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## COMPARATIVE THEORY: CHRONOTOPES AND CIRCULATION PRACTICES

### ARGUMENT

Contrary to its origins and areas of applicability, always “very” local and localized, literary theory aimed at reaching the status of a universal discourse on literature, a discourse that would identify and showcase in a display box the invariants beyond the cultural, historical, and geographical variables. As the anthropologist James Clifford ironically acknowledged in his article/ manifesto “Notes on Travel and Theory” (*Inscriptions*, 5), “Localization undermines a discourse’s claim to ‘theoretical’ status.” The very history of literary theory as a (still) recent human science has incorporated and disguised local heritages while also highlighting in the process their transferable virtue, their mobile and generalizing capacity. The various narratives that accounted for theory’s beginnings, from the organicist ones such as R. Wellek’s *History of Modern Criticism* to those that value the breaking point as the constitutive motive of evolution (such as the introductions signed by Jonathan Culler, Terry Eagleton, or Antoine Compagnon, to name but a few), they all discreetly unify the variables of theoretical reflection into the apparently glorious perspective of a knowledge that makes its way through accumulating and filtering its data; a knowledge that is dubiously similar to the “hard” scientific one. First, theoretical discourse had to become more and more preoccupied with the theme of its own crisis for the motives of circulation, travel, and the unavoidable alteration of ideas to open up new lines worth investigating. This also happened thanks to the rebirth of comparative literature over the past two-three decades.

\*

Romanian literary theory has never quite fared on the major routes of theoretical discourse. The field’s tradition has rather been passed on from one individual to another, often at a distance, without consistent interaction and exchange that could enable a proper debate on the status of the discipline. Later on, in the golden age of structuralism – the age when theory reached its public climax which, at least in this lateral region of Europe, was to be taken for the very possibility of the discipline –, the attempts to revive and found at the same time a local tradition of theoretical discourse have brought to light marginal figures from the field of interwar literary studies (Mihail Dragomirescu, Dimitrie Caracostea). In other cases, they have stubbornly looked for traces of theoretical underpinnings in the discourse of literary critics or historians. It is not surprising at all that in a culture dominated for decades by a deep respect for the “big names”, critical doubts weren’t welcomed. This doesn’t mean there were no important theorists in

Romania after the Second World War who developed an autonomous discourse without being significantly indebted to the centers of symbolic power (among which Paris occupied the most prominent place). Discursive autonomy was conquered by paying the price of a radical break from the dominant critical-historical trend, which was almost exclusively legitimized in the field (see the cases of Tudor Vianu or Adrian Marino). Theory came thus to occupy an isolated position in the field of Romanian literary studies, a fact that had long-term consequences on the field's equilibrium. When the balance was nevertheless searched for and attained, as in the case of Ioana Em. Petrescu, it was not without a problematic recognition.

On the other hand, in the mainstream literary criticism, references to the fashionable themes and concepts of the same golden age were quite frequent, sometimes being even put to work, as in some critical studies by Nicolae Manolescu or Eugen Simion, the representative names for that period. However, these attempts did not question or engage in a strong dialogue with their sources. The crowned queen of Romanian literary studies, criticism – often including a historical perspective – contented itself with borrowing from the echoes of the theoretical debates taking place in different parts of the world, putting them only to a peripheral use. There were however some important exceptions: the debate space provided by the journal *Cahiers roumains d'études littéraires*, the theoretical enclaves hosted by the intellectual circles in Timișoara, Cluj, Iași, București, or the work of theorists such as Matei Călinescu, Virgil Nemoianu, Toma Pavel, among others, barely acknowledged in Romania during the '60s and '70s, who left the country to pursue their international careers in exile, in the United States or in Western European universities.

It was only in the 2000s, following another period of burning stages in a culture whose evolution model has been marked by acculturation for a long time that the fast updating through translations and other forms of circulation of ideas reached a relative normality. The Romanian academia could engage in a discussion in modern terms on the boundaries between literary disciplines, on the felicity conditions for the transfer of theories, on the circulation routes and adaptation models. This was the framework of the conference organized by the “Tudor Vianu” Research Center in the University of Bucharest, on the theme of *Localizing Theory. Schools of Thought and Policies of Knowledge in Contemporary Literary Studies* (Bucharest, 3-4 April 2015). Bringing together a small but representative number of Romanian and foreign theorists, the conference debates approached three main subjects: the felicity conditions for the present-day circulation of theories, the reception of theoretical approaches to literature in peripheral scholarly communities, and the import and adaptation of (Western) theories in communist and postcommunist Romania. The thematic dossier we put together includes a revised selection of papers presented at the conference.

\*

If, as the same J. Clifford states, theory circulates lately on an unpredictable route, with many comebacks, reconfigurations and new exportations towards the

former center (see, for instance, Gayatri Spivak's case), the legitimate question would be now whether the conditions that make a theory mobile and functional have somehow changed. Seen until recently in direct connection with the system of disciplines – because theoretical circulation is enabled by the disciplinary dominant of a certain period –, these conditions acquire variable importance since the customary narrative of the West-to-East transfer has lost its unidirectional character, as well as the traditional distribution of power poles. The change that started with revisiting the Prague school in the '60s and with the new/ old Lukács reinterpreted by Lucien Goldmann<sup>1</sup> was to be continued from the '90s onwards by the enthusiastic dissolution of the former emergence centers. Among many other productive consequences, this triggered the possibility of a more careful reflection on the contemporary theoretical mobility. It is already very clear – as Didier Coste convincingly demonstrates in the opening of this thematic dossier – that open-mindedness, flexibility, and attention to 'the real' are to be counted among the essential attributes of contemporary theory. Without them mobility would be impossible; moreover, mobility is today the very condition of existence for theory: *a static theory is a dead theory*, states Didier Coste, and this view is shared by an entire direction of critical thinking that articulates the status of theory in a visible interdependence with the new world episteme that privileges active, dynamic, and easily adaptable forms, as in a creative and alert ergonomics.

A question that could be raised here, at least as a symptom of the desire to somehow organize a historical trajectory, is whether some of the *felicity conditions* for the old import routes can preserve their place – and mostly, how, and under what circumstances – in the contemporary circulation practices. By choosing to discuss mostly the Romanian case before and after the fall of communism, sections 2 and 3 of this dossier offer a relevant and nuanced picture of these changes.

Theoretical circulation is not necessarily strictly geographic: a possible trajectory could also be that of intersection, of mirroring, of engaging into dialogue with several theories of different ages and places of emergence. This is what section 2 (*Revisiting Empires*) proposes: for Anca Băicoianu, Dumitru Tucan, and Ioana Zirra, the relationship between postcolonialism and postcommunism does not presuppose any relation of inclusion, nor an adaptation pattern of the Western theory of postcolonialism (by "Western", we understand here more a symbolical than a geographical power) to Eastern realities; rather a "theoretical dialogism", if we can call it this way. The articles in section 2 account for what happened with two theoretical schools that are connected, but also strongly circumscribed in a geo-cultural way. They struggle to understand their own principles and limits by relating to each other. This is the section that echoes Didier Coste's point about the

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<sup>1</sup> Edward W. Said, „Traveling Theory Reconsidered”, in *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays*, London, Granta Books, 2013, pp. 436-452.

mobility of theory: the proof that a theory is alive is that it emerges more nuanced and stronger after it has been seen through/ from another.

When the receiving field is less prone to nuancing and to cultural openness, the theoretical import functions in a displaced and hybrid manner. Such is the case of the Romanian theoretical framework in the period 1975-1980, situated in a “classical” and long acknowledged chronotope of marginality – from a geographical as well as a cultural historical perspective –, and in an ideologically conditioned immobility – a totalitarian society, in the national-communist version. The lack of innovative import and of the free exchange of ideas is dramatically resented, especially after their comparative activation; the theoretical climate of the 1960s includes among others, the import of the main structuralist concepts in the operational vocabulary. As the articles included in the section *Western Theories, Eastern Practices* show, there are two schools of thought which act as invigorating agents for theoretical reflection during the last years of communism: reception theories, treated as a privileged object in relation with literary sociology in Liviu Papadima’s article, and deconstruction/ postmodernism whose import path is traced back by Ioana Bot and Robert Cincu through their approaches to the academic environment of the last communist decade in Cluj.

Retrospectively, which were the selection and felicity conditions for these two directions that reached a marginal and (self)marginalized area? For the time frame pre-1989, the causality of the “context effect”, although predictable, seems inevitable: one can thus explain many facts, from the difficulty of Romanian theorists to take part in the contemporary debates to the widely spread popularity of theoretical directions which privilege an immanent approach to literature, together with creative subjectivity, aesthetic autonomy, and the like – all of them contextual-strategical synonyms of an absent freedom of thought in Communist Romania. The interest in the comparatist perspective that two important Romanian theorists, Paul Cornea and Adrian Marino, display in the late ‘80s, can be read, in its turn, as pertaining to this marginality: under such circumstances as the impossibility of circulation, difficulties in establishing a lively dialogue and in harmonizing their readings with those of their Western colleagues, we may infer that comparativism had become, for Romanian theorists, a derived form of theoretical travelling, an attempt at reshaping the immobility of geographical and political marginality, and a way to overcome the import difficulties. As Romanița Constantinescu’s article shows, the ideological constraints blocked all theories which placed individual identity and social singularity at their core: from the impossibility of translating Musil to the post-89 explosion of novelistic characters in identity conflicts.

Other conditions/ attributes which would make a theory worthy to be imported remain yet to be accounted for. Some of them pertain to the features of marginality itself: the argument of central authority (also inevitable in a space marked by the obsession with synchronicity), the stakes of the selection for a theory or another, the innovation/ adaptation ratio etc. The articles in the third section offer a relevant

background for such discussions. Neither the theories of reception, nor postmodernism “itself” represent the main topics of theoretical European and American debates (which had already discovered singularities and localisms at the end of the ‘80s). Yet in the Romanian context they were still perceived as compulsory for several reasons. The most important of these was the novelty effect in the import field: the conceptual/ theoretical innovation presupposed by the debates on reception theories and those on postmodernism had an immediate disruptive effect on the theoretical *doxa* of the local Romanian context, the core of which was, undoubtedly, critical immanentism. Traditionally, the Romanian field rarely imported entire theoretical domains; one of the very few exceptions is the work of Tudor Vianu, the pioneer of Romanian aesthetics, theory of values, and stylistics at the end of the 1930s. The other prominent names in Romanian interwar theory focus on individual theoretical systems, on some celebrity figures of their time, whom they convert into the core and the stake of their own systems: the French critic Émile Faguet for the Romanian literary critic and theorist E. Lovinescu, the Italian philosopher of culture Benedetto Croce for the critic G. Călinescu. The pattern of the individual trajectory remains valid for the main representatives of Romanian literary theory during the ‘60s and the ‘70s: Paul Cornea started his theoretical career in a Lansonian vein, then continued by adopting the line of literary sociology developed by Robert Escarpit in France, to move into reader-response criticism and hermeneutics in the late ‘80s; Adrian Marino, in his turn, took René Étiemble as a model for an integral comparativism. Their individual trajectories also set their coordinates around a name-as-substitute-for-the-domain, usually the founder of a school who is read and re-read after his position had been already strengthened at the center. Marginal areas such as Romania, as can be seen from these examples, do not import minor/ peripheral authors from theoretical centers, but names with credentials that become, as with other cases (Marcel Raymond for Mircea Martin, Georges Poulet for Ion Pop), the felicity condition for a metonymical import (the work and the innovations introduced by a theorist “standing for” the innovative contribution of the domain as a whole).

The model changes partly, as the articles in section 3 show, by the end of the ‘80s. Instead of importing individual theoretical systems – displaying obvious signs of a larger trend –, the Romanian field receives and adapts two orientations which no longer necessarily hold at their center individual figures and school founders. Their disruptive effect is brought by other characteristics: (a) the conceptual innovation in a certain field (reader-response theory) not yet closely explored because of the distance from the Romanian still functional model of scholarly subjectivity and textual preeminence, respectively (b) the degree of theoretical innovation, synonymous to plasticity, in the case of deconstruction. The trajectory of the latter’s adaptation opens the discussion on the maneuver space inside the exported system, as the “transplant” threatens to remain impractical if it does not allow its “importer” to innovatively adapt. During the ‘70s and ‘80s,

deconstruction enters the space of Romanian theory by two access routes: the first, sadly a complete failure, as Ioana Bot proves in her article, is that of Ioana Em. Petrescu's readings of Derrida, Paul de Man, and Kristeva in her 1981 volume, *Configurations* (its unpopularity being interpreted by Ioana Bot as a sign of theoretical frailty of the Romanian academic *doxa* at the time); the second one takes the shape of a concept with a more fortunate posterity: postmodernism. Read in the descent of French theory and having become rather quickly a legitimizing concept for an extremely active literary generation which assumed a double status – that of writer-theorists –, postmodernism did not go through the mandatory standstills of “domesticating” an imported theory which happened throughout time to structuralism, narratology, or literary sociology when applied to Romanian literary objects. Postmodernism became a literary operator derived from a theoretical concept, since the poetry and prose of the Romanian '80s generation, more notably the Bucharest writers, had adhered to it as a literary ideology of sorts before any attempt at theoretical acclimatization: Romanian postmodern literature exists before any conceptual debate on postmodernism. This can also be the place for a discussion on adaptation differences inside a marginal area itself: if in Bucharest postmodernism was “adopted” literarily by a group of writers in the early '80s, and then it had to wait until 1986 for a comprehensive debate to be initiated, in Cluj, on the contrary, the transfer route was marked by the individual attempts of the critics Ioana Em. Petrescu and Liviu Petrescu (in 1980-1981), which did not have a similar impact at the time. And things didn't seem to change even after a decade, as Robert Cincu proves in his analysis of Liviu Petrescu's volume on postmodernism. Therefore we can assume the existence of a difference in perceiving the theoretical import in the manifold areas of marginality: if the focus on the individual trajectory, on celebrity figures, is a felicity condition for most of the imports, the fruitful access of theory towards the periphery is facilitated by collective initiatives and group debates, perhaps even by the necessity of cohesion experienced by an emerging (literary) school. The indeterminacies of a theoretical system chosen to be imported, those leaving room for active adaptation, can thus be approached more rewardingly in a collective project, able to render visible the innovative results of the adaptation.

The circulation and recognition chances of a theoretical culture which has yet to become aware of its potential as the Romanian one is, cannot be easily assessed. They certainly depend on the critical reviewing – without any overemphasis or perpetual marginality complexes – of the local tradition, as well as on the relation to a broader area, be it regional – e.g. the case of postcommunist studies, discussed in the second section of this dossier –, European, or even global. They also have to do with the availability for an open access debate space, in a linguistic mediation adequate to contemporary literary research. This is also the purpose of the current issue of *Dacoromania litteraria*.

DIDIER COSTE

## **“POWER FAILURE IN PARIS”: DETHERORIZATION OF THE CENTRE**

0.1. If any one could doubt the ironical character of the mock front-page headline used as a beacon in the title of this paper, I trust this doubt will be short-lived. But a joke is of little worth if its intrinsic ambiguity is absorbed and lost in light-hearted laughter, or if it is dramatized to the point of reversing the essentially progressive dynamics of comedy. The point of parody can hardly be local, first of all because it is double, quoting another utterance at the same time as it recontextualizes it in order to at once restate it and turn it against itself. Its undermining of certitude or faith in one domain of belief would be sterile if it did not reverberate and contaminate adjacent and more remote areas of thought. Throughout this process, it will discover and test its own postulates, derive additional hypotheses from concrete historical situations, redesign the object of its critique, verify that it does not fall prey to common sense or conversely to the provocative mirages of counterfactuality, it will seek certainties against certitude, or faith. In brief, parody and irony should be understood as primary questioning and reorganizing acts of the scientific mind rather than purely destructive weapons or mechanically pulled revolutionary levers<sup>1</sup>.

The title of this paper, like parody and theory, tries to do more than two things at once: I mean to describe, at least summarily, the present humbling of the productions of an intellectual network that was widely supposed to be a site of power not long ago, but I will also relativize this effacement. Conversely, while questioning the actuality of any such power, we should evoke the possible causes and circumstances of its apparent loss. Finally, an ethical commitment requires to seek solutions with a view to restoring or establishing the relevance and efficiency of theory in the framework of new commons: commons that, by definition, must never be privatized or exclusively localized – even when localization results from a subversive act of appropriation and empowerment, as in the case of Frantz Fanon or other fathers and mothers of postcolonial theory.

Theory can be seen as a kind of currency, designed to purchase data

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<sup>1</sup> I fully agree with Linda Hutcheon on the point that “through a double process of installing and ironizing, parody signals how present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive from both continuity and difference” (Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, New York, Routledge, 1989, p. 93). This is also in keeping with Margaret A. Rose’s insistence on the temporal dimension of parody and her definition of it as “the comic refunctioning of preformed artistic or linguistic material” (Margaret A. Rose, *Parody: Ancient, Modern and Postmodern* [1979], Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 52).

certification and systemic correlation, hence a provisionally valid understanding of phenomena that would not make sense by themselves, separately: the very existence of theory is dependent on circulation and exchange. It has no absolute point of origin, it has moments and places of emergence and traffic nodes. Its only legitimate and logical location is where it operates in movement, at crossroads or at the bus stop.

0.2. This last statement is obviously theoretical, in the sense that it is both epistemological and meta-epistemological; it does not rely on the too-often wielded magic of supposedly performative acts of speech; it involves repeatedly close contacts with human praxis, whether psychological, social, political, economic, or all this at once; it involves an interaction with this praxis. When philosophy breaks free from its theological and metaphysical bonds and gives itself a constructed object rather than accepting a given object, it comes close to being theory. But, when theory is not of something *constructed* thanks to experience and against the resistance of things, it remains philosophy. I think it is my duty to present a summary list of the meanings (in terms of semantic comprehension and extension) in which I can or cannot use the term 'theory' in the framework of our questioning of 'localization': this amounts to (tentatively) *locating* theory as a preamble to *localizing* it (or not).

0.2.1. The noun [Theory], θεωρία in Greek, seems to have had two very different meanings, sometimes separated in distinct dictionary entries, as if it was a case of homonymy. On the one hand, it would refer to point of view, contemplation, intense observation or consideration; on the other, it is a procession of flesh-and-blood people. This double-entendre is fortunate, I have been building on it.

0.2.2. As used in modern European languages, theory is a *logical construct* devised to accommodate selected data that it also helps identifying and interpreting as related horizontally, vertically or obliquely between them; these data will also be related to other data not already present in the field of inquiry. Since it is a *process*, not a static set of laws or self-sufficient propositions, it will privilege oblique and lateral (not literal) thinking, abduction rather than deduction and induction. Theory cannot have the shape of a syllogism. A static theory is a dead theory.

0.2.3. Theory cannot be objectless, it cannot be of a *given* object, it cannot be of a *single* object. Theory is dynamic, evolutive and expansive. The concepts it produces and reworks do not amount to 'the essence of it' but to partly open sets of shared properties and functions. Thus, if the most basic object of 'literary theory' is called 'literariness' in English, a term that may not have an exact counterpart in another language or culture, at least some components, considered as essential, of the set of properties and functions covered by [literariness] must be

*translatable* into that other language or culture for us to be able to say something in English about the literature of the latter, and therefore about English literature itself.

0.2.4. Theory is *comparative*, in an enhanced sense, not just in the sense in which all cognition results from acts, experiences and experiments of comparison. I will use an easy analogy: polysemy is a fact of natural languages, because there cannot be a name for each thing, because a totally rigid syntax would not produce new thought, and finally because connotation, in any case, is context dependent; this polysemy, that I will call passive, runs against the felicity conditions of a ‘referential’ act of speech (in Jakobson’s sense), it must be not only reduced but eliminated in technical communication; but the rhetorical, aesthetic and speculative uses of natural languages (that we call literature at large) *activate* linguistic polysemy to *gain* from it. It is in this zone of uncertain balance between accuracy and indeterminacy that literary action operates and generates (or not) the pleasures of discovery, exertion, mastery and modesty. Theory consciously activates *comparison* and plays with it as the literary text activates polysemy and plays with it. It is this feature that places theory in the field of fictionality, contrary to the objectivist assimilation of ‘fiction’ to fictitious falsity (lack of existence in the “real” world) or non-serious statements.

0.2.5. In academic and some literary circles, ‘Theory’ has often been taken, in the last 20 years, as the short name of ‘French theory’, itself an ill-defined aggregate of unconventional and oppositional philosophies (whatever they opposed) that, under the ‘post-modern’ label, cut across the fields of the humanities, linguistics, psychology and the social sciences, with a pronounced fascination for literary and artistic thought processes. If we can accept that Barthes, Derrida, Cixous, Deleuze, Foucault, Lyotard, Baudrillard, the early Serres, and some lesser known others, shared transdisciplinarity and a taste for complexity, it would be extremely reductive to limit Theory to a narrow moment and especially to the ephemeral success of ‘deconstruction’ – not in France but mainly in the USA, where it was mixed or coexisted with other, very different approaches: Bakhtin, the Tartu School of Social Semiotics, the legacy of Formalism, the polysystem theory from Tel Aviv, etc. I will use ‘theory’ with an extension that can include normative and descriptive poetics, rhetoric and formal approaches to social discourses, as well as structural approaches to aesthetics. ‘Theory’ must not even be limited to its manifestation in an explicit metacritical discourse. It can be embedded or inscribed in novels, history and autobiography, it can take the form of poetry and drama. Like parody again, it is translational (in Serres’ sense) and re-creative, across genres and media.

0.2.6. Indeed, since ‘theory’ is comparative or *is* not, it relies on transmission – transfer, translation, transreading (and their limits) – for its very existence. For many theorists, until quite recently, transfer or even transcreation were fully enclosed within the limits of ‘interpretation’, in a broad and rather weak sense,

somewhere between hermeneutics and its glosses, and execution/re-enactment (as in ‘interpreting a piano sonata’). For these reasons, theory could be considered as a ‘gesture’ rather than an ‘action’, and the ‘gratuitous’, self-contained pleasure of it would be more important than any end result, such as additional sense produced<sup>2</sup>. But there would be no need for theory if we did not have to “remunerate the defect of languages” (of genres, cultures and histories too), in that they are plural – to re-use once more Mallarmé’s famous phrase. For this reason, I will begin my theoretical trip with a motivating critique of Antoine Compagnon’s anti-theoretical gesticulations, and a necessary examination of Jean-Michel Rabaté’s positions on the topic. We will be glad, after this, to travel safely *away* from the defensive Centre.

1.1. Seventeen years after *Le Démon de la théorie*<sup>3</sup>, Compagnon has become an easy target. But this book and some of those that followed remain widely influential, probably because the author provides apparently ‘reasonable’ support, presented as a ‘third way’, to many traditionalist and uncritical teachers who feared for their lives with the onslaught of ‘Theory’ and who also felt threatened by impinging ‘new’, militant and insurrectional disciplines such as Postcolonial Theory, Gender Studies, or even World Literature... Since Compagnon’s Restoration of uncritical ‘criticism’ and middle of the way literary pedagogy are fraught with contradictions and blind spots, I will be content with attacking the hastily rebuilt fortress on two particularly awkward points among many.

On p. 24 of *Le Démon de la théorie* we can read this firm (theoretical) statement: “For literature to exist, five elements are indispensable: an *author*, a *book*, a *reader*, a *language* and a *referent*.” If Compagnon means by “author” something else than a figure, constructed by readers, of the producer(s) of a text, then the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the Bible, all foundational ancient epics, much ancient poetry (including Sapho’s), most early medieval literature and generally all anonymous texts are excluded from the literary field. With the requirement of ‘a book’, oral literature is negated (it becomes literally literature only when it is transcribed!), folk tales, songs, lyrical and devotional poetry miraculously happen as literature when transcription empties them of most of their substance...

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<sup>2</sup> This is what Yves Citton explains in an interview: “What should be stressed is that literary studies enable us to turn the interpretative exercise into a pleasure and an end in itself, a self-justified activity rather than one justified by its end product. In this respect, interpreting a text is of the same kind as interpreting a dance: it consists as much in making a series of gestures as in ‘the production of meaning.’” (my translation). If interpreting single texts and sets of texts are different processes, according to Citton, the former being an experimental manipulation and the latter theory-building, both remain ‘gestures.’ [http://www.fabula.org/atelier.php?Theoriser\\_experimenter#\\_ftn2](http://www.fabula.org/atelier.php?Theoriser_experimenter#_ftn2) (last updated 19.05.2013, consulted 5.05.2015)

<sup>3</sup> Antoine Compagnon, *Le Démon de la théorie: Littérature et sens commun*, Paris, Seuil, 1998.

Moreover, isolated short texts, fragments, cannot count as literature unless they are bound together. Performed rather than printed drama is eliminated, since it does not have a *reader*. If we are atheists, we should also consider that any book about God or Gods, any book about angels and wandering souls does not belong to literature since it has no proper referent. The lesson from *The Hunting for the snark* has not been learnt. Finally we cannot but be struck by the repeated use of the singular in this list of requirements: ‘literature’ would thus be made of single works, single versions by single authors in a single language each, about a single topic in the world-out-there, and read by an individual (single) reader. The conditions of existence of literature imposed by Compagnon should nevertheless not be treated as a prescription to heal a literary pedagogy grown insanely erratic in the last third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, or even as a self-defensive plea in favour of home-cooked criticism, they *are* a highly normative theory, a toxic theory; they are determined by a historically and geoculturally located paradigm, a miniature chronotope reduced to caricature by the correlative amplification of its features: namely, the Western European literate bourgeois society of the later 19th and early 20th centuries (prefigured by Don Quixote), a *temps des équipages* when Gustave and Emma, Nana and Émile, followed by Albertine and Marcel, were secretly reading romantic novels and melodramas – with the name of the (famous) author printed on the cover. This is bad theory, not only because even the culture on which it relies was much more varied, complex and segregated than implicitly depicted here, but because such an exclusively, narrowly *localized* theory should not aspire to a comprehensive, let alone a universalist anthropological dimension. When, a few lines down, Compagnon distinguishes between two aspects of ‘the literary tradition’ (also in the singular): “its dynamic aspect (history) and its static aspect (value)”, everything becomes ideologically clear. The critic (not the theorist), while claiming a large share of it, pretends not to produce value, which is transhistorical, always already there, not even added, not surplus; the critic is the guardian priest of the temple, and the temple an authored Parthenon or Pantheon.

In the chapter on ‘value’ of *Le Démon*, Compagnon was still making a few strenuous efforts to criticize the later, patriotic Sainte-Beuve, opposed to Goethe’s universalism, but in his inaugural lesson at the Collège de France, *La Littérature, pour quoi faire?*<sup>4</sup> this mask falls, or his debts to Barthes and Riffaterre can no longer be acknowledged, if they are not forgotten, in front of Fumaroli or Michel Zink. Although Beckett and Kundera are mentioned, together with Celan, Primo Levi and Calvino, it is all as if the identity and the supremacy of French literature, of French and Western concepts, categories and theories, could not even be questioned. We have to reach the second last page of the booklet to find a brief disclaimer, or denegation: “But I have too much done until now as if there was

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<sup>4</sup> Antoine Compagnon, *La Littérature, pour quoi faire?*, Paris, Collège de France – Fayard, 2007.

only one literature and as if it was essentially narrative. No, and reading is not always a solitary action either”<sup>5</sup>. The perfunctory ‘no’, without any example to support it, falls short of an excuse. With Compagnon it is clear, at least, that, if theories ever travel, they are exported *from* a Centre located between place de la Sorbonne, rue des Écoles and quai de Conti, and return home unscathed, laden with American or colonial spoils.

1.2. Jean-Michel Rabaté, who mentions Compagnon only once, in disagreement<sup>6</sup>, cannot be accused of playing a similar game. His books *The Future of Theory* (2002) and especially *Crimes of the Future: Theory and its Global Reproduction* (2014) would deserve a detailed reading in the framework of our present inquiry. But I must refrain again from offering a complete analysis or even an overview of a reflection that is arranged in a systematically unsystematic fashion around the ‘Future’ – an elusive object par excellence, not because it is unpredictable, but because its location and therefore its duration escape its writing. Writing, like philosophising according to Althusser, only meets an end, re-classified as a goal, when it falls into itself<sup>7</sup>.

1.2.1. Chapter 1 of *Crimes*, “How Global Should Theory Be?” is where to find not only key declarations of intention, such as “following Derrida’s questions”<sup>8</sup>, but some incident, undeveloped remarks that will alert us to Rabaté’s hesitant attitude toward ‘localizing’ theory, confronted to the theorist’s “quasi-hysterical demand for truth”. Just before recalling the seminar on Plato he gave in the morning of 9/11, and just after a reverie on “the emerging of a new culture”, involving Nietzsche, Emerson and Habermas among others, we find this piece of non-committal insight: “[...] Diogenes would repeat: ‘I am a citizen of the world,’ a *cosmopolites*. However, cosmopolitanism will not suffice for theory to justify itself, to find a legitimation”<sup>9</sup>. I wish Rabaté had paused to explain what he meant, just then, by legitimation, law and legitimacy, and what political belonging other than to world citizenship, or what *other* factor is needed to justify theory (also to make it just, that is fair). Or was that a veiled, euphemistic critique of cosmopolitanism? Or yet a form of self-justification for an apprehension of ‘theory’ that relies almost exclusively on a ‘Western’ history of ideas? An overwhelming majority of references and theses discussed belong to the philosophical and literary corpus prevalent among postmodern or post-humanist French philosophers and psychoanalysts, from Plato to Heidegger through Kant, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, and from Dante to Beckett and Blanchot

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<sup>5</sup> Antoine Compagnon, *La Littérature, pour quoi faire?*, p. 75 (my translation).

<sup>6</sup> Jean-Michel Rabaté, *The Future of Theory*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2002, p. 145.

<sup>7</sup> See Jean-Michel Rabaté, *Crimes of the Future: Theory and its Global Reproduction*, New York and London, Bloomsbury, 2014, p. 240.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 37 (my translation).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

through Mallarmé, Proust, Rilke, Kafka, Joyce and Broch. German philosophy and modern or modernist European literature, limited to three languages (French, English and German) have the lion's share, and therefore delimit a familiar, *de facto* territory of theory beyond the borders of which the unknown and its dispassionate exploration might begin. Although Edward Said is not mentioned, there may be a certain fear of Orientalism and exoticism in Rabaté's discretion about 'non-Western' thought and art; but, if he is content with a few allusions to modern Japan and ancient China, and one cursive – and erroneous – appreciation of Tagore, we might as well detect a genuine lack of interest for anything non-Western-European. Without having to follow in the steps of the advocates of Third-world and visible minority militancy, or fall into Walter Mignolo's proud self-hatred, this author should have left doors ajar to peep into the role possibly played by non-Western thought and art in European and Eurodependent changes of paradigm. It is definitely not enough to add a 20% dose of non-European stuff to a reading list, without investigating how much the remaining 80% is indebted, positively, in reaction or even deliberate ignorance, to 'the rest of the world'. We can respect the caveats of 'untranslatability', but they should never lead us to keep silent about what we know for sure exists outside 'our' institutional realm, without knowing exactly what it is – a mode of existence that is exactly that of the conceptual real.

1.2.2. Theory is a risky, innovative business, it must dare talk of what it doesn't know and will never exhaust, of what lies elsewhere, in a trial and error process. Theory should speak in tongues, not as a gift but as a conscious experiment. This is where translation, transfer, transposition make their grand entrance with all the equivocal aura of analogy. But, while interlinguistic translation and transcreation are positively evoked at the beginning of *Crimes of the Future*, in relation to Mallarmé, Lacan, Badiou and the compensation of Barbara Cassin's conceptual untranslatables, they come to be largely forgotten in the rest of the book except on two occasions (about Joyce and Kafka). Curiously, when Rabaté discusses Wittgenstein's wavering statements about style and his disappointment with his own style, the *Tractatus* is quoted in an English translation – no questions asked –, without problematizing the status of a discussion of style and thought by a *bilingual* writer. The journeys of theory, however limited they are in Rabaté's implicit History of Ideas are not examined in the light of pragmatic situations but in that of an overarching pre-set philosophy of language, leaving untouched the policies of theoretical closure, transmission, domination and appropriation.

2.0. *Live* theory (theorization) needs to place together in the same space of thought large batches of information from varied sources that it will filter in the name of scientific field reduction or framing, in order to treat some as relevant data and discard others. It then correlates again these data in order to construct and

apply abstract grids of interpretation to them; it will also let the outcome of interpretation modify the grids and question the processes of thought that made the grids possible in the first place. Live theory, as such, wields potentially considerable amounts of power over how humans understand the world about them and themselves, over collective and individual decision-making and practice, through two different correlations: representations may dictate action, but, even more importantly, action needs representations to justify, legitimate itself. Interest is always bi-directional.

When theories are *live* (emergent, struggling to find their place and displace other theories, or actively resistant, or re-emerging), their bearers aspire and need to build them as a solid, productive body that will not perish for lack of nurturing and maintenance (data flow, researchers, archive, recognition). Successful theories thus become institutional, whether they obtain the means of developing their own institutions, or they colonize and substitute existing institutions. It is also in this phase of their existence that they pretend to abdicate in favour of ‘history’ and are often prone to declaring themselves dead<sup>10</sup>. The more institutionalized, the more static, the less exposed to challenge they become in a limited space, the less value theories retain, since they can no longer purchase intellection in the wider world; until the same theories are abandoned to decay and derision by the community that made their emergence and development possible. The community (in the shape of a church, a nation, a capital, a lobby, a party or a masonry) that had acquired the power of theory, that had become a Power Centre through the development of theory, is then *de*-theorized. This is what I have called “Power Failure in Paris” in the title of this paper. In which Paris does not exactly coincide with the French capital city, but, without being reduced to a mere handy metaphor, must be taken to point at the seat of a Republic of Theory similar to the Republic of Letters identified by Pascale Casanova as the central character, the protagonist of ‘modern’ literary history. Whether the entity called ‘Paris’ in these pages includes or not London, Vienna and, later, Cambridge Mass., Berlin or Frisco is not of the utmost importance at this stage.

2.1. Recent anti-imperialist thought, whose latest, radical and deviant avatar is self-labelled “de-colonial”, holds it true that the European Renaissance and the Enlightenment, coinciding with two decisive, capital(ist) steps of European expansion, was purposefully devised as a weapon to justify the exploitation or extermination of entire populations, and therefore that ‘civilization’ in a humanist sense (like ‘democracy’ today), was a thin mask designed to impose the law of European or ‘white’ executioners over the self-rule of other peoples conveniently

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<sup>10</sup> As Hayden White recently noted, we should “question whether ‘history’ can serve as a curb on ‘theory’ as if it (history) stood out there, given and observable, as ‘nature’ was once presumed to be. It is not as if we could evaluate theory by going to look at history” (posted by White on his Facebook “timeline” on April 16, 2015).

demeaned as 'barbarians', 'savages', or simply 'aliens'.

Unfortunately, this 'Occidental' vision, ready to be used in support of the most vicious dictatorships and terror, as long as they seem to be rooted in a local tradition, has it all wrong from a theoretical point of view, since it ignores at once the confrontational process of the emergence of theories and the internal contradictions within a Theoretical Power Space, without which Theory would not be alive, would not be Theory qua historically mutable thought process. I am suggesting that, without the forms of thought that were penetrating Western Europe at a time of increased direct and indirect trading with the three Asias (Middle East, South Asia and Far East), humanism could not disassociate itself from its opposite, the vindictive spirit of the crusades, and therefore it could not be used to support the Conquistadors from outside, or to indict them, as did Bartolomé de las Casas, trying to re-inject into Christianity the respect of mankind as such. Humanism, in a word, was first of all ex-centric, not only because it was exported, but primarily because it resulted from increased cultural distances that happened shortly before its emergence. A similar story could be told about the second major phase of globalization, coinciding with the Enlightenment. The point I want to make is that, although Theories do not emerge in an aseptic space, free from ideology (in the Freud-Marxian sense), far from it, they *are* not bagged ideologies, because they are mobile, they result from a mobility of ideas and they mobilize, hybridize and miscegenate ideas to the point of changing their shapes and functions, in terms of representation and pro-action.

But, when a Theory becomes too successful (in terms of its acceptance or even its 'unavoidable' character), either in its original space of emergence or in another space that has imported it (bought or stolen) and acclimatized it, making it patrimonial, 'saving' it from new challenges and the risks of renewed confrontations with the origin and its probably different horizons, it ceases to be a Theory and becomes Ideology, Religion, Dogma, a totalitarian phenomenon, or it just withers and fades away because it is now so commonplace that it does not need to be believed in and can be freely derided as 'just a theory' among others, mocked by 'reality' that follows its own course as usual. In both cases, *localization*, topicality (from *topos*, place), is key to this perversion and this decadence. The two possible stories are not always mutually exclusive in actual situations, as Marc Angenot shows it very lucidly in a section of his just published masterwork on *L'Histoire des idées*<sup>11</sup>. So far, I am not saying or trying to say anything strikingly original, I am just emphasizing what we should all know happens to Theories if and when they are 'localized' and stabilized, made immune, territorialized in a narrow sense. Theories can remain healthy as long as they are

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<sup>11</sup> Marc Angenot, *L'Histoire des idées: problématiques, objets, concepts, méthodes, enjeux, débats*, Liège, Presses Universitaires de Liège, 2014, pp. 271-277.

errant, exilic or diasporic. Alexis Nouss<sup>12</sup> and Djelal Kadir<sup>13</sup> converge on this key point.

2.2. It would be tedious to describe at length how Neo-Structuralism, on the one hand, and so-called French Theory, or more specifically Post-Modern Deconstruction, after developing as a result of the confrontation of older local Marxism and Existentialism with foreign linguistic formalism, theories of discourse, dissident anthropologies and historiographies, etc., met with different fates in 'Paris'. Neo-structuralism, reduced to its tabular mechanics and a quasi-scientific terminology, was taught at school, especially in the form of Gérard Genette's early narratology; French theory was ignored, despised or violently attacked by most of the educational establishment in Western Europe, while it flourished in the North American academia and even in the influential cultural press or in the arts. In both cases, we could see the lights coming out, one by one, in 'Paris'. No alternative energies, no new technologies of thought, among all those available in the World, have been adopted or even seriously tested as substitutes for the Linguistic Turn and Nietzschean anti-hegelianism. On the one hand the 'intellectual' media stage is held by older former pseudo-revolutionaries such as Philippe Sollers, and middle-aged populists such as Michel Onfray and Alain Finkielkraut, who ape in degraded forms the gestures of the organic intellectuals of yore; on the other hand, only a handful of actual theorists (professional philosophers and writers, initially), such as Michel Deguy, Jean-Luc Nancy or Jacques Rancière, prolong an active but scarcely noticed afterlife in academic retirement. Echoes of Italy in the rest of Europe (Giorgio Agamben, Carlo Ginzburg, Roberto Calasso) are somewhat marred by the dubious political image of the country and the aberrant allegiance of some public intellectuals to terrorism (lately, Gianni Vattimo). Feminist thinking has become residual or invisible. Large sections of the Humanities look up in amazement at the cognitive sciences. This is exactly what I call *de-theorization* of the Centre. It does not imply that the Centre is decentred as a result (a centre can be empty) or that it has lost all power, but it tends to be ruled and to rule its peripheries by other means than critical and comparative thinking, it reverts to *authority*. And 'market' is the sacred name of this authority.

More than one political, cultural and economic factor contributed to de-theorize "Paris" from the 80s onwards. Unable to do justice to their combination in a few lines, I will merely mention one factor that can be read both as a symptom

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<sup>12</sup> See, among other works: Alexis Nouss, *La Condition de l'exilé*, Paris, Fondation de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> See Djelal Kadir, *Memos from the Besieged City: Lifelines for Cultural Sustainability*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2011, and my review article around the same book: "Une chronique du siège de la Littérature Comparée", *Acta Fabula*, 16, 2015, 5, May.  
<http://www.fabula.org/revue/document9294.php>

and a participating cause in the process: I mean post-imperial linguistic nationalism, without an intelligent cultural policy to support it; one could call it the ‘Toubon syndrome’. While the share of translated literature (mainly contemporary international best sellers, but also works of better quality, not produced for the current market) has been ever growing in the Francophone space and the share of works translated from English (half of them American) reaches over 60 per cent of these translations, the number of translated works in the Humanities remains very small. In the field of Literary and Cultural Theory, this deficit has always been striking. Few major works are translated from any language, even English, into French, while they are widely translated into Spanish or Portuguese; they are often translated with immense delays, up to twenty or thirty years (Propp, Jolles, Käte Hamburger, Ashcroft et al.). Consequently the few works that get translated often receive disproportionate attention, out of context. Not one major non-French treatise or dictionary of narratology (whether in English, German or Portuguese) has made its way to France. There are two large and well-documented histories of (Western) Literary Theory in Spanish (by Carmen Bobes and Manuel Asensi), and uncountable anthologies and handbooks in English. Nothing is translated and nothing equivalent is produced in French. An even sadder case, perhaps, is that of *Metahistory*, the book by Hayden White, but also the whole historiological school of meta-historiography that combined discourse analysis with narrative theory and the rhetoric of genres. These ideas were introduced in France in the 1980s thanks to Ricœur’s interpretation in *Temps et récit*, but there has been no translation at all of White’s works, and the latest fashion of redrawing a firm boundary, if not rebuilding a wall between the confused and confusing aggregate [facts/ “reference”/ history/ truth] and a supposedly antonymous ‘fiction’, takes sides with American conservative neopositivists and analytic philosophers to attack White without a fine perception of his writings or any precise knowledge of the intellectual context, thus depriving the Francophone public of their free judgement. I would call this crime of the present ‘misuse of non-translation’.

One might think that this kind of protectionism resists a hegemony, but it is not so. In fact, it is useless and even counterproductive both in the Francophone space and in the wider world: in the former, giving a severe beating to an unknown quantity appears either pointless or as an easy trick to promote one’s own vision; in the latter, it will have no audience, even if an author tries to buy publication and applause. If ‘Paris’ was ready to engage seriously again with Theory, it should mobilize non-French sources by bringing them to its own linguistic and cultural field, and Francophone thought by making it able to dialogue and struggle with English and other alien speakers on their respective grounds. It is, alas, significant that, while Postcolonial Studies, Cultural Studies, Translation Studies were early embraced, like Literary Theory itself, in the Spanish and Portuguese speaking worlds, allowing these intellectuals to have a not negligible say on many questions

neglected by the French intelligentsia, these same key trends, many of which do not originate in North America or in the 'First World', appear very belatedly, in a distorted and summarized manner on the Francophone scene, impoverishing it further.

2.3. While 'French Theory' was, involuntarily but widely exported – after existentialism and neo-structuralism, in different circumstances –, making inroads, often through the USA, into the rest of the English-speaking world, notably in India and Australia, and also, to a slightly lesser extent in the Hispanic world, there was hardly any *return* of the creative or critical appropriations of those theoretical streams to the French-speaking world, whose absence in the lively ongoing debate at world scale has become remarkable. I do not regret it much for metropolitan France, it has forgotten the very meaning of theory that made much of its intellectual glory, usurped or not. But I am sorry for France's satellite countries, the former colonies and overseas territories, especially, and more generally for a blocked node in the World Theory Network. When theories travel today, they make only a brief pious stop over at the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme or at ENS, Ulm. Francophone thinkers/ researchers, not encouraged to enter these last international circles, have a better chance of being involved in creative, mutual learning encounters, in Delhi, Baton Rouge, Toronto, Buenos Aires, Lisbon, Brazil or Romania than in Paris, Oxford, New York or Heidelberg. 'Paris' and other Centres, or components of The Centre, have not adapted to the lesser but useful role given them by the 'writing back' of Empire. Western Europe and even North America have effectively become intellectual peripheries of their former Empires, but, reluctant as Western Europe is to feed from them, it hampers theory globally.

3. Rather than weeping over the de-theorization of the Centre or draw radically pessimistic conclusions about the future of theory and theories of the future, *avenir* or *à-venir*, I would now like to *act* more theoretically in the last words of this introductory paper. This theory can and should only be outlined in a programmatic but not utopian manner, hence with a good measure of openness and a portion of enigmaticity. Namely, 1) expressing what and how I am expecting to *learn* from a receptive contact with Romanian researchers who had to struggle for decades to gain access to thinking outside the fold, living distance as an iron curtain rather than a vista on themselves, 2) interpreting the former theoretical glory of 'Paris' and its present decay in terms of a positive lesson for the production of theory, 3) seeking some pattern, both localized and mobile, that could help mummified theory (bad, disfigured, recessive theory) out of its age-old crypts, 4) naming the process of liberation that we are trying to identify.

### 3.1. STEPS

– From my earliest contacts with the organizers till the eve of the *Localizing Theory* conference, with a number of abstracts and all the titles of accepted papers in hand, the key-words around which something useful could be elaborated in my mind evolved and grew in number. The local-travel-global triad, first understood in terms of disciplinary *location* or allocation, was considerably altered to become much more concrete, in terms of a dynamic cartography of thought power, while taking into account the ever-threatened, decreasing share of this power in the global balance of power. My feeling is that the very question of a locus of theory, instead of a time for theory, for example, is emblematic of the paradoxical nature of the remaining and the new power of theory today: if theory can be powerful now it will be because it stems from minority situations, and its *modus operandi* is rather clandestine. Then, as the prevalence of Romanian concerns and the keyword “postcommunism” became salient, I realized the ambiguity of the word ‘localizing’ and I began wondering if any theory can or must be rooted and/or adopted and acclimatized, and what it gains and loses with this temptation, this effort against the double resistance of theory to localization and of the local to being theorized.

– Now, considering that the great theoretical moments of the Centre in pre-modern and modern times took place in the Renaissance, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and that these moments were highly publicized and influential, does it imply that political and economic domination are necessary conditions to the emergence of successful theories? And that the loss of supremacy entails a theoretical loss? Would it not be wiser to consider that, in many respects, Humanism, Secularism, Scientific Epistemology, Democracy, Dialogism were theoretical inventions that arose from local minority situations and minority cultures and languages, at world scale? Is it not, therefore, the illusion or the realization of being ‘majority’, in any sense, that blocks a two-way and criss-crossing mobility, essential to the emergence and persistence of Theory? Exceptions, negligible data, aberrant facts are the sites to be interrogated. There is no theory without a strategy of errors and a diasporic nostalgia of knowledge. Theory lies on the tip of the tongue, it is what needs to be (re)written because it is about to be forgotten. It is a matter of “what was I going to say”. Theory is the kind of thinking that takes place in the form of emergence because it faces emergency, it is not insured against natural disasters or its own shortcomings, it takes place now rather than somewhere, since it will soon be too late, or maybe it is too late already. Theory can show the serenity of the last recourse that is the other face of what Rabaté calls its hysterical desire for truth.

– Theory is experimental. Both voluntary and involuntary displacements – not mutually exclusive –, what Huiwen Zhang, Alexis Nouss and Jean-Pierre Dubost would respectively call, under differing perspectives, “transreading”, “exilience” and “disorientation”, or what I used to see as oppositional and contrastive re-writing, *all* these attitudes or dispositions of the pro-theoretical subject, and many

more, with their particular inflections, are born of physical and/or linguistic displacements. I believe Romanian intellectuals, like Catalans, Slovenians, Irishmen or, at an altogether different scale, Indians, have an inbuilt advantage that they should not lose (and it is obvious that they are not ready to do it): they are *obliged* to think and write in more than one language, they are conscious, and visibly glad and proud to practice constant exo-translation as well as in-translation. Linguistic and cultural dualism and pluralism, whether they are forced upon the dominated or isolated subject or a means of liberation from an asphyxiating, collective territorial mastery, have always been and remain more than ever essential factors of theory as *inventio* of meaning. Supposing that we had only one “native” language and culture (which is less and less true, worldwide), we *could not* theorize, that is derive potential or virtual hyper-meanings from the confrontation of otherness; the assigned ‘native’ language must be spoilt of its evidence, its illusionistic transparency, it must become, in its turn, acquired, experimental, de-mastered, inexhaustible and re-mastered from outside.

### 3.2. TRACKS

Finally, I want to propose two modest tracks for further investigation, presented separately, but not unrelated between them. The order of presentation is arbitrary. There is no precedence, logical or chronological, of one over the other. Theory is an experimental *montage* before it can read a hierarchical or a causal sequence into its own disposition.

– Theory, whenever it happens, is modern. Doing away with the idea of progress (which is not at all necessarily linked with grand, linear, teleological narratives), as ‘post-modernism’ would have it, is incompatible with theoretical thinking. Theory is a march, it must go, with or without a pre-defined goal. Whether it eventually finds that it has landed somewhere else or returned wiser to its point of departure, or yet it sinks or founders, whether its hero is Columbus, Ulysses or Icarus, theory, as an aesthetic and alethic act, is the only form of transcendence that is not servile to the Divine unreal. For this reason, proper Theory should be understood as avant-garde, with all the dangers and contradictions of the avant-gardes, so thoroughly analysed by Renato Poggioli, Mary-Ann Caws and many others.

– Theory, contrary to fundamental postulates, on the one hand, and self-contained formulas or verified scientific laws, like equations or physical laws, on the other hand, arises, develops, changes and dies within the sphere of *fictionality*, where it occupies an unstable space between imaginary and real universes of reference, where it is threatened by the undifferentiated pole of myth and by its regressive potential adscription to the universe where the sacred vs. profane pair of opposites is the order of the day. By this statement I do not mean that Theory is nothing but ‘Fiction’, in the simplistic but resistant sense of non-referential, unverifiable utterances, I do not even suggest that it *is* Fiction in the sense of the

literary genre of narrative discourse so labelled in publishers’ catalogues. I mean that, like parody, it operates on a principle of uncertainty rather than of ascertaining, of infinite semiosis rather than eventual monosemic reduction. And, to end, I propose that theory, as abs-traction, ex-traction and dis-traction, is not to be found exclusively in the guise of argumentative discourse, but also, at its most dynamic, in the shape of the speculative literary genres of narrative fiction, poetry and drama. Among many exciting examples that could be studied in an (impure) theory seminar, I would thus propose four, tenuously but variously connected:

- the novel *Mad Girl’s Love Song* (2013) by the exceptionally gifted Indian theorist and poet Rukmini Bhaya Nair,
- the duet formed by Mircea Eliade’s *Bengali Night [Maitreyi]* (1933) and Maitraye Devi’s autobiographical response to it some forty years later, *It Does Not Die [Na hanayate]* (1974),
- Jacques Roubaud’s second grand elegy, *La Pluralité des mondes* de Lewis, to be translated into various languages and in transmedial forms,
- *Le Ton Beau de Marot* by Douglas Hofstadter (1997), being an elaborate, digressive but never circular variation on translation, mourning and mosaicic thought process and writing.

Not to the exclusion of more traditional surveys, but as an introduction to them, this is a tempting syllabus for a graduate course (in Romania, in India, in the USA or a number of other locations – except ‘Paris’, I guess), a Theory seminar in which books known as belonging ‘naturally to the genre of Theory would only pop up incidentally, as hypertext, when their style and propositions can be enlightened, clarified by literature. Theory is comedy, not tragedy, it enjoys being turned upside down and inside out. Its temporal mode is that of being reborn in its old age, unhurriedly insofar as it has left Apocalypse behind.

Hofstadter’s (not Murphy’s) law runs as follows:

“It always takes longer than you expect, even when you take into account Hofstadter’s Law”.

Bout it is never too late to start discussing the wiseness of the Gau of the Indies with William (Blake)<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> See Rukmini Bhaya Nair’s *Mad Girl’s Love Song*, Noida, Harper Collins, 2013, pp. 195-196.

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"POWER FAILURE IN PARIS": DETHEORIZATION OF THE CENTRE  
(Abstract)

Theory, in the broad field of the Humanities, Literature and the Arts, should be understood as both an intensive examination and a travelling, comparative point of view. It is akin to parody, due to its displaced, ironical and re-creative character, that it shares with interlinguistic and transmedial translation. It cannot and should not be firmly rooted in a particular place or historical moment without dying in the form of doctrine or dogma. But the exercise of theoretical power also depends on the relative stability of its institutions. From the 1980s onwards, the Centre called 'Paris' lost this power because it ignored both the de-centred appropriations it unwillingly made possible and the exotic origins of its own emergence. This de-theorization is nevertheless dangerous, because the place it leaves vacant is managed by the brainless and insensitive law of 'the market'. Theory is not ideology, it is the responsible self-consciousness of the interests involved in comparing and linking. Formerly marginalized cultures, such as those of Eastern Europe, India, China or Latin America have the need and appetite for theory that should allow them to build an alternative network of theoretical shuttles able to re-think the functions of the local in a globalized world.

*Keywords:* Theory, Parody, Translation, Migration, Empire, Republic of Letters.

PIERDEREA PUTERII LA PARIS: DETEORETIZAREA CENTRULUI  
(Rezumat)

În domeniul larg al științelor umaniste, al Literaturii și Artei, teoria ar trebui înțeleasă deopotrivă ca examinare intensivă și ca punct de vedere comparativ, migrator. Ea este înrudită cu parodia, prin caracterul său distopic, ironic și re-creativ, împărtășit și de traducerea interlingvistică și transmediatică. Teoria nu poate și nu trebuie să fie ferm înrădăcinată într-un anumit loc sau moment istoric, riscând astfel să dispară în formele ei doctrinare sau dogmatice.. Dar exercițiul puterii teoretice depinde și de stabilitatea relativă a instituțiilor sale. Din anii 1980 încoace, Centrul numit „Paris” a pierdut această putere, pentru că a ignorat atât posibilitatea aplicării decentralizate pe care a înlesnit-o involuntar, cât și originile exotice ale propriei sale apariții. Această de-teoretizare este totuși periculoasă, având în vedere că locul lăsat vacant rămâne în seama nechibzuitei și insensibilei legi a „pieței”. Teoria nu este ideologie, ci conștiință de sine, responsabilă de interesele implicate în actul comparației și al relaționării. Culturi marginalizate în trecut, precum cele din Europa de Est, India, China sau America Latină, demonstrează o vizibilă apetență pentru teorie, ce ar trebui să le permită elaborarea unei rețele alternative de modele teoretice capabile a regândi funcțiile localului într-o lume globalizată.

*Cuvinte-cheie:* teorie, parodie, traducere, migrație, imperiu, Republica Literelor.

NICHOLAS O. PAGAN

## THING THEORY AND THE APPEAL OF LITERATURE

Those who have tried to explain the evolutionary origins of human engagement with the storytelling that is found in literature often foreground the appeal of the traditional devices – character and plot. In *On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition, and Fiction*, for instance, Brian Boyd presents convincing evidence to support the view that authors are frequently engaged in the task of “shaping audiences’ attention by appealing to their evolved cognitive predisposition to foreground and respond to – automatically, amid all the possible patterns in a story – the patterns of character and plot”<sup>1</sup>. Using Homer’s the *Odyssey* as his prime example, Boyd insists that these key patterns explain to a large extent how throughout human history authors of literary narratives have been able to trigger and retain readers’ interest and give them enduring pleasure. Here I highlight another pattern as I propose that readers are attracted to literary narratives not just because these narratives are character- or plot-driven but also because they are thing-driven. Thus, I argue that one reason why literary narratives appeal to so many people can be explained through “thing theory”<sup>2</sup>.

The term “thing theory” was coined in 2001 by the American Bill Brown who was trying to speak out in favor of things as a possible alternative to the endless abstraction associated with “theory”. Brown’s bold initiative may be regarded as prefiguring such events as the British Museum’s recent exhibition “A History of the World in 100 Objects” and the current tendency among literary biographers like Paula Byrne to write books around objects<sup>3</sup>. These events, however, cast a glance far further back than Brown’s work to, for example, the writings of Martin Heidegger who may be regarded as the grandfather of “thing theory”. Brown refers to Heidegger, but here I discuss Heidegger’s work on “things” in more detail, and I begin by detecting a lineage in the theory of the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky.

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<sup>1</sup> Brian Boyd, *On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition, and Fiction*, Harvard, Harvard University Press, 2009, p. 216.

<sup>2</sup> Thing theory is closely allied to “Object-Oriented Ontology” (OOO) – a term coined by Bruno Latour. See, for example, Graham Harman, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects*, Chicago, Open Court, 2002, Rebecca-Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2010 and Levi R. Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects*, MPublishing – University of Michigan Library, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> For Brown’s essay see the special issue of *Critical Inquiry*, 28, 2001, Autumn, pp. 1-16.

In “Art as Technique” (1917) after noting that so many aspects of our lives are habitual and unconscious, Shklovsky champions art as that which can save us from this somnambulism. Thus in a memorable passage he proclaims that “...art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony* [...] The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar’ [...] to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged”<sup>4</sup>.

Shklovsky quickly goes on to give examples from Tolstoy’s work where the author “describes an object as if he were seeing it for the first time, an *event* as if it were happening for the first time” (Emphasis added)<sup>5</sup>. Thus, it would be misleading to take away from Shklovsky’s essay the idea that human beings have been given art to help them to see objects as they have never seen them before. Shklovsky is saying that, but he is also insisting that art – especially as after the introduction by “art” he means literary narratives – also presents events as never seen before – for example in Tolstoy, the flogging of a horse from a horse’s perspective<sup>6</sup>.

Whether we think of “things” in terms of objects or events, Shklovsky’s concept of *ostranenie* – in English “making strange”, estrangement or “defamiliarization” prefigures Heidegger’s work on “things” as the German philosopher also locates “strangeness” in our encounter with the work of art<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, the contention in Shklovsky’s memorable terminology that literature makes the stone stoney prefigures Heidegger’s view that literature can help protect us from the loss of “thingness” (*Dingheit*). Thus, Heidegger implicitly builds on Shklovsky’s metaphor when he (Heidegger) maintains that works of art, especially literary texts, are the best means that we have at our disposal for potentially getting “the thingness of the thing” to come out of hiding and reveal itself<sup>8</sup>.

Heidegger puts forward at least three tenets that may be regarded as lying close to the heart of what would later be called “thing theory”:

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<sup>4</sup> Viktor Shklovsky, “Art as Technique”, *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*. Edited by Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reiss, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1965, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Although not discussing Shklovsky’s work Brown notes Heidegger’s observation that like the Roman word *res* the English word “thing” does not merely denote an object but also “a case, an affair, an event” (Martin Heidegger, “The Thing” in *Poetry Language Thought*. Translated by Albert Hofstadter, New York, Harper & Row, 1971, p. 175).

<sup>7</sup> Heidegger may be considered as taking a step beyond Shklovsky when he claims that this “strangeness” does not merely prolong our encounter with the work of art but can also overwhelm us. See David Nowell Smith, *Sounding/ Silence: Martin Heidegger at the Limit of Poetics*, New York, Fordham, 2013, p. 33.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Inwood claims that for Heidegger, all art involves “invention” or “projection” (*Dichtung*) and among the arts, poetry (*Poesie*, another meaning of *Dichtung*) is preeminent. (Michael Inwood, *Heidegger*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 110-111).

1. *There is a distinction between a “thing” and an “object.”*

In *What is a Thing?* Heidegger admits that it is extremely hard to define what a thing is, but he also insists that the word “thing” is richer and more meaningful than the word “object”. The distinction remains crucially important today when, for example, Bill Brown states that “...We look through objects [...] but we only catch a glimpse of things”<sup>9</sup>. I suggest that objects are closer to things than events are, so whatever the characters in a literary narrative may be doing, the objects in that narrative will always to some extent speak for themselves.

2. *Grasping an object’s “thingness” is beyond the province of science.*

When Heidegger in *What is a Thing?* writes that “the sciences... with their thrust toward facts, apparently come closest to things”<sup>10</sup>, his use of the word “apparently” may imply that though this is a commonly held view, it should not be taken for granted. Indeed, Heidegger believes that although science may tell us plenty about the physical properties of things, it can tell us nothing at all about “the thing as thing”<sup>11</sup>. According to Heidegger, then, if you work like a scientist and try to situate things in relation to “universal, basic theoretical postulates [...] axioms, premises, principles...” you will never be able to capture the essence of things<sup>12</sup>.

This view of the way in which scientists study an object is analogous to the way in which theorists approach a literary text when they insist on studying it through their pet theory. The American neo-pragmatist Richard Rorty aptly labels the reading of literature the goal of which is simply to apply a theory “methodical reading”<sup>13</sup>. He criticizes the reader/ theorist who knows in advance what he or she is looking for; and he implies that that which is most important in a literary text is that which cannot be predicted and that this only has a chance to reveal itself when the text is approached through “unmethodical reading.” Similarly Rorty writes,

You certainly can’t avoid approaching it [a literary text] without a certain set of expectations. But a lot of the time, what you are hoping for, if only subconsciously, is to have those expectations upset. You would like to be swept off your feet. [...] I would

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<sup>9</sup> Bill Brown, “Thing Theory”, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Martin Heidegger, *What is a Thing?*. Translated by W.B. Barton, Jr. and Vera Deutsch, Washington, D.C., Henry Regnery, 1967, p. 15.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>12</sup> See E. T. Gendlin, “An Analysis of *What is a Thing?*” in Martin Heidegger, *What is a Thing?*, p. 256.

<sup>13</sup> Qtd. in Keith Tester, *The Inhuman Condition*, London, Routledge, 1995, p. 22.

prefer to say that although any reader comes to a text out of a background, good readers are those who try to let the text dominate the background rather than vice versa<sup>14</sup>.

There is a thread running through Shklovsky on readers being made to feel uncomfortable and Heidegger on their being overwhelmed to Rorty's having their expectations upset. All give priority not so much to what you bring to the literary text, but rather to what the text does to you. This can take us to a third feature of thing theory.

*3. Things can only take on the nature of "thingness" as a result of human interaction with them.*

Referring to the example of a teacher holding up some chalk while lecturing, Heidegger claims that even if we think of a piece of chalk as "objective", we have to bear in mind that the original word "*objectum*" means "something thrown against you"<sup>15</sup>. Thus Heidegger gestures toward a "realm of how things meet us"<sup>16</sup>. While not denying that we act on things, he invites us to imagine situations where things act on us. If this is to happen during our encounter with a literary text, we have to resist the lure of interpretation.

Hans-Georg Gadamer, still one of the best readers of Heidegger, explains:

The work of art is also a thing, and only by way of its Being as a thing does it have the capacity to refer to something else, for instance, to function symbolically [...] But this is to describe the mode of Being of the work of art from the point of view of an ontological model that assumes the systematic *priority of scientific cognition*<sup>17</sup>.

This takes us back to the problem in (2) above. Through scientific, analytical, calculative thinking a reader is not going to be granted access to "thingness". In *The Origin of the Work of Art* Heidegger approves of resistance to the inclination to interpret because "when we refuse to interpret, we allow the thing to rest in its own self [...] in its thing-being". He concedes, however, that this may be "the most difficult of tasks"<sup>18</sup>. Indeed this is paradoxical. How can we pursue thingness in literary texts while resisting the urge to interpret?

In *The Origin of the Work of Art* Heidegger himself fails to resist the inclination to interpret when he goes on to discuss Van Gogh's painting of peasant shoes. "There is nothing surrounding this pair of peasant shoes in or to which they

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<sup>14</sup> See Rorty and E. P. Ragg, "Worlds or Words Apart?: The Consequences of Pragmatism for Literary Studies. An Interview with Richard Rorty", *Philosophy and Literature*, 26, 2002, 2, pp. 362-396.

<sup>15</sup> Martin Heidegger, *What is a Thing?*, p. 26.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 31.

<sup>17</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Heidegger's Ways*. Translated by John W. Stanley, Albany, SUNY Press, 1994, p. 102.

<sup>18</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Poetry Language Thought*, p. 31.

might belong”, he says, “– only an undefined space...” The shoes in the painting are “A pair of peasant shoes and nothing more”<sup>19</sup>. “And yet –” he says, “From the dark opening of the inside of the shoes the toilsome thread of the worker stands forth”<sup>20</sup>. Thus, whether Heidegger wants them to or not, the shoes in Van Gogh’s painting open up “a world”<sup>21</sup>.

Let us take (1) above and the idea that what Heidegger calls “thingness” is more likely to emerge if objects are left to speak for themselves. It is possible to examine works of literature to register the varying degrees to which they do this. I will do so by considering three texts (chosen quite arbitrarily): Gustave Flaubert’s *Sentimental Education* (published in French in 1869), Alain Robbe-Grillet’s *Jealousy* (published in French in 1957), and José Saramago’s short story “The Thing” (published in Portuguese in 1978 in the collection *Objecto Quase*).

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In *Sentimental Education* Flaubert uses free indirect discourse but invariably focalizes the narrative through the protagonist, Frédéric Moreau. One way in which the narrator expresses Frédéric’s feelings toward two of the main women in his life – Madame Arnoux and Madame Dambreuse – is by situating them in relation to objects.

Frédéric thinks of Madame Dambreuse quite explicitly as an object. “...he desired her as an exotic, refractory *object*, because she was noble, because she was rich...”<sup>22</sup> (emphasis added). After her husband passes away, Madame Dambreuse resorts to the familiar strategy of employing objects in an attempt to lodge herself in her lover’s affections. “She sent him flowers; she made him a tapestry chair; she gave him a cigar-case, an inkstand, countless little objects of everyday utility, so that he could not perform a single action without evoking her memory”<sup>23</sup>. These memories, however, are fleeting, and Madame Dambreuse’s gift-giving quickly taken for granted.

For Frédéric, Madame Arnoux is an object of a very different kind. Although by no means immune to her physical charms, Frédéric frequently regards her with “religious awe”<sup>24</sup>, finding even in her name “clouds of incense and trails of roses”<sup>25</sup>. The subtle interplay between objects and beloved reaches its zenith in the auction scene. The debts in the Arnoux household have become so extensive that their belongings have to be auctioned off. At the auction attended by Frédéric and

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 33.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 45.

<sup>22</sup> Gustave Flaubert, *Sentimental Education*. Translated by Anthony Goldsmith, London, Penguin, 1970, pp. 360-361.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 368.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 202.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 271.

Madame Dambreuse, Frédéric finds that the objects that attract his attention all gesture toward the woman (Madame Arnoux) for whom he has genuine affection. Thus he finds Madame Arnoux's dresses, hats, furs, shoes and so on "vaguely recalling the shape of her limbs", and he feels that he is "watching crows tearing her corpse to pieces"<sup>26</sup>. Each item of bedroom furniture evokes a memory – for example, "the big blue carpet with its pattern of camellias which her dainty feet used to touch lightly as she came towards him..." Frédéric feels "as if a part of his heart was disappearing with each article"<sup>27</sup>. Surely, the most significant object is yet to appear.

This is a "little silver casket" which is linked to Frédéric's "dearest memories". As Frédéric tries to discourage Madame Dambreuse from buying it by asking what it could be used for, she proclaims ironically, "Perhaps for keeping love letters?"<sup>28</sup>. Frédéric had of course earlier admitted to Madame Dambreuse the powerful emotions that Madame Arnoux had aroused in him<sup>29</sup>. After Madame Dambreuse buys the casket, and it is handed over to her, "Frédéric felt his heart turn cold"<sup>30</sup>. Minutes later, he breaks off his engagement with her. Thus, the casket plays a key role in enabling nobility of spirit to manifest itself as shown by Frédéric's decision to not marry this exceedingly wealthy woman, and perhaps it allows a few rays of light to appear in the work of a writer notorious for his pessimism.

The above might misleadingly suggest a link between the casket and a pure love (between Frédéric and Madame Arnoux). Long before the auction scene, however, the casket had been associated with adultery. One evening Madame Arnoux had confronted her husband after finding a bill in the casket strongly suggesting that he had bought a cashmere shawl for one of his mistresses<sup>31</sup>. The casket is thus tarnished by and can never completely disassociate itself from these old associations. Indeed the relationship between Frédéric and Madame Arnoux becomes to some extent mired in its own impurity as the two of them became involved in forms of lying as they struggled to conceal their love from the world. They felt guilty: "...the sound of footsteps or the creaking of a panel caused them as much terror as if they had done wrong" (*Ibidem*, p. 272). Thus, the associations of the casket involve a complex mixture of impurity and purity.

Writing in the wake of Romanticism (there are many allusions in *Sentimental Education* to Romantic heroes or anti-heroes), Flaubert has the novel's central object convey mixed feelings although eventually perhaps the purer feelings trump

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 406.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 407.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 408.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 361.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 408.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 171-172.

the impure ones as at the end of the narrative the love that Frédéric and Madame Arnoux feel for each other remains unconsummated. I would suggest that the more the feelings evoked by an object become palpable, the less chance there is for “the thingness of the thing” to shine forth. The links at various stages in the novel between the casket and purity or impurity seem deliberate enough to suggest that Flaubert is far from the kind of writer who is prepared to allow objects or things to speak for themselves. We may surely be more likely to gain access to “thingness” if we turn to the work of a writer whose style is often considered “objective”.

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The labelling of Alain Robbe-Grillet’s writing as “objective” was fostered by Roland Barthes who in his essay “Objective Literature: Alain Robbe-Grillet” claimed that Robbe-Grillet’s writing “...has no resonance, no depth” and that it is constantly “keeping to the surface of things”<sup>32</sup> (Barthes, “Objective Literature”, p. 12). Barthes seemed to think that Robbe-Grillet was merely exploiting objects, especially their surfaces, for a while and then tossing them aside. Barthes goes on,

A slice of tomato in an automat sandwich, described according to this method, constitutes an object without heredity, without associations, and without references, an object rigorously confined to the order of its components, and refusing with all the stubbornness of its thereness to involve the reader in an elsewhere, whether functional or substantial<sup>33</sup>.

In a similar vein, Bernard-Henry Lévy writes: “Ah, to free oneself of the inner life! That was Sartre’s great desire. To free oneself of that French malady that is the cult of the inner life, that was Robbe-Grillet’s. It was Robbe-Grillet in the end who realized Sartre’s project”<sup>34</sup>.

I do not agree with Barthes or Lévy. Despite the widespread insistence that Robbe-Grillet’s writing is thoroughly immersed in objectivity, in an interview published in *The Paris Review* in 1986 Robbe-Grillet claimed: “I have been protesting against the idea of ‘objectivity’ for thirty years”. Even the title of the novel *La Jalousie* suggests that Robbe-Grillet is interested in describing objects as well as conveying feelings because it neatly combines a physical object (the French word “*jalousie*” may be translated as “blind” as in window shade – either with horizontal slats [Venetian] or vertical slats) with an emotion (jealousy). Throughout the novel, the reader may or may not sense that every description (particularly those involving two figures – a woman “A” and a man, a neighbor, Franck) is laced with the obsessive feeling of jealousy experienced by an unseen,

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<sup>32</sup> Roland Barthes, “Objective Literature: Alain Robbe-Grillet”, in *Two Novels by Robbe-Grillet: Jealousy and The Labyrinth*. Translated by Richard Howard, New York, Grove, 1965, p. 12.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 14.

<sup>34</sup> Qtd. in Rachel Donadio, “He Was Nouveau When It Was New”, *The New York Times*, 2008, Feb. 24.

unnamed observer/ narrator peering in a bizarre fashion sometimes inside, sometimes outside through the slats.

Whereas the narrator of *Sentimental Education* is seemingly completely in tune with the feelings of Frédéric, the protagonist, *Jealousy*'s narrator, seems only able to guess what the feelings of his protagonists may be. He leaves it to readers of the novel to read meaning, for instance, into A and Franck's frequent glances at each other, their whispers and their smiles. In *Jealousy* there are two objects which are mentioned over and over – a mark on the wall and the remains of a centipede on the floor. After Franck kills the centipede by swatting it with a napkin and squashing it on the tiled floor with his shoe, the mark left on the wall consists of “a tiny arc twisted into a question mark”<sup>35</sup>. Later this mark is described as “curved into a question mark that becomes increasingly vague toward the tip, and soon disappears completely”<sup>36</sup>. Not a perfect question mark, the mark nevertheless is quite literally a question mark, crying out to be interpreted.

As for the creature on the floor, the narrator surmises that in its death throes “... the characteristic buzzing can be heard, probably made by the buccal appendages”<sup>37</sup>. The narrator continues, “its mandibles rapidly open and close in a reflex quiver”, and he adds, “... it is possible for an ear close enough to hear the faint crackling they produce”<sup>38</sup>. A parallel is implied between the imagined sound made by the centipede's mandibles and the sound of the comb passing again and again through the woman A's long hair. The very same word is used – “crackle” – and woman and centipede also share red coloring: the crushed creature was “nothing more than a reddish pulp”<sup>39</sup>; the woman's hair consists of “a thick black mass with reddish highlights”<sup>40</sup>. On the following page the narrator brings the two different sources of crackling sound together in the same sentence: “Listening to it more carefully, this sound [made by the centipede] is more like a breath than a crackling: the brush is now moving down the loosened hair”<sup>41</sup>.

Although readers may be drawn in to thinking that the narrator describes the appearance and noises made by the centipede as objectively, as dispassionately and in as much “scientific” detail as he can, as the subtle parallels between centipede and woman begin to mount up, they become more and more difficult to ignore<sup>42</sup>. Franck's crushing without compunction of the centipede may then be

<sup>35</sup> Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Two Novels by Robbe-Grillet: Jealousy and The Labyrinth*. Translated by Richard Howard, New York, Grove, 1965, p. 65.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 97.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 113.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 96.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 113.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 114.

<sup>42</sup> For scientific descriptions see, for example: “Several pieces of the body or its appendages are outlined without any blurring, and remain reproduced with the fidelity of an anatomical drawing: one

construed as analogous to the narrator's (husband's?) projected exacting of revenge on A. Revenge for what? Could it be that "A" stands for "adulteress" (*adultère*)?

Such possible parallels are given further credence by consideration of the part played by the African novel, A and Franck's discussion of which often precedes descriptions of the crushed insect. Franck comments on the husband's behavior in the novel is followed by a knowing smile from A as she glances at the blackish spot on the wall<sup>43</sup>. Even more apropos perhaps is the declaration by Franck concerning the husband character in the African novel who A and Franck agree is "guilty of negligence"<sup>44</sup>. When Franck says "But that's it, he was just unlucky enough to have come home earlier that day, and no one could have guessed he would"<sup>45</sup> is it not implied that the male character finds the female with her lover *in flagrante delicto*? And does not the husband's failure to attend to his wife in this inner narrative (in the African novel) imply a similar neglect by A's presumed husband in the outer narrative?

As we move from Flaubert's text to Robbe-Grillet's there is of course, and this is one of the hallmarks of the Nouveau Roman, a dramatic increase in the quantity of descriptions of objects and also the level of detail in many of those descriptions. While in *Sentimental Education* the key object, the silver casket, was not mentioned often and we know little more than that its design includes "silver medallions, corners, and clasps"<sup>46</sup>, the key objects – the mark on the wall and the remains of the centipede on the floor – in *Jealousy* are described over and over again, often in significantly greater detail. Although this may imply that in Robbe-Grillet's writing there is a greater chance for the thingness of the thing to emerge, there are still very plausible links between objects, characters, and plot. These links have simply become more tenuous. The playful way in which both narratives considered so far combine the three elements – object, character, and plot – exerts a powerful, though not necessarily conscious grip, on the imagination of the reader.

Although we may be getting closer to "the thingness of the thing" as we move from Flaubert to Robbe-Grillet, we can hardly be satisfied. I will now try to follow another path established in line with what above I have called Heidegger's third tenet — the contention that "thingness" depends on human interaction with things, especially objects; and I will add to this Brown's

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of the antennae, two curved mandibles, the head and the first joint, half of the second, three large legs" (*Ibidem*, p. 62). Later the narrator describes it as "a common *Scutigera* of average size" (*Ibidem*, p. 64); and he speculates about whether it is a "spider-centipede" or "minute centipede" (*Ibidem*, p. 96).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 47.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 126.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 75.

<sup>46</sup> Gustave Flaubert, *Sentimental Education*, p. 407.

(Heidegger-influenced) suggestion that “we begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working”<sup>47</sup>. In film we could turn to Charlie Chaplin’s iconic *Modern Times* (1936). In literature, we will consider José Saramago’s short story “Things”, published in English in the appropriately named collection, *The Lives of Things* (2012).

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Throughout “Things” the protagonist is called simply “the civil servant”. In Flaubert characters are of course given names. In Robbe-Grillet’s *Jealousy* one character was referred to as the letter “A”. Now Saramago goes a step further and uses only the character’s occupation: civil servant. Could this be part of the process of dehumanizing the subject? Could this indicate a subject whose dying coincides with the coming to life of an object – a thing, one of the things of the title?

In the first sentence of “Things” the civil servant’s hand is being scratched by a door<sup>48</sup>, and after he proceeds to the First Aid Room (FAR) he is informed about a sofa awaiting treatment because its “temperature is too high”<sup>49</sup>. When a few hours later he returns to the main door and this time is able to pass through it unscathed the civil servant hears “a muffled noise that sounded like a sigh”<sup>50</sup>. It is as if the door wants to assert its own authority as “an integral part of the building, if not the most important part”<sup>51</sup>. Later another door, the main door of the apartment building where the civil servant lives, is described as “surrender[ing] and allow[ing] itself to be opened”<sup>52</sup>.

In “Things” the government labels things “OUMIs” (objects, utensils, machines, installations)<sup>53</sup>. There have been times, we are told, when the government saw it as being in its own interest for OUMIs to be faulty. Saramago’s writing is well known for its subversive political undercurrents, but here the implicit political commentary may be regarded as secondary to philosophical questions. Thus, when an announcer on the television goes beyond stating that the government is aware that things have been malfunctioning to its recognition that they have also been disappearing<sup>54</sup> the question might be: if it is impossible for anyone to see “thingness” emerging, can people nevertheless see it disappearing?

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<sup>47</sup> Bill Brown, “Thing Theory”, p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> José Saramago, *The Lives of Things: Short Stories*. Translated by Giovanni Pontiero, London, Verso, 2013, p. 65.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 66.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 71.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 73.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 102.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 79.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 80.

The first object the disappearance of which the civil servant is aware of is a pillar-box, an object that is humanized as it possesses “a mouth forever gaping and silent and giving access to its belly”<sup>55</sup>. The civil servant himself is unable to see the pillar box disappear as a passing lorry obscures his view. A policeman says bizarrely “Had you been watching, the pillar-box would probably still be here”<sup>56</sup>. Is he implying the superiority of mind over matter? This is an odd idea precisely because objects have started to act independently of human volition<sup>57</sup>.

Nevertheless, as more and more things start to disappear – including a jug in the cupboard in the civil servant’s kitchen, some steps in his apartment building, cars, and building facades, then entire buildings – the civil servant is granted a view of a whole building disappearing as it “suddenly shrink[s]... like a ragged sheet of dark paper which some invisible fire from the sky was scorching and destroying”<sup>58</sup>.

Unlike in the novels by Flaubert and Robbe-Grillet where one or two objects stand out and seem to varying degrees attached to particular characters’ distinctive emotions, in Saramago’s “The Thing” a plethora of objects jostle for the main character’s attention and trigger a wide variety of emotions. The civil servant moves through “a vague sense of uneasiness, nervousness” vis-à-vis the disappearance of the letter-box<sup>59</sup>, paranoia (“I must have done something wrong”<sup>60</sup>, panic which turns to vertigo<sup>61</sup>, fear and hatred turning to “wrath”<sup>62</sup>, followed by enjoyment at the prospect of “revenge”<sup>63</sup>.

Revenge against what? Against OUMIs – against things? The civil servant is delighted when he hears that the government has organized an aerial bombardment of a considerable part of the city and he leaves the city and climbs a hill in order to get a better view of this destruction. He gloats at the prospect that OUMIs are to be destroyed. “Heaven help any OUMIs that turned up on this side [as he stands on the other side of a row of canons directed toward the city] [...] they were about to

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 74.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 75.

<sup>57</sup> As things begin to assert themselves more and more, a train will even succeed in electrocuting all of its passengers. (*Ibidem*, p. 94).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 109.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 74.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 79.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 99, 102.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 109.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 110.

get their just deserts”<sup>64</sup>. He looks forward to the city’s “punishment”<sup>65</sup> and thinks of the military operation as “reprisal”<sup>66</sup>.

As the designated hour for the bombardment passes, however, the planes turn around without dropping a single bomb, and the cannons and other weapons on the ground remain silent and even disappear<sup>67</sup>. This happens after the civil servant is killed in the hills by a naked man and woman. These people may be described as non-conformists because unlike the rest of the population described thus far they do not have letters imprinted in their right hands. “And before he even had time to look, he already knew that the hands about to strangle him did not bear any letter”<sup>68</sup>.

At the end of the narrative, after the murder of the civil servant the entire city disappears. “In its place [...] naked men and women emerged from what had once been the city”<sup>69</sup>. These people’s nakedness parallels that of the civil servant’s assailants and the men and women who surround his corpse<sup>70</sup>. Could it be that all of these naked people do not have letters in their palms and represent a new population that will not bow down to the yoke of oppression, blindly following orders handed down by the top echelons of society. The civil servant’s mistake was to allow himself to be treated like a thing – blindly following the promptings of those in authority. He (and his kind?) have been vanquished in order for the society to be reborn. As a woman proclaims at the very end, “Never again will men [of course she means “men and women”] be treated as things”<sup>71</sup>. Throughout the narrative objects may be thought of as having spoken – saying “You, human beings, cannot control me. If I wish I can inflict pain on you. If I want to I can wreak havoc simply by disappearing”. OUMIs/ things are beyond human control. Nevertheless, Saramago leaves the last word to a human being.

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In *Fatal Strategies* Jean Baudrillard endeavored to speak up for objects, complaining “We have always lived off the splendor of the subject and the poverty of the object”<sup>72</sup>. In *Sentimental Education* one object played a key role in affecting the heart of the central character and influencing his decision making in his choice

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<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 111.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 112.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 113.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>68</sup> Letters in the hand denote status in the society. The civil servant was an “H” who aspired to be a “C”. People had earlier been encouraged/ ordered to show their palms to each other. (*Ibidem*, p. 93) Even children have letters in their palms – the same letter as their parents (*Ibidem*, p. 95).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 113.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 114.

<sup>72</sup> Qtd. in Bill Brown, “Thing Theory”, p. 8.

of a “romantic” partner. In *Jealousy* two objects had a decisive role in determining the possible interaction of narrator and the two main characters and in particular perhaps the fate of one of the characters, A. In “Things” the significance and power of objects extend far beyond such sentimentality and passion. Things have the power to wipe out an entire city and bring about a society’s rebirth.

Surely one reason why certain people are attracted to read and engage seriously with literature is not just because of the traditional elements character and plot (to some extent interfused) but also because of literature’s subtle relationship with objects and things. To some degree all literature breathes life into things – allows things to speak. Although we do not usually of course consciously recognize it, part of the appeal of literary narratives has to do with a dialectic between subject/ human being and object/ “thing”. We, human beings, are of course the creators of these narratives. We are the real story tellers and the real subjects. Although things may come to play a more and more substantial role in literature, we, human beings, have to be able to outthink them and make sure that history is written by us and not by them.

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### THING THEORY AND THE APPEAL OF LITERATURE (Abstract)

The term "thing theory" was coined in 2001 by the American Bill Brown who was trying to speak out in favor of things as a possible alternative to endless abstraction. This essay claims that thing theory not only opens up the possibility of a fresh approach to literature but also to some extent accounts for why literature is attractive. After briefly exploring the roots of thing theory in the work of Viktor Shklovsky and Martin Heidegger, I propose that readers are drawn to literature not just because literary texts are character- or plot-driven but also because they are thing-driven. I claim that Shklovsky's long-standing emphasis on plot (inextricably intertwined with character) is at odds with the Russian Formalist's own famous statement about art allowing us to feel the stoniness of the stone, and I suggest a parallel between Shklovsky's contention that literature makes the stone stoney and Heidegger's celebration of literature as guarding against the loss of "thingness." The contention that works of literature provide a platform on which things may be allowed to speak their own "being" is then traced through three works of fiction by Gustave Flaubert, Alain Robbe-Grillet, and José Saramago.

*Keywords:* thingness, defamiliarization, Heidegger, Flaubert, Robbe-Grillet, Saramago.

### „TEORIA-LUCRU” ȘI CHEMAREA LITERATURII (Rezumat)

Termenul de „teorie-lucru” a fost inventat în 2001 de către americanul Bill Brown, care încerca să pledeze în favoarea lucrurilor ca posibilă alternativă a abstractizării nesfârșite. Eseul de față susține că „teoria lucru” nu doar deschide posibilitatea unei noi abordări a literaturii, ci și, într-o anumită măsură, arată de ce anume ne place literatura. După o scurtă examinare a originilor „teoriei-lucru” în

operele lui Viktor Șklovski și Martin Heidegger, propun ideea că cititorii sunt atrași de literatură nu numai datorită personajelor și intrigii textului literar, ci și datorită lucrurilor. Susțin că accentul pus de Șklovski pe intrigă (inextricabil legată de personaj) este în contradicție cu celebra afirmație a formalistului rus, potrivit căreia arta ne permite să simțim „calitatea pietrei de a fi piatră”, și sugerez o paralelă între teza lui Șklovski referitoare la literatura ce face „piatra să fie piatră” și elogiul heideggerian al literaturii ca pavăză împotriva pierderii reității. Afirmația că operele literare oferă o platformă prin care lucrurilor li se permite să vorbească despre propria lor „ființă” este apoi urmărită prin intermediul a trei opere de ficțiune de Gustave Flaubert, Alain Robbe-Grillet și José Saramago.

*Cuvinte-cheie:* reitate, defamiliarizare, Heidegger, Flaubert, Robbe-Grillet, Saramago.

**WHY THE CENTER – PERIPHERY DIVIDE  
MAKES NO SENSE: MODERNITY AS A TRAVELING  
SPHERE OF OPTIONS**

Theory has an undetermined nature, which cannot be exclusively traced back to its eclectic origins. It is true that this type of humanistic knowledge and discourse rose at the intersection of two quite opposite processes. On the one hand, there was the steady tendency of transforming the traditional literary culture into a plausible form of empiricism, largely compatible with the norms of scientific research in general, for which “theory” would mean the systematic organization of carefully collected facts. Whether this implies stylistic “deviations” identifiable at all linguistic levels (as is the case with the line of evolution inaugurated by the Formalists – e.g. Jakobson 2007), or socio-cultural (i)regularities associated with concepts such as the frames of mind (as practiced, for instance, by cultural materialists and their followers – e.g. Williams 2000, Gallagher & Greenblatt 2000), is rather immaterial to the purpose of my present argument.

On the other hand, and in a deeply opposite manner, the appeal of theory lies in its tendency of detaching itself from the hegemony of empiricism and preserving the glorious heritage of intellectual speculation. This side of its genealogy pledges no allegiance to the standards and procedures of hard science, and plays instead on the autonomy of the humanities and on their right to produce a form of knowledge derived not from an accountable correspondence with a given state of fact, but from the pure play of our intellectual faculties. This perspective articulates pursuits as different as the free exercise of intuition, the delightful liberty of thought and expression, inherited from Montaigne’s essays (Fumaroli 1994, Burnyeat 1983, van der Zande & Popkin 1998), and the passion for worldmaking of a tradition best symbolized by Hegelian dialectics (Bloom 1959, Sontheimer 1976, Compagnon 1998).

This contradictory origin, pointing out to divided loyalties, could satisfactorily explain the “gender psychology” of theory. Precisely, the tensional lack of closure of its gender-identity. Which suggests the oscillation between impressive upsurges of creative energy and a radical lack of self-trust associated with the self-diagnosed cultural disease that brought the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the moniker “age of nervousness” or “anxiety” (Gay 1984: 3, 71-108, Pietikäine 2007: 1-8, Tone 2008: 1-27).

The mythology of the debilitating effect of civilization over the vitality of modern man generated, as it is well-known, not only diverse walks of artistic

expression usually compacted under the notion of *Decadence*, but also different and quite influential theories on society and consciousness. It is not without cause that some of the doctrines that presided over the birth of the notion of theory, like Nietzscheanism and Freudianism, became culturally influential precisely in the said “age of nervousness” (Schrift 1990: 77-94). That would partially explain why theory preserved the vibration and self-styling of this “nervousness” up to our times.

This would also add to the epistemological nexus of self-doubt I initially exposed, a different angle on the inner tensions of theory – having to do with psychological identity conflicts or with the mythologized confrontation between “reflexive intellect” and “vital instinct”. On the same line, it could be speculated that the periodically renewed interest of theory in different stages and species of Marxism has to do with an equally recurrent anxiety of the intellectuals over their social status – an anxiety originated in the wake of the 1900s, but continually modulated, according to new historical contexts (Hofstadter 1963).

This profusion of inner tensions and conflicts, and their free interplay or hybridizing, could offer a comforting explanation for the undetermined and “nervous” nature of the discipline of Theory.

However, in the following I will take a different interpretive path – one that, in my view, is more encompassing, not only because of its explanatory power, but also because it can approach theory in a less Euro- or West-centric manner.

I will try to derive Theory’s rhetoric and sensitivity hinting to perpetual inquisitiveness from an understanding of modernity that admits contradiction and paradox in its very core, making them a “natural” part of its very condition.

What I will attempt in the next section of the present paper is to de-define modernity – as a preliminary step to offering a comprehensive explanation, aspiring at global validity, for the very condition of un- or rather de-definiteness of Theory itself.

#### *The de-definition of modernity: a happy disillusionment*

The dominant representation of modernity is based on a number of premises that not only underlie the public (i.e. political, social, cultural) discourse, but are usually reproduced also by thinkers that claim to challenging the stereotypic vision of the matter.

The main such premise, and the seminal one, since all the others seem to derive in some measure from it, is that modernity is a *project*. Which implies a high level of consistency between all the restructuring programs and processes supposed to constitute its substance. That is to say that rational bureaucracy and managerialism, rule of law, science and technology, secularization are spontaneously naturally consistent between themselves. Which means that modernity could be described, in terms that have been used for describing Talcott

Parsons's sociological vision, as "a coherent, unitary, uniform, and worthwhile whole" (Gilman 2003: 75).

This vision of convergence implies with necessity an understanding of human society within which the economic, social, cultural, political spheres are constituted around a common kernel of basic rules.

A second principle that allows for a unified notion of modernity is that its project is not only coherent in itself, but that it is self-consciously devised, assumed and promoted by its agents: modernization is the process of gradually turning the project into a real-life functioning society.

Finally, given the alleged self-evidence and intrinsic rationality of modernity as a model and a system of values, it should be assumed that whatever obstruction occurs in the way of its global expansion, it should be seen as the reaction of local concretions of irrationally-held attitudes and beliefs.

It is essential for the progression of my argument to prove that all these three premises are essentially utopian and hardly tenable. In the following sections I will consider and reject them one by one.

*Modernity is not a coherent project:*

Even if modernity is construed as a whole by different trends of doctrinaire thinking, this thesis is at odds with a massive corpus of empirical evidence. It is true that criticism has been addressed to the "unfinished project of modernity" (Habermas 1997), but, in spite of the intuitive reading of this formulation, which would imply that the very concept of modernity is fraught with inconsistency, the actual crux of such criticism is the alleged gap between the mental, i.e. inherently projective, dimension of modernity, and the dimensions of its actual political and social reality.

But the criticism of the coherence tenet should go much deeper. What interests the present line of argument is that *ab initio* modernity holds a bundle of seminal inner incongruities, which go far beyond the pale of the economically ridden Marxian vision of "structural" contradictions. But they also differ from the diagnosis of self-contradiction held in Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectics of Enlightenment* (1969), which implies that every revolutionary and progressive step made by an indefinite force akin to the Hegelian Spirit of History is followed by the pressure of contrary reactionary forces for a step backwards.

The type of contradictions that I have in mind cannot be reduce to the rather elementary progress-reaction dialectics, but have to do with value oppositions to be found at the very core of what came to be called the "great transformation" (Polanyi 1985). It has been repeatedly noted that the apparent coherence and convergence expressed by the revolutionary arch-slogan *Liberté-Egalité-Fraternité* actually pointed to lines of acute tension that constantly threaten to dismember the project of modernization. Revolutionary enthusiasm massively downplayed the

autonomy of the values thus proclaimed, but wishful thinking was never able to eradicate actual aspirational and axiological incompatibilities. Most specifically, the idea that the goods of liberty and equality can be pursued concomitantly has been notoriously and eloquently rejected (Berlin 1979).

But liberty versus equality is just one of the contradictions growing among equally modern values and aspirations (Bell 1976). An extended (though open-ended) account of those should necessarily include: personal responsibility versus communalism; national versus democratic solidarity; cooperation versus competition; innovation versus conservation; historical teleology versus historical skepticism; moral absolutism versus moral relativism; foundational values versus reasoned consensus; institutional secularization versus intellectual secularization; innovative and visionary passion versus finely tuned skeptical prudence.

Obviously they are still to be counted, but the above list might suffice to make the point essential for the present demonstration: that in spite of the momentary outbursts of passion of different types of progressive elites self-styled as carriers of the spirit of history, modernity, in all its regional or local guises, does not function as a regulatory matrix, but rather discloses a field of open-ended doubts and questions.

A concentration of this evolution, a real cultural gem reflecting/ anticipating a global process in a highly suggestive local occurrence, is the Renaissance. Contrary to what is commonly thought, and even to how its very agents thought of their experience, what really happened in this crucial epoch was not the unearthing of a wholesome intellectual Antiquity. Instead, the explorations of the pioneers of modernization reactivated a complex network of cognitive and moral debates between the Platonists, the stoics, the epicureans, the skeptics.

*Modernity as agency is self-styled rather than self-aware:*

What the underdeveloped should really hold against the already developed is not that the latter perniciously obscure their recipe for social peace and economic plenty, but that they cannot spare the more unfortunate nations the shock and trauma they themselves went through in the course of their modernization. The fact is that the developed countries have been in the business of confronting radical ambiguity long enough in order to have reached different forms of social equilibrium, but not long enough to be able to extract from their trial and error credible rules for a painless economic and social development.

There are international institutions, basically funded by the developed countries, which have acquired some experience in limiting the inefficiency of economic or social policies of underdeveloped countries, or in dealing with humanitarian crises in those parts of the world where extreme poverty meets extreme violence. But very few has been, and probably could be done in helping the nations newly absorbed in the whirl of modernization to face philosophical and

religious pluralism, secularization, the *Entzauberung* of the world, and all the opportunities and risks inherent to an environment characterized by high levels of uncertainty and ambiguity.

Such traumatic experiences are not essentially different from those made by the developed countries in their early and not so early modernization. The core cultures of the Western world reached a satisfying balance between different goals or philosophical goods (political, intellectual, economic, and judicial freedom), but there is no consensus among scholars and educators with respect to the presumable chain of decisions that generated those enviable results.

It is relevant that the most comprehensive descriptions of the emergence of the West describe it as the non-intentional, non-personal outcome of a large interplay of factors. This being a tenet common to different schools of thought, from hard-line (Wallerstein 1989) to sophisticated (Luhmann 1995) system theoreticians, to analysts of discourse (Foucault 1975), to advocates of emergence (Hayek 1988), or genuine explorers of complexity (Elias 1987).

*Modernity cannot be coherently opposed to Tradition:*

Since contemporary academia witnesses an ongoing debate over the Western civilizational take-off, with corresponding contentious opinions on how this rare combination of prosperity and liberty could be preserved and expanded (McCloskey 2010, Morris 2010, Ferguson 2011, Kenny 2013), the outsiders or late-comers to the process of modernization should have grown by now painfully aware of the fact that there is no easy way of replicating this success story. The main reason being that the *raisonneurs* of Western development do not really have a story, definitely not one with a credible epic closure. In other words, the present winners of the global civilizational contest do not really know what brought them in poll position.

This view of the matter, once accepted as plausible, leads with the force of logical necessity from approaching the problem of globalizing modernization to acknowledging the globalization of the problem of modernization. And further on, to a critical assessment of the stereotypical representation of a global “battle of the giants” between Old and New.

The setbacks or utter failures in the modernization programs in different parts of the world are frequently seen as bad chemistry developed between a rationalized institutional framework and the substance of a given cultural heritage, wrought by pre-modern attitudes and mores (Harrison & Huntington 2000). But this is by far not the only problem weighing over non-Western modernizations. Every serious analyst of such processes has to consider the quintessential indefiniteness of the modernization process itself. As already stated, it is in the nature of modernization to activate opposing social tendencies and, at the same time, to make opposing values and motivations meet in one and the same consciousness.

Actually, the polemical field generated by the “great transformation” does not simply displace, but more often than not refashions, reactivates or simulate competing or conflicting tendencies existing in the cultural underlayer.

The famous late 17<sup>th</sup> century quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns samples in a highly symbolic manner the above assumption because it anticipates cultural and political polemics that erupted in various parts of the world over the coming centuries. At the surface, the stakes that mobilized the two camps opposing within the French Academy were essentially of a literary and artistic nature, with the Moderns cast in the role of forefathers of the subsequent European inclination for breaking rhetorical and moral canons. In fact, it is surprising to note that in France, as well in the other cultural areas where the debate gradually spread, such as Augustan England or *Sturm und Drang* Germany, the authors most daring in point of shaking the literary decorum actually sided with the Ancients. They exalted the Greek and Latin aesthetical systems of checks and balances as an expression of noble containment of the vital energies, opposed to the self-proclaimed formal excellence of the Moderns, accused (in a vein that we came to associate with Jean-Jacques Rousseau but that expressed a much wider state of mind), of being a transparent guise for intellectual sterility (Levine 1991, DeJean 1997).

On the political side, the paradox seems even greater, since the conservative, past-oriented Ancients tackled such matters, theoretically overcome by the “revolution” of times, as republican political order, while the Moderns were praising the absolute monarchy (Norman 2011: 89-98, Kitromilides 2013: 156-174).

Such reversed connections can be retrieved to the apparent paradox that as an ideology “conservatism” is, beyond any doubt, a direct product of modernity (Kirk 2001, Rudolph & Hoeber Rudolph 1967). The tide of rationalization did not promote by itself a compact philosophy, but rather offered instruments for the full-fledged manifestation of world-views and life-styles whose inherent differences lay latent up to that moment in the intricateness of premodern cultural systems. A process which is at least partly explained by the theory of “reflexive modernity”, which places the weight of the profound transformation of Western societies on the social obligation of arguing and explaining one’s stands on life and society (Beck, Giddens & Lash 1994).

#### *Uncertainty as Grand Equalizer:*

In the preface to the 1965 edition of his 1955 *Beyond Culture*, Lionel Trilling wrote:

One cannot be aware of the large sub-culture (as we have learned to call it) of youth, of those characteristics that are shared by the young of many lands, without giving credence to the supposition that a world-view continuity of cultures tends to come into being and that it is possible to make predictions about it.

If such predictions can be made at all, even those that seem to be based on that “very narrow class” to which my fluctuating “we” has sometimes referred may have at

least a tentative validity. The class of New York intellectuals is not remarkable for what it originates [...]. yet as a group it is busy and vivacious about ideas and, even more, about attitudes. Its assiduity constitutes an authority.

The structure of our society is such that a class of this kind is bound by organic filaments to groups less culturally fluent which are susceptible to its influence. The great communications industries do not exactly rely for their content and methods upon the class of New York intellectuals, yet journalism and television show its effects. At least one of the ways in which the theater and the cinema prosper is by suiting the taste which this “narrow class” has evolved. And between this small class and an analogous class in, say, Nigeria, there is pretty sure to be a natural understanding (Trilling 1965, x-xi).

Trilling perceived the importance of a state of mind that, for previous phases of globalization, was still called “the spirit of the age”. The Romanian interbellum literary critic and (in an intimate symbiosis closely reminding of Trilling’s own ambivalence) social thinker Eugen Lovinescu explicitly used the Latin concept of *saeculum* as a premise of his theory of “synchronicity”. This was an attempt to conceptualize the ideological atmospherics and the transnational psyche that brought, since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, liberal-democratic revolutions to the Romanian lands (Lovinescu 1997, Ersoy, Górný & Kechriotis 2010: 40-47).

Witnessing a later wave of democratization, the one of the 1950s and 1960s, Trilling was equally aware of the fact that in spite of its global scope, this movement was promoted by rather small intellectual groupings scattered all over the world which shared a common sense of adversity towards the otherwise very different traditions in which they emerged:

Yet around the adversary culture there has formed what I have called a class. If I am right in identifying it in this way, then we can say of it, as we say of any other class, that it has developed characteristic habitual responses to the stimuli of its environment. It is not without power, and we can say of it, as we can say of any other class with a degree of power, that it seeks to aggrandize and perpetuate itself (Trilling xv).

The vision of the famous liberal critic clearly exposes the tenet that modernization is a consistent global process set in motion by a coherent global actor – a network of dissenting intellectuals. What I want to question in this model is not, as it usually is the case, the existence of a global sensitivity, but rather the grounds on which such a grand scale spontaneous adjustment could be premised. Writing on (and in the midst of) moments of impetuous belief in change, Lovinescu and Trilling could not escape the illusion that various movements that seemed to convene around the globe were inspired by a consistent program. The same powerful impression was generated by the evolutions that brought the fall of Communism (Tismăneanu 1993) or, more recently, by the so-called Arab Spring (Ahmari & Weddady 2012). But once the initial enthusiasm loses momentum, a whole range of differences become more and more obvious, until the image of the revolutionary unity is completely replaced by that of a spectrum of options, beliefs and preferences.

On the above grounds, I think the vision of the globalized adversary culture could be amended on at least one major point. The analogies in ideology or behavior of different emancipation processes around the world are not justified primarily by a common cause. This may well exist with respect to certain forms of global activism (even if, in such cases, the difference between the global agenda and the rather regional participation, i.e. restricted to radical elites of the developed countries, will always be an issue – Krastev 2014). But as far as the larger picture is concerned, it is not determination, but doubt that is common to different modernizing processes (or, more precisely: to the patterns of thought and behavior of the main agents implied, often in a competitive manner, in different modernization processes round the globe).

The condition of uncertainty, of having to manage a whole field of interpretive options, is what underlies even some of the most aggressive radical ideologies.

Different “objectual-semantic horizons” (Bakhtin 1981: 201) configured according to different social and cultural collective experiences become equally close to or remote from the structural indefiniteness and from the core open questions described above. In other words the order instituted between the agents implied in the modernization process is given not by their position with respect to an *Idealtypus* (Weber 1988), but by their distribution in a problematic field.

Rather than a global network transmitting messages of change from a given center of command, or a spontaneous and unaware rhizomatic cooperation, the global perspective on modernization could be better represented as a community of doubt, as an expanding, or more precisely a traveling sphere of interrelated moral and intellectual options.

#### *Theory as Politics of Cultural Disquiet:*

The vision of multiple modernities (Eisenstadt 2003) morally equalized by the powerful existential impact of a common core of theoretical interrogations brings us to reconsider a well-established conceptual distinction, the one opposing doctrinaire discourses of *engagement* to objective and analytical approaches of modernization processes.

The mid-level between implication and detachment can be approximated by the concept of “adaptation”. Understanding your (cultural, social, political) environment, negotiating an acceptable version of “reality”, finding a moral balance with your fellows or with yourself – all these are situations which also imply a reflexive, theoretical involvement (to a measure that makes the two aspects, “active” and “passive”, almost undistinguishable from each other).

Therefore I will take the step of assuming that emergence of theory and its global diffusion is an expression of a specific adaptive behavior. Regular social adaptation implies a dynamic orientation accounting for oscillating environmental factors and for the risks and opportunities deriving from their perpetual interplay.

The practice of theory is the equivalent of social adaptation in the world of mental experiments and states of consciousness. Theory has to face turbulences that are not external, but have to do with states of inner insecurity, which mobilize and match, in various forms, not only different rhetorical registers and devices, but also different kinds of intelligence, or paths of cognition (different, for instance, in point of building concepts and articulating judgments).

More often than not theory isn't a discourse on method. It is rather an adaptive response made necessary once the fundamental incongruences of modernity have been deeply internalized. The condition of German intellectuals facing the aftermath of World War II has been described with the phrase "politics of cultural despair" (Stern 1961). In order to accommodate a much larger spectrum of historical, actual, but also potential responses to the theoretical conundrums of modernity, the phrase should be adapted to "politics of cultural disquiet".

Where disquiet should count as a continuous effort of self-exploration, self-justification, and self-approximation. The politics of cultural disquiet mean, in fact, the politics of living with disquiet and adapting to uncertainty, weather that would imply theoretical efforts of *purging* or *managing* anxiety.

This "continuous aspect" of theoretical disquiet resounds, on the one hand, with the experience of cultural displacement expressed in the concept of "homeless mind" (Berger, Berger & Kellner 1973), but also with more auspicious concepts such as "philosophy as a way of life" (Hadot 1999), or "passionate life" (Solomon 1999).

With respect to the localization of theory, the de- and re-definition that I propose has, first of all, a significant consequence on the division center-periphery. Since modernity is not seen as a mother of invention, but rather as a source of presumably unsurpassable uncertainty and disquiet, the difference between its original/ central promoters and late/ marginal third parties tends to become immaterial.

Given the nature of the modernity conundrum, the "center" stands no better chances than any other imaginable location in solving it. Of course, centrality brings and will continue to bring huge advantages in point of symbolic capital. But as far as the chances of standing up to the quintessential provocation of modernity, i.e. converting the negativity of uncertainty into complex forms of thought and expression, and transmogrifying vibrant doubt into creative energy, the center is in no way susceptible of any significant advantage.

It could even be argued that a technically peripheral location in the world community of theory-producers holds a couple of less obvious, but palpable advantages that are worth mentioning.

A "marginal" can simultaneously relate to arguments and argumentative cultures developed by major schools of thought and intellectual traditions which, given their path-dependent self-centeredness, will tend to indefinitely ignore each other.

“Marginality” has the possibility to displace and remix historical time. The belated reception of canonical stations of modernization such as Renaissance, Classicism, Enlightenment, Romanticism, Modernism creates in the intellectual perception of the “marginals” a natural heterocronicity, a simultaneity which seems impossible in the cultures where these trends originated. Heterocronic contiguity generates interesting hybrids in point of artistic forms, but also of private or public mores, or theory for that matter.

Similarly to the manner in which the capacity of poetic imagination has been credited with the capacity to discover and develop promising forms of expression that have been abandoned by cultural evolution (Eliot 1998), a non-Western secretor of theory can connect to lines of thought or action that the Center abandoned or sees as being part of a merely ornamental heritage.

But the most important of the mixed blessings bestowed on peripheral theoreticians is the impossibility of eluding their condition of complexity and ambiguity. This has to be acknowledged from the very beginning, and is inescapably present in both the premises and conclusions of all their intellectual undertakings.

This apparently uncomfortable awareness creates a significant competitive advantage, because the theoretical representative of the periphery enjoys – very much in the line of Montesquieu’s Persian traveler – the privilege of reminding his peers from developed countries and pioneering societies that they cannot escape confronting, on a very intimate and personal level, indeterminacy, unpredictability and doubt. A reminder also meant to help its addressees overcome their self-satisfaction, not necessarily by criticizing Western modernity from the point of view of cultural Otherness, but by pointing back to what modernity essentially is: a bundle of intense conceptual oppositions generating a tensional field of options.

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WHY THE CENTER – PERIPHERY DIVIDE MAKES NO SENSE:  
MODERNITY AS A TRAVELING SPHERE OF OPTIONS  
(Abstract)

There are two dominant explanations for the global reach of modernization processes. On the one hand, we have the representation of a vast network of mainly economic interests, centered in the highly developed Western world that gradually covers the whole planet. On the other hand, the global span of modernization is seen as the gradual imitation and internalization by marginal cultures and civilizations of a consistent system of emancipatory values that emerged in Western Europe and North America. Even if severely opposed, these two doctrines share an essential assumption: modernity and modernization derive from a set of positive, non-conflictual beliefs. But modernity can be understood, in complete opposition to „consistency-theories”, as a social and cultural process which essentially expands at a global scale the intellectual contradictions of modernity: liberty versus equality, responsibility versus solidarity, cooperation versus competition, innovation versus conservation, historical teleology versus historical skepticism, moral absolutism versus moral relativism. At the same time, modernity is the process of elaborating ways of coping with structural social and cognitive indetermination, and the virtual sphere that contains all possible patterns of response. Once we re-draw the picture of modernity as a global process along these lines, the distinction center-periphery, at least for intellectual processes, loses much of its grip. My main argument is that irrespective of its place of insertion in a presumed hierarchical network of civilizational influences, the theoretical mind is confronted with, and responsible for, finding plausible, even if vulnerable and transitory answers to essentially the same cognitive and ethical conundrums.

*Keywords:* multiple modernities, cultural disquiet, homeless mind, adaptation, philosophy as a way of life.

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DE CE ESTE ABSURDĂ DIVIZIUNEA CENTRU – PERIFERIE:  
MODERNITATEA CA SFERĂ MIGRATOARE DE OPȚIUNI

(Rezumat)

Există două explicații principale pentru accesul global la procesele de modernizare. Pe de o parte, avem reprezentarea unei rețele vaste de interese, predominant economice, cu centrul în lumea occidentală foarte dezvoltată, care tinde să acopere treptat întreaga planetă. Pe de altă parte, anvergura globală a modernizării este privită de către culturile și civilizațiile marginale ca imitație progresivă și internalizare a unui sistem consistent de valori emancipative apărute în Europa Occidentală și în America de Nord. Deși aflate într-o opoziție flagrantă, aceste două doctrine împărtășesc o presuposiție esențială: modernitatea și modernizarea derivă dintr-un set de convingeri pozitive, nonconflictuale. Dar modernitatea poate fi înțeleasă, în deplin dezacord cu „teoriile consistenței”, ca proces social și cultural care în principal extinde la scară globală contradicțiile intelectuale ale modernității: libertate versus egalitate, responsabilitate versus solidaritate, cooperare versus competiție, inovație versus conservare, teleologie istorică versus scepticism istoric, absolutism moral versus relativism moral. În același timp, modernitatea reprezintă procesul elaborării de metode pentru confruntarea cu indeterminismul structural social și cognitiv, precum și sfera virtuală ce conține toate modelele de răspuns posibile. Odată ce refacem desenul modernității de-a lungul acestor linii, distincția centru-periferie, cel puțin în procesele intelectuale, își pierde în mare parte ponderea. Principalul meu argument este acela că, indiferent de locul inserției sale într-o presupusă rețea ierarhică de influențe civilizaționale, gândirea teoretică are atribuția esențială de a găsi răspunsuri plauzibile, chiar dacă vulnerabile și efemere, la aceleași dileme cognitive și etice.

*Cuvinte-cheie:* modernități multiple, neliniște culturală, gândire fără adăpost, adaptare, filosofia ca mod de viață.

LAURA PAVEL

## REENACTMENTS OF “THE SECONDARY” – WITHIN AND BEYOND THE “LITERARY TURN”

Whether the wave of New Historicism has been symptomatic for a “political” and historical turn in literary studies, the apparently contrary direction of thought seems to be *the literary turn* in political and social thought and analysis. Such an interpretative turn, which emphasizes a literary approach to the knowledge of history and to political and sociological discourse, could be understood as a revival of several divergent cultural and textual tendencies. It is the cluster of such resistant literary and cultural forces that should be described, according to Virgil Nemoianu, through the discrete but multilayered concept of *the secondary*.

I will focus on several conceptual nuances which could enter into a hermeneutical dialogue; thus, they could become complementary modes of reinterpreting certain historical objectives of literary and aesthetic theory. These dynamic concepts are to be analyzed from the viewpoint of certain theoretical narratives, around which they seem to gather and nourish a few epistemological instruments and perspectives: *the secondary* (as defined by Virgil Nemoianu), *the political and historical turn* in literary studies (in this sense, New Historicism is a main critical perspective and direction of thought) and, conversely, the “*literary turn*” in political and social thought. Such comprehensive syntagms, which coagulate around important hermeneutical narratives of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, might prove relevant for reassessing the social and anthropological influence of literary theory and of aesthetic epistemology.

As a literary and cultural analyst, the Romanian-American Professor Virgil Nemoianu – a “travelling theorist” situated in-between cultures, as it were – proposes the notion of *the secondary*, a conceptual entity or a theoretical fiction that designates a series of cultural, social, but mostly literary attitudes, textual objects and phenomena, arguing that they form a dialectical opposition to *the principal*. The latter is somehow contained within the creative tension of *the secondary*. Literature symptomatically reveals the paradoxical power of the secondary, as well as the complementarity of the principal acts and driving forces of a society (political, economic, moral, religious, all of which constitute *centrality*), on the one hand, and the secondary cultural and aesthetic phenomena, on the other.

While elaborating his theory on the reactionary or, at least, subversive character of the secondary as compared to the dominance of the principal, Nemoianu has the merit of revaluating a couple of aesthetic and epistemological concepts created by the Romanian philosopher of culture Lucian Blaga. The American professor invokes Blaga’s work *Cunoașterea luciferică* [*Luciferic*

*Cognition*], from 1933, and tries to restore the dialogical potential of Blagian ideas, their philosophical and aesthetic legacy, their power of intellectual irradiation from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century up until the last decades thereof (Nemoianu's book was published in the United States, by the Johns Hopkins University Press, in 1989). Blaga's theory of *minus-knowledge* and of Luciferic cognition could be understood, in Nemoianu's view, in parallel with such moderately relativist and pluralist approaches as those of Thomas Kuhn, Nelson Goodman or Paul Feyerabend, or with Michel Serres's philosophy of the "multiple".

Lucian Blaga's theories of knowledge, graciously brought within the international circuit by Virgil Nemoianu, emphasize a specifically aesthetic treatment of philosophical discourse and an almost non-Western, rather Oriental mode of reflection (inspired by the Eastern-Orthodox branch of "negative theology"). The conceptual entities of his gnoseological system are mutually interrogating one another, as they are actually dwelling not so much on cognitive skepticism or relativism, but mainly on mystery, as a perpetually *creative* suspension of knowledge. The gnoseology and art philosophy of Blaga can be also analyzed through this retro-prospective revival, which actually means looking back upon some of his interpretative concepts from the moment of the "literary turn" that gained momentum in postmodern times, around the 1990's. The inclination of some important Western philosophers towards embarking on a quest for a literary perspective on social life and on moral dilemmas, and towards a narrative and metaphorical style, will be emphasized in the 1980's and 1990's. It will reinforce the place held by literary discourse and by the "life" of literary characters, relations, conflicts as points of theoretical reference within the humanities. This whole line of thought is represented, among others, by ethical philosophers like Martha Nussbaum (interested in Greek tragedy, or in Henry James's prose), or by skeptical hermeneuts (i.e., Stanley Cavell, with his huge interest in Shakespeare), or by "postfoundationalist" thinkers, such as the pragmatist Richard Rorty (for whom philosophy could be interpreted "as a kind of writing").

I aim to ascertain several new modes of employing the category of the secondary and to test its relevance up to this day. Certain sinuous arguments of literary theory could thus be revalued and a few metacritical tools could be tested. My argument will follow some critical reenactments of the *secondary* – and the dialogue, either subtle or radically polemical, or the rupture between the secondary and the principal – within the *literary turn* of the 1990's and then within the "digital turn" and the approaches indebted to "distant reading" (Franco Moretti) in the 2000's.

*The Secondary – between Dialogical Counterpoint and Ideological Control*

Throughout the final chapter of his book *A Theory of the Secondary. Literature, Progress and Reaction*, entitled “A Short Theory of the Secondary”, Virgil Nemoianu demonstrates how several important critical and theoretical movements and methodologies (Neo-classical philological studies, New Criticism, the Marxist and Neo-Marxist critique, structuralism and the psychoanalytical approach) arrive at a point where they renounce their pretence that literature should be forced to fit into their pre-defined patterns. And, consequently, these different interpretative strategies finally surrender to the subversive force of literature itself, to the recessive and secondary drives that hide within critical discourse:

Ultimately, the centripetal power of literature rests in the aspiration of discourse itself towards the status of literature, that is, towards the privileged enjoyment of liberty, self-referentiality, and a putatively inexhaustible substantiality as expressed in multiple meanings and textual openness<sup>1</sup>.

It is as if literary discourse were, in Nemoianu’s view, a kind of “anthropomorphic divinity” for ordinary discourse, one that hopes to reach that “paradisiac or utopian state” embodied in the sphere of the literary.

It appears that Nemoianu’s theoretical discourse itself testifies more than once to this particular kind of fascination, which helps the critic in his endeavor to construct a sort of lucid mythologization of the somehow mysterious core of literary aesthetics. There are many stylistic volutes and narrative structures that stand for the recipients of his critical arguments, along with metaphors and personifications of concepts. Among them, *the secondary* and *the principal* are the main metaphorically argumentative extensions and also the two protagonists of this theoretical odyssey.

In a chapter significantly entitled “The Dialectics of Imperfection: Girard, Blaga, Serres”, Nemoianu devotes a comprehensive interpretation to Blaga’s aesthetic epistemology, or, more precisely, to the specific Blagian mode of endowing aesthetic values with an epistemological power of their own. The gesture of integrating Blaga’s epistemology and aesthetic theory into the large cultural field of contemporary international debates is meant to reinforce the power of some almost marginal, but creative roads, where literary, philosophical and anthropological ideas meet, enter into dialogue and merge. The chance (or the innovative potential) of the marginal and apparently reactionary line of thought – or, better said, of *the secondary* – is sometimes to be found in the sheer mystery, in the ontological and epistemic uncertainty of the metaphysical Great Anonymous

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<sup>1</sup> See Virgil Nemoianu, *A Theory of the Secondary. Literature, Progress and Reaction*. Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989, p. 185.

(another syntagm of Blaga's, supposedly famous for the Romanian intellectual community and maybe for a few foreign scholars interested in quoting exotic references). Instead of a clarifying and "progressively" analytical reason, the Blagian *minus-knowledge* can offer a privileged insight into a *transcendent that descends* into this world, among us, like through aesthetic catharsis; instead of climbing up to the universals and to the general level of disembodied knowledge, it is expected to descend, to get down "on earth", into its contingency, in search for an intimacy with the world and for particularity.

The metaphorically revealing *minus-knowledge*, as it is reassessed by Nemoianu, takes part, this time, in a dialogical process of continuous reinterpretation, in a hermeneutics of cultural paradigms (especially those of the twentieth century, among the structuralist and poststructuralist approaches). A flexible and dynamic category such as *the secondary* allows for a hermeneutical narrative which concedes a privileged role to the digressive movements of the aesthetic as opposed to the straightforward progressive lines of thought. The latter actually endorse the dominance of different ideologies over literature.

The part to be played by literature would be, then, to recover that specific "material" which has been abandoned and devalued, to insert the otherwise neglected elements into language, and thus to trouble the self-satisfaction of the ordered and systematic progress. Concentrating on the secondary means resorting to strategies of postponement and to certain digressive changes and *détours* of the central, fast-forward movement within a cultural pattern. It seems that Nemoianu's theory develops, to a considerable extent, an ecological understanding of the field of literary studies and of their traditional, canonical humanistic "core". Literature and its aesthetically resistant and therefore "secondary" choices speak for the ontological value of human imagination, in dialectical opposition to doctrines of historical progress. This resistance of literature around its own aesthetic ontology is to be acknowledged in a period more and more filled by politicized interpretations and ideological transgressions of the aesthetic, on the one hand, and by an apparently dehumanizing or posthumanist digital approach on literariness (as in the case of the field of Digital Humanities), on the other.

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Nevertheless, one could argue that the secondary contains the risk of turning into the massive, overwhelming flow of the principal, and as such, it can take abusive dominance over the "material" that undergoes artistic transformation. One such case in which the principal takes over the artistic values and the creative intentions altogether is to be found in the politics of aesthetics developed by contemporary philosopher Boris Groys. In his book *The Total Art of Stalinism*, Groys demonstrates how the political leader symptomatically borrows the posture of a demiurgic artist and gains an almost aesthetic control over society. The control is exercised by the political man as if he became some sort of radical artist

that transforms, through dictatorship, the factual social scene, so as to make it correspond to his totalizing “artistic” vision.

Analyzing the cultural consequences of the Stalinist era in Russia, Groys gives us a critical framework through which to understand how the totalitarian views link the aesthetic element to the political. He clearly denounces the reasons why the aesthetic power exercised by the artist upon his material can be compared to the forms of political control over society:

When the entire economic, social, and everyday life of the nation was totally subordinated to a single planning authority commissioned to regulate, harmonize, and create a single whole out of the most minute details, this authority – the Communist party leadership – was transformed into a kind of artist whose material was the entire world and whose goal was to ‘overcome the resistance’ of this material and make it pliant, malleable, capable of assuming any desired form<sup>2</sup>.

Yet, what Groys exposes as the artistic power to control a totality, to keep under surveillance a whole social entity, actually proves to be more or less the same with what Nemoianu called “the principal”, namely the political itself, which only temporarily takes on the mask of the aesthetical, as in the case of the “realist socialist” art: “The unordered, chaotic life of past ages was to be replaced, argues Groys, by a life that was harmonious and organized according to a unitary artistic plan”<sup>3</sup>. Whereas Nemoianu reserves to the domain of the secondary exactly the opposite of a thoroughly organized cultural field, recognizing that literature brings about a divergent and disruptive force, even a chaotic movement, a sometimes reactionary emotional and aesthetic disposition and, in any case, one which is resistant to any abusive ideological and social control.

*The Literary Turn – the Values of Contingency, Particularity, Fragility*

I once again invoke a metaphorical assertion from *A Theory of the Secondary*, according to which literary discourse would be a kind of “anthropomorphic divinity” for ordinary discourse. Along the same line of thought, the recent revaluations of the field of literary studies bring forth diverse debates around the anthropological and the trans-aesthetic role of literature within everyday life and within society. The directions of research embraced by several French theorists and essayists like Jean-Marie Schaeffer, Marielle Macé and William Marx, or by an American moral philosopher like Martha Nussbaum are relevant for an ethical and even an ecological turn within literary studies.

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<sup>2</sup> Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism. Avant-Grade, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond*. Translated from German by Charles Rougle, London – New York, Verso, 2011, pp. 3-13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 3.

Beyond Nussbaum's more recent plea, in her book *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (2010), for the role of liberal arts in the formation of democratic citizens, her earlier volumes *The Fragility of Goodness* (1986) and *Love's Knowledge* (1990) make a strong case for the cultivation of virtues and capabilities that moral philosophy could find within the literary discourse (for instance, in the tragedy *Antigone*, or in Henry James's *The Golden Bowl*) or within "philosophical poetry". Also, her hermeneutical approach of Platonic dialogues such as *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* center upon the ethical dilemmas of characters like Socrates, Alcibiades or Phaedrus, involved both in passionate love stories and in a search for philosophical mastery, but also for responsiveness to the world and to the Other, for openness and receptivity, for the values of contingency, all through a "fusion of life and argument". Philosophy therefore seems to loosen some strongly argumentative ways in order to make place for the art of rhetoric and for ethical and even aesthetic preoccupations.

Thus, philosophical discourse achieves a specific touch of "vulnerability", meant to humanize the apparently disembodied rationale and to set off for an "intense scrutiny of particulars"<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, when she analyses Greek tragedy, Nussbaum focuses upon "the poetic features" of the text and its "metaphorical and emotive language"<sup>5</sup>, so that the clear philosophical line of argument does not disappear, but, on the contrary, attains a new level of accessibility, a "serene restraint" and a lucid persuasive power.

Another American ethical theorist and philosopher that significantly resorts to literary hermeneutics, Stanley Cavell, reveals in his turn the values of what he calls "acknowledgment", by focusing on a close reading of Shakespearean characters. His interpretation of *King Lear* is a hermeneutical construction that revolves around the values of cognitive skepticism. The process of merely *acknowledging* (instead of knowing by imposition) the "truth" residing in the Other (as Lear should have acknowledged, and tragically failed to do so, the truth about Cordelia's feelings for him) implies an ethical approach and openness towards alterity and difference:

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<sup>4</sup> Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*. New York – Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 148.

<sup>5</sup> See *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 394.

We think skepticism must mean that we cannot know the world exists, and hence that perhaps there isn't one (a conclusion some profess to admire and others to fear). Whereas what skepticism suggests is that since we cannot know the world exists, its presentness to us cannot be a function of knowing. The world is to be *accepted*; as the presentness of other minds is not to be known, but acknowledged<sup>6</sup>.

As in the case of Lear, a case that Cavell considers symptomatic, the hero's tragic evolution is brought along by his dictatorial need to "know" each thought and emotion of Cordelia's, that is, to do away with her alterity, to destroy her ontological difference, while what he should have done instead was to mere *accept*, or *acknowledge* her existence.

We can therefore conclude that Cavell's skeptical "acknowledgment" of the world and of the Other within the world is relevant for the ways in which philosophical interpretation, in the line of Gadamerian hermeneutics, sides with the apparently secondary arguments. They ought to somehow disturb the forces of the principal and to resist them, so that *the principal* doesn't profess abusive or almost dictatorial modes of knowledge. No structuralist or poststructuralist theories pervade Cavell's writing, but on the contrary, his interest in writers such as Thoreau, Wordsworth, Poe, Ibsen, Emerson and, of course, Shakespeare allows him to arrive at an "accomplishment of inhabitation"<sup>7</sup>; that is, to "inhabit" the object of his argument<sup>8</sup>, not to appropriate it within predetermined theories, but to let it free as if it were a form of life, not captured in any interpretative boundaries. Cavell's moral philosophy and his hermeneutical skepticism bring forth the divergent aesthetic and literary values, which function as a counterpoint to the principal philosophical mode of rationalizing. The latter is then being swallowed, even if only temporarily, by "the proximity of poetry"<sup>9</sup>, by the *inhabitation* (and not at all distantiation or impersonal style) of theoretical discourse, and by "disowning" knowledge.

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<sup>6</sup> Cavell advances that there is a certain "truth of skepticism", and this is a main ethical concept of his, whose analytical potential is probed in the chapter "The Avoidance of Love", from his book *Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays of Shakespeare*. The quotation is taken from a new edition of his essays on Shakespeare, namely from *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare*. Updated edition. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 95.

<sup>7</sup> In his essay "Thinking of Emerson", from *The Senses of Walden*, Cavell maintains that "Emerson's and Thoreau's relation to poetry is inherently their interest in their own writing... I do mean their interest in what we may call their poems, but their interest in the fact that what they are building is writing, as it realizes itself daily under their hands, sentence by shunning sentence, the accomplishment of inhabitation, the making of it happen, the poetry of it". See *The Senses of Walden*. An Expanded Edition. San Francisco, North Point Press, 1981, p. 134.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>9</sup> In analyzing Cavell's interest in literature and music, and Danto's views on art, literary theorist Gerald L. Bruns argues that their theories of interpretation recognize the "proximity of poetry". See Gerald L. Bruns, *Tragic Thoughts at the End of Philosophy. Language, Literature, and Ethical Theory*. Evanston, Illinois, Northwestern University Press, 1999, pp. 147-163.

*Progressive and “Reactionary” Forces within the Digital Turn in the Humanities*

In an article on Moretti’s revolutionary method of literary analysis, “distant reading”, journalist and essayist Kathryn Schulz comments upon the pretention of digital analysis, as it is practiced and conducted by the Professor from Stanford University, to be taken for a science. Consequently, Franco Moretti considers, instead, that traditional qualitative literary analysis is a “theological exercise”. Still, Schulz warns about the methodological traps and the paradoxical premises of this new myth of digitalization. The digital analysis of literary texts runs the risk of becoming yet another type of “theological” perspective: “There will always be some people for whom new technologies seem to promise completeness and certainty, and Moretti, enthusing over the prospect of “a unified theory of plot and style,” is one of them. Literature, he argues, is “a collective system that should be grasped as such.” But this, too, is a theology of sorts — if not the claim that literature is a system, at least the conviction that we can find meaning only in its totality”<sup>10</sup>. If we are to resort once again to Nemoianu’s duality of concepts, then the Digital Humanities’ methods tend to become *the principal*, supposedly more scientific and progressive ways of doing literary research, whereas all the other approaches (whether neo-classical textual studies, or poststructuralist perspectives) would classify as *secondary*.

One of the adepts of textual digital analysis within the humanities, Scott Kleinman points to the strange “metaphysical” character of such methodologies, which extract patterns from texts and thus detect digital “ghosts” from beyond their discursive context:

Lexomics (and similar approaches) unlinks language from its context – a problem for many scholars of the materialist bent, myself included. If there is a way to factor context back what would that mean for our understanding of the materials we study? Does working with only words and numbers mean that the fingerprints we detect are really just digital “ghosts”, haunting the texts from which they are extracted but without a way to engage with the material world?<sup>11</sup>.

By constructing “dendrograms” (tree diagrams) and other visualisations of textual structures, the digital approaches arrive at a paradoxical decontextualisation of literature. A strange step within the digital humanities

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<sup>10</sup> Kathryn Schulz, “What is Distant Reading?”, *The New York Times*, 24 June, 2011. See [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/26/books/review/the-mechanic-muse-what-is-distant-reading.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/26/books/review/the-mechanic-muse-what-is-distant-reading.html?_r=0), consulted on May 23, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> See Scott Kleinman, *Exploring Quantitative Methods in the Humanities: An Introduction*, article posted on July 26, 2012, at <http://scottkleinman.net/blog/2012/07/26/exploring-quantitative-methods-in-the-humanities-an-introduction/>, consulted on May 23, 2015.

research is, one can argue, that of freezing the flux of the literary object, as inside an insectarium, and then interpreting it in a static and somehow captive way, by placing its “live” figures and stylistic processes in dry charts and maps. Quantitative analysis, with its search for graphs, maps and, as it were, “ghosts” of different literary relations, conflicts, characters, displays the visual transposition of an otherwise discursive form of art. In their turn, the older qualitative methods of doing close literary analysis, as well as cultural and theoretical criticism, are often anthropological and identity-centered studies, in which one can infer the “anthropomorphic divinity” (to invoke Nemoianu’s syntagm) that resides in literature.

The secondary, as a travelling and multileveled notion, remains apparently marginal, as it reverberates more in a cluster of conceptual nuances or attunements, than in ideological statements. It can therefore offer a generous sphere of textual and metatextual meanings, whereby to rename the need for singularity, for literary embodiment, instead of mere disembodied graphs or “dendrograms” of lifeless literary relations. The part played by the secondary or aesthetic drives of literature is to otherwise restore it to its own body, to its own materiality and immanent flux of textuality. It is as if – going back to Nussbaum’s interpretation of *Antigone* in her *Fragility of Goodness* – the self-sufficient “cityship” of Creon had to open up one more time to “contingency”, to the fundamental “value of community” and, last but not least, to an ethical, albeit aesthetically based, experience.

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REENACTMENTS OF “THE SECONDARY” – WITHIN AND BEYOND THE  
“LITERARY TURN”*(Abstract)*

The paper focuses on several conceptual nuances which I consider that could enter into a hermeneutical dialogue and, thus, they could become complementary modes of reinterpreting certain topics of literary and aesthetic theory. These dynamic concepts are to be analyzed from the viewpoint of certain theoretical narratives, around which they seem to gather and to nourish a few epistemological instruments and perspectives: *the secondary* (a concept proposed by a “travelling theorist”, situated in-between cultures, Virgil Nemoianu), *the political and historical turn* in the literary studies (in this respect, New Historicism being a main critical perspective and direction of thought) and, conversely, the “*literary turn*” in political and social thought. Such comprehensive syntagms, which coagulate around important hermeneutical narratives of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, might prove relevant for reassessing the social and anthropological influence of literary theory and of aesthetic epistemology. My argument will follow some critical reenactments of the *secondary* – and the dialogue, either subtle or radically polemical, or the rupture between the secondary and the principal – within the *literary turn* of the nineties and then within the “digital turn” and the approaches indebted to “distant reading” (Franco Moretti) in the years 2000.

*Keywords:* the Secondary, the Literary Turn, the Digital Turn, Virgil Nemoianu, Martha Nussbaum, Stanley Cavell.

NOI PRELUCRĂRI ALE „SECUNDARULUI” – ÎN CADRUL ȘI DINCOLO DE  
„MUTAȚIA LITERARĂ”*(Rezumat)*

Lucrarea se axează asupra mai multor nuanțe conceptuale, care consider că ar putea intra într-un dialog hermeneutic și, prin urmare, ar putea deveni moduri complementare de reinterpretare a unor obiecte ale teoriei literare și estetice. Aceste concepte dinamice vor fi analizate din perspectiva unor narațiuni teoretice, în jurul cărora ele par să se adune și astfel să ajute la crearea câtorva instrumente epistemologice: *secundarul* (concept propus de către „teoreticianul călător”, aflat la granița dintre culturi, Virgil Nemoianu), cotitura sau mutația politică și istorică în studiile literare (în această privință, *New Historicism/ Noul istorism* fiind principala perspectivă critică și direcție de gândire) și reversul său, „the Literary Turn”, cotitura sau mutația literară a gândirii politice și sociale. Astfel de sintagme cuprinzătoare, care coagulează în jurul unor narațiuni hermeneutice importante ale secolului al XX-lea și ale primului deceniu al secolului XXI, s-ar putea dovedi relevante pentru reevaluarea influenței sociale și antropologice a teoriei literare și a epistemologiei estetice. Argumentația mea va urmări câteva reconstituiri ori prelucrări critice ale *secundarului* – precum și dialogul, fie subtil, fie radical polemic, sau chiar ruptura între *secundar* și *principal* – în cadrul a ceea ce s-a numit „mutația literară” a teoriei anilor nouăzeci, iar apoi în cadrul unei mutații digitale și a abordărilor îndatorate unei „lecturi critice distanțate”/ „distant reading” (Franco Moretti), în anii 2000.

*Cuvinte-cheie:* secundarul, mutația literară, mutația digitală, Virgil Nemoianu, Martha Nussbaum, Stanley Cavell.

## L'IDENTITÉ DE RÔLE – L'HISTOIRE DISCONTINUE D'UNE IDÉE TRANSATLANTIQUE

Le sujet de mon article porte sur un cas de réimportation théorique transatlantique : il s'agit des modèles descriptifs de l'identité sociale élaborés par Georg Simmel au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, eux-mêmes inspirés par une tradition très riche remontant jusqu'au romantisme allemand et adaptés par l'École de sociologie de Chicago, avant d'être ramenés sur le continent dans les valises d'un boursier allemand : Ralf Dahrendorf. Qu'est-ce qui fut perdu et qu'est-ce qui fut gagné sur ce chemin ? Outre la boucle qui se ferme par le retour d'une idée dans la culture d'origine, là où elle avait été oubliée, je tente de suivre la réceptivité dérivée d'autres cultures, comme celle roumaine, face à l'idée de rôle et d'identité de rôle. Dans la reconstitution de ce puzzle de connections entre cultures théoriques différentes, il faut remarquer les fréquents passages entre disciplines, de même que dans le cas de la réflexion théorique reliée à l'identité sociale et les pratiques artistiques de représentation du moi.

L'historique de la constitution et de la réception théorique des rôles pourrait à tout moment faire l'objet d'une vraie étude de cas, qui mettrait en valeur la dynamique intra- et transculturelle d'un canon théorique, comprise comme *dialectique subtile entre continuités et discontinuités*<sup>1</sup>. J'ai ici en vue premièrement les sinuosités censées d'appartenir à une longue tradition de pensée, marquée d'incessants efforts de mise à jour et de conceptualisation théorique, de prudente conservation d'un certain nombre de constructions d'idées inactuelles, d'une spectaculaire résurrection de fragments de pensée abandonnés, mais aussi d'obnubilations volontaires et involontaires des sources, de distanciations et de polémiques explicites, et surtout implicites, avec les précurseurs, de détournements et de pertes de sens, de transformations paradoxales et pleines de contradictions des principales figures de pensée, devenues difficilement reconnaissables. Deuxièmement, des disciplines théoriques plus ou moins proches accordent ou retirent leur intérêt à une théorie d'une certaine généralité, qui circule ainsi dans différents domaines et cultures théoriques, oubliée ici, redécouverte là, souvent sans que la théorie en cause ne transporte plus toutes ses implications et ses valeurs jusqu'à destination, oubliant ses origines pour gagner en précision ou, au contraire,

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<sup>1</sup> Sur une « dialectique des continuités et des discontinuités » dont l'herméneutique devrait tenir compte dans sa tentative de clarification des modalités d'actualisation historique de la pensée d'un précurseur important dans la construction d'une tradition, voir Willy Michel, « Poetische Transformationen Kierkegaardscher Denkfiguren im neueren deutschen Roman », in Gerd Michels (ed.), *Festschrift für Friedrich Kienecker zum 60. Geburtstag*, Heidelberg, Julius Groos Verlag, 1980, pp. 153-173.

contribuant à la rencontre pleine de conséquences de certaines recherches isolées, venant d'horizons variés. Cette dialectique des continuités et des discontinuités qui engage tant 1° *la dimension historique de profondeur* d'une tradition théorique que 2° *les champs de validité et d'applicabilité* où elle trouve son support, ainsi que 3° *la réceptivité* sélective et inévitablement non-synchrone, déphasée par rapport à d'autres cultures théoriques étrangères face à une idée d'importation et à sa *traductibilité* limitée<sup>2</sup>, met en valeur la secrète survivance, pleine de possibilités, des figures de pensée.

*La théorie sociopsychologique et l'esthétique des rôles*, connue également sous le nom de *théorie de l'identité sociale* décrit un trajet exemplaire pour mettre en lumière le changement de canon, surtout de ces quatre dernières décennies, et les significatives désynchronisations qui ont marqué le changement produit dans des domaines distincts comme la sociologie, la psychologie, la théorie littéraire, voire la littérature elle-même, intéressée à son tour par les modèles théoriques. L'histoire de sa constitution et de sa réception marque tant le phénomène de l'oubli des origines – la théorie est pratiquement réinventée par Ralf Dahrendorf en 1958, avant d'être redécouverte comme partie d'une tradition culturelle ignorée ou oubliée remontant jusqu'au romantisme – et celui de la survivance et de la diffusion souterraine de ses principales constructions d'idées dans des domaines parallèles à la sociologie. Soudain, dans les années 1970, presque inexplicablement, tout le monde semble disposer des instruments de pensée de cette théorie, sans que la théorie elle-même ait bénéficié dans les milieux académiques de la confiance et de la popularité, ou, tout au moins, d'une compréhension historique de ses racines<sup>3</sup>. A la fin des années 1950 et aux années 1960, le caractère formalisé et standardisé des normes et des attentes collectives de nos performances sociales, concrétisé dans le « rôle », respectivement les « rôles » qu'on joue dans la vie sociale, est un sujet que l'on trouve souvent sur l'agenda scientifique de l'époque. Le plus souvent, cette nouvelle théorie improvisée, qui ne connaissait ou ne reconnaissait pas encore ses grands précurseurs, de Georg Simmel à Friedrich Schlegel et Novalis, se moulaient sur la critique de l'existentialisme à l'adresse de *man*, ainsi que sur les théories de l'Ecole de Francfort, sur l'aliénation sociale. Du côté des critiques de la modernité, pour lesquels le rôle n'était qu'un synonyme de fonction, prédominait une conception objectivante, fataliste par rapport au rôle. Or, à ses débuts, la théorie des rôles avait cherché à quitter le sens idéologisé des valorisations positives ou négatives à l'égard de la socialisation en tant que phénomène en soi, cherchant des explications

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<sup>2</sup> Malgré l'internationalisation accélérée des thèmes et des instruments théoriques, il n'existe pas (encore) un canon théorique universel, et une idée qui traverse des milieux linguistiques et culturels différents se retrouve souvent modifiée, et de manière substantielle.

<sup>3</sup> Voir aussi Jacques Coenen-Huther, « Heurs et malheurs du concept de rôle social », in *Revue européenne des sciences sociales*, XLIII-132/2005 : *L'interdisciplinarité existe-t-elle?*, pp. 65-82, consulté en ligne le 30.05.2015: <http://ress.revues.org/328?lang=en>.

tant pour les comportements sociaux réussis (pour lesquels le jeu des solutions sociales et la liberté d'expression sociale de soi sont quasiment illimitées), que pour l'échec dans le conformisme social ou dans l'anarchie. Dans les années 1970, on assiste à une mutation significative dans certaines aires du paradigme de la théorie des rôles, qui s'élargit vers plusieurs domaines : on redécouvre les significations initiales des catégories théoriques du « rôle » respectivement du « jeu social », et on relance des modèles d'explication abandonnés ou traditionnellement moins précisés, tel celui de la distanciation par rapport au rôle, des comportements sociaux ironiques et parodiques. Cette mutation est très visible dans la sociologie, dans l'effort de récupérer la conscience historique, propre à Jürgen Habermas et à son disciple, le sociologue Lothar Krappmann. Indépendamment de ces évolutions théoriques, cette mutation touche également le roman, sous la forme d'une redécouverte du plaisir du jeu avec ses identités multiples, réelles et fictives, sans la crainte d'un certain masque, ou d'une identité imposée par les attentes des autres, qui suffoquerait le moi. Le changement du canon théorique eut lieu entre la publication des deux romans 'identitaires' de Max Frisch, à savoir *Stiller* (1954<sup>4</sup>) et *Mein Name sei Gantenbein* (1964<sup>5</sup>). Dans *Stiller* le protagoniste ne veut admettre ni devant ses proches ni devant les autorités qu'il est lui-même, il ne veut pas revenir à l'identité que les autres lui ont progressivement attribuée, en l'éloignant de son propre projet existentiel de nature abstraite, tandis que dans *Mein Name sei Gantenbein*, au contraire, le héros veut revenir à son soi non pas par le retrait du social, mais par l'imposture sociale, par l'attribution d'une pléiade de fausses identités, à commencer par celle d'un aveugle, par un jeu de rôles qui l'aide le mieux à s'exprimer, à rencontrer et à comprendre les autres dans des circonstances propices. Ainsi, tandis que dans *Stiller* le rôle social était l'expression de la contrainte de se laisser porter par les images, les avis et les attentes des autres, et que l'existence fragmentée et falsifiée constituée de rôles était plutôt une malédiction qu'un espace de jeu et d'ouverture vers des multiples possibilités d'interagir socialement, dans *Mein Name sei Gantenbein* l'auteur fait l'apologie de l'existence plurielle à travers les rôles. Cette fois-ci, le narrateur-protagoniste universalise tout simplement le concept, de telle manière que derrière chacun des *moi* qui s'exprime, il ne peut y avoir le moi entier, mais uniquement le rôle: « jedes Ich, das sich ausspricht, ist eine Rolle »<sup>6</sup>. Il se demande même si quiconque pourrait écrire sans jouer un rôle. Ce déplacement d'accent est visible si on compare le premier roman de la trilogie *Kristlein* de Martin Walser, *Halbzeit* (*Mi-temps*, 1960, sans traduction française) et le deuxième, *Das Einhorn* (1966<sup>7</sup>). Les

<sup>4</sup> Traduit de l'allemand par Solange de Lalène en 1957 (*Je ne suis pas Stiller*, Paris, Grasset, « Climats », n°8, 1957, et par Éliane Kaufholz-Messmer en 1991 (*Stiller*. Préface d'Olivier Mannoni, postface de Michel Tournier, Paris, Grasset).

<sup>5</sup> *Le Désert des miroirs*. Traduit de l'allemand par André Cœuroy, Paris, Gallimard, 1966.

<sup>6</sup> Max Frisch, *Mein Name sei Gantenbein*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1973, p. 45.

<sup>7</sup> *La Licorne*. Traduit de l'allemand par Magda Michel, Paris, Gallimard, 1969.

explications pour ce changement de canon sont intéressantes et variées : on peut citer le revirement des doctrines libérales et la dépréciation, en raison de sa trivialisation, de la pensée de l'Ecole de Francfort, l'articulation des premières critiques pertinentes à l'adresse de l'existentialisme, la redécouverte du premier existentialisme et tout d'abord de la dialectique des stades de Kierkegaard, qui avait permis à Heidegger de faire un absolu du stade éthique, au détriment de l'esthétique, de la joie donjuanesque pour l'identité queue de paon.

Le long cheminement de la théorie des rôles vers ses propres origines et en même temps dans le sens de son propre devenir est révélateur des vertus d'un *souvenir qui anticipe*, pour employer un mot essentiellement dialectique de la philosophie de Kierkegaard.

La théorie des rôles fut importée des Etats-Unis par le sociologue d'origine allemande (aujourd'hui établi en Angleterre et membre de la Chambre des Lords) Ralf Dahrendorf, qui fut en 1958 *fellow* auprès du Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences à Stanford, Californie. Dahrendorf voulait rassembler les résultats des recherches sur les conflits de rôles de Neal Gross (1958<sup>8</sup>), ainsi que les théorèmes de Robert K. Merton (1957<sup>9</sup>). Quand il publie son premier livre sur les rôles, *Homo sociologicus* (1958<sup>10</sup>), Ralf Dahrendorf ne pense pas que sa théorie puisse ne pas être une simple importation, et qu'en vérité il vient d'acclimater *αχχλιματερ* dans la sociologie allemande une théorie qui s'y enracinait fortement depuis un bon moment. C'est le mérite de Friedrich H. Tenbruck<sup>11</sup> d'avoir attiré l'attention la même année sur le fait que l'Ecole de Chicago, qui avait inspiré Dahrendorf, était majoritairement influencée par la pensée sociologique du début du siècle, celle de Georg Simmel, que Robert E. Park<sup>12</sup> avait directement connu à l'époque de ses études à Berlin. Plus tard, Uta Gerhard<sup>13</sup> établit les relations de filiation entre la pensée du sociologue américain George Herbert Mead, auteur de la théorie de l'interactionnisme symbolique, et Simmel ou Dilthey. L'historicité interne du processus d'éclaircissement conceptuel et de transformation catégorielle en théorie des rôles n'arrive à être reconstituée qu'avec difficulté, et cette

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<sup>8</sup> Neal Gross, Ward S. Mason, Alexander W. Mc Eachern, *Explorations in Role Analysis*, New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1958.

<sup>9</sup> Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Glencoe III, IL: Free Press, 1957, et *ibidem*, « The Role-Set » in *British Journal of Sociology* VIII, 1957, 2, pp. 106-120.

<sup>10</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Homo Sociologicus. Ein Versuch zur Geschichte, Bedeutung und Kritik der Kategorie der sozialen Rolle*, Köln et Opladen, Westdeutscher Verlag, 1958.

<sup>11</sup> Friedrich H. Tenbruck., « Georg Simmel (1858-1918) », in *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, 10, 1958, pp. 587-614.

<sup>12</sup> Robert E. Park, « Lebensgeschichte », in Wolf Lepenies (ed.), *Geschichte der Soziologie. Studien zur kognitiven, sozialen und historischen Identität einer Disziplin*, I, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1981, pp. 255-270.

<sup>13</sup> Uta Gerhard, *Rollenanalyse als kritische Soziologie*, Neuwied et Berlin, Luchterhand, 1971. Uta Gerhard relève aussi des renvois implicites aux concepts de Simmel dans les écrits de Ralf Dahrendorf.

reconstitution reste encore fortement discutée dans ses détails les plus concrets. Les premiers sociologues américains des années 1930, qui se disputaient la primauté sur l'introduction de la théorie des rôles dans la sociologie, tels Ralph Linton (*The Study of Man*, 1936), George Herbert Mead (*Mind, Self and Society*, 1934) ou encore Jacob L. Moreno (*Who shall survive*, 1934) ne renvoient pas directement à Simmel, qui reste néanmoins jusqu'à aujourd'hui celui qui offrit au concept de rôle les fondements les plus systématiquement ancrés dans la théorie de la connaissance. Heinz O. Luche explique l'absence de références à la sociologie de Simmel, connue de l'école américaine parfois directement à la source, par le contexte défavorable à toute citation de Simmel dans le monde académique, provoqué notamment par les tentatives d'Emile Durkheim de s'attaquer à la réputation scientifique de Georg Simmel. Dès la publication de la *Philosophie de l'argent* (1901), le sociologue français l'avait critiqué de manière virulente et pas toujours fondée pour un prétendu manque de cohérence et de système dans les idées, et pour des « spéculations bâtardes », qui n'auraient pas été fondées sur aucune preuve<sup>14</sup>. Les passages d'une tradition théorique à une autre, comme les transformations d'une école de pensée à une autre peuvent équivaloir, faute d'une conscience de l'historicité dans la ligne de pensée, à des éclipses inexplicables, à des pertes de substance et d'amplitude, jusqu'à la descente en-dessous du niveau de sa propre tradition. Ainsi, le point de vue de Ralf Dahrendorf quant à l'*homo sociologicus*, quant à l'homme en tant que présence sociale au centre d'attentes collectives plus ou moins précisées et devant se conformer à des normes et évoluant dans les limites de comportements-rôles prescrits avec un certain degré de rigueur, parvient à se différencier significativement, voire à inverser les prémisses d'une théorie des rôles présentes chez un précurseur comme Georg Simmel.

Ceci est dû aussi au moment où Dahrendorf arrive à connaître les différents développements de la théorie aux Etats-Unis, un moment de crise, où se profile un conflit finalement fertile entre théorie analytique et recherche empirique. Dans l'élaboration catégorielle du concept de rôle, l'accent était mis sur la fonction intégratrice, socialisatrice et stabilisatrice de la performance des rôles dans les collectivités, tandis que l'analyse empirique des rôles se fondait sur la question du conflit entre rôles performés et normes, sur le caractère contradictoire et conflictuel des prescriptions qui constituaient un rôle, sur les incompatibilités entre différents rôles. Puisque le problème du conflit aliénant entre normes, attentes et attitudes sociales ne se laisse réduire à ce moment-là à un dénominateur commun par rapport à la théorie de la fonction intégratrice de la performance, Dahrendorf fait appel à l'idée de « l'homme double » (« der gedoppelte Mensch »<sup>15</sup>), doté d'une nature privée et individuelle d'un côté, et d'une nature publique et sociale, de

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<sup>14</sup> Heinz O. Luche, *Distanz. Untersuchung zu einer vernachlässigten Kategorie*, München, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1985, p. 21. Voir aussi Emile Durkheim, *Textes*, Paris, Minuit, 1975, pp. 178-182.

<sup>15</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Homo sociologicus*, Opladen, Westdeutscher Verlag, 1974, p. 180.

l'autre, individu et espèce tout à la fois. Sur une ligne de recherche collatérale que Dahrendorf ne rejoint plus, les recherches empiriques du problème du conflit des rôles essayaient de ne pas perdre de vue la fonction indirectement intégrative du conflit, comme cela se passe dans les théories structurelles-fonctionnelles qui envisagent positivement le conflit, comme mécanisme systémique qui contribue indirectement à l'intégration et à la performance sociales, ou comme dans les théories fondées sur le théorème de la distance (Erving Goffmann – 1961<sup>16</sup>, Rose Laub Coser – 1966<sup>17</sup>, Lothar Krappmann – 1982<sup>18</sup>). Ce dernier postule qu'entre l'acteur et le rôle la différence n'est pas de nature résiduelle, mais constitutive, l'homme social gardant intacte sa liberté par rapport aux contraintes du rôle social. Mais chez Dahrendorf, l'*homo sociologicus* est un sujet conformiste qui veut éviter les éventuelles sanctions sociales et qui est obligé de se soumettre à des rôles socialement préétablis, et donc à cette énervante réalité qui s'appelle société : « Am Schnittpunkt des Einzelnen und der Gesellschaft steht *homo sociologicus*, der Mensch als Träger sozial vorgeformter Rollen. Der Einzelne *ist* seine sozialen Rollen, aber diese Rollen *sind* ihrerseits die ärgerliche Tatsache der Gesellschaft »<sup>19</sup>. Le concept de rôle social se fonde pour Ralf Dahrendorf sur une métaphorique réductionniste du rôle en général : le rôle, le caractère, le masque représentent pour leur porteur ou leur *performer* – l'acteur – quelque chose de prédéterminé, auquel on ne peut rien ajouter, quelque chose qui lui est foncièrement étranger et décidément inessentiel. Les rôles ne peuvent pas être négociés, ils ne résultent pas d'un consensus intersubjectif, et leur caractère obligatoire est pratiquement institutionnalisé. L'individu ne « joue » plus ses rôles, mais se donne à eux sans réserve, il se dissout en eux. Il ne garde son autonomie qu'en dehors des relations de rôle : « Hinter allen Rollen, Personen und Masken bleibt der Schauspieler als Eigenliches, von diesen nicht Affiziertes »<sup>20</sup>. Ainsi, la condition de l'individu ne se fonde-t-elle plus sur le concept de rôle, comme chez Simmel, pour lequel l'aspect distancié était implicite au rôle. Dahrendorf parle lui aussi de la possibilité de se distancier, mais non pas dans le sens d'un comportement social interprétatif et créatif, puisqu'il doute de l'existence d'une liberté sociale de l'homme. La société signifie contrainte, une carapace suffocante même pour ceux qui s'efforcent, selon leurs possibilités, de prendre leurs distances par rapport aux prescriptions du rôle :

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<sup>16</sup> Erving Goffman, *Encounters: Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction*, Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1961.

<sup>17</sup> Rose Laub Coser, « Role Distance, Sociological Ambivalence, and Transitional Status Systems », *American Journal of Sociology*, 72, 1966, 2, pp. 173-187.

<sup>18</sup> Lothar Krappmann, *Soziologische Dimensionen der Identität. Strukturelle Bedingungen für die Teilnahme an Interaktionsprozessen*, Stuttgart, Klett, 1982.

<sup>19</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Homo sociologicus*, p. 20.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 22.

daß die Tatsache der Gesellschaft ein Gerüst sein kann, das uns aufrechterhält und Sicherheit gibt, gilt auch für die, die bemüht sind, *sich von ihren Rollen nach Möglichkeit zu distanzieren*. Ob der Mensch in der Lage wäre, sein gesamtes Verhalten ohne die Assistenz der Gesellschaft selbst schöpferisch zu gestalten, ist eine spekulative Frage, die überzeugend zu beantworten kaum möglich ist (je souligne, R.C.)<sup>21</sup>.

Le réductionnisme conceptuel chez Dahrendorf est dû aussi à une récupération de la métaphore théâtrale du rôle dans le langage scientifique, qui permet au rôle de devenir le concept-clé non pas pour l'analyse des processus d'entremise entre individu et société, mais pour les événements typiques de l'aliénation, bien que les conditions d'une compréhension de la performance intelligente et interprétative du rôle ne manquent pas dans la constellation de la métaphore théâtrale. En cherchant les conditions de la liberté pour « l'homme double » ailleurs que dans sa propre sociabilité, Dahrendorf retourne à Kant, interprétant la contradiction entre l'image morale de l'homme en tant qu'être libre, unique, entier, et l'image de celui-ci en tant qu'agrégat déterminé et fragmenté de rôles, à travers le prisme de la troisième antinomie de la raison pure : « *Homo sociologicus* ist, in der Sprache Kants, der Mensch im Bann der 'Naturgesetzlichkeit', dessen jeder Schritt nur Glied in einer Kette erkennbarer Bezüge ist; der ganze Einzelne dagegen läßt sich keiner solchen Kette eingliedern, er ist frei »<sup>22</sup>. L'individu en tant qu'être déterminé par des rôles sociaux correspondrait à ce qui, chez Kant, signifie le « caractère empirique », tandis que l'homme entier (*das Ansichsein des Menschen*) serait synonyme au « caractère intelligible ». Le court-circuitage théorique, tenté par le sociologue allemand, entre deux traditions non-convergentes et entre deux époques théoriques cette fois distinctes, était voué à l'échec : la compréhension de la théorie des rôles se faisait chez Dahrendorf dans le sens d'une compréhension scientifique contemporaine du fonctionnalisme, mais afin d'éviter la confusion entre *homo sociologicus* et l'homme entier dans son existence concrète, il ressuscitait des traditions d'avant le fondement de la sociologie propres à la philosophie de la liberté, dans le sillage Kant-Rousseau. La sociologie revenait ainsi sans profit au modèle pré-bourgeois de la liberté, un modèle de rupture entre individu et société – souvenons-nous des impératifs présents chez des penseurs allant de Rousseau jusqu'à Kant, Fichte et Hegel, invitant à être égal avec soi sans, et même contre, la société, *ein Selbst ohne und gegen die Gesellschaft*, dans la variante du dévouement de l'individu par rapport à lui-même, ou, dans la variante du dévouement social, à exister dans la collectivité sans et même contre soi – *gesellschaftlich sein ohne und gegen das Selbst*. Remettre l'homme moderne dans la situation d'un citoyen appartenant à deux mondes fondamentalement différents, *Bürger zweier Welten*, est le signe inaugural d'une longue et stérile discussion sur l'attractivité des dichotomies classiques morales et philosophiques, sur l'actualité

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 42.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 84-85.

et l'utilité de tracer des frontières entre « l'homme déchu dans le monde » et l'abstrus et plénier « homme philosophique ». Les objections envers *Homo sociologicus* donneront naissance à un axe de recherche sociologique qui ne se situait plus sous le signe de la conscience tragique quant à la scission entre être public et être privé. Dans un livre de 1985, Dahrendorf trouve soi-même des arguments contre sa thèse de jeunesse, non sans s'adjuger, en dépit de toutes les critiques, le mérite d'avoir ouvert la discussion et de l'avoir orientée vers les comportements sociaux sous- et anti-institutionnels<sup>23</sup>.

L'histoire du mode de pensée qui aboutira à la théorie des rôles trouve son point d'origine dans les polémiques qu'*Homo sociologicus* fit naître. Dans les années 1980, Georg Simmel fut redécouvert<sup>24</sup>, avec des conséquences plus que profitables pour les chercheurs du domaine de l'interactionnisme symbolique, qui s'occupaient de l'étude des conflits de rôle, à l'instar de Jürgen Habermas, Lothar Krappmann, Ulrich Oevermann ou encore Hans Joas.

Ceux-ci retournent directement ou indirectement aux trois principes aprioriques de la socialisation, correspondant aux concepts respectifs de rôle, personne et système, tels qu'ils avaient été formulés par Simmel. A travers le premier principe, Simmel affirmait que les individus sont dans l'impossibilité de se percevoir les uns les autres et d'interagir de manière strictement empirique et immédiate et qu'ils se servent dans l'interaction sociale d'*images* relativement stéréotypées sur soi et sur les autres. Cependant, ces images stéréotypées (que Simmel nomme également *rôles*) ne sont pas de simplifications trompeuses de la perception dues au manque d'expérience ou d'acuité de l'observation, mais au contraire ce sont elles qui rendent possible l'interaction. Elles ont un rôle décisif dans l'économie entière des relations interpersonnelles, puisqu'elles sont incluses dans la faculté d'anticiper sur la perception réciproque et sur les effets de l'action et de maintenir la cohérence et la continuité de l'échange de regards et d'actes

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<sup>23</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, *Law and Order*, London, Stevens, 1985, notamment p. 126-127: « At this point, a personal note is in place. Now I have to add myself to this list. The institutional liberalism which I am advocating here is incompatible with the views which unfortunately still finds its readers, *Homo sociologicus* », « The Essay found many critics, all of whom I refuted conclusively in another paper entitled "Sociology and Human Nature" (Ralf Dahrendorf, « Sociology and Human Nature. A Postscript to Homo Sociologicus », in *Essays in the Theory of Society*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1968, pp. 88-106), except that today I believe that my critics were too lenient with me. They omitted to castigate me for my contribution to turning sociology into the study of sub-institutional, if not anti-institutional study of behavior ».

<sup>24</sup> L'intérêt pour la sociologie de Georg Simmel est perceptible dans quelques événements du début des années 1980 : le congrès « Die Aktualität Georg Simmels » des 24-26 juillet 1982 qui eut lieu dans le cadre du centre pour la recherche interdisciplinaire de l'Université de Bielefeld, ainsi que la publication de l'ouvrage de Heinz-Jürgen Dahme: *Soziologie als exakte Wissenschaft. Georg Simmels Ansatz und seine Bedeutung in der gegenwärtigen Soziologie*. Teil I: « Simmel im Urteil der Soziologie », Teil II: « Simmel Soziologie im Grundriß », Stuttgart, Ferdinand Enke Verlag, 1981 et du volume collectif dirigé par Heinz-Jürgen Dahme et Otthein Rammstedt: *Georg Simmel und die Moderne. Neue Interpretationen und Materialien*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1984.

sociaux. Les fondements théoriques de l'hypothèse de Simmel - l'homme entre en interaction sociale seulement par l'intermédiaire d'une image (d'un rôle) - est très proche de la conception du haut romantisme sur la perception interpersonnelle médiée par le rôle : on ne perçoit pas l'autre qu'à travers le rôle qu'on lui attribue ou qu'il s'attribue lui-même, étant donné qu'il n'est pas possible de se représenter de manière absolue une individualité divergente. C'est seulement dans l'échange réciproque de rôles et dans leur réajustement que la pluralité intérieure de chacun sera circonscrite. La projection de la totalité et la scission de la personnalité se superposent et se conditionnent réciproquement dans l'interaction sociale :

Die Praxis des Lebens drängt darauf, das Bild des Menschen nur aus den realen Stücken, die wir von ihm empirisch wissen, zu gestalten; aber gerade sie ruht auf jenen Veränderungen und Ergänzungen, auf der Umbildung jener gegebenen Fragmente zu der Allgemeinheit eines Typus und zu der Vollständigkeit der ideellen Persönlichkeit<sup>25</sup>.

La perception et la compréhension fragmentaire ont la capacité de saisir l'intégrité de l'autre, à l'instar du regard qui décrypte la tache aveugle de notre champ visuel :

Dieses Fragmentarische aber ergänzt der Blick des Anderen zu dem, was wir niemals rein un ganz sind. Er kann gar nicht die Fragmente nur nebeneinander sehen, die wirklich gegeben sind, sondern wie wir den blinden Fleck in unserem Sehfelde ergänzen, daß man sich seiner gar nicht bewußt wird, so machen wir aus diesem Fragmentarischen die Vollständigkeit seiner Individualität<sup>26</sup>.

De tout ceci, on comprend que chez Simmel la différence entre rôles assumés (ou socialement prescrits) et individu concret et entier n'est plus capable de s'annuler, et qu'elle devient même la condition de la socialisation. Quand il évoque la nécessité de réhabiliter le préjugé (*Vor-Urteil*) Gadamer se place lui aussi dans la même tradition de pensée où se situe le premier principe apriorique de la socialisation.

Le deuxième a priori chez Simmel prend en compte la partie de l'existence individuelle qui ne s'adresse pas à la société ou, pour mieux dire, qui ne se dissout pas en elle. L'humain est *en même temps* (et non tour à tour) en dehors et à l'intérieur de la société, la socialisation elle-même impliquant l'individualisation. La façon d'être soi-même, d'être un certain moi, individualisé, « ein Selbst-Sein », « ein gesondertes Ich »<sup>27</sup> se trouve dans la continuité du mode social d'être, Simmel évitant de prolonger dans la sociologie l'utopie robinsonienne de l'autarcie. L'individu se situe doublement dans la société: d'une part il est contenu par la société et d'autre part il s'y oppose. Ce double ancrage par rapport à la société lui donne la possibilité d'être soi-même (Simmel évite de parler du fait

<sup>25</sup> Georg Simmel, *Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*, Otthein Rammstedt (ed.) *Gesamtausgabe*, XI, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1992, p. 49.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 53.

d'être pour soi, « *das Fürsichsein des Menschen* »<sup>28</sup>, dans les termes de la philosophie de la liberté), de marquer sa différence par la distance. En partant d'ici et jusqu'aux théories de Krappmann<sup>29</sup> sur la distance de rôle, il n'y a plus qu'un pas à franchir.

Enfin, le troisième a priori voit la société comme système de positions et de fonctions prédéterminées, qui correspondent, dans leur différenciation et leur complexité, aux dispositions et aux facultés des individus, de sorte que ces dispositions et ces facultés forment la condition *sine qua non* de l'existence de la société. « Objektiv gewendet bedeutet dieser Gedanke, die Gesellschaft ist ein System, das in den Fähigkeiten und Leistungen der Individuen die selbsterzeugte Bedingung seiner Existenz hat »<sup>30</sup>. Simmel postule donc la corrélation structurelle entre l'existence individuelle et les cercles sociaux dans lesquels elle est incluse, entre les exigences sociales et les qualifications individuelles.

Il est évident que la société roumaine, qui est au moins jusqu'en 1990 une société sans liberté individuelle, ne supporte pas qu'on lui applique ce modèle libéral en tant que tel. La société est contrôlée de manière presque absolue par le pouvoir politique et par ses instruments de surveillance et de répression. Des dispositions et des facultés individuelles sont dogmatiquement et sans regret sacrifiées aux dépens du développement même de la société de ce temps-là. Malgré les déclarations de principe, le capital humain ne compte pas, le communisme nourrissant la croyance optimiste que ce capital est infiniment régénérable et la croyance élitiste selon laquelle on trouvera toujours les bons candidats pour les peu nombreuses hautes fonctions sociales. Une analyse fondée sur la théorie des rôles aurait été à même de rendre compte de l'appauvrissement social, et également de la farce gigantesque dont la plupart étaient bon gré mal gré les acteurs, et, pourquoi pas, des stratégies d'adaptation et des socialisations « réussies » dans ces conditions. Mais les conflits de conscience, l'écart entre performance sociale et convictions intimes, entre rôle du « dehors » et rôle au sein de la famille ou du cercle restreint des amis ne transparaissent à l'époque que dans des formes normées, atténuées, acceptables dans le discours public ou dans les arts<sup>31</sup>. Les

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 54.

<sup>29</sup> Lothar Krappmann, *Soziologische Dimensionen der Identität. Strukturelle Bedingungen für die Teilnahme an Interaktionsprozesse*, Stuttgart, Klett, 1982.

<sup>30</sup> Peter Furth, « Soziale Rolle, Institution und Freiheit », in Harald Kerber, Arnold Schmieder (ed.), *Soziologie. Arbeitsfelder, Theorie, Ausbildung*, Rheinbeck bei Hamburg, Rowohlt, 1991, pp. 213-251, ici p. 224.

<sup>31</sup> Dans son ouvrage *Construcția identității într-o societate totalitară. O cercetare sociologică asupra scriitorilor* ([*La Construction de l'identité dans une société totalitaire. Une recherche sociologique sur les écrivains*], Iași, Editura Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza, 2012, pp. 194-200), Dan Lungu cite l'exemple de l'écrivain Nicolae Breban, qui, après les « thèses de juillet », qui avaient déclenché une mini-révolution culturelle de nuance maoïste en Roumanie, quitte la revue *România literară* lors d'un voyage d'études à Paris, tout en continuant de rester membre suppléant du Comité Central du Parti Communiste Roumain, position autrement plus importante. De même, dans les interviews qu'il

formes esthétiques de diffusion de l'identité, de perte du contrôle, les expressions de l'incertitude, de la déception ou de la fuite hors de soi, de l'inconfort personnel et, tout compte fait, de la sincérité sont rares et commencent à apparaître vers la fin des années 1980. On déplore alors l'absence d'un Kundera dans la littérature roumaine, d'un point de repère pour les gens, pour les indécis. Car la dissidence, aussi faible qu'elle soit, est elle aussi une forme d'identité « forte », engagée, sans fissures, qui polarise – et peu nombreux sont ceux disposés à emprunter cette voie, même au risque d'une perte de sa cohérence personnelle. Pour d'autres il n'y a que de doutes qu'ils ne savent ni résorber ni utiliser comme capital de sympathie ou de négociation à l'instar des opportunistes. Ils n'ont ni même le courage de les totaliser tels les dissidents. Il faut attendre la prose des années 2000, les romans de Dan Lungu, *Raiul găinilor* (2004<sup>32</sup>) ou *Sunt o babă comunistă* (2007<sup>33</sup>) pour apprendre comment les gens gèrent leurs petits soucis et mécontentements, quelle identité personnelle ils ont réussi à développer durant la période communiste et ce qu'ils croient pouvoir encore sauver de leur profil personnel, forcés comme ils sont dans l'après-1989 à se resocialiser et à réinterpréter leurs propres échecs et réussites.

Paradoxalement, bien que ces gens préoccupés de leurs petits arrangements ne soient certainement pas les héros ayant vaincu le communisme, mais plutôt de ridicules vaincus, ils figurent dans le programme littéraire de la propagande du temps comme étant les (petits) ennemis de la société, les spéculateurs et les profiteurs, qui ont tendance à avoir confiance en eux-mêmes plutôt que dans les promesses de la société. Dans la vulgate communiste, l'existence des acteurs à leur compte est impensable. C'est l'origine saine, ouvrière qui garantit l'adhésion à la politique sociale. Seulement des formes linéaires, unicasales de déterminisme social sont admises. En théorie, il n'y a pas de « transfuges sociaux » (quoique, dans la pratique, il existât quelques hauts fonctionnaires de parti et d'Etat qui

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accorde à l'étranger il se garde de critiquer Ceaușescu, les auteurs des thèses ou encore la direction du parti, pour ne formuler que des critiques modérées sur des questions culturelles, considérées courageuses en Occident, mais qui ne peuvent lui être imputées à son retour en Roumanie. Dan Lungu nomme ce type d'attitude « semi-résistance » (terme présentant le défaut de continuer d'alimenter les faux mythes de la résistance) et, de manière plus analytique, « manipulation égocentrique des répertoires » qui désigne « une stratégie complexe de gestion des conflits entre valeurs, codes culturels, répertoires d'action » et qui « ne se fonde pas sur la suspension d'un certain nombre d'entre eux ou sur l'usage alternatif dans des domaines autonomisés, c'est-à-dire sur l'évitement du conflit par leur manque de mise en contact direct, mais qui tente leur réconciliation à partir d'un raisonnement légitimateur *sui generis* ». Cette « logique singulière » ne suit que « le principe de maximisation des avantages, en s'efforçant de cumuler les aspects favorables de codes théoriquement incompatibles, de partiellement actualiser les répertoires disjoints dans des combinaisons originales à but personnel » (pp. 192-193). Un autre exemple de cette même pathologie de la dissidence truquée, de la distance jouée à son avantage et valorisée sur tous les fronts est celui du poète Adrian Păunescu.

<sup>32</sup> *Le paradis des poules : faux roman de rumeurs et de mystères*. Traduit du roumain par Laure Hinkel, Paris, Jacqueline Chambon, 2005.

<sup>33</sup> *Je suis une vieille coco*. Traduction Laure Hinkel, Paris, Jacqueline Chambon, 2008.

provenaient de milieux tout à fait bourgeois), et pas d' « étonnement » non plus devant les possibilités de l'individu de surprendre son entourage et même soi-même par ses propres actions. Le « héros » communiste est monolithique, prévisible et prédictible. Sa figure antagonique, « l'ennemi de classe », est décrite en termes d'aliénation, censée refléter les conflits inhérents à la société capitaliste, marionnette d'une kyrielle de comportements, actions et réactions dissolvantes et sans conjonction. Dans ces termes, l'ennemi de classe est lui aussi une figure « pleine », déterminée. Il est vrai, il existait dans l'art de propagande une zone grise, celle des convertis et des déclassés. Et pourtant, dans ce cas non plus, on ne peut parler d'une idée plus complexe et subtile du déterminisme social qui permettrait cette indétermination relative au comportement individuel qui donne tout son charme à la vie sociale. Quelque part, dans la biographie des « convertis », il existe toujours un facteur déterminant oublié ou qui n'avait pas été assumé par l'individu en question et qui, une fois récupéré, le ramène comme par enchantement dans le creuset naturel et attendu de son développement. A titre d'exemple, le héros, puisque orphelin, fut seulement élevé dans un milieu bourgeois, mais, une fois confronté à ses origines « saines », il devient l'homme qu'il aurait dû être depuis toujours ; une autre solution, plus romantique, mais pas des plus viables, c'est l'amour pour une « fille du peuple », et l'entrée dans la bonne classe sociale par le mariage). La volonté, le désir de l'individu ne suffisent pas, en l'absence d'une garantie ferme, c'est-à-dire extérieure à l'individu (l'origine, la recommandation/le gage des camarades ou des pairs durant les dernières décennies du communisme, l'appartenance à la même caste par des liens familiaux). Finalement, pour que rien ne vienne fissurer la figure du héros, de « l'homme nouveau », il vaut mieux qu'il n'ait point de passé, et ainsi se dérober à ce qui pourrait le soustraire au contrôle, comme déclare ironiquement le personnage principal du roman de Mircea Nedelciu, *Tratament fabulatoriu* (1986) :

L'homme se doit d'être présent à tout moment, d'avoir les sens et l'esprit en éveil, il faut que son optimisme dérive directement de cette présence continuelle. Il faut qu'il s'endorme rapidement, qu'il n'ait ni rêve ni cauchemars. Qu'il soit partout dans sa peau, chez lui, jamais disloqué, ni hésitant ou fatigué<sup>34</sup>.

Or c'est précisément ce que Luca, le météorologue de Mircea Nedelciu, ne réussit pas : créer l'impression d'être « chez soi », alors qu'il cherche l'entrée d'un prétendu phalanstère, bien caché dans les forêts et derrière des collines trompeuses, raison pour laquelle les autres personnages, tout comme le lecteur, sont obligés à travailler avec toutes sortes d'hypothèses : que l'individu serait un fou à l'imagination délirante, ou alors un criminel dangereux à la recherche d'un *no man' s land* « que personne ne connaît et où les gens peuvent pénétrer par hasard

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<sup>34</sup> Mircea Nedelciu, *Tratament fabulatoriu* [Traitement par fabulation], București, Cartea Românească, 1986, p. 59.

sans déranger personne »<sup>35</sup>. Le héros de Mircea Nedelciu est un anti-héros : le traitement affabulatoire qu'il s'applique et qu'il applique aux autres – il s'agit de toutes les histoires mystérieuses et invérifiables qu'il colporte et auxquelles les autres arrivent à croire ne serait-ce qu'à moitié – n'entend déranger personne. C'est pourquoi il n'est pas Stiller – car il se défend de provoquer. Il sait également qu'il est très grave « de prendre pour un refuge quelque chose qui ressemble à un piège »<sup>36</sup>, de « vouloir survivre dans la fiction et mourir dans la réalité »<sup>37</sup>. Luca travaille pour l'enrichissement esthétique de son identité, il fabule sur des mondes inaccessibles, impossibles, mais parfaitement imaginables ; et cela tente aussi le narrateur qui prend le personnage comme surface de projection et dans lequel il voit « un instrument avec lequel l'homme – qui écrit ou qui lit – refuse le monde afin de créer des antimondes [...] et changer le présent à partir de cette perspective et à l'aide de cette nouvelle position, une position de force »<sup>38</sup>. Cet enrichissement est dangereux, non-négociable, imputable à l'individu, qui ne peut pas se soustraire au contrôle social. Luca est poursuivi, tandis que le narrateur, pour se justifier, rédige une longue préface (fictive et auto-ironique), en citant des fragments puisés dans l'esthétique marxiste sur la fonction sociale de l'art.

Seul l'effondrement du communisme permet, en Roumanie, la multiplication vectorielle des sphères d'action et rend nécessaire la réflexion sur l'individu fragmenté. Ce n'est pas un hasard si la première traduction intégrale en roumain de *L'homme sans qualités* de Robert Musil (traduit par Mircea Ivănescu et paru aux éditions Univers en 1995) ne paraît que dans ce moment<sup>39</sup>. C'est l'intérêt pour ce roman qui m'a mise en contact avec l'étude de Ralf Dahrendorf, *Homo sociologicus*, qui s'appuie sur l'œuvre de Musil. Dahrendorf est connu en Roumanie par certains de ses livres plus récents<sup>40</sup>, et Bernard Lahire (*L'homme pluriel. Les ressorts de l'action*, 1998<sup>41</sup>) est celui qui gagne le marché éditorial<sup>42</sup>. Ceci ne doit pas étonner, car Lahire se sert lui aussi d'un exemple littéraire bien

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 121.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 133.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 196.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 120.

<sup>39</sup> Le roman mentionné de Mircea Nedelciu renvoie à *L'homme sans qualités* par les descriptions météorologiques ironiques du temps, qui sont à la fois neutres et nulles.

<sup>40</sup> *Reflecții asupra revoluției din Europa: într-o scrisoare ce ar fi urmat să fie transmisă unui domn din Varșovia*, [*Betrachtungen über die Revolution in Europa*, 1990]. Traduit par Marina Sandu, București, Humanitas, 1993; *Conflictul social modern: eseu despre politica libertății* [*Der moderne soziale Konflikt. Essay zur Politik der Freiheit*, 1992]. Traduit par Radu Neculau, București, Humanitas, 1996; *După 1989: morală, revoluție și societate civilă* [*After 1989: Morals, Revolution and Civil Society*, 1997]. Traduit par Mona Antohi, București, Humanitas, 2001.

<sup>41</sup> Bernard Lahire, *Omul plural. Către o sociologie psihologică* [*L'Homme pluriel*]. Traduit en roumain par Elisabeta Stănculescu, Iași, Polirom, 2000.

<sup>42</sup> On peut y ajouter le livre de Peter L. Berger et Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality. A treatise in the sociology of knowledge* (1966), traduit en roumain par Alex. Butucelea, *Construirea socială a realității* (București, Univers, 1999).

connu, à savoir celui de Marcel Proust. D'ailleurs, comme dans l'espace allemand, en Roumanie les milieux littéraires sont le mieux préparés à recevoir ces idées ; dans la prose roumaine des années 1980 et 1990, chez des auteurs comme Mircea Cărtărescu, Adrian Oțoiu, Simona Popescu ou Gheorghe Crăciun, on assiste à des phénomènes similaires de diffusion de l'identité, pour la compréhension desquels l'idée d'acteur social et de comportement de rôle est essentielle. Le prosateur Dan Lungu, qui est aussi maître de conférences au département de sociologie de l'Université « Alexandru Ioan Cuza » de Iași, tire profit de l'application de certains concepts, tels « habitus » (Pierre Bourdieu) et surtout « répertoire de schémas » (Bernard Lahire), à l'analyse de la manière dont les écrivains roumains construisent leur identité durant la période communiste, partagés entre identité sociale et identité personnelle, en d'autres termes entre positions sociales et dispositions personnelles<sup>43</sup>. Bernard Lahire lui-même consacre un ouvrage (*La condition littéraire : la double vie des écrivains*, Paris, La Découverte, 2006) à l'identité de l'écrivain d'hier et d'aujourd'hui dans le champ littéraire, respectivement économique, à partir d'un certain nombre d'entretiens (enquête réalisée en 2004, sous forme de questionnaires auprès de 503 écrivains recensés par l'Agence Rhône-Alpes ; il s'agit d'entretiens individuels avec 40 écrivains de cette même région, auxquels s'ajoute l'étude de dossiers de demande de bourse ou d'aide financière). Dan Lungu utilise cette même méthode dans ses entretiens avec 27 écrivains roumains, ayant des biographies diverses, et en ajoutant à ces entretiens des journaux, des témoignages, des souvenirs, etc. publiés par 20 autres écrivains connus. Dans le sillage de G.H. Mead, Dan Lungu considère que « le soi est constitué *simultanément* (je souligne) d'une composante 'sociologique', le soi social, qui n'est que l'intériorisation des rôles sociaux, respectivement d'une composante personnelle, le soi personnel, qui est créateur »<sup>44</sup>.

On ne soulignera jamais assez l'importance de cette récupération historique de l'interactionnisme symbolique par la culture roumaine, due à Dan Lungu : dans une telle perspective, il n'est plus possible de s'illusionner rétrospectivement que les acteurs sociaux de la période communiste faisaient une chose et en pensaient une autre, qu'ils vivaient une double vie, dont l'une était pure, que le vrai individu se trouvait toujours ailleurs, sans rapport avec ses actions ou, en général, avec le système. Au contraire, Lungu montre à quel point les acteurs sociaux de l'époque avaient été sensibles à certaines propositions d'identité sociale, véhiculées par la propagande qu'ils avaient intériorisée. Je m'appuierai ici sur trois exemples : 1. Le changement continu des recettes de promotion sociale sur fond de détérioration toujours plus accentuée de l'ethos du travail, 2. le caractère quasi-obligatoire d'utiliser le langage administratif, celui de la propagande, 3. l'isolement comme

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<sup>43</sup> Dan Lungu, *Construcția identității într-o societate totalitară. O cercetare sociologică asupra scriitorilor* (Iași, Editura Universității « Alexandru Ioan Cuza », 2e édition, 2012).

<sup>44</sup> Dan Lungu, *Construcția identității într-o societate totalitară*, p. 25.

forme de censure. En ce qui concerne l'éthos du travail (1), aux aurores du communisme le travail agricole fut soumis à un processus ciblé de dévalorisation en faveur du travail industriel, les raisons en étant de nature tant économique qu'idéologique. Mais le travail industriel se dévalorise progressivement à son tour<sup>45</sup> en faveur du travail bureaucratique, dans l'administration d'Etat, même au prix d'un renoncement à une partie du capital scolaire accumulé. Les recettes d'ascension sociale sont vite périmées. Les projets identitaires d'émancipation, l'ambition, la motivation d'accéder socialement souffrent des coups durs sous l'impact des politiques sociales, mais aussi en raison de décisions arbitraires, aléatoires. L'un des écrivains suivis par Lungu, Gh. Grigurcu, voit son parcours professionnel – souvent interrompu de sanctions, menaces et autres retards – comme étant une « anti-carrière », et source d'étonnement que, malgré les mécanismes de contre-sélection de la vie sociale, quelqu'un soit toutefois disposé à recommencer à zéro. C'est, bien évidemment, l'exception à la règle. L'effet de ce processus social est constitué d'une confusion des valeurs, de fausses hiérarchies, de la « généralisation du carriérisme et de l'évaluation de toutes qualités personnelles (talent, intelligence, compétences) selon la position occupée dans le système, et non l'inverse »<sup>46</sup>, enfin, de la construction d'une nomenklatura dans le champ littéraire même. Ceux qui n'appartiennent pas à cette nomenklatura peuvent en être séduits, car ils lui présumant une certaine valeur, étant donné son exposition publique convenable, la publicité qui l'entoure et sa position de pouvoir<sup>47</sup>. Cette nomenklatura peut s'avérer à un certain moment bienveillante, et les « obligations » de reconnaissance face à l'autorité produisent des illusions concernant les gens et, pire encore, le système même.

Mais cette idée d'« obligations » liées aux autorités reflète le fait que nous sommes dans une culture autoritaire, dans laquelle les institutions ne se trouvent pas au service du citoyen. Et, comme le montre Lungu, cette réalité est beaucoup plus ancienne et elle explique l'acceptation du communisme et l'adhésion à ses principes en Roumanie, dans les premières années de son implantation. La recherche de Lungu sur les identités personnelles contredit ainsi l'opinion plus répandue selon laquelle le communisme est un corps étranger, imposé de force et du dehors et auquel la société roumaine n'adhère pas foncièrement, malgré l'évidence de tout ce qui s'est passé pendant plus de quarante ans. Lungu se sert des chiffres d'adhésion au Parti Communiste dans l'immédiat après-guerre qui sont

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<sup>45</sup> Attentivement géré par la propagande, et contre toute évidence de l'échec économique, social, écologique, culturel toujours plus accentué des industrialisations forcées et du développement urbain « systématique » de la Roumanie, le mythe des « réalisations » du communisme n'est jamais démenti.

<sup>46</sup> Dan Lungu, *Construcția identității într-o societate totalitară*, p. 202.

<sup>47</sup> L'exemple donné par Lungu est celui du contestataire Gh. Grigurcu, qui continue d'apprécier Zaharia Stancu, le président de l'Union des Ecrivains : pour Gh. Grigurcu, Zaharia Stancu aurait « veiller » administrativement au bien-être de la gente des écrivains, même si la composition de cette dernière fût viciée et purgée d'écrivains importants qui ne bénéficiaient d'aucun appui, de sorte qu'il est légitime de se poser la question de la nature du capital (politique ou symbolique) dans son cas.

en Roumanie 9 fois supérieurs à ceux de Bulgarie, 18 fois à ceux de Pologne, 26 fois à ceux de Yougoslavie, 28 fois à ceux de Hongrie et, enfin, 45 fois supérieurs à ceux de la Tchécoslovaquie (ces données statistiques sont empruntées à l'ouvrage de l'historien d'origine hongroise François Fejtő, *Histoire des démocraties populaires*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1952). Or, pour Lungu,

...l'analyse de l'instauration du communisme ne touche pas seulement aux transformations institutionnelles, aux modes de gouvernement et aux documents de parti, mais [...] tout d'abord à la réalité subjective, aux manières de penser, de sentir et de savoir-faire à cette époque<sup>48</sup>.

Ceux qui résistent à la propagande officielle apprennent que pour recevoir une réponse ils doivent s'adresser dans la langue officielle, celle de la propagande. Le simple usage de la même langue de bois dans les situations qui l'exigent (2) légitime perversement le pouvoir<sup>49</sup>. Lungu montre encore qu'il existait déjà auparavant dans la société roumaine cette disponibilité face au compromis, ainsi que l'exercice de la prise de distance par rapport au rôle, vue comme un « hiatus entre identité sociale et identité personnelle ». La résistance face au communisme peut être localisée plutôt « au niveau de l'identité sociale : on réagit puisqu'on lui a fait voler la propriété, une fonction, un statut, et moins un niveau de l'identité personnelle : au nom du droit à la propriété, aux droits civiques, etc. »<sup>50</sup>. L'expérience de la démocratie, qui pour la plupart des gens se réalisait dans l'interaction avec les institutions, était dans l'entre-deux-guerres plutôt fragile, source de mécontentements : l'écart entre théorie et pratique leur avait appris déjà à « recourir à des stratégies intermédiaires »<sup>51</sup>. Dans le champ littéraire, cet écart se traduit par la pratique de différents types d'ambiguïtés, par des stratégies de « semi-résistance », d'« exercices d'équilibre » que Lungu inventorie scrupuleusement : de la codification prudente, conventionnelle du message, prise par le public, mais dépourvue d'une réelle attitude civique/politique, jusqu'aux comportements alternants (se soumettre à l'idéologie dans les écrits journalistiques, considérés comme moins importants et résister dans le soi-disant registre de l'esthétique ; des périodes de conformisme alternant avec des périodes de retrait, voire de révolte, etc.). Le sociologue se demande sans ménagements quel est le poids des « atrocités du régime », respectivement du « manque de culture politique/civique, professionnelle/ organisationnelle des écrivains »<sup>52</sup> dans le bilan de l'époque.

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 98.

<sup>49</sup> « Demandez quoi que ce soit dans la langue de bois et on vous en donnera. Sans partager les valeurs de l'idéologie dominante, l'acteur social en utilisant les paroles de la nouvelle langue devient involontairement coauteur de la légitimité » (*Ibidem*, p. 132, ma traduction).

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 100.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 101.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 157.

Enfin, un dernier aspect qui endommagerait l'identité personnelle de l'écrivain durant le communisme serait son isolement (3), provoqué par le contrôle que le pouvoir politique exerce sur les informations (censure, blocage du contact avec les littératures étrangères), mais aussi par des phénomènes d'autocontrôle et d'autocensure. Les tentatives désespérées de publier sans se compromettre conduisent au blocage, à la stérilité, à la perte de vocation, à la pulvérisation de l'identité personnelle. De même, l'exil ou « la sortie de la souterraine » dans les années 1990 sont pour beaucoup d'écrivains l'équivalent d'une reconsidération drastique de leur propre position, d'une perte de confiance dans leur propre projet, dans leur orientation.

Les écrivains qui commencent à publier dans les années 1980 sont de plus en plus conscients des effets fatals de l'isolement. Ils tentent idéalement de le dépasser par le changement de lectures, s'orientant plutôt vers la littérature et les arts américains et faisant des efforts considérables et risqués pour se tenir au courant de ce qui se passe dans le monde, dans le contexte d'une fermeture politique de plus en plus sévère. Socialement parlant, ils sont isolés, beaucoup moins visibles que les écrivains des 6<sup>e</sup> ou 7<sup>e</sup> décennies, car le parti veille à la marginalisation des intellectuels proéminents (obligés de quitter les villes et de travailler en province, au moins dans les premières années de carrière etc.) et à la désensibilisation du public face au mythe de l'artiste dans la cité. La façon dont ils tentent de s'évader de l'enclos fait de tabous, interdictions et censure (un exemple pour cette violation des tabous non-explicites est le cas de Cezar Ivănescu, qui propose l'homosexualité, incriminée par le Code Pénal communiste comme sujet littéraire subversif) convient au régime qui stigmatise les écrivains en les réduisant à de simples figures de farceurs, incapables de respecter les règles de l'*establishment*. Le premier volume de prose de Mircea Cărtărescu paraît en 1989, portant le titre *Visul* (Le rêve), choisi par la censure, alors que le titre voulu par l'auteur était *Nostalgia* (sous lequel le livre allait paraître plus tard)<sup>53</sup>. Dans cette version censurée, le premier récit, *Ruletistul* (*Le joueur de roulette russe*), ainsi que quelques autres dizaines de pages sont simplement exclus du sommaire par les services de censure. La plupart de ces récits relataient une métamorphose féminin – masculin, un travesti et la mort du personnage. Après 1989, Cărtărescu reprend le thème dans le volume *Travesti* (1994). La métamorphose d'Andrei, l'adolescent amoureux, en sa bien-aimée Gina (image spéculaire de l'Autre, surface de projection de ses propres désirs) donne l'occasion à un dédoublement plein de virtuosité du personnage-narrateur par le changement de rôle masculin-féminin. Ce qui devait être le premier récit du volume, *Ruletistul/ Le joueur de roulette russe* (qui fut supprimé par la censure, puisqu'il renvoyait à la roulette russe) avertit le

<sup>53</sup> Mircea Cărtărescu, *Visul*, București, Cartea Românească, 1989; *Nostalgia* (version intégrale de *Visul*), București, Humanitas, 1993. *Le Rêve*, roman traduit par Hélène Lenz, Castelnau-le Lez, Paris, Climats, 1992, nominé pour le prix Médicis étranger, le prix du Meilleur Livre et le Prix de l'Union Latine.

lecteur sur le moi spéculaire et sur sa pluralité incontrôlable<sup>54</sup>. Le narrateur théorise l'unité et l'authenticité de la personne. Le rôle (l'expression indirecte, déformée, inauthentique) est inévitable. Il signifie damnation, régression. Le constat est celui du personnage-narrateur, et il est d'autant plus navrant si on peut encore penser que l'écrivain – dans le sillage du romantisme – peut s'exprimer pleinement et sans reste à son propre sujet. L'homme pluriel du romantisme s'est isolé dans ses fragments, dans ses projections :

...la littérature n'est pas le bon moyen pour dire quelque chose de tant soit peu réel à son propre sujet. Dès les toutes premières lignes qu'on couche sur le papier, une main étrangère, outrageante entre dans la main qui tient le stylo, comme dans un gant, alors que son image dans le miroir de la page fuit de tous côtés, tel l'argent vif, de sorte que, de ses grains déformés, se coagulent l'Araignée, le Ver, l'Eunuque, l'Unicorne ou le Dieu, alors qu'on a voulu parler tout simplement de soi-même. La littérature est une tératologie<sup>55</sup>.

D'où l'effort du personnage-narrateur de réhabiliter la projection (la chimère) comme seule réalité, comme unique vérité ou évidence de la personne. Dans le récit *Rem*, au contraire, le narrateur, une araignée, se nourrit de ses projections narratives, déclarant qu'elle ingérerait sa victime, le personnage féminin du récit, après l'avoir manipulée à loisir. Du haut du plafond, elle regarde (et raconte) le partenaire du personnage féminin, le jeune Vali, à propos duquel elle affirme que dans deux ans il écrira *Le joueur de roulette russe*. Par conséquent, le personnage-narrateur du premier récit est à son tour phagocyté par un autre, dans des mondes qui se contiennent indéfiniment l'un l'autre... Dans le rêve, ces mondes communiquent et les personnages rencontrent les auteurs, de même les fictions du premier degré celles du second degré, et ainsi de suite, avec un involontaire mais d'autant plus pathétique effet de réel.

Des réflèts esthétiques sur l'idée d'identité de rôle apparaissent aussi dans le roman d'Adrian Oțoiu, *Coaja lucrurilor sau Dansînd cu Jupuița (L'écorce des choses*, écrit entre 1987 et 1991 et paru seulement en 1996). Vera, une artiste-peintre, brosse le portrait de son ami, l'architecte Ștefan Gliga, tout en lui parlant :

Tu es convaincu maintenant que tu vois là l'expression ultime, le degré zéro de ta figure. Je t'invite à la reconsidérer dans un quart d'heure. Rien ne te paraîtra plus faux que ce visage qui se prétend sans masque. [...]. Tu es en fait la proie de ta propre stratégie de survie. Tu as autant de visages sincères que de masques. Tu en joues avec une dextérité à envier. Mais qui es-tu? [...] Dégoûté de la multitude de rôles, mais

<sup>54</sup> Le joueur de roulette russe est à son tour un dédoublé: chaque fois qu'il appuie sur la gâchette il mise contre lui-même, non pas en espérant gagner, donc rester en vie, mais en espérant mourir. Or, comme il est un terrible malchanceux, il échappe systématiquement à la mort, alors même qu'il mise contre lui-même avec 6 balles sur 6.

<sup>55</sup> Mircea Cărtărescu, *Nostalgia*, București, Humanitas, 1993, p. 7 (ma traduction).

incapable d'y renoncer à l'un ou à l'autre, incapable de perdre, qu'il s'agisse d'un rallye, d'un jeu de clowns, ou encore d'un tête-à-tête<sup>56</sup>.

L'ironie fait que l'artiste-peintre s'efforce de saisir « la vérité de la figure » dans un « magasin d'illusions ». Qui plus est, son modèle ne l'entend pas, toute la scène se déroulant comme dans un film muet, comme dans un pantomime, où le personnage bouge rapidement et inutilement ses lèvres. A son tour, Ștefan peint le visage de Vera : « C'est une figure tendre et quelque peu triste, aux lèvres violacées sur un visage couleur orange, chaux et pistache. En la regardant, on pense aux grands cataclysmes qui ont besoin de notre protection : typhus, tremblement de terre, famine, fanatisme »<sup>57</sup>. Cette capacité histrionique d'entrer dans le rôle, de n'en faire qu'un avec lui, d'évoluer selon des scénarios, avec les accessoires à sa portée<sup>58</sup> s'avère néanmoins salvatrice pour le héros, dans au moins deux situations. Une fois, lorsqu'il est suspecté par trois enquêteurs d'être impliqué dans la diffusion de manifestes anticommunistes et qu'il feint magistralement, dans des répliques dialectales savoureuses, d'être un pauvre paysan analphabète, et de plus ivre mort, prenant l'un des enquêteurs, habillé d'une robe (de magistrat ?), pour un pope et lui appliquant un baisemain cérémonieux, en obligeant ce dernier de rester dans le rôle présumé. Une deuxième fois, il est arrêté par la milice qui trouve sur lui des dollars (la possession de toute devise étrangère était complètement interdite), sauf que les dollars en question proviennent d'un jeu de *monopoly*, et qu'au verso blanc des faux billets de banque se trouve la confession d'un ami qui travaille comme agent infiltré pour *Securitate*. Cette fois, Ștefan joue vivement le rôle d'officier supérieur infiltré, en contrepartie du rôle beaucoup plus humble, grâce auquel il avait échappé la première fois. Le sac rempli de manifestes se trouve dans le coffre du véhicule. Outre les rôles mineurs qui l'aident à éviter l'impact avec l'histoire, Ștefan a encore un *alter-ego* sublime, Yostephannos, qui est le conseiller d'Alexandre le Grand, lequel doit aussi survivre à la fureur du pouvoir. Le rôle n'est pas seulement une solution d'orientation et de survie dans les méandres de la personne, mais aussi dans ceux du monde.

Des formes esthétiques de pluralisation du moi, de diffusion de l'identité apparaissent déjà dans des expérimentations littéraires des années 1980. Malheureusement, comme on l'a vu, ces écrits ne voient jamais le jour. Et ils

<sup>56</sup> Adrian Oțoiu, *Coaja lucrurilor sau Dansând cu Jupuița*, București, Cartea Românească, 1996, p. 238 (ma traduction).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 250.

<sup>58</sup> Vera constate en misanthrope : « Mais comment te demander d'enlever ce masque ultime, puisque tu n'en ressens même pas la présence en tant que corps étranger ? Tes anticorps ne le reconnaissent pas comme ennemi. Et il s'est incrusté dans ta chair. Tu es grimé et poudré, captif sous le crépi du maquillage, mais tu ne le sens pas. Tes répliques coulent à flots, l'auteur est heureux, et tu n'a aucune idée sur l'existence d'un auteur, d'un texte, d'une mise en scène. Tu te déplace avec grâce, mais uniquement dans la limite des parenthèses de mise en scène. La belladone te donne des ailes, l'atropine dilate artistiquement ta pupille, tu pleures même des larmes de glycérine, mais en restant toujours convaincu que c'est l'*Emotion* qui te maintient en mouvement... » (*Ibidem*, pp. 238-239).

n'accèdent à la connaissance du public que dans les années 1990. C'est aussi le cas des journaux de Livius Ciocârlie, publiés après la Révolution, dans lesquels le moi se décompose sur l'écran du « cinéma intérieur »<sup>59</sup>. Les raisons de ce « retard » relèvent de l'isolement culturel roumain<sup>60</sup>, des rigueurs de la censure et de l'autocensure. La censure menace surtout les formes à la première personne (la poésie, l'essai, l'autobiographie, les mémoires), puisque celui qui dit « je » (l'auteur et, avec lui, le lecteur qui reprend ce « je » lorsqu'il le lit) ne peut plus se cacher derrière la fiction et derrière le personnage, il ne peut pas dire, au besoin, « Madame Bovary n'est pas moi ». D'ailleurs, au sujet de l'autobiographie dans la littérature roumaine d'après-guerre les historiens littéraires d'après 1989 remarquent: « sous la surveillance et les conditionnements d'un appareil oppressif, les littératures du moi ne se développent pas en synchronie avec ce que se passe, par exemple, en Occident »<sup>61</sup>. Il n'y a pas que le genre autobiographique, celui des confessions et des mémoires qui soit interdit ; les expérimentations autour du moi dans la fiction sont elles aussi mal vues, puisqu'elles produisent des effets d'authenticité, tout en rendant caduques les tentatives de la censure de rendre responsables les voix toujours plus diffuses de la fiction. A qui revient le délit d'opinion ? Qui parle ici, qui voit, qui pense ? Il faut attendre la prose des années 1990, pour assister à des expérimentations illimitées avec les formes plurielles du moi, avec l'identité diffuse et à peine repérable, avec des collages et des imbrications – et ) ce point il faut tout d'abord citer les œuvres de Simona Popescu (*Exuvii* [*Exuvies*], 1997<sup>62</sup>) et de Gheorghe Crăciun (*Pupa russa*, 2004<sup>63</sup>).

On peut dire, en conclusion, qu'il existe dans la culture roumaine un décalage concernant la réception de la théorie des rôles et des identités sociales, ainsi que l'expérimentation esthétique des conflits de rôle et de diffusion de l'identité dans la période communiste, et ceci pour des raisons dogmatiques<sup>64</sup>. La sociologie

<sup>59</sup> Livius Ciocârlie, *Cap și pajură* [*Pile face*], București, Albatros, 1997.

<sup>60</sup> Les romans de Max Frisch sont traduits en roumain (par Ondine-Cristina Dăscălița) dans les années 1980 également, *Mein Name sei Gantenbein* [*Numele meu fie Gantenbein*] en 1981, et un peu plus tard, *Stiller* avec le titre *Eu nu sînt Stiller* [*Je ne suis pas Stiller*] en 1989.

<sup>61</sup> Florina Pârjol, *Carte de identități. Mutații ale autobiograficului în proza românească de după 1989* [*Carte d'identités. Les mutations de l'autobiographie dans la prose roumaine d'après 1989*], București, Cartea Românească, 2014, p. 72.

<sup>62</sup> Un fragment fut traduit en français sous le titre *La Sieste*, traduit par Marily Le Nir, in *Douze écrivains roumains, Anthologie Les Belles Etrangères*, Paris, L'Inventaire, 2005. Voir aussi *Matriochka*, *Revue Europe*, n° 918, octobre 2005.

<sup>63</sup> *La Poupée russe*, traduit par Odile Serre, in *Douze écrivains roumains. Anthologie Les Belles Etrangères*, Paris, L'Inventaire, 2005. Un autre fragment en français paraît dans la revue en ligne *remue.net*, dans la traduction de Fanny Chartres : <http://remue.net/spip.php?article3012> (consulté le 30.05.2015).

<sup>64</sup> Cette situation se réfère aux trente dernières années du communisme. Pour ce qui est des propositions de la sociologie roumaine de l'entre-deux-guerres concernant l'identité sociale, Elisabeta Stănculescu remarque le synchronisme de l'école roumaine de sociologie et même certaines innovations fort méritoires (*Multiculturalisme scientifique et construction de l'objet sociologique. Le*

marxiste fait l'analyse de l'aliénation en s'en prenant uniquement à la société capitaliste, tout en encourageant par ailleurs le conformisme, et non la créativité à l'égard des rôles. La censure surveille de près, quand elle n'interdit pas tout court l'intimisme, l'autobiographisme, les genres artistiques porteurs de subjectivité. Sur le canevas d'expérimentations en matière de technique narrative, de démantèlement des liens innocents entre auteur, narrateur et personnage, de réception du textualisme français et du postmodernisme américain, dans la prose roumaine des années 1980 (Mircea Nedelciu, Mircea Cărtărescu et Adrian Oțoiu) on voit apparaître des phénomènes de désagrégation de l'identité, de dispersion du moi, qui ne sont pas trop visibles puisque la publication des œuvres en question est difficilement acceptée ou grossièrement censurée. Au-delà de l'intérêt purement esthétique pour ces parutions, la sensibilité esthétique des années 1980 correspond à des phénomènes sociaux d'insécurité identitaire, de schizoïdie ou de double jeu, à des dilemmes de plus en plus pesants concernant l'identité personnelle et sociale à large échelle, les perspectives et les stratégies de survie ou de « réussite » dans la société roumaine.

C'est le mérite de Dan Lungu d'avoir appliqué la problématique de la théorie de l'identité sociale dans l'analyse de cette société, en étudiant les écrivains, ainsi que d'autres catégories sociales<sup>65</sup>. En tant qu'écrivain, Dan Lungu valorise également dans sa prose ses propres observations de sociologue sur le conflit de rôle à l'époque communiste et dans les décennies de transition. Simona Popescu se montre plus proche des fantaisistes des années 1980, tandis que Gheorghe Crăciun fait le lien entre ceux-ci et la prose réaliste des années 1990. Le fait de centrer toute la problématique sur les phénomènes du moi, de l'identité personnelle et sociale présente aussi un deuxième avantage : on élimine ainsi les lignes de démarcation trop grossières entre les soi-disant « fictionnaires fantastes » et les nouveaux réalistes des années 1990 et 2000, tout en brossant un nouveau portrait de groupe.

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*cas de la sociologie roumaine de l'individu*, papier préparé pour le XVII<sup>e</sup> Congrès International des Sociologues de Langue Française « L'individu social – autres réalités, autre sociologie? », Tours, juillet 2004, en ligne (30.05.2015), [http://elisabetastanciulescu.ro/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Elisabeta-Stanciulescu-Congres-AISLF\\_Tours-2004\\_Multiculturalism-scientifique\\_Sociologie-roumaine-de-lindividu\\_12.pdf](http://elisabetastanciulescu.ro/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Elisabeta-Stanciulescu-Congres-AISLF_Tours-2004_Multiculturalism-scientifique_Sociologie-roumaine-de-lindividu_12.pdf)). Il faut également souligner que Tudor Vianu avait lu les œuvres des précurseurs de l'interactionnisme symbolique, tels Georg Simmel et Wilhelm Dilthey.

<sup>65</sup> Voir également Dan Lungu, *Povestirile vieții. Teorie și documente [Les histoires de vie. Théorie et documents]*, Iași, Editura Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza, 2003. On noterait également ici les études d'Elisabeta Stănciulescu (traductrice de Lahire en roumain) au sujet des complexes identitaires de l'oligarchie universitaire durant le communisme et dans la période dite de transition (*Despre tranziție și universitate [Sur la transition et l'Université]*, Iași, Polirom, 2002).

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## ROLE IDENTITY – THE DISCONTINUOUS HISTORY OF A TRANSATLANTIC IDEA

(Abstract)

While reconstructing the history of the *socio-psychological and aesthetic theory of social roles*, a thing that is striking is the *subtle dialectics between continuities and discontinuities* of a highly important theoretical canon, one of the most prolific resources of today's human sciences. When we talk about *discontinuities*, we mean that the explanatory patterns of the Chicago School, the one that endowed this theory with its contemporary magnitude, have been aesthetically intermediated by the reception of the thought tradition represented by Georg Simmel and Wilhelm Dilthey – a tradition that, at its turn, descended up to the model of the role plurality of the early Romanticism. These connections between the representatives of the Chicago School and German sociology, between Robert E. Park or H.R. Mead and G. Simmel or W. Dilthey have been obliterated in the proper sociological research. The role theory was reimported and reinvented in Europe thanks to Ralf Dahrendorf and Bernard Lahire, inspired by the literary works of Robert Musil, Ernst Mach and Marcel Proust. The paths to conceptual transformation from the incipient aesthetic role theory and up to the sociological theories of role behavior, partly redeemed by sociology, have, however, been “forgotten” by the field of aesthetics, by the theories of fiction or the theory of the novel. Surprisingly so, the new French and German novel of the 1960s and 1970s seems to independently rediscover the initial meanings of the theoretical concepts of “role” and “social play”. The *continuity* of the theoretical canon considers this scattered redemption of certain theoretical literary ideas, a phenomenon constantly dealt with by the history of ideas. Therefore, the fall of such patterns from thought systems that are rigorously conceptualized in the public discourse and from here, in literature is not always fatal. This paper follows this *parallelism* between what is happening with the idea of role and identity in human sciences, fiction and literary theory.

*Keywords:* role identity, personal identity, social identity, communist society, history of ideas.

IDENTITATE DE ROL – ISTORIA DISCONTINUĂ A UNEI IDEI  
TRANSATLANTICE  
(Rezumat)

Reconstruind istoricul *teoriei sociopsihologice și estetice a rolurilor sociale*, ceea ce frapează este *dialectica subtilă între continuitățile și discontinuitățile* unui canon teoretic de maximă importanță, una dintre cele mai prolifiche resurse în științele umane astăzi. Când vorbim despre *discontinuități* ne referim la faptul că modelele explicative ale Școlii de la Chicago, cea care îi dă acestei teorii anvergura contemporană, sunt intermediare estetic prin receptarea tradiției de gândire reprezentate de Georg Simmel și Wilhelm Dilthey, tradiție care la rândul ei coboară până la modelul romantic al pluralității de rol. Or, aceste legături dintre reprezentanți ai Școlii de la Chicago și sociologia germană, dintre Robert E. Park sau H.R. Mead și G. Simmel sau W. Dilthey au fost obliterate în cercetarile sociologice propriu-zise. Teoria rolurilor e reimportată și reinventată în Europa datorită lui Ralf Dahrendorf și Bernard Lahire, inspirați de surse literare: Robert Musil, Ernst Mach și Marcel Proust. Căile transformării conceptuale de la incipienta teorie estetică a rolurilor până la teoriile sociologice ale comportamentului de rol, recuperate în parte de către sociologie, au fost „uite” însă în estetică, în teoriile ficțiunii sau în teoria romanului. În mod surprinzător, noul roman francez și german al anilor '60 și '70 pare că redescoperă în mod independent semnificațiile inițiale ale categoriilor teoretice de „rol” și de „joc social”. *Continuitatea* canonului teoretic despre care vorbeam are în vedere această salvare difuză a unor idei teoretice în literatură, fenomen de care se ocupă constant istoria ideilor. Iată, căderea unor astfel de modele din sisteme de gândire riguros conceptualizate în discursul public, și de aici în literatură, nu este întotdeauna fatală. Prezentul studiu urmărește acest *paralelism* dintre ceea ce se întâmplă cu ideea de rol și identitate în științele umane, în ficțiune și în teoria literară.

*Cuvinte-cheie:* rol social, identitate personală, identitate socială, societate comunistă, istoria ideilor.

ANCA BĂICOIANU

**IS THE “COLONIAL” IN “POST-COLONIAL”  
THE “SOVIET” IN “POST-SOVIET”?  
THE BOUNDARIES OF POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES<sup>1</sup>**

*By way of preface: how far to the East should transitology travel?*

Between spring 1994 and winter 1995, *Slavic Review* hosted a polemic on the viability of a transitologist comparative approach to post-1989 East-Central Europe which opposed Philippe Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, on the one hand, and Valerie Bunce on the other. Whereas a full-length discussion of their respective positions falls outside the scope of the present paper, a brief overview of their main assumptions is not without interest, since it points out to the tension between the need for conceptualization and generic/ structural models of interpretation in the emergent field of postcommunist studies, and the caveats against reading postcommunist realities with an inattentive eye to theories and methodologies designed to account for the historical evolutions and cultural productions in distant and (radically) different territories.

Initially framed as a debate between proponents of transitology and area studies specialists<sup>2</sup>, this “conflict of interpretations”, as Paul Ricœur would have it, soon turned out to be more of “a debate among comparativists about comparative methodologies”<sup>3</sup>. The arguments involved may therefore serve as a cautionary introduction to the discussion of the postcolonial-postcommunist connection in the following sections of this article.

Schmitter and Karl’s main working assumption is that, provided the events and processes related to the regime change in East-Central Europe “satisfy certain definitional requirements”, their occurrence should be regarded as pertaining to the same “‘wave of democratization’ that began in 1974 in Portugal” and swept Southern Europe and Latin America:

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<sup>2</sup> Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, “The Conceptual Travels of Transitologists and Consolidologists: How Far to the East Should They Attempt to Go?”, *Slavic Review*, 53, 1994, 1, pp. 177-178.

<sup>3</sup> Valerie Bunce, “Should Transitologists Be Grounded?”, *Slavic Review*, 54, 1995, 1, p. 113.

...all these cases of regime change – regardless of their geopolitical location or cultural context – should (at least hypothetically) be regarded as parts of a common process of diffusion and causal interaction<sup>4</sup>.

This overarching comparativism is set in stark opposition with an approach unwittingly presented by Schmitter and Karl as typical of area studies specialists, namely the stress placed on “the cultural, ideological and national peculiarities of these cases”<sup>5</sup> which causes former Sovietologists and scholars of East-Central Europe to reject theoretical instances of “acultural extrapolation”, and thus run the risk of taking “refuge in *empirie* – in the dilligent collection of facts without any guidance from theories and models”<sup>6</sup>.

In making a case for the reading of democratization in East-Central Europe within the broader framework of transitology, Schmitter and Karl argue that, the particularities of the region notwithstanding, such an inclusion would serve firstly as an indicator of how well transitology can actually travel, and secondly as a kind of photographic developer able to convert the latent East-Central Europeanness into a visible image:

Only *after* (and not *before*) this effort at incorporation, mapping and analysis has been made, will it become possible to conclude whether concepts and hypotheses generated from the experience of early comers should be regarded as “overstretched” or “underverified” when applied to late comers. Only then will we know whether the basins containing different world regions are really so interconnected and moved by such similar forces. The particularity of any one region’s cultural, historical or institutional matrix – if it is relevant to understanding the outcome of regime change – should emerge from systematic comparison, rather than be used as an excuse for not applying it<sup>7</sup>.

The interesting point here – as far as my understanding is correct – lies with the relationship between comparativism and similarity. Normally, comparative methods are used to establish a relationship between at least two objects or phenomena based on their similarity; or, to put it differently, it is the extent of similarity which determines whether the elements thus analyzed are to be treated similarly. On the contrary, when difference overcomes similarity, the conclusions of comparative research are usually considered to be unhelpful, if not utterly misleading.

This is, in fact, the crux of Valerie Bunce’s argument against a traditional transitologist approach to East-Central Europe. In her opinion, the differences between transitions to democracy in Southern Europe and Latin America and

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<sup>4</sup> Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, “The Conceptual Travels”, p. 178.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 177.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 184.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 178.

regime changes in East-Central Europe – as catalogued in much of the scholarly work on the subject, and aptly reviewed by Schmitter and Karl<sup>8</sup> – are so important in number and quality that the benefit-cost ratio of adding East-Central Europe to comparative studies of democratization becomes highly questionable.

Is it really so? Perhaps it doesn't even matter so much. The way I see it, arguing for or against the notion that only that which is comparable should be compared is far less interesting than trying to analyze how such comparables are constructed, for what kind of audiences, and to what purpose. In other words, what is at stake here is not so much to justify the usefulness of the comparison *per se* as to come up with effective ways of performing it.

From this perspective, we can distinguish between two different manners of tackling the postcolonial-postcommunist connection. The first one would be to see it as an *opportunity* to expand a field of investigation or advance a specific agenda, based on the understanding of theory as an explanatory model which can be used to account for realities or phenomena outside its initial area of emergence; for commodity's sake, I suggest to call it "the traveling theory approach". If, on the other hand, we choose to deal with this comparison in terms of *challenge*, theory will appear more like a body of situated knowledge, and research will therefore focus on the various factors that shape it and on the "cognitive dissonances"<sup>9</sup> produced by theoretical displacement. While the former approach seems quite well suited for those who support the notion of postcoloniality as a global condition, the latter – which, in the traces of Mieke Bal<sup>10</sup>, I'm inclined to dub the "traveling concepts approach" – is interested in bringing forward "not an essential quality but rather the multiple and shifting forms"<sup>11</sup> that a given element in the original configuration may take when analyzed in a different context. The main focus here is not explanation or classification but the laying bare of mechanisms of thought at work in the very operation of creating models and configurations. In classical rhetoric, this approach would go by the name of *topic*, in the Aristotelian sense; today it might be described as a form of conceptual analysis by means of successive displacements.

Now, do we really need this distinction or is it yet another clever exercise in hair-splitting which does little to further our knowledge of the subject matter at hand? Since both of the approaches briefly discussed above are, on the whole,

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 179-184.

<sup>9</sup> Marcel Detienne, *Comparing the Incomparable*. Translated by Janet Lloyd, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2008, p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2002.

<sup>11</sup> Marcel Detienne, *Comparing the Incomparable*, p. 28.

comparative methods for dealing with a problematic relationship, is it so important to decide what kind of comparativism are we talking about? Is there, in the particular case of the postcolonial-postcommunist connection, sufficient reason to choose one over the other? In order to answer these questions, it would perhaps be useful to see what happens when they are ignored.

### *Competing colonialisms*

A case in point is the way in which Anne McClintock, for instance, thought to include the USSR among the established modern European empires. In her 1992 article "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-Colonialism'", McClintock distinguishes between *internal colonization* ("where the dominant part of a country treats a group or region as it might a foreign colony") and *imperial colonization* ("large-scale, territorial domination of the kind that gave late Victorian Britain and the European "lords of humankind" control over 85% of the earth, and the USSR totalitarian rule over Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia in the twentieth century")<sup>12</sup>.

At the time of publication, the sheer mention of the USSR in the context of modern European imperialism was nothing short of revolutionary, given that the general tendency up to that point had been to meet this equation with anything from fierce rejection to "deflected silence"<sup>13</sup>, especially among the practitioners of postcolonial studies. McClintock's article, therefore, marks a welcome opening up of a new investigative field by allowing for a shift in focus from the workings of overseas imperialism to alternative dispensations of imperial-like power.

*How* she does that, though, may be subject to debate – although I would like to emphasize that my misgiving here is not with the substance of her article, but rather with the inadequacies of the theoretical vocabulary at hand.

While *imperial colonization* is defined as a form of territorial expansion and the subsequent production of specific power relations, *internal colonization* can be read as a reenactment of the respective power relations *inside* the original boundaries of a nation-state (the subjectification of entities socially or geographically defined: "a group or region") or *outside* those boundaries, but in the absence of actual territorial annexation. Writing from within the field of postcolonial studies, albeit in a critical fashion, McClintock uses this distinction to further her own purpose, which is

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<sup>12</sup> Anne McClintock, "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-Colonialism'", *Social Text*, "Third World and Post-Colonial Issues", 31-32, 1992, p. 88.

<sup>13</sup> David Chioni Moore, "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique", *PMLA*, 116, 2001, 1, p. 117.

...to question the orientation of the emerging discipline and its concomitant theories and curricula changes, around a singular, monolithic term, organized around a binary axis of time rather than power, and which, in its premature celebration of the pastness of colonialism, runs the risk of obscuring the continuities and discontinuities of colonial and imperial power<sup>14</sup>.

In other words, the above distinction is meant, on the one hand, to challenge the reduction of the various political and cultural experiences of the former overseas colonies to what is commonly perceived as their dominant characteristic, namely their shared experience of European colonization; and, on the other hand, to emphasize the enduring presence of colonial practices even after actual territorial appropriation has ceased, if it ever existed at all. Within the limits of her article, *imperial colonization* stands for the “classical” expansionist *model*, while *internal colonization* is meant to describe *alternative*, more insidious and oftentimes overlooked, examples of political, economic, cultural or military “imperialism-without-colonies”<sup>15</sup>, chief among which are the United State’s distinct forms of domination since the 1940s. When articulated onto colonial history proper, McClintock’s distinction between imperial and internal colonization could therefore be read as a distinction between pre- and post-independence colonialisms.

Given the fact that she is interested in the variations of post-independence colonialism rather than in the competing models of empire, her mentioning of the USSR among “the European ‘lords of the humankind’” on the same grounds as Victorian Britain is almost perfunctory. In fact, the article contains no further reference to Soviet colonialism – when she does mention the Soviet Union, it is in relation to the collapse of the regime and the subsequent demise of the master narrative of communist progress<sup>16</sup>. But if read with an eye to the workings of pre-independence imperialism or to the possible relationships between (post)colonialism and (post)communism, the USSR’s presence on the list of “old” imperial powers is not so unproblematic as it appears to be.

There are, in my view, two main issues pertaining to the construction of McClintock’s distinction which are worth discussing, and both of them are related to the prominence of the spatial idea in defining imperial domination. On the one hand, describing the USSR’s rule over the Eastern Bloc as an example of *imperial colonization* is, in the light of her definitions, rather confusing: although the USSR was indeed a large-scale territorial unit, its satellites in East-Central Europe remained, unlike the former Soviet republics, independent entities (their respective

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<sup>14</sup> Anne McClintock, “The Angel of Progress”, p. 88.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 89.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 95-96.

degrees of independence greatly varying, mostly due to local factors). For all intents and purposes, what we are dealing with here is in fact a *non-territorial* form of colonization which, in McClintock’s own terms, would qualify as *internal*<sup>17</sup>. One might therefore wonder why she would use an example which undermines her distinction, instead of replacing it with a more adequate one in the same category, namely the Russian Empire. Both historically and ideologically, Tsarist Russia has more in common with the European empires it has sought to emulate than it is the case with its Soviet successor, and if McClintock’s intention had been to overwrite the distinction between continental and overseas empires it would have served her purpose just as well. Another intriguing question is why McClintock has decided to liken the USSR with precisely Victorian Britain (purposefully singled out among the other “European ‘lords of humankind’”, possibly as a paragon of modern imperial expansion, and the most frequent reference in the vocabulary of postcolonial studies) rather than, say, France or King Leopold’s Belgium, the authoritarian nature of which would have been closer to Soviet totalitarianism (incidentally, Stalin is said to have despised British colonial administrators for their “toothlessness”). And finally, why bring to the fore the Soviet Union’s domination over the Eastern Bloc as an example of imperial colonization, when the annexation of the Baltic States, for instance, would have made a far less debatable case?

There are many possible answers to these questions. The first possibility is that McClintock hasn’t given much thought to such matters, in which case the USSR – “the prison-house of peoples”, as it was sometimes called – is inventoried here as the last empire to have fallen, the chronological conclusion of pre-independence, territorial imperialism (a premature celebration, as the Chechen wars and, more recently, the Crimean and Ukrainian crises would prove), regardless of the peculiarities of its actual domination over the former Soviet republics and satellites, respectively. Secondly, and least probably, McClintock may have used the USSR as a synecdochal designation for the whole history of Russian expansionism, in which case the designation is misleading, because it obscures the significant discontinuities, both in discourse and in practice, between the Tsarist and the Soviet colonial models, especially with regard to the former Eastern Bloc. Thirdly, she may have intentionally likened the USSR to Victorian Britain, in order to postulate some significant similarity between Soviet totalitarianism and European imperialism – a risky decision to be made without a minimal theoretical justification, since the general tendency up to the mid-1990s has been to

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<sup>17</sup> For that matter, internal colonization is a familiar enough concept in both Sovietology and Russian studies: widely used in Russian historiography in nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it has enjoyed a second life in Soviet times and it is still very much in use. For a thorough analysis, see Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia’s Imperial Experience*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2011.

thoroughly distinguish between the two. And finally, she may have had the intuition that there is “something imperial” about the USSR’s relations with its satellites, but not the means to adequately define imperialism otherwise than in spatial terms.

This brings me to the second issue raised up by McClintock’s distinction. Although she sets to the task of addressing the ineffectiveness of the theoretical vocabulary of postcolonial studies<sup>18</sup>, she does not challenge the spatialization of empire, i.e. the prevailing definition of imperial colonization in terms of overland expansion. Her preoccupation is chiefly with time (as encoded in the post-ness of postcolonialism), but the case she makes against a concept which is misleading because it is “organized around a binary axis of time rather than power”<sup>19</sup> and therefore reluctant “to surrender the privilege of seeing the world in terms of a singular and ahistorical abstraction”<sup>20</sup> can also be dressed against the conceptual agglutination of postcolonialism around the alternative axis of space.

If anything, the prominence of the territorial expansion as a distinctive feature of imperialism is indicative of how ideological predispositions shape the methodologies, instruments and vocabulary of postcolonial studies – and it is precisely that which sometimes makes it difficult for theories to travel. Traveling theories are never neutral; when transplanted, traces of the original context and previous constructive constraints are always palimpsestically present. Perhaps this is why (post)communist realities can hardly fit into postcolonial categories without causing them to implode. Soviet colonization is highly idiosyncratic; Soviet imperialism, as we have seen, is not “proper” imperialism, neither are former Soviet republics or satellites “proper” colonies. Cultural practices are exasperatingly different, as David Chioni Moore is forced to admit<sup>21</sup> even as he struggles to demonstrate that “the term ‘postcolonial’... might reasonably be applied to the formerly Russo- and Soviet-controlled regions post-1989 and -1991, just as it has been applied to South-Asia post-1947 or Africa post-1958”<sup>22</sup>. Shall we then abandon all hope for an effective comparative approach?

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<sup>18</sup> Anne McClintock, “The Angel of Progress”, pp. 85-88.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 88.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 86.

<sup>21</sup> “However, when one chats with intellectuals in Vilnius or Bishkek or when one reads essays on any of the current literatures of the formerly Soviet-dominated sphere, it is difficult to find comparisons between Algeria and Ukraine, Hungary and the Philippines, or Kazakhstan and Cameroon” (David Chioni Moore, “Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet?”, p. 117).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 115.

In my opinion, comparison still stands a fair chance, even on such shaky ground. It is also true that adjustments might be in order. If postcommunist realities cannot fit into postcolonial categories, perhaps the respective categories could do with a little dusting off. A good place to start would be to suggest complementary or alternative definitions for concepts already put to widespread use by postcolonial studies – empire, colony, ambivalence, etc. – based on their use in East-Central European literature, historiography, and bureaucratic discourse: the kind of work Oțoiu does for “liminality”<sup>23</sup> or Alexander Etkind for “internal colonization”<sup>24</sup>. Such an approach, far from showing just a narrow, parochial interest in localities, could help expand and make more flexible the conceptual framework of postcolonial studies by opening up a dialogue between various context-shaped understandings of the terminological inventory<sup>25</sup>.

Another possibility to tackle comparison on fruitful grounds is to “think postcolonially” about (post)communist issues<sup>26</sup>, i.e. to use postcolonialism not as a *theory* (in the “strong” sense), but as a *perspective*, a way of organizing research around a set of central preoccupations – the dynamics of power within a given society, the discursive strategies deployed to control and transform territory, the marginalization, displacement or dispossession of various groups, strategies of identity (re)construction, and suchlike – already addressed by postcolonial studies,

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<sup>23</sup> Adrian Oțoiu, “An Exercise in Fictional Liminality: the Postcolonial, the Postcommunist, and Romania’s Threshold Generation”, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 23, 2003, 1-2, pp. 87-105.

<sup>24</sup> A similar treatment is applied by Ioana Zirra to the concept of *hyphenation* in her article for the current issue of *Dacoromania litteraria*.

<sup>25</sup> The usefulness of such an approach is largely proved, albeit for a different context, by Barbara Fuchs’ “Imperium Studies: Theorizing Early Modern Expansion”, in Patricia Clare Ingham and Michelle R. Warren (eds.), *Postcolonial Moves: Medieval Through Modern*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. In her essay, Fuchs argues that the term “empire” is intrinsically polysemic and, given its rich history, it “denotes both internal control of a polity and external expansion beyond that polity’s original boundaries” (p. 72). While postcolonial studies usually privilege the more familiar meaning of “a political entity made up of geographically remote states”, there are certain cases – Tsarist Russia and the USSR among them – where we would be better advised to bring to the fore earlier, secondary meanings such as “the political relations that h[o]ld together groups of people in a political body” (p. 72). This would do away with some of the terminological difficulties arising from territorial definitions of colonization and put an end to the ongoing debate about the validity of comparing continental with overseas empires, while at the same time triggering an increased awareness of the analogous features of empires which are not normally addressed by comparative studies.

<sup>26</sup> See, for instance, Cristina Șandru, *Worlds Apart? A Postcolonial Reading of post-1945 East-Central European Culture*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012 and Bogdan Ștefănescu, *Postcommunism/ Postcolonialism: Siblings of Subalternity*, București, Editura Universității din București, 2012.

while being able to freely use whatever methodologies are most adequate for dealing with the cases in point.

The particular issues raised by the collapse of the Soviet regimes in East-Central Europe can also be used to reinitialize, re-invigorate, and develop existing debates about our understanding of modernity, state construction, civil society, solidarity, and so on<sup>27</sup>. The transformations brought about by the “posting” of socialism are not limited to the region behind the former Iron Curtain – the collapse of “actually existing socialism” is, as McClintock has aptly suggested, also the demise of a master narrative of progress and emancipation which requires important theoretical adjustments in Western thought – a task made all the more urgent by the resilience of the socialist utopia among influential voices within the field of postcolonial studies<sup>28</sup>.

What I am trying to say, in fact, is that the postcolonial-postcommunist connection may be addressed in ways that do not require comprehensive justifications of postcommunism as a “postcolonial condition”. Postcolonial studies have familiarized us with the difficulties of theorizing diverse spaces; and, in my opinion, the effort required by such a conflation would be better spent on producing alternative conceptualizations of the kind suggested, for instance, by Stenning and Hörschelmann<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> William Outhwaite and Larry Ray, *Social Theory and Postcommunism*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2005.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Aijaz Ahmad, “The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality”, *Race and Class*, 36, 1995, 3, pp. 1-20; Benita Parry, *Postcolonial Studies. A Materialist Critique*, London – New York, Routledge, 2004.

<sup>29</sup> Alison Stenning and Kathrin Hörschelmann, “History, Geography and Difference in the Post-socialist World: Or, Do We Still Need Post-Socialism?”, *Antipode*, 40, 2008, 2, pp. 312-335.

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IS THE “COLONIAL” IN “POST-COLONIAL”  
THE “SOVIET” IN “POST-SOVIET”?  
THE BOUNDARIES OF POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES  
(Abstract)

The post-1989 transition of East-Central Europe to capitalist democracy has focused much scholarly attention on the political, economic, social, and cultural trajectories of the countries in the former Soviet bloc and on the fostering of new identities within a wider, European or global, context. Yet the ‘transitologists’ attempts to establish transregional comparisons that would tackle the similarities and differences between postcommunist territories and former colonies were met with deflection and silence among the proponents of postcolonial studies. With very few exceptions, Western scholars were rather reluctant to count the USSR among other, mostly European, “modern empires”. Still, the postcolonial sensibility of people in the Soviet sphere – as documented by oral history, sociological investigation, and cultural analyses – is hard to ignore. In the last few years, the postcolonial-postcommunist connection gained momentum in East-Central European studies, as part of the reflective attempts to translate a specific historical and cultural experience into one of the most widespread theoretical idioms in current academia. In doing so, East-Central European scholars interrogate the limits of an increasingly canonical discipline and join in its critical revaluations by measuring colonialism against other systems of domination.

*Keywords:* postcolonial, postcommunist, post-Soviet, postcolonial sensibility, cultural dependency.

ESTE „COLONIALUL” DIN „POSTCOLONIAL” „SOVIETICUL” DIN  
„POSTSOVIETIC”? LIMITELE STUDIILOR POSTCOLONIALE

(Rezumat)

Tranziția Europei Centrale și de Est, după 1989, la democrația capitalistă a atras atenția mediului academic asupra traiectoriilor politice, economice, sociale și culturale din fostul bloc sovietic și asupra configurării de noi identități în cadrul unui context european sau global mai larg. Cu toate acestea, demersurile „tranzitologilor” de a stabili, prin comparații transregionale, similitudinile și diferențele dintre teritoriile postcomuniste și fostele colonii au fost întâmpinate cu rezervă sau trecute sub tăcere de către autorii studiilor postcoloniale. Cu foarte puține excepții, teoreticienii occidentali s-au arătat reticenți față de includerea URSS-ului în rândul celorlalte „imperii moderne”, majoritatea europene. Sensibilitatea postcolonială a populației din sfera sovietică – ilustrată de istoria orală, de studii sociologice și de analize culturale – este totuși greu de ignorat. În ultimii ani, relația dintre postcolonial și postcomunism a devenit importantă în studiile central și est europene, ca parte a demersurilor speculative de a traduce o experiență istorică și culturală specifică într-unul din cele mai răspândite idiomuri teoretice din cadrul mediului academic. Procedând astfel, teoreticienii din Europa Centrală și de Est explorează limitele unei discipline canonice aflate în plină expansiune și contribuie la reevaluările sale critice, resituând semnificația colonialismului în raport cu alte sisteme de dominație.

*Cuvinte-cheie:* postcolonial, postcomunist, postsovietic, sensibilitate postcolonială, dependență culturală.

DUMITRU TUCAN

**THE ADAPTABILITY OF THEORY:  
POSTCOLONIALISM VS. POSTCOMMUNISM IN  
ROMANIAN LITERARY STUDIES**

*Poststructuralism, Postcolonialism,  
and the Cultural Turn in Western Literary Studies*

Over the past three decades, postcolonial theory has been one of the dominant modes of speculation upon literature and culture. Deeply connected to the strong core of poststructuralist thinking, postcolonialism is still a powerful theoretical approach today<sup>1</sup>, that attracts those who attempt to establish a dialogue with the discursive communities of Western academia. There are multiple explanations for this dominance, which are connected to the geopolitical transformations that occurred on a global scale after World War II. The tensions inherent in this new geopolitical situation urged Western thinking to investigate the cultural rifts produced by the global fragmentation caused by imperial disintegration. The voices that epitomize “subaltern” identity<sup>2</sup>, which up to that point held a marginal position, have begun, since the 1960s, to legitimize themselves as political voices which can channel not only the energies of marginal identities, but also the critical energies of the centre’s elites. This two-pronged “process of catalysis” is connected mainly to the discourse of restructuring identities, initiated by the voices of the former “colonised”<sup>3</sup>, but would have had no chance of success if it had not encountered an intellectual environment prepared to receive it. Therefore, I can state that the crystallization of poststructuralist thinking beginning with the 1970s represented a fertile ground for the intensification of the discursive manifestations (confessional, political, critical, theoretical, and creative) of a formerly marginal otherness. The conceptual core of postcolonial theory also emerged as part of this process, and was legitimized as a discourse of the “centre” by its adoption by

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<sup>1</sup> David Chioni Moore, “Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique”, in Violeta Kelertas (ed.), *Baltic Postcolonialism*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2006, pp. 11-43.

<sup>2</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, in Carry Nelson, Lawrence Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and Interpretation of Culture*, London, Macmillan, 1988, pp. 271-313.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the influential militant voices of Franz Fanon (*Black Skin, White Masks*, 1952, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961) or Chinua Achebe (*Things Fall Apart*, 1958, *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness*, 1975).

Western academia as a circumstantial (i.e., historically necessary) variation of the critical tradition<sup>4</sup> alive in Europe ever since the mid-nineteenth century.

A brief analysis of the evolution of literary studies since the advent of poststructuralism will provide a concrete example. Poststructuralism, which developed in successive stages along a path which leads from Nietzsche to Foucault and Derrida, and later concentrated around “deconstruction”<sup>5</sup> practices, was the catalyst of the “cultural turn” in literary studies, as well as the fertile ground on which cultural studies could develop<sup>6</sup> as a relevant disciplinary field within academia. Theorising the literary phenomenon as one that mirrors the power relation within the “discursive” manifestations of the socio-cultural imaginary, post-structuralism made possible “the questioning of already established meanings”, which were seen as natural, by “revealing their culturally and historically ‘constructed’ character”<sup>7</sup>. At the same time, poststructuralism created a taste for the literature of alterity, educating the public, among other things, for the reception of “postcolonial literature” (Naipaul, Rushdie, etc.) and of the complex games of interaction among cultural models. Within this development, an identity-related appetite for the process of interpretation was gradually born. As J. Culler says, talking about the meaning of a text has meant, since the early 1980s, “to tell a story of reading” from the perspective of an “identity” (most of the time a formerly marginal one)<sup>8</sup>. Thus, in literary studies, the postcolonial perspective (i.e., reading practices) is transformed into a “hermeneutics of identity”<sup>9</sup> with militant and political connotations, which can be seen as a catalyst of the energies of a world that is undergoing a process of rapid transformations.

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<sup>4</sup> This is a critical tradition (Marx, Nietzsche, Freud), conceptually recuperated by poststructuralism in the process of its configuration and legitimation within academia (see, for example, Michel Foucault, “Nietzsche, Freud, Marx”, in Michel Foucault, *Theatrum philosophicum. Studii, eseuri, interviuri (1963-1984)* [*Theatrum philosophicum. Studies, Essays, Interviews*]. Translated by Bogdan Ghiu, Ciprian Mihali, Emilian Cioc and Sebastian Blaga, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2001, pp. 80-95; Paul Ricœur, *Conflictul interpretărilor [Le conflit des interprétations]*. Translation and afterword by Horia Lazăr, Cluj-Napoca, Echinox, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Deconstruction is often characterized by historians of critical theory as an “applied poststructuralism” (Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory. An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, Manchester University Press, 1995, p. 70).

<sup>6</sup> Dumitru Tucan, “Cultural Studies – Problems and Dilemmas in Romanian Higher Education and Academia”, *The Annals of Ovidius University Constanța, Romania – the Philology Series*, XXIV, 2013, 1, pp. 61-71.

<sup>7</sup> Dumitru Tucan, *Introducere în studiile literare [An Introduction to Literary Studies]*, Iași, Institutul European, 2007, p. 111.

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983, p. 35.

<sup>9</sup> Dumitru Tucan, *Introducere*, p. 119.

*Postcolonialism – a “Theory of the (Academic) Centre” which penetrates (Academic) Peripheries*

Over time, the postcolonial perspective has succeeded not only in creating this openness towards the theoretical and creative voices of otherness, but also in processing the cultural tensions of the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Paradoxically, the former centre has not only attempted to understand a world full of contradictions, but also to exhibit in its critical discourse the remorse generated by the history of oppression in its relation with the “periphery”. The theorists and scholars belonging to the strong core of this theoretical perspective seem to agree, not always explicitly, upon the fact that their interest in post-colonial cultural spaces is generated by a need to understand the “tensions between the desire for autonomy and a history of dependence, between the desire for autochthony and the fact of hybrid, part-colonial origin, between resistance and complicity, and between imitation (or mimicry) and originality”<sup>10</sup>. Behind this otherwise legitimate interest are at least the anxieties regarding the dis-integrating and destabilizing potential of these tensions. This is why postcolonial theory is more than a method of analysing cultural phenomena (including literature), and represents a field of academic interests which nourishes itself and derives its legitimacy from the very need of understanding the paradoxes of the contemporary world. Its disciplinary prestige, its connection with phenomena in progress which need to be understood, as well as the fact that it functions as a theoretical bridge between networks of international academic communication, have enabled it to reproduce in diverse academic environments, even in those in which the phenomena it concerns are less obvious<sup>11</sup>. From this point of view, postcolonial theory is a theory of the centre which travels towards the periphery, a theory with a high capacity of penetrating peripheral academic communities. A practical discussion of the ways in which a theory of the centre (in our case, postcolonial theory) travels towards the periphery can be relevant in measuring not only the adaptability of the “theory”, but also the mechanisms of this process of adaptation. In what follows, I will discuss this process referring directly to the relation between postcolonialism and postcommunism in Romanian literary studies.

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<sup>10</sup> David Chioni Moore, “Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet?”, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> Sheng Anfeng, “Traveling Theory, or Transforming Theory: Metamorphosis of Postcolonialism in China”, *Neohelicon*, XXXIV, 2007, 2, pp. 115-136.

*Postcolonialism in Romanian Literary Studies: the Mimetic Version*

The presence of studies written in a postcolonial vein in Romanian literary studies can be noticed after 1990, when the ideological and especially institutional barriers within local academic communities disappeared. Direct academic contacts (study trips, conference presentations, etc.), as well as indirect ones (greater access to the core texts of international discursive communities) between the Romanian and the Western world were subsequently facilitated by instruments of online communication, which permitted, especially after the year 2000, the synchronization of some Romanian academic communities with similar ones in the West. This synchronization evidently occurred at the level of discursive communities which, by the nature of their interests, were closer to the theoretical, methodological and practical dominants of the “centre” (i.e., English and/or American studies departments<sup>12</sup>).

One illustrative example is the *Romanian Journal of English Studies* (RJES<sup>13</sup>), which publishes mainly papers presented at the BAS Conference organised by the West University of Timișoara<sup>14</sup>, whose first issue (2004) featured a “literature” section in which the (rather eclectic) contributions had a timid “identity” component (including a postcolonial one), in studies focusing on authors such as Toni Morrison or Nadine Gordimer. Starting with the second issue, the literature section was renamed and became “Literature and Cultural Studies”, thus covering a wider range of “cultural” readings of the literary phenomenon, readings in which one can notice instruments and theoretical elements derived from the great names of postcolonialism (such as Spivak<sup>15</sup>), disguised, however, behind the label of “postmodernism”. Beginning with the third issue (2006), “Cultural studies” became an independent section which included part of the “postcolonial” readings that focused not only on literary phenomena, but also on cultural phenomena in general. At the same time, the literature sections (split in the third issue between American Literature and British Literature) also include studies connected to the postcolonial paradigm. These studies subsequently multiply, with the number of studies written in a postcolonial vein peaking in the 2011 issue. This example suggests not only a disciplinary restructuring of interests (under the umbrella of cultural studies), but also the postcolonial perspective’s capacity of penetration,

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Liviu Andreescu, “Are We All Postcolonialists Now? Postcolonialism and Postcommunism in Central and Eastern Europe”, in Monica Bottez et alii. (eds.), *Postcolonialism/ Postcommunism. Intersections and Overlaps*, București, Editura Universității din București, 2011, p. 71.

<sup>13</sup> The journal appears under the aegis of the Romanian Society for English and American Studies.

<sup>14</sup> The participants are coming mainly from Romania and Central and Eastern Europe.

<sup>15</sup> “Quoting Daniel Defoe’s *The History of the Devil* as a motto, *The Satanic Verses* locates Satan in the air, in an ambiguous space that postmodern critics, such as Gayatri C. Spivak, often associate with the space of the signifier” (RJES, 2005, 2, p. 37).

which can be analysed on three levels: *theoretical* (the level of notional instruments and bibliographic references), *thematic* (the interest in certain specific themes: hybridity, displacement, exile, revolt, the postcolonial subject, etc.), and that of the *fundamental texts/ the material analysed* (the most popular names in postcolonial literature – V.S. Naipaul, S. Rushdie, etc., the phenomenon of immigration, identity representations in the media etc.).

Without elaborating upon the originality and relevance of the above-mentioned approaches, we can say that the close connection among these three levels reflects the thematic, theoretical and material configuration of the postcolonial approaches in the “discursive communities” of origin. From this point of view, these connections between the postcolonial approaches in Romanian academia and those in the international (particularly Anglo-Saxon) world can be characterised as *mimetic*. This is in fact one of the primary relations of contact between the discursive communities of two different cultural spaces, of which one is central (due to its prestige/ popularity/ communication platforms/ capacity to influence other communities) and one is “peripheral” (by its position within the dynamics of academic relations/ not popular/ lacking effective communication platforms/ open to change in relation with other spaces): a relation of conceptual, thematic and material mirroring of the “centre” by the “periphery”.

#### *Adaptation vs. Adaptability. Postcolonialism and Postcommunism*

The postcolonial perspective could not have penetrated Romanian academia without this opening, mimetic or not. This “penetration” resulted in three phenomena. Firstly, it allowed the cultivation of a taste for the literary texts and authors of the “postcolonial” wave and, at the same time, provided several instruments for understanding the tensions of the context in which they appeared. Secondly, it popularized certain figures belonging to international theoretical movements which, being connected in their original context to the whole history of 20<sup>th</sup> century critical theory, permitted the reconstruction in Romania of a coherent image of the evolution of recent theoretical thinking. Last but not least, this opening allowed a methodological discussion of the conditions in which a theoretical framework with no apparent connection with local phenomena can function. Perhaps this is why, around the year 2000, starting from the same discursive communities which adopted the postcolonial perspective, the need of an adaptation to local cultural and historical experiences was felt.

Inevitably, the most natural use of postcolonialism in the Romanian cultural space was that of employing its critical propositions in the analysis of the phenomena generated by Romanian communism during its existence, but especially after its fall. Soon enough, the dyad postcolonialism – postcommunism became a problematic coordinate of an epistemological discussion of the ways in which borrowed analytical instruments can be used in order to analyse local

phenomena. In fact, if the *mimetic adoption* of postcolonialism represented a coincidence between the *theoretical armature of the centre* and the *subjects of the centre*, the *adoption of postcolonialism* generated two types of processes. The first of these is one of *practical adaptation*, more precisely one of taking over its critical instruments and using them more or less freely in the analysis of local phenomena. The second is one of *conceptual and theoretical adaptation*, which led especially to a problematizing discussion of the possibilities of adaptation.

In fact, the temptation of this comparison between postcolonialism and postcommunism in Romanian academia resembles similar comparisons in the rest of Central and Eastern Europe and was fostered by theorists who were looking for their niche at the centre of the discipline. David Chioni Moore, American Africanist, published in 2001 the study *Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique*<sup>16</sup>, in which the focus was rather on expanding the boundaries of the phenomena which could be analysed using the theoretical lens of postcolonialism. Moore analysed the phenomenon of colonisation and connected it to the implications of its expansion in the Soviet Union's influence towards its geographical margins, being interested mainly in extending the coverage area of the term "postcolonial" to a wider spectrum of phenomena of cultural and identity interaction, including those in postcommunist societies. It is therefore not surprising that Moore's study subsequently became a compulsory reference for those who intervened in discussions upon the links between postcolonialism and postcommunism<sup>17</sup>, including Romanian scholars.

A discussion of the problematic relationship between postcolonialism and postcommunism in the Romanian cultural space began in a seemingly concerted manner in the early 2000s. In 2001, the Cluj magazine *Caietele Echinox* (1/2001) published, in a thematic issue entitled "Postcolonialism & Postcommunism," a series of studies<sup>18</sup> that succeeded for the first time in drawing attention upon this dyad, which had already taken a relatively clear shape in the West. An analysis of the volume is relevant in the context, particularly if we look at the way in which the topics of the studies partly contradict the expectations raised by their titles. Although the thematic unity is sustained by the fact that the subjects approached

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<sup>16</sup> First published in *PMLA* [*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*], 116, 2001, 1, special issue on Globalizing Literary Studies (January), pp. 111-128.

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, the volume *Baltic Postcolonialism* (edited by Violeta Kelertas), where Moore's study is reprinted at the very start of the volume, serving as a theoretical frame of the analysis of postcommunist phenomena in the Baltic States. Another example of discussion regarding the postcolonial status of the countries in the former Soviet sphere of influence is the Polish journal *Postcolonial Europe* (<http://www.postcolonial-europe.eu/index.php>).

<sup>18</sup> Most of them revisions of papers presented at the ALGCR Annual Conference (31 March – 1 April 2001, Cluj) on "Postcolonialism and Interculturalism".

are connected to postcolonialism in the canonic sense of the word<sup>19</sup>, to postcommunism, or to the defining elements connected to the history of the communization and decommunization of Eastern Europe, the only text which explicitly attempts to analyse the relation between postcolonialism and postcommunism is authored by Ion Bogdan Lefter, *Poate fi considerat postcomunismul un post-colonialism?* [*Can Postcommunism be Considered a Postcolonialism?*]<sup>20</sup>. I. B. Lefter's text is significant not only because it succeeds in pinpointing several problems of this juxtaposition in the Romanian context<sup>21</sup>, but also because it defines this juxtaposition as a problematic one which needs to be explored in detail<sup>22</sup>.

The 2001 thematic issue of *Caietele Echinoc* shows that, at that stage, Romanian academia (at least in the field of comparative studies) was relatively familiar with postcolonial theory, but related to it in various different ways. There are, in this volume as well, studies in which one can see a mostly mimetic adoption of the theoretical core of the centre<sup>23</sup>, but most texts enter a free dialogue with the elements of postcolonial theory<sup>24</sup>. I.B. Lefter's paper is the only one that attempts a methodological discussion upon the juxtaposition of postcolonialism and postcommunism.

The next moment that marks a serious problematization of the relationship between postcolonialism and postcommunism is the 2005 thematic issue of *Euresis* journal, entitled *(Post)communism and (Post)colonialism*. The studies included in this volume are characterized by coherent and substantial discussions of the congruence between postcolonial theory and the phenomena of Central and Eastern European/ Romanian communism/ postcommunism. Most of the texts concern themselves directly with assessing, on several different levels, the connections between postcolonial and post-communist phenomena. In the issue's

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<sup>19</sup> For example, M. Martin (*Caietele Echinoc*, 2001, 1, pp. 105-109) on the connection between postcolonialism and the phenomenon of de-canonization, in a study on Harold Bloom. However, the study's admiring tone towards Bloom reveals an ironic perspective upon the postcolonial theory.

<sup>20</sup> I.B. Lefter, "Poate fi considerat postcomunismul un post-colonialism?", *Caietele Echinoc*, 2001, 1, pp. 117-119.

<sup>21</sup> The process of Sovietisation was not a true colonization process, since identity consciousness was preserved and the local populations resisted cultural colonization.

<sup>22</sup> At the same time, the study implicitly suggests the limits of the corpus of phenomena in the analysis of which the postcolonial perspective can enhance the understanding of postcommunist developments (transformations in mentalities, the culture of transition).

<sup>23</sup> M. Frunzã ("Postcolonialism și feminism. O paralelã conceptualã și tematicã", *Caietele Echinoc*, 2001, 1, pp. 110-116) on feminism and postcolonialism as militant versions of poststructuralism (postmodernism, according to the author).

<sup>24</sup> For instance, M. Spiridon ("«Ochii suverani» și problema zonei de frontierã", *Caietele Echinoc*, 2001, 1, pp. 201-206) analyses the issue of Romanian protochronism, which resorts in a loose manner to the scenario of colonisation/ decolonisation; see also Corin Braga's study (pp. 83-92) upon the classical and medieval sources of the colonial and Eurocentric imaginary.

opening article, Mircea Martin<sup>25</sup> discusses the relationship between colonialism and communism and traces the history of the Soviet ideological oppression in Romania, the main coordinates of which were “the destructive campaign against the [Romanian] national culture and collective mind”, “the assault upon memory and cultural identity”<sup>26</sup>, de-nationalization and de-Europeanization<sup>27</sup>. As a result of this reconstruction of the traumatic events in recent Romanian history, the conclusion seems natural: “le communisme soviétique s'avère même avoir été encore plus colonialiste que le colonialisme occidental”<sup>28</sup>. Anca Băicoianu’s study<sup>29</sup> holds a somewhat opposite position, moving the discussion about the coloniality of European countries into the epistemological register, in order to argue that the relation between postcolonialism and postcommunism is detrimental to both notions. The arguments suggested are connected less to the incompatibility of their specific theoretical constructions as to differences of a contextual nature: “To sum up, although both postcolonialism and postcommunism are derivative discourses enacting a drama of liminality, their particular contexts are far too different to be conflated”<sup>30</sup>.

Although they focus less upon the equivalence between communism and colonialism, the other studies that attempt to problematize the possibility of theoretical and conceptual adaptation of the postcolonial perspective also underline the specific character of Eastern European countries as compared to the colonial status<sup>31</sup>, despite the fact that the majority recognize the ability of the postcolonial theoretical framework to function as a background for the analysis of (post)communist phenomena. On the other hand, all authors seem to believe that the postcolonial perspective is useful in the analysis of phenomena characterized by cultural hybridization and liminality<sup>32</sup>, or that the study of postcommunist phenomena “can join in the theorization of (epistemic) violence, political or cultural strategies of domination”<sup>33</sup>.

In fact, all the authors who, in the above-mentioned volume, reflect upon the possibility of adapting postcolonial theory are attentive to nuances, even when its applicability seems obvious to them (cf. Martin, Zirra). Their theoretical

<sup>25</sup> Mircea Martin. “Le Communisme Comme Colonialisme”, *Euresis*, 2005, 1, pp. 3-26.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 12.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 20.

<sup>29</sup> Anca Băicoianu, “Top Hat and Fur Cap: Postcolonialism, Postcommunism and their discontent”, *Euresis*, 2005, 1, pp. 48-53.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 51.

<sup>31</sup> Cristina Șandru, “Reconfiguring Contemporary 'Posts'”, *Euresis*, 2005, 1, p. 35.

<sup>32</sup> Rodica Mihăilă, “Atypical Postcolonial Spaces: American Studies and the Postcommunist Context”, *Euresis*, 2005, 1, pp. 132-146.

<sup>33</sup> Ioana Zirra, “Where Does Postcolonialism (As Postcommunism) Stand? And Where Could It Be Wished to Stand?”, *Euresis*, 2005, 1, p. 112.

enthusiasm is tempered by the critical evaluations of the particularities of local phenomena, which reveals an interesting *liminal positioning* of the researchers themselves in the empty space generated by the pressure of the central theoretical model and the reflection upon the specific historical and cultural conditionings of phenomena which are related, but still independent<sup>34</sup>.

Interestingly, in this issue we also encounter the other two dimensions of the practice of the postcolonial approach in the local academic context. The mimetic dimension is present in two texts which analyse phenomena of the postcolonial literature (culture) in the manner of the “centre”<sup>35</sup>. Another three studies articulate models for the practical adaptation of postcolonial instruments to local Romanian phenomena<sup>36</sup> or Eastern European ones<sup>37</sup>.

Another important moment in the discussions upon the relationship between postcolonialism and postcommunism in Romanian literary studies concentrated around a research project which channelled problematizing energies coming almost exclusively from the area of English and American studies, namely the *Postcolonialism/ Postcommunism: A Dictionary of Key Cultural Concepts* project. The project has had several direct<sup>38</sup> and indirect<sup>39</sup> results which constitute an interesting and extensive critical discussion of the possibility of engaging the postcolonial perspective in the study of postcommunist realities, seconded by a direct dialogue between theorists of the centre (e.g. John Thieme) and their local counterparts. For example, one of the direct results is the volume *Postcolonialism/ Postcommunism: Intersections and Overlaps*, in which one can notice the disappearance of the mimetic dimension in the manifestation of the postcolonial perspective in relation with postcommunism. Even though it includes several studies which seem to be mainly concerned with the anthropology of post-totalitarian culture and claim no major connections with postcolonialism, these are outnumbered by studies of a problematizing nature and by some which adapt the

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Anca Băicoianu, “Top Hat and Fur Cap”, p. 52.

<sup>35</sup> Daniela Rogobete, “Mapping Alternative Spaces”, *Euresis*, 2005, 1, pp. 121-126; Elena Butoescu, “What Isn’t Postcolonial Writing”, *Euresis*, 2005, 1, pp. 48-53.

<sup>36</sup> Carmen Andraş, “Literary Representation of Central and Eastern Europe Viewed from the West. Postcolonial and Postcommunist Approaches”, *Euresis*, 2005, 1, pp. 66-75; Radu Surdulescu, “Identity-Raping Practices: Semicolonialism, Communist Reeducation, and Peer Torture”, *Euresis*, 2005, 1, pp. 54-65.

<sup>37</sup> Marcel Cornis-Pope, “Literary and Cultural Reconstructions after 1989: Postmodernism, Postcommunism, Postcoloniality”, *Euresis*, 2005, 1, pp. 76-85.

<sup>38</sup> The proceedings of the 2010 conference organized within the project, edited by Monica Bottez, Maria Sabina Draga Alexandru and Bogdan Ștefănescu, *Postcolonialism/ Postcommunism: Intersections and Overlaps* (București, Editura Universității din București, 2011); the dictionary itself: *Postcolonialism/ Postcommunism: A Dictionary of Key Cultural Concepts* (București, Editura Universității din București, 2011).

<sup>39</sup> B. Ștefănescu, *Postcolonialism/ Postcommunism: Siblings of Subalternity* (București, Editura Universității din București, 2013).

postcolonial theoretical instruments to local realities. Like in the 2005 thematic issue of *Euresis*, the volume dramatizes the tension between the arguments for and those against the possibility of equating postcolonialism with postcommunism. The skeptical position is represented by Liviu Andreescu's study, which warns, in a rather categorical manner, against conceptual incompatibilities and against the lack of a coherent research hypothesis on the postcolonial perspective in Eastern European cultures<sup>40</sup>. Even if the favourable positions are nuanced and highlight the usefulness of postcolonial reading practices and implicit thematizations (i.e., mimicry, liminality, ambiguity and textual ambivalence, the effects of cultural or ideological hegemony, overlapping and conflicting identities, etc.<sup>41</sup>), as the editors of the volume note, most of the studies "raise questions rather than giving answers, suggesting that the discipline under debate had not yet come of age enough to develop its own independent theoretical discourse"<sup>42</sup>.

*Postcolonialism/ Postcommunism. Dictionary of Key Cultural Terms* (Bottez et al.) is the second visible and important result of the above-mentioned project. The dictionary is a useful instrument in the field of Romanian literary studies for several reasons. Firstly, it attempts to familiarize the academically educated reader with the key notions of postcolonial and postcommunist theory by using *double references* (i.e. connected both to the centrality of postcolonial theory and of the fundamental texts on (post)communism, and to the theoretical and problematizing works originating in the Central and Eastern European/ Romanian context)<sup>43</sup>. Secondly, the insistence upon the possibility of adapting the notions from the sphere of postcolonialism to the (post)communist phenomena acquires a central position, and the *semi-colonial status* of the countries within the Soviet sphere of influence is explicitly asserted on several occasions<sup>44</sup>. Last but not least, there are several elements that underline useful directions for possible future research: the relation between memory and totalitarian repression, the study of the coercive means of remodelling the individual as a subject of ideological power, the study of collective identity trauma, etc. By its nature, but especially due to these elements,

<sup>40</sup> Liviu Andreescu, "Are We All Postcolonialists Now?", p. 67.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Cristina Șandru, "Textual Resistance? «Over-coding» and Ambiguity in (Post)colonial and (Post)communist Texts", in M. Bottez et alii, *Postcolonialism/ Postcommunism*, pp. 39-56; Monica Colț, *The Dynamics of Cultural Values in Postcolonialism and Postcommunism*, in M. Bottez et alii, *Postcolonialism/ Postcommunism*, pp. 219-234.

<sup>42</sup> M. Bottez et alii, *Postcolonialism/ Postcommunism*, p. 8.

<sup>43</sup> The *Caietele Echinox* and *Euresis* issues analyzed above are often cited as points of reference in the discussions.

<sup>44</sup> M. Bottez et alii, *Postcolonialism/ Postcommunism: A Dictionary of Key Cultural Concepts*, p. 11, p. 70. This status is also recognized in other articles by the editors: Monica Bottez, "Postcolonialism/ Postcommunism: Similarities and Differences: the Romanian Case", *University of Bucharest Review*, I, 2011, 1, pp. 89-99; Bogdan Ștefănescu, "Reluctant Siblings: Methodological Musings on the Complicated Relationship between Postcolonialism and Postcommunism", *Word and Text. A Journal of Literary Studies and Linguistics*, II, 2012, 1, pp. 13-26.

the dictionary represents what we may call an attempt at adaptation. Interestingly, this adaptation seems to take on mainly the mission of compensating what seems to be a lack of unity in postcommunist studies. The entry on *Postcommunism* underlines both this lack of unity and the uneven distribution of the disciplinary areas which lay claim over postcommunist phenomena: economics, sociology, political science, history, discourse analysis, cultural and literary studies<sup>45</sup>.

Among the indirect results of the above-mentioned project is the research undertaken by Bogdan Ștefănescu, an English studies scholar with a strong interest in the relations between (post)colonialism and (post)communism. In a very interesting 2012 article, in which he undertakes an analysis of epistemic embarrassment in the discussions regarding the coloniality of the former Soviet republics and the Soviet satellites, he maintains his own discourse in the area of a problematizing discussion, bringing arguments in favour of the anamorphic character of the notion of colonialism and, consequently, of the ambiguities and uncertainties of the (post)coloniality of Romania/ Eastern Europe<sup>46</sup>. The article's most important contribution is, in fact, that of clarifying the meaning of the notion of colonial status. Starting from the distinction between the practical register of the notion (the military, political and economic subordination) and the symbolic one (cultural and ideological subordination), B. Ștefănescu suggests the usefulness of a general ("all-inclusive") significance of colonialism, which would also be suitable in a discussion of the effects of the complex cultural and political relations in the Central and Eastern European and the ex-Soviet space<sup>47</sup>.

B. Ștefănescu's analytical explorations of the relationship between postcolonialism and postcommunism are extensively elaborated on in his 2013 book *Postcommunism/ Postcolonialism: Siblings of Subalternity*. As early as the preface, the author confesses to an academic liminality positioned between the East and the West, centre and periphery, which determines him to reconsider (post)coloniality outside the traditional Western patterns<sup>48</sup>. His main concern throughout the book is the rejection of the Westcentric picture of coloniality, in order to argue precisely the coloniality of the communist experience. As these arguments develop, colonialism becomes a paradigm of collective subordination, which has an impact upon discourse, upon institutions and social behaviours, and thus upon the socio-cultural imaginary. These methodological considerations enable the author to undertake, in the last part of the volume, his analyses of the variations in postcommunist Romanian intellectual discourse and its traumatic reverberations. Remarkable in this volume are the analytical skepticism in relation to the theory of the centre, the attention to nuances, and the attempt to

<sup>45</sup> M. Bottez et alii, *Postcolonialism/ Postcommunism: A Dictionary*, p. 256.

<sup>46</sup> Bogdan Ștefănescu, "Reluctant Siblings", p. 23.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 19-21.

<sup>48</sup> "Traditional Westcentric schematics" (B. Ștefănescu, *Postcommunism/ Postcolonialism: Siblings of Subalternity*, p. 10).

problematize the complex relations between (post)colonialism and (post)communism, leading not to an adaptation of postcolonialism, but rather to its paradigmatic reduction, followed by its practical development in new directions.

*Mimicry, practical adaptation and epistemological concerns*

The above description of the main modes of interaction between postcolonial theory and the rather complex and amorphous body of phenomena generated by the communist experience suggests that in Romanian literary studies the most important dimension is that of the exploration of the ambiguities of these relationships. The premises of this comparison are evident. Firstly, there is a certain degree of similarity of the historical experiences they arise from. Colonization and Sovietisation, even when they are not equated, are analysed as phenomena capable of producing patterns of transformation in the cultural configurations of the spaces they interfere with. The most important of these patterns is connected, in the first place, to the *liminality* and *hybridity* of the postcommunist subject, characteristics which are easily placed in analogy with the liminal and hybrid character of the postcolonial subject, as it is theorized by the theoretical “centre” (e.g. H. Bhabha)<sup>49</sup>. In this sense, the possibility of connecting with the wider area of the investigation of the effects of communism in the countries affected by it – *postcommunism*<sup>50</sup> – is evident, both from the perspective of the similarity in the cultural and ideological interactions which took place during colonization and Sovietisation (subalternization, demonization, the denial of the previous identity and the projection of a new one), and from the perspective of their long-term effects. Similarly to the colonial experience, the experience of Sovietisation also generated long transitional periods characterised by identity violence. When it did not lead to wars, or at least to inter-ethnic violence, this identity violence triggered a resurrection of a nationalist drive which revived attitudes, stereotypes, and rhetorical formulas the effects of which led to cultural fragmentation and discursive violence in the public space. All of these have prevented (and there is still the risk that they may continue to do so in the future) any efforts towards institutional reconstruction. From this perspective, we can understand both the importance of the investigations of the paradoxes generated by

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<sup>49</sup> “The liminality and hybridity that Bhabha finds characteristic of the postcolonial subject who hovers in a space between colonial discourse and a new «non colonial» identity also perfectly illustrates the situation in postcommunist states where the long-term effects of communism could not be eradicated over the night and the new European identity has taken, or is still taking, various spans of time to materialize in admission to NATO (2005 in the case of Romania), to the European Union (2007 for Romania) or to other European organisms and institutions.” (Monica Bottez, “Postcolonialism/ Postcommunism: Similarities and Differences”, p. 90).

<sup>50</sup> See Leslie Holmes, *Postcommunism. An Introduction*, Durham, Duke UP, 1997.

the postcommunist transition, and the intellectual need to find a theoretical formula which may help in this exploration.

In Romania, this intellectual need came from within several “discursive communities” connected to the various disciplinary fields interested in the (post)communist phenomena. Over the past twenty years, cultural history, cultural anthropology, political science or economic studies approaches have explored, on various levels, the impact of recent history upon the Romanian space (institutional culture, the sociology of identity stereotypes, interethnic relations, traumatic memory, the dynamics of economic evolutions, etc.). Most of these approaches, however, had no connection whatsoever with the postcolonial perspective, due to methodological and disciplinary incompatibilities. This connection could arise only in an area where it previously existed, that is, literary studies, which were about to absorb the cultural atmosphere that had emerged several decades earlier in Western academia. Postcolonial theory, an influential speculative and conceptual bond in Western literary and cultural studies, was first adopted *mimetically* within the discursive communities that were the most closely connected to the instruments and topics of the Western ones. Subsequently, a process of practical adaptation of the postcolonial instruments to the (post)communist realities began. Some of these approaches can be seen in the pages of the volumes and journals analysed above, but there are probably very many other examples<sup>51</sup>. This process of *practical adaptation* probably represented a personal research strategy, more precisely an attempt to penetrate the discursive communities of the centre by the construction of a *specific research space*, simultaneously connected to the theoretical core of the centre and to the reality of local phenomena in which the competence of the Romanian researchers could manifest itself freely in its dialogue with the central core of the theory. This was the decisive step in moving beyond a subaltern status in academia and, at the same time, the decisive step in questioning the hegemonic pressure of the theory of the centre<sup>52</sup>. This is also the reason why, in most cases, Romanian discussions related to the postcolonialism – postcommunism dyad have always had an epistemological component. This component, a necessary one in fact, has suspended the terminological precision and the capacity for abstraction of the centre’s perspective, and placed the Romanian researcher in a liminal position whose potential I see as fertile especially from the perspective of the academic dialogue that can build bridges between connected, but still different academic spaces.

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<sup>51</sup> For example, Andrada Fătu-Tutoveanu, *Building Socialism, Constructing People: Identity Patterns and Stereotypes in Late 1940s and 1950s Romanian Cultural Press*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014.

<sup>52</sup> On the hegemonic pressure of the Western academic models in relation to the wider field of comparative studies, see Bogdan Ștefănescu, “Why Compare? What’s to Compare? The Practice of Comparative Literature in a Postcolonial/ Postcommunist Context. A Response to David Damrosch”, *University of Bucharest Review*, I, 2011, 1, pp. 21-28.

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## THE ADAPTABILITY OF THEORY: POSTCOLONIALISM VS. POSTCOMMUNISM IN ROMANIAN LITERARY STUDIES

(Abstract)

For the last two decades, the postcolonial theory has become one of the most dominant perspectives in the study of literature and culture in the Western Academia. Together with its increasingly more authoritarian voice, the postcolonial theory has also become able to influence peripheral scholar communities, including those coming from cultures with no direct link with the historical phenomenon of colonisation. This influence seems to be of two distinct types. The first one is a *mimetic* one (i.e. unintermediated by local experiences) which has generated an imitative postcolonial discourse in local academia, mostly used by members of English language departments. The second one, which I can call *particularizing* (i.e. intermediated by local cultural experiences), has tried to adapt (to various degrees of intensity) the postcolonial perspective to local conditions. This second type of influence can be seen, for example, in the adaptation of the postcolonial theory to the analysis of the postcommunist cultural phenomena in Central and Eastern Europe. The same thing has happened in Romanian literary studies, although at a low degree of intensity. In this paper, I will try to analyze the impact of postcolonial theoretic speculation on the Romanian literary studies of the last two decades.

*Keywords:* postcolonialism, postcommunism, travelling theory, adaptability of theories.

ADAPTABILITATEA TEORIEI: POSTCOLONIALISM ȘI POSTCOMUNISM  
ÎN STUDIILE LITERARE ROMÂNEȘTI

(Rezumat)

Una dintre paradigmele dominante în studiile literare occidentale din ultimele două decenii este vizibil conectată la o perspectivă postcolonială. Inevitabil, aceasta a influențat și spațiile academice „periferice”, inclusiv pe acelea fără legătură directă cu colonizarea propriu-zisă. Această influență pare a fi avut două variante. Prima dintre ele (*mimetică*) ar fi cea neintermediată de experiențele „locale” (care a generat o practică postcolonială imitativă, mai ales în spațiul departamentelor de anglistică și americanistică). Cea de-a doua (*particularistă*) este cea intermediată de elemente specifice locale, generând o modificare a perspectivei „centrului”. Aceasta poate fi observată în spațiul central și est-european în problematizările privind adaptarea teoriei postcoloniale la analiza fenomenelor culturale postcomuniste. Același lucru s-a întâmplat și în spațiul studiilor literare românești, chiar dacă la o intensitate redusă. În prezentarea de față îmi propun să analizez impactul speculațiilor teoretice postcoloniale în interiorul studiilor literare românești din ultimele două decenii.

*Cuvinte-cheie:* postcomunism, postcolonialism, localizarea teoriei, adaptabilitatea teoriei.

IOANA ZIRRA

**IS ROMANIAN POSTCOMMUNIST IDENTITY  
HYPHENATED IN THE SAME WAY AS THE  
POSTSTRUCTURALIST, POSTCOLONIAL AND  
POST-TRAUMATIC HYPHENATED IDENTITY?**

(DEBATE ON THE APPLICABILITY OF A CONCEPT  
FOREGROUNDED BY EMILY APTER'S NEW COMPARATIVE  
LITERATURE OUTLINED IN THE TRANSLATION ZONE)

*Narrative Preamble about the Genesis of the Identity Hyphen Series of Terms*

My attention was first drawn to hyphenation in *the poststructuralist sense* by Emily Apter's adoption (in her 2005 comparative literature book *The Translation Zone*<sup>1</sup>) of a Derridean term which served to describe the condition (in the sense of "predicament") of colonized nations whose natural historical processes were denied and the language testified to it. "The hyphen signifies all the problems of national/ linguistic unbelonging characteristic of post-Independence Algerians, including the way in which Jews, Arabs, and French were neighbored, yet separated, by the French language"<sup>2</sup>. According to Apter, Derrida also theorized on the imposition of "the monolingualism of the other" (subjective genitive) which reduced the amputated natural complexity of the denied language and presented the victim with a prosthesis of origin to replace the amputated complexity of the natural language; an example of the prosthesis of origin, offered in a footnote to her concluding remarks by Apter, is the term *negritude*, "coined by Aimé Césaire in Martinique, a place that had no single African language on which to ground it"<sup>3</sup>. In Derrida's wake, the hyphen is foregrounded to signal the prosthetic language imposed on the colonized by the colonizer. Another symptom of hyphenation and

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<sup>1</sup> Emily S. Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2006, see especially the conclusion in Chapter 16, titled "A New Comparative Literature".

<sup>2</sup> Apter, *Translation*, p. 246.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 286 (Note 9); her reference is to Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other: or, The Prosthesis of Origin*, translated by Patrick Mensah, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1998. More particularly, what is invoked is the Derridean theoretical demonstration about the corporeal aspect of language when it is and it is not one's own, as explained in terms of the dynamics of cultural-political inclusion and exclusion that affect a French speaking Algerian Jew.

the monolingualism of the other is, in a quotation given by Apter from Kenneth Reinhard<sup>4</sup>, the creation in the course of colonial history of “‘neighbourhoods’ determined by accidental contiguity, genealogical isolation, and ethical encounter”<sup>5</sup>; and the verb “to neighbour” is coined (by Reinhard) and used (by Apter) to describe the predicament of “[neighbored] languages, nations, literatures, and communities of speakers ... articulated as the uncanny neighbor of the other ... [in] traumatic proximity”<sup>6</sup>. Neighbouring disrupts predication and leaves a hyphen behind:

“Neighboring” describes the traumatic proximity of violence and love, manifest as exploded holes in language or translation gaps/ spaces of nonrelation; such spaces [...] are directly relevant to the problem of how a language names itself because they disrupt predication, the process by which verbal attributes coalesce in a proper name or noun<sup>7</sup>.

Equipped with Apter’s conceptual apparatus, a/the new comparative literature could not fail to become more attractive, merging poststructuralist with postcolonial theory and being readier to address the translatability of cultures to each other efficiently. In an ethical sense, Apter militated for a thoroughly intersubjective translation in response to, and in the wake of, the civilizational implosion of 9/11, indicative of serious misunderstandings constitutive of our discourses. It is possible to extend even further the range of new comparative literature so as to address and translate the discourses of the neighbored postcommunist, just as the postcolonial discourses, but not before the outline of the way hyphenation emerged as an academic tool is allowed to come full circle.

I further exploited the notion of hyphenation in teaching Irish identity to MA students at the University of Bucharest in order to explain the uncomfortable coexistence of a historically successful *settler colony*, Northern Ireland today, with a *colony of occupation*, in the same confines. In retrospect, as identity should be taught anyway, the falling apart of the historical colony of occupation, perceived as such by the colonized Catholics, began precisely during the nineteenth century Union with Britain. It gave a clear political expression to the Protestant neighbouring of the Catholics<sup>8</sup>. After the Protestants secured the perpetuation of

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<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Reinhard, “Kant with Sade, Lacan with Levinas” quoted by Apter’s Note 10, p. 286, from *Modern Language Notes*, CX, 1995, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Apter, *Translation*, p. 247.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*. The attention to depredication is further connected by Apter in loc. cit. with Saidian secular criticism and indicated as an important preoccupation for philology in the postcolonial age, given that philology originated with Western Biblical and classical hermeneutics placed side by side with Arabic-Islamic Koran hermeneutics. Apter quotes from Said’s 2003 text in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (p. 58).

<sup>8</sup> Protestant colonization had been going on in Ireland since the sixteenth century but even earlier there had been Catholic or Old English and more precisely, at the beginning, Anglo-Norman settlers.

the settler colonial tradition in the Northern Ireland dominion during the 1920s, the definitive decolonization of the Catholic colony of occupation was effected as late as the year 1949 with the appearance, in the South, of the Republic of Ireland, after an Anglo-Irish, then a Civil War immediately following the First World War. Decolonization was also perfected by the replacement, in 1937, of the constitution imposed by Britain with one that explicitly declared the status of the liberated colony of occupation. Meanwhile, the North traversed a period of Troubles, an unofficial terrorist civil war waged by Catholics still raging against their own perpetuated colony of occupation (what happened was that *the Catholic replica to the former colony of occupation had moved inside the original settler colony*; Catholics suffered at the hand of a Protestant parliament for a Protestant nation for 45 years until an unofficial terrorist civil war was unleashed; it lasted from the Human Rights agitation in the late 1960s, followed by the loss of autonomy in 1972, until 1999; in 1999 the dominion status, which was actually unwanted by the Unionists, was restored after a period when Northern Ireland had been no more than a British province). From the political point of view, in the latter half of the twentieth century the hyphen isolated the North from the South and explained, first, the international boundary between the transparently English Northern Ireland and the Gaelic *Éire* (or, in English, the Irish Republic); it pointed, secondly, to the reduplication, in the late twentieth century and in Northern Ireland, of the endemic historical Troubles. The hyphen indicated in the North the uncomfortable coexistence of two kinds of colony in one – and the near impossibility for an analyst to include in the same linear narrative the history and the present of the two kinds of colony. It became necessary to separate the causality links of the Protestant and Catholic historical narratives in order to explain things. In the settler colony, Old English identity grew “naturally” to become the Unionist British identity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the colony of occupation, the Catholic resistance to the Protestant Ascendancy also grew: it grew in outbursts of insurgency, periodical troubles in the eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth century – to become endemic, as a disease or a plant that catches, growing from the soil beneath, from beneath the normalized, acceptable life. From the soft/rhetorical discourse analysis perspective, hyphenation provided a clear starting point for demonstrating the incommensurability of the Catholic historiographical discourse, a typical *colony of occupation* discourse, with the Protestant successful *settler colony* historiographical (and literary) discourse. It was a discourse ready to mimic/reproduce the colonizer’s narratives and values. This was evident in the difference between a very professional comprehensive literary history book about Ireland titled *Colonial Consequences* and written from the settlers point of view in 1991 by John Wilson Foster and a more recent reference book, Declan Kiberd’s *Inventing Ireland*, originally published in Cambridge, Massachusetts, but circulated in the paperback London, Verso edition, of 1996. These books share the right cultural monumentality of good literary

histories, but whereas the latter is widely read as the main work tool for literary criticism on Ireland's reinvented identity after centuries of colonialism, the former traces the common elements (themes, literary species) that unite Irish with English literature in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth century. By contrast, Kiberd's titles play with the hyphen to dislocate the inwardly perceived difference between Catholics and Protestants by popularizing the playful, very Irish cliché speaking of Catestants and Protholics. Next, I put to work Emily Apter's Derridean discourse politics hyphen to explain the complexity of *the Irish question* as seen in the metropolitan nineteenth century discourses while also thematising *the ambivalent relationship with the English neighbour* as seen from across the Irish Sea, especially after the mid-century disaster of the Famine. The verb *neighboring* emerges as a useful tool, a transitive verb which draws attention to stronger nations forcing their neighbours. Seamus Heaney's poem "Ocean's Love to Ireland" presents the Irish maid that is forced, backed to a tree, raped by none other than the famous Renaissance courtier, Sir Walter Raleigh. "In London his name/ Will rise on water and on these dark seepings" [of a whole history of rapes] because "He is water he is Ocean lifting/ Her farthingale like a scarf of weed lifting/ In the front of a wave"<sup>9</sup>. In the same generation, Derek Mahon's poem "A Disused Shed in County Wexford" laments a quite different trauma, the trauma experienced in the Republic of Ireland, after decolonization by the settlers cast as fungi proliferating in the dark underground of a deserted hotel. In their sick and wild germination bed, the nostalgic prisoners of the old (colonial) regime long for the return of the departed mycologist (the colonial ruler) with his light meter, this modern implement for taxing light on behalf of an established, central administration; the poem's postcolonial allegory is located in a provincial country reduced to the condition of resembling a disused shed in one southern Irish county, Wexford, a county replete with colonial history reminiscences.

I plucked courage with "my hyphen" next, when I met it in Joep Leersen's cultural history of nationalism – whose motto comes from the Irish Joycean book *Ulysses*. But in Leersen's history, the term *hyphenation* was used with a different sense from the Derridean poststructuralist and postcolonial perspective. In reference to the history of national thought in Europe, *hyphenation* and *hyphenated* point to *the fusions* effected between the nation and the state to yield the ideologically supported modern nation-states (notice the hyphenation in the common noun *nation-state*, the result of "the hyphenation of nation and state into the ideal of the nation-state"<sup>10</sup>). The hyphen was next applicable to the fusion between separatist nations in the name of *Pan-Slavism* (notice the hyphen which

<sup>9</sup> Seamus Heaney, *North*, the explosive volume of 1975, London, Faber and Faber, 1989, p. 46. Author's translation.

<sup>10</sup> Joep Leersen, *National Thought in Europe. A Cultural History*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2006, p. 21.

constitutes the proper name) (the fusion of the Czechs and Slovaks for their liberation from the Austrian rule and of the Serbs and Croats to break free from Ottoman rule<sup>11</sup>). In these two cases the hyphen created progressively geared nations and notions. Leersen's book also explores the reverse of the modern liberal coin, looking at things from the colonial agency perspective when explaining that Henri Grégoire's one and indivisible France allowed, in the 1792 code of laws, "no subsidiary or 'hyphenated' identities"<sup>12</sup>, or when mentioning that "empires hyphenated themselves into Czecho-Slovak and Serbo-Croat alliances"<sup>13</sup>. Last but not least, Leersen changes the morphological category using verb-phrase references to the "tendency [in the postwar period] to hyphenate various Slavic nationalisms into federal initiatives"<sup>14</sup>. In sum, Leersen's cultural history revolves around a hyphen that expresses the traditional and imperial amalgamation and separation movements whose language can be analysed by the adjunction/suppression operations of the structuralist model. As suggested by the author himself in a discussion at the Central Library in Bucharest in November 2015, hyphenation is time- and context-dependent. The nationalisms of the nineteenth, early and late twentieth centuries do not resemble, even when the hyphen intervenes. This is why late twentieth century and twenty-first century postcolonial history and theory, and, in their wake, postcommunist theory, must reach, as could be seen by Emily Apter's Derridean hyphen, beyond the straight structuralist fusions and alliances, to the unspeakable of history's residual "dark seepings" that can be approached in poststructuralist terms.

Hyphenation also stands a fair chance of becoming as wide-spread in the postnationalist age as to fit practically every discourse about any form of current social organization; this is suggested by the following quotation from a 1997 article which describes the nation-states as *splintered*: "The world economy requires socially and territorially more complex organizations than nation-states, which have subsequently become splintered rather than developmental in form"<sup>15</sup>. Interestingly, on the same page this article speaks of "the deformations of the postnational" by what seems a direct analogy with the recognition of destruction of predication or depredication as a task for the philologist practicing secular criticism and putting it in the service of circumscribing postcolonial discourses.

The next thing to do is attract into the sphere of these discourses the postcommunist ones.

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 136 (summarized).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 138.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 220.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 158.

<sup>15</sup> Donald, E. Pease, "National Narratives – Postnational Narration", *MFS Modern Fictional Studies*, XLIII, Spring 1997, 1, p. 2.

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*The Comparison of the Postcommunist/ Postcolonialist Hyphenation*

I shall start the comparison of postcommunist/ postcolonialist hyphenation from Sorin Alexandrescu's coordinates for defining three paradoxes of Romanian identity regarded in the imagological mirror, in *Paradoxul român*<sup>16</sup>. They all translate hyphenation systematically, beginning with space (and the difficulty of assigning Romania lastingly to any precise cultural zone), continuing with time (and the description of the paradoxical Romanian synchronicity that results when borrowing foreign models disposed diachronically, and crowning the description of the Romanian ethnotype by referring to continuity in discontinuity. Interpreting, next, the resulting image of discontinuous continuity in Romanian modern and postcommunist western aspirations in the light of Ireland's case of white colonialism, I will show how hyphenation between modern and anti-modern aspirations works in the discourse of anti-modernist intellectuals representative for the Eastern and Central-European elites between 1880 and 1945. I will refer to the intellectual history reader (an anthology published in 2014 by the Central European University Press) that gathers texts illustrating radical revisions of collective identity in the entire postcommunist region. These observed samples of postcommunist identity analysis can finally be shown to bear numerous resemblances to postcolonial theory discourses but to differ in some significant details which may resist the assimilation of postcommunist to postcolonialist discourses.

When moving on Romanian soil, in Sorin Alexandrescu's *Paradoxul român*, which opens with the translation of an article that predates Apter's and Leersen's previously mentioned books by about thirty years (since the original article from which the 1999 Univers Publishers book by Sorin Alexandrescu sprang was first published in English in The Netherlands in 1976) – we miss the hyphen in material form in the text as a first thing worth noting. The discussion about Romanian identity, nonetheless, revolves around precisely the same “hyphenation complaints” as does any postcolonial analysis text. Sorin Alexandrescu's first and third paradoxes, respectively, depict the Romanian nation as inhabiting an intermediary space. He does not call it *hybrid* and does not speak of *liminality* but of “an intermediary space that attenuates and absorbs shock-waves coming from neighbouring colossi, Austria, Russia, Turkey”<sup>17</sup> and causes Romanian culture to be marked by both continuity and discontinuity, as the Romanians' (survival) reaction to their milieu. Paradoxically, then, the constitutive Romanian continuity expressed in cultural texts rests on vertical, and transversal (or horizontal) *discontinuity* (one of Sorin Alexandrescu's words for hyphenation constitutive of

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<sup>16</sup> Sorin Alexandrescu, *Paradoxul român [The Romanian Paradox]*, București, Univers, 1998.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 32 (here and in what follows - the author's adaptative translations).

his third paradox). According to the space-paradox, continuity is achieved as part of the Romanians' survival in relation with the neighbours based on a pattern of "multiple differentiation from and assimilation of" foreign models<sup>18</sup>. A few paragraphs later, Sorin Alexandrescu points to the same *neighboring* phenomenon when he speaks about "a culture that has had to conceive itself as *constrained* in order to survive"<sup>19</sup>. The emphasis on survival in the imagological representation of postcommunist identity represents the first difference from the postcolonial (and postnationalist) approaches already examined. The difference comes from the Romanian discourse focusing on the (felicitous) *result* achieved in the process of historical survival rather than focusing on the Derridean prosthesis of *origin* as a symptom of unbelonging. This makes manifest the difference between historical and genealogical approaches to identity and the different assessment of modernity's relevance to the construal of identity in the two approaches. It recalls the fact that modernity is assumed as substantial by the former, while the latter's contestation of modernity is blatant and a source of differentiation: the source for the postmodern and poststructuralist stimulating difference. Consequently, the noticeable difference indicates the affinities between the hyphen as a signal of adjunctions and suppressions in Joep Leersen's account about the ideological nation-state and pan-Slavism formations above mentioned and the equally structuralist presentation of the continuity achieved in despite of the vertical and transversal discontinuities in Sorin Alexandrescu's text. By contrast, in *The Monolingualism of the Other*, Derrida starts from the postmodernist alternatives of (un)belonging in the light of "monoculturalism or multiculturalism, nationality citizenship"<sup>20</sup> in order to define the identity of the political subject but he goes further, towards '*ipseity*' and its link with the originary power, as shown by Michèle Lowrie<sup>21</sup>. This leads into the heart of the postmodern-poststructuralist paradigm that connects postcolonialism with trauma. Derrida's words in this respect, "Alienation institutes every language as a language of the other: the impossible property of a language"<sup>22</sup>, inscribe him in the poststructuralist paradigm invoked by Apter. He is further connected (by Michèle Lowrie<sup>23</sup>) with ancient and modern literature written in the elegiac vein (by Rimbaud and Sextus Propertius) .

Before concluding that it might be due to the different methodological presuppositions of Western imagology as contrasted to postcolonial theory if the

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 33.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem* (author's emphasis).

<sup>20</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism*, p. 14, quoted in Michèle Lowrie "Divided Voices and Imperial Identity in Propertius 4.1 and Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other* and *Politics of Friendship*", *Dictynna VIII (Varia)*, 2011, p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> M. Lowrie, "Imperial Identity in Propertius and Derrida", p. 8.

<sup>22</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism*, p. 63.

<sup>23</sup> See M. Lowrie's motto and the entire case she makes in "Imperial Identity in Propertius and Derrida".

hyphenated identity discourses differ, it is interesting to dwell longer on this point of difference. The comparative postcommunist perspective on Romanian identity appears as less impassioned, less fraught with apocalyptic-sounding or simply psychoanalytic terms ready to reveal ambivalence or disturbing distances that open, as Homi Bhabha would see them, in threatening ways, to declare the structural in-betweenness or dislocation. There is no discussion about Cathy Caruthian unclaimed experiences, either, in *The Romanian Paradox*. The vein of the discourse is not elegiac, to mark historically traumatized nations or communities and their narratives. The postcommunist identity discourse is drier, marked by the historian's objectivity desideratum. In his third national characteristic, Sorin Alexandrescu makes the Romanian character simply paradoxical by the standards of logic, continuity manifesting itself as culturally entrenched discontinuity – both on the vertical and horizontally. First, the vertical hyphen is one between the folklore and formally cultural traditions, with the folkloric one always eventually overriding the succession of institutionalized cultural modes; folklore is the decisive dimension of Romanian identity: an enduring substratum in the local resistance to so many waves of forceful change. As part of this paradox (and in conjunction with the coexistence in time of several cultural models in Romania the second paradox), Sorin Alexandrescu even ventures to declare tentatively that the realer Romanian classicism might be that of the folkloric cultural mode. Secondly, the horizontal hyphen (or discontinuity) originates in the Romanians' break with the neighbouring Balkan tradition in favour of a decisive orientation, in the course of the nineteenth century, towards the never sufficiently approachable West. The western centre was then a rejuvenating, modern one, politically and linguistically a place of romance/Romance, capital and small case letter. But as a source of discontinuity, it polarized Romanian society, with the Western adepts of the modern and politically revolutionary romance fighting, in the nineteenth century, the traditionalist defenders of what was to become the twentieth century anti-modern(ist) ethos of the Central Powers. This explains the difficulties of past and present Romanian diplomacy. Sorin Alexandrescu insisted, as could be seen in the first part of this demonstration, on the variable and alternative orientation of Romanian diplomacy towards now one, now another of the three colossi (and later the Austro-Hungarian empire) as an inevitable and successful survival technique dictated by Romania's geographical position. From our point of view, the shifting diplomatic orientation and allegiances move the hyphen in so many ways that it becomes impossible to define identity in any clear structuralist terms with it. This condition is communicated, of course, to the Romanian postcommunist age with its two centres of identification and reference: the former, communist one, represented, to the east, by Soviet Russia, and the earliest, eventually retrieved and postcommunist western centre. Consequently, the complexities of Romanian culture and identity had better be analysed with new poststructuralist umbrella drawn from

postcolonial theory. It does not mean, however, that postcolonial and postcommunist theory could or should be conflated, but they had better be placed in communication, mutually translated, joined in the translation zone.

One step towards achieving this is the comparison with the Irish white colonialism case. Though still fighting with colonial consequences (not only in the mild, congratulatory sense of the cultural consequences due to the assimilation of Ireland into the English mainstream culture in the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as demonstrated by John Wilson Foster's above mentioned book thoroughly emblematic for the settler mentality), Ireland does not definitely suffer from "the white man's artifice inscribed on the black man's body"<sup>24</sup>, this figure for the colonial otherness relation. But it suffers from hyphenation in demonstrably similar ways as Romania does. A double case can be made, consequently, *in the dependency theory sense. Ireland, an island which has been dangerously tilted towards both London and Rome for an entire colonial history, can be seen to share the predicament of East and Central-European countries fighting, throughout the centuries of modern history, between Western and Eastern centres which were now to be mimicked, now to be feared, as the regimes would have it.*

*Paradoxul român* mentions, in this respect, a series of (polyvalent) self-imposed artifices, indicative of trauma and surviving techniques that constitute the Romanian Self-Other relationship determined by the perpetually shifting *Janus bifrons* orientation of the country in respect to the east and the west hegemonic centres. The predicament of countries exposed to white colonialism is similar in the postcolonial and postcommunist spaces. The Romanian historical testimony of the imagologist Sorin Alexandrescu can be seen to coincide at this point with that of the Irish writers Hubert Butler and James Joyce. All these writers' voices speak of countries "dangerously tilted" or torn between more than one centres as the source of their basically hyphenated identity. To the three "neighbouring colossi, Austria, Russia, Turkey"<sup>25</sup> in the historic-political negotiations chronicled by Sorin Alexandrescu should be added the Romanian allegiance to the Western modernity centre both after the brisk rupture with the Balkan neighbours (as part of Sorin Alexandrescu's paradox of continuity in discontinuity) and after the fall of communism, when the Western modernity centre was frantically retrieved by the Romanian intelligentsia. Similarly, there are enough sources that speak about the Irish case of double dependency, shifting between alternating centres – now regarded as Kristevan abjects, now as simply desirable, depending on what section of the population and/ or what period in time is taken into consideration. Irish

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<sup>24</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London, Routledge, 1994, p. 45. There is, however, a sense in which the American Irish were racially marked being regarded as white-skinned niggers in the nineteenth century, by an extension of the American South mentality.

<sup>25</sup> See the quotation above from Sorin Alexandrescu, *Paradoxul*, p. 32.

hyphenation was described in short by Hubert Butler in one of the opening paragraphs of his fascinating book of essays gathered in 1990, *The Sub-Prefect Should Have Held His Tongue*.

Living in social harmony is a most difficult art; the most absolute concentration is required, and perfect equilibrium. Our island is dangerously tilted towards England and towards Rome, good places in themselves but best when seen on the level. Everybody is rolling off it and those that remain, struggling hard for a foothold, drag each other down<sup>26</sup>.

The same was dramatized in the fables of Irish history hidden among the famous parodies of English styles that make up the “Oxen of the Sun” episode of Joyce’s *Ulysses*. Two scathing Joycean fables about the alternating occupations of the island by Rome and England expose bigoted Irish women for welcoming Rome and cowardly Irish men for fleeing the island’s occupation; they serve to prove the same self-imposed artifices which the colonial nation resorted to for survival, adaptation, and, of course, hyphenation as the strategies reviewed in *Paradoxul român*. In the latter, Romanian, discourse there is hardly any self-defacing anger and maybe not enough openly expressed bitterness owing to the context of the original article’s publication (it was a debate about the place of Romanian identity studies abroad). But the Irish, just as the Romanian, writings suggest the hyphenation of the nation. Had *Paradoxul român* been written to deplore the way contemporary history saw both countries torn by and between collaborationism and emigration as two social evils one cannot fail to be touched by, Romanian, reminiscing (about communist history) would have been sufficiently bitter, too. But since Sorin Alexandrescu’s imagological chapter is only an opening to an otherwise pre-communist history book, there is no room in it for the tonalities of the self-hating nationalist, such as Joyce, or of the twentieth century Protestant settler left behind in the Republic to rail against the (ultra-Catholic) establishment. Although not directly relevant for this paper’s demonstration, the Joycean fables are worth remembering. They are exposures of the colonized nation’s adaptative artifices; they feature papal and Anglican bulls (the ancestors of the modern oxen of the Irish sons) and extend to an all-pervasive kind of secular sarcasm, via the English punning on son/ sun, the Odyssean allusion to the sacred herd of the god Helios when connecting it with the Christian Son of Man. As a mock-Jesus at the Last Supper, Stephen Dedalus delivers his artist’s Salvationist doctrine of male postcreation in the middle of the “Oxen of the Sun” episode about (feminine) procreation in answer to the other younger son, the Anglo-Irish Buck Mulligan. The latter’s project of setting up a fertilizing farm, as a princely fecundator ready to repopulate a depleted island mocks the turn of the nineteenth century colonial

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<sup>26</sup> Hubert Butler, *The Sub-Prefect Should Have Held His Tongue and Other Essays*, London, Penguin, 1990, p. 3 (“The Auction”).

British projects of erecting (capitalistic) garden cities on John Bull's other island. Read as parodies of hegemonic policies in past and recent centuries, the Joycean fables in this chapter foreground the historical series of seductions which fertilize the nation with despicable foreign seed. Reading very much like Heaney's allegory of colonization in "Ocean's Love to Ireland", they dramatize the curse of alternating centres envisaged by hyphenated nations. And they re-mediate anti-colonial anger, though Joyce wrote before the fall of colonialism and Heaney during the Troubles that re-edited it.

Ten years after 1989, the objective historian's tone was still dominant in the Romanian postcommunist imagological discourse of *Paradoxul Român*. Self-hating statements were intentionally refined to mere openly expressed regrets. The same is true in the only slightly more impassioned historical account presented, as a gesture of reparation for the benefit of the postcommunist younger generation, by Neagu Djuvara's *A Brief Illustrated History of Romanians* of the year 1999. In the English translation of the book, done by Cristian Anton and published by Humanitas in 2014, I have in mind Professor Neagu Djuvara's comment, for example, in the sixth and last chapter dealing with contemporary Romania, about the possibility that the 6 members of the Crown Council may have been right when they advised King Carol II against ceding there and then Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina as demanded by the Soviets in the Ultimatum of 1940. Had we not given in as the majority of 15 Crown Council members decided, and had we patriotically fought for our historic land, though with such meager chances of success in resisting the Soviet forces on our own, we might have fared better than we did under communism. "Decades later I still ask myself", Neagu Djuvara confesses, "whether it was not those six men [including the reputed intellectual Nicolae Iorga, *author's note*] who were right after all... Would it not have been better to declare our resistance on that day?"<sup>27</sup>. And the Irish case might contribute to answering this question if one considers the Easter Rising in Dublin, commemorated in W.B. Yeats's poem "Easter 1916". When defeated, this anti-colonial outburst with very few chances of success was followed by the British execution of the Irish leaders; and it is worth remembering that they and the passionate faith they embodied resounded in William Butler Yeats's words as the moment when "a terrible beauty was born". The terrible beauty refers to what was gained, nevertheless, after the failed insurrection. Despite the Easter Rising operations being officially cancelled in 1916 by part of the movement's leaders, the radicals disobeyed and the actually hopeless anti-colonial insurrection made its mark. Though indirectly, and later, it did change the country's history. The

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<sup>27</sup> Neagu Djuvara, *A Brief Illustrated History of Romanians*. Translated by Cristian Anton, București, Humanitas, 2014, p. 326.

executed heroic leaders passed their radical legacy on and a majority of Irishmen were granted a free state in 1921.

*The Benefits of Opening the Discussion on Hyphenated Identity in Structuralist and Post-Structuralist Terms in the Central and East-European Meso-Region*

After proving to some extent how hyphenation in postcommunist and white postcolonialist spaces can resemble, more in the basic historical data than in softer discourse terms<sup>28</sup>, a comparison between Romania and other countries in the postcommunist region has been made possible by the CEU anthology of 2014, edited by Diana Mishkova, Marius Turda and Balász Trencsényi: *Anti-Modernism – Radical Revisions of Collective Identity* published in Budapest and New York. It provides a sequel to the conundrums of the pre-communist baffling Romanian negotiations with the Western centre discussed by Sorin Alexandrescu and Neagu Djuvara; and it may indicate how postcommunism can be accommodated into the poststructuralist paradigm. It opens ways of analyzing further the centre denied by centrist communization and retrieved from the postcommunist debris in the transition period (if transition is tendentiously understood as a necessary drifting towards capitalism, centered in the West).

In this book's preface, by Sorin Antohi and Balász Trencsényi, the lines and concepts that unite some radical platforms in the meso-region, i.e., Central and Eastern Europe, whose study only became possible in the postcommunist decades, are clarified. The volume represents an act of orderly restitution since it clarifies not only the anti-modernist, i.e., antiliberal ideas developed in the Central and East European world which later fell under Soviet rule, but also shows how kindred spirits were inserted in several concrete cultural and political contexts of the meso-region. The book helps create an image, like a radiograph, of meso-regional interwar identity, a period to which postcommunist hearts are inclined to return. In structuralist terms, this collection establishes the meso-regional/ Central and East European region as a reference point by hyphenation, i.e., adjunction because it joins and revives various home-bred anti-modernist revisions of official pre-communist discourses on collective identity. They are thoroughly documented radical intellectual opinions that ran, and still run!, counter to the fascination with

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<sup>28</sup> In connection with the distinction between hard and soft arguments for the postcommunist/postcolonial comparison, this is the place to acknowledge my indebtedness in the observations of this article, to the entries on discourse, allegory, mimicry, hegemony, dependency theory, dislocation, hybridity, globalization, worlds, diaspora, communization, communism, colonialism, colonization, self-colonization, and, last but not least, postcolonialism and postcommunism, in the volume *Postcolonialism and Postcommunism: Dictionary of Key Cultural Terms*, prepared by the members of the English Department, the University of Bucharest, București, Editura Universității din București, 2011. The reference here is to p. 256.

the western modernity centre. They were put forward in undesirable/ unpopular affirmations made by cosmopolitan Austrian, Polish, Slovak, Czech, Hungarian, Serbian, Croat, Bulgarian, Greek, Turkish and, of course, Romanian intellectuals. The Romanian authors are, in the order of their appearance in the five sections, Nicolae Iorga, Aurel Popovici, Mircea Eliade, Lucian Blaga, Nichifor Crainic, Emil Cioran. The five sections document important intellectual history topics of the first half of the twentieth century: integral nationalism, the crisis of European conscience, the search for a national ontology, conservative redefinitions of tradition and modernity. Last but not least, the chapter which presents some calls to anti-modernist revolution promises an understanding from new angles of the postcommunist identifications and oppositions relevant for the negotiations of national identity. *As a new coinage that denotes a discursive fusion, the meso-regional hyphen opens the way for developing a meso-regional postcommunist theory critical of western hegemony and dependency theory by restituting marginalized pre- and interwar radical discourses.* It allows hyphenation to work as a convenient operator, suitable for integrating Romanian postcommunist hyphenation in a transcultural frame. Meso-regional theory being home-bred, since it arises from restituted local discourses, cannot function as a derivative of postcolonial theory translated for postcommunist use. It can represent a discursive practice generated from the inside, by the thick-description of Central, East European and Balkan studies (since Austria, Turkey and Greece cannot be included in the postcommunist zone). As such, meso-regional theory can draw attention to the diverse speed-gears of change in interwar history in so far as it adds rapid/ revolutionary/ catastrophic crises (these being Mircea Eliade's terms in "Spiritual Itinerary"<sup>29</sup>) to the series of mainstream modernity terms that revolve around the reformist, liberal politics of the establishment and modernization (illustrating the even pace of change developed in western democratic regimes). In addition, anti-modernist affirmations coming from local interwar intellectuals can qualify the statements about the postcommunist aspiration towards the western centre and pluck them out from the reach of neo-dependency theory claims. Lastly, operating with the hyphen in the meso-regional comparative frame may lead to the discovery of relationships within, and between ethnical and supra-national paradigms. Hyphenation outside the nation may serve to analyze, directly refute, or relativize Romanian exceptionalism, too, opening it to a world larger than the local identity.

This kind of opening was effected by the postcommunist identity lesson in survival that Hertha Müller teaches – and she was rewarded for it – in her Nobel Prize winning novel *The Hunger Angel*. It is a lesson about the power of discourse

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<sup>29</sup> Mircea Eliade, "Spiritual Itinerary", in Diana Mishkova et al (eds.), *Anti-Modernism – Radical Revisions of Collective Identity*, Budapest – New York, CEU Press, 2014, pp. 127-133.

taught facing the West from the East of Europe. Because of her own, and her penalized protagonist's, capacity to survive communization by preserving the advanced values of the West, she achieved the performance of defeating, while also frontally addressing, the forceful postwar communization in the Soviet Union satellites. The survival of a poet, the real and fictional poet Oskar Pastior whose concentration camp thoughts the book chronicles, may well differ from that of an ordinary, anonymous figure in the crowd; but the effect of rich discourse substituting itself to the decimating realities of concentration camp oppression is an overwhelming act, and gift, of secular grace. Hertha Müller's transcription refines to the angelic sublime and transcendence the hunger flagellum in the novel. Writing in what one may well designate as "postcommunist German" about a typical experience in the meso-regional world (with Hertha Müller being a postcolonial citizen of the Austro-Hungarian empire in the Romanian Banat) is the perfect equivalent of writing back to Empire in English, French, Spanish or Portuguese. The only difference is that it writes back to the western world from, and about, the communist meso-regional oppression. Thus it is that the East and West of Europe are hyphenated together, if not reconciled, in postcommunist discourse made possible by expressing the postwar hyphenated trauma in a language graced with sufficiently wide-circulation. So, what can one derive from this exceptional case?

Derrida's analysis of identity starting from uniqueness and performed in increasingly abstract, comprehensive terms can help answer this question. Derrida started from his own experiences *in extremis*, as shown in the following quotation.

What happens when someone resorts to describing an allegedly uncommon "situation," mine, for example, by testifying to it in terms that go beyond it, in a language whose generality takes on a value that is in some way structural, universal, transcendental, or ontological? When anybody who happens by infers the following: "What holds for me, irreplaceably, also applies to all. Substitution is in progress; it has already taken effect. Everyone can say the same thing for themselves and of themselves. It suffices to hear me; I am the universal hostage"<sup>30</sup>.

These thoughts fuelled the Derridean diagnosing of traumatic experiences in social terms because they opened the way for defining identity under imperial and post-imperial circumstances by using hyphenated counter-terms, the result of negation or contrast, but also of inclusion. It is to describe post-traumatic identity (whether imperial or not) and the divided voices that resist inclusion in homogeneous discourses that the flexibility of the hyphen operator is welcome. It may well satisfy the criterion of unchecked substitutions that poststructuralism wishes to liberate from the hegemony of centered structures in discourse as well as in civic life.

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<sup>30</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism*, p. 20.

Because it encourages substitutions in both directions, the graphical figure of the hyphen, which is not a trope either, really, allows one to think of both ends, or of the linear hyphen middle. Hyphenation reaches for generality, as an operator ready to accommodate (or graft) on postcommunist soil the postcolonial experience of hybridity, dislocation, liminality which have already been deconstructing hegemonic centres and narratives for so many decades now. What can boost one's hopes is the fact that bolder literary discourses have already done that in addressing postcommunist alienation frontally. Hailing from Romania, Hertha Müller succeeded in bridging the gap, and placed a hyphen, between the two halves of Europe, West and East of the Berlin Wall, in associating German as a major cultural language and Russian. Her merit was that she made palpable the postcommunist hyphen that decolonized meso-regional nations have to strive with; in fact, she made the traumatic hyphen visible by moving the long silenced anti-communist language to the Western left in the discourse of the hegemonic age that both postcommunism and postcolonialism strive to move beyond.

All this brings us back to the way hyphenation, understood as an almost impossible coexistence in time and space (such as the coexistence of Protestants and Catholics in Ireland or of communist nostalgia and the decommunization pathos in the meso-region), becomes recognizable when it is pinpointed in/ by discourses. When acknowledged as such, in the poems by Seamus Heaney and Derek Mahon or in the German language and in Romanian translation, Hertha Müller's Nobel Prize winning novel, literature manages the performance of fixing the hyphen – which slips and slides as a supremely floating signifier. It is now a structuring fusion or defusing operator (as seen in the history of nationalist thinking), now a pointer or an arrow speaking, rather than of linguistic neighbouring or othering, of the trace and the lag in time of theoretical discourses. There is a roughly ten years' space which separates postcommunist from postcolonial theory discourses, if we consider the distance in time between Robert Young's account about hybridization and the *Colonial Desire* (1995), for example, and the self-divided desire, manifest in the postcommunist meso-HYPHEN!-region. With a little bit of patience and equipped with the right understanding of the instruments at hand, accountability might be secured for postcommunist self-reflection. This will situate it so as to counter the fact, noted as early as 2001 by David Chioni Moore, that "South does not speak East, and East not South"<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> David Chioni Moore, "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique", *PMLA*, XVI, 2011, 1, *Globalizing Literary Studies*, p. 115.

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IS ROMANIAN POSTCOMMUNIST IDENTITY HYPHENATED IN THE  
SAME WAY AS THE POSTSTRUCTURALIST, POSTCOLONIAL AND  
POST-TRAUMATIC HYPHENATED IDENTITY?

(Abstract)

The paper is an attempt to approach postcommunist identity scholarship to postcolonial and poststructuralist theory by focusing on hyphenation as an identity mark traceable in both harder and softer disciplinary approaches – and in poetry or fiction. In the first part, the theoretical scaffolding is constructed in a narrative about the origin of the hyphenation terms. They are shown to derive from postcolonial and poststructuralist theory as advanced in *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (2006) by Emily Apter, a text which ties into Jacques Derrida's *Monolingualism of the Other: or, The Prosthesis of Origin* (1998). Both of these are read in conjunction with the history of nationalism in Joep Leersen's *National Thought in Europe. A Cultural History* (2006), where the hyphen indicates structuralist fusions, suppressions and adjunctions. The second, comparative part of the paper debates and demonstrates the applicability of the hyphenated identity terms in several collective identity discourses and texts. After documenting the Irish postcolonial identity still segregated between the typical mentalities developed in a colony of occupation (nationalist) and the successful settler colony one, by referring to poems by Seamus Heaney and Derek Mahon, to scathing satires from James Joyce's "Oxen of the Sun" episode in *Ulysses*, and to the elegiac metropolitan essays by Hubert Butler, the following hypothesis can be advanced. That there is an analogy between the postcolonial case of British white colonialism in Ireland, a country still torn between two centres, and the postcommunist hyphenation due to the confrontation with eastern and western hegemony and discourses. On the

postcommunist side, Romanian hyphenation is followed in Professor Sorin Alexandrescu's imagological essay *Paradoxul român* (1998), which is compared to Joep Leersen's history of European national thought, and to a more recent intellectual history anthology, *Anti-Modernism – Radical Revisions of Collective Identity* (2014). Because it documents several radical statements deployed until 1945 in Central and Southeast Europe, the latter book helps reconstruct the horizon of pre-communist identity to which postcommunist discourses prevalently refer. The similarities and differences between European imagological and postcolonial studies, the latter developing under the sign of critical theory, are highlighted. They are put to work in the paper's third part. Future directions for the analysis of meso-European regional hyphenation in relation to the poststructuralist and postcolonial paradigms are suggested.

*Keywords:* hyphenation, postcolonial, postcommunist, (post)structuralist, anti-modernism in the meso-European region.

IDENTITATEA ROMÂNEASCĂ POSTCOMUNISTĂ SE ARTICULEAZĂ ÎN  
ACELAȘI FEL CA IDENTITATEA POSTSTRUCTURALISTĂ,  
POSTCOLONIALISTĂ ȘI POST-TRAUMATICĂ?  
(Rezumat)

Lucrarea de față își propune să stabilească o similitudine între studiile asupra identității postcomuniste și teoria poststructuralistă, printr-o discuție pe marginea despărțirii prin cratimă ca marcă a identității, reperabilă în studiile mai mult sau mai puțin riguros disciplinare, cât și în poezie sau ficțiune. În prima parte, demersul teoretic pornește de la analiza originilor termenilor formați prin afixare. Aceștia derivă din teoria postcolonială și poststructuralistă elaborată de Emily Apter în *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (2006), text înrudit cu *Monolingualism of the Other: or, The Prosthesis of Origin* (1998). Ambele lucrări sunt interpretate în relație cu istoria naționalismului din studiul lui Joep Leersen, *National Thought in Europe. A Cultural History* (2006), unde cratima indică fuziunile, suprimările și alăturările structuraliste. Cea de-a doua parte, comparativă, a lucrării discută și demonstrează modul de aplicare a termenilor referitori la identitatea realizată prin cratimă la diferite discursuri și texte despre identitatea colectivă. După demonstrarea identității postcoloniale irlandeze, sfâșiată încă între mentalitățile specifice unei colonii aflate sub ocupație (naționalistă) și, respectiv, ale coloniei învingătoare, prin referința la poezii de Seamus Heaney și Derek Mahon, la satirele sarcastice din episodul „Boii Soarelui” din romanul lui James Joyce, *Ulyse*, și la eseurile elegiace metropolitane ale lui Hubert Butler, putem avansa următoarea ipoteză: că există o analogie între cazul postcolonial al colonialismului alb, britanic din Irlanda, țară încă împărțită între două centre, și clivajul postcommunist determinat de confruntarea cu dominația și discursurile estice și vestice. În domeniul postcomunismului, cazul românesc este urmărit în eseu imagologic al profesorului Sorin Alexandrescu *Paradoxul român* (1998), prin raportare la istoria gândirii europene naționale a lui Joep Leersen, precum și la o antologie a istoriei intelectuale recente, *Anti-Modernism – Radical Revisions of Collective Identity* (2014). Analizând câteva afirmații radicale utilizate până în 1945 în Europa Centrală și de Est, cea din urmă lucrare contribuie la reconfigurarea orizontului identității precomuniste la care se referă în mod preponderent discursurile postcomuniste. Accentul cade pe similitudinile și diferențele dintre studiile europene imagologice și cele postcolonialiste, întreprinse în numele teoriei critice. Acestea sunt reliefate în cea de-a treia parte a studiului. Sugerăm, de asemenea, posibilitatea unor direcții viitoare în analiza segregării regionale din Europa Centrală, în relație cu paradigmele poststructuraliste și postcolonialiste.

*Cuvinte-cheie:* despărțire prin cratimă, postcolonialist, postcommunist, (post)structuralist, anti-modernism în regiunea mezeuropeană.

## LITERARY RECEPTION THEORIES: A REVIEW

### *From text to context*

The concern for a contextualized approach to literature has gradually taken shape throughout the 1960s, as a manner of detachment from the still dominant “immanentism” and “from the formalist and New Critical emphasis on the autonomy of ‘the text itself’ toward a recognition (or a re-recognition) of the relevance of context, whether the latter be defined in terms of historical, cultural, ideological, or psychoanalytic categories” (Suleiman – Crosman 1980: 5).

Eine Dichtung lebt und entsteht nicht als Abglanz von irgend etwas anderem, sondern als in sich geschlossenes sprachliches Gefüge. Das dringendste Anliegen der Forschung sollte demnach sein, die schaffenden sprachlichen Kräfte zu bestimmen, ihr Zusammenwirken zu verstehen und die Ganzheit des einzelnen Werkes durchsichtig zu machen (Kayser 1969: 5),

maintained Wolfgang Kayser, in the 1948 preface of his highly influential work *Das sprachliche Kunstwerk*, the refusal to study literature by taking into consideration “extra-literary phenomena” such as “the personality of an author or his conception of the world, a literary movement or generation, a social group or region, the spirit of an age or the character of a people” (Kayser 1969). Within the same period, in the preface of a similar work, with considerable impact as well, the authors (Wellek – Warren 1956: 8) expressed their conviction that “literary study should be specifically literary”. Employing the famous distinction between “extrinsic” and “intrinsic” approaches to literature, Wellek and Warren expressed their distrust towards the former rather strongly, rejecting it while assuming the pretense of “causal” explanation and accepting it only insofar as it asserts “much more modest claims”, set forth in an elusive manner: scholars who use extrinsic methods

...will seek to establish only some degree of relationship between the work of art and its settings and antecedents, and they will assume that some degree of illumination follows from such knowledge, though the precise relevance of the relationships may escape them altogether (Wellek – Warren 1956: 74).

The “intrinsic” approach, “the interpretation and analysis of the works of literature themselves”, was considered to be “the natural and sensible starting point” of literary scholarship; “in recent years a healthy reaction has taken place which recognizes that the study of literature should, first and foremost, concentrate on the actual works of art themselves”, advocated the authors (Wellek – Warren 1956: 139). The practical dimension of “immanentism” (*Textimmanenz*) is diffuse, since

the latter represents a premise rather than a theory, a method, or much less an autonomous field of study. It is worth mentioning here the stances of Anglo-American New Criticism, of Russian Formalism with its extensions in the Prague School, of Spitzer stylistics, of the literary hermeneutics of Emil Steiger (*Die Kunst der Interpretation*), of the “history of mentalities” such as *Geistesgeschichte* for Oskar Walzel, of Structuralism oriented towards the issue of intrinsic “literariness” or “poeticity” as defining concepts for fiction. The “purism” of such approaches is often less radical than one might expect. Sometimes they offer opening perspectives that subsequently become fruitful: for instance, the sociological turn of semiotic aesthetics of Mukařovský or Vodička or favoring the receiver to the detriment of the author in French Structuralism. It is no wonder that, out of the approaches that have stimulated the polemic reaction of rapid increase in concern with the text-reception binomial, some of them will be taken into consideration both for delimitation purposes and for their employment as theoretical framework.

The “contextualist” openness that took shape simultaneously with the gradual, sinuous and irregular demonetization in various cultural areas of the “linguistic mirage” (Pavel 1988) – I would briefly like to mention the French Post-structuralist phase that implied the shift of the linguistic issue from a methodological to a philosophical point of view, as well as its extensions into the field of American literary and critical theory – occurred as a recouped and out of phase phenomenon, with emphases and priorities variable in time and space.

Overall, in the years 1960-1990, there was a gradual shift in the academe and in the education sphere in general with respect to the manner of understanding the central notion of “literature”, swinging from a “museum” perspective, according to which literature can be perceived as a “library” that offers a vast exploratory space within its own specific system of classification towards a dynamic perspective, directed towards the exploration of the aspects related to social practice – or, in some cases, semiotics – by means of which “literature” is defined as a distinctive domain of cultural interaction. The vane turn is suggestively synthesized, for instance in rephrasing the pivotal question of previous decades – “What is literature?” – in the contextualized form – “*When is literature?*”.

Similar tropisms occur in the field of linguistics as well. The latter, able to confer scientific legitimacy to literary studies, has served as “pilot-discipline” for inter-war stylistics as well as for post-war structuralism. The turn proposed in the work of philosopher John Langshaw Austin, with the telling title, *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), a work that from a linguistic perspective operates a spectacular breach in the purism of famous Saussurean dichotomies, opening the way towards what would be an extremely productive discipline in the following decades – pragmatics – has as counterpart the equally suggestive title of the literary theory book authored by Karlheinz Stierle, *Text als Handlung* (1975). The early 1980s already witness an ambitious attempt to systematically reorganize the

domain of literary studies into an action-oriented version, as illustrated in the two volumes of *Grundriß der Empirischen Literaturwissenschaft*, authored by professor Siegfried J. Schmidt, from the Bielefeld University (1980, 1982).

The contextualized perspective favors, in various forms and with different theoretical options, the reconsideration of those aspects that the mid twentieth-century has debased as being at most “accessories” of literary research *per se*. Firstly, the concern lies in creation and reception – “production” and “consumption”. Subsequently, the range of investigation widens, annexing themes previously considered to be marginal, relegated to the “factual” information, such as intermediation – translators, editors, the circulation of literary texts and so on – or other factors that compete in the functioning of “the institution of literature” in a world ever more profoundly affected by globalization. At the same time, the political relevance of literary studies – lodged almost exclusively in the sphere of canonical debates in the period I deal with – subsequently expands so as to include affirmative action meant to do justice to disadvantaged groups and cultures by means of cultural studies, feminist and gay studies, postcolonial studies and so on.

In terms of the primary equation of the contextualist approach, author – text – receiver, the option for reception is often based, in a preliminary stage, on a strategic suspension or even on a *de plano* contestation of authorial instance. French Structuralism is prone to conditioning the reader’s “emancipation” upon the author’s “death”, a stance that reverberates in the hermeneutical controversies around the “correct interpretation” as well. The programmatic expressions of the “Constance School” are also inclined – particularly when they plead in favor of the reception approach as a solution that brings about an overall revival of literary studies – towards a depreciation of the role of authorial instance, a tendency reinforced by the debates of East-German researchers who use a Marxist foundation in order to support the primacy of “production” over “consumption”. It also happens that the author should be “recovered”, with *de rigueur* adjustments, from the perspective of reception in order to keep the theory balanced.

In the following pages I will refer exclusively to the dynamics of reception theory in the approximate period 1970-1990. There are two reasons for which I considered it appropriate to re-engage this matter. Firstly, to my knowledge, Romanian culture still lacks a detailed description, both in the historical and theoretical sense, of what the “golden age” of reception studies implied. Secondly, an even more important reason as far as I am concerned is that, as the final section will suggest, in Romanian literary scholarship – which is generally avid for synchronization – the impact of Western reception studies, particularly of German influence, has been very scant. After 1990, there has been a swift burning of stages that has propelled us into the sphere of intensely politicized investigations – cultural studies, gender studies, postcolonial studies and so on. I believe that a “recuperative” undertaking is still useful and necessary.

*The study of reception*

The turn towards reception has been most spectacular in Germany, where the new approach has had the advantage of an incisive and very astute doctrinal crystallization, conducted primarily by Hans Robert Jauss in the years 1967 and 1969, as well as of stipulated acts of assertion.

The impact of Jauss' two "manifestos" (1972, 1975) has been monumental, partly due to the already amassed dissatisfaction in the field of literary study, shrewdly speculated under the guise of the epistemological "paradigm shift" theory, partly because radical views that the author held at the time, which helped him place himself in the "horizon of expectation" of the moment, shaping the outline of a complex reformatory program.

Yet Jauss' colossal intervention is far from installing consensual harmony. The critical reactions vigorously rival the apologetics. The responses arise from very disparate directions. However, the range of polemic stances rapidly gains manifest coherence. The defensive reproaches of "immanentism" and "historicism" are overwhelmed by critics on offensive stances that deplore precisely the half-measure, the secret attempt on the part of the redrafting promulgators of the old paradigm to reach compromise and salvation.

Although the result is not the anticipated convergence, but rather the reciprocal delimitation of certain parallel options, the "provoking" stage of reception studies has brought about the gain of a strong awareness of methodological knowledge. The weak points have been noticed, discussed and debated from the very beginning. In essence, this is about the incompleteness trial instituted firstly against the aesthetics of reception (*Rezeptionsästhetik*) in its narrow understanding (Jauss, W. Iser, Rainer Warning, Karlheinz Stierle, Harald Weinrich and so on) and then against reception studies (*Rezeptionsforschung*) in general, with all its rather unstable subdivisions. The former has been rightly accused of the tendency to ignore the real reader, either by projecting him or her into an uncertain ideality by means of the vague and multi-faceted notion of "horizon of expectation" or by suppressing him or her in order to make room for an equally ambiguous concept derived from textual analysis "implied reader". The various approaches supporting the second subdivision have been attacked for ignoring the assembly of intermediary links that strive to achieve literary communication (for instance, the role of "mediators", of "adapted" forms, of the "institutions" involved in the production, circulation or reception of literature). Thus, the study of reception has extensively broadened and diversified its program through pressure of the many critical stances taken with respect to its premises. The promise of the unifying perspective initially expressed by Jauss was subsequently perceived as a strategic play – with supremacist intention? – which cannot be attributed lack of efficiency. The redrafting program has given extended into quasi-autonomous research branches, joined or not to other disciplines:

phenomenological or semiotic aesthetics of reception, empirical reception studies, sociological, psychological or dialectic reception. For the benefit of convergence, interdisciplinarity and team work have been appealed to ever more vehemently as two stringent necessities of literary investigation.

Outside the German sphere, there has been no coagulating moment of doctrinal expression. The heterogeneity of contributions in the field of literary reception is even more striking here. Robert C. Holub (1984: XII-XIII) separates *reader-response criticism*, “an umbrella term that accommodates systems as diverse as Norman Holland’s ‘transactive criticism’, Jonathan Culler’s structuralist poetics, and Stanley Fish’s affective stylistics” from its German counterpart entitled *reception theory*, which “by contrast, must be understood as a more cohesive, conscious and collective undertaking”. The annotated bibliography of the *audience oriented criticism* mentioned at the end of the *Reader in the Text* anthology (Suleiman – Crosman 1980) comprises approximately two hundred titles, grouped into the following sections: I. *Rhetorical*, II. *Semiotic and Structuralist*, III. *Phenomenological*, IV. *Psychoanalytic and Subjective*, V. *Sociological and Historical*. In fact, Inge Crosman favors this bibliographical selection by means of this type of assertions: “Since any reading – analytical or interpretive – involves texts, readers, and their interaction, I had a wealth of material to choose from” (Suleiman – Crosman 1980: 401).

The distinction between the German aggregation *Rezeptionsforschung* and the Anglo-Saxon one *reader-response criticism* has also persisted because of the meagre knowledge of the former outside of the continent.

### *Historical premises*

The conditions that have favored the turn towards the reader and reception can be traced back to the socio-political circumstances of the late 1960s, to the evolution of literary studies in a moment of quandary, to the mutations that have affected literature. Walter Reese describes the intellectual climate of Federal Germany during the student movements at the end of the sixth decade of the twentieth century:

Traditionelle bürgerliche Werthaltungen wie autoritäre Leistungsorientierung, Hochschätzung materieller Belohnungen, Aufstiegs- und Karrierementalität sind im Rückgang; ebenso die Betonung von Ruhe und Ordnung etc. Stettdessen hat sich ein im Lebensstil verwurzelt Gleichheitsdenken, ein Bedürfnis nach individueller Autonomie, eine Hochschätzung von Sensibilität und Selbsterfahrung ausgebreitet. (Reese 1980: 27-28)

The inversion of the hierarchies of value gradually leaves its imprint on the domain of education, where democratic norms gain ground to the detriment of authorial models. These changes can be perceived primarily by the more cultivated

social strata that make up the main readership of literature and, at the same time, the social extraction of the young generations of teachers and researchers of literature. As Reese maintains, the issue of social connection is a characteristic of German philology expressed from the very beginning: “als Wissenschaft mit offener augesprochener politischer Tendenz” (Reese 1980: 28). However, it must be added that the promoters of the study of reception are not necessarily specialists in German philology: Jauss is a scholar of Romance languages, Iser specializes in English studies and so on.

A review of the economic, political and social conditions from which the pleas in favor of reception stem includes: the end of the “economic miracle”, “the end of the Adenauer era in 1963, the Great Coalition in 1966, and the rise to power of the SPD on a non-socialist basis”, the structuralization of the extra-parliamentary opposition (APO), the first attempts of historical confrontations with the Hitlerist past, “the final realization with the erection of the Berlin wall that hopes for German unity were futile”, the implications of the Vietnam war, the coming of age of the first post-war generation (Holub 1984: 7-8).

On a scientific point of view, a “methodological crisis” can be perceived (Holub 1984: 7). The assiduous preoccupation with the theorization and problematization of the “method”, of the conceptual apparatus employed by the specialist, has already become remarkable in the field of structuralist poetics. Yet the dilemmas of the period push methodological reflection beyond the intrinsic aspects of research. For structuralists, the method owing to linguistics makes possible the definition of the object of study and ensures the autonomy and scientific prestige of literary scholarship by means of the appropriation of exact sciences. Ever more adamantly, a new, theological component: *what for* is added to the methodologically regulated relation between *what* and *how*. Doubts are expressed about the “legitimacy” of literary study in the manner it has been understood and practiced under the dominance of “immanentism”: *Legitimationsschwierigkeiten* (Grimm 1975: 11), *Legitimationskrise* (Reese 1980: 27). “Eine der Literatur zugestandene gesellschaftliche Funktion legitimiert ja auch die wissenschaftliche Beschäftigung mit ihr”, asserts Grimm (1975: 11-12). The importance attributed to the “utility value” (*Nutzwert*) of the study of literature goes against the Saussurean tendency towards the “autonomization” of the humanities. This is the prologue to a long, profound and ongoing change of cultural perspective.

Equally important is the fact that the study of reception is stimulated by the necessity to re-evaluate the “official” values of literary history amenable to increasing disavowal pressures. In Jauss’ perspective, the solutions brought by reception theory are viable even when they point to opposite directions:

On the one hand, it represented a method of looking at the old canon anew, for re-evaluating the past and thus rescuing the old standards from this onslaught of

insolent plundering. On the other hand, as Jauss makes clear in his reference to the mass media and popular literature, it provided a basis for analyzing those works that had been traditionally excluded from selections, as well as reasons for this omissions (Holub 1984: 10).

On the one hand, the ambivalence of reception theory, which is recommended for its “emancipatory” character and judged for its “confirmative” tendencies” – despite the undoubtable preference made manifest by the representatives of the “Constance School” in the pioneering stage for the values of “negativity” in literature – constitutes one of the main arguments in the debate determined by Jauss’ reformatory program.

Last but not least, I must mention the mutations underwent by literature itself. Holub presents a few examples such as the success of documentary literature, the implication of the audience in the development of the theatrical performance, the intensification of the preoccupation with the reaction of the reader in the novel. Reception theory itself has attempted to prove the fact that highlighting the role of the reader represents one of the fundamental characteristics of modern literature. “Die Entdeckung der Leserrolle bei Weinrich, Harth, Poulet und anderen wurde offenkundig angeregt, ja erzwungen durch die strukturellen Veränderungen im modernen Roman” (Hohendahl 1974: 18). These changes do not refer exclusively to the evolution of the novel, even if they might occur predominantly in this type of literary works and they might be easier to elucidate by means of narratological analysis (Lange 1974: 35). In turn, casting a retrospective glance upon the “prehistory” of reception theory, Jauss signals “analogies worthy of consideration” between on the one hand the new, 1960s approaches in the study of literature and, on the other hand, “the practice of postmodern aesthetics” (Jauss 1990: 66), mentioning Borges (*Pierre Ménard, Author of the Quixote*) and Italo Calvino (*Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*) as examples.

The enhancement, diversification and refinement of the creation strategies that configure the “role” of the receiver in the text are also stimulated by the changes that occur in the composition of the reading public. The spectacular rise and the ever more pronounced distinction between categories of consumers of literature make the global concept of “public” inoperable in contemporary times. Surely, this is not a recent plea. Victor Lange (1974: 35) situates the early split of the literature reading public approximately in 1970. Clearly distinguished categories of receivers have existed before and they are relevant particularly if we consider the distinctions between written and oral literature, between “authored” and “folk” literature. However, starting with the eighteenth century they are no longer distributed according to borderlines between different types of culture. The mutations that have occurred and are considered by some to be a “revolution of reading” are directly linked on the one hand to dislocations and social amalgamations on a large scale and on the other hand to an unprecedented rhythm

acquired by the spread of literacy. In the Romanian sphere, the most spectacular cue is probably given by the “rivalry” between the printed writings and the manuscript copies during the Enlightenment and even at the beginning of the following century. One of the most important consequences of the disintegration of the unity of the reading public is differentiation between various levels of literature and its ensuing consequences. This can be observed in Romania starting with the national Romanticism around 1848.

In the seventh and eight decades of the twentieth century, the conceptualization of “postmodernism” has reinforced a series of socio-literary observations within the field of reception theory. I would like to offer a single example: the phrase “multiple offer text” enters the terminological inventory widely spread towards the end of the millennium. Seemingly, this concept represents merely a variation within the repertoire of “ambiguity”, “polyvalence”, “unlimited semiotics”, “open work” from the supply of “immanentist” aesthetics. Although the distinction is apparently subtle, it marks the separation between two contrasting stances with respect to literature. In the first case, the “openness” of fiction is perceived as an invitation to explore an inexhaustible totality of signifiers. In the second case, the text implies the existence of multiple possible levels of self-sufficient reading in its own structure.

The “open work” is an intensional “immanentist” concept that refers to the interpretative potential *in* the text and implies the relation with *a* reader – whether individual, general-collective, abstract or, in turn, potential. The typically modern perception of the semantically inexhaustible literary text attempts to legitimize an explanation of the very different – if not divergent – literary interpretations on the grounds of textual analysis foundation.

On the contrary, the idea of the “multiple offer text” – in fact suited only for fiction – implies the conscious linking of the author within the frame of the same literary work with *groups of readers* or *types of readings* that are differentiated and also make use of distinctive norms, interpretive strategies and evaluation criteria. In this case, the plurality of readings is perceived not only as a consequence of the text itself, but also, or primarily, as a result of the conditioning of *literary communication*.

The change in the structure of the reading public carries disturbances in the “agreed upon stratification of literature”. The transgression of the borders between the levels of “high” and “low” literature, as well as “peddled literature” (Link 1976: 64 *sqq*) with respect to literary creation, the attempts to subdue or even do away with instances of evaluative discrimination in theory as well as in practice, the ever more enhanced concern for the “lower” levels usually ignored or marginalized in the academic tradition, favors or calls for approaching the issue of literary interpretation from the perspective of reception.

“Popular literature” (*Unterhaltungsliteratur*, *Trivilliteratur*) becomes the object of study for an overwhelming number of researchers. One of the reasons for

this is that the intensely standardized literary phrases offer a greater degree of transparency that allows for the examination of the mechanisms of the “institution of literature”. At the same time, the analysis without *parti pris* of certain products that have been depreciated or neglected by literary criticism and literary history help problematize the “canon”, tacitly circulated by exegetical tradition (Grimm 1977: 119) and thus, emancipate the researcher from the status of transmitter – often unconsciously – of current norms.

The “democratization” of the field of investigation is produced on a synchronic as well as on a diachronic level. From the very beginning, reception theory is directly involved in solving the literary dilemmas of the age. Ever since 1949 René Wellek’s famous “aporias” made manifest the stalemate reached by the immanentist approach when dealing with “historicity”, a central issue for diachronic research: “Most leading histories of literature are either histories of civilization or collections of critical essays. One type is not a history of *art*; the other, not a *history* of art” (Wellek – Warren 1956: 253, *passim*). The focus on the relation between text and reader could avoid paradox by offering the possibility of the integration of literature into specifically historical circuits.

Apart from the elements that have supported the extraordinary impulse towards reception theory, it would be worth mentioning the factors that have contributed to its delay. Firstly, there were technical difficulties: the toilsome access to documentary sources for the historical research of the reading public, the heterogeneity of “consumer groups” of literature, particularly in the modern period (Grimm 1975: 12).

#### *Theoretical and methodological pillars of support of contemporary reception studies*

A systematic presentation of the theoretical and methodological directions that support the study of reception and the precursors it annexes are hindered by numerous factors: the circumstantial character of the “genealogies” denounced by the promoters of the new approach themselves, marked by local differences between the manners of imposition or the forms of manifestation that the concern towards reception and receiver take, without excluding the circulation of influence between cultural spaces, the variety of research undertakings under the much too generous umbrella phrase “the new paradigm”, the terminological instances of hesitation that enhance the feeling of confusion.

Firstly, I will mention a few landmarks of German reception studies.

The extrapolation of the “scientific revolutions” theory brought forth by Thomas S. Kuhn into the field of literary scholarship served primarily as a strategic move on Jauss’ part by means of which he significantly enhanced the shock value of his essay *Paradigmawechsel in der Literaturwissenschaft* (Jauss 1972). “By adopting Kuhn’s popular theory of scholarly change, it sets up a ‘plot’

whose outcome must be favorable to reception theory” (Holub 1984: 12). As it can be noticed, the crumbling of the “old paradigm” is due not only to epistemological causes, but also to concurrent pressures with socio-political underlayers.

A fundamental anthology of the aesthetics of reception (Warning 1975) includes alongside Jauss, Iser and the editor, texts by Roman Ingarden, Felix V. Vodička, Hans Georg Gadamer, Michael Riffaterre, Stanley Fish: phenomenological aesthetics, the “Prague School”, philosophical hermeneutics, structural and generative-transformational stylistics.

Gunter Grimm (1977: 10) identifies four directions that lead the way towards the issue of reception: the sociology of literature, hermeneutics, Praguian structuralism and literary history. The former category includes research into biblioteconomy (*Bibliothekswissenschaft*, Grimm 1975: 20-21). The models of communication theory (Grimm 1977: 15), adapted to the domain of literature either from the perspective of the history of aesthetics and literary criticism (D.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, 1958), or from the viewpoint of the text’s semiotic theory (Heinrich Plett, *Textwissenschaft und Textanalyse*, 1975) also conduce to the clarification of the issue of reception. Robert Holub also mentions Russian Formalism alongside other influential sources for and precursors of German reception theory, due to the possibilities of “reconversion” of certain central notions (“procedure”, “isolation”, “denudation of the procedure”, “literary evolution”) to the benefit of the new approach. Indeed, from the very beginning, Russian Formalism is tackled by Jauss (1975: 141-144) in order to make a few amendments and additions rather than with the intention of rejecting it.

Significantly, the strategy of the “shock moment” avoids references to the German philological tradition of the historical study of reception dating back to the last century (*Historische Rezeptionsforschung*, Jörn Stückrath 1979: the collections of documents *Goethe in den Zeugnissen der Mitlebenden* by Varnhagen von Ense, 1823; *Über Goethe. Literarische und artistische Nachrichten* by Alfred Nicolovius, 1828; *Lesing im Urteile seiner Zeitgenossen* by Julius W. Braun, 1884-1897; the monographies *Goethe und das Publikum* by Victor Hehn, 1887; *Die Lessing-Legende* by Franz Mehring, 1893; *Schiller und die deutsche Nachwelt* by Albert Ludwig, 1909). However, in the 1960s, this tradition was overshadowed. Exactly in the following decade Stückrath would state that: “der rezeptionsgeschichtlichen Forschung fehlt das Bewußtsein ihrer eigenen Geschichte”, therefore “Hans R. Jauss z. B. hat den Eindruck erweckt, als handelte es sich bei der Rezeptionsforschung insgesamt um einen Neubeginn” (Stückrath 1979: 6). The fall into abeyance of the early nineteenth century pioneering initiatives as well as the marginal character of the research that continues on the same path in the following one are last but not least due to the precariousness of methodological reflection with respect to the object, aim and method of investigation (Stückrath 1979: 7-10). Even in the much more generous review of the “prehistory” of reception theory, in which Jauss (1990) drafts a few lines of

continuation starting with Homeric or Biblical hermeneutics, such studies do not belong here. Fruitful suggestions arise rather from the newer “recovered” writings of literary sociology: the sociology of taste (Leon L. Schücking), of fame (Julian Hirsch), the psycho-sociology of reception (Leo Löwenthal). After Grimm (1975: 21) “die Anstöße zu einer Verbindung der Literatur mit gesellschaftlichen Interessen kamen von außerhalb der Germanistik”. Jean-Paul Sartre with his influential essay *Qu'est-ce que la littérature* (1947) and Robert Escarpit (*Sociologie de la littérature*, 1958) are mentioned among others. Hohendahl describes this cultural bridge in a more specific manner:

Durch die deutsche Romanistik (Jauß, Weinrich) wurden die französischen Ansätze nach Deutschland vermittelt. War in Frankreich die positivistische Lanson-Schule der (verspätete) Gegner, spielte im Deutschland eher der Historismus und die traditionelle Hermeneutik die Rolle des Opponenten. (Hohendahl 1974: 19)

However, ever since 1903, there have been incentives particularly on Lanson’s part to engage in an expansion of the historical-literary study horizon, in order to include “le tableau de la vie littéraire dans la nation, l’histoire de la culture et de l’activité de la foule obscure qui lisait, aussi bien que des individus illustres qui écrivaient” (*apud* Genette 1972: 14). In 1904, the famous literary historian, “so expeditiously and unjustly judged in the 1960s” (Cornea 1988: 61), discussed the relationship between literary history and sociology, taking into account, among others, the circumstances of literary creation with reference to the connections established between the author and the reading public (Lanson 1974: 63-87). The Lansonian project remained a desideratum and it was appealed to by Lucien Febvre, between the two world wars and later, even by Roland Barthes in 1960 (Genette 1972: 15).

Starting with the “provoking stage”, the theory of reception allies itself with the sociological study of literature. In an attempt to counter the Marxist doctrine that assigns a predominantly representational function to literature, Jauß (1975: 154) proposes in the seventh “thesis” of his manifesto, the employment of the social-formative function (*gesellschaftsbildende Funktion*). Consequently, the relation literature-society might undergo a 180° shift. Instead of interpreting this relation fortuitously as a reflection of a pre-existing reality or as a matter of conditioning the work according to the author and the latter according to the context, it will be tackled in terms of the effect that literature has upon social life. An often considered illustrative case is that of the “Werthereanism” brought about by the famous novel written by Goethe in his youth. This time as well, the novelty of vision of reception theory is relative. The concern with the “formative function” of art is one of the constant elements of critical and literary theory, even when it appears under the derisory guise of pedantic and restrictive moralism. However, in the “case study”, the distinction between the causal and the final relation is blurred. For instance, deciding to what extent a work or a set of works “reflects”

current social norms or “proposes” alternative ones becomes toilsome the moment we renounce the image of society as depository of a homogenous normative group. The distance between Jauss’ *La Douceur du foyer* (1983: 389-426) and, for example, Lucien Goldmann’s theory of “structural homologies” (1972: 255-275) is not exactly insuperable. In fact, a sphere in which the social effect of literature in terms of its impact upon human behavior can be perceived with striking clarity is... literature itself. The character who is marked or even shaped by reading offers the “intrinsic” approach the chance of juncture, where intertextuality joins the art-life dialectical play.

From the hermeneutical perspective, reception theory avails itself primarily of Hans Georg Gadamer’s theories (1965). For the disciple of Martin Heidegger, understanding does not merely imply the reader bringing to the present the meaning of a text. The former, in turn, is historically conditioned. “Das Verstehen der Texte ist durch ihre Wirkungsgeschichte vermittelt”, sums up Hannelore Link.

So scheint die Bezugnahme auf den ursprünglichen Leser ebenso wie auf den Sinn des Verfassers nur einen sehr rohen historisch-hermeneutischen Kanon darzustellen, der den Sinnhorizont von Texten nicht wirklich begrenzen darf (Gadamer 1965: 373, *apud* Link 1980: 125).

Determining the parameters of understanding by means of tradition offers a promising foundation for the study of reception. The “text itself” can be assessed as fiction arbitrary postulated by the researcher. The key concept of the “fusion of horizons” (*Horizontverschmelzung*), in which what is fused is the text-tradition-receiver triad dynamics reverberates in Jauss’ main central points. Reception theory assumes the role of pointing out, with methodological rigor that “die Geschichtlichkeit der Literatur beruht nicht auf einem post festum erstellten Zusammenhang, literarischer Faktoren’, sondern auf den vorgängigen Erfahrung des literarischen Werkes durch seine Leser” (Jauss 1975: 128).

Roman Ingarden (1931) also offers theoretical premises in favor of the exploration of the role of the reader in the generic domain of literature. Ingarden distinguishes between the work of art as material object and its *concretizations* as esthetic entities through the participation of the receiver. The structure of the work of art allows for distinct concretizations and even more, this well-known reality in the history of reception represents a constitutive element of the aesthetic. However, the possibility of postulating or even of detecting a relation of adequacy between the work and its various concretizations remains vague and problematic. The idea that a literary text can be defined as the sum of its potential readings was supported in Romania early on by Mihail Dragomirescu (1969: 461-462) in terms of the individual/ species opposition and opens up an unlimited horizon of manifestation for receptive subjectivism. Postulating an infinite number of possible readings entails projecting the work in complete indetermination, renouncing any instruments of prediction. Yet, the succession of the already

registered responses shows that some of them tend to be eliminated as “inconsistent with the text”. The “openness” of the literary work, analyzed by Umberto Eco (1962), undergoes a series of correctives, so that the issue of “fidelity” to the text cannot be completely disregarded, irrespective of how depreciated it might have recently been. For instance, it attracts almost all debates generated by the shocking “modernizations” in scientific or cinematographical adaptations of literary texts. The same extremely delicate issue is touched upon by Umberto Eco’s (1979) subsequent redefinitions of the “openness” and “completeness” of the literary work, in which the theorist endows the reader with more power than in *The Open Work* and attempts to do away with arbitrary readings by distinguishing between “cooperative” reception and a “usage” that violates the text as the reader pleases. Similarly, Paul Cornea considers that reading instances can be placed on a “scale” according to the fidelity with respect to the text. Therefore, “interpretation can be placed on the highest position, which stands for maximum adequacy, free reading can be situated on the lowest position (as the reader pleases), and standard reading on a central position” (1988: 247). It is worth noticing that such delimitations can be useful as explicative and descriptive landmarks as well as indicators of normative implications. In the present study, this involves literature itself and the manner in which it can be approached. If the constitutive “openness” of literature – that is structurally achieved through polysemanticism, ambiguity, indetermination, “gaps”, intertextuality and so on – offers the reader considerably more freedom and at the same time it simultaneously proposes reading strategies for putting this freedom into effect. It implies a simultaneously more “lax” and more “intense” decoding and interpretation. Hence, it is no wonder that Eco’s reflections lead to paradox, so that “ein geschlossener Text für jede Art von Reaktion offen ist und ein offener Text die Möglichkeiten für den Leser, mit dem Text umzugehen, beschränkt” (Hawthorn 1994: 231-232). In the case of Ingarden, the conditioning of text adequacy parameters can even lead to contradiction, since different receptors – regardless of their level of literary competence – can only discuss their own concretizations. The “text” as such disappears as negotiable object.

A proper context for solving this dilemma is shaped in the field of aesthetics by the Prague School and more specifically by Jan Mukařovský (1974). Since the aesthetic work is considered to be a semiotic product with specific characteristics, the social implications of this definition are inescapable:

Is the interpretation of the work of art as a sign an exclusively individual affair, different and incompatible from one person to another? I anticipated the answer to this question when I maintained that the work of art is a *sign*, which makes it in essence a social fact. [...] Therefore, the result reached by the analysis of the semiotic nature of the work of art is far from being aesthetic subjectivism: it has only been shown that the objective relations that the work of art as a sign establishes, engage the attitude of the

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receiver with respect to reality, since the former is a social being, a member of a collectivity (Mukařovský 1974: 80-81).

The characteristics of art are shaped through the interdependencies of the triad: function, norm and aesthetic values, “in the analysis of which, the starting point must be the social nature of the three phenomena” (Mukařovský 1974: 91).

*Reception theories; directions and approaches*

I have insisted upon the circumstances in which the Jaussean turn occurred as well as upon the theoretical pillars of support that the latter claimed in order to produce a comparative analysis of the reasons behind the weak adherence of reception theories to Romanian cultural contemporaneity and to propose a series of possible affiliations or filiations with and from theoretical stances that I believe have been (and, to some extent, still are) highly influential in Romania even if they played the role of avowed “historical roots” in relation to the imposition of the “new paradigm”. Hence, even to the detriment of a more rigorous analytical approach, “historicization” has culturological justification – explicative and recuperative. Meanwhile, the assembly of reception theories and the manner in which it distinguished itself and developed starting with the 1960s onwards have become a quasi-compulsory chapter for literary theory works or dictionaries.

A more detailed content analysis of this wide range of theoretical positions does not belong here. Ever since the 1980s there have been many works of synthesis dedicated to this subject and meant to build cultural bridges between different theoretical schools, be they between the Anglophone and Germanophone cultural spaces (Tompkins 1980, Holub 1984, Freund 1987) or less commonly, there have been attempts to link European theory to the overseas autonomously developed investigations (Klemenz-Belgardt 1982). I have also already sketched a review of the range of reception theory versions in *Literatură și comunicare (Literature and Communication)* (Papadima 1999: 21-25). However, I will briefly go through a rather historically oriented chapter dealing with reception theories and, more specifically, East-West German debates for two reasons. Firstly because the debates brought about by East-German researchers touch upon – not despite, but rather due to excessive partisanship – multiple neuralgic points of reception study in general, *beyond* the expressions mentioned above. Secondly, because the East-German reaction constitutes a useful contrasting base for the explanation of the weak grip that reception theories had in the Romanian cultural space.

*The East-West German debate*

The debate was brought about against the backdrop of the rivalry between the two sides of Germany, given the fact that the common cultural past and language created serious problems regarding the demarcation tendencies in the sphere of the cultural policies adopted by the two countries after separation. The campaign started in the West and its most often mentioned representatives, Jauss and Iser, attacked what was ultimately the entire set of ideas of the literary Constance School, which was considered to be a threat against or assault on the ideological premises of Marxist literary theory. In his inaugural lecture, Jauss (1972) had indeed adamantly referred to this by means of a global, rather simplifying critique shaped by imputing the narrow determinism of the Constance School, derived from the doctrine of the “reflection” of society in the work of art. However, the East-German response does not merely imply such rather vulnerable and marginally important, persuasive evaluations with regard to the theories expressed by the Constance Romanist. It also attempts to impose its own view point in the sphere of reception theory by means of discrediting its opponent. Central to this debate (retrospectively analyzed by numerous researchers among whom, Holub 1984: 121-133, Reese 1980: 43-53, Grimm 1975: 42-50), is the concept of literature itself, authorized at the level of a social (and, of course, political) system.

The impetus towards tackling reception issues had already been shaped in DRG during the mid-1960s, although it came from another direction: that of biblioteconomy (Mandelkow 1974b: 379). From the very beginning, the differences with respect to the West-German doctrine prove to be irreconcilable. The options are polarized around two key-notions: *Wirkungsforschung* for the East side and *Rezeptionsästhetik* for the West side. Literary “effect” implies the primacy of the text in guiding the reader’s reactions, while “reception” assigns an active role to the reader who becomes a “coauthor”, coparticipant in the construction of the text. Subtle differences, great controversies. “Gerade die Probleme der Rezeptionsästhetik zeigen in aller Evidenz den ideologischen Charakter literaturtheoretischer Debatten” (Mandelkow 1974b: 387).

Est-Germans maintain their position – it is difficult to say whether out of conviction, opportunism, precaution or constriction – as defenders of an ideological “dirigisme” that sees the literary text primarily as an instrument of shaping the reader. For this reason, the text’s essential “univocality”, understood as a “message” remains unalterable and untouchable.

Wenn in den hier besprochenen Arbeiten marxistischer Theoretiker, Eindeutigkeit’ als Wirkungsbedingung von Literatur postuliert wird, so steht hinter dieser Forderung die Utopie einer nicht mehr antagonistischen Gesellschaft, für die Bedingung und Notwendigkeit einer ‘Parteiung’ des Publikums aufgehoben oder überflüssig geworden ist (Mandelkow 1974b: 387).

It should also be added that prohibitive and manipulative systems help service the Marxist “utopia” in culture as well as in socio-political life, so as to obtain the desirable convergence of literary “effect” by means of amputations and disfigurement at the level of the dissemination or mediation of literature in the editing process or the reception approach.

From a diachronical perspective, the same premises are appealed to in reference to the relationship with the “literary heritage” of the past. The “effect” that the texts of previous writers will supposedly have upon contemporary readers is considered to be a criterion of selection and value. *Wirkungsforschung* is susceptible of being listed as an annex of the socialist cultural policy. In fact, ideological – and praxeological – research endeavors are sometimes more decisive:

Considering that the force of literature is made manifest through its appropriation, the result is that appropriation processes cannot be given over to spontaneous reactions but, on the contrary, all possibilities must be exhausted in order to gain influence upon them and their results” (Naumann 1973: 97).

### *Reception and effect*

In actuality, the issue of differentiation between the two notions – “effect” and “reception” – far exceeds the limits of the above mentioned ideological debate and of the historical circumstances in which it was held. Not as a last resort, placing reception studies in relation to a similar tradition of literary studies – that is much longer and richer than the apologists of the “new paradigm” insinuate – depends upon the signification given to the terms of the effect-reception binomial that has undergone classifications in numerous works (Grimm 1977: 22-31, Zimmermann 1977: 14-17). For instance, is there a line continuity between Aristotle’s *Poetics* and Jauss’ “program”? The philosopher’s work is mentioned or analyzed as a trailblazer also in studies that deal with *Rezeptionsforschung* (Stückrath 1979: 1) and with *Wirkungsästhetik* (Turk 1976: 47-54). Terminological clarifications remain vague and inoperative as long as they remain under the restriction of the opposition, expressed and reoriented towards the wider range of possible approaches to literature. Two types are worthy of being mentioned: the categorical variety of “responses” to literary creation and the variety of their research interests. I use the term “response” in its specialized understanding, as equivalent to the Anglo-American *response* and I prefer it over the more precise, literal translation “reaction” that implies a deceiving closeness to a literary communication mechanicist model. The text itself cannot be perceived as a form of “action” upon the receiver in terms of an inertial system. Indeed, we are talking about the “shaping action” of literary works upon readers, the “influence” of literature upon mentalities, attitudes, behaviors or the emotional “reaction” triggered by a certain text. Yet it is always the receiver the one who “eliminates

the inertia” of a text, whether the latter is presented in the “silent” form of a printed book or in the “volute” form of a theatrical performance or a poetry reading. Without the intervention of the receiver by means of the entire supply of perception processes, decoding, comprehension, interpretation, emotional and value-giving implication, “reactions” of the types mentioned above cannot occur. The distinction between the “active” or the “passive” role of the receiver does not affect the sphere of the notion of “response”. The similarities with the conceptual scheme of behaviorist psychology can be profitable, with the essential mention that the literary text does not represent a stimulus that is merely received, but also to great extent “built” by the receiver, in different phases and on different levels.

Thus, reader “responses” can be shocking or desirable, whether they are associated with the general functions of literature (or even of aesthetic creation in general), with specifications of genre, be they narrower or wider (from the “catharsis” of tragedy to the “mimetic illusion” that operates in multiple artistic spaces) or with techniques, devices, artistic means (in the “theory of figures”, in the antique tripartition of styles and so on). All of the above are the object of literary effect aesthetics. *Wirkungsästhetik* is linked with questions such as: what reactions does literature – or categories, or parts of it – aim to trigger, to what purpose and through what means? Such series of questions can be found in works that assert themselves through tradition or through title in the domains of aesthetics, rhetoric, poetics (even contemporary poetics) and stylistics.

In addition, there are actual “responses”: what really goes through the mind of a reader in the process of reading. We can learn about the existence of these responses from our individual reading practice: we are simultaneously readers and “spectators” of our own engagement with books. Unfortunately, this type of “response” remains, by definition, sealed in individual experience. However, we can make use of mediated access ways, starting with a multitude of subsequent testimonies: from informal conversations on literary themes and school essays to academic studies. Furthermore, with respect to the reader and current literature, we have the possibility of obtaining called forth testimonies as well as the chance (at least theoretically) of diminishing as much as possible their degree of interpretability. The use of questionnaires, tests or experiments represents a distinct, if not compulsory, particularity of the approach generically known as empirical research of literature (*empirische Rezeptionsforschung*). However, as briefly mentioned before, the positive foundation of empirical research does not eliminate methodological and epistemological dilemmas. While the former direction considers that the “real” object to be represented by a “desirable response”, the latter proposes the “desirable” object as “real response”. The series of questions that the empirical research of reception assumes either explicitly or implicitly – who, what, under what conditions, how reads or has read – allows for so many ramifications, that its “object” of investigation appears from the very

beginning in extremely diverse and difficult to pin down instances. In addition, the information basis overlaps that of other types of literary study to great extent.

Hence, there are externalized “responses” that form documentary material for empirical research and beyond. Such testimonies are used in most literary histories and the often vague intentions vary as well. For instance, the posterity of an author is presented in order to document the prestige acquired, the influences exercised, in order to stress the fluctuation in the interpretation and evaluation of his/ her work, to clarify the image of the respective work or to build a background of polemical contrast meant to make the personal perspectives of the literary historian doing the assessment more plausible and more challenging. Essentially, this amounts to two questions: how can the knowledge of reception documents help enhance the knowledge of received works and – more inclusively – the understanding of the system of literature, of its functioning and all of its correlative aspects: the existence of literary works, their production, processing, mediation and reception? Usually, literary histories lack the time to vehemently voice such questions: they have already made too many statements. Thus, the tradition abounds in descriptions of literary reception and less in attempts to form an explicative systematization, even when we are dealing with studies particularly devoted to the posterity of a certain author. Jorn Stückrath (1979: 7) rightfully accuses the literary history of literary reception not only of being deficient in the “consciousness of its own history” [“das Bewußtsein ihrer eigenen Geschichte”], but also of being weak in aspects of methodological reflection: “the insufficient clarification of its object, of its cognitive aims and devices” [“Daß es der historischen Rezeptionsforschung zudem an einer zureichender Klärung ihres Gegenstandes, ihrer Erkenntnisziele und ihrer Verfahren mangeln”].

One must not forget the fact that in relation to actual responses, externalized “responses” acquire a second degree status: they are socio-cultural products that enter an assembly of coordinates that is sensibly different from the one of reception *per se*. The writer of a literary review simultaneously does more and less than translating his or her practiced reading experience into public speech. Of course, it represents the *ab quo* mark, but not the *ad quem* one. Diminishing the distance between the two points of view – which, incidentally, can be very significant: the case of the reviewer with “obligations” and so on – that so intensely occupies the minds of test and questionnaire writers is sometimes utterly ignored by literary historians. It is true that this distance can be relatively of minor importance when the document is used for the exploration of the work’s latencies. However, it becomes fully relevant if the purpose is to analyze the system of literature: in this case mediation and processing represent something more than merely forms of reception.

In addition, there is another distinctive category that I would call subsequent “responses” (and not testimonies!): they are consequences and not just manifestations of actual “responses”. It is here that the traditional issues of

“imitation”, of literary influences as well as of the modifications (be they cognitive, attitudinal or behavioral) that literary reading can produce may be discussed. More often than not, such incredibly heterogeneous phenomena are categorized as “effect”, less in the sense of “reaction” than of “consequence”. Antique aesthetics avoided drawing a clear line of demarcation on the methodological point of view, but paid particular attention to the causal-teleological correlations, in tune with rhetoric, in practice. For instance, pleasant instruction is efficient: *ridendo castigat mores* and so on. For the moderns, this blurring of lines often seems to pertain to the domain of heresy. This makes the sociologist’s task more difficult, since he or she has to ask: ultimately, what are the consequences of literary reading in the context of social coexistence? The data gathered thus far rely significantly more on the abstraction of various hypothetical functions that result from the analyses of literary texts rather than on empirical research, the difficulty of which is adamantly acknowledged by sociologists.

Therefore, this is the resulting picture, although rather schematic and lacunose: a theoretical, often speculative “aesthetics of effect”, that starts from texts and aims for the textual aspect of literature, involving or frequently expressing normative generalizations, relying when need be, with confirmative title, on psychological and behavioral, introspective or public observations, operating in the field of philosophical aesthetics, of rhetoric, poetics or stylistics; an empirical, synchronic or diachronic research based on existing or called forth in an *ad hoc* manner testimonies, psychologically oriented (when it is interested in the mechanisms of reading and its individual variables) or sociologically oriented (when concerned with collective variables: social conditioning, the division of readers into “groups”, the place of reading in social practice and so on), often using quantitative evaluation techniques in common with those of biblioeconomy and with close applicative correlations in literary didactics; a historical-literary research, based on reception testimonies as well, yet interpreted either as being relevant for the received works or for the functioning of the “system of literature” in which the textual aspect represents merely a component that can no longer assume primacy; an investigation of reception consequences, either in the literary sphere (influences, the reversed connection reception-creation for the readjustment of authorial strategies and so on), or in the psycho-sociological sphere, approaches based on distinct and varied methodologies that reach, with their extra-literary openness, spaces of wide culturological interest. It is almost superfluous to mention that these versions, already difficult to distinguish in theory, constantly overlap in practice.

What is the stance of the “aesthetics of reception” – which for historical relevance, has been the focal point of my presentation so far – in relation to these alternatives? From the start, eclectic. In fact, its advocates do not even seem to be interested in defining a peculiar field of research, but in pinning down and tackling the constellation of problems the solution of which can be foreseen in shifting the

center of interest towards reception and receiver. Thus, in this flexible frame, multiple approaches coexist: theoretical versions and applied studies concerned with the author-reader relation (the traditional domain of “influences”), the development of the work as “potential of meaning”, in the succession of its concretizations (a reminder of “critique of criticism”), the social-formative function of literature (the study of “consequences”), encoding the answer in the work (the “aesthetics of effect”) and so on. In terms of epistemological options, the reception-effect dichotomy proves to be simplistic if not distorting. Jauss returns to this issue after the debates brought about in the early 1970s, with a series of specifications intended to justify the validity and appropriateness of the distinction:

In the analysis of the experience of the reader of the ‘community of readers’ of a given historical period, both sides of the text-reader relation (effect [*Wirkung*] as the element that is conditioned by the text and reception [*Rezeption*] as the element of concretization of meaning that is conditioned by the addressee) must be distinguished, worked out, and mediated if one wishes to see how expectation and experience mesh and whether an element of new significance emerges. These two horizons are the literary one, the one the work brings with it on the one hand, and that of his everyday world which the reader of a given society brings with him on the other. Because it is derivable from the work itself, the construction of the literary horizon of expectation is less problematic than is that of the social one which, as the context of a historical life-world, is not being thematized (Jauss 1982: 29).

As it can be easily noticed, the clarifications intended by Jauss touch upon central notions and problems of the historical-literary approach he proposed. He has been quite rightfully accused, for instance, of the fact that the notion of “horizon of expectation” is vaguely defined and that the possibilities of its “objectivization” proposed by Jauss appear to lead towards methodological contradictions:

As long as he insists on the possibility of a ‘reconstruction of the horizon of expectation’ and sets out to accomplish this reconstruction with evidence or signals from the works themselves, he is going to be measuring the effect or impact of works against a horizon that is abstracted from those works (Holub 1984: 61-62).

The binominal *Wirkung/ Rezeption* justifies the introduction of an additional topic of discussion in order to avoid circularity. However, ambiguities persist. Is it possible to reconstruct the interliterary horizon of expectation at the level of individual works or reading priorities, literary norms and conventions shared by a certain community, such as those already known relating to the genre, form and theme of literary works or those of the opposition between poetic and practical language initially mentioned by Jauss (1975: 130)? Studying the texts themselves proves to be an insufficient method for deciding to what extent the readers of a certain period actually shared such knowledge, conventions or norms, whether

homogeneous or irregular. The distinction between intraliterary and extraliterary does not overlap with the one between the focus on the text and the focus on the reader. The idea that the text “expresses” its own horizon of expectation, which is therefore accessible in an unmediated form to the reader must also be regarded with apprehension. How should this horizon of expectation be understood? As being exclusively text-given, as a set of initial, informative landmarks, as a succession of reading indications, as an ongoing negotiable offer of participation? Different models of literary texts will arrogate different horizons of expectation. In the case of the individual act of reading, we are dealing with a system of expectations with its own dynamics. Similarly, Mandelkew (1974a: 90) proposed the expansion of the content and the pluralization of the horizon of expectation, distinguishing between “files of contrast” (*Kontrastfolien*) such as expectations regarding the period, author or work. The identification of *effect* and *reception* with *moments* of the concretization of the work’s meaning is also debatable. Their successive arrangement would contradict the conditionings established by Jauss. In the analysis of reception *as process*, the “effect” is perceived as being the last, “post-receptive” phase (Beilfuss 1987). It is conditioned by reception, not by the text. It is a psychological terminology that is evidently different from Jauss’ intentions and brings about even more confusion. The title of the Constance group, *Rezeptionsästhetik* is also misleading. Jauss does not consider the above mentioned binominal in order to defend the choice of one term over the other, but in order to establish a connection – although a frail and problematic one, as we have seen – between what seems to be rather “heuristic fiction” (*Wirkung*) and what describes itself rather as empiric investigation (*Rezeption*). Iser, the second key figure of the “aesthetic of reception” believes that his endeavor in *The Act of Reading* “is to be regarded as a theory of aesthetic response (*Wirkungstheorie*) and not as a theory of the aesthetics of reception (*Rezeptionsästhetik*)” (Iser 1978: X). The argument is strikingly similar to that of Jauss: “A theory of response has its roots in the text; a theory of reception arises from a history of the readers’ judgments” (*idem*). Iser finds the translation of the German term *Wirkung* problematic because it care “comprises both effect and response” (Iser 1978: IX, note 1). Thus, the Constance School paves the way in two main directions: on the one hand, it reconsiders the “system of literature” from a pluridimensional perspective, according to historical coordinates, focusing on the area of reception (particularly Jauss), on the other hand, it reconsiders the aesthetics of effect from a new perspective, analyzing the relationship between the work and the receiver (particularly Iser). The second direction is usually considered to be defining for the “aesthetics of reception” in a narrow sense (in opposition to empirical research).

Von allen Rezeptionstheoretikern vertritt Wolfgang Iser am entschiedensten die Konzeption der *Rezeptionsästhetik*. Diese ist am impliziten, im Text verbogenen Leser

interessiert, im Unterschied zur *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, die sich mit dem *realen Leser* befaßt (Reese 1980: 39, *passim*).

*The study of reception in Romania (1970-1990)*

In 1960s Romania, a similar preoccupation to that of DRG with the “valorification of literary heritage” starts to take shape with the essential purpose of lifting the ban (be it total or partial) with respect to pre-war authors.

The ideological arguments of the perspectives involved in the debate can be considered predominantly circumstantial. By means of bringing back into circulation the authors banned in the proletcultist decade a great connection with the pre-war literary model is formed. In contrast with the persistence of the Marxist thought-frame in DRG, the tendency to renounce the ideologization of literary study, which finds fertile ground in the immanentist approach towards the text. The principle of “aesthetic autonomy” has suited not only the proneness to rehabilitate the “true nature” of aesthetic experience, but also the defensive stance with respect to the pressures and threats of political authorities in the sphere of culture. The literary works of the past have been predominantly perceived either in terms of their “perennial” value and significance or from the perspective of their openness towards aesthetic benchmarks and contemporary interpretative strategies. The 1970s series that presented classic writers of Romanian literature as “our contemporaries” is illustrative of this tendency. The preoccupation with the “initial context” of literary communication limits itself to the routine factology of academic historiography. The “temporal distance” or historical development of the potential of meaning of literary works do not raise hermeneutical problems. The separation of culture from the circumstantial and its placement in a universalist, ahistorical perspective reaches a high degree of awareness through the “Pălăniş School” established by C. Noica and the public debates that the latter generates, engaging a great number of intellectuals from the sphere of the humanities.

Once again, unlike the DRG, where reception controversies have brought about, even by means of recoil, reflections upon the chances of emancipation of the reading public within a communist system, in Romania, cultural “elitism” was considered by many intellectuals to be the only viable stagey, opposing the “dilettantism” promoted by the official mass cultural programs, such as “Cântarea României” (“Chant of Romania”). The most widely accepted position was that of “passive resistance”, of “surviving through culture” regardless of the levelling pressures of the culture produced by controlled and politically manipulated masses. This option is also explained through the fact that the officials’ tolerance with respect to public cultural goods was generally inversely proportional with the audience they attracted. The control was more stringent in the case of television than in the case of cultural journals; in turn, the latter were more closely monitored

than publishing houses and so on and so forth. The book *of* literature was considered to be potentially more dangerous than the book *about* literature.

Another factor worthy of being taken into consideration is the fact that at a certain point, the power either failed or renounced the persuasion attempts made via propagandistic instruments that were the object of its influence and the basis for considering literature highly significant in the 1950s. Gradually, propaganda assumed the function of “zero substitute”, encouraging the type of cultural product that – through its mere presence in the institutionalized mechanisms of value circulation – was meant to obstruct the rise of potential factions. The anticipated “effect” leaned towards *brain washing*: unable to induce or maintain favorable convictions, the attempt was to use permanent and concrete repetitions of various expressions lacking in coherence in order to empty the very system of convictions. Therefore, both intellectual elites and political-ideological officialdom have simultaneously, although often for opposite reasons, ignored the reality of the receiving public.

A breach in the supremacy of literary “immanentism” was shaped later on by the younger, 1980s generation of writers. They proclaimed (and often practiced) bringing literature back “into the street”, highlighting communication techniques (irony, textualism, “denudation of the procedure”), emphasizing and refining authorial ethos (through ironical doubling, metacommentary and self-disclosure, through the introduction of the author as agent in the text, as witness or even as the latter’s resultant, as “scriptural person”) and, symmetrically, the qualitative and quantitative potentiation of the role of the reader (through the value attributed to demythicizing phrases that trigger a more intense, deliberative participation on the part of the reader, but also through an enhanced “straightforwardness” of discourse intended to expand its accessibility – poetry without metaphors, apprehension towards the “esotericism” and “metaphysics” of lyricism) and so on.

The 1980s generation made manifest the irritability of the defenders of the *status quo* in Romanian cultural policy. For instance, the obstinacy with which the journal “Săptămâna” (“The Week”) led a campaign to infamize and annihilate the young poets and their supporters in the field of literary criticism is significant in this respect. This discriminating attitude with respect to the young poets reverberated in the editorial system as well. For example, a rather confusingly formulated directive was issued so as to condition the right to one’s debut upon the bringing of proof... of a prior debut.

However, the immediate impact of the 1980s generation must not be overestimated. Its diffusion among the public audience remained rather limited. In addition, the academe have only remotely absorbed its innovative suggestions and have proven to be even less inclined to transfer them to the understanding of literature in general. The 1980s generation rather marks the beginning of a process in full swing.

The power in question – particularly from the middle of the ninth decade onwards – of the term “postmodernism” has also had a sensitizing effect upon the attempts of defining a new “concept” of literature.

In conclusion, the issue of reception has triggered a relatively dim interest in Romania, where the synchronization with Western approaches along these lines has been much feebler than in the case of formalism or structuralism, for example.

The “paradigm shift” detected and anticipated by Jauss in the late 1960s reverberated in Romania dimly and tardily. The studies on literary, historical and contemporary reception have not attracted any particular attention. The “intrinsic” approach maintained its supremacy until the late 1980s. However, a few exceptions can be mentioned. Silvian Iosifescu (1973, 1981) and Ion Vlad (1972, 1977) have discussed the act of reading and its importance for the knowledge of literature in a predominantly aesthetic form. Carmen Vlad (1982) has analyzed critical reading from a semiotic perspective. Nicolae Constantinescu (1985) has investigated the characteristic aspects of the reception of folk literature. In the field of the sociology of literature, reading and reception have been discussed in works such as those of Traian Herseni (1973), Constantin Crișan (1977, 1978, 1989) or Ion Vasile Șerban (1983, 1985). However, the majority of literary sociology studies have not focused primarily upon reception. The specialized knowledge that the authors possessed was more often than not particularly scant (Lukacs, Escarpit and Goldmann were sometimes the only mentioned recent sources; German and Anglo-American literary sociology were almost completely unknown). Such studies were generally theoretical and the only references to case studies were linked to questionnaires and surveys carried out in France that were many times extrapolated in a disconcerting manner upon the Romanian reading public. Sociology of reception studies based on Romanian field investigations have been published by Pavel Câmpeanu (1972, 1973) regarding the radio, television and theatre audiences and by Amza Săceanu (1977, 1979) with respect to the Bucharest theatre audience. “Sociological criticism” was apparently more appealing to Romanians since it was a method of literary text interpretation and hence, an “immanentist” approach, despite its concern with the relation between work and society. There have been translations of the works of L. Goldmann (1972) and Robert Escarpit (1974, 1980). Other key figures in the domain, such as Fügen, Schücking, Lowenthal or Leenhardt have been ignored. The literary sociology practiced in Romania gives the overall impression of amateurism and vaguely emancipated ideological conformism. Unfortunately, it has had to endure the handicap of a facile assimilation to “sociologism” that had impoverished and despicably distorted literary history and criticism over the sixth and seventh decades, creating the mainly unfounded reputation of a discipline that could not avoid the trammels of Marxist ideology. Unlike the DRG, Romanian intellectuals have rather rapidly abandoned Marxist philosophy on a large scale, reducing it to preliminary, protocolary quotations in most cases in which it persisted.

Presumably, political authorities have also agreed to the disposal of the knowledge imparted by the “fathers” of Marxist thought in favor of an ever more pronounced approach towards a personal dictatorship, with nationalist tinges.

The academe and literary criticism have not displayed particular interest with respect to the “aesthetic of reception” practiced by the Constance School. Only Jauss’ work has produced a rather louder echo. *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft* was first published in Romanian in a fragmented version in the “Alma mater” student journal from Iasi, in 1975 and in full translation in “Caiete critice” (“Critical Notebooks”), as a supplement to the journal “Viața românească” (“Romanian life”) in 1980. Andrei Corbea translated Jauss’ later work, well known on a larger scale *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik* in 1983.

*Literaturpsychologie* by Norbert Groeben, published for the first time in 1972 was introduced to the Romanian public in the translation of Gabriel Liiceanu and Suzana Mihalescu (1978). However, the openness achieved by this work with respect to the empirical research of reception was left without consequences. This was surely due in part to its very “technical” character and the insistence upon “scientific objectivity” – two approaches that were not very appealing to the humanistic intellectuals of the time.

History of reception works have been sporadically published in specialized journals (Cornea 1980: 58, 276). They are mainly focused on the analysis of critical reception. The traditional “critique of criticism”, abundantly present in numerous works of literary history, avoids theoretical and methodological matters. However, notable exceptions can be mentioned. *Regula jocului (The Rule of the Game)* by Paul Cornea (1980) reunites a series of studies on the sociology of reading and other domains of literary reception (literary success, the theory of influences, the theatrical audience and so on) applied to nineteenth century Romanian literature. The work offers excellent theoretical landmarks for the study of literary communication, refreshing the historiographical perspective with the help of methodological models that were less mentioned in Romania and discussing what used to be a mostly ignored issue. Florin Manolescu (1983) has made an in depth analysis of communicational strategies in the work of I.L. Caragiale. The journal “Cahiers roumains d’études littéraires” consecrated an issue (3/ 1986) to literary reception. Ecaterina Mihăilă published a monographic, theoretical work (1980) about poetic reception. A systematic, abundantly informative and comprehensive work on the theory of reading published by Paul Cornea (1988) marked an important tendency towards openness in Romanian literary studies.

Translated from Romanian by Andreea Paris

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## LITERARY RECEPTION THEORIES: A REVIEW

(Abstract)

The interest in a contextualizing approach to literature is getting shape over the 1960s as a means of overcoming the dominant textual (and aesthetical) methodology or emphasis, of breaking away “from the formalist and New Critical emphasis on the autonomy of ‘the text itself’ toward a recognition (or a re-recognition) of the relevance of context, whether the latter be defined in terms of historical, cultural, ideological, or psychoanalytic categories.” (Suleiman – Crosman 1980: 5). In this paper I will consider exclusively the dynamics of reception theories between roughly 1970-1990. The reasons for which it seemed necessary to re-open this ‘case’ are twofold: firstly, to my knowledge Romanian literary culture still lacks a detailed introduction to the so-called ‘golden age’ of reception studies, an introduction that would cover both historical and theoretical aspects; secondly, and more important in my view: as we shall see in the final section of this paper, Romanian literary research, by its nature very prone, even obsessed to synchronize itself with Western theory, was not quite eager to absorb reception studies, especially in their German versions. After 1990, missing out certain stages suddenly brought our literary research to other topics of interest, very political ones, as for instance, cultural, gender, or postcolonial studies, etc. I strongly believe that a reassessment of this kind is still useful and necessary.

*Keywords:* Literary theory (1970-1990), Sociology of literature, Literary reception theories, Constance School, the study of reception in România (1970-1990).

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O RETROSPECTIVĂ ASUPRA TEORIEI RECEPTĂRII  
(*Rezumat*)

Interesul pentru o abordare contextuală a literaturii se conturează în jurul anilor 1960, ca modalitate de depășire a metodologiei dominante textualiste (și estetice), de ieșire de sub tutela „accentului pus de către formalști și Noua Critică pe autonomia ‚textului în sine’, în direcția recunoașterii (sau a recunoașterii) relevanței contextului, indiferent că-l definim prin categorii istorice, culturale, ideologice sau psihanalitice” (Suleiman – Crosman 1980: 5). În acest studiu mă voi referi exclusiv la dinamica teoriilor receptării dintre anii 1970 și 1990. Redeschiderea „cazului” pare necesară din două motive: în primul rând, culturii literare românești încă îi lipsește o introducere detaliată pentru așa-zisa „epocă de aur” a studiilor de receptare, o introducere care să cuprindă aspecte deopotrivă istorice și teoretice; în al doilea rând, lucru și mai important, în opinia mea, așa cum vom vedea în partea finală a acestei lucrări, cercetarea literară românească, preocupată, prin natura sa, de ideea sincronizării cu teoria occidentală, nu s-a grăbit să asimileze studiile de receptare, mai ales în versiunea sa germană. După 1990, arderea anumitor etape a orientat cercetarea noastră literară înspre alte subiecte de interes, în speță politice, cum ar fi, de exemplu, studiile culturale, de gen sau postcoloniale. Cred cu convingere că o reevaluare de acest tip continuă să fie utilă și necesară.

*Cuvinte-cheie:* teorie literară (1970-1990), sociologia literaturii, teoriile receptării, Școala de la Constanza, ecouri ale teoriilor receptării în România.

ANTONIO PATRAȘ

## TOWARDS A REHABILITATION OF THE COMMONPLACE

### NOTES ON THE ROMANIAN READINGS OF JEAN PAULHAN'S *FLEURS DE TARBES*

Only recently translated in other international languages (English – 2006, German – 2009, Spanish – 2010), Jean Paulhan's book, *Les Fleurs de Tarbes ou La Terre dans les lettres* (1941), has the merit of having identified, at its time and with lucidity, the limitations of modern aesthetics and of the idea of “revolution”, defined through the prism of some negative categories that establish an irreducible opposition to the past and tradition in general<sup>1</sup>. Not so long ago a Romanian version of Paulhan's famous book has also been published (Jean Paulhan, *Florile din Tarbes sau Teroarea în Litere*, Iași, 2015), signed by Adrian Tudurachi, a refined theorist and critic from Cluj, who also delivers an insightful analysis of the great French essayist's work. The latter has been remembered by the history of Western thought owing to his reflections on cliché and his nuanced plea for the rehabilitation of rhetoric. In what follows, I intend to highlight some ideas which, in my opinion, might also be interesting to today's readers.

The world-wide travelling of this text written in the fashion of an essay-poem, which places it closer to literature and journalism than to the rigorous profile of academic style (the note on the edition warns us that, when he does not fabricate things all together, Paulhan often quotes from his memory), is, without any doubt, the result of the increasingly vivid interest in cliché, convention, and stereotype manifested throughout the post-modern era, as it is known that post-modern writers have been trying to renew their connection with literary tradition and its specific rhetoric. In brief, starting from the observation that the modern evolution of literature led to the autonomization/ purification of language (Paulhan talks of “impoverishment”) and, indirectly, to a pathological lack of trust in the word (*souci*), that is to say, to Terror, the illustrious French thinker puts forth “maintenance” as a solution to help come out of this crisis, *i.e.*, a technical-engineering attitude towards language and its clichés meant to ensure its good functioning with no emotional investment whatsoever and without the illusion of radical transformations. What is more, in this exquisitely fine-tuned essay,

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<sup>1</sup> See Hugo Friedrich's reflections on the negative categories of modern aesthetics in *Structura liricii moderne* [*The Structure of Modern Poetry*]. Translated into Romanian by Dieter Fuhrman, București, Univers, 1969.

Paulhan's observations about literature are accompanied by the reflections of the political and social thinker, who is constantly paying attention to the echoes of the aesthetic phenomenon in the conscience of the masses.

The substantial introductory study which accompanies the translation reveals numerous details about the writer's intellectual biography – a forefront figure of the French cultural life during the century past, as a linguist, amateur ethnographer, professor, literary critic, journalist, and a political thinker who was very close, at a given moment, but only during its peak stage, to the *avant-garde* movement. Later, he became an academician and the director of the *Nouvelle Revue française* (1925-1940, 1946-1968), with a gap of only a few years, during the war, when Paulhan was an active member of the Resistance movement. However, before he made himself known in the Parisian literary life, the young scholar went to Madagascar, aiming to experience a way of life that was radically different from the Western one and to study carefully the culture and customs of the Madagascan people. Just as passionate about ethnography and linguistics, he declared himself thrilled by the presuppositions of semantics, a relatively new discipline<sup>2</sup>, which analysed the distortions that emerge in language as a result of the mechanical use of words – hence the surprising mutations at the level of meaning.

After having studied the language of primitive African peoples with the scientific diligence of a linguist but also with the sensitivity of a decadent artist, fed up with literature (for a while, he was a member of anarchist circles), Paulhan returned to France a few years later with a collection of proverbs and traditional songs which were enthusiastically received by modernist writers (such as Apollinaire, for instance) because of their obscurity. Adrian Tudurachi emphasizes that, far from leaving the impression of a treasury of wisdom, Madagascan proverbs proved to be some cliché formulas that had lost their initial meaning, being perceived as some sort of absurd expressions that were nevertheless used by people in common practical situations of daily life. Nonetheless, being preoccupied with the previously unexplored ways of renewing the language, the Parisian literati noticed only the semantic incoherence of those proverbs, but not their social functionality nor the reassuring feeling produced by their use (*i.e.*, the feeling of being integrated into a given society, with its specific vocabulary and laws)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Adrian Tudurachi claims that the rediscovery of cliché in literature “is linked to the birth of semantics as a scientific discipline”, as Remy de Gourmont was the first to mention “cliché” within a theoretical context, in the last chapter of *Esthétique de la langue française* (1899). However, unlike Paulhan, Gourmont sees cliché as a spoiled form of language, owing to its overuse.

<sup>3</sup> From the doctoral dissertation that he had began writing under the supervision of the famous linguist Antoine Meillet on the *Semantic of the proverb*, Paulhan managed to finish only an essay, which is nevertheless essential in order to understand his ideas – *The Experience of the Proverb*, published in 1925.

The brief experience as an ethnographer revealed to the author of *Les Fleurs de Tarbes...* that it is also possible to contrive a new language using elementary forms of expression, ignoring the romantic-idealistic prejudice of originality. This is why, Paulhan says, literature does not need to avoid stereotypes, as it has done so far, but to cultivate cliché in a programmatic fashion, in order to destroy once and for all the illusion that it is only accessible to a small group of connoisseurs. Taking over his idea, but changing its meaning, avant-gardists would have preferred for literature to be exempted from the prerequisite of being “literary”<sup>4</sup> – more precisely, they would have wanted for it to get mixed up with life itself and, as a result, become accessible to everyone. So, here you have it, a foreshadowing of the premises that led to the extinction of the writer as a “subject” on the literary stage, the “author’s death” being claimed, once, with much satisfaction by the Western intelligentsia (Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, etc.). Much more cautious and much less “democratic”, Paulhan, the “bourgeois” with terrorist sympathies, did not see cliché as a way of de-structuring and disintegrating authorial identity, as the avant-gardists did (the latter did not hesitate to get involved in extremist political movements) but rather as a means of conciliation between the individual and the community, a type of conciliation which is always carried out based on conventions and a common language.

As a result, it is wrong to see Jean Paulhan as a conservative thinker, as Adrian Tudurachi is right to notice, insofar as the rhetoric he upholds is not a mimetic-reproductive one but, on the contrary, a “maintenance” one, which aims to support the functioning of literature as an institution for as long as possible, even if in emergency mode. Indeed, the author of *Les Fleurs de Tarbes...* considers that, far from being restricted, individual freedom (at the social and creative level) is conditioned by the existence of cliché itself, which provides it with a series of possibilities (even if limited) to manifest itself and thus become relevant at the community level<sup>5</sup>. “We have pushed Terror as far as it will go, and have discovered Rhetoric”, says the French writer, completely aware of the need to move on from the moment of revolution in the dynamic of every evolution. In brief, the rhetoric celebrated by Jean Paulhan is one that arises from its own ashes after the virulent criticism of the avant-garde. Therefore, pleading in favour of a

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<sup>4</sup> Paulhan does not share the avant-gardists’ view and upholds the idea that literature should not give up its status of an art.

<sup>5</sup> In this respect, see Kant’s considerations on *taste* in his *Critique of Judgment*. To mention only one aspect that seems to be important in this context, I will only say that the German philosopher saw taste as a kind of *sensus communis*, and this “common sense” as – “a necessary condition of the universal communicability of our knowledge” (Immanuel Kant, *Critica facultății de judecare* [*Critique of Judgement*]. Translated into Romanian by Vasile Dem Zamfirescu and Alexandru Surdu, București, Trei, 1995, p. 79). Should I also mention that “common sense” goes hand in hand with cliché?

continuity that is critically and lucidly assumed, Paulhan declared himself a “terrorist” so as not to be taken for a conservative retrograde thinker, a reactionary, when he talked of the need to revive the commonplace and rhetoric in modern times (is it just a coincidence that he experienced the “artificial paradises” induced by the use of hallucinogen drugs very late in his life, at the age of patriarchs, and not in his youth, as it is usually the case?).

The same type of critical thinking motivates the French essayist’s complex reaction to cliché when we take into account his political attitudes. Coming from a bourgeois family with Huguenot roots (his father, Frédéric Paulhan, was a well-known scholar of his time and brought important contributions to the history of logic and psychology), the famous director of the NRF participated in the two wars, experiencing courage in the face of death and being decorated for his heroism. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the former combatant did not judge at all those who had not followed his example and remained on the other side of the barricade. It is here that the deeply moral dimension of his reflections about cliché is to be found: by deliberately rendering his heroism banal, Paulhan sanctioned the vindictive reactions of his bloodthirsty fellow countrymen from the Resistance, taking the side of those accused of having been collaborationists. And this because he refused to see things in a Manicheist fashion, being right to doubt the vigilante motivations of the accusers. The moral of this kind of behaviour is that the use of cliché is a good remedy against pride, as it forces people to adopt a balanced, good sense attitude, which makes them forgive and forget and without which dialogue is not possible. Therefore, accepting the commonplace implies understanding the conventional nature of literature and, not in the least, of daily life, as the respect for the form (in literature and art) is an aesthetic analogon of politeness in social practice<sup>6</sup>.

Just as he separated, after the war, from his vengeful former fellows from the Resistance, the young scholar distanced himself – I repeat it – from the ideological radicalism of the numerous avant-garde movements, in which he unambiguously identified the indelible mark of Terror. At a certain point, Adrian Tudurachi quotes an answer – only apparently “Dadaist”, I believe – given by Paulhan in an interview, in which he claimed that the power needs to be given to the first who come, regardless of their qualities and competences. The essayist tried to show that only a precarious society attaches importance to the one who exercises power, i.e. the leader-“player”. Otherwise, in a truly balanced world, as the one in which the “terrorist” Paulhan would have loved to live, the exercise of power should leave

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<sup>6</sup> Among others, see Toma Pavel, *Arta îndepărtării. Eseu despre imaginația clasică* [*The Art of Distance. Essay on The Classical Imagination*]. Translated into Romanian by Mihaela Mancaș, București, Nemira, 1999.

the impression of an immutable ritual, meant to depersonalize and render banal, through stereotype, the meticulously prescribed gestures of the actors on the political stage. The excessive valuing of individual qualities (“originality”) in the playing of a social role gives away the weakness of that society – a weakness that becomes increasingly visible along with the accelerated modernisation and democratisation of the European world<sup>7</sup>.

As Paulhan says: “We call periods of Terror those moments in the history of nations (which often follow some famine), when it suddenly seems that the State requires not ingeniousness and systematic methods, nor even science and technology – but rather an extreme purity of the soul, and the freshness of a communal innocence. Consequently, citizens themselves are taken into consideration, rather than the things they do or make: the chair is forgotten in favour of the carpenter, the remedy in favour of the doctor. Skill, knowledge, and technique, however, become suspect, as if they were covering up some lack of conviction”<sup>8</sup>. In relation with this subtle and very insightful observation, it is time to discuss another aspect of Paulhan’s reflections. I consider here the relation established between cause and effect, the so-called phenomenon of “projection”, defined as an intellectual mechanism through which we attribute to “an object, animal, or person” the feelings that they actually elicit in us. The phenomenon of projection is specific, in general, to infantile thought, as the children often punish the door against which they hurt themselves, blaming it for the pain it caused. The same holds for cliché. “If our experience has any meaning”, Paulhan says, “it is to show that the flaw we take clichés to task for – with all the wisdom in the world – ceases to exist as soon as we stop criticizing them. [...] Terror seems to be a way of doing things rather than an observation and it is not because commonplace expressions are despicable that Terror proscribes them; it is because it proscribes them that they become despicable”<sup>9</sup>. For this reason, the insightful thinker is eager to show, the Rhetorician is currently seen as someone who looks for his words before he thinks.

Not by chance, noticing the growing influence of the masses on the historical stage, Gustave Le Bon signalled, in *La Psychologie des foules*, the modern man’s increasing receptivity to words that have affective connotations, and mainly to clichés. In a similar fashion, the effect of words on the behaviour of the mass-man

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<sup>7</sup> One of the classics of conservative thinking, Michael Oakeshott, believed that we are dealing with a conservative penchant when activity turns into a ritual (patriotism and the pleasure of conversation require such a penchant as a necessary condition). See Michael Oakeshott, *Raționalismul în politică* [*Rationalism in Politics*]. Translation and foreword by Adrian-Paul Iliescu, București, ALL, 1995.

<sup>8</sup> Jean Paulhan, *Florile din Tarbes sau Teroarea în Litere* [*The Flowers of Tarbes: or, Terror in Literature*]. Translation, foreword and notes by Adrian Tudurachi, Iași, Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2015, p. 45.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 83.

is comprehensively discussed by Paulhan too; he says that social errors are caused by the influence of language, rather than by human stupidity, as the “power of words” is at the root of all contemporary forms of manipulation. As a result, with the modernization and democratization of the European society there has emerged a true de-semantization of public language, noticed by several thinkers – this is why, Paulhan concludes, repeating, in turn, a cliché: “after the French Revolution, any democratic society possesses a set of stereotypes that have long been devoid of any content but are still able to move and muster the masses”<sup>10</sup>.

Thus, the phenomenon of projection leads to a surprising overturn of the causal relationship, as it determines the emancipation of the word and verbal expression from their presupposed pre-extant meanings<sup>11</sup>. Consequently, words are no longer called upon to “translate” preconfigured cognitive contents, as it is commonly believed – but, on the contrary, they begin to function as outside stimuli that move our thought and sensitivity. Or, if clichés emerge in the natural order of words, they get to play an essential role, as, in time, they make us speak alike and get the illusion that we understand each other.

Therefore, applying the law of reverse causality to his reflection about cliché, Paulhan depicts it in a paradoxical light of amazing complexity, which also has some Freudian echoes (see the theory of “slips” or the powerful observations from his studies on the comic and humorous words). Here is a paragraph that is, I hope, edifying in this respect: “Whether it is literary or banal, a commonplace expression is an event of language which, from its very first appearance, delights our mind. It seems to lend itself to countless different meanings, which get progressively more profound, so incommensurable is its spiritual dimension with the part of it that is made up of words and matter. It appears to escape for a moment from the servitude of language, and we escape along with it. Which explains no doubt why it makes such a strong impression on our memory, being the sign of a triumph”<sup>12</sup>.

The French essayist captures here with finesse the suggestive capacities of cliché, which, on the one hand, gives the impression of infinite semantic richness and, on the other, of a puzzling lack of meaning. Despite its strong connection with (affective) memory and the unconscious, cliché should be nevertheless taken, as in

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 119.

<sup>11</sup> In a remarkable study on Lovinescu’s novels (*Cuvintele careucid. Memorie literară în romanele lui E. Lovinescu [The Words that Kill. Literary Memory in E. Lovinescu’s Novels]*, Cluj-Napoca, Limes, 2010), Ligia Tudurachi noticed the mechanism of this reverse causality, identifiable in the manner in which the character was built and theorized by the modernist critic in his article *Expresia creatoare de realități [The expression that creates realities]*. The article was published in 1931 and republished in vol. 2 of his *Memoirs* (Chap. XXXIV. 1. *Creațiunea muzicală a ideilor mele. 2. Expresia, principiu de creație a ideilor*). For further details, see chap. *Reminiscente: figuri uzate, reveniri livrești, stereotipii verbale [Reminiscences: worn-out figures, livresque come-backs, verbal stereotypies]* in Ligia Tudurachi’s study, pp. 59-143.

<sup>12</sup> Jean Paulhan, *Florile din Tarbes*, p. 92.

Rimbaud's verse, *littéralement et dans tous les sens*. The so-called "material" side, the aspects which point to the concrete part of life cannot be eluded without seriously hurting its ambivalent-reconciling functionality. Words make us think, it is true. But when we think, we also do it with words. Not with images or sounds. Or with who knows what obscure sensations. If what Borges says is true, i.e. that, ultimately, there are two broad categories of thinkers, the Platonic and the Aristotelian, the only way we can picture the author of the book at hand is walking in the gardens of the Lyceum<sup>13</sup> – with flowers in his hand, of course. The discrediting of the word never fails to give away the action of a utopian, anti-humanistic way of thinking. In exchange, the resurrection of rhetoric marks, as a counterweight, the emergence of a cognitive-existential paradigm that is humanistic in nature<sup>14</sup>.

Unsurprisingly, Paulhan fights directly Bergson's (who is called the "Terror's philosopher" *par excellence*) radically pessimistic remarks about language, sanctioning (indirectly) the complaints of those who claim that words are unable to adequately describe the soul's inner life, unlike music and images. A significant fact is that the author of the *Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* saw cliché only as an expression of the laughable *par excellence*, when he defined comedy as an effect of that "mécanisme plaqué sur du vivant". Therefore, in Bergson's view, life is the realm of spontaneity and unpredictability, of unleashed energy, and the appearance of clichés signals the imminence of death and of all the limitations that make man a creature with no freedom. Influenced by Bergson's philosophy, modern writers (the "terrorists") reject rhetoric on the grounds that it presumably puts language before thought – however, as the French essayist finely observes, they prove to be much more interested in language and more receptive to cliché than the Rhetoricians have ever been. Yet, they do not dream to reinvent the old language, but to invent an original one, beyond language, a language that is innocent and pure, free from the tyranny of stereotypes and syntax, i.e., ultimately, a language in which words would resemble things in the most authentically Platonic way possible. Indeed, Bergson takes over some suggestions from Plato's and Schopenhauer's philosophy, accrediting the idea that music translates the

<sup>13</sup> Ioan Petru Culianu highlighted Aristotle's brilliant intuition, who (unlike Plato) identified a middle element between the soul and the body – the Spirit (*pneuma*) –, which was deemed to perform the function of "first instrument (*proton organon*) of the soul in its relationship with the body". Through the "pneuma", then, the soul "transmits to the body all the vital activities, and mobility", while, in turn, the body opens to the soul "a window to the world". It is thus that the Stagirite solved the "corporal/not-corporal contradiction", since he allotted to *phantasia* (the inner sense) the role of transforming "the messages transmitted by the five senses into phantasms perceptible by the soul" (see Ioan Petru Culianu, *Eros și magie în Renașterea. 1484 [Eros and Magic in Renaissance]*. Translated into Romanian by Dan Petrescu, foreword by Mircea Eliade, afterword by Sorin Antohi, București, Nemira, 1994 – the chapter *Istoria fantasticului*, pp. 23-55).

<sup>14</sup> A detailed account of the links between rhetoric and humanism is provided by Vasile Florescu in the book *Retorica și neoretorica [Rhetoric and Neo-rhetoric]*, București, Editura Academiei, 1973.

obscure life of the unconscious, the depths of the spirit that literature can only capture in a mediated way, through an analogous language in which words function as pure signifiers, as some kind of de-materialized sounds. This is why, Paulhan says, the Terrorist is so obsessed with authenticity, why he mixes up a “constant concern (*souci*) with language and expression” with everything, with love, with freedom.

In the light of the things discussed above, I cannot ignore the influence Paulhan had on a well-known French professor and theorist of our time, William Marx, who, in his relatively recent study, *L’Adieu à la littérature* (2005), describes in similar terms the process of the artist’s segregation from the wide audience and of the progressive devaluing of literature in modern society, a phenomenon which may be explained by the increasingly pronounced autonomisation of artistic language, up to its complete separation from the common language, the “words of the tribe” that Mallarmé rejected with much disdain. As a matter of fact, it is known that, in modern times, all the arts tend to annul the traditional distinction between “form” and “content” (see Croce’s theories about poetic expression) and to follow the example of music – a symbolic art *par excellence*, which claims it does not represent phenomenal reality, but leaves the impression that it is able to reach the deepest strings of the unconscious and to capture the deep structure of the universe, the world as idea<sup>15</sup>. After a tradition that is rooted in Ancient times and has survived for almost two millennia, becoming modern, literature no longer follows Horatio’s mimetic principle “*ut pictura poesis*”, steering, in a decisive manner, towards an analogical type of creativity, poetical-musical in nature (“*ut musica poesis*”), theorized in its canonical form by symbolism. Not by chance, just as Paulhan, William Marx considers Bergson the most representative philosopher of modern times, because the ideas of the great French thinker explain the fundamental mutation occurring at the level of artistic expressiveness, identifying the causes that made literature steer more and more towards the irrational, dreaming, and the unconscious.

Coming back to Paulhan, it should be noted that, gliding incessantly from one perspective to another, always confronting the Revolution with the Reaction, Modernity with the Classical Age, Terror with Rhetoric, the essayist ends up by explaining them, in a metaphorical manner, as necessary and interchangeable stages in the dialectics of love, impetuous when it is born, torn up by love and hatred, only to be tamed later on, with the passing of time, when the life of any couple gets to be ruled by the beneficial routine of matrimonial love. Spiritually, Terror is a disease of the youth (as Platonism is too), and it is only natural that it be cured sooner or later, as men become wiser and wiser. However, this is not always the case.

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<sup>15</sup> They are the “*universalia ante rem*” – primordial elements which configure Plato’s model of the universe, musically structured.

“However banal a commonplace expression may be”, Paulhan says in his demonstration, “it is always possible that it was invented by the person uttering it”. In other words, cliché could also be understood as a phenomenon of subjective, suspicious projection, as we have previously mentioned, not as an inescapable linguistic reality which is supposed to immediately enter dictionaries. Flaubert’s ambition to catalogue received ideas in a monumental *Sottisier* was an utter failure that taught us an important lesson: it is not possible to build an exhaustive inventory of all commonplace expressions, just as it is impossible to summarize our life in a single book. The ideal of a book about nothing gets configured, as it is easy to see, on the background of a failure. As a result, by exiling clichés out of literature, the haughty writer, who deems himself clever, becomes artificial and unauthentic, losing any connection with reality and life. “It is not without a certain sense of pleasure that we discover a commonly held opinion to be wrong”, the much tried essayist warns us; he recommends that all the authors of literature who come to a dead end fathom cliché, not avoid it (something that Flaubert also understood, to a great extent); he advises that they become young again, just for a moment, as “poetry is also seeing with fresh eyes what everyone always sees”<sup>16</sup>. Yet here freshness is not the effect of the beholder’s ingenuity, as one might think, but of a long cohabitation with clichés. Only he who feels already old yearns for youth. As a result, ultimately, Terror seems to be a Bovaristic projection of old age itself.

Therefore, from what we have discussed so far, to the best of his knowledge (who could suspect him of innocence?), Paulhan rejects scientific criticism and its empty methodological presuppositions (see the ample section of *Notes and documents* at the end of the book), opting to present his thoughts in the infinitely more difficult form of an essay (in spite of all appearances of spontaneity, the book was carefully written over more than a decade) – a type of discourse that is deliberately drawing on ambiguity and paradox, and the dramatic confrontation of ideas. The rhetorical technique rooted in the humanistic-Epicurean tradition is to be found, in Romania, in the rationalistic-bourgeois movement of inter-war essay, from Ralea, Călinescu and Zarifopol, to Eugen Ionescu (the acid criticism in *Nu* is ambivalent, like Paulhan’s Terror), N. Steinhardt or, especially, Alexandru Paleologu. Not by chance, Paulhan’s most daring ideas, and especially the specific means through which they are discussed, with their brilliant plays upon nuances, seem to have already been translated in the books of the Romanian essayists who belong to the same spiritual family, from the apologia of bourgeois ethics and moderation, claimed by Montaigne’s lineage, up to the complex analysis of cliché and paradoxical good sense – of which we know, now, that is not nearly as widely spread among people as “terror”.

Therefore, placed within a major culture, which gives him an advantage, Paulhan managed to talk about literature and the man in a more direct, simpler, but

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<sup>16</sup> Jean Paulhan, *Florile din Tarbes*, p. 173.

also more insightful way, I believe, than the system critics, the scholars, have ever managed to do it. This is why, if the purpose of this book was to cure us of naivety, as Adrian Tudurachi rightfully says, it is not less true that, when finishing it, we are experiencing a strong feeling of regret for this lost naivety, with all its youthfulness and terrors. Paleologu used to quote quite often an aphorism from La Rochefoucauld, his favourite, which is perfectly suited to end our demonstration: “Qui vit sans folie n’est pas si sage qu’il croit”. Let us render unto wisdom the things that it deserves. *Vive La Terreur!*

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TOWARDS A REHABILITATION OF THE COMMONPLACE.  
NOTES ON THE ROMANIAN READINGS  
OF JEAN PAULHAN'S *FLOWERS OF TARBES*  
(Abstract)

The metaphor of "Terror" in Literature expresses the obsession with originality, rooted in Romanticism, and matched, in modern times, by the (anti-literary) cult of authenticity. Nevertheless, in an age of multiple radicalisms, Paulhan rehabilitates literary tradition, with all its conventions and clichés, showing how it can be made to assume new functions from a contemporary perspective without falling into conventionalism and routine. This lenient attitude towards cliché (reactivated out of the wish to rediscover a common and intelligible language, rather than out of inertia) reflects here a definitive rejection of any kind of fanaticism, which made the French essayist criticize both the "rightist" political extremism of the inter-war period and the "leftist" extremism of the post-war age. In what follows, I intend to develop these observations and demonstrate that Paulhan's reflections draw on a humanistic model that prevailed amidst dramatic historical circumstances, which favoured dogmatic thinking, the "terror" in Letters and life alike.

*Keywords:* cliché, rhetoric, authenticity, avant-garde, tradition, modernity, humanism, Bergsonism.

PENTRU O REABILITARE A LOCULUI COMUN.  
NOTE PE MARGINEA LECTURILOR ROMÂNEȘTI ALE  
*FLORILOR DIN TARBES* DE JEAN PAULHAN  
(Rezumat)

Metafora „Terorii” în Literatură exprimă obsesia pentru originalitate, provenită din romantism, reprezentată în vremurile moderne de cultul (antiliterar) al autenticității. Cu toate acestea, într-o epocă a radicalismelor multiple, Paulhan reabilitează tradiția literară, cu toate convențiile și clișeele ei, arătând cum anume – evitând convenționalismul și rutina – i se pot atribui noi funcții dintr-o perspectivă contemporană. Această atitudine indulgentă față de clișeu (reactivată nu din inerție, ci din dorința de a redescoperi un limbaj comun și inteligibil) reflectă refuzul definitiv al oricărei forme de fanatism, eseistul francez criticând deopotrivă extremismul politic „de dreapta” din perioada interbelică și pe cel „de stânga” al epocii postbelice. În cele ce urmează, intenționez să dezvolt aceste observații și să demonstrez că reflecțiile lui Paulhan au conturat un model umanist devenit important în circumstanțe istorice dramatice, care favorizează gândirea dogmatică și „teroarea” în domeniul Literelor, la fel ca în viață.

*Cuvinte-cheie:* clișeu, retorică, autenticitate, avangardă, tradiție, modernitate, umanism, bergsonism.

**SANS TEMPS, NI LIEU.  
INNOVER EN THÉORIE LITTÉRAIRE  
AU TEMPS DU COMMUNISME**

Le cas de Ioana Em. Petrescu représente un bon exemple de « théorie qui se localise » en réponse aux diktats de l'histoire ; dans ce qui suit, je vais puiser mes exemples dans un seul livre, parmi ceux qu'elle a signés, celui qui est – même à ses yeux – le plus ouvertement « théorique ». Ma réflexion naît de l'étude de ses archives, ces 10 dernières années ; dans une visée plus ample, l'accès étant possible maintenant à la bibliothèque personnelle et aux manuscrits de l'auteure, j'espère pouvoir reconstituer des pratiques de lecture (de la théorie), ainsi que des manières de donner corps aux nouvelles idées. Ce faisant, je voudrais pouvoir reconstituer des façons de trouver et poser une voix personnelle (et fortement iconoclaste) dans un champ – celui de la théorie littéraire européenne – qui était, *a priori*, lointain, sinon interdit d'accès pour un spécialiste roumain.

Pour ce faire, j'ai choisi un volume particulier de son œuvre. Il s'agit de *Configurații* (*Configurations*, 1981)<sup>1</sup>. C'est, parmi les livres de Ioana Em. Petrescu, celui dont la visée théorique est la plus visible, la plus « programmatiquement » posée, dès le début (le premier chapitre s'intitule *Niveau configuratifs dans la construction de l'image* et il contient une discussion purement théorique du sujet, que les chapitres suivants vont illustrer et reprendre). C'est aussi le livre qui a joui, à son apparition, de la réception critique la plus « discrète » (car les commentateurs ne savaient pas quoi en faire : non focalisé sur un grand auteur, avec des microlectures jouant sur la pauvreté des textes, précédé par une introduction théorique substantielle, le volume va, à mon avis, à l'encontre des habitudes de lecture et d'écriture de la critique littéraire roumaine). Mais l'évolution ultérieure des idées littéraires prouvera la qualité de ses propos théoriques. Ses innovations, les enjeux des débats que Ioana Em. Petrescu y amorce, et qui sont autant de prises de positions – toutes particulières – de type poststructuraliste, passent en fait inaperçus lors de son apparition. Le volume – relu éventuellement après 90, par les historiens des idées littéraires roumains ou par des « *aficionados* nouvelle vague » des écrits de Ioana Em. Petrescu – n'est pas effectivement intégré dans son temps, quoiqu'il entend poser de façon explicite une vision sur la fin du structuralisme (et sur ce qui vient après). Il ne participe à aucun débat, il ne figure pas parmi les voix qui se font entendre. Hélas – cela est vrai, aussi – la fin du structuralisme n'est réellement pas « aperçue »

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<sup>1</sup> Ioana Em. Petrescu, *Configurații* [*Configurations*], Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1981.

comme telle par la critique roumaine dans les années de la fin du communisme (j'allais dire – de la fin du monde, de ce monde-là, dont il est question).

Voilà pour les exemples. Mais, avant tout, je vais vous parler d'un théoricien roumain de la littérature qui a été aussi le professeur de quelques-uns de nous, dans les années 80. J'ai commencé ma formation à l'étude de la littérature dans ses enseignements, trop vite clos, et cela me situe parmi les témoins, fait notable, qui l'emporte sur toute autre articulation de réflexion. Ceci me permet d'aborder le thème de ma communication par une anecdote. C'était approximativement en '83 – '84, et notre professeure, Ioana Em. Petrescu, venait de présenter une communication sur le texte de Derrida *Structure, sign and play*<sup>2</sup>. Peu de monde – académique – parmi ceux qui se trouvaient dans la salle avait effectivement suivi ses propos et Derrida était encore un nom assez exotique pour eux. À la fin, un autre professeur – un homme, cette fois – l'approcha, la complimenta en termes très généraux sur sa présentation, mais s'empressa d'ajouter une question, qu'il posa avec un air de pitié supérieure : « Mais, voyons, ma très chère, pourquoi une femme si belle que vous s'intéresserait-elle à un philosophe aussi difficile que Derrida ? ». Nous, les étudiant(e)s, nous regardions la scène avec des yeux énormes ; je ne sais pas si nous comprenions, en ce moment-là, toute la pesanteur de la discussion. Car tout y était : la misogynie roumaine bien enracinée culturellement (et parfaitement tolérée par les milieux censés être parmi les plus éclairés), le refus des nouveautés de tout domaine scientifique, la méfiance, aussi, face à la théorie (littéraire), ou aux discussions « trop » théoriques, la résistance de la gérontocratie sur place face aux jeunes (Ioana Em. Petrescu avait environ 46 ans à l'époque, ce qui faisait « très jeune » dans les universités roumaines).

Pour revenir à la scène évoquée : notre professeure mima, sur le champ, une pose de « petite femme fatale » qui lui était complètement étrangère, par ailleurs, et répondit en battant les cils : « Mais, comment ne pas m'intéresser à Derrida ? Avez-vous vu le bel homme qu'il est sur les photos ? ». Fin de la scène. Le professeur se retira satisfait (quoi que légèrement perplexe : il sentait quelque chose de louche dans la réponse) et, pour les étudiant(e)s de Ioana Em. Petrescu, l'argument « sur la beauté de Derrida » resta à jamais une métaphore du machisme universitaire. Et de quelque chose de plus, que nous ne savions pas nommer en ce moment-là, tout en ayant l'intuition de sa pesanteur...

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<sup>2</sup> Ioana Em. Petrescu, « Filosofia poststructuralistă a lui Derrida și soluțiile criticii contemporane » [La philosophie poststructuraliste de Derrida et les solutions de la critique contemporaine]; le texte a été publié, premièrement, dans *Revista de istorie și teorie literară*, XXXII, 1984, 4, XXXIII, 1985, 1-2 ; réédité en volume dans Ioana Em. Petrescu, *Modernism/ Postmodernism. O ipoteză [Modernisme/ Postmodernisme. Une hypothèse]*. Edition, étude introductive et postface française par Ioana Bot, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2003, pp. 54-79.

Ioana Em. Petrescu (n. 1941, m. 1990) a fait des études de langue et littérature roumaine à l'Université de Cluj, où elle a travaillé, jusqu'à sa mort, en enseignant la littérature roumaine et la théorie littéraire. Elle a signé des volumes consacrés, si l'on se fie à leurs titres, aux principaux poètes du canon littéraire roumain (*Ion Budai Deleanu și eposul comic/ Ion Budai Deleanu et l'épos comique*, 1974 ; *Eminescu, poet tragic/ Eminescu, poète tragique*, 1978 ; *Configurații/ Configurations*, 1981 ; *Eminescu și mutațiile poeziei românești/ Eminescu et les mutations de la poésie roumaine*, 1989 ; *Ion Barbu și poetica postmodernismului/ Ion Barbu et la poétique du postmodernisme*, 1993 – achevé et donné à l'éditeur en 1987). En fait – et au contraire de la perception (et réception) critique roumaine – chacun de ses livres se focalise sur un concept ou sur une situation théorique particulière, que l'œuvre étudiée met, en quelque sorte, à l'essai. Ceci pour dire que, dans ses écrits, l'enjeu était premièrement d'ordre théorique – ce qui devient visible, peut-être, de nos jours (je parle aussi en tant qu'éditrice de ses œuvres posthumes), pour des lecteurs (roumains) beaucoup plus habitués à ce type d'approche à présent que ne l'étaient les contemporains immédiats de Ioana Em. Petrescu. Car ceux-là avaient l'habitude de lire des études littéraires plutôt « *author-oriented* » que « *concept-oriented* » et donc ils allaient lire ces volumes comme des études portant sur des auteurs majeurs ; ce, jusqu'à ses éditeurs, qui lui demandaient de mettre un nom d'écrivain (classique, important etc.) dans le titre, pour mieux « faire passer » le livre aux yeux du contrôle politique/éditorial... Il n'y a pas de preuves objectives d'une telle imposition politique à l'époque ; on sait, en échange, que les éditeurs allaient le plus souvent à l'encontre des prétentions que les censeurs politiques pourraient formuler. Ioana Em. Petrescu a été, aussi, une brillante professeure de littérature, créatrice d'un cercle critique et – subrepticement – d'une véritable école d'études littéraires à l'université de Cluj. Mais son tracé littéraire et académique appartient à ce que l'on pourrait appeler la « moyenne nationale » de son époque. Ni trop visible, ni inconnue dans son pays, ni au sommet de la hiérarchie universitaire, ni exilée dans la Roumanie profonde, ni titulaire d'une rubrique dans une revue littéraire (ce qui pouvait assurer, aux temps de Ceausescu, la visibilité et la force d'une posture littéraire), ni absente des mêmes revues, aimée par les étudiants pour ses qualités pédagogiques et, peut-être, évitée par ses confrères pour son ethos refusant tout compromis politique... Elle n'était pas unique, en cela. On le sait. Mais, à 25 années de distance historique, il nous le faut démontrer et c'est là que l'étude de ses archives et de sa bibliothèque privée subviennent heureusement à la recherche.

Je ne suis pas une adepte des « biographismes », mais dans ce cas particulier, je trouve le biais biographique bien nécessaire. Je vais insister sur trois détails, donc, afin d'expliquer la formation intellectuelle de l'auteure en question, sa venue à la théorie, ainsi que les préjugés de sa première réception :

*Ioana Em. Petrescu n'a pratiquement vécu que dans la période communiste.* Elle y a essoré beaucoup de ses désavantages au niveau du quotidien, ainsi que de

sa formation professionnelle (une formation exclusivement roumaine, une bourse Fullbright en 1981 – 1983 à UCLA, aux États Unis, étant pratiquement sa seule sortie/son seul contact direct, et tardif, avec le monde académique libre – un contact qu'elle a vécu par ailleurs difficilement, toujours à cause des impositions communistes<sup>3</sup>). Elle est, donc, un cas exemplaire de théoricienne de la littérature appartenant – objectivement – à cette époque-là. Du point de vue de la circulation des idées littéraires entre la Roumanie et l'Europe, on peut considérer la période respective comme un hors-temps, mais en fait la situation sur le terrain n'est pas si clairement définie, en noir et blanc. Un cas comme celui-ci me permet de retracer les plages intermédiaires, colorées de gris.

*Son « héritage familial » lui permit un accès libre et riche aux études littéraires de l'entre-deux guerres, l'isolant du même coup des influences politiques des années '50 – '60 dans le domaine littéraire.* Elle était la fille d'un professeur de littérature roumaine (D. Popovici) de l'université clujeoise, mort lui aussi très jeune (à 50 ans, en 1952). Elle avait 11 ans à la mort de son père et – beaucoup plus tard – elle décida de le suivre dans ses études (selon ses propres déclarations), afin de pouvoir l'éditer et sauver son (énorme) œuvre manuscrite des vautours qui commençaient à en profiter. Par la suite, elle devint beaucoup plus que cela, dans le paysage académique roumain de la théorie littéraire.

Mais la disparition du père a su influencer à sa manière la formation intellectuelle de sa fille. Orpheline, elle allait chercher la mémoire du père adoré dans la bibliothèque (particulièrement) riche de celui-ci. Manuscrits paternels, livres (roumains, français, italiens etc.) annotés par son père – c'était, là, sa lecture favorite. Selon ses propres aveux, mais aussi selon le témoignage de la bibliothèque même, après la mort de son père, la famille arrêta d'acheter des livres : elle grandit en lisant ce qu'elle trouvait à la maison, sans surveillance, ni guidage. Beaucoup d'études littéraires, donc, et de littérature ancienne. Le tout, immobilisé en quelque sorte, hors de l'histoire (violente, du premier communisme roumain), ainsi que hors de toute perspective historique/diachronique sur les lectures respectives. Elle connut, de cette façon, des textes, études et idées de l'entre deux guerres, qui allaient lui être familiers, là où, pour ses collègues de génération, ces écrits étaient interdits ou difficiles d'accès. Elle avait (bien) lu les auteurs d'avant, avant de se consacrer aux auteurs et théories de son temps. Beaucoup plus tard, à l'âge mur, cela lui valut une espèce de « navigation libre » dans la bibliographie critique, ainsi que une capacité particulière de métaboliser, dans ses lectures, cette bibliographie « ancienne », qui lui était beaucoup plus proche qu'à ses collègues de la même génération. De retrouver les sources, d'exercer des comparatismes parfois inouïs etc.

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<sup>3</sup> Ioana Em. Petrescu, *Molestarea fluturilor interzisă [Il est défendu de faire du mal aux papillons. Lettres américaines]*. Réunies et éditées par Ioana Bot, București, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 1998.

La famille, son mari (Liviu Petrescu, qui était lui-même comparatiste et travaillait au même Département de littérature), ainsi que ses amis proches, lui cultivaient souvent l'impression qu'elle écrivait mal ou qu'elle était difficile à lire/ à suivre dans ses idées. Ceci est évident dans la correspondance, aussi bien que dans le *Journal* de Ioana Em. Petrescu<sup>4</sup>. Elle n'avait pas contesté cette impression, confirmée par ailleurs par la critique littéraire à l'apparition de la plupart de ses livres. Toute une énergie du dialogue se voit, dans ses écrits, tournée vers le dialogue des idées – et moins vers un lecteur censé « la comprendre » ou « lui répondre ». Cet hermétisme de ses textes était, en échange, équilibrée en quelque sorte par leur origine : à deux exceptions près, toutes ses études avaient été, à l'origine, des cours ou autres enseignements. Elles conservent la démarche claire de la leçon, dans le style, ainsi que dans l'architecture de leurs démonstrations.

L'histoire personnelle, dans des cas comme celui de Ioana Em. Petrescu, se mêle à l'Histoire, se plie aux dictats de cette dernière et – qui plus est – s'y ajoute. Car l'Histoire, en ce cas, n'est pas seulement celle de la dictature communiste et ses interdictions (...de lecture, d'écriture, de circulation de livres aussi bien que de personnes), mais aussi de plusieurs sous-couches de retard quant aux développements des sociétés contemporaines, sur lesquelles le communisme « à la roumaine » s'était si bien ajouté : les mentalités patriarcales et gérontocrates (et ceux des milieux académiques aussi), le machisme, le conservatisme, le repli sur « les valeurs nationales », tout cela allait de pair, en fait, avec l'obsession d'un Occident avec lequel on ne voudrait pas perdre contact, avec la résistance intellectuelle au communisme, avec le refus de la pensée unique etc.

Ma démarche a été facilitée par la conservation de son archive (bibliothèque et manuscrits) *in situ*, dans l'appartement familial, revenu en héritage à l'état roumain, après le décès de son mari, Liviu Petrescu, en 1999. Il se trouve conservé (avec un archivage professionnel) comme « Archives Ioana et Liviu Petrescu », auprès de la Bibliothèque Districtuelle de Cluj. Depuis 2006, j'y dirige des travaux d'étude de textes et d'édition de manuscrits, avec une équipe de jeunes chercheurs postdoctoraux, doctorants et étudiants en master. De nombreuses publications, ainsi qu'une édition posthume, complète, des œuvres de Ioana Em. Petrescu, sont issues de ces travaux. Cela m'a aussi permis d'étudier *des pratiques de lecture* et d'esquisser des réponses à des questions telles :

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<sup>4</sup> Ioana Em. Petrescu, *Jurnal [Journal]*. Edition de Elena Neagoe et Rozalia Borcilă, avec une postface par Carmen Muşat, Piteşti, Paralela 45, 2004. Les éditrices précisent, dans leur note, avoir choisi de publier seulement des fragments d'un corpus plus ample et ayant un contenu plutôt délicat. Jusqu'à aujourd'hui, il a été impossible à la Bibliothèque de Cluj, devenue entre temps propriétaire de l'archive, de récupérer le manuscrit original, enlevé de la maison par les éditrices, pendant le déroulement du procès civil concernant l'héritage de la famille Petrescu, après la mort de Liviu Petrescu, en 1999. Cela fait que le livre est, à son tour, une édition à considérer avec prudence.

1. *Comment se procurait-elle les livres occidentaux ?* Quels étaient les réseaux de leur circulation ? Les archives aident à retracer un véritable marché noir, sinon un groupe d'amis et collègues, ayant des intérêts communs, qui faisaient circuler les livres – en original, en photocopie intégrale ou partielle, en copie manuscrite, le plus souvent partielle mais impeccablement référenciée.

2. *Comment lisait-elle les livres de théorie ?* Je peux offrir, pour le moment, deux réponses, attestées par les archives : *a. si le livre lui appartenait*, elle lisait en faisant beaucoup de notes marginales, aux crayons de plusieurs couleurs (avec un usage personnel assez codé) ; pratiquement, si un essai ou un commentaire allait être écrit, on le voit naître dans ces commentaires ; *b. si le livre ne lui appartenait pas*, elle prenait beaucoup de notes, fiches de citations et renvois aux pages du livre, en laissant à ses pages manuscrites des marges assez larges pour contenir des commentaires successifs, éventuellement en rouge ; elle prenait ses notes dans des cahiers d'écolier de 100 ou de 200 pages, qui devenaient par la suite des substituts des livres. Elle numérotait ses cahiers, ce qui nous permet d'établir la chronologie de ses lectures. En voici quelques exemples :

2.1. Pour les livres occidentaux cités dans *Configurations*, tels est le cas du *Cours de linguistique générale* de Ferdinand de Saussure (édition française de 1969, Paris, Payot), lu entre 1976 et 1980 et résumé dans le même cahier que trois études de grammaire textuelle, narratologie et pragmatique signés par Teun Van Dijk. D'où provenaient ces titres étrangers ? Il se trouve que je peux retracer, personnellement, les études de Van Dijk (pour les avoir lues, étudiante, dans la même bibliothèque privée), mais pas le livre de Saussure. Ce qui nous vaut une réponse générique : elle puisait dans les (riches) bibliothèques privées de deux de ses collègues et amis, linguistes, qui se les procuraient via des membres de leurs familles, expatriés aux États Unis ou en Israël.

2.2. Un autre cas, d'une lecture tout aussi importante pour le livre des *Configurations* : un conspect de 123 pages de l'édition française de Heidegger, *L'Être et le temps* (Gallimard, 1964), où elle note sur la première page du cahier « je traduis seulement la première section », mélangeant le roumain et le français, avec un glossaire substantiel allemand-français des termes philosophiques heideggeriens en ajout. Notes de lectures en bleu, commentaires en rouge, termes du glossaire en vert. Source du livre : inconnue (fort probable : un des deux collègues linguistes invoqués auparavant).

2.3. Enfin, pour cette liste d'exemples – et parce que c'est une référence bibliographique essentielle pour l'enjeu post-structurel des *Configurations* – j'ajoute le cahier contenant les notes (abondamment copiées du livre) de Derrida, *La Grammatologie* (édition de 1974). La page de gauche (le verso de chaque page), libre, est annotée en rouge avec des commentaires qui indiquent déjà le sens de ce qu'elle allait écrire dans les *Configurations*, ainsi que de ce

qui, de manière plus générale, la préoccupait dans les écrits de Derrida. Source du livre : inconnue.

3. *Qu'est-ce qui l'attirait/ l'intéressait dans un livre de théorie ?* Voilà, justement à cause des notes manuscrites longues ou abondantes, ce qui est bien difficile à voir. Ce n'était, en tout cas, pas nécessairement l'idée centrale ou l'enjeu principal de ce qu'elle lisait, sinon ce qu'elle poursuivait elle-même dans ses recherches ; cela fait que les lectures sont orientées dans leur choix de fragments, citations etc.

Enfin, le dialogue avec l'auteur lu « crayon en main » lui était très facile et explicite, en marge de la page imprimée : elle y griffonnait de petites demandes (« sérieusement ? », « pas vrai ? », « sur quoi te fondes-tu ? ») souvent ironiques, mais dénotant plutôt une vivacité de l'esprit dialogique, à toute épreuve, que le fil d'une pensée se construisant dans le dialogue. Pour faire vite, je dirai que, dans tout cela, je ne vois rien de spectaculaire. Les manières de lire sont celles des littéraires/scientifiques de son temps (cahiers, notes, crayons de différentes couleurs, annotations etc.) et de partout, si ce n'est de la dimension des citations copiées (le retour au livre étant le plus souvent impensable) ou la clarté des références aux pages<sup>5</sup>.

Certes, cet accès aux archives manuscrites m'a aussi permis de reconstituer certaines pratiques d'écriture de l'auteure en question, que je me contente de résumer, pour le moment, en plusieurs étapes : 1. La lecture d'un texte théorique provoque un dialogue/une réplique en marge de la page ; 2. Si possible, le dialogue sur l'idée respective est repris au cours d'un enseignement, approfondi et illustré par au moins une microlecture (choix selon la programme de l'enseignement, choix selon un projet plus ample de l'auteure, visant telle œuvre littéraire) ; 3. Suivent les notes de l'auteure pour un futur essai/ chapitre/ étude ; 4. Enfin, l'écriture (souvent, à plusieurs versions, manuscrites, sur feuilles de cahiers d'écopier) de l'essai – moment de retour sur la bibliographie première, ayant déclenché ou soutenu la nouvelle réflexion. Mais, en fait, ce que l'on retrouve ici, ce sont les gestes les plus normaux des pratiques d'écriture d'un spécialiste. Rien ne semble troubler, ou donner une nuance à part, cela, quoique c'est, là, une écriture qui se fait en plein cœur de la période communiste. Sa clôture, son espace d'intimité, ne sont pas imposés par le contexte historique. Une future étude des dossiers de surveillance de la Securitate, consacrés aux époux Petrescu (que je projette, pour l'instant), nous dira si tel a été vraiment le cas, si cet espace de réflexion et de création a été effectivement si intime ; mais eux, ils ne se sentaient

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<sup>5</sup> À ce sujet, je signale une publication issue d'un travail de dissertation réalisé sous ma direction, dans les archives de la famille Petrescu: Silviu Mihăilă, *Ioana Em. Petrescu, citindu-l pe Eminescu. Note, arhive, documente* [Ioana Em. Petrescu lisant Eminescu. Notes, archives, documents], Cluj-Napoca, Eikon, 2013.

pas du tout espionnés par leurs proches, auxquels, au contraire, ils faisaient complètement confiance.

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*Un deuxième moment des pratiques de lecture*, tout aussi emblématique pour l'atmosphère du champ littéraire roumain de l'époque est constitué par la réception (critique) des écrits de Ioana Em. Petrescu. Les critiques (le plus souvent, des universitaires eux aussi, en fait – des collègues de l'auteure) reprochent à ses livres d'être trop enclins à la théorie – et de citer trop de sources occidentales, comme pour vouloir faire impression sur le lecteur. Misogynie et refus de la théorie (de la théorisation) sont deux attitudes caractéristiques de la vie culturelle roumaine à l'époque : Ioana Em. Petrescu en fait les frais, de son vivant, pour presque tous ses livres ; et ce – à tous les niveaux de cette réception : de son mari, comparatiste et universitaire lui-même, qui lui reproche (à voir leur correspondance intime<sup>6</sup>) de ne pas savoir bien écrire, à ses collègues et anciens professeurs de l'université (le cas de Mircea Zăciu et de ses chroniques condescendantes mais misogynes publiées au sujet de quelques autres volumes de Ioana Em. Petrescu), enfin – à ses confrères pratiquant la chronique littéraire dans les revues centrales de Bucarest (Mircea Iorgulescu, Laurențiu Ulici etc.). À quelques exceptions, certes, notables, tels Paul Cornea, Mircea Angheliescu ou Mihai Zamfir, tel est le climat critique roumain, récepteur dans l'immédiat de ses textes. Le fait de les avoir réédités, un après l'autre, depuis 2006, nous a permis de restituer le dossier critique de chacun des volumes, et il faut dire qu'ils sont assez homogènes pour ce qui est de la méfiance envers le poids théorique des écrits de Ioana Em. Petrescu. Enfin, ces chroniques n'ont aucun égard pour placer dans un temps, un contexte (idéatique) ou dans un dialogue (avec le champ occidental des idées littéraires) les volumes commentés. Elles sont, elles aussi, « sans temps ni lieu », en exprimant leur jugement uniquement par rapport au contexte roumain (soit invoqué de manière imprécise et bien trop générale, soit immédiat).

En voici, de nouveau, quelques exemples, que j'essaie de grouper selon la stratégie critique principale utilisée. Ainsi, dans le dossier de la réception critique du volume, le commentateur le plus prestigieux, Laurențiu Ulici (et qui publiait dans la revue la plus importante de l'époque, la « România literară »), *choisit d'ignorer complètement la théorie qui articule l'étude* ; il le fait même en louant le volume... pour ses microlectures, et non pas pour la nouveauté de la théorie :

...les textes de *Configurations* (1981), pour la plupart des analyses partielles d'objets historico-littéraires, dont un appartenant à la littérature contemporaine (*Laus Ptolemaei*, de Nichita Stănescu) attestent, en égale mesure, les disponibilités

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<sup>6</sup> *Corespondența intimă Ioana Em. Petrescu – Liviu Petrescu, 1961-1978* [*Correspondance intime Ioana Em. Petrescu – Liviu Petrescu*]. Edition, notes et étude introductive de Mirela Tomoiagă, préface de Ioana Bot, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2012.

interprétatives de Ioana Em. Petrescu et son désir de diversifier l'espace littéraire de ses investigations, mais non de sa perspective critique...<sup>7</sup>.

La même attitude, minimisante par ce qu'elle note des réussites de détail et feint (gauchement, je dirais) ignorer l'ensemble, dans la chronique signée à l'époque par Dana Dumitriu :

...son nouveau livre, *Configurații*, part de quelques précisions d'ordre général, s'achevant par l'examen attentif de la structure de quelques œuvres modernes qui attestent un changement de conception artistique profond : la technique de la citation. Apportant dans ses commentaires une information solide, une culture bien assimilée et un respect rigoureux du texte, elle nous communique des informations très intéressantes, pertinentes, d'une clarté sans reproche<sup>8</sup>.

*Une autre stratégie est celle de la description correcte sans aucune vue sur le sens de l'ensemble.* Des critiques qui se bornent à résumer le volume, assez minutieusement, sans toutefois donner une vue d'ensemble ou bien une contextualisation du débat théorique qui s'y trouve amorcé. Comme la description d'une langue inconnue... ou bien comme une essentielle indifférence envers les enjeux réels du volume<sup>9</sup>.

La bibliographie théorique invoquée dans *Configurații* est, certes, abondante, sans toutefois dépasser ce qui serait « la norme » d'un propos occidental semblable. Voici la liste des auteurs et écrits théoriques invoqués dans l'étude introductive (par ordre de l'apparition ; en gras, ceux qui n'étaient pas lus dans une édition roumaine) : Giambattista Vico (*La nouvelle science*), Mikel Dufrenne (*Le poétique*), Fr. Nietzsche (*Naissance de la tragédie*), I.M. Lotman (*Leçons de poétique structurale*), Herbert Read (*Image et idée*), M. Heidegger (*L'Être et le temps*), M. Merleau-Ponty (*Phénoménologie de la perception*), Titu Maiorescu (*Une recherche critique sur la poésie roumaine de 1867*), Oskar Walzel (*Gehalt und Gestalt im Kunstwerk des Dichters*, consulté dans la traduction roumaine de 1976), B. Tomashevski (*Théorie de la littérature. Le poétique*), E.R. Curtius (*La littérature européenne et le Moyen Age latin*), G. Genette (*Figures III*), A.J. Greimas (*Du sens. Essais sémiotiques*), A.J. Greimas – J. Rastier (*Le jeu des contraintes sémiotiques*), Ș. Coculesco – Pius Servien (*Essai sur les rythmes toniques du français*), Mircea Eliade (*Commentaires à la légende du Maître Manole, Traité d'histoire des religions, Aspects du mythe*), Jacques Derrida (*De la Grammatologie*), Pius Servien (*Esthétique*), J.P. Sartre (*L'imaginaire*, édition de 1966), Rudolf Arnheim (*Art et perception visuelle*), F. de Saussure (*Cours de*

<sup>7</sup> Laurențiu Ulici, « Istorici literari VIII » [Historiens de la littérature], *România literară*, XXI, 1988, 5, p.11.

<sup>8</sup> Dana Dumitriu, « Rigoare și subtilitate » [Rigueur et subtilité], *România literară*, XV, 1982, 6.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Cornel Robu, « Lectura între fragment și sistem » [La lecture entre fragment et système], *Tribuna*, 1983, 5 mai, et Despina Neagoe, « Ioana Em. Petrescu, *Configurații* », *Echinoc*, XIII, 1981, 10-11-12.

*linguistique générale*, éd. de 1969), G. Călinescu (*Œuvre de Mihai Eminescu*), Paolo Santarcangeli (*Livre des labyrinthes*), T.S. Eliot (*Essais*), L. Blaga (*Trilogie de la culture*), G. Călinescu (*Cours de poésie*), G. Bachelard (*Psychanalyse du feu, L'eau et les rêves, L'air et les songes, La terre et les rêveries du repos, La terre et les rêveries de la volonté*), J. Merleau-Ponty (*Cosmologie du XXe siècle*), N. Frye (*Anatomie de la critique*), G. Durand (*Structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire*), J. Kristeva (*La révolution du langage poétique*), L. Goldmann (*Pour une sociologie du roman, Sociologie de la littérature*), Marx et Engels (*Sur l'art et la littérature*, traduction roumaine de 1953). De ce grand nombre d'auteurs et études consultés, la plupart avaient été traduits en roumain, dans la période communiste et se trouvaient en accès libre dans les bibliothèques publiques. D'autre part... est-ce beaucoup de références théoriques pour 200 pages de texte, comme les critiques le lui reprochaient ? Qu'est-ce que c'est que « beaucoup » ? À voir...

Ceci dit, il faut aussi noter l'aisance avec laquelle Ioana Em. Petrescu met ensemble la bibliographie occidentale du sujet et les sources roumaines de l'entre-deux guerres (la philosophie de Lucian Blaga, la critique de George Călinescu), voire même avec les premières définitions roumaines du poétique, appartenant à Titu Maiorescu et au XIXe siècle...

Il nous semble évident, le long du livre, que Ioana Em. Petrescu ne part pas d'un manque de la théorie structuraliste (qu'elle ressentirait au moment d'utiliser celle-ci dans ses analyses), sinon d'une connaissance approfondie d'une bibliographie « d'avant le structuralisme », qui lui permet d'utiliser ce que la doctrine avait obnubilé dans son affirmation. Elle ne réagit pas à un moment dans l'histoire de la théorie – le moment dont elle était bel et bien contemporaine et qui serait celui de la fin du structuralisme – sinon elle se pose en dehors du structuralisme, tout court. Ce faisant, elle relie, avec un geste théorique dont le naturel et l'aisance font rêver, la bibliographie de l'entre-deux guerres avec les nouvelles positions, post-structurelles, qui venaient de paraître. La première lui est – pour des raisons que nous avons expliquées – bien familière. Ce qui réduit aussi, à ses yeux, l'effet de nouveauté de la dernière.

Effectivement, le volume des *Configurations* (écrit à la fin des années 70 et publié en 1981, donc – avant le séjour américain de l'auteure) proposait une lecture (implicitement polémique) des derniers grands structuralistes, en se retournant en revanche vers la *Gestalt*-théorie de l'entre-deux guerres, en cherchant à fonder une nouvelle vision du langage poétique, où l'on retrouve idées et sources inspiratrices provenant d'époques et courants de pensées assez divers. Dans la visée de Ioana Em. Petrescu, il est évident que la polémique avec le structuralisme (de Julia Kristeva, par exemple) ne constituait pas le centre de son excursus théorique. Ses lectures, la pratique des analyses de texte (l'expérience des séminaires de théorie littéraire qu'elle donnait), ses projets de livres portant sur la poésie de Nichita Stănescu, Ion Barbu ou T.S. Eliot, l'amènent à s'interroger sur la possibilité d'un niveau pré-linguistique de l'organisation du sens poétique. *D'une*

*forme qui ne serait pas encore dans la langue, mais qui serait assez forte pour déclencher le processus créatif.* Elle se retourne, pour argumenter cela, vers les théories de l'entre-deux guerre (ayant précédé le structuralisme, même en ayant fomenté dans les mêmes cercles): *Gestalt*-théorie, mythocritique, critique esthétique ou esthétique mathématique y sont invoquées. De fait, elle revisite des théories que l'ascension du structuralisme avait obnubilé ou exilé en marge de la doxa, pour rencontrer, en appui de ses propos, les positions post-structuralistes de son temps (Derrida, *De la Grammatologie* – lecture séminale pour Ioana Em. Petrescu, et ce bien avant que la mode Derrida ne frappe, à nos portes comme en Occident...). Mais sa recherche d'une (nouvelle) théorie est fondée sur le besoin d'affiner les outils de ses analyses (pour ce qui est des analyses sur Ion Barbu ou Nichita Stănescu – le lecteur peut voir ce que cela a donné dans ses livres ultérieurs), et non par le désir de participer à un dialogue sur la fin (ou sur les erreurs, ou sur les *misreadings*) du structuralisme. La mode occidentale du moment ne la touche pas. Tout comme elle savait ne pouvoir dialoguer avec personne, dans un (utopique) champ de la libre circulation des idées, et ce non seulement parce que tout contact direct avec les collègues d'ailleurs, occidentaux etc., lui était impossible, mais aussi à cause du manque d'intérêt que le milieu roumain manifestait envers ce genre d'étude (et de position théorisante).

Les impositions du contexte politique roumain (fermeture, interdictions etc.) n'expliquent que très peu de cette option monologique de l'auteure ; beaucoup plus (des explications) revient à la façon dont elle-même choisit de poser ses propos, ainsi qu'aux manières spécifiques du contexte professionnel roumain (manque d'intérêt pour les débats/ renouveaux théoriques, pour le style académique d'écriture ; machisme et provincialisme à rebours, aussi...).

Sans temps, ni lieu, la théorie de Ioana Em. Petrescu demeure étrangère au commerce idéologique du poststructuralisme (fut-il uniquement roumain). La critique postmoderne la relit peu ou pas du tout, son appartenance historique à une autre période (celle du communisme) la reléguant « en principe » aux territoires dont tous veulent s'éloigner au plus vite. Paradoxalement, son exil – si exil il y a – continue après la chute des murs politiques qui la tenaient, à ses yeux, prisonnière.

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WITHOUT TIME OR PLACE.  
 INNOVATING THEORY DURING THE COMMUNISM  
 (Abstract)

Starting from a volume of theoretical poetics published in Romania in 1981 (Ioana Em. Petrescu, *Conșturații* [Conștrurations], Cluj-Napoca: Dacia) that we are currently re-editing, we aim at considering the way in which a Romanian literary theorist could, at the time, innovate, discuss, and – eventually – find and articulate their personal and highly iconoclastic voice within a field which was *a priori* regarded as being remote or even prohibited. Given the present access to the personal library and manuscripts of the author in question, we hope to be able to recreate some reading patterns (of theoretical texts), as well as some ways of putting into practice new ideas. Ioana Em. Petrescu's volume offered a reading key to the least polemic of the great remaining structuralists, turning as an alternative to the *Gestalt* theory of the interwar period, in order to set up a new vision of the poetical language, where one can find ideas and inspirational sources from different ages and schools of thought. The close-readings (mainly of Romanian canonical and even school literary texts) also constitute a voluntary “poor” approach of literary theory. Is that a contextual solution of the ivory tower? An indifference to the whims of fashion and to Western patterns? A form of *extreme* freedom from the part of a theoretician?

*Keywords:* Ioana Em. Petrescu, intellectual history, reading practices, communism, *Gestalt theory*.

FĂRĂ TIMP ȘI LOC.  
INOVÂND ÎN TEORIA LITERARĂ ÎN VREMEA COMUNISMULUI  
(Rezumat)

Pornind de la un volum de poetică teoretică apărut în 1981 în România (Ioana Em. Petrescu, *Configurații*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia), a cărui reeditare o pregătim, ne propunem să reflectăm asupra modului în care un teoretician român al literaturii putea inova, pentru a intra în dialog ori pentru a se identifica și exprima de o manieră personală și puternic iconoclastă, într-un câmp care îi era, *a priori*, îndepărtat, dacă nu interzis. Fiindcă în prezent accesul la biblioteca personală și la manuscrisele Ioanei Em. Petrescu e deschis, sperăm să putem reconstitui practicile de lectură (a teoriei) care au făcut posibilă expresia în spațiul românesc a unor idei noi. Volumul Ioanei Em. Petrescu propunea o lectură cel puțin polemică a ultimilor mari structuraliști, întorcându-se spre teoria *gestaltistă*, pentru a fonda o nouă viziune a limbajului poetic, în care se regăsesc idei și surse inspiratoare situate în epoci și curente diverse. Microlecturile (în cea mai mare parte consacrate unor texte din autori români canonici, de manual chiar) constituie, la rândul lor, o abordare în mod voit „săracă” a teoriei. Să fi fost oare aceasta o soluție contextuală a turnului de fildeș? O indiferență impusă față de formulele la modă, față de modelele occidentale? O libertate *in extremis* a teoreticianului ?

*Cuvinte-cheie:* Ioana Em. Petrescu, istorie intelectuală, practici de lectură a teoriei, comunism, *gestaltism*.

ROBERT CINCU

## LOCALIZING POSTMODERNISM IN MĂNĂȘTUR<sup>1</sup>

The concept of postmodernism was discussed rather late in Romanian culture in comparison to other Western cultures (it is only at the beginning of the 80's that the first relevant articles on this subject are published in literary magazines). This paper focuses on determining and analyzing the evolution of theories concerning postmodernism in the limited cultural context of Cluj-Napoca, because we find here what can be called a privileged (or, in another sense, isolated) cultural space. Ironically, the Communist Party had allocated apartments for most university professors (considered simple laborers) into apartment-buildings in the working district of Mănăștur. Thus, when referring to Cluj-Napoca's professors of that time it is not wrong to refer almost exclusively to this district. Some names of literary critics or theorists that were (re)located here include: Ioana Em. Petrescu, Liviu Petrescu, Georgeta Antonescu, Liviu Cotrău, Mircea Muthu, Marian Papahagi and others.

My study will focus mainly on the works of Ioana Em. Petrescu and her husband Liviu Petrescu. The two have made a great contribution to Romanian literary theory concerning the concept of postmodernism, even though their role in this sector of Romanian culture is often neglected. For example, it is very rare in the case of Romanian theorists to associate or discuss in detail the connection between deconstruction/poststructuralism and postmodernism. For Ioana Em. Petrescu, however, deconstruction seems to be a key-concept in defining postmodernism, thus her theories are at least atypical in comparison to other works in this field. As for Liviu Petrescu, he is probably the author of the first Romanian book entirely dedicated to defining postmodernism. His book, however, is rarely quoted in later publications of other Romanian theorists.

Even though the two were husband and wife, their theoretical approaches are very different from one another and their works concerning postmodernism belong to two very different periods in Romanian culture (as I shall explain further on), yet they both prove to offer an atypical contribution to the field.

Since Ioana Em. Petrescu passed away in 1990, her work is entirely related to the Communist period of Romania, and to discuss Western concepts such as postmodernism or deconstruction in that time was not an easy task. Very few books on this subject were translated into Romanian and original editions were

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hard to find, since the Communist secret police severely controlled the circulation of Western theoretical books within the country. In 1980, for example, Adriana Babeți and Delia Șepețean-Vasilieu edited the so-called “Tel-Quel” anthology<sup>2</sup>, thus publishing a series of poststructuralist texts that introduce the Romanian public to key-concepts that will be essential in the later discussions concerning the topic of deconstruction. At that time though, such topics were rather rare.

Aside from a local Romanian tendency to stay in touch with the latest Western debates, Ioana Petrescu’s works concerning deconstruction could also be explained by geographical/biographical reasons. Thus, in 1981 she obtains a Fulbright scholarship to The University of California, in Los Angeles, and, for two years, will have access to books that were totally inaccessible in Romania. Apart from reading and taking notes, Ioana Em. Petrescu managed to bring back to Romania, upon her return to Cluj-Napoca, many of these books, carefully picked-out. Some of the titles include: *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Wayne C. Booth), *The Eye in the Text* (Mary Ann Caws), *The Pursuit of Signs – Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (Jonathan Culler), *Allegories of Reading* (Paul de Man), *Deconstruction and Criticism* (anthology Bloom, Derrida, de Man etc.), *Writing and Difference* (Derrida), *Theory of Criticism* (Murray Krieger), *Truth and Method* (Gadamer), *The Implied Reader* (Iser), *The Prison-house of Language* (Fredric Jameson), *Powers of Horror* (Julia Kristeva), *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-structuralist Criticism* (anthology), *The Yale Critics: Deconstruction in America* (anthology ed. by Wlad Godzich). As we can infer from this list, Ioana Em. Petrescu’s main interest as far as Western bibliography is concerned revolves around deconstruction or poststructuralism. It is known from her correspondence (published in 1998<sup>3</sup>) that while she was in America she planned to bring home (as she could only pack a limited number of books) those titles which were not available in Romania (neither translated nor available in their original format). Thus, by analyzing this list of books we can understand that the great theoretical gap in Romanian theory of that time was clearly related to such fields as postmodernism or deconstruction. The gap Ioana Petrescu tries to fill could not be solved only by bringing the books to Romania (or by sharing them with fellow professors and students, as was the custom in those days in the University), but also by contributing with her own articles on this matter in Romanian literary publications. Thus, one year after her return from America, in 1984, Ioana Em. Petrescu publishes an article called “Derrida’s Poststructuralist Philosophy and the Solutions of Contemporary Criticism” in (three consecutive numbers of) RITL

<sup>2</sup> Adriana Babeți, Delia Șepețean-Vasilieu (eds.), *Pentru o teorie a textului. Antologie „Tel-Quel” 1960-1971* [For a Theory of the Text. “Tel-Quel” Anthology 1960-1971], București, Univers, 1980.

<sup>3</sup> Ioana Em. Petrescu, *Molestarea fluturilor interzisă. Scrisori americane, 1981-1983* [The Molesting of Butterflies Forbidden. American Letters, 1981-1983]. Edited by Ioana Bot, București, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 1998.

(*Revista de Istorie și Teorie Literară*). The text consists of an austere presentation of Derrida's main concepts and ideas of the time, and acknowledges the relevance of the French philosophers' theories in the field of contemporary cultural studies.

One year later she will publish in *Cahiers roumains d'études littéraires* an even more analytical text concerning the works of Murray Krieger, trying to determine the (subtle) differences between contextualism and deconstructivist criticism: "Unlike deconstructivist criticism, contextualism admits its status of secondary art dependent on the primary art which is literature"<sup>4</sup>. It is pointless to say that many of the references from these articles and the following ones are from the books Ioana Em. Petrescu brought home from America, or from notes taken during her scholarship there.

As I've said before, an appetite for deconstruction was rather rare in Communist Romania, yet there were authors that (more or less) also approached the subject. A very interesting case, as far as this study is concerned, is that of Professor Liviu Cotrău (who, ironically, also lived in Mănăștur at that time). Cotrău published a first article în *Steaua*<sup>5</sup>, analyzing Derrida's view upon the linguistic sign. Cotrău is also present with another article concerning deconstruction (*Dis-placing and Re-placing the Center*), alongside Ioana Em. Petrescu in the same 1985 issue of *Cahiers roumains d'études littéraires*. It is not impossible that these contributions of Liviu Cotrău are also due to the books Ioana Em. Petrescu brought back from America, since the two were colleagues at the same University and had a common circle of friends.

One of the most interesting articles of Ioana Em. Petrescu's was published, however, much later, in 1988 (*Steaua*), entitled *Modernism/Postmodernism. A Hypothetical Model* (an English version of the article was also published posthumously in the literary journal *Euresis – cahiers roumains d'études littéraires*, 1995). The article has a very wide range of references, relating postmodernism to fields such as modernism, quantum physics or deconstruction. Also, we find here a few theoretical observations that provide a challenging view upon the relationship between modernism and postmodernism. If many theorists consider postmodernism as a part (a final stage) of modernism, Ioana Em. Petrescu sees it in an opposite manner. That is, modernism was only the first (naive) stage of postmodernism which was only beginning at that time to be fully recognized:

"I will therefore call *postmodernism* the cultural model which aims at a new form of synthesis by integrating the modernist crisis and even going beyond it in an effort to rehabilitate (on a dynamic basis) the individual as a category"<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Ioana Em. Petrescu, "Murray Krieger's «contextualism»", *Cahiers roumains d'études littéraires*, 1985, 2, p. 133.

<sup>5</sup> Liviu Cotrău, "Spațiul diferenței" ["The Space of Difference"], *Steaua*, XXXIV, 1983, 10, pp. 51-52.

<sup>6</sup> Ioana Em. Petrescu, "Modernism/ Postmodernism: A Hypothetical Model", *Euresis – Cahiers roumains d'études littéraires*, 1995, 1-2, pp. 23-24.

Later in the article, Petrescu quotes Lyotard on a similar idea: “a work of art can become modern only if it is first postmodern”<sup>7</sup>.

Even though the article was published rather late, after the Romanian cultural context was a bit more accommodated with the concept of postmodernism, it still managed to provide an atypical approach on the subject (because of both its references to deconstruction and quantum physics). For example, in 1986 the journal *Caiete critice* publishes a special issue dedicated entirely to theorizing postmodernism<sup>8</sup>. Many Romanian critics and theorists from that time had contributed to this issue with diverse ideas and references related to the concept, thus providing a first major picture of Romanian literary theory on postmodernism and also encouraging future debates on this topic. Yet few of the articles mention, for example, Derrida or deconstruction. So, even two years after the publication of this number and several other studies related to the topic, Ioana Em. Petrescu’s *hypothetical model* for postmodernism still manages to be “singular”, providing a different type of approach.

Her works regarding postmodernism were published selectively in magazines throughout a period of ten years. Posthumously, these texts were gathered together in a collective book dedicated to Ioana Em. Petrescu<sup>9</sup>. Also, some of the ideas present in these articles were part of a major project that Ioana Em. Petrescu was working on at that time, a study that situates Ion Barbu’s poetry within the range of postmodernism. This study was also published posthumously.

In today’s Romanian cultural context, Ioana Em. Petrescu is considered mainly as one of the most important analysts of the works of the “national poet” Mihai Eminescu. Her studies on Eminescu are highly quoted and have opened this field of study to a much broader understanding. However, as a theorist of postmodernism, her contribution is often neglected, this also due to the difficult editorial history (many articles published posthumously, books published initially in a small number of copies, available mainly in Cluj-Napoca, books republished in better editions, but at a late time when theorizing postmodernism was less relevant). There has been, however, some critical response to her theories, especially from critics from Cluj-Napoca. I am referring mainly to a book written by Elena Voj, dedicated entirely to these postmodern studies of Ioana Em Petrescu<sup>10</sup>, and to Mihaela Ursa’s book on Romanian postmodernism published in 1999<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 24.

<sup>8</sup> *Caiete critice*, 1986, 1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Diana Adamek, Ioana Bot (eds.), *Portret de grup cu Ioana Em. Petrescu [Group Portrait with Ioana Em. Petrescu]*, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1991.

<sup>10</sup> Elena Voj, *Contribuția Ioanei Em. Petrescu la studiul postmodernismului în teoria literară [Ioana Em. Petrescu’s Contribution to the Study of Postmodernism in Literary Theory]*, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Mihaela Ursa, *Optzecismul și promisiunile postmodernismului [The 80’s and the Promises of Postmodernism]*, Pitești, Paralela 45, 1999.

Unlike his wife, Liviu Petrescu was not preoccupied with postmodernism in the Communist Period of Romania. Since the 70's he was regarded as a leading, yet atypical, critic of the modern novel, which was his main interest. Some of his books, for example, include *Realitate și romanesc* (*Reality and Novelty*, 1969), *Dostoievski* (1971), *Romanul condiției umane* (*The Novel of the Human Condition*, 1979), *Vârstele romanului* (*The Ages of the Novel*, 1992). His approach, however, on the subject was not a common one among Romanian critics who were divided by an impressionistic view upon literature, in contrast with the social(ist) view<sup>12</sup>. Petrescu was somehow neutral, as he favored what can be called existentialist criticism<sup>13</sup>.

It is these two topics (the art of the novel and existentialism) that were the starting point to Petrescu's theoretical shift towards postmodernism. In his book *The Ages of the Novel* (1992), the critic distinguishes between three types of modernism: a first stage focused on a scientific contamination of the arts (in general), a second stage where the individual (or subjectivity) is the main focus-point in art and, finally, a post-modern stage. After re-writing this book, focusing mainly on the importance of the last post-modern stage, Petrescu publishes, in 1996, *Poetica postmodernismului* (*The Poetics of Postmodernism*). As far as Romanian culture is concerned, this is, probably, the first book entirely dedicated to defining the concept of postmodernism. However, many critics have ignored this text in the years to follow, even in cases where such an omission can be seen as hostile. The most interesting case here is that of Mircea Cărtărescu's book *Postmodernismul românesc* (*Romanian Postmodernism*, 1999). Cărtărescu does not directly quote or even mention Liviu Petrescu's book, even though the two share, in many cases, very similar ideas. For the author of *Romanian Postmodernism* it would seem that Petrescu's book did not even exist, or, at least, Cărtărescu did not want to take it into consideration. However, at a certain point, Cărtărescu gives the following quotation from the Moldavian poet Alexandru Vakulovski:

...it was like this it's snowing outside with dilated pupils new year's ball at the Science Academy but Grigore Vieru has chosen kindergarten I am reading *The poetics of postmodernism* Liviu Petrescu my girlfriend wants to know how much [...]<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Oana Fotache, *Divanul criticii. Discursuri asupra metodei în critica românească postbelică* [*The Critics' Gathering. Discourses on Method in Post-war Romanian Criticism*], București, Editura Universității din București, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Alex Goldiș, *Critica în tranșee. De la realismul socialist la autonomia esteticului* [*Criticism in the Trench. From Social Realism to Aesthetic Autonomy*], București, Cartea Românească, 2011, pp. 269-274.

<sup>14</sup> Mircea Cărtărescu, *Postmodernismul românesc* [*Romanian Postmodernism*], București, Humanitas, 1999, p. 474.

It is rather unusual that the only place in Cărtărescu's book where Liviu Petrescu is mentioned is in a quoted poem. Such a reference can seem hostile, especially when we are dealing with two theoretical books focused on the same topic (that of postmodernism), both published in a time when the concept of postmodernism was not entirely clarified by Romanian literary studies.

It is possible that *The poetics of postmodernism* was ignored by later theoretical texts because of the fact that Liviu Petrescu, as I've said, was not preoccupied mainly with this subject. Thus, this atypical book in Petrescu's bibliography, published quite early in Romanian culture and very late for the standards of European culture, is seen today mainly as a local attempt to understand a complex term such as postmodernism. Also, another reason for which Liviu Petrescu's book did not become a main reference in Romanian culture is the fact that his approach is similar to earlier theories that were published in articles, or later theories published in books. To be more exact, authors such as Fredric Jameson, Gianni Vattimo, J.F. Lyotard and others are of great interest to all Romanian theorists, thus, Petrescu's book might be the first of its kind in Romanian culture, but similar theories have been developed by most theorists in this branch. So, the atypical approach that defines Liviu Petrescu's criticism remains, in fact, his existentialist perspective, and this perspective is not very explored in *The poetics of postmodernism*. Surprisingly, it is the articles of Ioana Em. Petrescu that seem to give a broad and innovative approach to postmodernism, even though they were written during the Communist period.

It is without a doubt that living in Communist Romania influences the way in which a critic or theorist can work, his/ her possibilities being limited by explicit political (dictatorial) laws. However, writers have proven many times their ability to find gaps in the system, thus allowing them to continue with their work according to higher standards. This seems to have been the case of Ioana and Liviu Petrescu also, as they managed to develop new paths in literary criticism and theory (before and after Ioana Em. Petrescu's scholarship to the States) in the very limited political and cultural context of Romania. It is difficult to determine in which ways did the city of Cluj-Napoca (or, to be more specific, Mănăştur district) influence the works of Ioana and Liviu Petrescu, yet it seems more reasonable to determine the cultural context of Cluj, starting from their works. Thus, we are dealing with a cultural milieu that managed to stay in touch with Western cultural standards by originally exploring a few gaps in the system (the existentialist, deconstructivist, postmodernist ones, to be more precise). In other words, the two theorists seem to have made the best of both worlds, taking advantage of their trip to America and bringing back a few theoretical instruments that allowed them to remodel some of the rigid and local understandings of postmodern concepts.

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## LOCALIZING POSTMODERNISM IN MĂNĂȘTUR

## (Abstract)

The concept of postmodernism was discussed rather late in Romanian culture in comparison to other Western cultures (it is only at the beginning of the 80’s that the first relevant articles on this subject are published in literary magazines). This paper focuses on determining and analyzing the evolution of theories concerning postmodernism in the limited cultural context of Cluj-Napoca, because we find here what can be called a privileged cultural space. Ironically, the Communist Party had allocated throughout the years apartments for most university professors (considered simple laborers) into apartment-buildings in the working district of Mănăștur. Thus, when referring to Cluj-Napoca’s professors from that time it is not wrong to refer almost exclusively to the district of Mănăștur. I will analyze articles from literary magazines, Liviu Petrescu’s *The Poetics of Postmodernism* (probably, the first book dedicated entirely to the concept of postmodernism in Romania), along with several works by Ioana Em. Petrescu (one of the few Romanian theorists who discusses deconstruction in relation to postmodernism). In my analysis I will focus on the relationship between the articles or books and the context in which they were written, thus proving that biographical, political, or even geographical aspects determine key points of these theoretical texts.

*Keywords:* postmodernism, Mănăștur, Cluj-Napoca, Ioana Em. Petrescu, Liviu Petrescu.

## LOCALIZÂND POSTMODERNISMUL ÎN MĂNĂȘTUR

*(Rezumat)*

Conceptul de postmodernism a fost discutat relativ târziu în cultura română, abia la începutul anilor '80 apărând primele articole relevante. În lucrarea de față voi încerca să determin specificitatea teoriilor despre postmodernism în contextul cultural restrâns al orașului Cluj-Napoca pentru că găsim aici ceea ce poate fi numit un spațiu cultural privilegiat sau, cel puțin, atipic. Un detaliu interesant din acest punct de vedere este faptul că, în perioada comunistă, Partidul aloca apartamente profesorilor universitari clujeni în cartierul muncitoresc Mănăștur, astfel geografia teoriilor clujene despre postmodernism poate fi limitată, în mare parte, la spațiul acestui cartier. Voi analiza articole din mai multe reviste literare românești, volumul *Poetica postmodernismului* de Liviu Petrescu (probabil prima carte dedicată integral teoretizării conceptului de postmodernism în cultura română), mai multe lucrări ale Ioanei Em. Petrescu (unul dintre puținii teoreticieni români care discută postmodernismul plecând de la filosofia deconstructivistă). Voi insista asupra relației dintre textele teoretice și contextul în care aceste texte au fost publicate, urmând să subliniez modul în care detalii biografice, politice și, inclusiv, geografice pot avea un rol esențial în dezvoltarea teoriilor.

*Cuvinte-cheie:* postmodernism, Mănăștur, Cluj-Napoca, Ioana Em. Petrescu, Liviu Petrescu.

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*<sup>1</sup>; 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 approach<sup>2</sup>, going through Vasile Băncilă’s concept of “personance”<sup>3</sup> and Constantin Rădulescu-Motru’s “energetic personalism”<sup>4</sup>, to C. Ciopraga’s view<sup>5</sup> 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”<sup>6</sup> and Henry James’s influential theory on “the House of Fiction”<sup>7</sup>, 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

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

<sup>2</sup> 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.

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

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

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

<sup>6</sup> Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, *The Depersonalized History*, p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> 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*<sup>8</sup>, 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 Romanticism<sup>9</sup>, on the other, he offers a close reading of the post-Romantic European novel<sup>10</sup>. Edward W. Said himself zooms in the 19<sup>th</sup>-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 models<sup>11</sup>. Filtering Said's theories from *Orientalism*<sup>12</sup> 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"<sup>13</sup> from *The Trilogy of Culture*.

Indeed, *Jurnalul Vestului Sălbatic* (*The Diary of Wild West*) lays ground for "a project of cultural communication"<sup>14</sup>, formulated later, in the opening studies of *Reprezentări critice* (*Critical Representations*)<sup>15</sup> 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/

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

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

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

<sup>12</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, London, Penguin, 2003.

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

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

<sup>15</sup> 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”<sup>16</sup>, the cultural “hybridization” and “marginality”<sup>17</sup>, the imaginary of “borders”<sup>18</sup> 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 memory<sup>19</sup>. 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 favorites<sup>20</sup>. Additionally, his own vision of contemporary Romanian literature claims the writer’s need for academic standards and intellectual practices<sup>21</sup>.

In one of his texts, Harold Bloom explains how the formal patterns of romance stories are “internalized” by the entire Romantic literature<sup>22</sup>; nevertheless, an

<sup>16</sup> 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.

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

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

<sup>19</sup> Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, *The Diary*, pp. 108-118.

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

<sup>21</sup> Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, *Critical Representations*, pp. 15-30.

<sup>22</sup> 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*<sup>23</sup> 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”<sup>24</sup>. 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 humanities<sup>25</sup>. 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” consistence<sup>26</sup>. 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

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

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

<sup>25</sup> Edward W. Said, *Traveling Theories*, p. 228.

<sup>26</sup> 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 estetică<sup>27</sup>.

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

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<sup>27</sup> 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 română<sup>28</sup>.

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 literature<sup>29</sup>.

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 marginality<sup>30</sup>, 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 Maiorescu<sup>31</sup> and amplified into a cultural feature by G. Ibrăileanu<sup>32</sup>, "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"

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<sup>28</sup> *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).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 23.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 33.

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

<sup>32</sup> 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"<sup>33</sup> 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 obsolet<sup>34</sup>.

It is not at all incidental that the author of *The Present Discontinuous* mentions frequently mnemonics and casual inserts of memories into the present<sup>35</sup>.

*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 journalism<sup>36</sup>. 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 feeling<sup>37</sup>.

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

<sup>33</sup> Edward W. Said, *Traveling Theories*, p. 242.

<sup>34</sup> 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).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 37, 109, 159, 196, 237-240, 275.

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

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

technologies<sup>38</sup>. 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-Căcache”, “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 identification<sup>39</sup>. Not only new global technologies – from the most ordinary screwdriver to the iPad, iPhone and tablet<sup>40</sup>, but also the autochthonous realities – from dishes to illnesses<sup>41</sup> 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”<sup>42</sup>.

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

<sup>38</sup> Codrin-Liviu Cuțitaru, *The Present...*, pp. 105, 167-170.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 179-182.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 89, 135-139.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 225-228, 233-237.

<sup>42</sup> *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.

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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.

DOCUMENT

## SCRISORILE AMERICANE ALE LUI LIVIU PETRESCU (NOIEMBRIE 1981-FEBRUARIE 1982)

Prefațate de IOANA BOT și editate de ANDRA JUHASZ

În 1981, Ioana Em. Petrescu (pe atunci, lector universitar la Facultatea de Filologie a Universității „Babeș-Bolyai”) câștigase o bursă Fulbright care îi permitea să plece – mai întâi, pentru un an universitar, apoi, reînnoindu-se, pentru încă unul – la Universitatea Californiană din Los Angeles (UCLA). Statul român, cu o expresie pe atunci foarte familiară, „o lasă să plece”, ba chiar să își ducă și soțul cu ea, pe toată durata bursei. Liviu Petrescu era, și el, lector la Filologia clujeană. Același stat comunist impunea, însă, discrete și diabolice popriri pe bursele străine ale cetățenilor săi, din care fericirii călători în lumea liberă trebuiau să dea „patriei” sume suficient de importante pentru a le amărî existența și a-i face pe soții Petrescu, de pildă, să calculeze draconic fiecare centimă cheltuită (un subiect care ocupă mult din spațiul tuturor scrisorilor lor). Pe toată durata șederii lor americane, cei doi scriu acasă cu regularitate – familiei, părinților, prietenelor (Ioanei). Așa se face că dispunem de un fel de „jurnal epistolar” al anilor lor losangezezi, semnificativ pentru ceea ce însemna, în epoca respectivă, ieșirea unui tânăr intelectual într-o universitate occidentală, accesul liber la informațiile de specialitate și, în general, viața într-o lume radical diferită de cea a comunismului ceaușist, cu tot ce implica, existențial, intelectual etc., o asemenea diferență.

În septembrie 1990, Ioana Em. Petrescu se decisese să își rescrie experiența americană, pornind de la scrisorile trimise de ea mamei și prietenelor sale. A murit pe neașteptate, la 1 octombrie 1990, fără să fi scris decât câteva pagini. Am editat colecția aceea de scrisori sub titlul (ales de ea pentru cartea niciodată scrisă) *Molestarea fluturilor interzisă* (București, Ed. Didactică și Pedagogică, 1998). După decesul profesorului Liviu Petrescu (în 1999), arhiva și biblioteca familiei, intrate, în lipsa unor moștenitori legali, în posesia statului român, se află în custodia Bibliotecii Județene „O. Goga” din Cluj, la secțiunea de „colecții speciale”, unde sunt studiate și editate de masteranzi și doctoranzi aflați sub coordonarea subsemnatei. Rezultatele editoriale sunt, deja, vizibile (volume semnate de Silviu Mihăilă, Elena Voj, Mirela Tomoiagă, ediții restitutive, studii publicate în reviste de specialitate, teze de doctorat etc.). Între documentele descoperite de noi în arhivă se află și scrisorile trimise, de la Los Angeles, de către Liviu Petrescu (uneori, ele sunt scrise de amândoi) părinților săi, Mărioara și

Gheorghe Petrescu, care au fost întotdeauna principalul sprijin al carierelor fiului și nurorii lor. Editate de Andra Juhasz, masterandă a programului nostru de Studii Literare Românești, ele vor întregi viitoarea ediție – în curs de pregătire – a „scrisorilor americane” ale lui Liviu și ale Ioanei Petrescu (care va include și textele restituite în ediția din 1998).

Cele reproduse aici fac parte din acest ciclu, scris în principal de Liviu Petrescu și destinat celor mai apropiați membri ai familiei lor, și totodată celor care – din familie – înțelegeau cel mai bine foamea intelectuală, aspirațiile și necazurile acestui cuplu de excepție pentru istoria ideilor literare românești, pe care îl formau Ioana și Liviu Petrescu. Se pot citi într-însele, în primul rând, problemele cotidiene ale unei șederi într-o lume fundamental diferită de cea de acasă (o ședere colorată de restricții impuse de sistem, clădită pe mari decizii existențiale, exprimate cel mai adesea foarte ambiguu, din cauza presupusei violări a unei asemenea corespondențe de către Securitate...). Dar, dincolo de această cronică intimă, foarte animată și colorată, tema secundară care străbate chiar și scrisorile celor doi către părinți este una ce privește reacțiile intelectualului român la contactul cu noul său mediu. Universitatea Californiană din Los Angeles, bibliotecile, librăriile, colegii profesori și studenții, cărțile, revistele, ziarele, toate acestea formează subiectele unor descoperiri făcute, mereu, sub semnul curiozității intelectuale, dar și al urgenței și incertitudinii: românii nu știu decât foarte târziu dacă vor mai avea și un al doilea an de bursă, nu îndrăznesc să discute cu părinții despre posibilitatea de a nu se mai întoarce în România, nu sunt siguri că vor mai avea parte vreodată de o asemenea experiență intelectuală (în ce-i privește, o precedaseră, pentru fiecare, doar scurte ieșiri la cursuri de vară în străinătate – la Oslo și la Oxford pentru Liviu Petrescu, la Debrecen pentru Ioana). Transpare, în scrisori, o foame foarte concretă de cunoaștere a noutăților din domeniile lor de interes (ea contrapunctează, altminteri, numai în aparență întâmplător, poveștile lor culinare, mai abundente dar scrise în aceeași cheie...), o dorință de dialog (nu întotdeauna împărtășită de gazde), un interes aparte pentru tot ceea ce înseamnă „libertatea intelectuală” a Americii anilor '80. Aceste trăsături, ținând tema secundară a scrisorilor, realizează în contrarelieful a ceea ce spun, prin ceea ce lasă să se înțeleagă sau trec sub tăcere, chiar, un portret foarte adevărat al universitarului român din ultimele decenii comuniste. Restituirea lor editorială contribuie la înțelegerea și reconstituirea cât mai exactă a unei epoci și a unei lumi care sunt fundamentale pentru istoria ideilor românești.

Ioana Bot

f. 2, d. 36  
[25. 11. 81]

Dragă măicuță și tăicuțule,

Mai întâi și mai întâi să vă îmbrățișez și să vă sărut cât pot de tare pe amândoi; n-au trecut decât două săptămâni de când ne-am despărțit, dar mie mi se pare că s-au scurs luni întregi. Să vă povestesc mai întâi peripețiile noastre; la București am dus-o tot într-o alergătură. Din fericire, Cicuța – ca și Lulu – ne-au tratat cu o dragoste adevărată, ne-au ajutat atât cât le-a stat în puteri, încât ne-am simțit la ei ca la niște rude adevărate. Chiar ne-am reproșat că până acum am fost întrucâtva distanți și expeditivi față de ei; am greșit și ne-am hotărât ca, pe viitor, să le arătăm mult mai multă răbdare decât pînă acum. A urmat drumul, călătoria cu avionul, o încercare de care, ca să vă spun drept, m-am cam temut, nu atât pentru mine, cât pentru Ioana; de la București la New York am făcut 11 ore bătute pe muchie, am plecat de acasă la ora 9 și am ajuns în New York la ora 15 ora locală (la noi era aproape 9 seara). Am petrecut pe aeroport cam 4 ore, stînd de vorbă cu prietenii noștri Mircea Borcilă și Ica Borcilă, bînd un pahar de coca-cola și îngrozindu-ne de prețurile foarte ridicate. La 19 și ceva (de acum înainte voi da numai ora locală), ne-am suit într-un alt avion și, după încă o oră și jumătate de zbor, aterizam în capitală, la Washington. Se făcuse ora 20 și noi ne aflam, va să zică, de 17 ore pe drum (acasă, voi dormeați; erați la ora 2 noaptea din ziua următoare). Am fost așteptați la aeroport și duși la un hotel, unde ne-am prăbușit în pat, trăzniți de somn. Am petrecut în capitală două zile (joi și vineri) destul de obositoare, cu drumuri pe jos – și drumuri destul de lungi – înviorați oarecum doar de priveliștile orașului (am văzut Casa Albă. Monumentele înălțate în memoria lui G. Washington și Th. Jefferson; am trecut și prin zona cea mai veche și cea mai frumoasă, a orașului, Georgetown). Oricât vi s-ar părea de ciudat (și nouă ni s-a părut) Washingtonul este un oraș extraordinar de luminos și de liniștit, cu multă verdeață, cu oameni binevoitori și politicoși, plin de cântece... de păsări și (noaptea) de... țârâit de greieri. Când pășești pe caldarâmul Washingtonului, nu-ți vine să crezi că te afli în centrul unei lumi atât de agitate și de dinamice cum este – în reprezentările noastre – America. Când am părăsit Washingtonul (vineri seara), am ieșit parcă dintr-un loc ireal, dintr-o cetate utopică. Am plecat cu avionul, se înțelege, dar asta nu înseamnă că am avut un drum foarte scurt; până la Los Angeles am făcut încă vreo 6 ore de zbor, lăsând în urmă încă trei fuse orare, astfel încât acum ne despart de voi aproximativ 9-10 ore; când aici e ora 12 noaptea, la voi s-a făcut deja ora 10 dimineața, de a doua zi. Și aici am fost așteptați la aeroport și conduși la hotel; când am ajuns în camera ce ne fusese rezervată, se făcuse 1 noaptea. Ioana era desfigurată de oboseală, eu așijderea, cred că nu am mai trecut niciodată, până acum, printr-o asemenea încercare chinuitoare. Răgaz să

ne odihnim, după aproape o săptămână petrecută aproape în întregime pe drumuri, nu am prea avut; de a doua zi (sâmbătă) a început alergătura din nou; contacte, vizite de prezentare, explorarea împrejurimilor, cumpărături strict necesare. Sâmbătă noaptea, am încercat să vorbim cu voi la telefon, de la hotel; ghinion, de două ori ne-a răspuns un alt abonat. În disperare de cauză, Ioana a sunat atunci la Elvira și – culmea culmilor – de data asta a primit legătura. Nu vă pot spune însă cât de trist am fost, mai încolo, gândindu-mă ce trebuie să simțiți voi, știind că m-ați fi putut auzi și că m-ați fi putut avea atât de aproape de voi pentru câteva minute. De duminică, am pornit în căutarea unei locuințe; închipuiți-vă, am pescuit anunțuri de la mica publicitate și am început să colindăm din casă în casă, în căutarea unui loc potrivit și... a unui preț potrivit (chiriile sunt aici aiuritor de scumpe!). Dificultatea era că nu aveam mașină pentru a putea colinda pe la toate adresele (Los Angelesul se întinde pe o suprafață comparabilă cu aria Cluj-Oradea); noroc că am întâlnit oameni prietenoși și serviabili! Un coleg de la catedră, de aici, ne-a purtat peste tot, cu mașina lui, intrând din casă în casă, zile la rând; și miracolul s-a produs, mult mai devreme decât ne așteptam și noi și toți ceilalți. După o săptămână de cercetări (în sâmbăta următoare, deci) ne-am mutat în apartamentul nostru (să vă dau din nou adresa: 1742 Federal Avenue, #3, Los Angeles, California, CA 90025, SUA; semnul # indică apartamentul). Să vă descriu casa: avem un dormitor (cu un pat dublu, o noptieră cu veioză, o comodă, o garderobă în perete; o cameră extrem de luminoasă); apoi o cameră de zi (cu o sofa, o masă pentru cafele, alte două măsuțe – de o parte și de alta a canapelei – cu câte o lampă mare, două fotolii și o măsuță pentru televizor); apoi o bucătărie (cu sobă, frigider, un imens dulap de bucătărie, o masă pentru cină și patru scaune); precum și o baie (cu cadă, duș, chiuvetă etc.). Necazul era că, în afară de mobilă, nu aveam în casă nimic din lucrurile trebuincioase: nici așternuturi de pat, nici pătură, nici cuiere de haine, nici fier de călcat, nici farfurii, nici tacâmuri, nici pahare, nici cratițe de gătit, nici măcar o scobitoare! Ar fi trebuit să ni le cumpărăm pe toate – dar asta ar fi însemnat ruina noastră absolută! Acum – ca să vedeți peste ce fel de oameni am dat: una dintre cunoștințele noastre recente de la UCLA (= Universitatea din Los Angeles) ne-a dat în împrumut întreagă puzderia asta de lucruri, fără să ne ceară în schimb nici un ban! Incredibilă generozitate și colegialitate față de – în fond – niște străini! Și câte sfaturi vitale nu ne-au dat (de unde să facem cumpărăturile cele mai ieftine, cum să procedăm în anumite situații cu totul noi pentru bieții de noi etc.), și cât s-au mai ostenit când ne-am mutat lucrurile! Nu știu cum am putea vreodată să ne revanșăm față de ei! Cel mai neînsemnat contra-serviciu pe care li l-am putea face ar fi să vă rugăm pe voi (tot pe voi!!!) să vă interesați din când în când de soarta și de viața băiatului lor, care este student în ultimul an la Medicină, la Cluj! Se numește John Sunderson (se pronunță Gion Sandersan) și locuiește la căminul 6 (în complexul Hașdeu), camera 307. I-ar veni, oare, foarte greu lui tata să urce într-o seară până acolo, să-l caute, să-i spună că sunteți părinții noștri (că noi ne aflăm acum la Los Angeles și că i-am

cunoscut pe părinții lui, care ne-au primit cu multă dragoste), să-l întrebați dacă nu are nevoie de ceva (nu de bani, firește, din ăștia are îndeajuns), dacă poate fi ajutat cu ceva (îi puteți lăsa numărul vostru de telefon)? Mai încolo, de vreo sărbătoare mare (de Crăciun, sau de Anul Nou sau de Paști – deși e evreu, el respectă sărbătorile astea), îl puteți chema la masă la voi; nu încercați însă să îl acaparați; el își are prietenii și cunoștințele lui, nu stăruieți decât în măsura în care ați vedea că e cu adevărat singur și fără nici un program. Lucrul cel mai important este, totuși, să știe că există cineva care se gândește cu prietenie părintească la el! Și apoi – el vă poate povesti pe săturate despre Los Angeles, unde ne aflăm noi acum, despre locuri, despre climă, despre felul de trai de aici, despre toate câte aveți nevoie pentru a vă putea reprezenta cât mai limpede și mai exact decorul nostru cel de doi ani de zile!

Și acum, să merg mai departe: sâmbătă ne-am mutat, iar luni la prânz aveam deja instalat telefonul nostru! De-abia am așteptat să se facă noapte, ca să vă putem telefona (1. fiindcă numai noaptea vă putem prinde pe voi dimineața. Noi am telefonat la miezul nopții când la voi era, probabil, ora zece dimineața; 2. noaptea, tariful convorbirilor internaționale este mai redus). O să vă dau numărul nostru de telefon (dar să nu cumva să încercați să ne chemați voi, decât, Doamne ferește!, în caz de forță majoră!): (213) 473-0411. Unde (213) este prefixul pentru Los Angeles. Să nu ne chemați voi, pentru că: 1. o convorbire de 3 minute v-ar costa aproximativ 300 de lei; 2 nu puteți telefona de acasă, ci numai de la telefoane, unde ați putea sta în așteptare chiar și 12 ore; 3 pentru că nu puteți ști dacă ne prindeți într-un moment potrivit (când să fim acasă, iar nu la program la Universitate). Deci: numai în cazuri de forță majoră!

Ne-a întristat vestea morții lui tata mare! Să se odihnească în pace! Întristați am fost și pentru clipele de zbucium și agitație prin care veți fi trecut voi. Grija noastră cea mare este să primiți odată banii ăia de pe cartea Ioanei, să vă știm, în felul ăsta, puși la adăpost de nevoi. Dacă vă veți afla cumva în dificultate (materială), apălați de îndată și fără nici o reținere la Gicu Ionescu sau la doctorul Stancu; le vom face și noi serviciu, așa că nu trebuie să simțiți nici un fel de jenă! Să sperăm însă că totul va decurge bine și că nu va fi nevoie de o astfel de inițiativă! Doamne, că departe mai suntem de voi!

Dragii noștri, în privința noastră nu aveți ce griji să vă mai faceți; ce a fost mai greu și mai complicat a trecut! Suntem amândoi sănătoși, odihniți (în sfârșit!), avem chef de lucru și ne vom putea consacra, de acum înainte, fiecare clipă pentru studiu! Un singur gând ne strânge inima: să nu vă fie vouă greu și să puteți îndura cât mai ușor despărțirea asta, pe care am scurta-o cât s-ar putea. Să fiți sănătoși și împăcați și încrezători în bine! Noi o să încercăm să vorbim cu voi cel puțin o dată pe lună! Să ne fie tuturor numai bine!

Vă salută cu drag,  
Ioana și Liviu.

P.S. Pe John Sunderson, vă poate ajuta să-l găsiți dl. Mircea Țoca – un bun prieten de-al nostru, conferențiar la Universitate și, oarecum, vecin de-al nostru (locuiește în Mănăstur, îi puteți lua numărul de telefon din cartea de telefon). Mircea Țoca a fost, înaintea noastră, lector de limba română la Universitatea din Los Angeles! El îl știe pe John Sunderson, ca și pe părinții acestuia! Oricum, dacă vorbiți cu Mircea Țoca la telefon, transmiteți-i îmbrățișările noastre; spuneți-i că, datorită lui, cele dintâi momente ale șederii noastre aici au fost cu mult mai ușoare decât ne-am temut. Și că toți prietenii lui din Los Angeles ne-au rugat să-i transmitem cele mai călduroase salutări.

Vă sărută, din nou,  
Liviu.

Dragii noștri dragi și depărtați,

Cu 2 săptămâni în urmă, cam pe vremea asta, aterizam la Washington. Doamne, câte au trecut de atunci! Marele triumf e că avem casă (asta e tare greu de găsit), că am stabilit cele mai importante contacte la Universitate și că am început să ne descurcăm (în primele 10 zile n-am găsit nici măcar poșta – nici nu era ușor – ca să putem lua timbre p[en]t[ru] Europa). Nu trebuie să fiți îngrijorați pentru noi: după șocul primelor zile (cea mai chinuitoare a fost diferența de fus orar care ne împiedica să dormim noaptea și ne tâmpea de oboseală peste zi), ne-am adaptat perfect. Ne-a ajutat mult extrema amabilitate și bunăvoință cu care ne-au tratat colegii americani. Sper că o să ne simțim bine aici și că vom veni acasă cu un imens câștig intelectual – și sufletesc. E important că am fost obligați să ieșim din rezervele și sălbăticia felului nostru călugăresc de viață, să ne descurcăm pe piele proprie într-un loc în care totul, începând cu butonul aragazului și dopul chiuveței și terminând cu topografia unui oraș nesfârșit de mare sau cu obiceiurile cele de fiecare zi, într-un cuvânt absolut totul, este altfel. Ex: la prima friptură pe care am creat-o în noul ns. apartament, într-o cratiță de tip necunoscut, pe un cuptor nemaixperimentat, a-nceput să iasă un nor de fum care s-a isprăvit cu declanșarea automată a soneriei de alarmă contra fumului. În timp ce drăcia țiuia, eu, cu tigaia în mână în mijlocul living-bucătăriei, roteam ochi sperați spre Liviu, care nici el nu-nțelegea ce țiuie în halul ăsta la nenorocita de găină pârlită: curs practic de învățare pe viu a misterelor Lumii Noi.

Tare ne e dor de casă, de dumneavoastră, de toți ai mei, de Sasi săracu'. Ce i-ar mai plăcea lui aici, să se zbenguie prin palmieri și eucalipti! Știți cine ne-a conversat azi în poziție de sluj, în parcul Universității? O veveriță teribil de sociabilă și deloc inhibată de engleza noastră (impecabilă)!

Vă sărutăm de tare multe ori,  
Ioana.

f. 6, d. 36  
[30. 11. 81]

Dragă măicuță și tăicuțule,

Au trecut deja, iată, trei săptămâni și mai bine de când am pășit pe pământul Americii; am început să ne familiarizăm cu mulțimea de lucruri atât de noi și de neobișnuite, pentru care, aproape la fiecare pas, trebuia să punem câte o întrebare. Nu spun că am izbutit deja să le descurcăm pe toate, să știm rosturile fiecărui lucru și să cunoaștem toate obiceiurile; e un fel de a învăța din nou să mergem, dar ca într-un fel de stare de imponderabilitate, în care vechile deprinderi nu mai slujesc chiar la nimic. Este, trebuie să recunosc, îndeajuns de obositor, trebuie să fii neconținut foarte atent și foarte concentrat, pentru a înțelege repede și pentru a reuși să fii eficient; nu ai nici o clipă de răgaz, nu te poți nicidecum odihni, lăsându-te pe seama automatismelor. Ei, dar, nimic de zis, progrese am făcut, și încă foarte mari; cred că într-o lună sau două, cel mult, cantitatea de noutate cu care am fost bombardat până acum va scădea considerabil. Norocul nostru a fost și este că am întâlnit până acum foarte mulți oameni săritori și serviabili, care ne-au ajutat – cu multă înțelegere și colegialitate – să depășim momentele cele mai grele. Gândurile noastre încep deja să se îndrepte, cu mai multă libertate, către chestiunile majore: biblioteca (una dintre cele mai mari biblioteci universitare ale Americii), studiul, munca la universitate. Colegii de catedră ai Ioanei nu sunt niște savanți foarte mari (așa cum am sperat); chiar profesorii sunt în general oameni destul de tineri, cu puțin, poate, mai vârstnici decât noi. Dar meseria și-o cunosc și și-o fac foarte bine, iar – lucru deosebit de important – relațiile cu ei sunt dintre cele mai agreabile și mai amicale.

Orașul – mie mi se pare frumos și odihnitor, Ioanei îi place mai puțin; în cartierul unde locuim noi, nu vezi decât vile – foarte scunde, cu cel mult un etaj – ascunse de palmieri, de magnolii sau de eucalipti. Totul strălucește foarte viu, într-o lumină nemaipomenit de intensă, răsfrângându-se într-un soare blând de noiembrie (aici, însă, soare blând de noiembrie înseamnă peste 20°C; pe stradă, lumea umblă adeseori în pantaloni scurți și în maieu). Campus-ul universitar (= suprafața pe care se concentrează clădirile facultăților și ale institutelor) este de fapt un imens parc, cu pajiști bătute de soare, pe care poți vedea oricând studenți întinși pe gazon, citindu-și caietele de notițe sau studiind manualele, unii dintre ei furând chiar un pui de somn. Deocamdată – astea sînt reperele noastre fundamentale aici: cartierul unde locuim și campus-ul; distanța dintre un loc și altul o parcurgem zilnic cu autobuzul și nu ne ia mai mult de un sfert de oră. Ca să ajungi însă de la noi în centrul Los Angelesului („downtown” – orașul „de jos”) îți trebuie nici mai mult, nici mai puțin decât *o oră* de mers cu autobuzul pe autostradă (adică pe un traseu fără oprire, fără stații). Ca să străbați orașul de la un capăt la celălalt, pe una

din diagonalele lui principale (bulevardul Wilshire), ar trebui să te pregătești ca pentru o călătorie Cluj-Oradea, cum v-am mai spus.

Casa noastră este foarte bine plasată deci, este foarte aproape de campus, la cinci minute de noi se află și un super magazin, de unde ne putem face cu ușurință cumpărăturile. À propos de cumpărături: alimentele, aici, sunt, totuși, îngrozitor de scumpe. Ca să vă faceți o idee: pâinea cea mai ieftină costă ceva mai mult de un dolar (1 dolar face aproximativ 11 lei), un litru de lapte – aproape un dolar, un sfert de kilogram de brânză – în jur de 4 dolari (= 44 de lei), doi ardei grași (ce e drept, mari și frumoși) îi iei tot cu 1 dolar ș.a.m.d. Nu trebuie să vă faceți însă griji; prietenii noștri ne-au învățat cum să ne descurcăm. Pândim o zi pe săptămână – când se fac reduceri mari de prețuri, la majoritatea articolelor, și atunci facem o aprovizionare capitală. De altfel – așa procedează toți colegii noștri. Partea îmbucurătoare este că, aici, gătitul aproape că nu îți ia mai mult de un sfert de oră; totul se găsește semipreparat (până și sosul de salată). E un câștig de timp care nu conține să ne uimească. Singurul necaz este că nici un produs alimentar nu are aici gustul de acasă: țelina nu este țelină, fasolea verde nu este fasole verde, oțetul nu seamănă nici pe departe cu cel pe care îl știam, la fel și sucul de roșii și altele încă. Totuși, Ioana a izbutit – mică vrăjitoare ce este – să pregătească o supă de conopidă aidoma cu cea pe care o știam. Am avut și oaspeți la cină – și toți au lăudat mâncarea făcută de ea (salată de praz, salată de boeuf și o găină friptă la tavă, cu tot felul de soté-uri).

Am reușit, în sfârșit, să ne obișnuim și cu noul fus orar; la început, diferența de 10 ore ne-a răsturnat toate ritmurile biologice, ziua muream amândoi de somn (mi s-a întâmpat, la început, să vorbesc cu Ioana și să o văd cum, la mijlocul frazei, face o pauză neașteptată: cădea în somn), noaptea nu ne puteam odihni ca lumea (ne trezeam întotdeauna foarte devreme, pe la 4 dimineața, și nu reușeam să readormim). Acum totul a intrat în normal, ne-am adaptat pe deplin.

Vremea – până acum – a fost absolut splendidă; o căldură ca de mijloc și sfârșit de august, de la noi. Nu am purtat decât haine de vară, am ieșit cel mai adesea doar în cămașă; sacoul nu l-am purtat decât la ocazii foarte festive, și atunci am și transpirat îngrozitor în el.

Din păcate, săptămânile astea de la început au fost atât de agitate și cu atâta alergătură, încât nu am reușit să vedem nici un spectacol (nici film, nici concert, nici spectacol de teatru); să nu mint însă: săptămâna trecută am fost la un spectacol dat de o formație folclorică românească. Spectacol altminteri destul de banal, dar cu o sală aproape plină și cu un succes mare de public (în special dansurile maramureșene). În general, nu prea sunt slab de înger, dar când am auzit pe scenă vorbă românească și muzică românească, m-au cam trecut, drept să vă spun, fiorii (deși spectacolul, în țară, mi s-ar fi părut, nu încapă vorbă, de-a dreptul plictisitor, începând cu repertoriul și încheind cu interpretii).

Dragii noștri – acumă despre voi; uneori, dimineața, când mă trezesc, sau seara, când se potolește alergătura de peste zi, îmi răsăriți pe neașteptate dinaintea

ochilor, am senzația că v-aș putea atinge sau auzi, sau că nu am decât să ridic mâna, ca să pot suna la voi la ușă, parcă aud țipetele copiilor care se joacă în curte, bătând mingea, aud zgomotul cu care trântiți ușa de la frigider – am rămas pe jumătate și dincolo, se vede treaba, lângă voi. Niciodată nu am fost noi despărțiți pentru atâta vreme, niciodată nu ne-a venit atât de greu să răbdăm depărtarea, ca acum. Uneori ne și întrebăm – Ioana și cu mine – dacă merita ca experiența noastră americană să o plătim cu un astfel de preț, ce-ți poți, de fapt, dori mai mult de la viață și ce fericire mai mare poate fi – decât să te afli alături de ai tăi? Uite, de 1 noiembrie am și uitat să vă rog să aprindeți o lumânare, din partea noastră, la mormintele celor dispăruți; ne vine foarte greu să știm că, anul ăsta, nu am putut-o face noi înșine.

Dar să nu ne smiorcăim ca niște babe; important e să aveți, acum, mare grijă unul de altul. Nu faceți eforturi, îngrijiți-vă sănătatea, găsiți-vă alte ocupații, cu care să vă treacă mai lesne timpul; uite, pe mama aș ruga-o să se gândească la ceva împletituri sau cusături în stil românesc, pe care să ni le pregătească pentru la vară (sunt cele mai potrivite cadouri pe care le putem face aici cunoscuților, la vreo sărbătoare). Tatei îi reamintesc de John Sunderson; vedeți dacă nu duce lipsă de ceva (eventual alimente, lapte, iaurt sau altceva). De casa noastră să nu vă preocupați excesiv; doar atât cât ea v-ar putea aminti de noi. Puteți lua din bibliotecă orice carte doriți, puteți să vă uitați la televizor, puteți face baie la noi – să nu vă mai chinuți cu improvizația aia de cadă. Ce mai face micuțul Sasi? Cum s-a obișnuit cu voi? Că-i merge bine nu mă îndoiesc, dar să ajungă să și țină la voi, să vă recunoască și să și intre în vorbă; nu știu dacă de noi o să-și mai aducă aminte, când ne va revedea.

Dacă până la sfârșitul lui noiembrie nu vă vin banii pentru cartea Ioanei, o rog pe mama să-l tragă de mânecă pe dl. Vancea, de la editură, și să-l roage să grăbească lucrurile. Puteți, de asemenea, să vorbiți și cu dna. Viorica Mării (care a fost redactorul de carte al Ioanei) sau cu dl. Vasile Igna (tot redactor la editură și foarte bun prieten al nostru). Dacă treaba asta cu banii se aranjează, vom fi cu mult mai liniștiți decât acum, când vă știm prinși în datorii atât de mari și fără nici o rezervă în casă.

Dragii noștri, în ziua când vom primi cea dintâi scrisoare de la voi, va fi mare sărbătoare; din păcate, asta nu se va întâmpla, totuși, decât peste o lună! Cam așa am socotit noi, de fapt nu știm exact cât face o scrisoare pe drum. De telefonat, o să vă telefonăm noi mai repede, însă cât se poate spune în cele 3 minute? Și când te gândești că, dacă am fi locuit pe coasta răsăriteană a Americii, la Washington sau la New York, o convorbire de trei minute cu voi nu ne-ar fi costat decât 3 dolari!!! Din Los Angeles, telefoanele sunt de aproape patru ori mai scumpe (telefoanele internaționale, vreau să spun).

Cu sănătatea – o ducem foarte bine! Ioana a rezistat admirabil la eforturile cele mai grele, dar de acum înainte nu va avea de mers și de alergat decât exact ca acasă! Trăim confortabil, nu ducem lipsă de nimic; nu ne lipsiți decât voi, și

locurile dragi de acasă. Când ne vom întoarce – poate că vom fi nițel schimbați; cu ceva mai bătrâni, cu ceva mai multă experiență de viață, cu (probabil) ceva mai mult spirit practic. Nădăjduim să ne întoarcem și cu oarecare câștig intelectual (cărți, orizont științific mai larg); și să putem folosi acest câștig în viitoarele noastre lucrări. Și, sperăm, Ioana să lase aici, la catedră, o amintire frumoasă și stimă pentru țară și pentru români. Dacă va fi așa, vom spune că ăștia doi ani de înstrăinare n-au fost degeaba.

Vă sărută și vă îmbrățișează, cu dragoste,  
Ioana și Liviu.

P. S. Când scrieți adresa, aveți grijă cum îl faceți pe 1 și pe 7; deci: 1742 (Federal Avenue etc). Să nu îl faceți pe 1 ca la noi, fiindcă ăștia îl citesc ca pe 7. Deci: 1742!. 7, ei îl scriu fără bară: 7. Iar pe 1, ei îl scriu ca pe un simplu băț vertical: I.

Liviu.

Dragii noștri,

Vă puteți imagina cum arată simpaticii soți L. și I. Em. Petrescu ținând socoteala banilor până la centimă? Când ați vedea cu câtă sânguință notăm fiecare penny – și ce greu ne despărțim de el, cred că v-ați prăpădi de râs. Dar n-avem ce face. Și până o să învăț gustul lucrurilor de pe aici tot o să mai risipim din parale, deși asta e, aici, o nenorocire. Am luat clătite mexicane la pachet, am luat soteuri la pachet și am făcut tort de clătite. Dumnezeu sfinte, așa o grozăvie n-am mai mâncat de când suntem – dar am mâncat tot, că nu ne puteam permite să aruncăm bunătate de dolari sub formă de mizerie de mâncare. Un supco de sparanghel, încercat azi, are gustul delicios al scrobellei (fără albăstreală). Însă a găti din zarzavaturi proaspete e de trei ori dificil:

I. conopida (din care mi-a ieșit o supă normală) a costat 2,50 dolari (aproape 30 de lei! – numai conopida, nimic altceva).

II. marea majoritate a zarzavaturilor au cu totul alt gust și ceea ce iese e o combinație greu de suportat.

III. n-am nici timp de gătit în stil românesc, pentru că sunt cu mult mai ocupată decât acasă. În plus, e absolut obligatoriu să folosesc tot timpul care-mi rămâne ca să învăț englezește – altfel nu văd cum o să mă descurc mai departe.

Orașul, într-adevăr, nu mă încântă. E o mare amestecătură de tot felul de lucruri – cu câteva cartiere într-adevăr elegante (nu e cazul cartierului nostru!). Îmi place însă Universitatea și biblioteca. Din păcate, până acum am avut prea puțin timp de lucru efectiv – am avut îngrozitor de multe probleme „administrative” – din care doar una ne-a rămas nerezolvată. N-am avut încă timp să închiriem un televizor. Nici casa nu mă încântă – dar e singurul lucru pe care l-am găsit în grabă

și, cum contractul e pe 6 luni, va trebui să o suportăm, așa, 6 luni. Dormitorul e plăcut și luminos, dar livingul, care e în același timp și bucătărie (deci, practic, de neaerisit) e întunecos și cam antipatic. Evident, dacă am mai fi putut căuta, găseam ceva mai bun. Dar bani de hotel nu mai aveam, singuri era greu să ne descurcăm în ditamai orașoiul acesta, iar pe colegii, extraordinar de generoși, care ne-au ajutat în toată odiseea asta, ne era jenă să-i mai alergăm. À propos la colegi: pentru cazul în care prima noastră scrisoare s-a pierdut, John Sunderson, pe care vi-l dă Liviu în grijă (Căminul 6 – Observator, camera 307) este fiul colegei noastre Ernesta, care ne-a ajutat imens și e student la Medicină (în ultimul an) la Cluj. Are mulți prieteni și cunoscuți acolo, așa că îl veți găsi destul de ocupat. Dar am fi bucuroși dacă l-ați căuta, dacă v-ați interesa de el; în plus, el vă poate face vie, cunoscută, imaginea locurilor ăstora unde ne vom petrece aproape doi ani – adică poate, cred, micșora distanța enormă dintre noi.

Să știți că simțim cumplit distanța asta. Uneori ne spunem că suntem, poate, prea bătrâni ca să privim numai cu încântare o schimbare atât de mare, că suntem, poate, prea înrădăcinați în felul nostru călugăresc de viață de acasă. Cred însă că nu e asta. Ne amintim, acum, că toți – dar *absolut toți* – colegii noștri spuneau (indiferent de vârsta lor sau de locul unde fuseseră plecați) că primele luni au fost extraordinar de grele. Noi nu putem spune asta. E, într-adevăr, un foarte mare efort de adaptare. E solicitant, obositor uneori. E, deocamdată, fără randamentul intelectual pe care îl așteptam. Cred însă că în 2 luni vom fi pe deplin capabili să profităm de marea șansă intelectuală care ni s-a oferit. În momentul în care odiseea casnico-administrativă se încheie, cred că ne vom putea găsi echilibrul unei munci productive, care ne va ajuta să suportăm mai ușor despărțirea. Dacă ați ști cum așteptăm să vă îmbrățișăm de-adevăratelea! Sau măcar să primim, în sfârșit, niște scrisori lungi-lungi despre tot și toți cei pe care îi iubim!

Vă sărutăm,

Ioana și Liviu.

f. 13, d. 36

[09. 01. 82]

Dragii și scumpii noștri,

Am primit, în sfârșit, prima veste de la voi, ne-am bucurat de toate câte le-am aflat, dar – mai presus de orice – ne-am bucurat de starea voastră de spirit, care se pare că e bună. Nu ne putea ieși din minte cât de răvășită arăta mama la gară, când ne-am luat rămas bun; ne-am tot gândit cum veți fi suportat voi primele zile de singurătate, și cât de greu vă va fi venit să treceți pe lângă telefon și să vă spuneți cât de nefolositor a devenit. A fost, cu siguranță, o perioadă foarte grea pentru voi

– dar nu mai puțin și pentru noi. După tonul din scrisoarea voastră, am înțeles însă că v-ați regăsit puterea și răbdarea de care aveau nevoie; acum, dacă veți mai primi și banii pe cartea lui Ioana și veți putea plăti datoriile, rămânându-vă și vouă un fond de siguranță și supraviețuire – se vor liniști și celelalte griji mari pe care ni le facem acum. Noi, din păcate, nu am putut aranja să primiți lunar bani de la noi; o vom putea face numai în vară, când ne vom întoarce acasă. Vreau ca, în toamna anului viitor, să nu mai fim iarăși obligați la împrumuturi, să nu vă lăsăm, iarăși, cu socotelile atât de încurcate. S-ar putea însă ca, la anul, să nu mai revenim în Statele Unite; administrația Reagan a lansat un program foarte sever de reduceri de fonduri. Între altele, și comitetul Fulbright este vizat foarte serios (comitetul Fulbright este tocmai agenția care ne finanțează pe noi, lectorii străini care predăm în Statele Unite). Este posibil deci ca, în 1982, Comitetul Fulbright să nu mai primească fonduri din care să ne plătească. În cazul ăsta, șederea noastră aici se va încheia în vara anului viitor; dar deocamdată, nimic nu e încă sigur. Rămâne ca recomandarea președintelui Reagan să treacă prin Congres, unde va fi sau votată, sau respinsă; vom vedea destul de curând – probabil în decembrie – ce ne rezervă viitorul.

Am aflat, ieri, că l-ați cunoscut pe John; suntem foarte bucuroși și recunoscători că ați făcut-o. Sperăm că băiatul v-a făcut o bună impresie; părinții lui sunt nemaipomenit de încântați de grija pe care i-ați arătat-o fiului lor. Știți voi prea bine cum sunt părinții: vor să-și știe feciorul ocrotit și înconjurat cu cât mai multă dragoste. Ați făcut o faptă de mare generozitate și, în plus, ați răsplătit bunăvoința pe care ei înșiși ne-au arătat-o nouă aici; nu vă putem spune cât de mare a fost ajutorul pe care ni l-au dat, în situațiile cele mai grele, când – cu banii pe care îi avem noi – nu ne-am fi putut îngădui nici măcar un fier de călcat să ne luăm. John va pleca, după cum știți, în vacanță, dar se va reîntoarce la Cluj în luna ianuarie. Dacă nu vă va veni prea greu, arătați-vă, în continuare, atenți față de el; mai chemați-l, din când în când, pe la voi (de Paști, neapărat; v-am mai spus, e evreu, dar respectă sărbătorile tradiționale). Întrebați-o, eventual, pe Elvira dacă nu vă poate ceda, din când în când abonamentul ei la lapte; dacă John ar avea – o dată la săptămână – brânzeturi sau lactate proaspete – ar fi extraordinar de încântat. Dacă băiatul v-a făcut o bună impresie, nu vă va veni prea greu; dar – iarăși – să nu exagerați cu grija față de el, ca să nu-l faceți să se simtă prost, îndatorându-l prea mult. Și, în plus, să nu faceți cheltuieli prea mari, că nu prea aveți de unde!

Dragii noștri, noi o ducem, aici, din ce în ce mai bine; ne-am mai liniștit, în sfârșit, după toate aranjamentele câte le-am avut de făcut la început. Nu ducem lipsă de nimic; avem și radio, și televizor, și telefon. Ne-am făcut și asigurările medicale. Sperăm să nu avem niciodată nevoie de ele, dar de făcut, trebuia să le facem; cea mai neînsemnată asistență medicală se ridică, aici, la cifre fabuloase. În caz de boală, societatea de asigurări plătește 80% din nota de plată. Din fericire, Ioana se poartă acum foarte bine, nu mi-a dat nici un temei de îngrijorare; și puteți să mă credeți, umblă enorm de mult, în comparație cu programul ei de acasă. În

fiecare zi de lucru face un drum până la școală; uneori, ieșim chiar de două ori pe zi în oraș. E, totuși, mereu într-o formă fizică bună; decât că are, acum, ceva mai multe fire albe de păr. Dar, ce vreți, în curînd vom împlini 40 de ani! Gîndiți-vă, când voi aveați vârsta asta, noi eram deja copii mari, aveam 13 ani și intram deja în clasa a VI-a!

Lucrăm foarte mult, avem o foarte bună bibliotecă în campus, una din cele mari din California (ca să vedeți ce fonduri mari de carte sunt în bibliotecă, e destul să vă spun că am găsit, în cataloage, și *Romanul condiției umane!*). Putem împrumuta cărțile și acasă și se poate face o mare economie de timp: nu mai e nevoie să întocmim fișe, cum ne obișnuisem noi în țară, când copiam cu mîna pagini întregi de carte! Pasajele cele mai interesante le fotocopiem (o pagină costă doar 5 cenți) și – în numai o secundă – avem deja fișa dorită. Treaba e mult mai spornică așa, putem înainta mult mai rapid cu treaba! Chiar dacă vom rămîne aici numai un an de zile, câștigul intelectual va fi, totuși, enorm; vom fi adunat material cât pentru cinci ani de lucru în țară!

Vremea este, în continuare, foarte uscată și caldă, degeaba a aflat mama, la televizor, că în California plouă; poate să fi plouat, dar California este imensă! În Los Angeles nu a plouat, de când suntem noi aici, decât două zile: în 26 și 27 noiembrie (adică tocmai de sărbători, de Thanksgiving). Și acum, în plin decembrie, ieșim în oraș doar în bluză. Fiți liniștiți, dacă timpul se va răci (ceea ce nu cred), putem face focul; nu în sobe (nu există decât sobă de bucătărie), nici la calorifere (nici așa ceva nu există), ci la un dispozitiv cu gaze, instalat în perete, care încălzește în câteva minute casa, de trebuie după aceea să deschizi neapărat geamurile!

Cum facem cu rufele? Casa în care locuim are și o spălătorie, cu o mașină automată de spălat (50 de cenți) și cu una de uscat (25 de cenți); încât, în cel mult o oră (și fără să fie nevoie să stai la coada mașinii), ai terminat cu toate, poți să bagi deja lucrurile în dulap. Foarte multe treburi gospodărești se fac aici cu mare economie de timp, nici nu-ți dai seama că le faci.

Am ajuns să ne obișnuim până și cu regimul de mese de aici, dimineața, micul dejun e întotdeauna copios (lapte, pâine cu unt, șuncă, brînză, sucuri). Prînzul (la ora 12) mai degrabă frugal (noi ne ospătăm de obicei cu crenvurști fierți – cu muștar sau hrean), iar cina (la ora 6) e masa principală. Se mîncă, în general, enorm (aproape tot al doilea american urmează o dietă severă, pentru a pierde din greutate; foarte multe mîncăruri și semipreparate sunt cu 0 calorii (zero) tocmai pentru a ajuta lumea să slăbească). La cină, se mîncă foarte rar supe sau ciorbe; se începe, de obicei, cu o salată (salată verde, cu ceapă, cu ardei, cu roșii, cu castraveți, cu ridichi – și fără pâine). Se continuă cu o mîncare gătită, în cantități enorme (fripturi imense de vacă sau de porc sau de curcan sau de pui), cu garnituri abundente de zarzavaturi (fasole verde soté, conopidă soté, mazăre soté; cartofi întregi, copti în cuptor și unși cu unt sau cu sosuri speciale; precum și alte zarzavaturi exotice – cartofi dulci, dovlecei dulci de culoare maro aidoma cu

bostanii copti de la noi, alături, uneori se mai pune și un jeleu dulce). Iar la desert, de cele mai multe ori, se servește înghețată sau fructe (felii rotunde de ananas, banane, portocale, mere etc.), nu te mai miri că unul dintre punctele cardinale și locuri de pelerinaj ale americanului a devenit frigiderul! Noi încercăm totuși să păstrăm măsura în carnavalul acesta culinar. Singurul dezmăț pe care ni-l îngăduim sunt sucurile: Pepsi, Coca-Cola, sucul de mere (senzațional de bun!), limonada. Iar, din când în când, ne mai îndulcim și cu câte un vin californian (ceva mai ieftin și, în plus, foarte curat, îl suportă și Ioana). Dar nimic nu ne dorim mai arzător decât să ne întoarcem noi la bucatele noastre de acasă; să ne vedem într-o duminică, la prânz, cu toții, în jurul mesei. Și să ne desfătăm noi cu ciupercile pané cu mujdei de usturoi sau cu ciorbița de cartofi cu ceapă sau cu papricașul de pui, așa cum știe mama să le facă. Au trecut deja aproape două luni de când am plecat, dar toate astea (și obiceiurile, și locurile, și lucrurile, și sunetele) ne sunt într-atât de familiare, de parcă nici n-am fi plecat vreodată.

Dar lasă – au mai rămas doar în jur de 6 luni – și o să fim iarăși laolaltă! Ce ne pare rău – este că am zugrăvit casa, înainte de a pleca; dacă știam, o lăsăm pentru când ne întoarcem și am fi avut bani destui, n-ar mai fi trebuit să vă împovărăm pe voi cu atâtea datorii. (Uite, chiar acum mi-am ridicat ochii de pe hârtie și ce credeți că am văzut pe geam? Cineva se ducea să arunce coșul de gunoi la lada din curte; era în pantaloni scurți și cu picioarele goale! Ca să vedeți cât de rece poate fi clima acum, în 6 decembrie, la Los Angeles). M-a impresionat ce îmi scrieți despre vecinii noștri; am trimis o ilustrată dnei Berindeanu. O să-i trimitem una și dnei Noje și d-nei Jebeleanu (numai că nu știm care e numele mic al d-nei Jebeleanu. Nu puteți afla voi, cumva?).

Cum o duceți voi acolo? Se părea că va fi o iarnă grea, dar ziarele spun că, în ultimul timp, s-a încălzit din nou. Numai sănătoși să fiți și să primiți odată banii ăia de carte; Câmpeanu e un ins drăguț, tocmai el e cel care a făcut formele de plată. Dacă banii mai întârzie, totuși, rugați-l (pe el sau pe Vasile Igna sau pe Viorica Mării) să se intereseze, să mai dea niște telefoane, să urnească lucrurile.

Ne bucurăm că Sasi se simte bine la voi și că vă distrează, drăguțul de el; e în stare să vă arate multe minunății, o să vedeți. Dacă vom rămâne aici doi ani de zile, cum era vorba, vi-l lăsăm vouă de tot – i-ar pricinui mare suferință să-l mai despărțim de voi. Tot voiam noi să vă găsim un suflet să-l poată înlocui pe Rodolfo, săracul de el; de-ați ști cât ne-am tot gândit să vă luăm un alt câine! Acum o să vă bucure biata asta păsărică; dacă vedeți că nu se îndeamnă să cânte – luați-i o pereche, va cânta din nou!

Dragii noștri, și pentru ziua de astăzi, și pentru sărbătorile care vor urma, noi vă îmbrățișăm, dorindu-vă sănătate și fericire și să ne revedem cu bucurie!

Vă sărută,

Ioana și Liviu.

f. 22, d. 36  
[18. 01. 82]

Dragii noștri bătrânei,

A trecut 17 decembrie, nu mai e nimic de făcut, am așa ca un fel de simțământ că am intrat și eu în rândul veteranilor; ce bine de Ioana că mai are dinaintea ei o viață de om, ca să atingă și ea onorabila vârstă de 40 de ani. De ziua mea, am primit un foarte spectaculos cadou, de la draga mea tovarășă de viață: un deodorant și o loțiune pentru după-ras. Peste 20 de ani, când va atinge și ea respectabila vârstă, am proiectat să-i fac, la rândul meu, un cadou impresionant: fie o pereche de ciorapi, fie vreo alifie. Regimul de aristocratică austeritate nu ne-a împiedicat însă de la montarea sărbătorească a pomului de Crăciun; avem un brăduț mic de tot (ca să spun adevărul, e mai curând o creangă de brad, pe care Ioana a pus-o într-un fost borcan de maioneză), dar cu toate podoabele de trebuință (4 globuri galbene, o ploaie de staniol subțire, care strălucește argintiu chiar și în întuneric, precum și niște scelipiciuri mărunte, care s-au lipit nu numai de acele de brad, ci și de fața și mâinile atât de harnicele mele neveste). Suntem tare fericiți pentru brăduț, cu atât mai mult, cu cât a umplut toată casa cu o aromă proaspătă de pădure. Noi avem și o lumânare imensă, groasă și roșie, din ceară aromată, pe care o vom aprinde în seara de Crăciun. Începe să aibă ceva familiar și îmblânzit casa noastră de aici, nu mi se mai pare atât de impersonală și străină, a început – ca să zic așa – să se muleze după noi.

Ce am făcut noi în ultimul timp? Viața noastră socială continuă să fie foarte încărcată; vineri i-am avut invitați la cină pe Sundersoni. L-am cunoscut și noi, în sfârșit, pe John, care ne-a făcut o impresie foarte bună; ne-a povestit o seară întregă despre voi. A fost cât se poate de evident că i-a făcut o reală plăcere întâlnirea cu voi. Părinții lui John au fost, de asemenea, încântați de atenția cu care l-ați înconjurat pe fiul lor; după cum vedeți, părinții sînt pretutindeni aceiași. Decât că pe voi, o spun cu mâna pe inimă, nu o să vă întrecă nimeni, niciodată.

Ce am mai făcut în săptămâna asta? Azi (e duminică) am dat o mică petrecere acasă, la care am invitat câțiva prieteni, colegi de la Universitate, europeni și ei. A fost extrem de agreabil, s-au simțit cu toții realmente minunat, iar Ioana s-a întrecut pur și simplu pe sine cu mâncărurile; a pregătit, de data asta, numai mâncăruri reci (așa cum se obișnuiește aici la prânz), în care e neîntrecută. A făcut din nou castraveții ei acri umpluți cu ouă, a mai făcut ciuperci cu maioneză, ouă umplute, măsline umplute cu pastă de ficat, conopidă cu maioneză, roșii umplute cu salată de boeuf, friptură rece din piept de curcan, cu o garnitură de salată orientală, iar – ca desert – un cocktail de fructe cu frișcă. Totul a avut un succes monstruos, bieții oameni (pe care îi bănuiesc că – între ei – urmează același regim de demnă austeritate) s-au ospătat copios, iar – la urmă – ne-au mărturisit că s-au simțit „ca acasă”. Nu mă mir. Ne-am bucurat de atmosfera foarte prietenească, ce a

domnit aproape tot timpul. Din păcate, petrecerile astea înseamnă însă oarecare eforturi financiare, uneori chiar eroice; dar nu avem ce face. Suntem și noi, la rândul nostru, invitați cam peste tot; iar, în plus, „petrecerile” astea sunt o formă de viață socială pe care trebuie să o adoptăm și noi; ele sunt singura împrejurare în care oamenii se arată dispuși să vorbească pe îndelete, să se cunoască reciproc, să stabilească prietenii. În afara acestor „petreceri”, cam fiecare își vede de treburile lui și nu prea se uită la ce e în jur.

Urmează, de acum înainte, un fel de vacanță pentru noi, până prin 11 ianuarie, când începe semestrul de iarnă; o vacanță în care avem însă de gând să muncim pe ruptelea. Majoritatea timpului o vom petrece în bibliotecă, un loc de studiu admirabil: biblioteca centrală a Universității este o clădire cu... cinci etaje; de la un nivel la altul, se circulă cu liftul. Sălile de lectură sunt amplasate de fapt chiar în depozitul de cărți; îți iei singur cartea din raft, te așezi la o masă, ești perfect izolat de rest, poți să și fumezi dacă vrei, nu se aude nici un zgomot (unii studioși chiar ajung să tragă și un pui de somn, după care – reînviați – se întorc la carte). Am găsit în Research Library (Biblioteca centrală a Universității) cărți pe care, în țară, le căutasem zadarnic ani de zile! Și, cum vă spuneam, ne vom duce veacul la bibliotecă, de dimineața până seara (nu vă speriați, în imediata vecinătate a bibliotecii, se află un fel de Casa Universitarilor – Faculty Center – unde se poate lua prânzul, la prețuri convenabile). Pe la 6 după masa – ne vom întoarce acasă, vom lua cina, vom urmări, probabil, programele TV (televizorul nostru are 83 de canale; am văzut câteva filme destul de bune, altele mai slăbuțe, dar punctul forte, aici, sunt emisiunile de divertisment și – în special – buletinele de știri, foarte atractive, palpitate, durând uneori ore în șir. Aștia reușesc să facă nemaipomenit de spectaculoase până și buletinele meteorologice, la care – nu o dată – Ioana și cu mine am râs cu lacrimi). Seara târziu vom mai citi câte ceva, ziarele (noi cumpărăm de obicei Los Angeles Times; e un ziar întrucâtva mai gros decât Făclia; în unele zile – joia, de pildă – de abia îl pot căra sub braț), ne vom revedea notițele și însemnările de peste zi, vom mai vorbi despre una, despre alta, și – apoi – la culcare. După cum vedeți, viața de aici nu ne mai sperie atât de tare ca în urmă cu câteva luni (de fapt – doar cu două). Dacă la anul ne vom reîntoarce în America (nici până în clipa de față nu se știe nimic precis despre soarta programului Fulbright, într-o Americă în care cuvântul de ordine a devenit, de câțiva vreme încoace „reduceri bugetare”; dacă într-o țară atât de bogată, cum e America, criza economică prezintă aspecte atât de dramatice, devin cu totul de înțeles dificultățile cu care sunt obligate să se confrunte țările mai mici și mai nevoiașe, de pe glob), ne va veni cu mult mai lesne să ne descurcăm, nu vom mai pierde nici atâta timp, nu vom cheltui nici atâta energie nervoasă pentru o groază de fleacuri. Firește, am fi bucuroși să ne reîntoarcem în Los Angeles; dar, chiar dacă nu va fi așa (prietenul nostru Mircea Borcilă insistă să ne mutăm mai spre nord, în Indiana, ca să fim mai aproape unii de alții, să ne putem vizita), tot va fi un avantaj și în asta: vom putea cunoaște și alte locuri din America, pe care altminteri nu ne-am putea permite să le

vizităm (călătoriile interne sunt nemaipomenit de scumpe: biletul meu de avion Washington, D.C. – Los Angeles, bilet pe care a trebuit să ni-l plătim din buzunarul nostru, costă 325 de dolari! Numai dus! La vară, va trebui să-l plătesc, aşadar, încă o dată! Un lucru e sigur: când mă voi întoarce acasă, în România, voi avea o inegalabilă calificare de contabil. Ca şi Ioana, de altfel. Stăm în fiecare zi şi facem socoteli până la centimă. Să nu cumva să ne întindem mai mult decât ne e plapuma. Noi, care acasă eram învăţaţi să risipim fără socoteală banii, în dreapta sau în stânga. Nu spun că era bine cum ne învătaşem; dar şi obsesia asta tipic americană – în angrenajul căreia am intrat, fără să vrem – mărturisesc că mi se pare deosebit de scârboasă, chiar degradantă. Şi acum, să închid parantezul ăsta, care s-a lăţit foarte tare).

Dragii mei, suntem foarte bucuroşi că aţi ajuns să vă redobândiţi, oarecum, liniştea sufletească; am dedus asta şi din scrisorile voastre (binecuvântaţi să fiţi pentru cât de des ne scrieţi), cât şi din povestirile lui Johnny. Nu poate fi alinare mai mare pentru noi, decât să vă ştim pe voi în bună sănătate şi întăriţi sufleteşte. Greutăţi au fost de când e lumea, şi vor mai fi; cu sănătate şi împăcare în cuget, se poate trece însă peste orice. E grea despărţirea, dar să ne gândim că ar putea fi şi altele, cu mult mai greu de îndurat. Numai sănătate să fie, şi încredere, şi pace pe pământ! Ne gândim mereu la voi, cu dragoste şi cu mult dor, vă îmbrăţişez pe amândoi şi vă sărut,

Liviu.

P.S. Numele de botez al lui Lulu e Lucian? Nu îndrăznim să-i scriem încă, de teamă să nu-l pocim.

Vă sărut încă o dată,

Liviu.

f. 24, d. 36  
[25. 01. 82]

Dragă măicuţă şi tăicuţule,

Este prima scrisoare pe care vi-o scriem în noul an (dar cam a zecea la rând; mi-e teamă că nu toate au ajuns până la voi. Sper să le primiţi, în cele din urmă, pe toate, chiar dacă va fi cu oarecare întârziere); s-a scurs deja o treime din timpul pe care îl avem de petrecut aici. Au mai rămas celelalte două treimi. Dar cât de uşor va fi de îndurat scurgerea timpului de acum înainte, când luna iunie e din ce în ce mai aproape! Că mâine o să vă văd din nou pe peronul gării din Cluj, de data asta cu ceva mai veseli decât la plecare, şi atunci ne vom spune că imensitatea de vreme, pe care ni se părea atunci, în octombrie 1981, că o avem dinaintea noastră, nu a durat, totuşi, mai mult de o clipă. Şi ne vom întreba dacă totul a fost de-adevăratelea, sau nu.

De la Anul Nou, vremea a început să se strice, pe aici; de altfel, pe tot teritoriul Statelor Unite bântuie furtuni mari, în unele state s-au produs inundații, în altele sunt înzăpeziri, unele șosele sunt blocate de viscol, se pare că e o iarnă ceva mai grea. Los Angelesul nu resimte însă prea tare înrăutățirea vremii; totul s-a redus, până acum, la o zi întreagă de ploaie aproape neîntreruptă (ieri, luni, 4 ianuarie); termometrul a mai coborât puțin, dar nu foarte tare, încât lumea iese pe stradă tot în talie. Astăzi, deja, spre prânz, s-a ivit din nou soarele, iar meteorologii spun că – de vineri încolo – temperatura se va ridica din nou până în 70 – 75 ° F. Cam așa arată cea mai grea iarnă, în Los Angeles, din ultimii 40 de ani; pentru că, trebuie să vă spun că, în mod obișnuit, lumea poate să facă plajă, la ocean, în ziua de Anul Nou. Duminică încă era o zi strălucitoare, am plecat cu Johnny la țărm, totul era scaldat în lumină, oceanul era împânzit de yole, dealurile golfului erau incendiate de apusul de soare. Mirosea a plante de mare, cerul incredibil de albastru era străbătut de stoluri de pescăruși. A doua zi – luni – totul s-a posomorât, a turnat de dimineța până seara (noi, firește, am stat tot timpul în casă și am citit cu multă râvnă), dar numai la atât s-a redus „cea mai grea iarnă din ultimii 40 de ani” din Los Angeles. Vremea este, una peste alta, o mare binecuvântare pentru noi, și Ioana e cea dintâi care să recunoască lucrul ăsta; niciodată, de când a ieșit din clinică, nu s-a simțit atât de bine și nu a arătat atât de bine refăcută, ca acum. Astăzi de dimineța a plecat și Johnny spre Cluj; va sosi – cu avionul la București, miercuri după-amiază. De acolo, va lua trenul spre Cluj, unde va ajunge în noaptea de miercuri spre joi, în jurul orei 2. Sper să-l vedeți cât de curând; prin el v-am trimis, tuturor, și câteva mici cadouri (într-adevăr neînsemnate, nu puteam să-l încercăm pe bietul băiat cu cine știe ce lucruri). Vouă v-am trimis un set de prosoape de baie (unul de corp, altul de față și al treilea de mâini – în ordinea dimensiunii lor). Nu e o grozăvie, dar nouă ni s-au părut frumoase și desul de deosebite – sperăm să vă placă și vouă.

De luna viitoare, reîncep cursurile (semestrul de iarnă); după toate semnele, probabil că Ioana va avea câțiva studenți, pentru cursul ei de limba română. Ca să vorbim pe șleau, ne-am temut că nu va avea deloc studenți; în anul trecut, nu a fost nici un lector român în Los Angeles, nu a existat, deci, practic, nici un fel de continuitate în predarea limbii române. În plus, noi am sosit în America destul de târziu, după ce cursurile începuseră deja (semestrul de toamnă începe, aici, la 15 septembrie), iar studenții apucaseră deja să opteze pentru cursurile deja existente. Ioana s-a văzut așadar, în situația de a face publicitate cursului ei; a răspândit afișe, în campus, a dat un anunț și în ziarul scos de studenții de la UCLA, prin care anunța pe studenți de sosirea și de existența unui lector român, precum și de foloasele pe care pot ei să le aibă, învățând limba română. Am așteptat cu sufletul la gură, să vedem rezultatele; i s-a stârnit cuiva interesul, s-a înscris cineva pentru audierea cursului de română? În sfârșit, am început să primim vești îmbucurătoare – dar numai cu puțin înainte de Anul Nou. Drept care, Ioana s-a pus foarte serios pe lucru; fiindcă nu are la îndemână nici un manual convenabil, s-a apucat să

redacteze ea singură unul, lecție de lecție. Textele redactate de ea până acum sunt excelente – a reușit să compună cel mai bun manual, cel puțin din câte cunosc eu; va obține, sper, rezultate excelente.

Oricum, în ultima vreme, așa cum vă preveneam, și în alte scrisori, am lucrat foarte mult, amândoi; în perspectivă, am vrea – atât Ioana, cât și eu – să ne pregătim, cât stăm aici, cărțile viitoare. E un climat de muncă foarte bun și sper să reușim; ar fi câștigul și răsplata cea mai frumoasă pentru statul nostru aici, printre străini. Cât despre distracții și amuzament – asta se află, cel puțin deocamdată, pe ultimul plan; nu am ajuns, de pildă, să vedem, până acum, nici unul din filmele care rulează în oraș. Nu ne-am dus decât la un singur concert (un concert de muzică din Renaștere, de ziua de... 17 decembrie!), și, chiar și la acela, numai pentru că aveam biletele gratuite (la un alt concert – să nu mint – ne-am mai dus, totuși, dar numai fiindcă ne-am simțit obligați față de un coleg de-al nostru, și numai eu m-am dus – Ioana a pretextat ceva și a rămas acasă – ca să nu plătim decât un singur bilet!). Suntem într-un fel cu mult mai strămtorați decât ne-am închipuit noi, atunci când am plecat din țară; nu ne plângem însă, avem din plin ceea ce ne-am dorit cu atâta ardoare, și ceea ce alți colegi de-ai noștri, mai norocoși, dobândiseră deja de multă vreme: o mare bibliotecă, librării cu ultimele noutăți, o grămadă de timp pentru lucru. E atât de important, pentru cariera noastră viitoare, ceea ce putem dobândi aici, încât celelalte îngrădiri, pe care le simțim cu multă strășnicie, devin cu totul neînsemnate. În plus, începem să ne schimbăm întrucâtva și firea noastră de acasă: devenim, pe zi ce trece, mai practici, mai întreprinzători, mai bine struniți și mai puțin naivi. Și am mai dobândit și un anumit exercițiu al vieții sociale, simțim gustul de a stabili contacte, de a ne întâlni cu lumea, de a ieși din muțenie și încruntare ursuză. Bine ar fi ca toate câștigurile astea să devină foarte trainice, să nu ne dezberăm de ele, deîndată ce vom sosi acasă.

Dragii noștri, noi ne străduim să vă povestim cât mai fidel întâmplările și împrejurările vieții noastre de aici; Johnny ne-a făcut și câteva fotografii, în fața casei noastre și pe malul oceanului. Când le veți vedea, vă va veni foarte lesne să vă gândiți la noi, să vă imaginați cum trebuie să arătăm noi în aceste locuri cu totul necunoscute. Voi, în schimb, sunteți tare zgârciți cu cronica zilelor voastre, petrecute în lipsa noastră; ce e drept, pentru noi e cu mult mai lesne să ne gândim la voi și să ne închipuim ce faceți, într-un moment sau altul. Când m-a întreat mama, la telefon: „Îl auzi pe Sasi cum cântă?”, am și văzut – dar cu câtă limpezime, și cât de chinuitor de aproape! – antreul vostru, și ușa de la dormitor deschisă, și șifonierul din colț, și fereastra înaltă (cu perdelele ei cele noi), și lumina de dimineață (o dimineață de iarnă, albă) și pe Sasi dându-și duhul de atâta cântat (în colivia pe care, probabil, i-ați pus-o tot pe șifonier). Cu toate astea, n-ar strica să fiți mai puțin zgârciți și să ne povestiți, în scrisorile voastre, chiar și cele mai zilnice mărunțișuri; când vă citim scrisorile, uităm, pentru câteva clipe, unde ne aflăm și cât de departe suntem de casă. À propos de zgârcenie: tata a uitat să mă

mai țină la curent cu știrile sportive; nu mai știu ce s-a mai întâmplat cu Universitatea, cum a terminat turul campionatului, dacă sunt ceva noutăți, dacă au mai plecat – sau dacă au mai venit – jucători, nimic din toate astea. Pe mama o rog, dacă poate (am mai rugat-o, într-o altă scrisoare, dar nu știu dacă ați primit-o; mă tem să nu se fi rătăcit) să transcrie, pentru Ioana, niște rețete de mâncăruri. Ne-am cam epuizat ideile și, pentru prilejurile ce se vor mai ivi, se cuvine să ne înfățișăm și cu ceva noutăți (între altele: am descoperit, chiar astăzi, în magazin, frunză de viță în borcane; am putea să ne gândim la niște sărmăluțe în frunză de viță. Dar nu am găsit nicăieri borș. Oare cu suc de lămâie iese bună?).

Fiindcă veni vorba de mâncare; să știți că eu m-am îngrășat, față de cum eram la sosire, în vreme ce Ioana a reușit, în fine, să slăbească (a dat jos câteva kilograme, dar nu mănâncă și nu bea decât produse de dietă, „fără colesterol” și cu „minimum de calorii”, după cum scrie pe etichete).

Le-am scris astăzi niște vederi – și lui Lulu, și lui tanti Firuța; le-aș fi trimis mai devreme, dacă nu erau, după cum știți, mici impedimente de ordin... tehnic.

Dragii mei, aveți grijă de voi: sper să nu aveți probleme cu aprovizionarea. Ne gândim tot timpul la voi. Slavă domnului că vă știm sănătoși și – în sfârșit – scăpați de datorii!

Vă îmbrățișează, cu dragoste,  
Liviu.

Nu vă temeți de asprimea iernii californiene – magnoliile roz continuă și ele să înflorească nestingherite și-n parcul universității tot a tei (cu flori uriașe și mov) miroase. Așa că, vedeți cum stau lucrurile cu iarna pe aici, spre adâncă noastră desfătare. Vă mulțumesc că mi-ați trimis scrisoarea lui Paul Cornea – mi-a făcut o mare bucurie.

Sărutări de mâini, Ioana.

f. 30, d. 36  
[10. 02. 82]

Dragă măicuță și tăicuțule,

A mai trecut o săptămână, cu zile ceva mai urâte, întunecoase, cu ploaie persistentă, care se revărsa în torente; când ne culcam, adormeam în zgomotul torentelor de afară, și ne trezeam tot așa. Dacă n-ar fi trebuit să mai și ieșim din casă, n-ar fi fost nici un necaz, dar cum Ioana are ore zilnic, cum eu trebuia să mai fac și ceva aprovizionare... Noroc că stația de autobuz (ca și supermagazinul, de altfel) sunt foarte aproape, încât nu ne-am înmuiat prea tare. Și, oricum, începând de ieri, cerul s-a limpezit din nou; aerul a rămas încă destul de rece, dar măcar vedem din nou soarele și albastrul cerului. Se mai luminează, cât de cât, și în

sufletul nostru; fiindcă, odată cu posomorala de afară, începuse să ne bântuie de peste tot dorul de acasă. Ioana nu se mai visa decât în chaise-longue-ul ei din balcon, mie mi se năzăreau, dinaintea ochilor, până și neprețuitele noastre containere de gunoi, simțeam în mușchii picioarelor exact lungimea drumului de la stația de mașini până acasă, vedeam fiecare tufiș sădit de noi, vedeam lumina de iarnă din bucătărie, a fost – ce mai încoace și încolo – un dezmaț de melancolie.

Ne-a scris, zilele astea, și Lena; spunea că a trecut pe la voi, să-i aducă lui mama un gherghef, sau așa ceva. Ne-a asigurat că sunteți neschimbați, că totul e bine, doar că tânjiți foarte tare după noi (cu excepția lui Sasi, care se pare că o duce în mare huzur). Altfel, zicea că pe acasă ați avut parte de o iarnă destul de grea, când cu ger, când cu ninsoare, când cu zloată. Uite, chiar adineauri a venit poșta și ne-a adus o scrisoare de la profesorul Vlad; ne scrie pe larg despre toate (aproape 4 pagini dactilografiate), cu marea lui spontaneitate și nesfârșitul lui umor. Avem, în sfârșit, știri și despre ceea ce nu aflasem, până acum, nimic: despre universitate (unde se pare că totul a rămas neschimbat), despre lumea literară (cu un cuvânt: „cafeneaua” scriitorilor, cu bârfele obișnuite, în jurul unei cești de cafea și învăluți în fumul de țigară). Ne-a făcut o mare bucurie epistola bătrânului nostru profesor, la fel de cald și de amical ca întotdeauna.

În rest, dragii noștri, cam ce facem noi? Ioana, cum vă spuneam, are ore zilnic. Pleacă însă în jur de 10 dimineața de acasă și se întoarce tocmai pe la 5,30 seara. Cred că – din exces de zel, ceea ce, după cum prea bine știți, o definește – și-a complicat singură programul; în mod normal, ar fi trebuit să țină doar 2 ore pe zi (adică 2 cursuri diferite, de câte o oră fiecare). Întrucât însă grupul ei de studenți nu e îndeajuns de omogen (unii sunt chiar începători, în vreme ce alții deja au unele cunoștințe de limba română), i-a împărțit în mai multe subgrupe, în așa fel încât acum ține 4 ore zilnic, în loc de 2. E un program greu, dar nu într-atât de greu, cum era cel de acasă. În plus, aici se lucrează numai 5 zile pe săptămână, astfel încât sâmbăta și duminica rămân pentru odihnă și refacere. În sfârșit, țineți cont și de faptul că în semestrul următor (semestrul de primăvară, care începe în aprilie), programul ei se va simplifica simțitor (în ciuda faptului că, probabil, va avea încă și mai mulți studenți. Acum are 9, ceea ce constituie o cifră impresionantă); va avea mai mulți studenți, dar un număr mai mic de discipline de predat.

În timpul ăsta, eu – cum s-ar spune – cam huzuresc; în afară de câteva drumuri obligatorii (cumpărături, operații bancare – depuneri sau încasări –, alte formalități) stau mai mult pe acasă. M-am înconjurat cu un teanc de cărți (ca și Ioana, de altfel), de plicuri cu articole din reviste trase la xerox (un aparat de multiplicat), și îmi croiesc drum prin nămeți. Recuperez lucrări fundamentale (apărute, unele dintre ele, chiar cu 30 sau 40 de ani în urmă), lucrări pe care s-ar fi convenit să le cunosc de mult, dar care sunt totuși de negăsit în bibliotecile din țară. Din punct de vedere profesional, aș avea nevoie de cel puțin 3 ani de stat în America; într-un an aș parcurge studiile capitale mai vechi, în al doilea an aș

încerca să mă pun la curent cu cele mai recente noutăți, iar în al treilea an – aș începe să redactez sinteza pentru care mă pregătesc de atâta amar de vreme. O sinteză asupra romanului, o carte care ar putea deveni nu numai cea mai importantă publicație a mea, dar și unul dintre cele mai bune studii românești în materie. A sta însă 3 ani în America este cu desăvârșire cu neputință; chiar și 2 ani (atât cât prevede înțelegerea culturală) au intrat într-un con de îndoială. Oricum, voi încerca să aduc cu mine, în vara aceasta, cât se va putea de mult din lucrările de care am nevoie; în cel mai rău caz, voi încheia acasă ceea ce am început aici. Pot spune însă că numai de puțină vreme am început să am sentimentul că sunt cu adevărat un om de știință: cunosc acum reperele bibliografice capitale din domeniul meu, știu care sunt cărțile de bază care s-au scris, asupra unui aspect sau altul, dar nu numai că le știu – cărțile astea (cu mici excepții) le-am și ținut în mână, sunt ca o prezență permanentă în raza mea de vedere. Asta îți dă nu numai siguranță și stăpânire asupra domeniului, ci și o perspectivă asupra a ceea ce poate fi adus nou. Vă rog să mă credeți, am sentimentul că tot ceea ce am făcut până acum nu a fost decât rodul unei inteligențe și a unei anume înzestrări native, simplă performanță de diletant; rămîne o consolare – penibilă – aceea că starea generală a criticii românești este marcată de aceeași trăsătură a diletantismului, chiar și în cazurile cele mai răsărite. Se întâmplă de multe ori ca – fie Ioana, fie eu – să intrăm în bibliotecă (doar pentru a găsi cota unor cărți, nu pentru lectură) sau în vreo librărie, în vreme ce celălalt așteaptă acasă; aproape întotdeauna cel care așteaptă acasă a avut de trecut prin ceasuri de panică și coșmar: orele se scurgeau, timpul trecea, iar celălalt nu dădea nici un semn de viață. Gândurile cele mai sinistre ne treceau prin cap (crime, accidente, jafuri, tot felul de tâmpenii); până când, într-un târziu, inocentul așteptat își făcea apariția, cu un aer nespus de mirat: „Cum a trecut atâta vreme? Nu mi-am dat seama. De ce te-ai speriat?”. Și într-adevăr nu-ți mai dai seama de vreme când intri printre rafturi și iei cărțile la rând, descoperi chestii despre care nu auziseși niciodată și care te lasă cu gura căscată. Câte burse ți-ar trebui ca să ajungi să strângi în brațe toate lucrurile care te îmbie și care îți aprind imaginația? Câtă nevoie ar fi fost să dăm peste toate astea la vârsta potrivită – când eram mai tineri, când eram în plină formație, când aveam timp pentru citit – iar nu acuma, când e momentul realizărilor, când avem timp mai mult pentru scris!

Și, dacă tot a venit vorba – în trei ani de zile de stat în America – ai ajunge, într-adevăr, până la genunchiul broaștei cu știința. Dar muncind din greu, făcând sacrificii, renunțând la multe (în primul rând la călătorii). Noi – nu numai din această pricină, ci și din cauza condițiilor financiare mai grele – de-abia dacă vom ajunge să cunoaștem mai bine orașul în care locuim acum, Los Angelesul. Cu toată rușinea, dar când vom ajunge acasă, nu ne vom putea îngădui să ne lăudăm că am reușit să „cunoaștem lumea”; pentru asta – ar mai fi fost nevoie de încă un stagiul, de simplă vacanță. Una peste alta – statul nostru aici va fi ca un fel de piguleală din de toate, fără puțința de a stoarce dintr-o experiență tot ceea ce ea ne putea da.

Însă, chiar și așa, nu vom putea niciodată spune că nu am fost privilegiați; alții – nu mulți, ce e drept – nu au avut parte nici măcar de șansa asta (Manolescu, de pildă, nu a fost niciodată plecat mai mult de o lună afară din țară).

Dragii noștri, sper că ați avut deja ocazia să vă întâlniți cu John. Nu mă îndoiesc că v-a povestit despre noi tot ceea ce ardeți de nerăbdare să știți. Bănuiesc că v-a arătat și pozele pe care ni le-a făcut; nu știm cum arătam în ele, noi n-am apucat să le vedem. Nu vă îngroziți însă de înfățișarea mea: dacă vreți să știți, încă nu m-am tuns, de la plecarea din țară (deci, de vreo patru luni). Culmea e că nici nu am de gând să mă tund, în timpul cât vom sta aici. Nu am nici un fel de motive speciale, decât că un tuns costă în jur de 20 de dolari (adică, altfel spus, cu ceva mai mult decât ne putem noi îngădui să cheltuim pe o zi). Așa încât, să vă pregătiți sufletește ca (la întoarcerea noastră în țară) să-l întâmpinați nu pe Liviu, ci pe... un tip cu codițe și (poate) cu fundă!

Ioana este, slavă Domnului, sănătoasă, în continuare. Rezistă la efort, e mult mai dinamică și mai activă. Aveam de gând să profităm de șederea noastră aici, să o arăt unui doctor, care să-i facă un examen temeinic, să o supună la un set de analize și să-i dea, eventual, un tratament superior (deși cel de pînă acum, mulțumim lui Dumnezeu, a pus-o pe picioare). Suntem însă îngroziți de prețurile exorbitante ale asistenței medicale de aici; un profesor de primă importanță ia și 500 de dolari, pentru o simplă consultație. Ne gândim totuși, dacă nu se poate recurge la asigurarea de sănătate a Ioanei (amândoi suntem, de altfel, asigurați); compania de asigurări ar plăti, în cazul acesta, cheltuielile medicale. Chiar dacă nu vom izbuti în anul acesta – la anul n-ar strica să ne dăm peste cap și să-i aranjăm un consult. Deși, am impresia că nici un tratament n-ar putea fi mai eficient, în cazul ei, decât clima de aici, care, pur și simplu, face minuni. Nu e vorbă – necazurile reumatice au cam rămas (deși cu mult mai îmblânzite), dar necazurile circulatorii s-au retras de-a dreptul uimitor. În sfârșit, asta rămâne o chestiune de perspectivă.

Dragii noștri, așteptăm mereu vești de la voi, cu mare lăcomie; sperăm să fiți, cu toții, sănătoși și cu voie bună. Ne e mare dor de voi; vă visăm foarte des!

Vă sărută și vă îmbrățișează,  
al vostru fiu, Liviu.

*Abstract*

From 1981 to 1983, Liviu Petrescu (1941-1999), lecturer of Comparative Literature with the “Babeş-Bolyai” University in Cluj, at the time accompanied his wife, Ioana Em. Petrescu (1941-1990, lecturer of Romanian Literature at the same University) to the University of California, Los Angeles, on a Fulbright scholarship. For both of them, that was the only period of their lives when they really lived in a Western world and could pursue their research in a Western university. These letters, sent by Liviu Petrescu, from America, to his parents in Cluj, provide us with a very significant picture of how two Romanian intellectuals could, in those times, relate to the free world, what were their expectations but also their difficulties when living there. A complete edition of the “American letters” sent home both by Liviu and Ioana Petrescu is to be published, based on the discoveries made in the family’s archives, which (after Liviu Petrescu’s death) were deposited at the District Library “O. Goga” from Cluj and are actually studied by a research group coordinated by Ioana Bot.

*Keywords:* Letters, intellectual history, Liviu Petrescu, Ioana Em. Petrescu, Romanian communist era.

## COMPTE RENDUS / BOOK REVIEWS

LAURA ALBULESCU, *Sfinxul. Pierre Bourdieu și literatura. [Le Sphynx. Pierre Bourdieu et la littérature]*. Préface de Mircea Martin. Postface de Bogdan Ghiu, București, Art, 2014, 318 p.

Suivre le trajet d'introduction de P. Bourdieu au public lettré roumain donne l'occasion de réfléchir une fois de plus sur les conditions d'importation et d'inscription d'un schéma théorique contemporain dans une aire assez éloignée (localement, mais aussi en termes de production des savoirs) de son centre d'émergence. Le choix d'un sujet qui porte sur un nom célèbre que celui de P. Bourdieu, universellement plus cité que rigoureusement lu et commenté, suppose au moins deux directions interdépendantes dans l'effort du questionnement réflexif : premièrement, c'est la position du chercheur pionnier, qui fait de son sujet de recherche et de la condition de primauté les noyaux de son effort légitimant – introduire pour la première fois un certain système théorique imprimé à ce genre de travail un air enthousiaste et orgueilleux de 'passeur' primordial ; deuxièmement, c'est la question du terrain d'accueil, plus ou moins préparé à recevoir fécondement l'importation théorique et qui impose au chercheur autochtone un certain dosage entre information, prise de position fonctionnaliste et attention au trajet d'imposition d'un certain thème. L'étude de Laura Albuлесcu, première synthèse roumaine de la pensée théorique de Pierre Bourdieu, favorise visiblement la première direction : 'son' Bourdieu est un Bourdieu dont le profil se construit à travers une biographie de l'œuvre, dans l'effort soutenu de dévoiler sa boîte d'outils sociologiques, ses crédos et ses autoanalyses, son vocabulaire, ses polémiques et ses détracteurs. Mais l'auteure en question jouit d'un double panache : Laura Albuлесcu a fait de Bourdieu le sujet de ses études doctorales (ce *Sphynx*, rappel livresque à la prose gnominique de E. A. Poe, étant la variante largement modifiée de sa thèse), mais elle est également traductrice et éditrice d'une bonne partie des œuvres du sociologue français, parmi lesquelles on distingue de loin la traduction complète des *Règles de l'art* (avec Bogdan Ghiu, 2007, deuxième édition 2012).

En six sections de longueurs variables, l'étude restitue les principaux axes de la pensée sociologique de l'auteur de *La Distinction* ; cette restitution transversale n'oublie rien de principaux termes opératoires devenus 'marque déposée Bourdieu', de *habitus* à *légitimité* et *violence symbolique*, ni de la position essentiellement anti-substantialiste du sociologue français dans le climat intellectuel contemporain. Pour l'auteure roumaine, le système bourdieusien « ne s'accommode pas au schéma du découpage, [il] doit être lu dans son intégralité » (p. 12), puisqu'il est « suffisant, autarchique et relativement fermé. Le *habitus* appelle le champ, la violence symbolique appelle la domination, la trajectoire appelle le vieillissement social etc. et tous ensemble s'appellent réciproquement » (p. 60). Laura Albuлесcu privilégie ce type de lecture tout au long de son étude, en insistant sur l'effort de mobiliser la théorie dans sa totalité pour garantir l'accès à l'interprétation (p. 105) ; ce qui en résulte serait, selon l'auteure, une troisième voie bourdieusienne, qui explique finalement pourquoi le système est vu en tant que 'relativement' fermé, ce qui peut signifier également totalement articulé et interdépendant : « La recherche impatiente d'une tierce solution, ni dualité, ni monisme, c'est pour Bourdieu une *forma mentis* qui parcourt comme un courant souterrain toute son œuvre; elle se traduit par l'incroyable articulation de tous les plans: stylistique ou rhétorique (l'oxymore ou le chiasme comme figures de choix), morphologique (le *habitus* est, en acte, une 'troisième voie') et syntactique (la méthode bourdieusienne est irrémédiablement marquée par l'obsession du relationnel, de la médiation, des homologues). C'est ici que l'on trouve, probablement, la vraie ambition de Bourdieu » (p. 155). On pourrait lire dans cette citation, dont le mirage intentionnaliste est à peine voilé, la substance de l'étude entière : on est devant un travail de

compréhension de la pensée bourdieusienne, un travail de mise en lumière de son *making of*, suivi d'une description de ses effets de connaissance dans la pensée critique de notre temps.

C'est un travail que l'on ne peut qualifier que de très utile dans le champ roumain, où le trajet d'imposition de P. Bourdieu ne bénéficie d'aucune linéarité convaincante: dès les années 1990, son nom s'impose difficilement, à travers des études qui cherchent à mettre au profit l'un ou l'autre de ses concepts (*habitus* pour les sociologues, *légitimité* pour les politistes, *champ* et *autonomie relative* pour les lettrés etc.). Les premières traductions sont publiées avant la chute du communisme (*L'économie des biens symboliques* en 1986, un recueil d'articles de ARSS en 1988), mais sans écho notable : le traducteur, le sociologue Mihai Dinu Gheorghiu, quitte la Roumanie en 1989 et devient l'un des doctorants de Bourdieu lui-même à l'EHESS. La pensée bourdieusienne fait son entrée dans l'espace académique en tant que référence obligatoire des sciences socio-humaines mais en l'absence d'une traduction systémique : il est lu en français ou en traduction anglaise, et l'espace intellectuel roumain approprié premièrement la démarche bourdieusienne, la mise en question et la mise au travail de ses *modi operandi*, dans des études où on vérifie la mobilité d'un tel concept et d'une telle théorie, ses capacités de faire retravailler les faits et les formes du réel. C'est comme si on fait le test pratique, 'l'application' de la réflexion théorique, premier pas d'une opération d'autant plus compliquée et plus laborieuse. La synthèse de Laura Albuiescu vient après quelques remarquables études de sociologie littéraire qui voient le jour au début des années 2000 et où le système bourdieusien est mis au plus large profit : Ioana Popa sur les traductions de l'espace communiste vers la France, Lucia Dragomir et Petru Negură sur les institutions littéraires de Roumanie, Bulgarie et l'ancienne Moldavie soviétique, Ioana Macrea-Toma sur les formes de légitimité officielle des écrivains etc. Une fois prouvée la souplesse méthodologique, le terrain semble préparé pour l'apparition d'une biographie de l'œuvre, qui n'a plus nécessairement le rôle d'introduire Bourdieu au public roumain (en 2014 on compte déjà une dizaine de titres traduits, presque tous avec un solide appareil de présentation – préfaces ou postfaces, études introductives, dossiers critiques), mais de marquer une étape réflexive dans le trajet d'importation : ne plus penser avec Bourdieu, mais penser sur lui, sur son système et sa postérité.

Dans l'étude de Laura Albuiescu, cet effort de compréhension est rendu plus visible surtout dans la première section (*Quelques concepts opérationnels*) et dans la cinquième (*L'autobiographie entre personnel et impersonnel*), où le travail de réflexion dépasse la démarche descriptive et place la pensée sociologique de Bourdieu dans une logique de la rupture admirablement tracée. En ce qui concerne le rapport de sa pensée à la littérature même, la substance de la deuxième et de la troisième section, les choix de l'auteure vont vers un découpage qui privilégie toujours le fonctionnement relationnel du système bourdieusien. Selon l'auteure, « le piège de cet volume était d'enclaver artificiellement les contenus, selon une 'spécialisation' quelconque, c'est-à-dire de ne lire que les textes sur la littérature, déjà identifiés par la bibliographie, à travers une lecture hâtée » (p. 274) ; par conséquent, elle regarde de près le fondement de la théorie des champs (à partir de l'article « Haute couture et haute culture », repris dans *Questions de sociologie*, qu'elle qualifie comme ayant « le poids d'un vrai manifeste », p. 119), déclare l'espace littéraire un objet privilégié de cette théorie et utilise le volume de Pascale Casanova de 2011, *Kafka en colère*, comme exemple définitif de la pertinence et viabilité théorique du concept de champ littéraire : « probablement la plus créative, la plus ample et la plus élaborée tentative d'appliquer le concept de champ (littéraire) à une autre espace, sans s'inscrire d'aucune manière dans l'orthodoxie des épigones, [ce volume] nous dit que oui, le champ garde son efficacité analytique. Donc la théorie des champs, malgré son évidente perfectibilité – d'ailleurs reconnue par son auteur même – n'est pas du tout une théorie régionale » (p. 123).

D'habitude très attentive à démanteler la moindre objection de ceux qu'elle appelle, d'une manière assez téméraire, « les détracteurs » de Bourdieu (de Jeannine Verdès-Leroux à Pierre Verdrager, mais la série inclut également des noms qui font une sociologie critique tout à fait respectable, comme c'est le cas de Luc Boltanski), l'auteure enregistre sans trop de commentaires les deux théories concurrentes, celle d'Alain Viala sur la naissance de l'institution littéraire et celle de

Bernard Lahire sur l'homme pluriel (mais, assez surprenant, sans renvoyer au concept de *jeu littéraire* de ce dernier). On ressent également comme nécessaire, dans une étude qui marque dans son sous-titre la relation de la pensée bourdieusienne avec le domaine littéraire, un rappel à l'ouvrage coordonné par Jean-Pierre Martin, *Bourdieu et la littérature* (Nantes, éditions Cécile Defaut, 2010), ne fût-ce que pour la contribution de Marielle Macé sur la présence du style chez Bourdieu. La question du style, substance de la quatrième section de l'étude, doit beaucoup à l'expérience de traductrice de Laura Albuлесcu : elle identifie exemplairement « la fondamentale cohérence entre langage et pensée » (p. 205) et dresse une liste d'indices rhétoriques de positionnement, de l'oxymore aux guillemets et à la chiasmophilie, vus comme partie intégrante d'une « rhétorique de la dissociation » (p. 210).

Toutes les sections contribuent, dans cette étude, à la reconstruction savante d'un système de pensée. Enthousiaste pionnière et consciente de son imbattable position, Laura Albuлесcu marque une étape essentielle dans la réception roumaine de P. Bourdieu. Ce serait d'autant plus instructif de suivre les étapes futures du trajet d'imposition du sociologue français dans le terrain roumain, de voir ce qui viendra après une synthèse critique : une véhémence délimitation, une deuxième synthèse, une traduction monographique ou une nouvelle « étude de cas » ?

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CAIUS DOBRESCU, *Plăcerea de a gândi, moștenirea intelectuală a criticii literare românești (1960-1989), ca expresie identitară într-un tablou cultural al culturilor cognitive [The Pleasure Of Thinking. The Intellectual Heritage of Romanian Literary Criticism (1960-1989), as an Identity Marker within a Global Map of Cognitive Cultures]*, București, Editura Muzeului Național al Literaturii Române, 2013, 322 p.

The presence of the literary critic at the center of Romanian cultural life seems like a natural occurrence at first, given that there were very few to have either questioned this matter-of-course centrality, inquired as to its origins or, indeed, think it anything else than innate to a culture whose modern intellectual history has been written, and in a certain – positive – sense, overrun by its humanists.

In his book, Caius Dobrescu doesn't question it either. What he does is something far less easy and, as will be evident shortly, necessary. When talking of Romanian literary criticism after the Second World War and, specifically, of the critics that were active under the communist regime, the scholars of the period have settled into the legitimate habit of analyzing the shadow that state power throws over the practice of criticism, how state sanctioned practices collide with – and sometimes annul – academic liberties (and all other liberties altogether) and lastly, how Romanian philologists have had to walk a thin line between obeisance of political oppressive norms and their own work, which either had nothing to do with the norms it had to follow or, as was sometimes the case, went against them. Dobrescu focuses not on the warring cultural terrain where literary judgment meets power, but on providing us with an explanation for why it was the literary critic in particular that was so often caught in these clashes, having to mediate, to translate, to explain, to find midways or to

offer opposition to interferences that might have threatened the already fragile autonomy of the cultural field.

On borrowing from Norbert Elias' *The Civilizing Process*, the center-point of his theory runs as follows: if the critic is a charismatic figure in Romanian cultural life, as indeed he is, this isn't merely the result of a historical glitch, but the outcome of a long-term series of events starting as far back as the Enlightenment. Unlike his West-European counterpart, over-specialized and weary of any theory reminiscent of *la grande critique* of past centuries, "in the tradition of Romanian modernization, the literary critic hails from *le philosophe* of the nineteenth century, a synthesis of the liberal aristocrat, establishing himself ["*împământenit*"] through the feeling that it is his right to take part in the tradition of the local social elites."

As such, Dobrescu adds, the Romanian critic's "intellectual curiosity", his employment of "rhetorical elegance", his laboring from inside a tradition of cultural sovereignty has turned him into a "vector of modern sociability", a source of "manifest social discourse", has made him an agent "of the local version of what Norbert Elias termed the civilizing process". In Dobrescu's view, Romanian critics think criticism not merely as the craft of reading and reacting to literary texts, of ranking masterpieces and writing prolegomena, but as the updated, modernized ethos that permeated and made possible the culture of the French salons of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The intricate rules and mannerisms of the salons, their model of polite conversation, the emphasis on taste, the high standard of civility of that ethos – all these are things which have found their way into the *conceptual toolbox* of the critic and may explain why he occupies such a central position in Romanian cultural life, a centrality which, be it noted, does not close in on itself but remains inherently open.

However, Dobrescu is careful to state that, even if literary criticism is born at the same time as the literary salon, by the end of nineteenth century it is "no longer a reflex or a component of salon culture. It has become autonomous, it has absorbed and made virtual a structure and communicative culture that were based on the pleasure, freedom and aristocratic gratuity of thinking which were then articulated with bourgeois preoccupations for rigor, precision, coherence, merit, careful use of concepts, and intellectual property."

And it is precisely this culture "of the pleasure of thinking" that the communist regime had tried to undermine and even actively sought to destroy through bureaucratization, censorship and the requirement that intellectuals concede to the politico-philosophical norms of the communist dogma.

In the second part of the book, Dobrescu analyzes works by three Romanian critics of the postwar period: Eugen Simion, Nicolae Manolescu and Mircea Martin, trying to prove how each transfers the desiderata of the Enlightenment ethos into his own work, making criticism into a trans-disciplinary, open, "cognitive practice". Acknowledging that sometimes critics need to pretend and *play nice* under the watchful eyes of the regime, it is Dobrescu's belief that the discipline's core is so profoundly democratic that it cannot but remain independent, open and sometimes even antagonistic. Each of the three critics are aware that a critical endeavor is also, genuinely, a civic enterprise. Or, in Mircea Martin's words: "a meditation on our contemporary literature becomes, in the precise meaning of the term, a meditation on Romanian society".

The often-quoted and as often barely proved "resistance through culture" thus gains new meaning. The thesis that Romanian postwar criticism holds out against the repressive nature of the regime by its innate civility and fundamental openness is believable, argued with much acumen and relying on a (at times frightening) wealth of sources. I would argue, though, that trying to prove what is essentially a societal theory with close-readings of critical texts is useful, but not sufficient. What critics wrote shows what they thought and only obliquely, if at all, how they acted or how they shaped the cultural scenery or how the cultural scenery changed about them as a result of their theories and practices. It would have been interesting to see how criticism performs what it theorizes, through what channels, if any, it leads to a form of civic commitment that might remain deeply cultural and, at the same time, of a profoundly social importance, mirroring, however slightly, the changes that were afoot in the French Enlightenment.

But this of course would require another book, and we can not blame the author of having not written it, since he has already written one which gives us the most interesting and studied explanation to date of why it was the critic, and not the philosopher or the scientist, that occupied the junction point of Romanian culture.

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OANA FOTACHE, *Moșteniri intermitente. O altă istorie a teoriei literare* [*Des héritages intermittents. Une autre histoire de la théorie littéraire*], București, Editura Universității din București, 2013, 170 p.

L'idée qui traverse ces essais est bien synthétisée dans le titre qui parle de l'« intermittence » de l'héritage théorique. Oana Fotache situe d'emblée sa réflexion dans l'espace périlleux des entraves qui menacent le transfert du savoir théorique : l'incompréhension ou l'aveuglement face à la visée des idées, l'éloignement géographique, l'appartenance à une culture périphérique ou démunie de ressources littéraires, la clôture politique ou économique. L'intermittence – c'est-à-dire la transmission irrégulière des théories en fonction des décalages, des découvertes imprévisibles et des résurgences inattendues – participe à une véritable pathologie de l'isolation qui conditionne toute activité réflexive dans le monde des lettres. Il faut se rappeler la célèbre modélisation anthropologique du travail intellectuel faite par Tony Becher et Paul Trowler en 1989 (*Academic Tribes and Territories*) et reprise par Jean-Marie Schaeffer, dans son essai de 2011, *Petite écologie des études littéraires*. Entre le modèle de connaissance dans les sciences dures et celui des sciences humaines il y a la différence entre une organisation « urbaine » (forte concentration des chercheurs, agglomération sur des terrains de travail partagés, communication intense) et une organisation « rurale » (des espaces de réflexion individuels, écartés à l'instar des fermes isolées, et surtout une faible fréquentation des lieux communs, de rencontre avec les autres spécialistes). C'est notamment ce manque d'homogénéisation du champ lettré, réitéré dans une longue histoire de la méconnaissance des traditions théoriques à l'Est ou à l'Ouest, qui nourrit le fort pessimisme à l'égard de la possibilité d'accommoder les études littéraires aux nouvelles exigences de la recherche empruntées des sciences exactes.

Le rapport de Oana Fotache avec l'« intermittence » est plus complexe. Plutôt que de la stigmatiser, l'auteure essaie d'en faire la principale articulation d'une réflexion générale sur la littérature. Envisagée comme seule possibilité de penser la réalité des idées dans le champ littéraire, l'« intermittence » y devient un moyen indispensable pour la description de tout geste théorique. Les repères les plus importants de ce questionnement proviennent de l'espace anglo-saxon où depuis une trentaine d'années on privilégie l'interprétation contextuelle des idées littéraires. Ce sont des analyses qui mettent en évidence la manière d'appropriation et les déformations impliquées par les usages locaux, tout en montrant la rupture avec la source d'origine. Oana Fotache articule cette perspective autour de la notion d'« héritage », également mise en vedette par le titre du recueil. L'essai qui ouvre le livre, « Des rythmes de la succession. Héritage et tradition dans la théorie littéraire », développe l'« héritage » comme un concept fort, pour désigner une dimension particulière de la transmission des idées. La notion est soigneusement différenciée des autres formes de la filiation – de l'influence et de la tradition. Tandis que ces notions expriment une dette envers la source originelle du savoir théorique, assumée par l'engagement individuel (l'influence) ou collectif (la tradition), l'héritage désigne une « actualisation en fonction de la forme mentale des successeurs ». Au cœur de cette

distinction se trouve une opposition par rapport à la logique du don : ce qui est « hérité » engage le sujet dans une entreprise de réévaluation massive des contenus, libérée de toute « donation », au point d'effacer l'autorité de l'origine.

Si on la compare aux analyses d'Edward Saïd, souvent évoquées dans les pages du livre, on saisit la visée radicale de cette proposition. Dans ces célèbres démonstrations qui suivent la réception des théories de l'Hongrois Georg Lukács à Paris, à Oxford ou en Inde on voit non pas seulement les altérations dues aux différents contextes sociaux et intellectuels, mais aussi la présence des médiateurs, des points de relais ou des personnages ayant des rapports privilégiés avec la source. Ce n'est pas par hasard qu'au centre de ces narrations se trouve Lucien Goldmann, celui qui apporte à Paris les idées de Lukács et qui était l'élève de celui-ci. Avec Saïd on est toujours dans la logique d'une succession linéaire : il y a un sens du voyage, du chemin parcouru, bref, de la carrière d'une thèse à travers des espaces, des cultures et des temporalités. En revanche, Oana Fotache s'intéresse plutôt à la redécouverte soudaine – sans continuité sensible – des grandes idées qui caractérisent de manière stable, anthropologique je dirais, le domaine des lettres. Je retiens, parmi les exemples qu'elle donne, celui de la redécouverte brusque de l'idée de *Weltliteratur* au début des années '90. Bonne illustration des « intermittences », ce thème revient dans l'histoire selon un rythme irrégulier et imprévisible, qui écarte d'emblée toute forme de filiation. Jérôme David, qui fait la synthèse du parcours sinueux de la littérature mondiale dans son livre de 2012, *Les Spectres de Goethe*, intitule ses chapitres en fonction des dates et des lieux qui scandent les retours de cette idée. Ce procédé met en évidence l'hétérogénéité irréductible des contextes, l'émergence essentiellement discontinue de l'idée : Weimar 1827, Bruxelles 1847, Chicago 1911, Istanbul 1952, New York 1999 etc.

Ce qui soutient une telle narration de la récurrence de la théorie n'est plus ni telle « dette », ni tel contact, mais la rencontre du théoricien avec une réalité du monde, de la société ou de l'être humain. L'idée de *Weltliteratur* refait surface de manière si abrupte parce qu'une nécessité – d'un temps ou d'un espace – la réclame. Autrement dit, la redécouverte de la théorie engage, même avant sa dimension doctrinaire, une dimension éthique. Je rapprocherais la perspective historique de Oana Fotache des « survivances » que Giorgio Agamben essaie de penser de nos jours en partant de Walter Benjamin. Ce que l'auteure tente de décrire ce sont les réapparitions du savoir théorique sans parcours, sans chemin et sans « friction » culturelle, comme une brusque réincarnation dans un autre lieu. Une belle citation, empruntée de Northrop Frye, évoque cette pureté de l'héritage théorique : « des conventions ignorées ou oubliées se matérialisent soudainement de nouveau, comme les anges qui ne se déplacent pas dans le temps ou dans l'espace mais tout simplement deviennent visibles ailleurs ». On aspire ici vers une histoire de la théorie libérée de ses sous-entendus et surtout des « lois » qui articulent son inscription dans le temps et dans l'espace (prééminence temporelle des inventions théoriques et primauté géographique des centres culturels). Une histoire composée uniquement des émergences soudaines, sous la seule emprise d'une urgence locale : « je crois qu'on peut écrire une histoire de la théorie, surtout celle contemporaine, tout en comptant les récurrences, les reprises, les fidélités et les hérésies » (p. 21).

Le sommaire du livre évoque plusieurs contextes d'accueil de la théorie. Un essai sur l'inscription de la nouveauté dans la théorie littéraire moderne (« La Fascination de la nouveauté. Des topoï de l'histoire littéraire chez Frye, Guillén et Moretti »), un autre sur la théorie est-européenne et son destin tardif (« L'héritage central et est-européen dans la théorie littéraire »), un article sur la notion du nœud dans l'histoire littéraire contemporaine (« Des nœuds et des creux. L'histoire littéraire comparée, une carte schématique de la littérature »), un autre sur la situation de l'exil roumain par rapport au champ national (« Le refus de l'héritage ? Monica Lovinescu et la tradition esthétique dans la critique roumaine ») etc.. Sur ces contextes – visiblement différents – l'auteure essaie de porter le même regard. C'est un effort de décentrer la théorie littéraire, en montrant qu'elle émane à l'Est ou à l'Ouest, dans les débats spécialisés ou dans les problèmes de l'histoire littéraire, dans des questions abstraites ou dans les préoccupations éthiques. Car ce que Oana Fotache essaie de circonscrire n'est pas une production de théorie (avec tout ce que cela suppose – inventivité, écoles, prestige), mais plutôt une *activité de théorisation*, accessible partout et à n'importe qui. Elle est liée à l'usage libéré

des références, et à une certaine énergie critique par rapport aux repères donnés d'une discipline. Il suffit une simple distance par rapport à ses instruments de pensée ou par rapport à la représentation de sa propre littérature, pour engager la force créatrice d'une intermittence. Je cite la phrase finale de l'essai sur l'histoire littéraire contemporaine : « Si la nouvelle histoire comparée offrait au moins un regard aliéné sur ses objets et sur soi-même, et une attitude lucide par rapport à ses objectives et à ses possibilités, cela constituerait un progrès... » (p. 54).

On ne peut pas apprécier les retombées d'une telle proposition sur la base des articles qui doivent leurs enjeux – au moins en partie – aux circonstances. Je peux toutefois me risquer de dire que Oana Fotache reconstruit cette « liberté » propre à l'activité théorique autour du *habitus* individuel. La disposition qui décide l'actualisation du savoir théorique n'est pas celle d'une société, d'une époque ou d'un événement historique, mais elle tient plutôt à la posture et aux choix faits par le théoricien comme sujet singulier. Oana Fotache insiste – et cela démarque sa perspective – sur les déterminations personnelles qui encadrent l'articulation des idées. L'usage de la théorie dépend des expériences de vie ou de lecture : en revenant sur le trajet de Tzvetan Todorov (« L'histoire d'une carrière intellectuelle : Tzvetan Todorov »), elle explique sa brusque découverte de l'anthropologie et son abandon de la sémiotique non pas par un changement de génération, ni par un effet de mode, sinon par des expériences individuelles. Dans un autre essai dédié à la figure de l'exilé roumaine Monica Lovinescu, cette liberté est située en fonction du positionnement éthique individuel par rapport à l'espace littéraire et politique national. D'ailleurs, il faut souligner l'intérêt de Oana Fotache pour la conduite de l'exilé, une réalité spécifique aux pays de l'Europe de l'Est pendant le régime communiste. Un peu comme le concept de « dissidence » chez Blanchot, l'exil conjugue l'engagement éthique et la solitude. Il représente la possibilité d'un individu de penser autrement et de s'affranchir non pas d'une discipline, ni d'une tradition – mais du *habitus* du champ national, d'une manière de faire qui est propre à une communauté historique, des pratiques collectives de valorisation et de représentation de la littérature. Néanmoins, il faut remarquer que cette interprétation de l'activité théorique comporte une certaine ambiguïté morale : dans un mélange caractéristique, l'exil est en même temps la chance d'une prise de distance et une condamnation à l'isolement, une expérience ambivalente de l'individualisation, à la fois comme liberté qu'on gagne et comme peine qu'on subit.

Cette hypostase extrême nous aide à comprendre la véritable visée de la liberté engagée par l'activité théorique. Au moins en partie, la démarche de Oana Fotache est justifiée par la situation de la théorie dans les cultures est-européennes. Au demeurant, cette solitude de l'activité théorique reflète la posture fragile du théoricien dans le cadre d'une littérature mineure. Doublement marginalisé, d'un côté par les grands producteurs de théorie et de l'autre par les principaux acteurs du champ littéraire, il est obligé à mener un combat pour la reconnaissance, à la fois à l'intérieur de l'espace national, et à l'extérieur de celui-ci. C'est pourquoi, au cœur de la notion d'« héritage » se trouve une idée d'émancipation qui vise simultanément une certaine géographie symbolique de la théorie littéraire et les conditionnements nationaux qui contraignent l'activité théorique. Il s'agit, avec une expression que Oana Fotache utilise dans un de ses essais, de « gagner son héritage », d'obtenir son droit de penser la littérature.

La redécouverte brusque des théories ou des lectures, par dé-territorialisation et dislocation, est un enjeu fort pour notre époque que l'on appelle, dans sa version politique, « actualisation ». Il ne manque pas les voix qui en font une « arme », un programme d'action des études littéraires, comme c'est le cas de nombreuses interventions récentes de Yves Citton. Je crois que c'est notamment ce mouvement entre connaissance et politique qui doit être retenu du livre de Oana Fotache. Plus qu'une histoire de la théorie littéraire contemporaine, *Les héritages intermittents* soutiennent une réflexion sur la possibilité-même de la théorie littéraire. Elle est d'autant plus importante qu'elle constitue une des rares tentatives d'engager dans ce combat le positionnement singulier du théoricien est-européen.

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ALEX GOLDIȘ, *Critica în tranșee. De la realismul socialist la autonomia estetică* [*Criticism in the Trenches. From Socialist Realism to Aesthetic Autonomy*], București, Cartea Românească, 2011, 288 p.

Romanian criticism during the first decades of communism has been often regarded as embodying an absence: the lack of what might be called authentic voice, that is, a type of discourse which does not dissimulate its belonging to a certain tradition of thought. The majority of authors manifesting their presence in the field of literary criticism play against their own beliefs concerning aesthetic value and the principles of representation of reality. The title chosen by Alex Goldiș for his thesis on this shady interval of thought points out to the underlying tension between the official culture supported by the Communist Party and the resistance of the directions aiming to pursue the Interwar literary tradition. The book exploits the dimensions of conflict between ideology and literary aestheticism as it progresses through the first decades of Romanian communism, and it proceeds from an uncommon angle, that of delineating unacknowledged or even involuntary mixtures and negotiations of the two nuclei. The author states that although originally the focus of his research was to point out “the main theoretical frameworks in Post-war Romanian criticism”, the purpose of his study gradually developed towards decoding and discussing what was hidden behind the permanent mutual “jamming of intentions and stakes” in Romanian culture during the communist regime. Goldiș relentlessly underlines that the two main directions in approaching literature hardly ever faced each other openly in gripping confrontation. Instead, the opposition rather consisted of duplicitous strategies of the belligerents, and of tactical discursive manoeuvres focused on avoiding to challenge the opponent explicitly.

The first chapters of the book focus on the functions of the dogmatic socialist realism critic, who had to be able to provide the general directions for the “evolution” of literature, mainly by succeeding in eliminating the former aesthetic principles developed by Romanian writers. In this first part of his analysis, Goldiș proves that if the critic needed to attack a writer’s position, this already represented a partial failure in accomplishing his mission. The forces at work during the first decade of communism tended towards achieving a levelling of the discourse, an “absence of perspectivism” (p. 37) in what the author names “integral socialist realism”. The critic must become the “absolute administrator of the Romanian literary heritage” (p. 42), a mission which is bound to fail due to its radical claims. Therefore, Goldiș’s study becomes not so much the analysis of a battle, but a history of the fall of socialist realism, as engendered by internal causes. As Bianca Burța-Cernat noticed in her review from *Observatorul Cultural* (no. 610, February 2012) or Mihaela Urșă also wrote in *Revista Apostrof*, no. 2/ 2012, the author acts as the narrator of a peculiar smoldering conflict, based rather on the perseverance of both sides than on spectacular “troop movements”.

Initially, we are faced with an unprecedented amount of debates, all of them engaging in the same type of demarche, strengthening the position of ideological rough statements such as denying any kind of reality except for the one postulated by the intentions of the political regime. Literary texts which may seem only vaguely disconnected from the guidelines of the Party are quickly dismissed as inimical. *Criticism in the Trenches* follows this ruthless and, above all, discretionary campaign and identifies its main strategies and resources as they occur fundamentally in the periodical publications, which are found to be often more relevant for the tension of the directions than the criticism books themselves.

The author coins the concept of “minimalist socialist realism”, as a milder stage of the “integral” version, stemming after 1953 from the discontent with the “gratuitous embellishment of reality” (p. 45) practiced originally by the dogmatic writers. He also delineates the role of the few critics who timidly tried to suggest, around 1956-1957, a widening of the scope of literary trends and approaches to reality, by referring to modes of integrating features of classicism or modernism into the validated directions. Critics such as Vera Călin or G. Munteanu attempted to complain about the scarcity of

variations on the topics provided by the “legitimate” focus on the new social arrangement. Therefore, G. Călinescu or Tudor Vianu are reinvested, to some extent, with the symbolic authority of models in criticism, for their unparalleled proficiency in stylistic analysis or in the “art of the critical portrayal” (p. 63). Although the efforts to building up the discourse of desired autonomy are frequently neutralized by the critics remaining faithful to the political engagement, such as Horia Bratu, Ion Vitner, Ov.S. Crohmălniceanu, or Eugen Luca, their statements remain significant as endorsers of the fact that the aesthetic direction was still trying to resist under the veil of “wooden language” (*langue du bois*). The abnormality of this restrained survival consists in the fact that aesthetic criticism has to permanently dwell on the topics allowed by the dominant voices and that all of its utterances have a prophylactic sense rather than a combative one.

After listing and illustrating the main discursive traits of the opposing groups of the decade, Goldiș moves on to highlighting the amplitude of the effects of “ideological thaw”. In discussing the “Transition Period. Trench Warfare”, he investigates the discrete rise to prominence of young critics who gradually managed to deactivate the clichés of the ‘50s. This chapter is relevant for stressing the role of the first occurrences of the names of those which were going to become the main representatives of aesthetic autonomism – Matei Călinescu, Eugen Simion, G. Dimisianu, N. Manolescu, Mircea Tomuș, George Gană, and so on. By means of refreshing the critical vocabulary and pointing out the perfunctory character of the so-called polemical texts, they succeeded in encouraging a reconnection with the literary tradition before the War. In spite of the damage caused by works such as Crohmălniceanu’s *For the Socialist Realism*, the infamous label designed to be synonymous with critical legitimacy almost disappears until 1964, as Goldiș remarks. The young critics resisted the accusations of being “retrogressive”, “cosmopolitans” or “decadent” and managed to subtly impose their preferences in reading and to alter the spectrum of references which became models for Romanian criticism and theory. An important feature of the first half of the seventh decade is the simultaneity of literary and critical debuts. Along with the new generation of critics, poets such as Nichita Stănescu, Cezar Baltag, Gh. Tomozei or prose writers such as Fănuș Neagu, D.R. Popescu, Vasile Rebreanu contribute to the revival of a certain degree of authenticity in literary discourse on all of its levels.

Goldiș’s effort to systematize the options of criticism in this decade results in outlining a few cases of reassessing the literary heritage. He also allots serious analytical attention to the path towards debating the “Realism Without Shores”, a subtitle alluding to Garaudy’s book on *realisme sans rivage*, which has stirred manifold reactions around the idea of determinism in literature: “the dogmatists were actually militating for a limited realism, while the liberalists were pleading for a «borderless nonrealism».” (p. 97).

This central part of the book, the only one with a title chosen as to explicitly repeat the idea in the main one, brings to the reader’s attention a phenomenon as obvious as it was often overlooked by other analyses focusing on the same period. Just like with any other thing or principle which has long been the object of interdiction or of paucity, aestheticism and the literature which takes its distance from the confines of socialist realism tend to fall into the trap of overuse, of exaggeration. Thus they are an easy prey for the (still) dogmatic critics, who do not cease to plead against what they define as abuses of the “oneiric”, the “inner universe”, the “intimacy”, the “originality” and other recurrent notions which prevail in the new critical discourse and in the new literary texts.

Goldiș emphasizes that these exercises in compromise and negotiating nuances of key concepts of the decade gradually leads to the critics’ earning a more skillful use of ambiguity. We are provided with several types of examples, such as the neutral, yet “politically correct” phrase employed by Matei Călinescu when referring to Nina Cassian’s Stalinist poems: “ethical values specific to our contemporaneity” (p. 111). These types of constructions, minor as they may seem, slowly open a space towards inserting the preoccupation for traits of literary language and devices, thus making the transition to the so-called structuralist direction in Romanian criticism. Another major point of the study is the firm statement that the *Instauration of Aesthetic Autonomy* was actually a favor granted by the political power as one of the chief measures adopted by the Ninth Congress held in 1965 under

the Ceaușescu regime. The rehabilitation of the aesthetic criticism is represented, amongst other emblems, by G. Călinescu's symbolic authority, rising again to prominence after the critic's death.

Before proceeding to the analysis of ten books typical for the seventh decade "immanent criticism", Goldiș attempts to structure another main section of the book around the affinity of the Romanian literary field with the French one, by pointing out the strong resemblance between the opposing forces and the adversity between Roland Barthes and Raymond Picard, with the former's demonstration of the symbolic and plural nature of language. The analogy is sustained by some features of the Romanian debates and leads to the development of the chapters concerning the triumph of the essay and the study of the "autonomous universe" instated by the work of art.

One of the achievements of Alex Goldiș's book is the consistency of the demonstration with the premise, as indeed "most of the times it is hard to decide to what extent a text belongs to the individual author and how large the contribution of the superindividual author is (the Party, the censorship, self-censorship, etc.)" (p. 8). The "trenches" which shelter or, on the contrary, accidentally expose the critical discourse are clearly mapped by the study, therefore making it possible to understand more thoroughly the dynamics of the peculiar Post-war literary field.

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ANDREI TERIAN, *Critica de export. Teorii, concepte, ideologii* [*Export Criticism. Theories, Concepts, Ideologies*], București, Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române, 2013, 346 p.

Romanian researchers of literature have been preoccupied, since 1990, more with domestic issues, such as aesthetical or ethical revisions of national writers, than with the influence of international theory at home and with the place of Romanian studies on the international academic market. In the last decade there has been a Romanian boom in studies on the discourse and institutions of literary criticism which coincided with the turn in the foreign policies of financing research. Both of them led to the constitution of a metadiscourse that came to overcome the old obsession of the need to "synchronize" with Europe and to formulate more precise methodological suggestions.

Meanwhile, the new generation of critics and literary theorists, in which Andrei Terian himself takes part, has witnessed a crisis in literary studies on multiple levels. On the one hand, there has been an unprecedented diversification of theories and instruments that may be applied in the analysis of cultural processes, thanks to globalization and to the fields of study that, rather than investigating the aesthetic and textuality, are concerned with political ethnic, regional, and gender issues. At the same time, prestigious schools came to question from the inside their paradigms, narrowly investigating their core assumptions, such as in comparative literature. However useful this auto critical inspection might be, in a space where centres of authority fade away, the circulation of theory becomes very problematic. Which principles may guide the import of theory, in a space where authority is relative and subject to competition?

Andrei Terian's book *Export criticism. Theories, Concepts, Ideologies* discusses several of these problems with regard to Romanian literature and criticism in the last decades. I shall discuss here Terian's book having in mind the topic of localizing theory. The author defines export criticism as „that critical discourse which retains some relevance beyond the strictly locally, regional or national context where it has arisen”. In his opinion, literary criticism – even when produced inside a semi-

peripheral culture such as Romanian culture – is more exportable than the literature that it used as support. Therefore, for Terian criticism mustn't be defined as a secondary discourse that elaborates on a primary one, which is literature. After all, criticism is not bound to speak about literary works, writers, themes and narrative strategies. Without stating this explicitly, the author signals in several places in his book criticism's divorce from literature, for example in the rhetoric of his *Argument*: criticism is more easily transmissible to a foreign audience than literature because „it has a much more pronounced conceptual structure than purely literary genres, which makes it more exportable even when there is no translation of the works it comments”. But if literature, once the linguistic barrier is overcome, has a universal communicative potential, this is not the case of criticism. To prove itself relevant outside of its culture of provenance, criticism must carefully construct the intelligibility of its own discourse. If literature and its old values no longer represent a common language inside the discipline, theory is called to edify a critical language that is comprehensible outside national boundaries.

One question may be if Romanian criticism is exportable as such, with its tradition of already sedimented theory imports, or if it is in need of an import of theory in order to become exportable. Andrei Terian's answer leans towards the second alternative, making clear that the solution is not the import of contemporary “hip” theory, but rather the adoption of a set of practices that might help autochthonous criticism escape its entrenchment with the “national” horizon. His main methodological propositions are the adoption of rigorousness and adequacy in the critical discourse, evading the allusiveness and impressionism of the post-war decades, practicing historical and geographical framing in order to situate Romanian literature in the system of world literature, and a stronger inclusion of this object of study in several disciplines: Romance studies, East-European studies or semi-peripheral literatures (as opposed to the inadequate equivalence between postcommunism and postcolonialism).

The five sections of the book: *A Bit of Theory, Looking (from and) towards the East, Criticism and Ideology in (Post)communist Romanian Culture, Figures and Discourses, The History of Romanian Literature in the Age of Globalization* offer not only an analysis of the complex factors that prevent the spread of Romanian criticism abroad, but also configure possible starting points for the process of becoming relevant on a world stage. One such occasion is the “space turn” in contemporary historiography which, putting aside the risk of losing a historical perspective, offers several alternative frames in which to situate Romanian literature and culture in a transnational “imagined community” (to quote Benedict Anderson). *Looking (from and) towards the East*, one of the most interesting chapters in the book, analyses closely the projects of such literary histories, among which there are those coordinated by Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer (*History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe*) or by Franco Moretti (*Atlas of the European Novel: 1800-1900*). However, according to Terian, cultural geography loses sight of “the strongly fictionalized genres, such as poetry and anti-mimetic prose”, favouring „factual genres, such as cultural histories or travel literature”. In the case of Romanian culture, another alternative would prove more effective: that of a spatial reading that would rely not on imagology, but on the relation of national literatures in a certain region with the system of world literature, as defined by David Damrosch in *What is World Literature*. National literatures in the Second World (a phrase coined in the 1950s by historian Alfred Sauvy) cannot be reduced to a type and judged by the rote of postcolonial studies. Andrei Terian convincingly demonstrates that there is no Central and East-European (post)colonialism, because such a hypothesis is neither legitimate, nor efficient. As a political reality, the thesis of a “remote” (post)colonialism of Central and East-European countries indebted to England and France is not tenable. And as a frame for reading, postcolonialism has no utility in the East-European space: “if we simply identify colonialism with any form of dependence/ domination”, the specificity of the concept is lost, and its explanatory potential is nullified.

The answer to the question I formulated in my second paragraph is given by the practice of this distant reading: for Andrei Terian, the legitimacy and efficiency of a concept are the two essential criteria in the process of importing theory. Returning to the case of Romanian culture, Terian pleads

for defining it as a “system”: “like any other product with identitary virtues, [literature] is the place of a continuous negotiation, a system which is constantly (re)producing”. Watched from a distance, all literatures (“minimal ethno-literary communities”, as Dionyz Ďurišin defined them) interact with those in their vicinity, generating forms of interdependence that function in a determined time and space. Using *world-system analysis*, a theory elaborated by Immanuel Wallerstein, the power relationship between a major culture and its satellites may be perceived in a much more nuanced manner, since a culture may play, at the same time, the role of centre and periphery. On this map of interdependence that is continuously redefined, Romanian literature may find its place among the “semi-peripheral literatures”, if one accepts as its satellite post-1989 Bessarabian literature.

The ideas formulated by Andrei Terian in *Export Criticism* have the double quality of proposing a way to follow, and at the same time opening several themes for future conceptual debates. However, the concern for nuance and dissociation is lessened in some subchapters of his book, for instance in the one discussing the influence of translated theory on the critical discourse in Romania, from its beginning to postcommunism. The “methodological delay” of autochthonous criticism diagnosed by Terian will not be resolved by the import of new methods, but by the capacity to bring old ones to a new life. The international popularity of Mihail Bahtin’s studies nowadays, to give only one example of a theorist who was early and constantly read in Romanian literature, demonstrates that the bridges with the European critical discourse may equally be found in our local cultural tradition.

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EUGEN NEGRICI, *Iluziile literaturii române [The Illusions of Romanian Literature]*, București, Cartea Românească, 2008, 296 p.

The essay published by Eugen Negrici in 2008 lines up, due to its programmatic title and for other reasons as well, with a series of attempts to review and lay bare Romanian literary tradition and the local cultural heritage, classified, in Western terms, by phrases such as “the School of Resentment” (Harold Bloom) or the “hermeneutics of suspicion” (Paul Ricoeur). Nevertheless, Negrici’s book does not explicitly commit its analysis to Western deconstructive methodologies (since the obsession with conceptual synchronization is constantly mocked at) and, likewise, the Romanian anti-canonical orientations are not considered adequate theoretical models. For example, the moral, “East-ethic” revisionism (as launched by Monica Lovinescu’s criticism) seems to be influenced by ideological propensities when compared with the unifying and integrating approach of *Iluziile literaturii române*. While the ethic revisionism established during the decade subsequent to the 1989 Revolution relativized or challenged the canonical position of the writers who stood in with the communist regime or with the so-called “neo-communist” ones (in 1990-1996), Negrici rebukes the opportunism and moral compromises of the pre-/inter-war writers. Moreover, the critic also denounces the canonization of such figures at odds with the political power of the time as, for instance, Lucian Blaga, Ion Barbu, Vasile Voiculescu, or Mircea Eliade. Similarly, the revisions undertaken by the ‘80s generation of literary critics and historians are also rejected on grounds of their ideology, as generating – in a narcissistic-Bovaric manner – the myth of Romanian postmodernism.

Negrici is inclined to partially acknowledge two sources of inspiration, namely Mircea Martin’s 1981 study, *G. Călinescu și „complexele” literaturii române (G. Călinescu and the “Complexes” of*

*Romanian Literature*), and the historiographical revision promoted by Lucian Boia in *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească (History and Myth in Romanian Conscience, 1997)*, although the author of *Iluziile literaturii române* seems closer to the historian rather than the literary critic and theorist, in his definition of myth as: “a phantasm which sprang into existence from the collective imaginary as a response to some social discrepancies or internal/ external tensions, to situations of emptiness and frustration”, which “alter the data of the observation and act as a screen that distorts the requirements of knowledge” (p. 15). This grid of interpretation also allows the comprehension and, potentially, the justification of the specific difference of the local cultural field in relation to the mythologizations in the Western literary space: the Romanian authors’ pretense and idealizations are unique by their excessive nature, because the “psychological mechanism of compensation” was more active than anywhere else, given the two typical responses to a number of phases in the national (literary) history: the feeling of “emptiness/ frustration” (the regression and inferiority complexes) and the “hazard” (the book treated as a “magical object” became an antidote to a constantly calamitous history). Whether required/ guided by the political power or, on the contrary, established for ideologically subversive reasons, the Romanian “mytho-genetic effervescence” has emerged with the contribution – sometimes interested, other times tributary to the simplicity of ignorance – of literary critics and historians or of authors of scholarly handbooks, and it experienced major inflections especially during communism.

Thus, says the author, the “literature-centrism” of Romanian culture has been a source of constant motivation for the litterati to cite identity-related, sociological, psychological, political and, less frequently, aesthetic arguments in support of the national literature’s symbols of age and organic evolution, as well as of artistic uniqueness and value. The illusions of “exemplarity”, “classicism”, “perpetuity”, “continuity” or “stability” characterize to a great extent the Romanian historiographical and meta-critical discourse, applied both to old and contemporary literature. For this reason, the interpretation and classification of Romanian literary movements, orientations, directions, and even of concepts or generations (from Baroque and Romanticism, to Modernism and Postmodernism) display a chronic “resistance to revision”, since any attempt to renew the perceptive dogmas is met exclusively with the intensified and widespread resurrection of mythicization – from the postulation of the defense of the “besieged fortress”, of the “paradise lost”, or of the “golden age”, to quasi-religious “canonizations” of some writers (“civilizing heroes”, “leaders”, “legislators”, “founding fathers”, “providential men”, “directors of conscience”, “brilliant prices”, “torch bearers”, “national torchlights”, “retrieved Lares”).

Therefore, the legitimacy attached to a reconsideration of some canonical files apparently sealed forever or not even open for a professional rereading cannot be challenged. Even the time chosen for this demystifying approach is deemed favorable – past the first phase of post-communist transition, when the symbolical prestige of literature collapsed under the pressure of consumer society, and the worship of the writer as “beacon” of the common herd is secularized down to its disappearance. This is why many of the relativizing and debunking approaches outlined by Eugen Negrici do not actually overturn the horizon of expectations of the field’s professionals since they bring in no absolute novelty. The inflated expansion of the origins of Romanian artistic creativity or the artificial amplifying (by G. Călinescu, G. Ivașcu or D.H. Mazilu) of the representativeness/ value of Romanian old literature have experienced an already long history of disproof. Likewise, the assimilation of the 1848 generation to Romanticism, the synchronistic dimension of the “Junimea” literary circle, the modernism of inter-war lyric poetry, the subversive propensity of post-war poetry and prose, or the authenticity of postmodernism in the last communist decade have long since ceased to be exegetic “illusions”. Even the aesthetic exemplarity of Mircea Eliade’s or Marin Preda’s prose, of Vasile Voiculescu’s, Lucian Blaga’s or the avant-garde’s poetry have lately managed to escape mythicization. However, the main virtue of *Iluziile literaturii române* can be retrieved, beyond its integrating and synthetic worth, in the condensation of the metamorphoses experienced by the local “mytho-genetic” activity. Very diverse extra-aesthetic factors generate odd mythicizing similitudes, against the so-called organic evolution of the Romanian literature, which enables the possibility to

encounter, over time, identical strategies of ideological self-definition with the 1848 generation, or the Neo-modernists, the Traditionalists and at the Proletkult adepts, with “Junimea” members and later the Protochronists, with the inter-war Modernists and the post-communist postmodernists, etc. Some case studies grounded on situational mythicization are also very challenging. For example, with Marin Preda, the writer’s aesthetic failures and ethic inconsistencies may have been eluded because he built up an alternative to Eugen Barbu’s group. Although he was not a charismatic presence and many of his proses (in Negrici’s reading) are aesthetic failures, Preda was mythicized by the other writers because his contemporary literary “rival”, Eugen Barbu, organized, via the “Săptămâna” magazine, acts of symbolic lynching of the writers that were hostile to the communist regime (pp. 89-97). In a similar manner, and contrary to the common idea that the establishment of the literary canon has owed much to professional studies of literary criticism and history, Eugen Negrici finds that the “classicized” image of Romanian Romanticism or Modernism may have been set in place because of the popularization in school handbooks rather than due to the researches of literary critics and theorists such as Paul Cornea, Nicolae Manolescu, or Mircea Angheliescu (pp. 152-165).

On the other hand, all these observations remain just at the stage of (re)reading proposals, and do not evolve into revisions *per se*. Eugen Negrici’s analyses are always kept at the level of distant reading, acting as arguments for disenchantment, for awakening, rather than actually dismantling autochthonous literary myths. Thus, *Iluziile literaturii române* rejects the status of a ‘final’ book, by bringing together a series of potential studies, valuable for the Romanian literary historiography in the near future.

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MIHAELA URSA, *Identitate și excentricitate. Comparatismul românesc între specific local și globalizare [Identity and Eccentricity. Romanian Comparative Studies between Local Specific and Globalization]*, București, Editura Muzeului Național al Literaturii Române, 2013, 268 p.

Mihaela Ursa teaches comparative literature and is the chair of the same department at the Faculty of Letters in the “Babeș-Bolyai” University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania. She recently summarized a postdoctoral research in a book which investigates the identity issues of Romanian comparative literature within its theoretical, institutional and methodological constrains that marked the field between 1960 and 2010. As showed in her demonstration, the evolution of Romanian comparative literature could be divided into two distinct phases of approach and interpretation. The first one, which ends around 1990 – that is, immediately after the anti-totalitarian Revolution of December 1989 – was profoundly defined by the prevalence of the national culture and literature, either exalted or criticized, while afterwards (after 1990) the widely accepted international paradigm of globalization has changed the orientation of Romanian comparative literature, shifting its interest towards small group identity issues or specific problems of the professional, academic bodies (both local), favoring at the same time the scholars’ adherence to the so-called “world republic of letters”, as defined by Pascale Casanova in her seminal book with the same title. Mihaela Ursa considers that the last two issues reflect the worldwide discourse on “intermediality”; that is, on the branch of comparative literature studies which defines itself as filling in the gap between two different spaces and cultures, the national and the transnational one. This allows the author to propose a dynamics of

“eccentric repositioning” of comparative studies, as specific to transnational, transitional or translational cultural fields.

By analyzing Romanian comparative literature as an issue of “identity”, the author also takes into consideration the intrinsic limitations of a self-proclaimed global discipline, which nevertheless, both through its terminological controversies and its object of study, continues to promote a legitimating discourse. The study also analyzes the institutional evolution of comparative literature within the academia, be it domestic or international, which makes the book relevant in terms of teaching strategies within the field. These and similar ramifications chart the complex, tree-like geography of the work, where each specific hermeneutical approach preserves, in its core, the flexible evolution of the next chapter. To take an example, the first section of the book, in which the reader is invited to choose between *The Crisis of a Discipline* and *The Crisis of a Concept*, starts from the methodological challenges comparative literature is facing nowadays due to cultural studies, and then embarks on a quest for the so-called crisis of comparative literature. This is accompanied by subtle interpretations of the responses provided in the current debate.

By taking into consideration the scholarly apprehensions of those who dubbed the term “comparison” inappropriate, as well as the difficulty to circumvent it or avoid its elusiveness, Mihaela Ursa’s work provides a synthesis of the international debate on the crisis of comparative literature. The author puts together an inventory of the ideas promoted by Albert Guérard, Robert S. Mayo, or the Romanian Adrian Marino, deploys the implications of René Wellek’s criticism on Paul van Tieghem’s *Littérature comparée*, and finally focuses on several conclusions formulated by Basil Munteanu – a Romanian scholar in comparative literature, resident in Paris since the mid-war years – regarding the internal causes of the crisis (that is, the scholars’ lack of solidarity within the field and the terminological confusions fuelled by them).

The chapter entitled *The Archaeology of a Methodological Deadlock* investigates the French reactions stirred by Paul van Tieghem’s binary relationship theory, channeled in René Étiemble’s urge to revive the aesthetic trend within comparative literature, together with the difficulties his proposal generated afterwards, especially in the translation field. The inventory couldn’t have been complete without mentioning the detractors of comparativism – among others, Benedetto Croce, who launched the idea that comparative literature does not exist as a field, or those scholars who promote comparative literature as “some sort of world religion”, in Susan Bassnett’s terms. Ursa wisely challenges both extremes, but acknowledges their deep imprint on the never-ending debate over the crisis of comparative literature. Its implications are analyzed in a chapter entitled *Comparative Literature: Between Triumph and Autopsy*, where the present turmoil of the discipline obliges the author to scrutinize the historical roots of the comparative tradition.

The chapter *Definition, Object, Purpose* reconstructs the historical evolution of comparative literature, starting with Philarète Chasles’s discourse from 1835, where the discipline was conceived as a study of the cultural influences taking place in interpersonal or international relationships. It continues by analyzing the way in which the discipline established itself all over Europe during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, entering Romania through Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu’s comparative proposals. Later on, the field was brilliantly illustrated by Tudor Vianu’s lectures on world and comparative literature, which he held from 1948 onwards at the University of Bucharest. Ursa argues that the relatively short but tormented international history of comparative literature is crisscrossed by ambiguities and terminological controversies, as well as by the obsession to strictly delineate and define the domain, whose echoes are still heard today.

If the first section of the book looks closely into the crisis of comparative literature by bringing together Romanian and international references, its second part, entitled *National and Universal*, focuses on the identity issues of the domestic comparative literature tradition, relying on terms such as *national, universal, global* and *local*. This section identifies the existence of a “national complex” within the Romanian tradition from its very beginning, that is, the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This trend was later exaggerated during the communist period, but proves to be completely anachronistic nowadays. On the other hand – the author asserts –, by deconstructing the semantic sphere of the “national”, and

by substituting the “universal” with the “global”, we mark a shift within the identity debate, the new accent being laid on regional identities and on what Aihwa Ong calls “flexible citizenship”, as a form of participation to the already termed “world republic of letters”. This is exactly the affiliation that scholars in comparative literature have always experienced, as individuals who live in-between, in the so-called (by Victor Turner) “liminality”, belonging to “intersected nations” (as proved by the Romanian Adrian Marino, along with Fernand Baldensperger, Ernst Robert Curtius, Erich Auerbach, Djelal Kadir, Basil Munteanu, Virgil Nemoianu, Al. Ciorănescu or Matei Călinescu). By investigating the temporal dynamics of the four seminal terms – that is, the *national*, *universal*, *local*, and *global* – Mihaela Urso concludes that comparative literature has always had a tendency to go beyond the limitations imposed by the national as such. On the other hand, precisely in doing this, comparative literature has always been eccentric, a vital discipline existing outside the usually accepted norms.

The third section, entitled *How to Build a Discipline*, treats the diachronic articulation of the domain, the way its discourse crystallized into an institution. Accordingly, the book analyzes the historical context and the cultural atmosphere which allowed comparative literature to function as an institution, on both shores of the Atlantic (Europe and the USA, respectively), and finishes by investigating the origins and the evolution of comparative literature in Romania. Here the discipline was founded by the publication of *Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum* (1877), Hugo Meltzl de Lomnitz’s academic journal, generally considered the very first comparative literature publication in the world. Avoiding any priority claim, the thoroughly documented chapter entitled *Romanians in the Republic of Letters* examines the way in which the persistence of a “foreign model” has contributed to the re-shaping of the national identity complex. A little bit further, in a chapter on *Imitation and Influence. Simulation and Stimulation*, grounded on Titu Maiorescu’s idea that simulating leads to actually stimulating, Mihaela Urso focuses on several “patriotic literary hoaxes” which were meant to re-write history: the Bohemian mediaeval poetry manuscripts, “brought to light” at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by a group of philologists led by Václav Hanka, Ossian’s purported epic on *Fingal*, actually written by James Macpherson, or the Romanian Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu’s cultural and mythological fakes, through which he tried to provide a more prestigious cultural identity to his countrymen by pushing their cultural roots far back into the past.

The fragile impact of Hasdeu’s “simulations” onto Romanian culture, as well as the persistence of a shame complex generated by the conscience of activating in a relatively young and minor culture, yielded a large space for imitating foreign, especially French and German models, as part of the paradoxical propensity towards treating Romanian culture as a “national” and an “original” one. The essays on *Construction Stages* and *Acquiring an Identity* highlight the transposition of the early “domestic comparative manifestations” into what will become “the Romanian comparative literature”, starting with the already mentioned comparative literature course held by Tudor Vianu in Bucharest in 1948, in order to further analyze how the Romanian field has synchronized itself with the Western tradition. This process started by internalizing the crisis syndrome, and finished by adopting the methodology of cultural studies rather than a more ‘literary’ one. The institutional identity of the field is discussed in a special chapter, entitled *Comparative Literature as an Academic Object in Today Romania*, which provides a thorough inventory of the Comparative Literature Chairs and Departments existing in Romanian universities today.

The essay which closes the third section of the book, entitled *One Subject, Several Usage Instructions* represents a stepping stone towards the typological description of the Romanian comparative literature tradition from section IV. This is called *Distinctive Signs* and its subchapters are dedicated to the various defining aspects of the field as practiced here before 1990. It starts with the topic of *Spontaneous Comparativism* (a concept concocted by Al. Dima in order to speed up the birth of the domestic comparative tradition) and goes on with the so-called “*avant-la-lettre comparative literature*” proposed by the theorist Paul Cornea. The other identity issues of the field, as revisited in the book, are: *Philological Roots*, *Synchronism*, *Methodological Crisis: Formal and Contextual*, the latter being conceived as a clash of the formal and the contextual elements. The

authors called to defend them are Adrian Marino, Ion Zamfirescu, Romul Munteanu, Tudor Vianu, and Al. Ciorănescu; the debate called forth notions such as *Theory and Method, Polemic Universalism vs. Assumed Nationalism*, as well as *National Values. Critical, Anti-Imitative Encyclopedic Writing*. The following issue of *Localism* emerges within the discussion concerning post-colonialism, but – the author asserts – it has been empirically anticipated by several debates in the 70s, while the interest to define and discuss imagology raised after 1990, as a field with firm anchors in the traditional and modern Romanian culture, which are fluently transferred into comparative studies.

Present day comparative literature studies are analyzed in the fifth chapter of the book, entitled *Romanian Comparative Literature Today*, when – the author asserts – the scholars are interested in topics like intermediacy or eccentricity. The thorough examination of domestic comparative literature studies from 1990 to 2010 reveals the persistence of an umbrella topic, that of exile/ estrangement/ anxiety generated by the destruction of a previous, reassuring order, feelings with successfully substitute the *national* theme, dominant until 1990. *The Themes of Exile* are illustrated by Matei Călinescu's interpretation of Eugène Ionesco (*Eugène Ionesco: Identity and Existential Topics*). The topics of mutation and of postmodern deconstruction are found in Liviu Petrescu's *Poetics of Postmodernism* and in Călin-Andrei Mihăilescu's *Antropomorfină*, while an essay dedicated to *Themes of the Rejection of the Local Prejudices* focuses on Mircea Martin's impeccable interpretations of local eccentricities. Further on, *The Themes of Cognitive Anarchy* chapter deals with Corin Braga's concept of "anarchetype"; *The Themes of Nostalgia* are decrypted in the works of Toma Pavel, Nicolae Balotă, and Mirela Roznoveanu, while the chapter entitled *The Themes of Transgression and Translation* is illustrated by authors such as Cosana Nicolae, Paul Cornea, and Monica Spiridon.

The last two essays in this section fully display the book's originality. One aspect to be noted is a terminological invention, triggered by the author's considerations on the so-called "comparativism of ex-centric repositioning". By making an inventory of the topics discussed in the fifth section of her book, Mihaela Ursa concludes that they are generally characterized by the dynamics of an "ex-centric repositioning", which is defined as "the new formula of the present day, both Central or Eastern Europe and the postcolonial, comparative tradition, which does not share the crisis syndrome experienced by the Westerners, because its identity complex is utterly sufficient to provide the supply and demand of its discourse." A later chapter, entitled *A Comparative Literature for Digital Beings*, provides a sketchy approach to how comparative studies may look like within the offensive of digital culture.

This intention to glimpse into the future evolutions of comparative literature is also present in the concluding part of the book, where Mihaela Ursa reviews several trends of the field. A first one, taken from Susan Bassnett's *Comparative Literature – „once divorced from key questions of national culture and identity, comparative literature loses its way”* – is completed with the necessity to adapt and transform comparative literature into an "eco-comparativism", to be shaped by revisiting traditional landmarks and approaching them in the light of new topics. Another perspective of comparative literature will be, the author says, the future blending of the Eastern and Central European comparative literature discourse with much wider cognitive approaches, as well as its study as an alternative praxis.

Mihaela Ursa concludes by asserting that any hermeneutic dogmatism must be swept apart within the field, as proving superfluous if one considers comparative literature as a historically determined convention, prone to continuous, metamorphic changes. At the same time, the author steps forward by asking that comparative literature may be accepted as a cognitive discourse, urging its scholars to adopt a flexible, open-minded, integrative, and analytic attitude.

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VASILE MIHALACHE, „*Noli me tangere*”? *Despre legitimitate și autonomie în literatură* [„*Noli me tangere*?”. *Sur la légitimité et l'autonomie dans la littérature*]. Préface de Mircea Martin, București, Tracus Arte, 2013, 248 p.

Parmi les tentatives de synthèse dans les études littéraires roumaines récentes il faut noter le livre de Vasile Mihalache, „*Noli me tangere*?”. *Sur la légitimité et l'autonomie dans la littérature*. Thèse de doctorat à l'origine, l'essai du jeune auteur bucarestois se propose d'identifier et d'analyser les facteurs qui contribuent de manière décisive à la consécration des œuvres et des écrivains dans le champ littéraire.

Le livre se situe ouvertement dans le cadre créé par Pierre Bourdieu dans les *Règles de l'art*, dont il reprend le support théorique, ainsi que les moyens conceptuels (et jusqu'aux éléments de discours et de vocabulaire). L'étude doit à Bourdieu l'idée du champ littéraire organisé comme champ autonome, avec des règles et des critères propres d'évaluation, en dépit des facteurs hétérogènes, sociaux et idéologiques, qu'il mobilise. « L'objectif principal de cette recherche est d'attribuer un sens spécial à la légitimité, dans le cadre du champ littéraire, sans exclure les autres usages historiques et disciplinaires du terme, et sans aspirer non plus à une définition totalisante » (p. 25), souligne l'auteur dans son introduction.

Mircea Martin, qui accompagne cet essai d'une préface, y remarque l'influence de l'Ecole du Ressentiment (Harold Bloom) et des représentants radicaux des études culturelles. Néanmoins, la démonstration favorise plutôt l'éclectisme des références au lieu d'une perspective unique. En effet, pour décrire le rapport entre la légitimité et les individus, Vasile Mihalache propose une synthèse des deux écoles : l'une, wébérienne, qui parle d'une croyance naturelle dans la légitimité, l'autre, marxiste, qui justifie l'obéissance par l'intervention de l'idéologie, de l'interprétation ou des préjugés.

C'est par cette vision totalisante et surtout en absence d'une définition concentrée de la légitimité (concept qui n'y est pas distingué de l'autorité) que Vasile Mihalache poursuit les mécanismes qui participent à la consécration symbolique dans le champ littéraire. Dans un discours souvent prolixe, on envisage de la sorte les procédés internes de la consécration symbolique, ainsi que les stratégies externes, institutionnelles. Pour la première série, Vasile Mihalache retient comme règle générale de la légitimité littéraire le refus des conventions et la recherche à tout prix de l'originalité et du caractère singulier : « La transgression systématique des conventions devient une règle du champ littéraire et une de ces stratégies qui, dans certaines conditions peuvent contribuer à la légitimité des auteurs » (p. 92), remarque le chercheur.

La perspective de Bourdieu, reprise sans réserve, favorise la réflexion sur les mécanismes institutionnels de la légitimité littéraire. À la fondation de cette reconstruction sociologique on trouve une règle que l'auteur définit par la métaphore du titre, « *noli me tangere* ». En tant que principe générateur de la légitimité littéraire, celui-ci représente une interprétation de l'idée romantique de la gratuité artistique, filtrée par la théorie barthesienne du caractère « atopique » de l'écriture : « On n'a pas le droit d'utiliser l'objet esthétique parce qu'il est gratuit et fabriqué uniquement en vue de la contemplation ou de l'interprétation » (p. 101). Le mérite du livre consiste dans la réunion, dans le cadre d'une seule narration théorique, de plusieurs stratégies de la consécration littéraire. Ainsi, on envisage l'« influence » – sans la dimension psychanalytique envisagée par Harold Bloom – comme une modalité de légitimation symbolique, tout en montrant que les acteurs qui la nient sont toujours extérieurs au champ littéraire. Le chercheur s'appuie sur les textes de Foucault pour réfléchir sur le rôle de l'« auctorialité » dans le processus de consécration symbolique comme forme privilégiée de « construction culturelle » et de « négociation de l'identité ». La forme la plus complexe de la légitimation littéraire est le canon, conçu « comme autorité légitime établie en fonction des valeurs et des règles d'appréciation » (p. 134).

Selon l'auteur, le processus de la canonisation est étroitement lié au rapport entre les positions hégémoniques et les positions subalternes du champ littéraire. C'est à la première catégorie d'élaborer les mécanismes de légitimation les plus complexes ; en revanche, la deuxième catégorie se laisse décrire en termes d'« obéissance » et de « consentement ». Ce qui ne signifie pas que *Noli me tangere* envisage la légitimité littéraire exclusivement dans la perspective d'une compétition pour le pouvoir symbolique. À cet égard, il faut remarquer le commentaire du concept d'« interpellation » lancé par Althusser dans *Idéologie et appareils idéologique d'État* : l'« obéissance » par rapport à la consécration canonique n'est pas pour Vasile Mihalache une forme d'intrusion idéologique mais, selon un modèle webérien, une acceptation naturelle de l'autorité canonique. C'est pour cette raison que la sphère de la légitimité littéraire y inclut des problèmes tels que l'« apolitisme », l'intertextualité, l'épigonisme, ainsi que des stéréotypes de lecture tels que mineur/ majeur, convention/ originalité, canonique/ contre-canonique, central/ périphérique, forme/ fond.

Le danger évident d'une telle approche est l'élargissement démesuré du champ d'application de la légitimité littéraire, afin de comprendre entièrement la gamme des critères d'appréciation et de valorisation de la littérature. Bien que notable, l'effort de réflexion sur le problème de la légitimité en dehors des cadres de l'École du Soupçon est miné par la tentation de l'exhaustivité et par la composition éclectique des références bibliographiques. *Noli me tangere* n'est ainsi qu'une promesse qui réclame des éclaircissements ultérieurs.

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