

History and Identity in Post-Totalitarian Memoir Writing in Romanian

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Recommended Citation

Ifrim, Nicoleta D "History and Identity in Post-Totalitarian Memoir Writing in Romanian." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 16.1 (2014): <<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2133>>

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Volume 16 Issue 1 (March 2014) Article 11

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<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol16/iss1/11>>

Contents of **CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 16.1 (2014)**
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol16/iss1/>>

Abstract: In her article "History and Identity in Post-Totalitarian Memoir Writing in Romanian" Nicoleta D. Ifrim analyzes Virgil Tănase's confessional and ego-graphic writing in his 2011 *Leap* *a pe murite* (Playing Fetch with Death). Tănase's text is about the individual caught in history and re-writes it post-traumatically from a double perspective: that of the collective memory of totalitarianism and the personal thus functioning as a filtering mechanism for the creation of meta-historical identity. For Tănase, the experience of exile and post-exile, as well as the confrontation with the West legitimizes identity dilemmas and the construction of the individual. The book is representative of imposed exile during the communist period which made Central and East Europeans face their inner torments and revise their identity formation(s).

Nicoleta IFRIM

History and Identity in Post-Totalitarian Memoir Writing in Romanian

With the fall of the communist regime in 1989, Romanian literature witnessed identity revision processes in the ego-graphic writings which tackle — in the form of the diary, memoirs, self-fiction, or autobiographic fiction — the issue of identity with the "ex-captive" confronted now with a memory of history he/she re-writes / re-lives through his/her ego-centric writing in keeping with the autobiographic logic of individual identity bearer of personal truths. This type of narrative is often expressed in direct relation with the socio-historical truth of the totalitarian period. Peddling the traumas of the individual subjected to the doctrinarian ideological pressure of the totalitarian regime — while negotiating forms of expressing identity by means of autobiographical mechanisms — the ego-graphic writing of Romanian post-totalitarianism occurred(s) in testimonials of the totalitarian experience in autobiographic register with which subjective memory reactivates the mechanism of history now relived in the course of the initial search of an identity rebuilt through writing. The space of exile, coupled with that of the interior exile projected by means of the textual adventure, the presence of a totalitarian History exorcised by the adventure of therapy writing, the confrontation with the West and the attempts at retrieving identity define some of the pivotal topoi of the autobiographic construct. Writing in itself becomes a scene for the binary mechanism of Memory and History, a mnemonic discourse in which "testimony constitutes the fundamental transitional structure between memory and history" (Ricoeur 21).

On the other hand, the cultural periphery of post-totalitarian European spaces reclaim their right to difference, proposing to the West the profile of an alterity which has not yet found its place in Western hegemonic discourse (on the "inbetween peripheral" space and cultures of Central and East Europe see Tötösy de Zepetnek). I do not refer to a *différance* in the sense of Derrida, but in the sense of a "cultural politics of difference" about which Jonathan Rutherford comments as follows: "Cultures and identities can never be wholly separate, homogeneous entities; instead the interrelationships of differences are marked by translation and negotiation. The cultural politics of difference means living with incommensurability through new ethical and democratic frameworks, within a culture that both recognises difference and is committed to resolving its antagonisms. This means a culture and individual sensibility that pays attention to that old liberal adage that we must learn to live together — not attempting to construct oppositions based on hierarchies of value and power, not through that politics of polarity, but in the recognition of the otherness of ourselves, through the transformation of relations of subordination and discrimination" (26). Caught "between the decline of old political identifications and the new identities that are in the process of becoming or yet to be born" (Rutherford 23), the post-totalitarian writing of the Romanian intellectual in which the "totalitarian subject" recollects his/her identity obsessions as the prisoner of a dominant political enclave and then as exiled to a Western "free world," validates the legitimacy a "the third space" through which "the process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation" (Bhabha 211). The dynamics of the specific articulation of a "cultural difference" by means of which scriptural identity — projected in the mirror-text of the ex-totalitarian subject is placed "in that position of liminality, in that productive space of the construction of culture as difference, in the spirit of alterity or otherness" (Bhabha 209) — negotiates a new type of presence, "the non-sovereign notion of self" (Bhabha 212).

For Homi K. Bhabha, this hybridizing "third space" outlines the dynamics of identity negotiation for the post-communist culture freed from the influence of monist ideologist schematism:

I mean, for instance, if you just begin to see what's happening in the Eastern Europe today: that's a very good example: people are having to redefine not only elements of socialist policy, but also wider questions about the whole nature of this society which is in a process of transition from a communist-state, second-world, iron-curtain frame of being. Socialism in both of the East and the West is having to come to terms with the fact that people cannot now be addressed as colossal, undifferentiated collectivities of class, race, gender or nation. The concept of a people is not *given*, as an essential, class-determined, unitary, homogeneous part of society *prior to a politics*; *the people* are there as a process of political articulation and political negotiation across a whole range of contradictory social sites. *The people* always exist as a multiple form of identification, waiting to be created and constructed. (220; italics in the original)

The recuperating writing of memory enacts, after December 1989, a scenario of the search for identity adopted as "unity in diversity," supporting the dilemmas of the traumatic experiences within and outside the Iron Curtain. Moreover, Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer note that the process of retrieving lost identity in narratives which compensate for the emptiness of the totalitarian period is specific to the Central and East European cultural space, where "the end of the Cold War challenged the grids used by writers to make sense of an ideologically polarized world. New emerging identities and narratives (most of them hybrid) have made their way into the vacuum created by the collapse of a bi-polar world" (629).

Oscillating between the fictional imaginary of the insular periphery under the influence of a dictatorship — a space transposed autobiographically in a totalitarian dystopia against which the self reacts by means of resistance writing using allusive symbolic or parabolic subversive codes de-structuring the official doctrinarian canon and exile as a space for survival — generates identity dilemmas in the process of self reconstruction. The Romanian intellectual creates an autobiographic discourse in which the games of memory and personal history are juxtaposed so as to project a subtextually emergent identity. The hypostasis of the communist colonized, coupled with that of the political expatriate, represents, in the Romanian writer's memorial fiction after December 1989, an axis for the mnemonic reconstruction of personal identity of the individual under the burden of History reflecting, at the same time, a "Romanianness" at the crossroads of History at the meeting of cultural collective memory and individual memory (on the history of Romanian intellectuals, see, e.g., Dobrescu <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2368>>; Terian <<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2344>>).

In the words of Stuart Hall, "far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" ("Cultural Identity" 225). The memorial narrativization of the collective past ideologically de-mystified and of the individual past presupposes, on the other hand, undertaking an initial search for the center, a "displaced 'homeward' journey" (Hall, "Cultural Identity" 232) which, in the case of the exiled, is juxtaposed with the contouring of some diasporic identities "constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (Hall, "Cultural Identity" 235). Therefore, the post-totalitarian anguish of identity confronted with a History of ideological oppression and then with exile as a traumatizing experience — and also as refuge in a Western space that intensifies the interior dilemmas of the expatriate — comes close Hall's view on postcolonial identity: "I use 'identity' to refer to the meeting point, the point of *suture*, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate,' speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken.' Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us" ("Who Needs" 5-6)

The projection in autobiographical exile writing of an "*ethos de l'altérité*" entails an experience of de-possession (see Nouss 25). Demystifying *à rebours* the totalitarian mythology of power in a discourse built in exile or post-exile, the writing of memory in post-totalitarian Romania constructs the profile of "l'homme dépaysé," as discussed by Tzvetan Todorov, confronted, on the one hand with his own traumatizing "memory" of the communist era and, on the other hand, with the attempt to revalidate an identity exited from under the "sign of totalitarianisms" (656; unless indicated otherwise, all translations are mine). Caught between "les traces mnésiques" and the mechanisms for reconfiguring identity, the Romanian intellectual fixes in autobiographical writing the stages of "reliving History." This is a therapeutic endeavor to exorcise the obsessions of "subordination," dominant in the official ideology of the Party: "both individuals and groups have the right to know themselves (self-judgment), so as to know and make their own story ... When the events experienced by the individual or by the group are exceptional and tragic in nature, this right becomes a duty: to remember and to testify ... the construction of meaning 'by' writing history ... after being recognized and interpreted, the past will now be used [and] ... summons memories to shape in a sense, his/her life and thus develop an identity" (Todorov 660-67).

Exiled on political grounds to France in 1977 and after publishing the novel *Portrait d'homme à la faux dans un paysage marin* in 1976, but also owing to the "reactionary antecedents" from his time at the university as a student and under surveillance by the Securitate, Virgil Tănase is a representative of Romanian "onirism." Onirism was formed in 1964 by writers such as Dumitru Țepeneag, Leonid Dimov, Virgil Mazilescu, Iulian Neacșu, Emil Brumaru, Sorin Titel, Miron Radu Paraschivescu, and others. While later censored by the communist regime, the movement proposed initially a literature as "automatic writing" projecting a hallucinating reality and yet inserted with verisimilitude by the amplitude of fantastic and visionary dynamics. During his French exile, while under the supervision of Ceausescu's political police who staged a failed assassination attempt against him which failed, Tănase wrote anti-totalitarian novels in the oniric mode. His narratives demystified the Ceausescu dictatorship and the period's official ideology. In 2011 he published *Leapșa pe murite. Document polițist și literar* (Playing Fetch with Death: Detective and Literary Document), an autobiographic novel centered on his personal identity. In *Leapșa pe murite* Tănase reconstructs the experience of the "totalitarian captive," of the individual caught under the dominant History of the dictatorial oppression, re-writing the personal history of the communist period, as well as the confrontation with the West. It is a survival formula for the communist and Soviet colonized Central and East European in French exile. The selection of events, the clippings of the experienced reality of the individual past, the mnemonic re-writing of experiences for the purpose of capturing a significant coherence of re-written "life," as well as the testimonial function of confessional writing project a personal "identity mythology." If his French exile legitimates for Tănase an imaginary of up-rootedness of the abandoned territory — under political pressure coupled with the reconstruction of identity confronted with Western alterity against which he projects his own inner values — the return to post-totalitarian Romania projects a post-exile which "feeds the fantasy about a lost territory. Exile is uni-territorial: the exiled either remains frozen when leaving the country ... the post-exile allows ambiguity" (Nouss 27).

This relation with multiple signifiers defines, in the post-exile imaginary, the "rhizomatic identity" specific to the postmodern period, theorized by Edouard Glissant as Stéphane Dufoix explains: Glissant "evokes rhizomatic thought to mark its difference by saying that the rhizome is not nomadic. The rhizome is above all the single root, but the root remains the same, the thought of the rhizome is the principle of a poetics of relationship ... By rhizomatic identity formation a nation acquires a political or economic state more cultural than a military significance" (355). The obsession with rediscovering an inner centre of belonging validates the mechanisms of the self's "wandering" and the double awareness of relating to the Other in a spectral scenario which juxtaposes Romania, the "interior homeland" and France, the adopted country. In Tănase's autobiographic writing, post-totalitarian retrospection employs a double perspective: that of an exile accepted as solution for survival and that of the post-exile through whose filter the return of the uprooted to the Romanian space of origin amplifies the identity dilemmas of the individual charged with the memory of his/her own traumas. These traumas are exorcized, however, by means of the therapeutic function of autobiographic fiction. From the perspective of a multicultural dialogue Tănase's ego-graphic writing — that of the "ex-totalitarian subject" bearer of Memory, confronted with a West that imposes an identity reconstruction on him — promotes "dialogue and critical reflection on the identity of cultural communities within the public space, especially around the dialectical relationship between the culture of the majority — also pluralistic — and the cultures of minorities (Fistetti 135). In Joanna Nowicki's opinion, the "Other Europeans" coming from ex-Soviet countries "know that if they do not have strong cultural awareness they may be destroyed ... or are integrated into a supranational entity (empire). Those who are forced to leave their homeland soon realize that it is for them to understand the identity of those who receive them, it is for them to decode different cultural paradigms ... unlike the West, which can live in a kind of cultural innocence, instinctive, unconscious, the Other European is sentenced to realize his/her identity" (289-90). The testimonies of these "other Europeans" mirrored in the narrative pattern of autobiographic fiction — in novels of personal history "re-lived" through writing in which the author's biographic identity fictionalizes that of the homodiegetic narrator, a juxtaposition which is actually paratextually confirmed in Tănase's preface to *Leapșa pe murite* — ensures the dynamic of an "interior temporality" in which the real chronology of events is imprinted by a refiguration of time and mediated by sincerity to truth in Tănase writing (see Hubier 35). Slices of experience ordered in the two experienced spaces — (post)totalitarian Romania and the France of exile — transcribe, as Tănase

states in the last chapter of the book: "a history I have not searched for and whose torrents I crossed as best I knew, trying to keep my cool, trying not to let myself be sidetracked, a strange experience I lived through ... A strange experience I lived through just as my parents lived through a war (which cannot truly be compared to this minor personal mishap), risking their lives in a confrontation they did not wish for and whose development depended in no degree on their will and convictions; a cataclysm that haphazardly crushes people, no matter their merits; an attempt as many others in life time, neither good, nor bad in itself, a brick which gains its worth by the purpose of the wall in which it is placed" (338).

Further, the fictional frames of reference associate the biographical episodes of fictionalized identity and in a novel "written in the first person in which a fictional narrator tells the story of his life ... [is] pure fiction and its claim to truth ... is a playful imitation of autobiographical practices" (Pluvinet 55). In the epilogue, Tănase adopts the convention of autobiographic fiction, as well as the identity core of his narrative project: "This book ends here: it is not that of my life (whose many other ramifications were not evoked here at all); it is the novel (true, this time) of a confrontation between two heads of state, two great army leaders, as they say, in whose hands I was a card they played without being able to rig, I think. They themselves were only the visible part of the clash between two tectonic plates of history that shook a part of the world until one of them positioned itself over the other. Which ends the narrative. A vassal to the rules of the latter, which induce him to cut deep, eliminating without mercy everything that does not lead the reader directly and personally towards the climax from where, tumbling him into the denouement, the author cries at him: check mate! that of the writing in hand believes that he accomplished his work and that it is his duty to stop here" (339).

The convention of verisimilitude, of the "effect of the real," shadows the biographical narrative through which the Central and East European intellectual — in an escapee from an age of ideological terror — elaborates a fictionalized construction of a traumatic history and of his relation with a freedom of the individual re-discovered in exile in the French space. On the metafictional level of the narrated autobiography, of the novel auto-reflexively projecting structures and meanings of the novels in a writing "turned towards the self," the re-lived history of the writer during totalitarianism mixes with the rewritten history of his books, which are the aesthetically resistant replies of a literature surviving the dictatorial regime through the mediation of the oniric allusive code. I mention here only the case of Tănase's *Apocalypse d'un adolescent de bonne famille* rejected by communist censorship and published in Paris in 1980 whose "history" began in 1972 at a time when "the most frequent topics for discussion are, naturally, the situation of the writers and what should be done for the political power to allow us to write and publish unhindered — with the conviction that one way or another under normal conditions, good literature surfaces above the mass of the mediocre, propaganda literature" (129):

This history is recalled in a metatextual scenario that reveals the meanings of dissident writing: The matter of the book, the clay from which I made the brick is that of my life in a country which had become a prison. A country in which we had to live as humanly as possible the only life we had been given. A country in which an adolescent 'of good station' who inherits an education, i.e. a moral obligation, automatically becomes the enemy (and the victim) of the historical catastrophe we all live, expression not of the Soviet power or of the Marxist thinking, but of the breaking of the dams that were keeping the ocean of muck away from us. Yes, I had lived by adolescence and the affection for my parents under the threat of prison and of the Canal, I had faced the waves of stupidity and malice of those holding the power in the name of brute material force, I had the feeling of a historical cataclysm, an overflow of the social, that is of the dead matter, on the human. Starting my novel with the 1940 refuge and continuing it with the Canal prisoners, two topics of the few which were completely forbidden, not to mention the rest, was I defying the Power? Perhaps, but it wasn't at all my intention. I was doing it naturally, simply out of a sense of duty. I was the man of a country built on these atrocious pains and it seemed to me that I wouldn't have been the same person if I hadn't accepted them. (*Leap* a pe murite 134)

After all, the metafictional register of the text retraces the internal path and followed by Tănase's books, the history of their censoring in totalitarian Romania — because of the inappropriateness of their message and their publication in France — amplifies the same identity dilemmas of the intellectual caught in History. The "identity pilgrimage" inserted either on the first level of autobiographic fiction or on the second level in the metanarrative of "books talking about books" emphasizes an individualization as research of micro-totally (Kaufmann, *Ego* 259) and Tănase selecting his truth, morality, social location, and identity suggests this (Kaufmann, *Ego* 238).

Eugen Simion and Andrei Grigor point out that under totalitarianism, writers of the age were forced to coexist with a double censorship: one "public, institutionalized" and one "internal, which enters your blood": "The interior censorship is learnt gradually. It is a ... perfidious form of protection and survival, but also of self-mystification. You learn the lesson. You discover that you must write nothing vexing about the Soviets, that church and religion must be avoided, that it is better to make abstraction of God, only good things about the Communist Party, but since you don't feel like praising it, you avoid the subject, finally, you mustn't be too pessimistic because you discourage the working class, it is not good at all to eulogize the West and its moral and material values and, most of all, you must learn well the language of dissimulation, of paraphrase, of allusion, of double talk" (79). Further, according to Simona Antofi, the diary is another form of biographic discourse — written retrospectively by "the traveller through History" — which resonates the inner dilemmas of the "multiple cultural identity" re-validated by the "games of memory" (19-23; see also Crihană 417-48). The recollection of episodes according to a precise "identity logic" — the "gloomy ball in the University hall" in the winter of 1965 which marks the debut of "fabricating" the "undesirable" status of Tănase evoking the familiar image and the native topos of Galați as a center for the traumas of the intellectual "of unsound origin" and "captive of History" — the narration of childhood and adulthood and the accidental contact with the West, the interrupted higher education, the expulsion and the period of being re-educated through work on a construction site, the collaboration offer by Securitate, the first novels, and the adoption of onirism's literary formula, the illusion of the ideological meltdown and the personal disillusion, the experience of theater, the invitation by Securitate to leave Romania in 1977, the French exile and the contact with the Romanian diaspora in the West, the failed assassination attempt staged by Securitate, the return to post-totalitarian Romania and the cultural-national identity dilemmas after December 1989 in the age of globalization — are part of the scenario of choosing his own truth

Identity metahistory is built into an autobiographic filter by the writer who selects, adapts, manipulates segments of information to prove his space of identity building" (Kaufmann, *Ego* 238). This is joined by a personal "moral choice" marking the status of the "subversive non-conformist" of the "totalitarian subject" who chooses his social space (Kaufmann, *Ego* 242). Thus, the mechanism of internalizing the social context, its filtering through the grid of individual conscience which generates a personal, autobiographic version of understanding the totalitarian world validates the social nature of the Romanian intellectual's profile (Kaufmann, *L'Invention* 49). The period of his collaboration with the Securitate — a blackmail which led to Tănase's re-enrollment in the university — when agent "Andrei C." (i.e., Tănase) is recruited to watch the "pardoned legionary Petrișor Marcel," the game with the inquisitors, and the recommendation to exclude the agent from the network on grounds of "insincerity" interiorize the identity crisis and the break with totalitarian mechanism, denouncing, simultaneously, the forced imposition of an identity which was "prefabricated and absurd": "The authorities had faced me with a choice I knew I could avoid — what was ghastly about the political system in which we lived was that you could only live by collaborating and, if I didn't want to 'drown,' I had to return to the trap I had only escaped for a while. On the other hand, this system that had its own historical logic seemed meant to last a millennium, a terrible outpour of minerality over us (since crowds function according to the laws of physics, what else is the 'social' than another form of 'minerality'?). In other words, a kind of cosmic catastrophe which, if we couldn't prevent, we must not, by any means, allow. The members of Securitate, poor fellows (not that I pity them!), were not the instruments of the political power, but of another much more frightening and more radical against which my whole being rebelled" (*Leap pe murite* 82-83).

Being reshaped as in-between identity as the continuous articulation of a double process (Kaufmann, *L'Invention* 55), Tănase's identity mythology takes shape alongside his confrontations with the history of totalitarianism in which the masks of the social actor are juxtaposed to the hypostases of a dilemmatic identity specific to the "modern individual" sliding from a fictional logic of generalized reflexion which deconstructs itself (Kaufmann, *L'Invention* 510). On the other hand, as actor in his own fiction, the totalitarian captive re-writes his "story" (Kaufmann, *L'Invention* 152). The attempt to redefine identity by reflexion arrests the biographic experiences and is now re-written in a novel:

Expelled from school, from the university, from the country and, finally, almost from life itself by those who made a privileged enemy out of me, despite my indifference — or perhaps because of it — to them, considering politics a surface manifestation, perishable and, thus, negligible of our confrontation with the world ... Forbidden as a writer, and then as a theater director ... Author of a pamphlet entitled *Ceaușescu I-ul, rege communist* [Ceaușescu I, Communist King] published in Paris and for which I was close to paying with my life, but especially of an interview granted from Bucharest and published while I was still in the country on the first page of the journal *Les Nouvelles Littéraires: Un scriitor cu călușul în gură vorbește* [A Gagged Writer Speaks], I never thought I was doing anything particularly brave for the simple fact that not even for one moment did it occur to me to do otherwise. Similar to the majority of those around me, I found myself against my will in a war I hadn't wanted and which was not mine with adversaries and allies I could have done without, trying to live a right and honest life in the middle of the catastrophe not out of a moral ambition, but simply because without these guidelines that challenge the logic of chaos, life resembles death. (*Leap-a pe murite* 6)

Within the general frame of transforming the life story into a "logic of being chained" (Kaufmann, *L'Invention* 152), the uprooted Tănase projects the period of French exile from an autoscopic filter of redefining identity and amplifying the interior anxieties become more acute with each moment of discovering the Free World. For Jean-Claude Kaufmann, life writing operates a change which structures meaning: "consistency is not sameness, but the cast and intelligence of events. It adapts perfectly to the structure (contradictory and changing) of the modern individual, building its necessary unity not by aggregation and attachment, but impossible, interior, and scalable way around the narrative thread. Everyone tells the story of his/her life that gives meaning to what he/she saw" (152).

In the eyes of a recent fugitive from the communism with a pre-formed image of the West as a compensating utopia for the communist ideological dictatorship, the Romanian world of the exile in Paris is a space of rupture fuelling the inner complexes of the new comer: "As for me, I was convinced that we could only speak for those at home, who could not do it themselves, by giving authority to our voices. The old exile was divided, at that time, in two. On the one hand, some established personalities, who, from various reasons, wanted to detach themselves from their Romanian origin and who did not consider they needed to become involved in our battles — Eugene Ionescu will only change his attitude at the insistence of his daughter and even then relatively so. ... On the other hand, a great number of intellectuals, sometimes of quality, some of whom could have had a literary career if they hadn't given up writing in favor of other lucrative endeavors and who, being completely unknown, being published only in Romanian by the publishing houses of exile, could not be taken into account" (*Leap-a pe murite* 197-98).

Paris, "a city inscribed in my personal mythology" (*Leap-a pe murite* 188) awakes the anguishing feeling of non-belonging, of lacking an identity acknowledged by the Western center of authority, but also the divorce of the exiled from the prefabricated status of the occasional dissident, from the "fierce French fighters for defending the human rights in Romania" (*Leap-a pe murite* 201). The publication, of his *Sa Majesté Ceausescu I-er, roi communiste* in 1982 signed Tănase's death sentence: his execution was ordered by Ceaușescu and the French counterespionage agency later provided the "undesirable" Tănase with details: "The agent charged with the assassination of Paul Goma and myself had surrendered to the French services. Which did not diminish the threat: usually, they tell me, such missions are entrusted to several agents who act independently until one of them succeeds" (*Leap-a pe murite* 262). The failure of the attempt, the imminence of fatal danger, the scenario of making the political convict disappear, and the adoption of a parallel identity are relived through the mechanism of autobiographic writing, the reconstruction of the tensional coherence of the events being part of the fictional project. The exposure of the vengeful exaggerations of the cardboard dissidents and of their tendency to denounce the collaborationists remaining in the country, as well as the criticism directed against the "immaculate knights of the Western society," of these "angels of democracy" who "want to make us believe in their virginal gentleness, hiding under a surface shyness the underlayers of a society infected with syphilis" (*Leap-a pe murite* 325), the therapeutic function of exile writing becomes means of exorcizing inner confusions and that compensate for Tănase's identity disillusion.

In conclusion, Tănase's narration becomes a fundamental argument for assuming a unique status of the Romanian intellectual who re-writes the history of the (post)exile: "Writer, not dissident. Writer, not diligent defender of human rights. Writer, not witness to a process, be it historic, and who no one needs once the sentence is pronounced. Have you noticed how many of the authors, once famous, of such 'testimonies' disappeared after the fall of the Berlin wall? Naturally, when the house is burning

and those inside are in danger, we pull our sleeves and we take either a bucket, or a shovel, or the hose, fighting with the flames as we can and know best. But only some of us have a fireman's calling" (*Leap* □ *a pe murite* 328-29).

Note: Research for the writing of the above article has been funded by Programul Operational Sectorial Dezvoltarea Resurselor Umane (Sectoral Operational Program of Human Resources Development) financed by the European Social Fund and by the Romanian Government, contract number SOP HRD/89/1.5/S/59758.

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