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ACADEMIA ROMÂNĂ



Adrian LĂCĂTUȘ

# Experimentul literar în proza românească postbelică și contemporană *O perspectivă cognitivă și comparată*



Editura Muzeului Național al Literaturii Române



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Autor: **Adrian LĂCĂTUȘ**

Conducător științific: **Prof. dr. Silviu ANGELESCU**

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Adrian LĂCĂTUȘ

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românească postbelică și  
contemporană.  
O perspectivă cognitivă  
și comparată**



Editura Muzeului Național al Literaturii Române

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## ADDENDA

### Summary

Starting from an outline of Adorno's aesthetic theory stating that every work of art is defined by a dual condition, seeking both autonomy and *mimesis*, the study investigates the experimental prose and novel in the East European, mostly Romanian, communist 1980s arguing that the so-called 'escapists' or 'textualists' (for their abandon of narrativity, plot and traditional realism) were actually pioneering a new literary representation of reality, one that would not maintain the ideological facade and hide the totalitarian mutilation of everyday life. The tradition of realism was renounced and its contemporary inheritors implicitly denounced for the sake of representing the truth of the un-essence and estrangement, the only acceptable legitimization of prose and the novel.

In the long duration of culture and the literary institution under communism, the only way for the young and radical prose writers to stay true to the principle of autonomy and relevance of their art was a constant practice of experiment and deviance from all layers of public and institutionalized (literary) discourse.

The research highlights the idea of the importance of the historical experience and of the *duration* of the political and historical experience in East-Central European Communism. It is true that these regimes appeared in a state of illegitimate authority but after that first historical moment of coming to power, a long series of challenges and legitimations through different strategies and discourses arose and consolidated their authority. They all influenced the way art and literature developed and evolved in this part of Europe in the last half of the 20th century. I will be focusing on the experimental prose and novel in the late 70s and in the 80s, a moment when communism already had a significant history and the culture it

created or tolerated was collecting into a tradition, a literature of acclimatization.

The historical character of this aesthetics represents an essential part of its cultural significance and largely explains the specific innovation and creativity it involved. When I am thinking of the historical character I do not only mean the succession and tensed alternation of artistic forms and attitudes, the exchanges inside the system of art, but mainly the mutations of social, political and cultural history that engage artistic representation. Literary institutions, survival and affirmation strategies, cultural discourses and attitudes varied over this rather long period of almost fifty years of totalitarianism in East-Central Europe. It is impossible to phenomenalyze a totalitarian literary aesthetics if one is aware of the historical and plural evolution of its distinct sequences.

The idea of the autonomy of art (a historical and *modern* one itself) was from the beginning a form of soteriology, of gnosis more and more exoteric, offering the artist (moral) consolation and an image of the self to live with. This idea proved to be more enduring than the art forms themselves, which are historicized and pushed to the margins of the cultural legitimacy field. The principle of autonomy remains intact beyond the iconoclasm and radicalisms that enter smoothly under its logic. Even though the historical avant-gardes wished to abolish the frontier between life and art, the historically irreversible character of the process of autonomization of art and consciousness was establishing. In the quest of absolute artistic liberty the avant-gardes just extended and radicalized the application of this principle.

Different currents of fiction prose under communism sought this autonomy. It was a ruling principle that gathered under its flag different schools and even conflicting factions. The young experimentalists, the so-called 80s Generation (in Romania) were joining, willingly or not, on the ground of the principle of aesthetic autonomy, the older authors they tried to differentiate from. But the levels of autonomy were many, and beyond the autonomy that the whole literary field (in bourdieusian terms, if you like) sought in relation to the political realm, internal conflicts inside the field are relevant.



This principle of differentiation, of deviancy, or the anguish of contamination was oriented towards multiple types of cultural discourses. First, of course, they sought autonomy from the discourse of propaganda in a political sense, as it was once incorporated by Socialist Realism. Then, starting with the 70s and getting stronger in the 80s, from the discourse of cultural nationalism, a pan-East-Central-European trend in the block after de-Stalinization. Péter Esterházy gives an ironical account of this task ascribed to writers in his *Kis magyar pornográfia* (1984):

The question, what is a writer supposed to be doing around these parts has produced answers stranger than fiction, though they were not *necessarily* born out of feeble-mindedness. They were born of misery, the misery of the situation, which does not make them any different from what they are. But they've got a reason, at least. Which is what we call misery. Through the years, the task has been formulated basically in relationship to the necessity of *regulating* the River Tisza, making it fit for navigation, and thus making the nation *prosper*, whereas there is something very wrong *to begin with* if the Tisza needs to be regulated by others than experts, while the nation - well, the nation had better be left to feed for itself with (need we add?) the wiser than wise counsel of its honourable and highly qualified leaders. All other eventualities can be worse. It is more comforting if the writer thinks not in terms of *the* people and *the* homeland, but in terms of subject and predicate, and not because he is a homeless villain, but because if he's any good at all, he's *up to here* in it anyhow, and if he's no good, what's the use of *talking*? He's just mincing his words. Love of country is a matter of quality."<sup>169</sup>

But, most important for our approach here, this literature tried to achieve autonomy from the discourse of institutionalized, 'official', literature. And by that I do not indicate only to the literature that was contributing ideologically to the regime, but mainly to the literature that obtained some kind of status recognition, that became part of the

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<sup>169</sup> Péter Esterházy, *A Little Hungarian Pornography*, translated by Judith Sollosy, Hydra Books/Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 1997, p. 19

established cultural order, even as an alternative legitimized authority. I am referring to the aesthetic and literary establishment of the period, an institution that came to perceive itself as autonomous from the political realm, but appeared, to the young radical experimental writers in the late 70s and in the 80s, as a part of the 'system', a tamed, accomplice network of artists and writers. I want to refrain from idealizing this group's dissident political attitude (political apathy was manifesting here in a comparable degree as in a previous generation), but their artistic dissidence was their form of implied rejection and resistance, of counterculture. The general feeling of captivity of all discourse, doubled by the urgency of expression or even deposition marked the negative aesthetics of experimental prose: "When we don't speak, said Edgar, we become unbearable, and when we do, we make fools of ourselves".<sup>170</sup>

The shock of the installation of Stalinist totalitarianism was a major one inside the system of art and literature and seemed to suspend and destroy the essential criteria for legitimation of modern artistic creation and intellectual life as a whole<sup>171</sup>. That is why it was perceived and described by numerous authors as an intervention of evil, irrational, aberrant, a violent deviation from 'normality'. Those intellectuals and writers who emigrated and left the country's general prison-camp in late 40s and the early 50s, left with this perception and they preserved it for a very long term. They had of the remaining authors a sort of a constructed expectation, formed in that particular and time-frozen historical moment, requiring from them to do the things they could not possibly do, to get back to the initial moment of fracture and take things from this point of 'normality'. The metaphor of Andrei Amalrik's soldier pointing his gun at the prisoner, quoted and expanded by professor Thomas Pavel in his contribution to this volume is very useful indeed. In the years following Stalin's death, during the Thaw, there were sings that the alleged 'normality' seemed to resurface with the

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<sup>170</sup> Herta Müller, *The Land of Green Plums. A novel, (Hertztier)* translated by Michael Hofmann, Hydra Books/Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois, 1998, p.1

<sup>171</sup> see Isaiah Berlin, *The Soviet Mind. Russian Culture under Communism*, edited by Henry Hardy, Brookings Institution Press, Washington, D. C., 2004

weakening of the intensity of repression. But when the exhausted armed guard lowered his gun, what the prisoner obtained was not freedom of movement nor he became a free person, he could just lower his raised arms and relax them for a while. This nuance changes everything because the literature of this period was not the literature of a 'normal' society, by modern western standards of political and social normality. Irrespective of the degree of the relaxation, everything remained politically marked. As Richard Wagner, the German-Romanian poet from the *Aktionsgruppe Banat* said, "in a dictatorship politics is everywhere. I don't bring it into my poems, it gets there by itself"<sup>172</sup>.

By the late 50s and then in the 60s a vigorous revival of the novel, away from the Socialist Realism, took place and it was all based on the strength of plot, character and story. The abandoning of plot and narrativity in the novels of Péter Esterházy, Péter Nadas (in a certain degree), Herta Müller, Gheorghe Crăciun, Mircea Nedelciu and other authors from this literary space of East-Central Europe was an important aesthetic choice made for the sake of representing the impregnated political reality. They avoided a direct literary response to the political discourse and the rendering of the political experience of opposition leaning for the empirical representation of the modified reality with its insidious politics. It was probably the emergence of a new literary language that tried to explore the new political, social, economical and cultural state as if it was a state of *nature*, though a corrupted nature, by no means idyllic or amnesic.

There was a critique of narrativity and plot implied in their practice, suggesting that the story operates a framing and a taming of the historical empirical experience, attributing implicit signification to it, be it hypothetical, hyperbolic, parabolical, ironical, parodical and so on. The narrative novel or prose states that reality could be set in a logical frame and sequence and ultimately possesses a meaning, be it tragic or less than

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<sup>172</sup> in an interview taken in 1993, quoted in David Rock, 'From the periphery to the centre and back again': *An Introduction to the Life and works of Richard Wagner*, in David Rock, Stefan Wolff - editors, *Coming Home to Germany? The Integration of Ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe in the Federal Republic*, Berghahn Books, New York, 2002, p. 125

that. These authors felt that this is a false consolation, a form of moral and artistic compromise and this is one main reason for which they renounced the story. Some of them built up their own legitimizing literary and philosophical tradition (Wittgenstein was a reference for many of them, and I dedicated a chapter to this influence), a restrained canon made of authors with fragmentary style who lacked narrativity and the background of grand narratives. They identified with the ones that refused to put the experience into a form aspiring for totality.

The social function of this literature is probably to be defined inside small social groups, marginalized, inner-worldly, colonies of artists and their corresponding small public (with variable distribution of the two roles). It definitely brought intellectual, moral and psychological consolation to its own authors. The marginality of this literature was for them a warranty of the right attitude of these authors. They accepted this kind of social damnation into the periphery, most of them. They passionately worked for a new literary aesthetics that failed to bloom with the fall of the communist regimes. The Fall canceled the spiritual apocalypse that negatively gave meaning to their endeavors. The transition to the renewed democracies found them in insecure positions, most of them incapable to imagine themselves in that situation. Their whole aesthetics entered a crisis (I am thinking here especially of the Romanians because Herta Müller or Péter Esterházy found a way to continue what they were doing) and failed to produce new works or followers. This kind of experimentalism was taken as something minor even over the threshold of 1989. A literary critic from the Romanian exile expressed her disappointment and was very critical to these authors for their failure to rise up to the historical mission of rendering communism in its true inhuman face, without the mask of experimentalism and techniques, they failed to tell its story. In the same novel mentioned above, whose publication in 1984 clearly indicates that the cultural environment in Hungary was much more liberal than in other countries of the block, Esterházy quotes Endre Bojtár about the dilemmas and difficulties of the representation of reality in its concrete historical experience:

My business is Eastern Europe. This presumptuous statement is equivalent to a fish, prisoner of a battered, rust-stained bathtub, condemned to silence except for Christmas Eve, saying, my business is bathtubs. Besides, the filth surrounding us hasn't even got an intimate, domestic character; the water is ice cold, and we have to dodge life-size warships all the time.

People around these parts are vigilant, hungry for knowledge. In those few precious moments when they are not forced to practise the switch-over to breathing through the gills, are not herded together by the bright beams of glaring ideologies, when their peace is not shattered by the blast of hand grenades, they come out of the water, look around and, panting with the full weight of their many duties, attempt to come to grips with the lesson to be learned from swimming around the tub in circles. What are we to do? What must a man do in order not to take the bait? What can and what must literature do under the circumstances?

Just one thing, and without balking. It must provide a clear description of the situation. It must make a clear assessment. This clear-headed precision is not much, but it is not little either. It is not much if we think of how many have already declared our bathtub a free ocean, how many have re-enamelled it, carved, hammered, kneaded, forced, raped and taped it into shape, trying in this manner to talk us out of looking for the drainpipe; and it is not little if we consider how the seaweed of bias and prejudice has engulfed even this small body of water, how little we know even our own brood.<sup>173</sup>

What Bojtár demands of literature here is incorporated into the practice of the few prose writers I have mentioned above: the representation of the world in conditions of high political / totalitarian pressure, the representation of *experience* in its truth, the pursuit of authenticity and not the representation of politics and ideology. Not even the war or revolution, or the great dramas, but the routine of diffused terror and misery. Not the novel that is making a *fable* out of the situation or fictionally escaping the situation. It is a recovery of *mimesis*. The

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<sup>173</sup> Esterházy, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-162

representation of the world in their modern prose answers not so much to the question “who am I” but mostly to “where am I”. The issue and the challenge of authenticity suffers a translation from the exploration of the inner self, inwardness and conscience, to that of the outer world, since the self finds all discourse of fulfillment or resistance confiscated by ideology or by the patterned models of official literature. Actually, the modern ethics of authenticity debuted (in Charles Taylor account) with a fine tuned relation between self and nature in Rousseau. It is a problem of localization, of placement. The narration launches the mechanism of fiction, formulating that “who”, while the experimental, anti-narrative prose goes for the texture of *here and now*. It’s artistic autonomy safeguarded through the practice of experiment remained vital and it constituted a condition for its development and for what the writers perceived as redemption of dignity. The cultural and institutional marginality of this literature was a warranty for the right attitude of its authors. Damnation, artistic asceticism and social sacrifice waiting for the Apocalypse. But the Apocalypse failed to happen with the fall of the communist regimes. This form of legitimation of literature in the totalitarian regimes entered a crisis after the fall of communism.

A special case that could offer an interesting perspective on the relation between experimental contemporary prose and the tradition of literary narrative is that of the national/ethnic literary subcultures. Relatively isolated from the larger literary systems, they present something that could be called a ‘Galapagos effect’ for the research on the evolution of literary forms. One of these subcultures belongs to the Germans in Transylvania and Banat. I examine the multiple interrelations between the form of the novel in its historical and localized, Central European, evolution and the urban, republican community of Transylvanian towns. Though connected to the literary styles and ideas of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, authors preserve, through their narrators and storytellers, a sense of community, a mission of representation and solidarity. The autonomy of the individual in relation to the communitarian ethos seems to be an alien value even for modern and contemporary novels. The break with this local

narrative tradition is made only recently, with experimental authors like Herta Müller.

It is a common observation that there actually exist, even within modernity, several Europes. Even within Central Europe there are several Europes, hence several novelistic traditions.

In a brief theoretical introduction, we shall make recourse to that theoretical perspective on the novel which outlines it contextually, and links the very beginnings of the novel to the cultural evolutions dating from early modernity. Here, the authors and the ideas are of secondary importance compared with the critical cultural mutations such as the Protestant Reform, which brings about a fresh perspective upon the individual, and an alternative way of individual self-representation, first and foremost within that type of literary discourse that forefronts the wish for self-examination and introspection. This concern is central to the novel, embodying its very essence, both in the progression of characters' construction, as well as in that of narrators' discourse, particularly in the case of first person narrative discourse. Undoubtedly, this is a phenomenon originating in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but it does not emerge solely in Reform countries (we can presume it spreads out from there to the rest of Europe, although the Counter-Reformation most likely showed a similar influence especially in Spain and Italy). This mutation will be inscribed in the genetic code of the novel, even in those instances where, as a rule, it (or its originating culture) is not associated with a concrete manifestation of the Protestant Reform.

We shall however focus here on a certain European area where the imprint of the Reform is highly visible, and which shapes out a parallel and alternative modernity (and prior to it, a tradition of the same sort): this is Central and Eastern Europe colonized in several German waves. It is generally a Europe that was early reformed in a predominantly peaceful manner that included the political consensus of the entire community. This is the case of the Baltic countries, and, naturally, of Transylvania, but not exclusively these since there are, throughout Central Europe, from SW to NE, towards Russia, numerous such communities. If we link the beginning of modernity to these social transformations within the Protestant space (in

a classical sociological and historiographic tradition), we cannot but notice that it is here that a certain pacing up of modernity did occur (urban, republican communities enjoying a democratic pattern of public life, with early democratic-associative institutions, unaware whatsoever of the aristocratic feudal system or already having parted from it, communities where a series of self-regulating and self-managing patriciates and gentries existed). The forms of literary expression cultivated in these regions emerged primarily from the German novel of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which is a narrative attempting to legitimize the superior and highly-accredited status (from a German enlightenment standpoint) of the German bourgeoisie against the aristocracy – a highly-privileged class (politically and socially speaking), however quite shallow from a cultural, moral and scientific standpoint. Through its intellectual representatives of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the German bourgeoisie takes on the entire humanistic tradition and delegitimizes the court aristocracy, deeming it as lacking spiritual noblesse, and reassessing the importance of the inherited one.<sup>174</sup>

The novel (particularly the German *bildungsroman*, the novel of initiation and growth) is meant to legitimize this entire cultural ascension of the high bourgeoisie (and of the bourgeoisie, in general). I believe that this is the pattern for Transylvania and for the German Protestant areas from Central and Eastern Europe.

Even though the authors we shall refer to are lesser known, they can provide an interesting perspective, which can undoubtedly become the starting point of a specific theory of the novel, firming up the cultural and historical view of the genre. We might wonder what the emergence of the novel meant for the European world by somehow reversing the relationship, by following not only the manner in which the novel mirrors the society and the movements of European history, but also the way it triggered a different sort of society and consciousness, for instance a national consciousness – contributing, along with the newspaper, to the process of building up a homogenous public, an imaginary (national)

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<sup>174</sup> See Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process. Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, Blackwell Publishing, London, 2000



community.<sup>175</sup> Within the theoretical considerations that contextualize the evolution of the novel, we can insert and analyze such enclaves, atypical and autonomous modernities that have created their own systems of symbolic regulation, including by means of literature. At some point, they enjoyed a certain socio-political ascendancy, but their literary cultures were subsequently perceived – from a certain dominant canonical perspective – as manifesting a sort of aesthetic retard.

The novels pertaining to these cultures emerge at the exact moment when the respective worlds find themselves in crisis, at the moment when the identity of the individuals is no longer taken for granted, or merely satisfied by the participation in the community, where the individual did not need a (cult and autonomous) narrative that should place him in the world. It is now that he needs the story of his life (or the life of someone like him) to be recognizable in such patterns, to be ascribed identification tags. The novels we shall be considering here are, for the most part, texts whose narrative substance is retrospective, being also novels of memory. The community the novel sets out to depict, to represent, but also to re-aggregate, is on the one hand, that of a nation (the Transylvanian Saxon nation), and, on the other hand, that of a republican city, the Transylvanian Saxon *polis* (Braşov/Kronstadt, Sibiu/Hermannstadt, Făgăraş/Fogarasch). There are two distinct levels here: a republican community emerging as such at the end of the Middle Ages, and that strives to hold on to its existence remnants until later in the modern age, and that ends up perceiving other political forms as threatening (particularly the Habsburg Empire and the dualist Monarchy that attempt to incorporate them, to confine them to Catholicism or to restrain their privileges). Then, during the Dualism, the threat of the Hungarian nationalism surfaced, and, after 1918, the menace of the Romanian nationalism. The novel emerges at the moment when this community defended itself from such assaults (be them real or imaginary), and it attempted at recovering the community values and the sense of belonging. Nowadays, such works most likely represent the most complex testimony of an extinct culture, that of the Transylvanian

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<sup>175</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London & New York, 2006

Saxons. Its rocky, hard shell still survives, but its social body has grown thinner and is virtually obliterated.

The novel written in 1931 by Adolf Meschendörfer (in Braşov), *Die Stadt im Osten*<sup>176</sup> and the one by Otto Fritz Jickeli (in Sibiu), *Siebenbürgisch-sächsische Familienchronik*<sup>177</sup> (1957) are both 'chronicles' of the past. The narrative of the latter starts shortly after 1800, *i.e.* around 1815-1820, whereas the former reflects the world around 1900, *fin-de-siècle*. Shedding a glance forward in time, due notice is to be granted to Eginald Schlattner's novels, out of which *Der geköpfte Hahn*<sup>178</sup> (1998) is of primary interest within the discussion herein given the manner in which it reflects the community and the way in which the narrator casts the identities' parts in the novel. It is the story of an "astral" sequence in the life of the Saxon urbane community in a Transylvanian town (Făgăraş/Fogarasch), on a bright summer day, which happens to be the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August 1944, a fatidic day in the history of the Transylvanian Saxons and the Germans in Romania generally, when the Romanian army entered the Allied forces and started fighting alongside the soviets against its former allied, Germany.

The last novel enclosed in this brief series reveals sundry transformations or alterations in the aforementioned trend of the German prose in Romania: *Atemschaukel*<sup>179</sup> (2009) by Herta Müller. An elementary and preliminary remark is called for in as far as this author is concerned: her *belonging* – to the extent to which the term *belonging* is legitimate and adequate when it comes to a heavily and voluntarily individualized author – to a different German community, the Catholic Swabians in Banat. Here, the experience of a Saxon young man from Transylvania is reconstructed through the lens of a very interesting narrating character, Leo Auberg (as we are primarily interested in the narrators and their building up their status in relation to the community). The experience under discussion is

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<sup>176</sup> Adolf Meschendörfer, *Die Stadt im Osten*, Kriterion, Bucureşti, 1984 (Romanian and Hungarian version entitled *Corona*)

<sup>177</sup> Otto Fritz Jickeli, *Siebenbürgisch-sächsische Familienchronik*, Kriterion, Bucureşti, 1985

<sup>178</sup> Eginald Schlattner, *Der geköpfte Hahn*, Paul Zsolnay Verlag, Wien, 1998

<sup>179</sup> Herta Müller, *Atemschaukel*, Carl Hanser Verlag, Munich, 2009

documented and explored starting from poet Oskar Pastior's memories, with whom Herta Müller spent numerous hours in discussion sessions. The narrator is very young and has been deported from an urbane Transylvanian community to which he relates as individual in various ways – both negative and positive ones.

At reading through the novels in this string, we can observe a certain, apparently predictable, evolution, that runs from the consciousness of the community, of the narrator as representative of a world, as voice, as guardian of the respective world and its memory towards (rather abrupt than progressive) autonomy, isolation, even dissociation, disengagement that the last novel features. Nonetheless, the first two novels display hybrid aesthetic characteristics (Meschendörfer's novel, for instance, contains expressionistic, gothic pages, which alternate with passages that are rather lyric, idyllic, cruel or engaged social criticism). Thus, they can hardly be isolated and labeled relative to the conventional norms which we use when describing the history of the novel as evolvement of a predictable, coherent, non-contradictory continuum. Jickeli's novel has a very constant narrator, who seems to be a traditional storyteller<sup>180</sup> although the world that he reveals is socially complex, with many conflicts resembling the 19<sup>th</sup> century realistic novels, with layers unfolding the nature of the society, including tension or ruptures. But the diegetic tone is highly uniform and well-balanced, typical of traditional narrative, anecdote or fairy-tale, at times even posing German fairy-tale stylistics. Therefore, we are facing the narrator having the consciousness of his being the story-teller of a community and living within a unity of language and experience with his audience, and also having the consciousness of the fact that, irrespective of what may happen, everything would (could) be told, would pertain to a world that circles and embeds all of its members, holding them together in a common code. This attitude is obvious even in the contemporary novel *Der geköpfte Hahn*, Eginald Schlattner's late debut, an interesting work also due to its appearing after a long break in which the German novel in Transylvania had failed to reach the public perception. This novel perfectly

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<sup>180</sup> cf. Walter Benjamin, *The Storyteller* in *Illuminations. Essays and Reflections*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007

integrates into a certain forerunning series and despite the existence of fragment stylistics – the fragmented confession perceivable in this novel –, with moderate ruptures of rhythm and perspective, the tone is a traditional one, but in this sense rather specific to tradition: an urbane, civic-protestant tradition. This idea is supported from the artistic point of view and by the creation of charismatic heroes (the wise priest, the father, the grandfather) who provide tradition with consistency and value.

Reading these novels represents a challenge to operate with several tradition-related concepts and to understand that there is not only a rural, archaic tradition opposing modernity, but also a series of traditions pertaining to the individual, of political actions and interactions, of political aggregation, a protestant moral attitude, of responsibility towards work, a tradition of the entrepreneurship (Banat also has its well-established place, having been explored in the Romanian criticism chiefly in relation to the Romanian prose writer, the late 19<sup>th</sup> century classic, Ioan Slavici<sup>181</sup>). The narrator of the novel *Der geköpfte Hahn* speaks on behalf of a community, perceives himself as representative of a fulfilled tragic destiny, whose dénouement unfolded before him, he being the only one left to tell the story, this time addressing an imaginary posterity which substitutes the real community of the audience who has invested him to this end.

However, the distinct rupture occurs with Herta Müller's novel, where the narrating hero wishes, from the very beginning, to be detached from this world along with its traditions, which he justly identifies but which ensure neither his aggregation nor his identity. He is an atypical young man (first an adolescent): his homosexuality makes him take distance from the respective world due to the secret he hides. Moreover, as teenager he develops the unconditioned desire to flee from home, desire brought about by an instance of social and technological modernization (the radio plays an important part in the novel). The ingenuity of this age (seventeen) explains his taking the deportation of the German ethnics from Romania to the forced labor camp in the Ukraine for some kind of holiday camp, for an opportunity to escape from home. It little matters that this opportunity comes in Soviet uniforms and that Europe's far end only seems

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<sup>181</sup> see interpretation on Slavici by authors like Cornel Ungureanu and Daniel Vighi

to be a land of freedom. The novel is undoubtedly more complex, but what is to be highlighted here is that the narrator disappears as community instance, being replaced by a receptor, a very sensitive *raisonneur* (in short, disjunct chapters) of his own experiences, be they sensorial, delusive or mnemonic. Hence, this all revolves around a narrator who is a totally autonomous *individual*, an almost solipsistic consciousness, having broken any connection with the social world, which had legitimized the novelistic discourse of an entire literary tradition up to then.

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