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THE FACES OF TRANSYLVANIA. THE IMAGE OF TRANSYLVANIA IN BESTSELLERS

SUMMARY

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My thesis analyses the representations of space and the overall image of the Transylvania-region in books about Transylvania, bought by many. I have observed constant motifs and formations that can be applied in shaping the image of Transylvania, in contemporary and 20th-century texts, in both popular, and belletristic texts about Transylvania. In my research, the concepts of popular and belletristic appear as a media product; I intend to track the modality in which the Transylvania-representations are shaped in literary texts, and also, the way these influence the consideration of spaces. The theme outlined above can be placed on the border between the applied practices of branding and the analysis of literary texts.

First, I outline the social role of literature, and how it is related to the social contexts. The examination of the social role of literature and its embedding in society allows the identification of social phenomena outlined in the books from the perspective of a social-psychologic aspect. The theory of social representations is a device of grasping this; hence, the next chapter unfolds the phenomenon of representations of locality and space. The possibilities of space management are detailed in the sub-chapter entitled *The relationship between the spatial turn, literature and place branding*. This sub-chapter seeks the joints of the spatial turn, place branding and tourism; hence, it becomes interesting how these novels manage space, and how the aspects and elements of space appear in a literary text.

As concerning the objectives of my thesis, I consider treating the various time aspects helpful in analysing the different societies outlined in literary texts. In order to localise this proposition, I touched upon the nature of presentism as a term of time aspects.

In selecting the books to be analysed, I considered the identity discourses formulated and marketed by the social public speaking in Hungary, about Transylvania in our days. There is a Transylvania-image which shows the region as a place far away from Hungary, exotic and archaic, extremely close to nature. In the Hungarian literature, an entire direction of poetics of prose, and many authors represent and create this construction of space. The aim of my research is to identify representations that contradict this image of an archaic, patriarchal society. Another characteristic of these books is that they bear the aspect of bestsellers. At the beginning of my research, these were placed on the top lists of editors, book stores, and on pages popularising reading. To me, analysing best-selling books is interesting, because their popularity allows them to disperse the representation of space formulated in them to many people.

In the chapter entitled *Methodological grounds*, I explain the relevance of the chosen volumes in relation to the objectives of the research. The selection was not inspired by some kind of contemporary literary canon, but by the contemporary editorial practices, and the book store top lists. Hence, on one hand, the basis of my research is formed of so-called "bestsellers" related to Transylvania that had appeared on the Hungarian book market of Hungary in the last decade, and that have become overall read in Transylvania, too. On the other hand, the list of the analysed texts is completed by several prominent, 20th-century representatives of belles-lettres. Out of these works, the ones that become relevant are those considered important by the contemporary editorial practices because of the knowledge and experience about Transylvania that they broadcast.

In this regard, it is indispensable to thoroughly research the contemporary Hungarian editorial and book selling market, which is determined by an entirely new consumer generation and a modern digital technology. The operation of the contemporary book selling market is gradually defined by an editorial practice motioned by a more market-like logic that I detail in the sub-chapter entitled *Editorial trends in the contemporary Hungarian book market*. The analysis of the chosen authors' personal and auctorial branding and communication through social media in the sub-chapter entitled *Personal branding of contemporary novelists in the digital era* is related to the former chapter.

The term *representation* well known from social psychology, and the researches of social imaginary offered the starting point for the development of analytical models. The analytical model follows perspectives like the time-structure, space-structure, and in each novel, the individual motif system, to which the language of the novel is closely connected as an identity constructing function. The detailed presentation of the bibliography used in developing the analytical model, and the technical terms can be found in the sub-chapter entitled *Methodology.*

Based on the analytical model, the following six chapters analyse the selected volumes. My thesis is focused on the following authors: Miklós Bánffy (1874–1950), András Cserna-Szabó (1974–), György Dragomán (1973–), György Méhes (1916–2007), Zsolna Ugron (1978–), Andrea Tompa (1971–). The objects of the analysis are the following literary texts: Miklós Bánffy: *Erdélyi történet.* I-III. Third edition. Budapest, Helikon, 2012; András Cserna-Szabó: *Szíved helyén épül már a halálcsillag.* Budapest, Magvető, 2013; György Dragomán: *Máglya*. Budapest, Magvető Könyvkiadó, 2016; György Méhes: *Kolozsvári milliomosok*.

Budapest, Ulpius, 2008; Andrea Tompa: *Fejtől s lábtól. Kettő orvos Erdélyben.* Pozsony, Kalligram, 2013; Zsolna Ugron: *Úrilányok Erdélyben.* Budapest, Ulpius, 2010.

Summing up my research questions and hypotheses, I have mainly searched the answers on how literary texts can be used in the process of spatial branding, how brand pillars can be surfaced in them, and which these are. Belles-lettres is part of the heritage of the society, and also, its mediator; furthermore, it validates existing brand values in a specific form.

Representations of space are constructed contents, created by a community, and through their use, they can define the management of spaces and the organisation of identities. They issue the image perceived about spaces and collective identity (Keszeg A. 2015: 14). The cultural products aimed at larger masses can in some regard be read as social representation, and "they contribute to shaping and dispersing the collective knowledge about the phenomena thematised about these products" (Keszeg A. 2015: 18). My research aimed at collecting the components of the collective imagery (György 2005: 7–8) that are related to Transylvania, and are conveyed by the contemporary Hungarian book culture. My goal was to identify representations that contradict and dislodge the nostalgic-mythical Transylvania-image explicated and interpreted by Margit Feischimdt et alii, and Péter György. The particularity of this image is that it offers an archaic, natural and traditional image of Transylvania, in which society is typically patriarchal.

The conclusions sum up the space-managing techniques of the novel, their space and time structure, and also, the motifs relevant from the point of view of the Transylvania-representations: the dilemma of the social reality depicted in these novels and social stratification, the dominant urban spaces, modernisation, renovation, reshaping; nature depicted as the background of human activity, the language as the device of shaping the identity.

My thesis seeks for Transylvania-images different than this, conveyed in Hungarian literature, and how it would be possible to talk differently about Transylvania, and also, how this tendency appears in the selected books.

All in all, the analysis of the selected books approaches the aforementioned archaic Transylvania-image as a scale. All of the novels partially enforce the new tendency in the literature about Transylvania, which distances itself from the aforementioned archaic Transylvania-image. In each case, it is different how a novel distances itself from the archaic

Transylvania-image, and in what measure. Andrea Tompa's novel offers the most innovative image of Transylvania and Cluj-Napoca. This image of the city and the region keeps the greatest distance, because the author draws a modernising Cluj-Napoca, in the era of the dual monarchy. In Miklós Bánffy's trilogy, the main character returns to the family estate with the intention of developments and renovation, thus, plans that are specific to the more developed, more Western-like regions of Europe. In this regard, this novel also enforces the representation of development, leaving backwardness behind. György Méhes's novel builds the plot in a changing world arrangement, in the dawn of embourgeoisement; the tendencies of industrialization and businesses have an effect on the theme of the novel. The author depicts a Cluj-Napoca in construction, developing; it mainly offers a peek at its economic aspects.

György Dragomán's novel keeps a smaller distance from the traditional Transylvania-image. He places the plot and action of the novel in an urban Transylvanian place, grey, stuck in time, in the era of the revolution. The least innovative Transylvania-image can be found in the novels of András Cserna-Szabó and Zsolna Ugron. The former offers a backward, partially communist and disadvantaged urban image; the latter author depicts a natural, rural Transylvania, backward and far away from Budapest and the modern metropolis.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, the tourist look pointed at Transylvania is also shaped by the images of space appearing in the literary texts, besides the planned spatial branding activity.

Summing up, the locations and spaces that appear in these novels advert contemporary spaces and spatial regards; in each novel, a different identity and spatial brand is outlined through the spatial components, pillars. In András Cserna-Szabó's novel, the image of the contemporary Cluj-Napoca is outlined, as we might see from the concrete references to restaurants and other "nodes" that exist and operate in Cluj-Napoca right now. The main character of the novel goes through a specifically culinary and gastronomical tour; hence, the reader is offered a culinary image of the city that is addressed to tourists, that is known by tourists, that satisfies their interests. György Méhes's novel outlines the business and industrial aspect of Cluj-Napoca, due to the setting in the era of the dual monarchy, the era of industrialization and embourgeoisement. It is obvious that in this novel, the city is seen as a developing entrepreneurial city. More than one faces of Cluj-Napoca can be seen in Andrea Tompa's novel; Cluj-Napoca appears as a student city (Franz Joseph University), as the

Transylvanian citadel of medical education, health and leisure centre (Elizabeth steam and bath) and the city of culture (Theatre of Cluj). In a larger regard, the reader is offered an image of Szeklerland as the region of baths and wells, as a developing, modernizing and under construction city and region, that awaits tourists that wish to hike, relax and heal. In Dragomán's novel, the plant, the blocks, tower cranes, the iron factory district enforce the urban and industrial character of the space. Behind the grey and brittle mood, the possibility of a new, free world offered by the change of regime can be spotted. Bánffy's novel outlines a specific image of Transylvania, about a social stratum and its lifestyle that today mainly exists through its descendants and ruins. The castles, interior spaces of castles and balls described in the novel can inspire potential functions of castles that today, need renovation. Zsolna Ugron reveals the special status to the reader through which she offers a peek into the issues of the dilapidated estates reclaimed by the descendants of former aristocrats. The issue is actual and relevant; many of Transylvania's estates lie fallow due to the lack of use. The owners try to renovate them and save their reclaimed heritage with the hope for tourism and operating castle hotels.

Keywords: representations of space, image of the Transylvania-region, books, bestsellers, media.