Post-Berlin Wall European Cinema between a Global European Identity and a National One

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Rezumat: *Promovarea unei noi identităţi europene care să păstreze identităţile naţionale dar şi să creeze un caracter european comun a devenit catalizatorul europenismului promovat după căderea Zidului Berlinului. În pofida unor sceptici, printre care şi Derrida, care susţin că acest deziderat este cel puţin problematic, eforturile depuse de organismele Uniunii Europene converg , încet dar sigur, spre o omogenizare a spaţiului european. Unul dintre mecanismele folosite este sectorul audiovizual, cu precădere filmul, fie el documentar sau artistic, circulaţia la nivel european a celor mai reuşite producţii naţionale contribuind la familiarizarea întregului continent cu specificul cultural al ţărilor de proveniență şi, prin extensie, la diseminarea şi asimilarea valorilor. În acest sens exemplară se dovedeşte a fi cinematografia ţărilor fost comuniste care oglindeşte cel mai fidel schimbările prin care trece Europa de azi.*
Cuvinte-cheie: *identitate europeană, identitate naţională, omogenizare culturală*

Since the Maastricht Treaty of 1992, which established the European Union, the renewed Europeanist project has availed itself of institutions, legal provisions, and a new cultural politics meant to integrate its states, its fractured economies, and its varied peoples. The reasons to join the new European Union as the harbinger of a unified Europe have been of an economic, social, and political nature, ranging from the need to enter and participate in new liberalized markets, to the call for modernization and a new visibility, to the compulsion to get away from a stagnant past into prosperity, mobility and security.

There is another equally important reason to promote a unified Europe, the fact that only as a supranational entity can Europe meet the challenge of the new globalized universe that started to take shape during the 1980s. The agents of globalization – interdependent markets, multinational capital, cross-border technologies, labor migration, and people's mobility – have blurred borders and have required as interlocutor not the small states of Europe but an overarching organization that might mediate on their behalf for mutual benefit. Which is, at its core, the meaning of supranationalism: "only a supranational Europe can become a global Europe" (Rivi, 2007: 140).

The promotion of a European identity aimed at preserving old and new identities while trying to foster a common European character has become the catalyst of the renewed post-1989 Europeanism. The insistence of the Maastricht Treaty on a common European character, cultural diversity, and the distinctive cultures of the member-states has been translated into numerous initiatives. A privileged site for envisioning the new Europeanness has been the audiovisual sector, based on the ability of audiovisual media, and cinema in particular, to construct and disseminate ideas of nationhood and identity at the national, supranational, and global levels. The MEDIA Program, the Eurimages Fund, the Convention on Cinematographic Co-Production, the establishment of the European Film Academy, the EFA awards, and the Europa Cinemas network have converged in the attempt to design one common European space and forward a European consciousness.

However, quite a number of prominent political philosophers have found the possibility of a European identity problematic. In his essay *The Other Heading* (1992), Jacques Derrida, for instance, states that "the injunction seems double and contradictory for whoever is concerned about European cultural identity: if it is necessary to make sure that a centralizing hegemony (the capital) not be reconstituted, it is also necessary, for all that, not to multiply the borders, i.e. the movements and margins… Responsibility seems to consist today in renouncing neither of these two contradictory imperatives" (Derrida, 1992: 44). Consequently, Derrida calls for a Europe that refuses self-identity and engages rigorously with what he terms "the heading of the Other." Given the level of ideological struggle over the terms and conditions of the new Europe, it is perhaps not surprising that public discourse on European identity tends to take up the question in exactly the binary forms of Europe/Other that *The Other Heading* problematizes.

European cinema, it seems, experiences a similar structural dilemma: how to become European – as opposed to simply continuing an older model of national cinemas. As film historian Mark Betz notes, this debate obscures at least as much about European cinema as it illuminates. Films made in Europe have frequently been coproduced by two or more countries at least since World War II, and the idea of "pure" national film cultures is a myth (Betz, 2001). According to this historical revision, "Italian" or "French" art films are already European, and the anxieties of the cultural moment immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall miss the point or, at the very least, beg the question. Simply put, while conservatives make national sovereignty, immigration, and ethnic minorities into social problems, film cultures evolve an opposing liberal concern with regionalism, minority representation, and transnationalism.

Post-Berlin Wall European cinema maps the spaces of Europe "today," speaking both of and from the changing spaces of the continent. Most important, it does so as a textual work, blending cinematic space and geopolitical space. It is "a form of writing that articulates both the discursive and the referential spaces of nations" (Galt, 2006: 4).

While internationally European films code as both "not-American" and, in many markets, "not-Asian," "not-Latin American," and "not-Middle Eastern," within an internal European hierarchy, French, British, and Italian films mean quite different things to audiences than do, say, Czech, Swedish, and Romanian ones. These encrustations of cultural meaning are by no means new, but they are mutable, and like any other historical period, the post-Berlin Wall era can be characterized by such specific forms as *heritage films*, *popular memory films*, and *anti-spectacular films*.

Particularly prevalent in western Europe, the heritage film (Galt) is "a critically and industrially contentious notion that gets to the heart of contemporary discourses on European culture, identity, and film production policy" (Galt, 2006: 7). In general terms, heritage films use high production values to fill a mise-en-scene with period detail, representing their national pasts through sumptuous costume, landscape, and adaptations of well-known literary novels (see *La Vie de Bohème,* Kaurismaki, 1992, and *Beau Travail,* Denis, 2000). Generally costume dramas rather than history films proper, and mostly dealing with romanticizable eras such as the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these films are most often criticized as nostalgic attempts to whitewash the national past for both reactionaries at home and the more gullible foreign markets. Antoine de Baecque, for instance, says that they have a common polish, a homogenized prettiness that lacks genuine engagement with place. Instead of representing the genuine differences in European cultures, he claims, heritage films smooth out history and image. The critic contrasts this negative view of an official European cinema with what he considers a contemporary countercinema, including films by Emir Kusturica, Lars von Trier, Alain Tanner, Pedro Almodovar, and Otar Iosseliani (de Baecque, 1992).

Structuring personal rather than heritage histories, popular memory films show a young protagonist coming of age in a historically specific setting, with the story often framed as flashbacks or narrated *as* memory by the same character as an adult looking back at his past. Many of these films use comedy to locate national histories within "universal stories" of family drama and childhood romance (see *Toto le héros,* Van Dormael, 1991). In others, the comedy involves a more satirical view of national history, and, given the region's histories of both black comedy and political censorship, it is perhaps not surprising that many examples of this use of the childhood comedy trope come from Eastern Europe (see *Tito and Me*, Marković, 1992). These invocations of popular memory can seem open to the same critiques as the heritage film: "the problem becomes not a self-absolving version of history but yet another avoidance of the political, this time through the self-involved world of childhood" (Galt, 2006: 12).

With the 1995 *Dogme Manifesto*, anti-spectacular cinema became arguably the most influential European film movement. Its signatories promised not to use special effects, to periodize, or to make genre pictures but only to shoot on location with available props and natural lighting. The manifesto states: "Today a technological storm is raging of which the result is the elevation of cosmetics to God. By using new technology anyone at any time can wash the last grains of truth away in the deadly embrace of sensation. The illusions are everything the movie can hide behind" (*Dogme Manifesto*, 1995).

This manifesto demonstrates both the centrality of spectacle in any efforts to rethink European cinema and the way in which historicity has become closely connected to spectacle, even – or perhaps especially – for those who seek to oppose them both. For the members of Dogme, historicity is as much a problem for realism as spectacle, a position that makes no sense in relation to, say, classical Hollywood history films but, rather, is logical only in response to the spectacular histories of the European heritage film. While the grainy digital video (DV) of Thomas Vinterberg's *Festen* (1998) produces its own visual beauty, its low-light and low-life immediacy clearly stands in a dialogic, if antagonistic, relationship with the aesthetics of *la belle image*.

Nowhere have anti-spectacular films been more popular than in the former communist countries. While these countries have varied film industries and traditions, they show a recurrent interest in European Otherness, a desire to chart new itineraries and to see identity otherwise. An early instance of this impetus is the German documentary *Videograms of a Revolution* (1992), directed by Harun Farocki and Andrei Ujica, in which the filmmakers compile footage shot by many Romanian groups and individuals in an attempt to document the uniquely mediatic nature of the Romanian revolution. This strategy is both alienating and affective: the spectator becomes highly aware of the position of the camera and sometimes of the danger that the cameraperson is in. At the same time that the film questions the objectivity of the politically contested video image, it commands authority in its capturing of a complex profilmic now.

A film that makes even clearer the importance of new itineraries is *Chico* (Fekete, 2002), a German, Hungarian, Croatian, and Chilean coproduction. The protagonist is a national and ethnic mongrel, part Jewish, part Christian, with a mix of European and South American roots. Beginning in the 1960s, he takes part in political upheavals in Bolivia and Chile; travels to Europe; works as a spy, a soldier, and a journalist; and ends up in the 1990s fighting for Croatia in the Yugoslav wars. *Chico*'s narrative forms a picaresque itinerary, weaving through many wars and revolutions, but amid the chaos there is a persistent questioning of the relationships among spatial identities (nationality, ethnicity, language), histories (war, revolution, coup), and ideologies (from South American socialisms to European post-Communism).

A more ambiguous text is *Buttoners* (Zelenka, 1997), a Czech film that includes contemporary narratives, as well as a key story set during World War II. It takes place in a foreign country, Japan, and narrates the lucky escape of Kokura, slated as the target for the atomic bomb that was diverted to Hiroshima because of bad weather. The rest of the film consists of several small stories, interconnected in unexpected ways. The Japanese narrative returns when a group of girls at a seance raises the ghost of one of the American pilots, who wants to apologize for his actions in 1945. Director Petr Zelenka is known for his absurdist style, and *Buttoners* can be read within a Czech aesthetic history of surrealism. The film's coincidences of time, space, and characters suggest that geopolitics, like love, is arbitrarily determined. But, as with a previous generation of Czech surrealist films, the fantastical events in *Buttoners* entail a political logic. While arbitrary cruelties often refer obliquely in Czech cinema to the absurdities of life under state Communism, *Buttoners* suggests a new state of affairs: a lack of any social or ideological fixity, seen, for instance, in bizarrely

humorous sexual perversity. An integral part of this incoherent system is the haunting presence of the history of World War II. Here, the apparently arbitrary itinerary slips from Hiroshima to Prague and from sexuality to technology. The Other is not Western Europe as much as Japan, America, and the altered place of Czechoslovakian history in the world system.

In Hungarian Robert Koltai's popular films of the 1990s - *We Never Die,* 1993, and *Teacher Ambar,* 1998 - adolescent boys are learning how to be men from the invaluable lessons that only likable and poetically inclined scoundrels of a previous generation can impart to them. While the earlier film rides the wave of postsocialist optimism and resurgent nationalism to popularity, the later one is bogged down by its own skepticism and a too romantic subplot between the lustful middle-aged teacher and a female student.

In Polish Robert Glinski's black-and-white documentary style feature *Hi, Tereska,* 2001, Tereska, who lives in a Warsaw tenement with an unemployed, violent, and alcoholic father and an uncommunicative, church-bound, factory-worker mother, has all her angel-dreams crushed by loveless circumstances. Under peer influence, she drifts toward cigarettes, alcohol, horny teenage boys, and petty theft. She strikes up a friendship with Edek, a handicapped factory doorman; when Edek reveals his own emotional-sexual desperation, she murders him. In Poland, the film became a much-discussed social document about a new generation of hopeless young people and rising adolescent crime. It also made international media news by virtue of the fact that the actress playing Tereska, whom Glinski found in an institution for juvenile delinquents and whose performance won numerous festival awards, disappeared after the film was completed to resort to her old criminal habits. They found her a year later and placed her in another institution (Imre in Shary and Seibel, 2007: 81). In Glinski's film the degree of intimacy and permeability between life and fiction grows beyond the desire to document slices of reality unseen by propaganda cameras and mainstream films, owing something to the postmodernist aesthetics that increasingly encompass postsocialist societies.

Serbian Emir Kusturica's *Underground* (1995) offers a unique perspective on history from the position of a historically repressed and suppressed Other. It presents, through the epic story of two friends, a potent allegory of Yugoslavia from the aftermath of World War II to the bloody breakup of the Federated People's Republic, officially sanctioned in 1995, but still unresolved at the most basic levels of living. The director demonstrates that history is not a unitary and emancipatory process destined to realize the perfect man; rather, it is first and foremost a construct tailored to the particular, privileged needs of a specific ideology. This attitude, however, remains firmly rooted into the historical, political, and social realities of the time and place. The self-reflexiveness in which the film is steeped "does not assert the autonomy of Art to the detriment of history; it engages, instead, with the historical context to produce the only historical knowledge we can access, one that takes place in the present, therefore always *a posteriori*, from a distance in space, or time, or both (Rivi, 2007: 103-104)

The five films that might constitute a canon of 21st century Romanian cinema - Cristi Puiu's *Stuff and Dough* (2001) and *The Death of Mr. Lazarescu* (2005), Corneliu Porumboiu's *12:08 East of Bucharest* (2006), Radu Muntean's *The Paper Will Be Blue* (2006), Cristian Mungiu's *4 months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* (2007) – all confine their action to a single day and focus on a single action. In each case the action is completed but a haunting sense of inconclusiveness remains. The narratives have a shape, but "they seem less like plots abstracted from life than like segments carved out of its rough rhythms" (Scott, 2008: 33). The characters are often in a state of restless motion confused about where they are going and what they will find when they arrive. The camera follows them into ambulances, streetcars, armoured vehicles and minivans, communicating with unsettling immediacy their anxiety and disorientation. The basic stylistic elements these films share are a penchant for long takes

and fixed camera positions, a taste of plain lighting and everyday décor, and a preference for stories set amid ordinary life.

The Death of Mr. Lazarescu, for example, chronicles the last night in the life of its title character, a flabby 63-year-old Bucharest pensioner with a stomachache and a drinking problem. Filmed in a quasi-documentary style in drab urban locations – a shabby flat, the inside of an ambulance, a series of fluorescent-bulbed hospital waiting and examination rooms – it follows a narrative arc from morbidity to mortality punctuated by casual, appaling instances of medical malpractice.

In these films there is an almost palpable impulse to tell the truth, to present choices, conflicts and accidents without exaggeration or omission. This is undoubtedly a form of realism – the directors are sometimes described as neo-neorealists (Galt and Schoonover, 2010: 13) – but its motivation seems to be as much ethical as aesthetic, less a matter of verisimilitude than of honesty. Although the wobbling camera and the use of unflattering available light create an atmosphere of tough, unadorned naturalism, the films are also remarkably artful pieces of work, with strong, unpredictable stories, rigorous camera work and powerfully understated performances.

There is also an unmistakable political dimension in these films, even when the stories themselves seem to have no overt political content. The emptiness of authority is almost ubiquitous, against a background imbued with "a pervasive rudeness and suspiciousness, the malevolent hangover from many years of a police state" (Denby, 2010: 83): the doctors who neglect Mr. Lazarescu; the small-time TV host in *12:08 East of Bucharest*; the swaggering army commanders and rebel leaders in the *Paper Will Be Blue* – all of them display a self- importance that is both absurd and malignant. Their hold of power is mitigated sometimes by stubborn acts of ordinary decency: an ambulance technician decides to help out a suffering old man who is not very kind; a student stands stoically by her irresponsible friends; a militia officer, in the middle of a revolution, goes out of his way to protect an idealistic young man under his command.

The critical discourse, success, and transnational validation conferred by awards and festivals upon most of the above-mentioned films, demonstrate how these films are highly significant in terms of a Europeanness that they envisage, even if — or because — such identity may be highly contested. As they explore the specific layers of cultural identities that make up today's Europe, national cinemas are constantly redefining these boundaries, as well as our notion of what in fact constitutes "Europeanness." As a template for political dialogue, they provide a prism of opportunities for a global European cinema.

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Exiled Writer's Linguistic Identity within the Context of Globalization

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Rezumat: *(E/I)migrantul este o specie de „falie", de „interstiţiu", condamnat pe viaţă să penduleze între polii a două spaţii/culturi diametral opuse: una de origine, cealaltă de adopţie, una „marginală", cealaltă „centrală". Drama sa, generată de sentimentul pierderii aderenţei la cultura „sursă", este dublată traumatic de drama insuficientei aderenţe la cultura „ţintă". Unul dintre cele mai importante criterii de stabilire a apartenenţei unui scriitor la o anumită literatură/cultură este limba în care scrie. Pornind de la acest criteriu fundamental, sunt analizate într-o primă instanţă raportările – nu lipsite de o oarecare doză de tragism şi nostalgie a originilor – la relaţia limba maternă – limba de adopţie ale unor autori precum Norman Manea, Mircea Eliade, Vintilă Horia, Ştefan Baciu, care nu au abandonat cultura matriceală, în care s-au format intelectual, optând pentru redactarea operei literare (parţial sau total) în limba română. Apoi analiza va fi condusă către cazul unor autori precum Andrei Codrescu şi Petru Popescu, eliberaţi de obsesia unicei identităţi lingvistice şi culturale şi pe deplin adaptaţi la noul context al unei culturi global(izat)e. Demersul analitic se va îndrepta firesc către o concluzie evidentă oricărui observator al lumii actuale: În zilele noastre, scriitorul se poate simţi „acasă" în mai multe spaţii geografice şi lingvistice, valorificând diversitatea mijloacelor de comunicare ale societăţii contemporane.*

Cuvinte-cheie: *exil, cultură „sursă" vs. cultură „ţintă", limbă maternă vs. limbă de adopţie, identitate lingvistică, globalizare*

1. Introduction

Since the fall of the 'Iron Curtain' and the abolition, within the European area, of the great historical dichotomy *capitalism* vs. *communism*, as well as the hybridization of the two political systems in contemporary China, it has become obvious that the world is plunging headlong into **globalization** – a worldwide unity of disparate identities, meant to function according to common norms and standards. The stereotypes of each actor involved in the process will contribute to the effect of an entropic, international equilibrium, mainly socio-economic in nature, as well as cultural. In this context, "nation or national state must not be opposed to globalization. They are embedded in this process. In this light, globalization does not appear as something destructive, meant to eradicate specificity. Globalization can no longer be understood in terms of a threat to identity, but as a phenomenon which preserves, avows, and strengthens nations."[1] Thus, the two elements of the binomial *globalization–identity* should not be mutually exclusive, but complementary.

It has long become a cliché the statement that we are living in a 'global village'. Due to the amazing evolution of mass-media (especially the satellite television) and the Internet, closely linked to the fact that English language has gained the status of a *lingua franca*, the world has shrunk its space and neared its poles. Borders, in Europe, are becoming ever more transparent and symbolic. Information is sent instantly and communication carried out in real time. It is now almost impossible that the old national identities should not interact, leading to a flexible and permeable multiculturalism.

It is undoubtedly of great interest to discuss – within this context of globalization – those shifts in the Romanian exiled writer's perception of his own linguistic and cultural identity. And that, the more so as exile has all the features of a *reversed globalization*: exile implies the movement toward the centre of a finite, provincial, minor culture, with the memory of its origin and an archetypal, mythical structure, with a *genius loci* ('local spirit') and national specificity; globalization – on the other hand – entails the expansion toward periphery of a limitless, cosmopolitan, dominant culture, with neither memory nor mythology, with a universal spirit and transnational specificity (if any).

To start with, we will look at the way in which a typical, common exile – with no specific profession – perceives himself. By looking through his eyes and understanding his anguish, we will be able to better comprehend the exiled writer's almost obsessive need for defining his identity and avowing his affiliation to the native literature/culture.

2. The (e/im)migrant and his complexes

"By definition, going into exile means taking a one-way road. Yet the exile in itself can only be understood in terms of a double perspective: the exile leaves/ emigrates from his native country and reaches/immigrates into his adoptive country."[2] This is the dual perspective, of the *insider/outsider* type, which S. Alexandrescu suggests in analyzing a bicephalous character: **the (e/im)migrant**. This is an 'interstitial' species, destined to oscillate between the poles of two different spaces/cultures: one native and 'peripheral', the other adoptive and 'central'. His drama resides in both losing contact with his *source*-culture and taking a feeble grip to the *target*-culture; hence, his fundamental complex: the sensation of *invisibility*. His transparency is given by the fact that "At the two extremes of his journey, he is regarded differently: the emigrant's departure is felt with a sense of relief ('we got rid of him!'), regret ('what a pity he left'), envy ('what a shame we stayed') or resentment ('another one has made it!'), while the immigrant's arrival is tackled with indifference, annoyance ('what's this one doing here') and, again, resentment ('he's coming to teach us the alphabet!'), although sometimes, especially on formal occasions, when it is not fit to speak otherwise, he is declared that 'your presence is a great honour to us'. In both situations, the (e/im)migrant is looked askance at."[3]

He displays a deviant behaviour with regard to both communities: he leaves from where the others stay and reaches the place where the others have been forever. It is a paradox he cannot overcome. Whatever he may do, he is overwhelmingly aware of his 'otherness': "Every (e/im)migrant's dream is therefore to abolish the difference, in the same way as other typical deviants dream of removing their stain or stigma: a black person wants to look like white people, a child and an old man wish they were adults (at last and again, respectively), the crippled – a healthy person…"[4].

S. Alexandrescu shows an astute psychological grasp in noticing the fact that the immigrant can gain some access to the *public* life in the host country – formally ensured by antidiscrimination laws – but never will he enter the *private* life, the circle of friends of a native person, because of his allogeneous nature: "This means the immigrant's integration into society, to some extent, as far as his *public* life is concerned, but it is never the case for the *private* one. The law compels the majority to (formally) respect the minority, but not to make friends with it."[5] Hence, the minority's centrifugal tendency to organize its private life in *parallel* ethnic communities, or cultural 'enclaves', beside that/those of the majority, with no interference, or strictly incidental contacts.

This 'psychological profile' of the (e/im)migrant as depicted by Prof. Alexandrescu seems extremely useful in understanding the emotional background and the moral traumas which the Romanian writers of the exile felt and almost invariably confessed.

In the sense of the above discussion, to become 'invisible' means to lose your native cultural identity, with no chance to replace it with a new one. Therefore, most Diaspora writers considered the issue of their affiliation to Romanian literature, invoking the preservation of mother tongue in their work as a major criterion in maintaining their linguistic and cultural identity.

3. Language and identity. The issue of affiliation to Romanian literature

There are worldwide, "pushed beyond the boundaries of their country by unfair and sometimes dramatic circumstances, a number of writers who belong to Romanian literature: because they write – most of them – in Romanian language, because they write from within an unaltered Romanian culture and tradition, because they consider themselves Romanian writers," notices Constantin Eretescu in his journal[6], establishing three of the most important criteria in defining a writer's affiliation to a certain literature: the language of his writings, his background culture, and the writer's self-proclaimed belonging to his native ethnicity. It

is the viewpoint of an *insider*, who has experienced the exile at his own expense. Similarly, the critic Aurel Sasu, one of the 'domestic' researchers of Romanian literary exile across the Atlantic, observes that "(Romanian) literature is one and the same in Bucharest, New York, Madrid, Paris or London."[7]

Discussing the issue of linguistic identity, Mihaela Albu remarks: "To a large extent, the exiled writers (especially those who fled the country after the instauration of communism and realized the impossibility of their return) preserved their Romanian expression, continued to think in Romanian, to write, publish newspapers and magazines, even set publishing houses – in other words, to 'move' as much as possible their 'country' with them, struggling thus by all means to remain what they had been back home and, ultimately, to maintain their identity."[8]

In an interview given to Victor Eskenasy, on being awarded the famous 'Médicis Etranger' prize for the novel *Întoarcerea huliganului (The Hooligan's Return)*, Norman Manea avows his affiliation to Romanian literature, by virtue of the same fundamental criterion – *language* as a form of artistic expression: "I am a Romanian writer – that's how I consider myself – and I still believe that an essential criterion in classifying an author is the language in which he writes, not being a woman, a homosexual or a catholic… My language is Romanian; I have been formed and 'deformed' in Romanian culture."[9]

Mircea Eliade, who – as we know – wrote his entire belletristic work in Romanian, perfectly realizes that literature calls for the innermost imaginary and verbal resources of human being, which are to be found in the primordial space of native culture: "I couldn't have been creative if I hadn't stayed in my world, which was primarily the world of Romanian language and culture."[10] It is obvious that, in Eliade's view, the conservation of one's linguistic identity is compulsory for preserving the creative side of one's existence. This option for the mother tongue as a form of artistic expression places the writer in the Romanian literary and cultural patrimony.

Another important exiled author, Vintilă Horia, composed his epic work in Spanish and French, while choosing Romanian for his lyric production. With the last novel, *Mai sus de miazănoapte (Upper North,* 1992*)*, he 'connected' thoroughly to his native language: "I may say that […] never have I parted with nor broken loose from Romania, and I managed not to detach or lose myself, in fact, by writing poems in Romanian," states the author in an interview[11] given to the journalist Marilena Rotaru, expressing the interdependence between language and identity. By the same token, the author confesses in the postface to the volume of poetry *Viitor petrecut (Consumed Future,* 1990*)*, addressed to Romanian readers: "… I could endure the adventure of exile by writing, now and then, in Romanian – not only short stories, articles and essays, but mostly poems. It was a way of replacing the lost Country." In this case too "the loftiest language, that of poetry" plays a vital part in preserving identity.

Having been asked in an interview about the destiny of his artistic creation and his position in the national history of literature, Ştefan Baciu unswervingly avows his affiliation to Romanian lyricism and hopes in a redemptive moment of grace, when things come to normal and Diaspora's work is revisited from a purely aesthetic perspective, in a value-centered approach: "I position myself in Romanian literature exactly where my place is: in Romanian poetry. And I am convinced that, sooner or later, it will come the day when a true history of Romanian poetry will be written, when all Romanian poets scattered throughout the world – who are passed over in silence in Romania – will find their rightful place. […] So I position myself in Romanian poetry, as a now exiled Romanian poet, and I am certain that, post-mortem, […] a critic will come that will know how to set things straight and will find the place that each of us organically fit into."[12]

In Ştefan Baciu's view, the centrifugal effect of a hostile political context ("if history has pushed us aside, out of our trail") should not lead – fatalistically and irreversibly – to a

loss of ethnic consciousness and cultural identity: "I consider myself a Romanian writer, even when I write in Spanish, Portuguese, or German, things that my readers in Latin America find interest in."[13] In fact, the writer is no stranger to the experience of cultural diversity. On the contrary, we may claim that at the time of the interview (February 1st, 1989) he had already been engaged in a global-type culture. Let us remember that Ştefan Baciu comes from a multicultural environment (his native city of Braşov), that he graduated primary classes from the Transylvanian Saxon School, and in the year of his literary debut (1933) he published in *Klingsor* magazine poems translated into German. It is the most important existential 'baggage' with which this *globetrotter* of Romanian lyricism will travel worldwide, perfectly equipped for the contact with, and adaptation to, other cultures.

So far we have discussed about those writers who chose to preserve their 'primordial', linguistic and cultural identity. "And yet – as Mihaela Albu observes – even though, in general, the Romanian writers who live(d) beyond the borders confirm(ed) what Ştefan Augustin Doinaş – a major writer who has chosen not to flee the country – had stated, namely that 'we always struggle within the placenta of our original existence', we cannot exclude that category of writers who have adopted (partially or totally) the new language of their host country."[14]

Among the local critics there have been frequent debates over the issue of affiliation to national literature of those writers of Romanian origin who write and publish in other languages in their adoptive countries, within the context of their entering our literature through the gate of translation, like any other foreign writer. To this question, Prof. Ştefan Stoenescu – a famous Anglicist and translator, member of American-Romanian Academy of Sciences and Arts – answered very pertinently: "Insofar as a writer is assimilated and recognized as such in other culture (and literature), his chances to be reintegrated into his original culture (and literature) are diminishing. Eugen Ionescu can still be related to I.L. Caragiale and Urmuz. The influence remains unaffected by the transplantation in a different cultural environment. Of course, some motifs and ideas can be traced back and followed in the area of the playwright's original experiences, but they will not have enough strength to displace and relocate him in the former cultural environment. Eugen Ionescu's case (and Emil Cioran's, to some extent) is nonetheless singular. In most cases, to write in other language is a chimerical endeavour that implies the mere synchrony of the adopted language at the most (absolutely sufficient for ordinary communication), but not its diachrony or history (absolutely crucial in establishing an organic relationship of fusion with the literary history of the adoptive culture)."[15]

In Stoenescu's view, there are two types of exiled writers: some, more or less 'hybridized', remain in a cultural *no man's land*, in a fault area, being equally rejected by the 'centre' to which they have adhered, and the 'periphery' from which they have separated; others – the great universal spirits – sense and apply, *avant la lettre*, the principles of **globalization**, transcending the limitations of a certain national territory and a unique identity, by fully assimilating a 'central' adoptive culture and equally lending prestige to the 'peripheral' culture of their origin. It is the case of world-famous Eugen Ionescu and Emil Cioran in the French-speaking cultural environment, but also of the popular Andrei Codrescu or Petru Popescu, contemporary Romanian-American writers.

It is his incredible success to the reading public – both at home and on American land – that particularizes Petru Popescu among his fellow writers. The success of his novels – that determined Laurenţiu Ulici to acknowledge his merit as "the widest-read fiction writer of the late '60s and early '70s" – can be attributed to a vast complex of *textual*, *paratextual* or *autobiographical* elements. To these features one may add the urban, authentic atmosphere and slight touches of revolt against the regime which render the early texts subversive—a key to success in the totalitarian period.

Apart from the much acclaimed reception the author enjoyed at the time – that brought him an inexhaustible source of sympathy – Petru Popescu bridges the gap between two epochs and two political systems: the *totalitarian regime* in Romania and the *democratic regime* – both American and post-revolutionary Romanian, with all its specific aspects.

Moreover, Petru Popescu has undergone two stages in his development as a writer: one in his native culture and the other in his adoptive country. The former implies a continuation of the inter-war modern novel, concerned with authenticity, but equally entails a polemic attitude toward the proletarian culture and formalism of the epoch. The latter implies the contact with the American literary models – Conrad, Hemingway – as well as with the *entertainment* industry. Furthermore, it involves writing in the language of the adoptive country (i.e. English) a real challenge for any exiled writer. In an interview given to the TV hostess Delia Budeanu, Petru Popescu himself is aware of the fact that "To become the leader of a generation was easier by writing in Romanian. To produce valuable literature in a language spoken by hundreds of million of people is harder."[16] English language got the writer to face his own limitations, to expose himself to a public insensitive to subversive innuendoes, but on the other hand it offered him the chance of revival with an all-new, cosmopolitan identity, as well as to become rich and famous.

Andrei Codrescu is the exiled writer who, in an age of plurilinguism and multiculturalism, has easily overcome the problem of a unique cultural and linguistic identity. Being asked by Nicolae Stoie, the chief editor of *Astra* magazine, what means to the American writer Andrei Codrescu to 'return home', he replied: "As a writer, my 'home' has always been the language, the language in which I have written and lived. I have lived in both Romanian and English, and I am home in both of them. In our time it is possible, thank God, for a man and a writer to be home in two or five countries, in two or five languages."[17] This ubiquity of the concept of 'home' by cultural and linguistic expansion is specific to a new type of understanding the world and relating to it, typical of a globalization approach. Unlike the majority of his fellow-writers in exile – who take steady pains to preserve their linguistic identity and their affiliation to Romanian culture –Andrei Codrescu opts for the metaphor of the American *melting pot* in defining his multi-faceted identity: "Once again, it is not about two distinct identities: my 'American' identity is not torn apart from the 'Romanian' one – I am an amalgam, a crossbreed. This amalgam also consists of my Jewish origin, of my childhood in Sibiu, of Transylvania, of all the cities I have lived in and all the languages I have spoken, including the German and Hungarian of my early childhood."[18] With this perspective, the writer overcomes the 'nostalgia of origins' with its inherent tragic echoes, joining – alongside Petru Popescu and other fresher names of our literary exile – the group of those released from the obsession of a unique cultural and linguistic identity.

Nowadays, within the new context of a global(ized) culture, *a writer can make himself* at home *in more than one geographic and linguistic space, by resorting to the diverse means of communication in today's society: "The present-day richness and the gift of immediate communication make it possible the multi-identity man, enriched by 'homes' and languages. The obsession of a unique identity only diverts us away from the contemporary reality and pushes us off the history's track."*[19]

Notes:

[1] Miliana Şerbu, Constantin Gheorghe (eds.), *Globalizare şi identitate naţională. Simpozion: Bucureşti, 18 mai 2006*, Ed. Ministerului Administraţiei şi Internelor, Bucharest, 2006, p. 5.
[2] Sorin Alexandrescu, *Invizibilitatea emigrantului*, "Secolul 20", 10-12/1997, 1-3/1998, pp. 217-218.
[3] *Ibidem*, p. 218.
[4] *Ibidem*, p. 219.
[5] *Ibidem*.
[6] Constantin Eretescu, *Pensiunea Dina (Jurnal de emigraţie)*, Ed. Fundaţiei Culturale Române, Bucharest, 1995.
[7] Aurel Sasu, *Dicţionarul scriitorilor români din Statele Unite şi Canada*, Albatros, Bucharest, 2001, p. 5.

[8] Mihaela Albu, *Prezenţe spirituale româneşti în spaţiul american. Recuperări necesare*, "Philologica Jassyensia", II, 2, 2006, p. 149.
[9] See Victor Eskenasy's interview with Norman Manea, in „Suplimentul de cultură", 27, November 4-10, 2006, p. 3.
[10] Mircea Eliade, *Memorii (1907-1960)*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2005, p. 204.
[11] Marilena Rotaru, *Întoarcerea lui Vintilă Horia*, Ideea, Bucharest, 2002, p. 12.
[12] See Constantin Eretescu talking to Ştefan Baciu, *Poezia în libertate*, in „România literară", 18, May 3, 1990, p. 12.
[13] *Ibidem*.
[14] Mihaela Albu, *idem*, p. 149.
[15] Laurenţiu Orăşanu, *Timpul – Rană Sângerândă*. An Interview with Ştefan Stoenescu and Gabriel Stănescu, in "Conexiuni", 22-23, Dec. 2006 - Jan. 2007, http://conexiuni.net/autori/Stefan%20Stoenescu/pornire-Stefan%20Stoenescu.htm.
[16] The quotation comes from an interview the author gave to Delia Budeanu in the TV show "Oamenii timpului nostru" (*The People of Our Time*), on the channel Antena 2, on November 14, 2009.
[17] Nicolae Stoie, *Obsesia unicei identităţi nu face decât să ne îndepărteze de realitatea contemporană*. An Interview with Andrei Codrescu, in „Astra", New Series, I (XL), 1, December 2006, p. 13.
[18] *Ibidem*.
[19] *Ibidem*.

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