# COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATIONS IN VOLUNTARY EXILE: A CASE STUDY ON THE PATTERNS OF SELF-ASSERTIVE MIGRATION DISCOURSES WITHIN THE GERMAN MINORITY IN THE BANAT AREA

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## 1. Who? What? Why?: A Brief History of the Scholarly Discussion on the Research Topic

The settlement of the German minority in the Banat area started in 1716 and went on till the end of the eighteenth century. Two distinct German speaking groups, rural colonists originated mainly in Mosel-Franconia and Bavaria (mostly farmers) and gentrified middle-class urban colonists (particularly administrative and military staff, craftsmen and traders) from all regions of the Habsburg Empire formed two distinct groups of settlers. Living segregated and in definitely separated communities, these two classes of German speaking colonists did not engage in contacts one to another until the middle of the nineteenth century.

Later on, after the Austro-Hungarian Ausgleich 1867, the Banat area, a region former under the direct administration of the Viennese Hofkammer, became an administrative part of Hungary. Hence the active political and cultural presence of the Hungarian-speaking community became more and more persistent, eventually generating first explicitly delimitative identity patterns on the side of the German minority, consisting in various explicit claims of identity in the literary and cultural collective representation forms of this community.

At this point in time the segregation between the two distinct groups of German-speaking minority settlers became a secondary issue and was replaced by the search for efficient common representations forms of their self-assertion. Later, from 1918 on, the historical Banat was split between mainly Romania, Serbia and Hungary. Thus the constraint of the Hungarian-speaking upon the German-speaking community was replaced by that of the newly shaped Romanian state.

Yet the peculiar initial constellation of two distinct social groups in one and the same minority, both perceived by the other ethnic groups of the region as a unity, lead to a unique development of identity patterns in a threefold outcome (Gadeanu, "Urbane Garnisonsidentität" 261f.). The first

one was the *submersion programme*, a Hungarian-friendly, Budapest-oriented, political and cultural movement, giving up main German minority features in favour of the new Hungarian state. Later on, after 1918, the submersion programme partially applied for the Romanian-friendly, Bucharest-oriented positions within the German minority. The second programme arising after 1867 is the Vienna-oriented pro-Austrian *immersion programme*, which positioned itself as a moderate current, claiming an integrative common Habsburg identity pattern for all ethnic groups in the Banat area. Finally the third one, emerging as a response to the pressure of the Hungarian dominance, is the highly conservative Berlin-oriented *autarchy programme*, claiming a German-only identity for the minority (Gadeanu, "Des Kaisers neue Kleider" 260).

The full outlining, as well as a theoretical completion of these three patterns, valid mainly for the period 1716-1918, is still pending. The "Romanian period" of the Banat area also goes hand in hand with intensified autarchy tendencies conflicting with a post-war Moscow-oriented programme for the period 1945-1989 yet to be coined and described. To elaborate a diachronic and complete programmatic model of collective representation using the identity patterns as described above, and to expand this model from the history of ideas towards the history of literature still is the main long-term research task to be accomplished.

# 2. What Theory can buy a Model of Minority Literature and Cultural History?

"Small literatures" is so far the only operational term for non-taxonomic accumulations of minority groups literary writings to be found in the canonical grey areas of various national literatures. The term has been coined in a study about the German minority literature in Prague by Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in the late Seventies of the twentieth century (Deleuze, Guattari 24). The term has though a longer history, as Franz Kafka, the most outstanding exponent of the German Prague literature himself, used it earlier in his diary, too (Kafka 326).

In developing Kafka's concept, Deleuze and Guattari oppose it to the "great [national] literatures" that are embedding the "small literatures" of the minorities on a merely linguistic basis. They also establish three criteria defining the Prague German literature, namely:

- 1. the deterritorialization of its language (i.e. its use outside the compact German speaking world),
- 2. the interconnection of individual matters with the proximate political issues of the minority

and finally:

3. a high collective adherence to public statements in the minority community.

Previous research (Gadeanu, "<Kleine Literatur> vs. <große Literatur>" 476) evidenced that these three criteria Deleuze and Guattari briefly establish in their case study on Kafka for the German minority literature in Prague can be successfully applied to any other minority literature in Central and South-Eastern Europe. However, a detailed and functional extension and development of this evidence is still missing.

However, work in progress on a further development of both the interpretation of Deleuze and Guattari and of this brief programmatic theory into a fully functional theory of identity patterns of the German minority in the Banat area is summarized in Table 1.

Eventually, this theory could offer the framework for a consistent description of collective representations of identity, as it is sustained by the various literary writings of the German minority. Also the elaboration of this theory can also satisfy the constant request for a consistent encyclopaedic History of the German Literature of the Banat Area, which has already become a commonplace among literary scholars.

As the history of literature, the very science claiming for such an opus, does not offer the adequate methods and concepts for it, this alternative theory would better serve this purpose. In other words: this research approach is mainly about developing a theory and then about applying it to a Cultural History of the German Literature of the Banat Area. This could offer a new theoretical framework and would free the writings of this minority group from the canonical grey areas where national literatures of the German speaking countries, Austria and Germany, have placed them. Up to now these national literatures practice two different narratives when describing the minority German Central and East-European regional literatures of Banat, of Transylvania, of Bucovina or of Silesia.

The first approach, frequently used in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, is that from *inside to inside*, i.e. as a history written by an insider for insiders, as an "indoor" scholarly work with no other purpose than to strengthen the identity of the minority itself. Outstanding examples for this method are Karl Kurt Klein's comprehensive overview of the History of the German Literature outside the compact German speaking world (Klein 121f.), as well as the monograph on the German Banat author, playwright and theatre director Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn by Hans Weresch (11-16). As creditable and consistent as they all may be on their information and accuracy, these nowadays outdated volumes by insiders for insiders tend to reinforce in their approach a strong

commitment to the autarchy programme and are thus sometimes only restrictively beneficial for the contemporary reader.

Proponents of the second approach, scholars and observers from outside the minority, would write a history of literature from *outside to inside*, as Thomas Krause (29-36) successfully did in his refreshing overview of the Aktionsgruppe Banat, a major and highly influential literary movement of the seventies and early eighties in the region and also as Dieter Kessler accomplished in his diachronic partial description of this literature (359-492). However meritorious, this second approach is sometimes afflicted with a Columbus-Syndrome, as its authors project the standards of "great literatures" on the structures of the described "small literatures", hence reinforcing their positioning in canonical grey areas.

Similar to the linguistic pattern of the Status of High Proficiency Second Language Acquisition (Gadeanu, "What Progression Level" 238f.) existing with the present day speakers of the German minority, it is necessary to find and describe not only the key catalytic social microsystems of cultural patterns, but also to embed these findings in a possible theory of the Platform-Periphery Area Phenomena. However, for the Periphery of the Banat area, one can define at least Vienna and Budapest as the two main Platform-Zones: the delayed receiving of their cultural influences (Heppner 1-19) probably lead to Platform-interferences which also considerably shaped the collective representations of the minority.

Yet there also exists a third approach, from *inside to outside*, able to open the "small literature" towards its corresponding "great literature" and to free it from its Periphery-status in relation to the latter (Gadeanu, "Urbane Garnisonsidentität" 148ff.). The correspondences and transition possibilities between the "small literature" of the Banat area and its corresponding Austrian and German "great literatures", i.e. between the Platform and the Periphery, are schematically pointed out in Table 1.

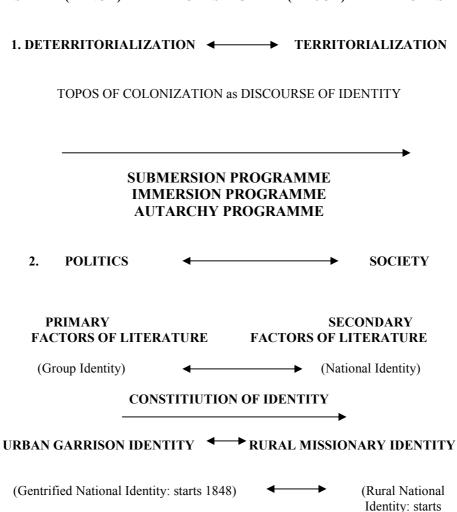
Preliminary research has located throughout the writings of this minority literature the constantly recurring *topos of colonization of the Banat space* by the German settlers, set as a central theme. One can observe that this topos became the means of re-territorialisation for the German "small literature" of the Banat area, but also the link that allows it to be integrated in the Austrian and German "great literatures".

Also the group identity of the writers and readers of the Austrian and German "great literatures", sustained by a solid collective representation and by well established identity patterns is replaced in the case of the German "small literature" by the national minority identity. Being used as a means of enforcing the identity discourse by all three programmes, both by the rural colonists and by the gentrified middle-class, the colonization topos is a main part of the collective representation and offers the recurrent and central

theme that explains best both the constitution mechanisms of the German Banat identity pattern.

The provisional explanatory model of the diachronic structure of the German speaking social micro-systems in the Banat area still is work-in-progress. This present first draft is to be detailed and expanded. For the moment it merely provides a first summary description for a series of methodological approaches to be employed:

### SMALL (MINOR) LITERATURES GREAT (MAJOR) LITERATURES



1716)

#### 3. COLLECTIVE REPRESENTATION OF ASSERTION

#### IN EMERGING IDENTITY PATTERNS

#### VIA

#### META- LEVEL OF EVALUATING INSTITUTUONS

## CANONIZATION OF CULTURAL PATTERNS VIA LITERATURE

#### LITERARY CRITICISM / ACADEMIC TEACHING

Table 1: Provisional assignment of features: possible transitions from "great literatures" to "small literatures" and vice versa

Obviously, in order to observe the multicultural environment of the Banat area, where the German minority is only one of the various ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups of the region, a focus on the dimension of acculturation in the depiction of the mechanisms that lead to the process of self-defining identity and ethnicity within this group are essential.

Another challenge would be locating key active micro-systems of the German minority in the Banat area that had a catalytic effect upon its development. The working hypothesis is laid out on these micro-systems in the canonization attempts at the meta-level of the evaluating institutions, starting from the findings of Joachimsthaler (17-21) and Stüben (50-55) regarding the concepts of region and regionality.

#### 3. Outlook

Empirical research conducted according to the classical methodological outlines of the history of literature would lead to unsatisfactory results of this research. Brilliant cultural narrative approaches like those of William M. Johnston (337-359) or in Michael Pollak (33-47, 62-65), which have become reference works on the subject, would better fit this approach. Hence the aim of this research is both to put into discussion the classical perception of minorities and to contribute to the restitution of the history of ideas from a highly peripheral area of Eastern Europe.

However, the raw material of cultural, literary and historical facts this research is operating with has been instrumentalized several times. Its challenge consists in finding an adequate method to re-tell the history of collective representation of the German minority of this multiethnic area employing the identity patterns and the micro-system theory.

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