, cu sediul în capitala fostului Principat al Moldovei), cercetătorul român reușește să formuleze o teorie originală a localismului creator. Aceasta îi oferă criticului nu doar argumente în favoarea rezistenței la teoriile străine, ci și o deschidere către tradiția vechilor școli de critică din Iași.

Cuvinte-cheie: Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, localitate, localizare, localism creator, împrumut/ adaptare a teoriei, rezistență la teorie.