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CULTURAL STUDIES – PROBLEMS AND DILEMMAS IN ROMANIAN HIGHER EDUCATION AND ACADEMIA

Abstract: *The paper examines the ambiguous status of Cultural Studies as a discipline in Romanian higher education and Academia; the basis of the analysis is a corpus of publications associated with Cultural Studies that are produced by the members of the academic community of the West University of Timişoara. The premise of the analysis is the observation that Cultural Studies in Romanian universities represent two different projects (i.e. with different genealogies, different methodologies, and different understandings of the cultural phenomenon) that are competing for primacy within the institutionalized academic field. Moreover, there is no real dialogue between these two different projects. First of all, there is the modern project of Cultural Anthropology (that continues the traditional project of ethnology with an innovative theoretical framework). This project, with an extension to Social Anthropology and Cultural History and influenced by the French Academia (Histoire des mentalités, L'École des Annales), seems to occupy the centre of the disciplinary field of Cultural Studies in Romanian Academia at present. The second project, belonging to the British and American Cultural Studies, is a later outcome of British and American Literary Studies. This project has a complex theoretical framework, resulting from the developments of the 20th century Literary Theory and Critical Theory (structuralism, post-structuralism), and gives a complex definition to culture, seen as a "reality" shaped by ideological, social, and economic factors. Although critically questioning the cultural phenomenon, the two projects manifest rather ambiguously in the Romanian Academia as a theoretical speculation that mainly emphasizes the cultural and identitary texture of literature (imagology, cultural geography, feminist criticism etc.). These ambiguous manifestations are the main reasons why there is a deficit of legitimacy for Cultural Studies in the eyes of traditional practitioners of Literary Studies and also this ambiguity makes room for a number of contestations and accusations of dilettantism, eclecticism, and cultural relativism. In fact, these accusations are the consequences of the traditional discourse on culture, rather eager to express identity and ideology, and allergic to the critical principles of the Cultural Studies.*

Keywords: *Cultural Studies, Cultural Anthropology, Literary Studies, post-structuralism, academic discourse in Romania*

The Paradoxes of Cultural Studies

In the Romanian higher education, Cultural Studies have often been addressed with much ambiguity. In an attempt to achieve a coherent definition, researchers in the field have seldom found it difficult to form a working definition at the desired level of specificity, and this may be caused by the fact that here 'Cultural Studies' are often meant to be an umbrella term for a corpus of publications, public statements without a sound theoretical base, and for different educational offers, which, in some cases, may be even working at cross purposes. For instance, if one tries to search the catalogue of a university library (BCUT), the entry on *Cultural Studies* will generate mixed results for different historical epochs, or for different research fields that seemingly relate to another tradition, with well-established terminology; a tradition of various academic practices and disciplines: Literary Theory, Comparative Literature, History, Philosophy,

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Ethnology, Anthropology, 'British and American Cultural Studies', Arts, Translation Studies, Applied Linguistics, or Journalism. Another significant example taken from the educational system would be the university's present curricula on 'Cultural Studies'. More specifically, if we analyze the curriculum offered by the Faculty of Letters of the West University in Timişoara[2], it is crucial to observe the interesting combination between the disciplines of traditional philology (Literary History, Ethnology and Folklore, and Aesthetics) and those disciplines emerging from Cultural Anthropology and Intercultural Psychology (i.e. Intercultural Communication), which, together with pragmatic elements of cultural politics and regional contextualization (Regional History, Regional Foreign Languages), conceal a small nucleus arising from the British-American Cultural Studies (Literary Theory and Cultural Studies, Gender Studies, Pop Culture and Mass Media).

However, to conclude with an optimistic tone, this ambiguity could be seen as interdisciplinary diversity that can be essentially productive and easily explainable in the context of rapid informational explosion, and also in the context of the paradigm of interdisciplinary dialog that seems to be a common desired goal in today's academic spheres and educational system. On the other hand, this ambiguity may generate serious terminological, methodological, or taxonomic paradoxes that may be the source of confusion, contradictory effects, and misunderstandings at the level of public discourse, which make the term of 'cultural studies' be a less functional landmark for the present discursive diversity. More than that, this ambiguity giving rise to much confusion in the public discourse will decrease the legitimacy of the disciplines promoted by Cultural Studies; it is now clear why Cultural Studies have always been contested and accused of shallow theoretical frameworks, eclecticism, and 'postmodern' relativism.

Thus, a thorough analysis will be necessary with a view to examining the methodological and disciplinary means used by practitioners in the field of Cultural Studies in order to start a preliminary debate on the factors of coherence or dissonance that characterize today's discursive community[3], and then in order to establish the common ground for diverse research interests raised in the field of Cultural Studies. Last but not least, this analysis may put forward a series of pragmatic arguments against the accusations raised by the more conservative voices of the Romanian higher education.

Cultural Studies – the British-American Version

Admittedly, the today's Cultural Studies may refer to the academic discipline first introduced by the British higher education in the '60s (Cultural Studies). This intellectual movement in the academic landscape, which later proved to be extremely prolific, started to flourish when the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) was founded in Birmingham in 1964, under Richard Hoggart's direct supervision. In fact, the founding of this Centre can be seen as the response given by important education institutes to a new wave of educational and social politics that had been already firmly demanded in several critical public statements since the 50s, which are now considered landmarks for Cultural Studies.

In the form of an allegedly critical exercise, Raymond Williams's study *Culture and Society* (1750-1950), published in 1958, developed an effective demystifying outline of culture that was mainly rooted in social and historical circumstances. From Williams's perspective, culture should be also viewed in anthropological terms that are now primarily concerned with present developing events: culture is "a mode of interpreting all our common experience, and, in this new interpretation, changing it"[4], Williams states in one of the few places where he voices an indirectly demystifying view on culture.

[2] See http://www.litere.uvt.ro/6_studii/lic/plan_inv/plan_inv.pdf, accessed June 25, 2012.
[3] See Dominique Maingueneau, *Genèses du discourse* (Liège: Pierre Mardaga, 1984), 50-52.
[4] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1958), 18.

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Almost simultaneously, R. Hoggart goes on with his arguments in *The Uses of Literacy* (1957)[5] where he uses the tools of literary criticism for analyzing the phenomena of mass culture which in the 50s and 60s are beginning to tremendously disregard high culture, and also folklore or traditional forms of art. Another important name for the origins of cultural studies, Stuart Hall, radically changed the perspectives of the CCCS when he was appointed chair of the Centre in the early 70s; he advocated the radically critical directions of Marxism that now turned into the ideology of the new left[6], that affected the manner in which ordinary socio-cultural practices and institutional routines could be applied to aspects of everyday life. The foundations of high culture, previously disregarded, were now replaced by Hall (drawing on Gramsci's previous contribution) with ideological foundations that will later be analyzed in numerous forms:

> Cultural studies set about finding culture in places where it was hitherto unlooked for. In the context of the time this meant looking for it in demographic locations other than those of the rich. So working-class culture, women's culture, youth culture, gay and lesbian culture, postcolonial culture, third world culture, and the culture of everyday life were all quickly discovered and described. [7]

However, Cultural Studies may have only remained the result of circumstantial politics if they hadn't benefited from the unexpected radical transformation of the literary studies and philosophical thinking. If at the beginning the critical toolkit used belonged to "anthropology, literary criticism, political economy and other existing disciplines"[8], the tools were later refined and became more adjusted to the study of Cultural Studies as soon as an epistemological change appeared in these academic disciplines that almost programmatically generated an overlap of goals and research projects. The "philosophies of the twilight" at the end of the 19th century[9], which are best illustrated by Paul Ricoeur's 'masters of suspicion' (Nietzsche, Marx, Freud)[10] with their radically critical positions, together with the fundamental innovations in literary theory, reinvented by the Russian Formalists, and also together with the transformations in linguistics (F. de Saussure) immediately after the World War II were making significant headway in the new theoretical arena and started to question the mythical or humanist status of culture, with a view to creating an anti-foundationist and anti-representationalist perspective on culture; in sum, the entire enterprise first started to question the 'constituent' components of culture: literature, metaphysical thinking, transcendental moral, the truth, the beauty, and 'the natural' etc. The structuralist theoreticians gave particular prominence to relations and structure in the detriment of the substantial and organic, and therefore they disregarded the aesthetical value and the autonomy of the creator. This line of thinking will be later elaborated in the aesthetical statements developed by post-structuralism (Barthes, Foucault, Lacan, and Derrida):

> By claiming that the language always revolves around a centre of power, post-structuralism [through the voices of Foucault and Derrida] advances the idea that the language is impossible to master. The most fundamental consequence of these claims is that, if our access to 'reality' and

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[5] Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy. Aspects of working-class life with special reference to publications and entertainments* (London, Chato & Windus, 1957).
[6] See Stuart Hall, „Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies", in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, edited by Simon During (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), 100.
[7] John Hartley, *A Short History of Cultural Studies* (London – Thousand Oaks – New Dehli: Sage Publications, 2003), 3-4.
[8] Ibid, 4.
[9] See Cristian Delacampagne, *Istoria filosofiei în secolul XX* (Bucureşti: Babel, 1998), 67-68.
[10] Paul Ricoeur, *Conflictul interpretărilor* (Cluj: Echinox, 1999), 140.

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> 'truth' is facilitated by a language that is difficult to master, 'reality' itself becomes purely textual, impossible to determine according to the markers of a rationalizable 'objectivity'. That is why the 'referentiality' of literature is no longer, as in previous times, 'objective reality' (nature, life, humans, history, or society), but the language that, in its particular manifestations, culturally reconstructs this 'reality'[11].

By its intense preoccupation with the cultural reconstruction of 'reality', the philosophically grounded post-structuralism coincides with Cultural Studies in their common interest for the 'ideological' determinations of the culture; it should be noted that, in the case of Cultural Studies, this concern is rather intuitive, when it is not politically determined. In addition to this, if we observe the flourishing success of post-structuralism in America[12], then we could also notice an increasingly political orientation of the literary studies that are now more concerned with cultural and political terms. Plus, due to a growing cultural hybridization, the dynamicity of the modern world produces a set of 'identity hermeneutics'[13] (feminism, post-colonialism) that mainly arise from both the militant agenda set after the crisis of the traditional values (crisis that became apparent at the beginning of the 20th century) and from the critical and inquisitive quality of the philosophical onset of early post-structuralism. Also, literary studies begin to be increasingly popular for their cultural content, which ultimately results in various political readings. Above all these, other theoretical forms gradually appear, i.e. the structuralist reformulations of Marxism (L. Althusser), the critical input of the Frankfurt School, and the sociological analyzes of the cultural phenomenon (P. Bourdieu), which will put forward new critical tools for reconsidering the literary phenomena, and also for reconsidering the increased interest for the critical analysis of the 'contemporary'/ developing cultural phenomena.

This entire enterprise, which mainly characterizes the British-American academia in the 80s, mainly results in an increasingly blurred boundary between the literary studies and the cultural ones. In fact, what is actually happening at the time is not only the marginalization of 'the literary'[14] exactly within 'literary studies', or a radical transformation of the literary practices and of the literary corpus (the decanonization of the literary, the demystifying spirit, the relativization of the aesthetical, metafictional games etc), but also a 'textualization' of the cultural phenomenon. Culture acquires an ideological sense that is not only replacing the humanist sense, but it will finally 'destabilize' literature. The critical tools, the theoretical framework, the critical perspectives, and the ideological readings will steadily give voice to cultural phenomena of different origins that will receive 'textual' touches. This claimed textualization will grant empirical legitimacy to Cultural Studies that now become a valid academic discipline or an established theoretical practice, equally important as literary studies.

In the long run, in the 90s Cultural Studies become a legitimate interdisciplinary framework with solid conceptual and terminological grounds, arising from the literary theory and the critical theory of the 20th century. At the basis of the newly launched discipline sits a comprehensive perspective on the cultural phenomena that views culture as a 'reality' constructed by ideological items, by social and economic factors, and identity aspects, belonging to a particular human community. In truth, the analysis of the cultural phenomena will lead to the analysis of a large corpus of *particular symptoms* of the culture. The cultural symptoms are considered to be organized according to the rules and principles of a discourse or a

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[11] Dumitru Tucan, *Introducere în studiile literare* (Iași: Institutul European, 2007), 109.

[12] For instance, Paul de Man or Barbara Johnson uses the practice of deconstruction to support purely political matters, i.e. marginal identities (Barbara Johnson, *A World of Difference* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

[13] Tucan, *Introducere în studiile literare*, see p. 119 and the following ones.

[14] See also the practice promoted by 'new historicism' or 'cultural materialism' (Stephen Greenblatt, Louis Montrose, Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield etc.) – see Peter Barrry, *Beginning Theory. An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), 172-190.

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sign organization. Such a discourse 'conceals' or contains conflicting cultural 'realities', grounded on particular 'power relations'; therefore, the practice of Cultural Studies leads to the interpretation and analysis of this discourse. From this point of view, Cultural Studies give voice to a radically critical spirit, emerging from its inquisitive theoretical sources (post-structuralism and critical theory), which aim at interconnected existing phenomena that are at the core of today's critical studies.

Cultural Studies in Romanian Higher Education and Academia

The British-American Cultural Studies foster a hybrid form of culture, seen in its developing dynamicity[15]. In this sense, literature itself is just a piece of the larger puzzle. This is the main reason why Cultural Studies themselves (many recent literary studies have become an integral part of cultural studies) are seen as heterogeneous practices that refer to the analytical methods used and also to the critical toolkit; equally important, the view on culture and the interpretation of cultural phenomena are hybrid. One of the most apparent consequences in the British-American higher education is, therefore, a mixture of analytical methods and theoretical goals belonging to literary and cultural studies. This very combination can be also seen in the Romanian academia, especially in the case of academic practices that are legitimately associated with British-American practices in the field: British and American studies. To exemplify, 'feminist criticism', 'postcolonial criticism', 'eco-criticism', 'gay and lesbian studies', new historicism or cultural materialism, are the dominant academic preoccupations in British and American studies in Romania at present, which are perfectly attuned to the latest global practices in the field[16].

Nevertheless, this British-American model seems to be rather isolated in the Romanian academia. The radically critical spirit, the theoretical inclinations, and the political implications of studying literature and culture in this manner are softened by the intense care for nuances, by the lack of appetite for cultural activism, and by the approach to a rather humanistic view on culture. The fact that Cultural Studies have never been in the critical limelight or they have not been directly related to main Romanian literary or cultural phenomena has produced rather contradictory directions, has made room for accusations, and sometimes, indifference. This situation will be illustrated with an example taken from the academic sphere in Timisoara.

In 2007, Daniel Vighi published *Onoarea şi onorariul*[17], a 'monography' on Ioan Slavici. Here the author makes use of various critical tools taken from sociology and political economy, whose leading promoters were M. Weber and Francis Fukuyama. In fact, these two names are heavily cited in the book. For the purpose of his paper, the author uses M. Weber's theses in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*[18] that connect the capitalist culture of development to the protestant ethic[19]. By contrast, F.

[15] In one of the studies, written when Cultural Studies have already become an accomplished discipline, with its own personal history, Cris Barker (*Making Sense of Cultural Studies. Central Problems and Critical Debates*, London - Thousand Oaks – New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2002, 16) notices the fact that "culture can be thought of as the continual hybridization of meaningful practices or performances in a global context. Thus, culture is a matter less of locations with roots than of hybrid and creolized cultural routes in global space. Cultures are not pure, authentic and locally bounded; rather, they are syncretic and hybridized products of interactions across space". See also D. Massey, "The Spatial Construction of Youth Cultures", in *Cool Places – Geografies of Youth Cultures*, edited by T. Skeleton, G. Valentine (London: Routledge, 1998), 124.

[16] Among the most prominent figures in the academia in Timisoara that interpret literature in a culture orientation, we should add Dana Percec, *The Body's Tale: Some Ado About Shakespearean Identities* (Timişoara: Editura UVT, 2006), who uses the tools of new historicism, Reghina Dascăl, *Feminist Perspectives* (Timişoara: Editura UVT, 2001), who uses the tools of feminist hermeneutics, or Cristina Chevereşan (*Wounds and Deceptions. Decadent and Modernist Sensitivities on the Edge* (Bucureşti: Institutul Cultural Român, 2006), who is closer to a historic and cultural comparatism that analyzes the dynamics of lost identities in the first half of the 20th century.

[17] Daniel Vighi, *Onoarea şi onorariul* (Bucureşti: Cartea românească, 2007).

[18] Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Unwin University Books, 1967).

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Fukuyama is mainly exploited for his liberal arguments stated in *The End of History and the Last Man*, and especially for his thesis in *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*[20] claiming that culture and economic phenomena are impossible to separate. 'The Banat's world'[21], as presented in Slavici's prose, is read from the perspective of an implicit value-oriented structure on which the whole text is constructed, and this structure seems to be generated by the work ethos[22] that is grounded in the historic realities (as related to the social modernity), and in the geographical background of the Banat's region. In principal, the hypothesis that sits at the basis of this critical approach to Slavici's texts is the fact that the literary text contains a value-oriented structure equivalent with a socio-cultural structure, historically and geographically identified. In the end, this type of criticism mirrors, whether consciously or not (to demonstrate this would be beyond the scope of my paper), the main principles of reading literature with a cultural-political key, which would be one of the common practices of cultural studies. Interestingly enough, D. Vighi's study borrows much from the militant agenda of the Cultural Studies and their preoccupation with identity issues. In fact, the book advances favorable comments on the well-known 'work ethos' and, as stated by one of the critics, the book is "the apology of liberal capitalism and of the culture in Banat, which best represents this capitalism"[23]. Leaving aside the overall intentions of the volume, which may lack a coherent organization of the arguments, but which has, nevertheless, effective rhetorical strategies and dynamic connections, one may say that *Onoarea şi onorariul* is a good illustration of a literary study grounded in Cultural Studies.

However, Vighi's book has been criticized for his choice of methodology, and this may be the proof for the decreased interest in such critical approaches among Romanian literary critics. If Bianca Burţa – Cernat notices rather admiringly the less 'conventional' type of criticism on literature[24], Andrei Terian[25] directly accuses Daniel Vighi of "reenacting the vulgar sociologism of the 50s". This critical assertion is extreme and shows, beyond doubts, the dominant aesthetical trait of mainstream Romanian literary studies, and the rather 'humanistic' view on culture in the Romanian critical discourse that is unwilling to open up to an analysis of the literary in 'cultural' terms. In the end, we may conclude that Cultural Studies have the ability to produce observable effects in the Romanian academia, but so far these effects have not been totally appropriated. Most probably, the 'ideological' outline of culture, as performed by the British-American Cultural Studies, is associated with the 'ideological' aspects of the Communist times. On the other hand, the non-cannonic literary outlines, the marginalization of the literary and the textualization of contemporary cultural phenomena are thought to be destabilizing the aesthetical/ humanist projections, still dominant in Romanian literary studies.

Because of this, in the Romanian academia and for Romanian institutionalized practices, Cultural Studies are meant to use up a set of approaches to culture, which may be called 'anthropologic', in our opinion, and which appears to be separated, as regards the material to analyze, from literary studies and

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[19] cf. Vighi, *Onoarea şi onorariul*, 11.

[20] Francis Fukuyama, *The end of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Presss, 1992); *Trust: Social Virtues and Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Free Press, 1995).

[21] cf. Vighi, *Onoarea şi onorariul*, 19.

[22] that appreciates 'the achieved status' in the detriment to 'the ascribed status' (Vighi, *Onoarea şi onorariul*, especially chapter. „Mara, Bocioacă, Hubăr et alii între Karl Marx şi Max Weber – on status –", p. 28 and the following ones).

[23] Dan Cîrjan, „De îl iubim pe Slavici", *Observatorul cultural*, nr. 466, martie 2009 (http://www.observatorcultural.ro/De-ce-il-iubim-pe-Slavici*articleID_21441-articles_details.html, accessed on June 29th 2012).

[24] Bianca Burţa – Cernat, „ Mara, contemporana noastră", *Observatorul cultural*, nr. 391, 27 septembrie, 2007(http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Mara-contemporana-noastra*articleID_18387-articles_details.html), accessed on June 29th 2012).

[25] Andrei Terian, „Pentru realismul capitalist", *Ziarul de duminică*, 19 octombrie 2007 (http://www.zf.ro/ziarul-de-duminica/pentru-realismul-capitalist-3064326, accessed on June 29th 2012).

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their potential connection to the British-American variant of Cultural Studies. If the *humanist* sense of culture is universalist and normative[26], the *ideological* sense is radically critical and political (as related to a politics of social action[27]), then the anthropological sense could be found in the middle ground, where, in truth, culture is seen as 'plural and relativistic', but at the same time, culture is necessary to explain identitary differences[28] that need to be explored and described, most often in an exhaustive or encyclopedic manner, without making any evaluations.

Nonetheless, the issue with the anthropological approaches to culture in Romanian academia is rather problematic because of its plural genealogy, its methodological tradition, and because of the existing influences in critical approaches. In essence, we need to point out the fact that what it is here at stake is a whole range of problems and dilemmas of the discipline of Cultural Anthropology (along with its historic avatars) and its diffuse influences on the critical methods used to describe current cultural phenomena. Today's cultural anthropology in Romanian academia continues a previous research project initiated by the studies in ethnology, a project that is in effect a comparative synthesis of the practices belonging to ethnography and folklore. These rather descriptive and archeological (in the sense of highlighting endangered traditional items) disciplines started to develop at the end of the 19th century under the influence of the desired goal of German Romanticism that advocated the reconstruction of the collective essence of the 'spirit of the peoples' (Herder's *Volkskunde*), and which would be later strengthened under the influence of French ethnology between the two World Wars[29], so that in the end the two disciplines would play an active role in the reconstruction of Romanian identity that was extremely necessary at the time when the modern Romanian state was slowly emerging. The very essence of this identity will be contained in various forms of folk culture, especially in its particular representations in traditional art. This is the reason why the traditional art, with its specific orientation to literary forms, will later become one of the main interests for Romanian literary studies, which will no longer depend on the sources offered by ethnography and folklore. In fact, if we look at the distinction made by George W. Stocking between "empire building anthropology' and "nation building anthropology"[30], we will notice that the historic and methodological sources of Romanian anthropology are mainly linked to the latter type, i.e. the anthropology (ethnology) that "took part in the building of the nation"[31].

The militant agenda of the anthropology involved in the building of the nation was an easy asset for the national ideologies that were preoccupied, on the one hand, with the construction of an integrated identity, and on the other hand, with the legitimacy of their own politics, including the cultural ones. One could consider here the examples of the national extreme right ideology in the time between the two world

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[26] cf. Alan Barnard and Jonathan Spencer, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology* (London & New York: Routledge, 2002), 206: "culture is what a person ought to acquire in order to become a fully worthwhile moral agent".

[27] Terence Turner, "Anthropology and Multiculturalism: What is Anthropology that Multiculturalists Should be Mindful of it?", *Cultural Anthropology*, 8 (1993): 411-429. Turner's study analyzes the differences between the anthropological approaches of the cultural studies and the politically oriented ones. (425-426).

[28] Alan Barnard and Jonathan Spencer, *Encyclopaedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, 206: "the «anthropological» sense […] is plural and relativistic. The world is divided into different cultures, each worthwhile in its way. Any particular person is a product of the particular culture in which he or she has lived, and differences between human beings are to be explained (but not judged) by differences in their culture (rather than in their race)".

[29] This influence is also due to the prestige of the Institute of Ethnology (Institut d'Ethnologie), founded in 1925 by L. Levy-Bruhl, M. Mauss and P. Rivet.

[30] George W. Stocking Jr., "Afterword: a View from the Center", *Ethnos*, 47 (1982): 172 – 186.

[31] See Vintilă Mihăilescu, *Antropologie. Cinci introduceri* (Iaşi: Polirom, 2007), 247: "At large, Romanian 'national ethnology' had the mission of forming Romanians or of participating in the process sui-generis. National ethnology was meant to be *nationalistic* (italics in the original) by its definition and scope, but this particular trait should be understood in the political and cultural context: if it hadn't existed, the national elite would have had to invent it!"

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wars and during the period of national-communism. This is why for the last twenty years efforts have been made to free ethnology (ethnography and folklore) from the domination of ideology in the construction of identity. Romanian ethnology had much improved and updated its theoretical tools due to the French Structuralism and its theoretical influence on folklore studies and other research lines that are associated with them (narratology). The researchers carried on with their field work in poor scientific conditions, while the real outcome of their work was only revealed in the 90s when a new framework and innovative research methods were discovered and later accepted. Therefore, cultural anthropology, acknowledged as an institution rather than a discipline in its own right before 1990[32], had to wait until the fall of the Communist dictatorship to reinvent itself when new links were reinforced to the tradition of global Western anthropology, especially popular for its epistemological dimension. In the new context, the field work started again and was made to respond to new challenges and scientific requirements. In actual fact, cultural anthropology in the Romanian academic landscape started an innovative project that aimed to reach a wide range of objectives, such as: urban ethnography, anthropology of collective memory[33] (associated with frameworks of oral history), interest in identities and ethnicities[34], reevaluation of symbolic structures and rituals in traditional communities[35] as preserved in contemporary times. It should be noted that this project indirectly addresses questions of social anthropology and cultural history; a clear indicator of the French academic model (as in the History of mentalities or the History of culture). In truth, the understanding of culture as a hybrid product can be also found in Cultural Studies, although here it lacks an explicit militant orientation. Rather, it is the archeology of 'identitary formation' that has been approached in an analytical and descriptive way, and not in the fashion of a unitary political agenda, as the one developed by the British-American Cultural Studies.

Conclusion

In her study entitled "From Cultural Studies to Études Culturelles, Études de la Culture and Sciences de la Culture - Questions of Singularity", published in the prestigious journal *Cultural Studies*, Anne Chalard-Fillaudeau attempted to interpret the French culture's unwillingness to embrace British and American Cultural Studies, and the subsequent unwillingness of French theoreticians to engage in a dialog with British or American Cultural Studies; this historic fact is even more puzzling if we think of the important critical theoreticians (Barthes, Foucault, Derrida etc.) that have massively contributed as an intellectual endeavor to the British Cultural Studies[36]. The understanding of this isolationism gave a rather negative diagnosis to the French culture in the present cultural and academic context. In effect, as concluded by the French specialist in the history of mentalities and histories of ideas, the French isolationism can be related to a series of factors – parochialism (narrowness of general interests, attachment to local interests, and lack of intercultural curiosity), monolinguism (consistent resistance to adopt or adapt to American frameworks or practices), and protectionism (stemming from a form of aestheticization of the theories of the great French thinkers)[37]. The conclusions of the study are only

[32] See Vintilă Mihăilescu, *Fascinaţia diferenţei* (Bucureşti: Paideia, 1999). The approach of the book revealingly combines case studies written by the author before 1989, diary entries and personal reflections that outline an unclear image of cultural anthropology at the time, that was a mix of institutionalized rigidity and intellectual escape.

[33] See the approaches to collective memory anthropology of the most representatives of the academic shpere in Timisoara,: Smaranda Vultur, *Germanii din Banat prin povestirile lor* (Bucureşti: Paideia, 2000), *Memoria salvată* (Iaşi: Polirom, 2002); *Deportarea în Bărăgan* (Timişoara: Mirton, 2011).

[34] In this sense, see Otilia Hedeşan, *Mă răzumeşti, fata mea...* (Bucureşti: Paideia, 2007).

[35] see Otilia Hedeşan, *Şapte eseuri despre strigoi* (Timişoara: Editura Marineasa, 1998); *Pentru o mitologie difuză* (Timişoara: Editura Marineasa, 2000).

[36] Anne Chalard-Fillaudeau, "From Cultural Studies to Études Culturelles, Études de la Culture and Sciences de la Culture - Questions of Singularity", *Cultural Studies*, vol 23, Nos. 5-6 Septembre-November (2009): 831-855.

[37] Ibid., see p. 842 and the next one.

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moderately optimist, due to the fact that France as a 'multicultural society' (p. 846) needs new work on interconnected issues that can lead to controversy and conflicts in society or culture, or due to the fact that our information-based society needs new work on the analysis of cultural differences that are explicitly expressed in today's social dialog.

This study, similar to others that treat the impact of British cultural studies on the 'continental' academic landscape[38], even if it is written in an apologetic manner, succeeds in revealing the critical nature of Cultural Studies at present and their practices in the circumstances of an increasingly hybrid and dynamic culture. In essence, the eclectic nature of contemporary Cultural Studies, that are constantly readapting and transforming their critical toolkit, fits the *modus vivendi* of a discipline that rejects tradition in view of innovative reformulations. Thus, cultural anthropology, due to its dynamic transformations that relate to Cultural Studies, can contribute significantly to the reinforcement of the theoretical framework on the grounds of its capacity for synthesis, for descriptions or comparative approaches. Despite the fact that Romanian anthropology is still within the confines of a descriptive theoretical framework, for the last decades it has come in closer contact with authentic forms of Cultural Studies by approaching contemporary cultural phenomena in a manner that mostly focuses on dynamic cultural transformations and by taking a critical view to present issues. In the long run, despite an explicit deficit of communication between Cultural Studies and modern cultural anthropology, one can notice their common ground regarding their critical view on present cultural issues; admittedly, we will need a critical eye for the challenges posed by new cultural phenomena in the current global communication that are growing extremely complicated and have become more difficult to analyze and comprehend.

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