

Résumé

Sensibility and Identity in the Hungarian's Narrative Sources from Transylvania in the 18th Century

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Synthesis:

Part I:

The dissertation begins with an exhaustive theoretical presentation (Chapter I, A), in order to elucidate the most important methods and principles used in the study of biographical genres. This introductory chapter's purpose is to synthesize and clarify some theoretical aspects on historical explanation. This lecture is followed by a subchapter meant to reflect on historical discourse. These three subdivisions of the first chapter are based on the analyses of theories delivered by historians, sociologists, philosophers and anthropologists, such as: Arthur Danto, Patrick Gardiner, Carl G. Hempel, Maurice Mandelbaum, William Dray, Hayden White, Gyáni Gábor, Louis O. Mink, Frank Ankersmit, Hans Kellner, Roland Barthes, Lionel Gossman, Stephen Bann, Hans Georg Gadamer, Michel Foucault, Dominick La Capra, Nelson Goodman etc.

The second theoretical unit of this thesis (Chapter I, B) is dedicated to the process of recollection. Because the memory, as well as the remembrance techniques, constitutes the object of several sciences, in this chapter we described some types of memory identified in different research areas. In first place we scheduled the main characteristics of collective memoirs, as they were defined by *Sociology* and *Psychology* (Halbwachs și Bartlett), afterwards describing the anthropological debate of the cultural nature of the memory (Assman). Finally we tried to emphasize the procedures by which these types of remembrance are found in what Nora called historical memory. These are the four major directions corresponding to three different, but, in the same time, complementary visions. The subchapters are based on the concepts of some researchers such as Maurice Halbwachs, Daniel L. Schacter, John Shotter, Frederic C. Bartlett, Jan Assman, Israel Rosenfield, Alaida Assman, Pierre Nora. Our investigation suggests how important is to acknowledge the relation between writer, society and cultural contexts, because only in this way became possible to define the nature of remembrance used in the personal narratives. The way one remembers differs from autobiographies to diaries. While in first case the narrator's memoirs are selected deliberately, in the second one we have to admit that the information were written down spontaneously.

In order to understand the remembrance and motivation of the personal narratives, we considered highly important to illuminate some aspects of identity (Chapter I, C). As well as

memory, the identity defines itself in a relational system, which is interpreted differently by philologists, philosophers or anthropologists. The first and second subchapters scheduled the basic characteristics of the personal and collective identity, followed by some acknowledgments on the narrative and biographical identity in order to clarify the dynamics of the personal and biographical identity on the narrative level. We came to the conclusion that, identity as it is shown in biographical works, presumes, first of all, an elaborated and conscious construction of the narrative. This chapter is based on works written by Norman Denzim, Ulric Neisser, Dominick La Capra, Harry Porter Abbott, Jean Paul Eakin, Paul de Man.

Part II

The second part of the PhD dissertation offers a study on biographical genres in general (Chapter II, A. 1-2.), and Transylvanian in particular (Chapter II., A. 3.), presenting this century's Principality and its elite. In order to make clear the concepts we have about the semi-literature genre (memories), also to indicate the complexity of this issue we offer a brief introduction of the terminology, theories and polemics existing at this moment in historiography. We based our presentation on authors such as Marie Thérèse Hipp, Georges Gusdorf, Germaine Brée, John Sturrock, Robert Folkenflick, Georg Misch, and Philippe Lejeune, certainly de most known theoretician of this subject.

As it results form the statistics we have presented in the chapters dedicated to the classification of biographical genres in Transylvania, the Hungarian biographical accounts are abundant, having two central directions: memoirs and diaries (Chapter II, A. 3. b-c.). The chapter which treats memories, autobiographies and biographies with the case-studies we have presented underlines the importance of interdisciplinary in the research of personal narrative sources.

The second unit of this chapter presents some aspects on religious narrative identity (Chapter II., B). The study-cases are putting forward a detailed analyse of Bethlen Miklós's memoirs and of the autobiography of Vargyasi Daniel Istvan. In Bethlen Miklós's *Memoirs* (Chapter II. B. 1) we identified two kind of biographical plots: the autobiography and the biography of his own time. We came to conclusion that the author does not use this biographical genre to confess but to ground his strategy in order to serve his religious identity. At the narrative level of his memoirs this two dissimilar texts are interpenetrating each other making difficult for one to mark in them the limits of the private from the public self. We must have taking consideration that the representation of historical facts, and of his personal

life are subordinated to the internal logic of the narration, of the cultural patterns of his time. His *Memoirs* are first of all a reflection of the cultural, textual and Puritan context he belonged to. The situation is quite similar in the second case-study (Chapter II. B. 2). But in the *Autobiography* of Daniel, the duality of discourse is no longer present; the representation of private and public is detachedness from the tropics of discourse used by Bethlen or other writers of the past century. In this biographical work the intimate sphere it's obeyed to the political one, the main purpose of the narration being the political justification. In Daniel István's case we lost the biographical line, and we face on of the first attempts of the Transylvanian modern autobiography. The Principality is no longer represented as *moribunda*, neither the course of historical events are no longer represented from an eschatological perspective. Gradually the old protestant representation will evaporate, the author is no longer using the old tropics of discourse, such as the similarity between the Jewish and Hungarian history, or the reflections on the tragic events from 1657 (for the Transylvanians and Mohács for the Hungarian historiography). The alteration of attitude and discourse, as we have presented in this chapter, it's partly the consequence of the enlightenment, and partly of the Pietism.

The last unit of this chapter reveals another significant aspect of the Transylvanian memoirs, presenting the narrative sources as social constructions. The investigation regarding the collaboration between Apor Péter and Cserei Mihály (Chapter II. C.1), or Bod Péter and Hermányi Dienes József (Chapter II. C. 2) reveals that there are no such things like impartial autobiographies or memoirs, not even biographies. Everything seems to be the outcome of socialization, so that this genre will always be somewhere between recollection, narrative and dialog: the memory of a group and the private intention of one, to confirm itself through writings, in order to realize together a dialog with posterity. So it has been proven again that the private sphere of personal writing does not differ in concept of that of scientific writing, the texts reflecting the personal convictions and impressions of the authors, details which have contributed in a crucial way to rethink historical representation and explanation as well.

Another provocation of this dissertation lies in the processing of the information given by the Transylvanian diaries (Chapter III), especially because until now the investigations regarding diary writing were treating mostly private diaries and not the classical *diarium*. It is nor our duty to present the metamorphosis of this genre, the transition from classical memory books to private diaries, as well as we did not insist (the 18th century Transylvanian diaries does not allow us such an interpretation) upon the esthetical aspects of this genre. But we would like to underline the fact that even the private diaries have taken their origins from trivial every day entrances. The purpose of this lecture is to make familiar with the Romanian

historical public the different types of diaries existing in Transylvania at that time (Chapter III. C). This presentation begins with clarifying some aspects on the marginal entries of the early modern calendars (Chapter III. C. 1), which in our opinion served as models and memory books also, a kind of support for future biographical works. The particulars revealed by these calendars are precious especially because they are left out from the retrospective personal narratives. The trivial aspects of every day life does not present any importance in this elaborated narratives, this kind of details are neglected, still the authors used their calendars in order to validate the information they will present in their memoirs. The major contribution of these calendars relies in capturing the immediate spontaneous reactions of the authors. In a sort of way calendars are even proper for anthropological and historical research, because they reveal us the social reality of a certain century as it was, without any further mystification. The calendars aren't restricted to narrative forms; they are not influenced by the evolution of literary genres, or rhetorical representations.

The presentation of the urban diaries (Szakály Ferenc, Vízaknai B. György), political (Wesselényi István, Halmágyi István) or economical (Vass László, Cserei György) ones were meant to highlight the main direction of interests around which this narratives are built. Our conclusions are available for the entirely 18th century's Transylvanian diaries. Even if these biographical accounts are defining themselves as being diaries, especially the political and urban ones shows us great similarities with urban and historical chronicles, their information moving from political to public interest, hiding almost every aspect of private life. Based on the statistics we offer in this chapter, we came to conclusion that the early modern diaries from Transylvania neglect the private life elements in the favor of political and public ones. The economical entries are also relatively few, especially if we compare to political and military records, in spite of the commercial importance of production and the tradition of viticulture in this places. We do think that the lack of this kind of information it's rather a result of being aware of the importance of political facts then showing us the authors real interests. We consider instead that this narrative shows us the author's attitude about the genre. The diaries we have presented, excepting some particular cases, reveals the curiosity of our ancestors on history and their wish to make a contribution be keeping with their narratives the collective memory alive.

Part III.

The last unit of this thesis offers us an investigation in social history by interpreting the content of the diaries and memoirs we mentioned before. The sources we have analyzed

introduced us in the Transylvanian every day life with its private and public aspects, thoughts, believes and hopes.

The 4th chapter begins with a presentation regarding the early modern family (Chapter IV. A). Even if the information we have presented in the previous chapter confirmed, at least statistically, the secondary role of the private and personal records, this part of the dissertation wants to clarify some aspects of the family life in Transylvania by all kinds of kinships from blood to spiritual relatives, without participating to the theoretical debates regarding the function and roles of family in the construction of modern society. We came to conclusion that it is very difficult to outline an accurate image of what we call personal life, married life in early modern Transylvania. Diaries sometimes written in a hurry conserving only a few words, and placing almost always the public above the private, rarely offers us an image of what we would think to be family life. We detect the same attitude concerning the few entries about the one/ones the author lived nearby, the companions, the loving wives (Cap. IV. B). The wives appears on the pages of diaries, only that we found out too little about their daily routine and about their roles and obligations. Most of them are present especially on exceptional occasions such birth, childbed or illness. On the other hand, this lack can, and has to be filled with the image we capture from memories and autobiographies. The situation is a little bit different in the case of retrospective narratives, because the picture they offer are a composite and reconstructed image of the past. In such circumstances the attitudes regarding the wives are the conclusion of a lifetime, and not some spontaneous thoughts and impressions.

The last unit of this chapter presents the collective sensibilities and especially the personal ones about children and parenthood (Chapter IV. C). Our lecture reveals that diaries presents in each century a large number of records regarding health, studies and education of children, but rarely, or almost never, reflecting on parental responsibilities or affection. But this kind of information can be found in the elaborated narratives such as memories and autobiographies. The diaries we have presented in the previous chapters are telling us about illness and treatments, about accidents, about neighbor's visits, meanwhile memoirs are describing us games and parties, matrimonial arrangements, child protection during wartime and epidemics, proving that in every circumstances men protected first of all their wives and children.

The last chapter of the thesis shows the fears of the Transylvanian society, evoking the author's attitudes while facing phenomena they can not control, such as illness, climatic anomalies, epidemics and death. The sources revealed that good health became an obsession for our ancestors (Chapter V. A). Most of them have trusted the physician's healing capacity

as much as in God. The author's tragic perspective doesn't come surprisingly if we are taking into account that everywhere around them neighbors, relatives and friends became victims of some mysterious disease, reminding them constantly about how ephemeral life was. People of those times had a peculiar sensibility about medicine. Healing and all of its methods was one of the most debated subjects of the personal narratives. Our investigation revealed that while 17th century's medicine was still based excessively on spiritual healing, after the appearance of the influences of enlightenment and the progress of modern medicine, these religious methods were no longer considered essentials for a good health. For the end of the 18th century, keeping the fast, or praying, were not indispensable elements of treatment, just as well as the cosmically interpretation of disease were no longer capable to satisfy the modern elite's curiosity. We detected the same skeptical attitudes in the representation of climatic anomalies or calamities (Cap. V. B). Certainly we can not talk about a revolution on the perception of supernatural phenomena, especially because we can still identify the protestant rhetoric or the baroque exaggeration of catholic writers, existing at least on the narrative level, even at the beginnings of the 19th century. We came to conclusion that the changes of the mental sphere can not eradicate the existing standards of representation, which perceived in texts.

Therefore we consider that this PhD dissertation offers an exhaustive presentation of the Transylvanian biographical genres of the 18th century. We are aware of the fact that the thesis did not treat, and did not present equally all the personal narrative existing for this period, but this was not our intention. This research does not wish to complete the image we already have about the Transylvanian society, but to synthesize a great mass of information, some published, some unpublished, presenting and analyzing them critically, in order to exhibit some new aspects about sensibility and identity existing in the Hungarian elite's narratives in this century. The thesis can be a small contribution to the social history of Transylvania.