

**“Babeş-Bolyai” University**

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# **Messianic Expectation and Function in the Crepuscular Novel**

**Scientific Advisor:**

**Prof. Dr. Ruxandra Mihaela BRAGA**

**Ph.D. Student**

**Andreea HELLER-IVANCENKO**

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**Key-words:** expectation, urgency, postponement of the work, messianic condition, crepuscular, state of exception, threshold

### Summary

Apparently, the existence of expectance as a phenomenon in the everyday reality, the fact that every person experiences frequently the inevitable situation of expecting something, someone, being expected or something being expected of him, should ease the access to the ways of interpretation. Hence, a close analysis concerning the theoretical problematization nuances the approach on the concept itself. First, the naturalness of the phenomenon can easily be identified in the daily life, for instance, the expectation in the case of a significant event. Therefore, although the relevance of expectation as a phenomenon is justified from a “factual” point of view, the theoretical perspective faces us with a challenge. It doesn’t necessarily aim at interpreting the core thematic senses encountered in literature, religion and philosophical texts. Here, expectation opens itself towards associations with the poetic work, the discourse of absence and the Christian attention, hope being placed in an eschatological horizon. Some associations can easily be identified for they are already integrated in a system of used conventions and means of interpretation, thematised and attached to a ritual of interpretation. This is how certain mythological or symbolic interpretations transform expectation into a “predefined” research object. There are instances of more facile analogies when addressing the amorous expectation and the cultural stages of love in the genre studies.

The stake of the present research is an exploration of the “crepuscular universes”<sup>1</sup>, from a perspective of expectation as a messianic structure and as an ethical, esthetical and political gesture, from one of the messianic function as a means of operating on thresholds, boundaries, and as a postponement or a deactivation of the patriarchal law. The negative expectation, the expectation without any expectation, without content and without horizon means priority both regarding the future and the past, the messianic present of “now”<sup>2</sup>. It is connected with tension, urgency, event, and community in the crepuscular novel. The messianic function operates a threshold, a postponement, a cut or a “division”, the same way the surveyor K. in Franz Kafka’s *The Castle* generates crisis at the borders by tracing a cadastral cut, or the way Robert Fämel the son, in Heinrich Böll’s *Billiards at Half-Past*

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ion Vlad, *Romanul universurilor crepusculare*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Eikon, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Iluminări*, translation by Catrinel Pleșu, Cluj-Napoca, Ideea Design&Print, 2002, p. 200.

*Nine*, suspends history by dynamiting the cathedral built by his father. The messianic function in the crepuscular novel is connected with what begins to end or to “weaken”, with the crisis faced by the patriarchal law, with the “weakening” of the caste imperial and aristocratic values, with the unessential, with the failed clown and with the ignorant peasant facing the gate of law, with the precarious left without juridical status or bearing an uncertain juridical status, with the gatekeeper, with Kafka’s assistants, with the remains of history. We approach expectation and the messianic function in the crepuscular novel by tracing a few lines of interpretation, starting with the messianic theories assumed by Giorgio Agamben, Walter Benjamin and Jacques Derrida, but also by employing the concepts used by Maurice Blanchot and Jean-Luc Nancy, having as a starting point the experience of the community. The nucleus of the crepuscular authors of expectation, in the line of Kafka, Robert Musil, Hermann Broch and Heinrich Böll, proposes the problematization of expectation and of the messianic function, starting with the literary text. This way, the research articulates the relationship between the expectation and the messianic function with the literary, critical and theoretical modernity of the crepuscular novel, and only at a second level with the political modernity. The political dimension is tied to the political-theological and political-judicial concepts of the above mentioned philosophers, but it is partially connected to Mitteleuropa, as a geopolitical and ideological space from the first half of the 20th century.

In the crepuscular novel, expectation and messianic function operate via a series of conditions, gestures and clues which function as operators, functors and messianic catalysts which precipitate the decline: the crepuscule, the postponement and the delay experienced in the time of the Kafkian characters, the piece of work as an auctorial law, Kakania, the condition of the exile or the exception of the crepuscular characters, the community, the event. These messianic operators have as a role the “suspension” of what confers identity to work and history, as tradition and as eulogy, or the “deactivation” of the sovereign patriarchal law, as an instrument that operates with a series of partitions, as are the ones regarding the exile condition of the man facing the law and the guardian belonging entirely to the legal order.

By referring to Giorgio Agamben’s theory regarding the Pauline messianic time, to deactivate does not mean annulling the law, but making it temporarily inactive, for as a state of potency it preserves in itself the possibility of manifestation. The *katargeó* concept, having as an etymon the Greek *argeó*, marks a suspension or a deactivation of the act, “a way out of

the *energeia*<sup>3</sup>, which involves an inversion operated in the messianic, between potency and the act in potency, the act is not annulled, but remains inactive and it does not manifest in the work of art, it is *a-ergos*. Thus, to deactivate does not mean to annul, but to suspend the act, as it is mentioned in the biblical verse in the voice of the divinity addressing Apostle Paul: “for my power is made perfect in weakness”<sup>4</sup>. This is the meaning according to which law of normative acts and of faith according to deeds is deactivated from the law of love and of the messianic figure. The suspension or deactivation presupposes something that is “left”. This involves an excess, that fact that an inexhaustible remainder subsists in the act, the fact that the action does not exhaust work, history, time and community. Work, history, community, time are not exhausted in the action, they don’t end, but contain a surplus shared and used “by everyone”. This way of sharing resonates with the Pauline expression “as if not”, of using without having any property rights over what is being used, of the ephemerality of any right and of the pre-eminence of what is ephemeral over the law: “[...] and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods.”<sup>5</sup>

According to Jean-Luc Nancy and Maurice Blanchot, “suspension” preserves the same sense, that of the inactivation of the work or of a coherent history of identity. History, work, community are taken out of *enérgeia*, of what is function or act, without annulling or nullifying them. They are *désœuvré*, a term used by Jean-Luc Nancy when talking about the community. For the two authors, the suspension is related to work seen as a writing. “The suspension of the work”<sup>6</sup> is neither an annulment of the community, nor of the work. The passion with which the reflection of negation affirms, at the limit, an excess or a remainder that has not been put to use supports the idea according to which the thought does not exhaust its negativity in the act.<sup>7</sup> Maurice Blanchot brings the reflection of negation closer to Georges Bataille’s concept of “unemployed negativity”<sup>8</sup>, as an impossibility of the act to

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<sup>3</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Timpul care rămâne. Un comentariu al Epistolei către Romani*, translation by Alex Cistelean, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Tact, 2009, p. 96.

<sup>4</sup> *Biblia sau Sfânta Scriptură*, a version improved after Septuaginta, edited and adnotated by Bartolomeu Valeriu Anania, Archbishop of Cluj, 2 Corinthians, 12, 9.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+12:9>

<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians, 7, 30.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+7%3A30&version=ESV>

<sup>6</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *Comunitatea de nemărturisit*, translation by Andreea Rațiu, postface by Bogdan Ghiu, Cluj-Napoca, Tact Publishing House, 2015, p. 20.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Maurice Blanchot, „L’expérience limite” in *L’entretien infini*, Paris, Éditions Gallimard, 1969, p. 304

<sup>8</sup> Georges Bataille, „Les malheurs du temps present” în *La Somme Athéologique, Oeuvres complètes V*, Paris, Éditions Gallimard, 1973, p. 287.

exhaust knowledge, as a means of using and “unproductive” or useless spending of resources. Therefore, suspending means denying the finality of the work or of the community in the act, in a scope or an ideological project, in order to leave open the dialogue, the “infinite conversation” of the work, as source of openness and sharing. This is the sense of suspension, of the burning of *Aeneid* in *The Death of Virgil* by Hermann Broch. In the same sense, from Jean-Luc Nancy’s perspective, suspension (*désœuvrement*) means to “un-achieve” the project as a purpose of the community as a piece of work. “The suspension of the work” and of the unitary history, the deactivation of the law of the father in relation with the law of the son, and of love represent meditations regarding the crepuscule of values.

Walter Benjamin sets the crisis and suspends history as tradition or as a “precipitate”, in order to produce a “messianic restitution” of the past, as a means of activating it in the present, by using the “profane enlightenment” or the fulgurations which play the role of saving the past from oblivion and servitude. Each generation is awaited and called upon by the past, invested with a “weak messianic force”<sup>9</sup> through which the past, as an unfinished and inhomogeneous history, awaits being suspended and recalled, but not as a eulogy or as a nostalgia, but rather as an experience that opens up the possibility of the past and of the future. Here, “the messianic suspension”<sup>10</sup> does not mean rupture, but continuity, it is not a homogenous continuum of history, seen as a storage or as tradition, but as an ongoing reconstruction or rewinding movement, a “tough manoeuvre” of history as a sediment.

Jacques Derrida opens up the issue of the “messianic without messianism”, without theology, different from the religious messianism. The latter is related to the presence in the world of a Messiah in the religious content, unlike the messianic, an immanent universal structure. The messianic is an atheological universal category, but it does not lack faith, a precondition of any form of messianism, starting with the Abrahamic religions. Understanding the messianic without content, and expectation without horizon means reflecting on a category of experience: the event, the promise, the “à-venir” structure as messianic experiences beyond religion and theology. From this “desert messianic”, as described by Derrida, was developed the other representations of messianism and its figures, because this messianic state lacks horizon, expectation is undetermined, while any prefiguration, any content or stake risks to transform it into an ideology. In this structure, not necessarily temporal, but political, the present as a passage point is no longer contemporary

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<sup>9</sup> Walter Benjamin, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 202.

with the messianic present or with the “now time”. It is a “spectral moment”, not a present that passes. The present is dislocated, and the question regarding the future, which accompanies the crepuscular novels, contains a promise, an advent. This promise allows the opening of time as hospitality unconditioned by any law. The fact that Derrida affirms the existence of a certain desperation in the messianic resides in the need of keeping the promise undetermined. The community, the event are experience categories of the “coming”, where the coming itself has messianic features. “The messianic desert” is the desert of the possible, a “desert” of temporal opening, because it doesn’t carry religious content and there is no expectation of a Messiah. The excess resides in this “desert” of justice, of promise and of the gift for the other, of the burning of the work as an auctorial identity, of the suspension of history as an identity figure. It is the gesture that cannot redeem a history of crimes, but can assume the temporal step from present to past: “[...] what is to come cannot be announced as such and in its full purity unless we start from a past that ended.”<sup>11</sup>

If Jacques Derrida delimits himself from messianism as expectation of fulfilment in a horizon, factual or theological, of the Judeo-Christian eschatology, for Walter Benjamin this means an indetermination of the past. Benjamin clarifies the messianic time from the perspective of the present time, as a moment of the present, as a “now time”<sup>12</sup>, and of its coincidence with the entire abbreviated history of mankind. The messianic prepares the radical changes in history by “adjusting” and using effects that disrupt its unitary and coherent course. “The weak force”, lacking identity, presses and precipitates the decline of the coherent history, of the patriarchal law, of the work which tends to be achieved in a majestic figure.

Situated between two different eras, the Robert Fämel sons, in *Billiards at Half-past Nine*, and Hans Schnier, in *Opinions of a Clown*, the novels of Heinrich Böll, the poet Virgil as an orphan without his work in *The Death of Virgil*, by Hermann Broch, Ulrich, as well as his daughter Agathe, in *The Man Without Qualities*, by Robert Musil attentively search for the most suitable rhythm of history. Their exile condition operated the brutal gesture which suspends and exposes history, faces the work with a crisis, dynamites the monument in order to create space for the new rhythm. These gestures represent the strategy by which they attempt to subjectivise in the messianic present. Their condition precipitates the beat, the rhythm, and with the help of local and revolutionary techniques they exit the panegyric of

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<sup>11</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Spectrele lui Marx: starea datoriei, travaliul doliului și noua Internațională*, translation by Bogdan Ghiu, Polirom, Iași, 1999, p. 52.

<sup>12</sup> Walter Benjamin, *op. cit.*, p. 200..



history. The gesture of the fathers is not capable to operate on continuity. The condition of the patriarchs of the crepuscular novels does not operate with the suspension of history, which would mean stepping from the present into the past as innovation and experience, but its eulogy. The messianic gesture interrupts the apology of history and exposes “a dialectic image” of history in a framework. The past is not understood as a chain progressively accumulating an array of historical data, but as a composition in which we can identify at once its effects of lights and shadows. The condition of the sons carries a messianic function: a subversive and necessary game of profanation. The messianic represents the interruption and the suspension of history as eulogy, the division of unity and of the coherence of the law.

If the gestures of the generation of sons in the crepuscular novel are radical, they still don't bring along fundamental transformations of the essence, but rather precipitations, changes in shape, structure, minor changes, which imprint a “halo” or luminous difference in the historical continuity. “Expectation without expectation” in *The Death of Virgil*, dynamiting the cathedrals in *Billiards at Half-Past Nine*, and the deactivation of the law of the father by the clown Hans Schnier in *Opinions of a Clown*, the setting of crisis at the boundaries by the surveyor in *The Castle*, the expectation and the postponement, local and limited, seen as punctual and finite, to the man facing the law in *The Trial*, the suspension of the “project” in the case of Ulrich in *The Man Without Qualities*, these gestures do not bring transformations in the essence, but, at the same time, are not left without effects. In Musil's novel, *Parallel Actions* the event where Ulrich and Agathe meet are swallowed by the war, in *The Trial*, the clerk K. will be killed, in *Opinions of a Clown*, Hans Schnier, after awaiting for a long time, ends up on the stairs at the railway station, but all these small interventions, suspensions, interruptions, settings of crisis stir the continuity, the eulogy, the monument and history as identity. Here, from the messianic point of view, to suspend means to expose a history of catastrophes, but also to operate a cut in the segregations produced by the law. To suspend the moment or the myth is a messianic gesture, a postponement which defers the work, the private or collective history from reaching fulfilment in a system, from becoming a myth, from becoming Work. It is not an infinite postponement, for it is always in the present, now. If the countryman in *The Trial*, who comes in front of the gate of law, succeeds to inactivate the law, to interrupt history, it is because, by being set in a “state of exception”, in an exile messianic condition, neither within the law, nor outside the law, he succeeds with the help of a gesture at hand to postpone entering the gate. A tactical, local postponement, but not infinite, always in an active messianic present of the “now time”, and not “for now”. In this

sense, the crepuscular novel always exists as piece of Work or as a History that begins to end. They are abandoned on a threshold, exposed to abandonment and expectation as a limit of the tension between being fulfilled and being unfulfilled. It is a piece of work exposed on the line of suspension, of what translates as self-sufficient and its sovereignty as well as the encounter with the Other, it is the crepuscule or the postponement, the delay in K.'s time, in *The Trial* or in *The Castle*, the sleepwalker and the Kakanian character, who due to being exhausted move forward with the collars of their coats over their faces, the love which begins to end in *Opinions of a Clown*, the history of the dynamited monuments, the piece of work which begins to expose its limit, to suspend itself. The messianic is that knot of exposures without identity, because what it operates is the very division of identity, the suspension of coherent history, of the monument as a piece of work or as a ritualist identity value. If the messianic operates these effects, it doesn't mean that it becomes law, the messianic is not a device that holds the "force of law"<sup>13</sup>, which would only mean replacing a sovereign law with another, as exposed and submitted to pressure the crisis of sovereignty in *The Death of Virgil* or in *The Man Without Qualities*, but also in *The Trial*. He is the figure of Kakanian and of the sleepwalker coherent with himself in the automatic movement forward. The messianic interrupts this coherent flux of time, of sleepwalking, of the relentless Kakanian activity, of the piece of work, without having a purely temporal structure, but rather political. Being spectral, it appears to be "the coming of a place"<sup>14</sup>, which means that it is not what it occurs in the present that passes, but the advent is the true messianic structure, "the coming" uses the characteristics of the messianic. Having these apories as a starting point, Jean-Luc Nancy asks himself what coming means, "What does coming mean?". The time of the coming is an advent, an offering, it is filled by the "present of happenings" and opening of time itself. It is not full in the sense of fulfilment, of the end of time (*pléróma*), nor in the sense of a true higher time, but full in the sense of what is to come, full of "coming" and full of "happening". The one that is expected always comes, as in the parable described by Maurice Blanchot in *L'écriture du désastre*, his presence is not the equivalent of the coming, that is why he continues to be expected in the messianic present. Messiah in rags at The Gates of Rome, waiting without being recognised, is asked: "When will you come?" which, as stated

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<sup>13</sup> Jacques Derrida, „Forță de lege *Fundamentul mistic al autorității*”, *Despre Violență*, Cluj-Napoca, Idea Design&Print, 2004, p. 31.

<sup>14</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Comunitatea absentă*, translation by Emilian Cioc, Cluj-Napoca, Idea Design& Print, 2005, p. 125.

by Jacques Derrida, involves an inadvertency between the present, as we currently understand it, and the messianic present.<sup>15</sup>

Probably nowhere in the modern literature is more obvious the need for postponement and the crisis of history than in the crepuscular novels. In the crepuscular novel, the gesture, the event hold messianic features. The postponement, the delay, the urgency, the unyieldingness with which the crepuscular characters await have capital effects: an ethos of expectation and exalted search, as the “major idea” behind the *Parallel Actions* in Robert Musil’s novel *The Man without Qualities*, the expectation at the limit of exhaustion in Kafka, but also a specific tension of the fall and of the delayed awakening out of the sleepwalking of a history of tradition in Hermann Brock’s novel *The Sleepwalkers*. Hans Schnier’s expectation in *Opinions of a Clown*, is a contagion between pantomime and life, it consumes and produces time, creating a continuous game with time in the fictional reality. The awakening out of the sleep of cultural, familial or political tradition means operating upon some messianic thresholds which generate crisis because of the urgency, an episteme of the thought: Work, History, the monument as a safe deposit when they enter crisis, the same way the character Virgil in *The Death of Virgil* interrupts and suspends *The Aeneid*, and “the state of exception”<sup>16</sup> in which he finds himself represent the exile messianic condition of expectation, urgency, imperatives and event.

Both the theoretical and the literary parts of the research will be interpreted using two types of lenses. From a theoretical perspective, we open up the major issues pertaining to expectation by opting for an interdisciplinary approach, as are the origins and some interpretations of the theme in theoretical and mystical texts. These aspects will be outlined in the first part of the research, which includes the first chapter, *Theoretical and religious problematizations and elements of origin*, attempting to delimit some states of the expectation.

The first chapter is a theoretical excursion, in the sense of placing expectation against the vertical axis, as a religious foundation. The excursion has as a starting point a few texts that approach Christian and gnostic mysticism, as well as philosophy, which will help decant the canonical and the less canonical aspects pertaining to this theme. The vertical or transcendental reference of the religious behaviour becomes the object of the analysis only in this chapter, where expectation is presented as a purpose-oriented spiritual active progression,

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Despre ospitalitate*, translation by Mihai Ungurean, Iași, Polirom, 1999.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Starea de excepție*, translation by Alexandru Cistelean, Cluj-Napoca, Ideea Design&Print, 2006.

either as a negation or as an apophatic theology. The prototype of the negative expectation, of expectation without expectation, is used as a metaphor of “the passive dark night” with Saint John of the Cross, a print of enlightenment through the divine grace. The relevance of Christian expectation and of its origin is reflected in different totalizing forms of expectation. Thus, an understanding of the phenomenon in the origin and the occurrence of its religious configuration is necessary.

The second chapter, *Expectation and messianism as a weak structure*, approaches a series of concepts, starting with the messianic theories as presented by Giorgio Agamben and Walter Benjamin. By “gesture” as a concept, Giorgio Agamben opens the ethos dimension, and in the case of the present paper, towards articulating expectation as a literary, ethical and political matter, in the broadest sense of the word. Another theoretical concept is that of expectation as an instrument, originating in two texts, one written by Michel Foucault <sup>17</sup>, and the other by Giorgio Agamben <sup>18</sup>. It was created as a instrument or as a *terminus technicus* along with Christianity, which is related to the great eschatological time, expectation is outlined as horizon, founded in the reaching of a purpose. This temporal gradation is arithmetic put to use for the presupposed reaching of truth. The fitness translated into the active life of the Christian is placed under this pressure of the eschatological time of fulfilment. “The weak messianic force” <sup>19</sup> and the messianic Pauline time, “the time that remains”<sup>20</sup>, are two messianic categories analysed in detail in this chapter. These concepts will become the base of the case studies on crepuscular novels.

The third chapter, *Time and modernity in the crepuscular novel*, is an analysis of expectation, of time and of the messianic tension in modernity, in general, and in the crepuscular novel, in particular. Time is a movement forward, a progress, and sleepwalking as a means of confident movement forward for Broch’s characters leads to catastrophe, as it happens in the case of the inhabitants of Kakania, in *The Man without Qualities*, blinded by the trap of activity. This paradigm of time as progressive theology brings a perspective upon the future as an infinite and irreversible horizon, a concept the authors of the crepuscular novel managed to exceed.

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Michel Foucault, *Dites et écrites, 1954-1988*, vol III, Paris, Editions Gallimard, 1994.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Giorgio Agamben, „Ce este un dispozitiv? ” in *Prietenul și alte eseuri*, translation by Vlad Russo, Bucharest, Humanitas, 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Walter Benjamin, „Despre conceptul de istorie” in *Iluminări*, p. 195.

<sup>20</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Timpul care rămâne*, p. 70.

The second type of lens is the literary theoretical lens intra- and intertextual, a miniature perspective, an alternative to the generic eschatological or theoretical perspective, by marking a few lines in interpreting the literary texts.

The fourth chapter, *The messianic function in the novels of Robert Musil and Hermann Broch*, exposes the crepuscule state of messianic expectation and tension, where “the crisis” of the present is not an empty space between a reflexive past and an undefined horizon, but between a piece of work, a suspended history and a field of the possible, between a deactivated patriarchal law and a filial law of love. The exception of the characters is not an eschatological or an apocalyptic feature, of the end, but attempts to operate the messianic deactivation of sovereignty. The messianic condition of the members of the *Parallel Actions* intensifies their gestures with a series of urgencies, imperatives, expectations and the obsession of the project, where the characters in themselves become secondary, being outrun by their ambiguous condition which is fronted. The fact that Musil is preoccupied with the characters without identity assumes a certain episteme: the inner man dissolves, but identity is still analysed, problematized, Robert Musil ruins such a preoccupation in the character without identity, by annulling it, by suspending the history of the father, swallowed by war, through that of the identity set into crisis due to the lack of patrimony. If expectation does not presuppose a horizon or a content, it is linked to an entire history. The two poles, present and future, do not exist anymore, which leave an open space for the tensioned interval in which the self expects. This interval is a form of ruined identity, ruined by the crepuscular authors.

The fifth chapter, *The Kafkian. The politics of expectation* assumes the messianic politics of the ambiguous juridical situation of the characters in the novels *The Trial* and *The Castle*, where Kafka sculpted expectation and postponement at the level of a painting. The temporal sculpture, the expectation and the postponement in Kafka’s work are devices used in the sphere of political action, “pure means” which expose a threshold, a fissure, the “mediality” of the gesture. They send, through what they expose, where there is only a dialogue, a secondary fact, towards a camouflaged reality: that of the *anomos*, the socio-professional situation of the surveyor, neither within, nor outside the law, at the periphery of the castle, but still in the village belonging to the castle: that of the crisis of the boundaries and borderlines in *The Castle* and of the way they operate. Kafka’s time exposes the messianic problem of urgency and, simultaneously, of postponement and delay. Here, expectation is no longer just a field of stakes or purposes in a temporal horizon, but it directly exposes the ground or the engine that nourishes it: the messianic function of urgency. The

administrative apparatus of the castle captivates in expectation the one that generated the crisis at the borderlines and in the territory that is why it is followed by the decision made by the surveyor to do justice for himself. The fact that his justice cannot wait means, once more, that the urgency presses. To stop waiting for the justice K. was refused means participating to the continuity of the history of crimes and camouflages.

The sixth chapter, *Community, time and the messianic condition in the novels of Heinrich Böll*, by postponing the fulfilment of the history of the father and the suspension of its exemplary time, Robert Fämel the son sets himself in an ambiguous condition in relation to it. Expecting and suspending the identity coherent chronological time of the past, the son enters the messianic device of another time, of the eon which makes the fissure possible, the exposure of the misery, father's "stained shirt". Dynamiting the edifices of Nazi Germany, he brakes this solid mammoth, in relation to the community of the "ox", associated not only with Nazism, but with the prosperous capitalism as well, that of social solidarity in relation with the familial one, focused on destiny or on the individual. The suspension, the postponement of the history of the father and the urgency of decision made possible this interrogation of the great nation of History and of the exposure of this advancement, in continuous discrepancy with the history of the "lambs", the ones exiled from the safe deposit of the great effects. In *Opinions of Clown*, the twenty four hours spent in his own apartment, in his native town, visited by Hans Schnier a few times a year, is a politics of expectation: it is the time when the clown enters the exile state, in a space dominated by the figure of the father and of the family – the town of Bonn, in which pantomime and life in expectation overlap, but also an imaginary time, of the memory, of the development of the moments in the life of a clown, in the life of a man in love and in the life of a common lover.

Advancing a first core hypothesis of the research, expectation and messianic function in the crepuscular novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, contemporary to the two world conflagrations, are messianic structures of the "exception" which expose urgency, postponement and the ambiguous condition of the characters, as well as the "lost centre"<sup>21</sup> or the centrifuge force of the identities. These means of operation occur in a certain time and in a certain place: late at night, when the surveyor in *The Castle* enters the snowy village, at the very moment of the landing in the Brundisium harbour and during the last eighteen hours of life lived by the Latin poet in *The Death of Virgil*, in the hometown which precipitates the professional decay phase of the clown, in the agony of the "Kakanian" empire in the lounge of Diotima. The messianic

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. Corina Ciocârlie, *În căutarea centrului pierdut*, Bucharest, Editura Art, 2011.

time operates in the present time, presses it, precipitating the decline. It is a cut in the legal apparatus, as portrayed in Kafka's novels, from Giorgio Agamben's perspective. However, it is also a suspension or a Benjaminian "review" of the past as a frame-picture exposed in the actual present, in an operative and functional sense. This time suspends and places history in crisis as a line from the past towards the future, being a time of exhaustion and crepuscule, but also of the coming. The time of the suspension of glorious history, of the monument, of the piece of work, of the "Kakanian" stir and of the sleepwalking forward precipitate the decline. Due to this condition of exception, the characters reach a standstill and take the path of a form of exile, reflected in the nomadism of the clown in Böll's novel, in the surveyor of *The Castle* or in the bank clerk in *The Trial*. The spread of unity and of the centre become a paradigm of the era. This way, the messianic expectation is specific to the decomposing phase of the images and of the representation of a world that develops as a mechanism of homeostasis, a reflexive pathos of expectation on a threshold. The threshold operates the dismantling of a historical past of identity, where the crushed identity is lived dramatically. This threshold condition brings to the messianic present the possibility: that of the past as a new experience that of the coming as an opening of time itself. The condition of the characters is ambiguous, the culture of centrality is exhausted; the individual existences become retrograde in relation with the political or economic problems. What is experienced is similar with the tension of a hopeless fisherman "who throws his fishing nets in a river without fish"<sup>22</sup>, gravitating around "not yet". These forms decline in a tensioned expectation. But the dime of expectation also means exhaustion and a necessary slowness, where to be suspended means assuming a derisory condition, a condition of openness and frivolity. It is the condition of life in ephemerality, suspension and wandering. A type of meditation regarding the end is reflected by Robert Musil in uneasiness when transitioning the era: "the era presented was an era of impatient, turbulent and unhappy expectation, but the messiah they waited and hoped for was yet to be seen."<sup>23</sup> An "era of expectation" contains the condition stated by the Latin poet Virgil, the character in Hermann Broch's prose poem: "We, Augustus, stand between two times, call it expectation, not void."<sup>24</sup> The messianic tension in the crepuscule of an era, against a disintegration of the clear horizons, doubled by the feeling that nothing essential to be done can be foreseen, that the ones that are present are abandoned

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<sup>22</sup> Robert Musil, *Omul fără însușiri*, translated by Mircea Ivănescu, Iași, Polirom, 2008, p. 354.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 520.

<sup>24</sup> Hermann Broch, *Moartea lui Virgiliu*, translation, preface and notes by Ion Roman, Bucharest, Univers, 1975, p. 376.

on a threshold, is an axiom of the expectation of the characters in the crepuscular novel. The messianic time of expectation is a “remainder” in which the man from the countryside situated in front of the gate of law has no time left, before death, not enough time to provoke, even as the exception in which he has found himself his entire life, the closing of the gate of law. In this time “abbreviated” from the present time, in this “awestrking *kairos*”<sup>25</sup>, the gate is closed. This time is simultaneously accompanied by an intensification and by a dramatic feeling, but also by frivolity and by a mask. To reach the state of suspension, as did the character Ulrich in Robert Musil’s novel, means not being able to make the difference between reality and simulacre. To oscillate and to dangle in the middle. On the other hand, not having anything essential to do is a sombre perception of time. Nothing to do represents the heaviness, the inertia, but also the farce under which Beckett’s characters are set. The wavering, the postponement and the “hesitation before birth” in Kafka’s work are gestures which bring forth the most prolific life lived in expectation, as well as the game of a double life. The mask of passivity and expectation is amusement, game, but also fear, tiredness and a sombre premonition.

The messianic function of urgency, of the crepuscule, of the exception and the exile of the crepuscular characters operates in the end under the pressure of the messianic time, “here-and-now”. This messianic present presses the present chronological time and precipitates the decline. But in *The Death of Virgil*, expectation becomes a spectral experience, a form of politics against the background of an opening of possibility. This experience contains a call, an exigency which solicits an answer from the expected generations. If the spectral belongs to the future, through what the spectrum makes possible as a way of directing towards what is to come, it is also specific for the spectrum to return, so it comes from the past. It is a messianic structure different from the chronological temporality, as an axis from the past towards the future. The spectrum announces, as it is being announced by the signs with which Broch’s novels begin and continue, *The Death of Virgil* and *The Sleepwalkers*, but, at the same time, it is part of its nature not to reveal itself in “a soothing order of presents”<sup>26</sup>.

In the crepuscular novel, the expectation and the messianic function operate a series of effects: the suspension of private history, of the work and of the patriarchal law, in *The Man Without Qualities*, of the monument and of the law of the father, in *Billiards at Half-Past Nine*, the deactivation of the normative law by the law of love in the clown’s case in *The*

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<sup>25</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Timpul care rămâne*, p. 71.

<sup>26</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Spectrele lui Marx*, p. 79.



*Opinions of a Clown*, the crisis of sovereignty and of the auctorial identity of the Latin poet, on the encounter with the Other is experienced as an event in *The Death of Virgil*, the postponement, the crisis of the borders and of the thresholds, in *The Trial* and in *The Castle*. The messianic condition of the characters operates a fault between history, as a monument and as tradition, and post-history, as its end. The postponement, the suspension and the deactivation of law are not determined by the characters, but their condition, their messianic situation of exception operates through these characters the possibility for strategies bearing strong effects. Since History tends to fulfil in every moment of the Work or in the monument, in a Law or in a great, magnificent discourse, the authors of the crepuscular novel address such values when entering the crepuscule.

A few examinations orient the research in ensemble: through what theories and operations can we configure expectation as gesture and politics, the urgency, the imperative, the event and the messianic function in the crepuscular novel? Which avatars of the messianic time present expectation and the modality by which the tension of expectation is densified in the fictional text? Which are the means of operation in the messianic time and the temporal sculpture in the fictional reality? What gestures, tics and stances does suspension operate and how does the interruption of history, work and identity intervene in the novel? How does the messianic function and “the state of exception” operate in the crepuscular characters? These are a few of the theoretical assumptions and practical problems which will guide the research.