


Memory and identity-focused narratives in Tănase's 'lived book'

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Abstract: In her article "Memory and identity-focused narratives in Tănase's 'lived book'" Nicoleta Ifrim analyses *România mea* (My Romania), Virgil Tănase's first book published after the fall of Ceausescu's regime, a collection of interviews in which personal history is fictionalized according to the narrative rules of a "spoken book." The text is representative for the Eastern intellectual travelling to the West, carrying out his own personal post-totalitarian traumas now mirrored in a self-oriented narrative.

Nicoleta IFRIM

Memory and identity-focused narratives in Tănase's 'lived book'

In the aftermath of the fall of communism, the Eastern European space witnesses both the reconstruction of identity at a personal as well as a collective level, and the retrieval of some literary values, either lost or concealed during the ideological oppression. At the same time, Europe turns to the East welcoming its fictions. It is the time for the vivid self-histories, identity-related fictions that place the Eastern European intellectual, Virgil Tănase, in a double role. On the one hand, the age of totalitarianism is retrieved and reshaped within a subjective textual memory grid; on the other hand, in keeping with his inner profile the writer, still assuming his stance as a prisoner of the Great History, rewrites and redefines it even more subjectively. What results is a puzzle in which identity is textually produced via fragments of fictionalized personal experience, an individual history rendered in a confessing grid. In turn, personal history already enclosed in the narrative is authenticated by mirroring the collective history of the non-fictional events of the communist age. In other words, these fictions are fictionalizing history (meta-history), while also historicizing fiction (aiming at creating the reality effect), which entails a constant switch from the personal to the collective level, recalling the political and ideological oppression and the escape into a posttraumatic discourse. The latter filters the trauma and thus acquires cathartic functions. The two strategies create, at the fictional level, a profile of a captive of a history opposed by individual forms of resistance. In Romanian post-communist literature, fictionalized history and historicized fiction intertwine so as to create fictionally-reloaded personal histories of the intellectual (the meta-history, of the second grade, juxtaposed over the official one), while attempting at acquiring verisimilitude through re-living history within the narrative. The identity-focused fictions of the Eastern European margin are doubly legitimized by two links:

1. with the totalitarian history recalled to mind autobiographically ("the soft memory" in Etkind's terms), reliving "the impersonal order" (Todorov, *Le siècle* 546) by means of resistance reflected in confessional writing, and
2. with the multicultural Europe, opening towards its post-communist periphery in view of redefining, in its turn, its cultural identity profile.

Having suffered due to the experience of exile, Tănase projects this identity profile in his narratives via two methods. This identity is illustrated, on the one hand, allegorically and subversively in the novels he published in France before 1989, and on the other hand, through autobiographical and confessional self-legitimization in the post-1989 writings published in Romania and promoted by Institutul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului și Memoria Exilului Românesc (IICMER – Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile). The "identity adventure" of his narratives is rooted in the biography of "the undesirable Tănase" from the age of socialism, since "in full age of socialist dogmatism, Virgil Tănase will daringly assert his independence of thought. The history of his humiliations is, at the same time, the history of the victory over communist terror" ("în plină epocă a dogmatismului socialist, Virgil Tănase își va afirma cu îndrăzneală independența de gândire. Istoria umilințelor sale este totodată istoria victoriei asupra terorii comuniste" [Cristofor, "Confesiunile" 4; unless indicated otherwise all translations are mine]). Conspiratorially named the Rebel by Securitate, the Romanian Secret Police, the Romanian writer emigrates under duress to Paris, where alongside Paul Goma he becomes in 1981 the target of the assassination attempt planned by Securitate under direct orders from Ceausescu. The "Tănase Affair" fails miserably and the initial operation becomes a spectacular diversion – in the age of Cold War – coordinated by the French Counter Information Service (DST) against Ceausescu's Securitate. His biographical coordinates and his refusal to live in an autarchic, autistically-politicized society justify his affiliation with the Romanian dissident movement in France, a status which both uproots and dislocates the author through identity loss and gives him ways to rediscover individual freedom. Inside the Romanian borders the exile brings about the "social death" of Tănase, as "the exiled is declared persona non grata and the simple mention of his name becomes a breach of law. Nevertheless, accepting this destiny is the only chance for an existence not governed by politics" ("cel exilat este declarat persona non grata și simpla rostire a numelui său devine o încălcare a legilor. Cu toate acestea, acceptarea acestui destin reprezintă singura șansă la o existență neguvernată de politic" [Strugaru, *Exilul* 29-30]).

In the historical context of trauma, by employing "dialogic relations with the others" defined as "providers of meaning" (Taylor, *Multiculturalism* 52, 54), Tănase's autobiographical fictions or his memorial discourses of exile (published in Romania after 1989) project a search for identity by

recovering the doctrinarian and totalitarian universe through a grid of personal memory. It is precisely this self-centered narrative that reflects identity as "coherence of the self in time" (Wieviorka, *La différence* 164). From a Cultural Studies theoretical perspective, the triad culture-identity-memory is actually regarded as a mechanism of reconstructing collective and individual identities in the writing of history. As Michael Wieviorka remarks, "many actors confess that, starting with the 1960s, they felt a preoccupation to inscribe their collective identity on the path of history, from whence they felt excluded or marginalized. Since then they started to challenge official history, [...] the history of the conquerors and the oppressors, in the name of their memory as defeated and oppressed people, certainly, but also in the name of their reference group's contribution to collective culture and life" ("de nombreux acteurs ont ainsi témoigné, à partir des années 60, du souci d'inscrire leur identité collective dans l'histoire, une histoire d'où ils s'estimaient exclus ou marginalisés. Ils ont dès lors entrepris de contester l'histoire officielle [...], l'histoire des vainqueurs et des dominants, au nom de leur mémoire de vaincus et de dominés, certes, mais aussi au nom de la contribution de leur groupe de référence à la culture et à la vie collectives" [*La différence* 163]). The case of Tănase's narratives, especially those which challenge official history, thus rewriting his own life, closely follow this pattern. His confessional works use personal memory to fictionally recollect instances of the Great History, the traumas he experienced as subject to the totalitarian age, and the exilic dislocation and its torments. Self-centered as they may be, these narratives become representative of the collective culture of the "uprooted" East, which as the result deems his recollections emblematic for the physical and psychological exodus of the intellectuals from the communist bloc.

On the other hand, it is the impact of the European dynamics on the imaginary of the post-totalitarian margin that generates fictions, which activate memory as "actors' subjectivity" (Wieviorka, 183), and self-reflexive discourses on the Self and the Other. As a matter of fact, in the works published after the fall of the communist regime by a significant number of Romanian intellectuals, including Tănase, Paul Goma, Dumitru Țepeneag, Nicolae Breban, Octavian Paler, Ioan Groșan, Adrian Marino, and so on, Europe is constantly referred to as a reservoir of multiple identities which coordinates the autobiographical imaginary of the post-communist space as it were from the shadows. This gives way to a process of re-Europeanizing peripheral literatures by emphasizing the dichotomy between the center and the margin. Along the same lines, Joanna Nowicki writes about "an imaginary Europe" which "finds itself face to face with a real Europe." This other Europe, "separated from the West by the whims of History" projects, in post-totalitarian writing, a "reclaiming Europeanness," generated by "the cultural co-habitation with the European Union states, – that many countries of the former socialist block wanted to join quickly. This new situation determined a series of numerous debates in the West, as well as in the East of the continent – debates not lacking some apprehension, and having a certain identity stake" ("la cohabitation culturelle avec les pays de l'Union européenne, à laquelle beaucoup de pays de l'ex-Est ont immédiatement souhaité *appartenir*. Cette situation nouvelle suscite de nombreux débats tant à l'ouest qu'à l'est du continent – débats non dépourvus d'inquiétudes, notamment identitaires" [285-86]).

In fact, the experience of the self-imposed exile, firstly as a sole means of survival during communism and secondly as the alternative to the diaspora, generates "a discourse of History" in the self-confessional-memorial narratives, placed at the "East-West interface" (Nowicki 287). The self-imposed exile of the intellectual bears special identity markers, or, in other words, a search for the identity of the self that is forged by permanently maintaining the illusion of a liberating West. In Joanna Nowicki words, and similar to Todorov's views, who writes about "transculturation," the "uprooted" East European rewrites the history of an "Other Europe," employing a specific perspective of the dialectics identity-alterity. Nowicki further asserts that "Contrary to the majority of Westerners, who discovered the world by conquest, or by receiving the others on their own territories, or as a result of journeying into the unknown, the Other Europeans are more familiar with the experience of the assimilated, the exotic, the allegorized or the exiled – if we consider the classification of modern travelers proposed by Tzvetan Todorov. Therefore, they have a tendency to express the 'identity self-celebration' since their identity is often distorted by a stormy political history" ("La Question" 289). Similarly, the literary relived experience of Tănase's exile with its phantasms of embedded History bestows legitimacy on an identity confronted with a re-evaluation of its individual and collective values at the impact with the Eurocentric polymorphism of identities. The author reshapes his own version of the past which reverberates his present experience of living in Paris and his narrative is thus extensively marked by the identity quest which displays both the "stormy political history," as Nowicki puts it, and the tormented personal history. The narrative acquires therapeutic functions while striving to grasp the sense of the individual Self.

It should be mentioned that, even though Romania was never a geopolitical part of the Soviet Union, the dogmatic invasion, that is Russification, turned the country into an enclave in which Soviet doctrine ruled. Politically, socially, mentally, and culturally, Ceausescu's tamed socialism was a replica of the Soviet society, 'enriched' towards the final years by the scenario of the cult of personality and of the unique leader. This uniqueness is opposed by the inherent diversity of the Other and by his non-hierarchical multiplicity, a rhizomatic identity, as Deleuze and Guattari would define it. In Edouard Glissant's view (quoted in Dufoix, *La Dispersion* 356-357), this opposition generates an "archipelagic thinking" that "gathers the wide variety of Diversity," which further destabilizes and relativizes the center. This gives birth to a form of postcolonial identity, which entails the fractal dimensions of discontinuity and fragmentation or homothetia (It should be mentioned that these concepts are borrowed from mathematical fractal theory, defined by Benoît Mandelbrot in *Les Objets fractals: forme, hasard, dimension*). Thus, identities are construed as representations of a postcolonial "circular nomadic drive," by which the matrix space of the archipelago organizes "the centralization of the margin and the marginalization of the center." This new type of reversed identity mirrors, in the autobiographic-memorial imaginary of Tănase's post-exilic writing, the adoption of some initiatic pilgrimages in search of "the home away from home" (Hall, 327-48). It reflects, on the one hand, the identity crisis of the self who in a post-totalitarian setting searches for his European roots and, on the other hand, the strategies for harmonizing the national-peripheral cultural memory with the European space of adhesion. Tănase's identity-centered narratives published after 1989 enhance the relieved "in-between peripherality" Tötösy de Zepetnek discusses in postcolonial terms (*Comparative* 10). As Cristina Sandru notices, "prior to 1989, East-Central Europe could be described as a mediating peripherality, doubly marginalized by the two competing centers of influence: the political-economic and ideological one of the Soviet Union, and the cultural one of the West" (*Worlds Apart?* 23). One can notice that Tănase's work is emblematic for being located between these two poles, offering in turn a special narrative typology emerging from the post-Soviet literatures, which may be referred to as "mediating confession."

In this context, some biographical details seem necessary for a better understanding of the writer's work. Born in Galați in 1945, Tănase becomes a student of the Faculty of Romance Languages, University of Bucharest (1963-1969), from where he is expelled for uttering the name of the "agnostic legionary," Emil Cioran, at a students' colloquium. His re-admittance to the faculty is conditioned by his agreement to collaborate with the Securitate (Political Police). The publication of his novel, *Portrait d'homme à la faux dans un paysage marin*, by Flammarion in 1976, draws the attention of the oppressive Political Police, which suggests an extension of his study period in France for three more months. While in France, he works with Flammarion publishing house, attends Roland Barthes's lectures from Ecole des Hautes Etudes, and in 1978 completes a doctoral thesis on the semiology of directing under the supervision of Barthes. The bases for "manufacturing" his political file, condemning him to death and revoking his Romanian citizenship in 1977, were his implication in the "Goma case" and the publication of the pamphlet "Sa Majesté Ceausescu I-er, roi communiste" ("His Majesty, Ceausescu The First, The Communist King" [*Actuel* no.27/1982]). This pamphlet was an ironic and virulent anti-totalitarian response that portrayed the symbolic figure of the King as the Center of power by asserting, "The king is good, the king likes celebrations – the joy brought by his anniversary is of cosmic proportions: the marble, the branches of the trees, all the birds hum on the day of your anniversary, speaking your name, the stars, the forests, the rivers. The queen is beautiful, the queen likes science: she is a star born in January, who conquered all the peaks of chemistry, all the heights of kindness and Humanity, comrade of the Chosen One, son of the earth and the light" ("Le roi est bon, le roi aime les fêtes - pour son anniversaire la joie est cosmique: Le marbre, les rameaux, les oiseaux frémissent le jour de ton anniversaire, en prononçant ton nom, les astres, les forets, la rivière. La reine est belle, la reine aime les sciences: Elle est un astre né en janvier, ayant franchi tous les sommets de la chimie, tous les sommets de la bonté et de l'Humanité, compagne de l'Homme Elu, fils de la terre et de la lumière" [Tănase, "Sa Majesté Ceausescu"]). The assassination planned by the Romanian secret services fails and the agent in charge with settling the "Tănase business" surrenders to the French secret services. During his Parisian exile, Tănase publishes novels encoded in the symbolically-allusive language specific to parable. In fact, they should be construed as anti-totalitarian literary stands, shaped by intertextual and self-referential strategies. Some of these novels are, *Portrait d'homme à la faux dans un paysage marin*, translated by Alain Pamit, Paris, 1976 ; *Apocalypse d'un adolescent de bonne famille*, Paris, 1980; *L'Amour, l'amour, roman sentimental*, Paris, 1982; *C'est mon affaire, sotie*, Paris, 1983; *Cette mort qui va et vient et revient*, Paris, 1984; *Le Bal sur la goélette du pirate aveugle*, Paris, 1987; *Le Bal autour du diamant magique*, Paris, 1988. After 1989, he publishes *La Vie mystérieuse et terrifiante d'un tueur anonyme*, Paris, 1990; *Ma*

Roumanie (Entretiens avec Blandine Tézé – Delafon), Paris, 1990 (Romanian translation by Irina Petraș, under the title of *România mea*, published in Bucharest in 1996); *Ils refleurent, les pommiers sauvages*, Paris, 1991; and *Zoia*, București, 2003. His plays are published in a volume in 1996, in Bucharest, and in 2011, in cooperation with the Romanian Institute for Recent History, he publishes a 'literary and police document' – *Leapșa pe murite (Playing Tag with Death)*, an autobiographical novel with a powerful identity core, with the Adevărul Holding from Bucharest. All of Tănase's novels written in the communist period aspire to the pattern of aesthetic oneirism (immediately banned because of its "formalist" character). In fact, this is a literary strategy for avoiding the socio-cultural absurdity of the time and sliding towards a compensatorily assumed absurdity. This in turn generates "new meanings by arranging parts of the real that is verisimilitude according to its own logic, each of them, as it happens in dreams, very precise in its materiality. In dreams real, identifiable persons meet in equally familiar situations, only these people have never been to those places. One seems to overcome thus in literature the determination of realism, which was the official dogma, and the surrealist demonstration, and the textuality of the nouveau roman, who can't get a hold on History. Even now, I believe Romanian oneirism is one of the most interesting literary inventions of post-war literature" ("sensuri noi, prin aranjarea, după o logică proprie, a unor bucăți de real [adică de verosimil], fiecare, cum se întâmplă în vise, foarte exact în materialitatea sa. În vise, persoane reale, perfect identificabile, se întâlnesc în situații și ele cunoscute, atâta doar că aceste persoane n-au trecut niciodată prin acele locuri. Se depășește astfel, în literatură, am impresia, și determinarea realismului, care era dogma oficială, și demonstrația suprealistă, și textualitatea noului Roman, căruia Istoria îi scapă. Și astăzi mai cred că onisrismul român este una dintre invențiile literare cele mai interesante ale literaturii după război" [Tănase, *România mea* 56]). Being invited by Securitate to leave the country in 1977, Tănase belongs to the category of "undesirables," whose iconoclastic texts generated by the anti-totalitarian stand, characterize dissident writing.

As stated, Tănase's literary début is marked by oneirism, an aesthetic technique for the reconfiguration of a reality "overstuffed with ideology." The oneiric literary group was founded in 1964 by Romanian writers such as Dumitru Țepeneag, Leonid Dimov, Virgil Mazilescu, Iulian Neacșu, Emil Brumaru, Sorin Titel, Tănase, Miron Radu Paraschivescu, and others. It promoted a literature inspired by German oneirism, Surrealism, and the French nouveau roman, which projects a hallucinating reality within fiction, infused with verisimilitude by the amplitude of the fantastic and the visionary dynamics. The movement is suppressed by the totalitarian censorship, with many of its representative figures choosing exile, Tănase being one of them. Later, after the fall of the dictatorial regime, the novelist promotes an autobiographic writing updated by two formulae of the pattern "écriture du soi"– writing the self: the memorial narrative and the autobiographic fiction. His texts focus on the identity of the "totalitarian subject," "captive" of the Great History and his new "problematic confrontations" pre-post-totalitarian with the West rediscovered during the imposed exile. The two books based on this bi-polar narrative, *My Romania (România mea* 1996), and *Playing Tag with Death (Leapșa* 2011) contain a self-confessing structure, juxtaposing "the historicity of text" over "the textuality of history" (Antoine Compagnon, *Le démon de* 265). The game of verisimilitude, enhanced by the presence of the authorial figure at the textual level, emerges from the reconstruction of the identity of the exiled. Thus, the Eastern-European intellectual becomes "himself and an Other, the reader and the writer of his own life" ("lui-même et un autre, le lecteur et le scripteur de sa propre vie" [Hubier, *Littératures* 127]). The resulted personal mythology is projected onto the fictionalized autobiography in which the author is deemed as "the object of the text he himself is writing" (Gusdorf, *Les Ecritures* 122). The meta-dimension of writing autobiographically about the self is juxtaposed and contaminated by the acquired effect of the real in Barthesian sense. The double affiliation of the autobiographical fiction "to the literary field and to society" keeps a polemic record of the writer's options in the totalitarian age through the emergence of a "singular 'vision du monde' which provides access to a collective mentality" (Maingueneau, *Le contexte* 5). This way, individual memory meditates on "the colonizers' assimilating paradigm," ("le paradigme assimilationniste des colonisateurs") and "the resistance and opposition of the colonized who do not only passively interiorize the dominant cultural values, but they imbue them with their own image" ("la résistance et l'opposition des colonisés qui ne se sont pas bornées à interioriser passivement les valeurs culturelles dominantes mais y ont imprimé leur réflexion propre" [Fistetti, *Théories* 28]).

Tănase's narratives of the "uprooted Eastern European" emphasize the idea that "the fragmentation of the first-person narrative itself cannot be understood outside the strong connection with the identity hesitations of the enunciating subject" (Hubier, *Littératures* 78). From Vincent Colonna's perspective, this enactment of the process of "Self fictionalization" entails "the attempt to turn the self into an imaginary subject, to tell a story by directly contributing to the story, to its

construction, by becoming an element of one's own invention" ("la démarche qui consiste à faire de soi un sujet imaginaire, à raconter une histoire en se mettant directement à contribution, en collaborant à la fable, en devenant un élément de son invention" [*L'Autofiction* 7]).

The direct rejection of the dominant ideological doctrine, the anxiety of exile, and the confrontation with the West become grounds for a "life story."

In 1990, one year after the fall of Ceausescu's regime, *Ma Roumanie (Entretiens avec Blandine Teze-Delafou)* is published in Paris. The Romanian edition of *My Romania (Ma Roumanie, România mea)* is published six years later in 1996 in Bucharest with an *Introductory Note to the Romanian Edition* composed by Tănase on April 9, 1996. Here, the author presents the motives that vouch for the "recuperating" authority of this "spoken book," which is an example of a narrative interview. Centered around a self that retrieves his memory of a dominant history that generates personal traumas, and having a definitive influence on the "totalitarian subject," the "life story" highlights the juxtaposition of an individual and a collective destiny. Tănase writes that,

My destiny seemed to me representative for the fate of an entire generation, which somehow managed to create contemporary Romania with the materials provided by history and which we could not choose. When the flesh of this era will have rotten and only stone will have remained after us, the enduring element over which many and various waters pass, I believe it will become clear that we haven't done worse than others in an age that itself wasn't worse or sweeter than others. We carried our life burden without misconstrued heroisms, trying to survive from one day to the next, defying the logic of a universe which was not built for our benefit, placing us in the service of the only things worth living for, that is managing to wake up in the morning, bringing children into the world and taking care of them, believing that nothing is more important in the world than the simple fact of being granted life.

(Destinul meu mi se părea exemplar pentru soarta unei întregi generații care, cum-necum, a clădit România de azi cu materialele pe care Istoria i le-a pus la îndemână și pe care n-am avut a le alege. Atunci când carnea acestei epoci va fi putrezit și nu va rămâne decât piatra din noi, elementul durabil peste care trec multele și feluritele ape, se va vădi, cred, că nu ne-am descurcat mai rău decât alții într-o vreme care nici ea n-a fost mai aprigă ca altădată, nici mai dulce. Ne-am dus povara noastră de viață fără eroisme anapoda, încercând să supraviețuim de la o zi la alta, sfidând logica unui univers care n-a fost clădit întru priința noastră, punându-ne în slujba singurelor lucruri pentru care merită într-adevăr să trăiești, adică a mai apuca să te scoli de dimineață, aducând pe lume copii și îngrijindu-te de ei, considerând că nimic nu este mai important pe lume decât simplul fapt de a-ți fi fost îngăduit să te naști [*România mea* 5].

By adopting the stance of a conscious observer of the regime, Tănase transfers his personal history as a prisoner of the Great History into an analysis of an identity which seeks retrieval through memory. He contests the post-revolutionary "paper dissidents," "professional revolutionaries, dissidents by trade, systematic opponents, teachers stiffened in absolute or sublime truths" (*România mea* 6). His "incriminatory testimony" of Romanian contemporaneity is built from the perspective of the "History experience." He notices the social and ideological flaws of a Romanian society "in eternal transition," marked by "political irresponsibility, media hooliganism, the encouragement of personal interests to the detriment of the collective ones, obtuse nationalism which is not based on trust in national values, quite the contrary, the bigotry of the views betray an ideological obscurantism, otherwise amusing, since it is the exact replica of the older 'party spirit', but with a different content" (*România mea* 8-9). His exilic access to "a social model that some envy" (6) enables the configuration of his remembrance-analysis of a revolte ideological system, to which the contemporary post-communist one is compared. In his view, the latter still preserves some of the social and crypto-Communist patterns of thought, which could explain "the failure of the East European worlds" as well as that of the Romanian world, which "like the eye that keeps for a long time the feeling of the slag which was removed long ago, [...] continues to function having as a main reference point the abolished totalitarian system. [...] In a country in which political attitudes seem to me to come less from the idea of a future, but rather out of fearing the past, we have, perhaps for the last time, the duty to say that, in some way, a house through which a herd of buffalos went through is not necessarily an architectural aberration ("ca ochiul care păstrează mult timp senzația zgurii de mult scoase, [...] funcționează în continuare având ca reper sistemul totalitar abolit. [...] Într-o țară în care, mi se pare, atitudinile politice proced mai puțin din ideea unui viitor cât mai ales din frica de trecut, avem, poate, pentru ultima dată, datoria să spunem că, într-un anume fel, o casă prin care a trecut o turmă de bivoli nu este neapărat o construcție arhitectural aberantă" [*România mea* 6]).

Personal history is reconstructed by placing bits and pieces of life in the autobiographical order of writing, which strengthens the continuity and separation of the identity projections. In other words, as Kaufmann puts it, such moments "emphasize the specific logic of every identity profile—dissonant among themselves, but relatively well constituted [...]: the individual does not possess only one unity

principle, but many" ("mettant en évidence des logiques identitaires dissonantes entre elles mais relativement constituées, [...]: l'individu n'a pas un seul principe d'unité, mais plusieurs" [*Ego* 167]). Relevant in this respect are a series of chronologically arranged episodes: the "provincial" childhood of the 1950s in the city of Galați as a utopian space which still holds some ancestral rhythms, the "intermittent" mirage of a Western world, infiltrated through the "forbidden" books, the student years and the formative "subversive" readings, the aggressive impact of the Communist propaganda and the repressive mythology of the "new man," the spiritual adhesion to the French matrix-space, the "undesirable" status and the expulsion from the faculty, the time of "re-education through work" as a concrete, the "dialogues" with the Securitate, the playwright's position in a Communist Romania, the literary debut in France and the motivation for exile, "the confrontation" with the West, "the Tănase affair," the failed attempt of the ordered assassination, "the literaturization" of personal experiences and the hypostasis of the writer in exile, the dilemmas of post-exile, and the return to contemporary Romania. All of these turn into fictional stages of self-development which, according to the internal mechanisms of the memory writing, redefine "the internalized plurality" (Kaufmann, 167), and reshape it as a "unitary construction." This acquired unity "is not simply a biographical illusion; the individual must truly build it by using a maximum of believable elements extracted from his own history. Then, he must turn this representation in the perception grid of new designs and means of interiorizing those that were already selected. Finally, starting from the most recent version which includes the latest interiorized designs, he must re-build his entire interior architecture" ("n'est pas une pure illusion biographique; l'individu doit en effet parvenir à la forger avec un maximum d'éléments crédibles tirés de son histoire. Il doit ensuite transformer cette représentation en grille de perception des nouveaux schèmes et d'intériorisation de ceux qui auront été sélectionnés. Il doit enfin, à partir de la version la plus récente incluant les derniers schèmes intériorisés, travailler à la reformulation de toute son architecture intérieure" [168-69]).

In Tănase's confessional writing, the paternal model and the rural origin – a marker of Romanianness, greatly affected by the collectivist ideology of the Marxist-Leninist dogma – function as amplification of "the selective reactivation of the interiorised past" (Kaufmann, 204-05), and motivate the options made by "the ideologically outraged" and to-be exiled writer. The reconstruction of identity via confessional mechanisms is rendered cinematically, in the form of an imaginary representation. As Kaufmann observes, "The intuitive cosmogonies of ordinary dreams are essentially populated by images, by the very visual stagings. [...] We are, at the same time, actors and creators of the sequences playing in our inner universe [...]. The little cinema is, therefore, an activity of re-transmission, of reflection for the selected images generally idealized. The individual revisits his own history, so as to live it again (it is re-doubled) and so as to live it much better (the history is embellished). He stages himself during certain events, solely for his own pleasure and to cement his own identity image, or so as to analyze the details that justify a possible critical view" ("Les cosmogonies intuitives de la rêverie ordinaire sont essentiellement peuplées d'images, de mises en scène très visuelles. [...] Nous sommes à la fois acteurs et réalisateurs des séquences qui défilent dans notre univers intérieur. [...] Le petit cinéma est alors une activité de retransmission, de reflet de quelques images sélectionnées, généralement idéalisées. L'individu revisite son histoire, pour la vivre plus (elle est redoublée) et pour la vivre mieux (elle est embellie). Il se remet en scène dans certains événements, pour le seul plaisir et le renforcement identitaire, ou pour analyser des détails justifiant un regard critique" [214]).

The identity scenario comprises, in Tănase's case, the recollection of his "totalitarian captivity." However, the temporal gap between "the time of living" and "the time of confession" sets the frame for this identity project in the sense that reality shifts towards the myth of the "ideologically captive," freed by a therapeutic writing in quest for the center. Put simply, the separation between the actual man living in the totalitarian Romania of 1945-1977 and the self that is outlined by the confessional writing generates egocentric ruptures. The oppressive mechanisms of communist doctrine are opposed by compensating strategies through which "the totalitarian subject" builds resistance to the invasive political ideology. An example of such resistance can be seen in the story of his expulsion from the university because of his mentioning the name of Emil Cioran during the students' symposium in Sinaia. Another instance of such resistance is Tănase's 1966 presentation on René Char, which was followed by interrogations by the Securitate, political harassment, an imposed collaboration with the oppressive forces, and the conditioned reinstatement at the university, which in Tănase's words was "a lesson in cynicism which puzzled me" (43). At the very same time, subversion is triggered by the small breaches in the authoritarian regime in the form of the compensating Western readings (Mann, Camus, Faulkner, Proust and others), coherently protecting the man and holding together the "personal ideology" of the narrating—narrated self. It is the latter—and not the former—who reflects

on the contradictory forms of survival in such a totalitarian regime: "In such a regime, ethics is more complicated than the simple opposition of good and evil. I believe that the one who endured to the end of his sometimes physical strength is a solid man. But who can know exactly what that limit is, since it's different for each of us. Deep down, we all know if we've reached our end or not. This way of seeing things, I admit, is not obvious, but whose accuracy I verified countless times, leads to paradoxical moral configurations: you may respect someone who gave up, but whose basic honesty you can sense, and you can despise someone who was spared by hazard, but of whose weak moral structure you are aware" ("În acest tip de regim, morala e mai complicată decât simpla opoziție a binelui și a răului. Cred că cel care a rezistat până la limita, uneori fizică, a puterilor sale e un om de bine. Dar cine poate să știe unde se află exact această limită, diferită pentru fiecare dintre noi? Fiecare știe, în fundul sufletului său, dacă a mers până la capăt sau nu. Această manieră de a vedea lucrurile, care nu e evidentă, recunosc, dar a cărei justețe am putut-o verifica de nenumărate ori, dă configurații morale paradoxale: poți să stimezi pe cineva care a cedat, dar căruia îi simți onestitatea funciară, și să disprețuiești pe cineva față de care hazardul și-a economisit încercările, dar îi știi textura morală foarte știrbită" [Tănase, *România mea* 46]).

The autobiographical narrative converts the moral pact with the demystified History, the unveiling of the mechanisms of oppression and the aesthetic legitimization of the resisting texts written before or after exile into crucial moments of the identity quest which "searches" for the center, deconstructing the "doctrinarian barricade" and the anti-Westernism of the communist propaganda. Interestingly enough, from the perspective of the captivity inside the borders of the totalitarian East, the West is redeemingly transfigured since "confronted with the flaws in our system, we were tempted to invest the opposite one, the Western with all the qualities that were missing here [...]. It must be added here that the temptation to see the West as the ideal opposite of our society was guided less by the information that came our way as in particular by the vague consciousness that it was a materialistic society dominated by vulgar interest. What fascinated us about the West (us, whose main concern were neither money nor simple welfare) was the illusion that there not everything was frozen. The system in the East was completely blocked with no hope of being restarted while the West even though overloaded allowed for hope. For us, the intellectuals of the East, the Western land was not entirely frozen. It could still be seeded, it could still be made fruitful" ("confrunțați cu defectele sistemului nostru, eram tentați să-l investim pe cel care îi era opus, cel occidental, cu toate calitățile care lipseau aici [...]. Trebuie adăugat că tentația de a considera Occidentul ca opusul ideal al societății noastre era moderată mai puțin de către informațiile care ne parveneau, cât mai ales de conștiința confuză că era vorba despre o societate materialistă, dominată de interesul vulgar. Ceea ce ne atrăgea în Occident (pe noi, cei a căror grijă principală nu erau nici banii, nici simpla bunăstare) era mai ales impresia că acolo nu era încă totul împietrit. Sistemul din est era cu totul blocat, fără speranța de a putea redemara, în timp ce Vestul, chiar dacă supraîncărcat, îngăduia speranța. Pentru noi, intelectualii din Est, pământul occidentului nu era în întregime înghețat. Se mai putea semăna, mai putea fi făcut roditor" [Tănase, *România mea* 75]). The recollection of the episode of the "imposed exile" turns into the key-element of the Western self-reconstruction. The condition of the "undesirable," which "stands in the way," is beautifully captured in the autobiographical episode of the "invitation" to leave the country where the writer claims that, "*Les Nouvelles littéraires* interviewed me over the phone. Jean-Louis Ezine phoned to my house. We spoke for about half an hour, and I made headline to their magazine. Three days later, they gave me a passport which I hadn't even asked for [...]. The police officer who gave it to me led me to believe that it was an order given by Ceausescu himself. He said: 'You have a three-month visa so you may continue your education abroad. I advise you to study there for a long time' " ("*Les Nouvelles littéraires* mi-au cerut un interviu prin telefon. Jean-Louis Ezine m-a sunat acasă. Am discutat o jumătate de oră, iar ei și-au făcut pagina întâi despre mine. Trei zile mai târziu mi s-a dat un pașaport pe care, de data aceasta, nu-l cerusem. [...] Ofițerul de poliție care mi l-a adus m-a făcut să înțeleg că era un ordin personal al lui Ceaușescu. A adăugat: 'Aveți viză pe trei luni ca să vă continuați studiile în străinătate. Vă sfătuiesc să faceți studii îndelungate" [Tănase, *România mea* 67]).

While many of the writers who remained in the country switched "literary logic" to "political logic," turning into propaganda tools of the regime and writing "pact-making books," which induce an ideological-doctrinarian guilt, the Parisian expatriate, Tănase, composes literature that is "doctrinally unbound." This distinction occupies a special place within the frames of the memory-writing in *My Romania (România mea)*. The texts establish the identity profile of the Eastern-European writer faced by the West, but also by the "old exile," the Romanian writers in France, "people of a perhaps estimable right-wing, but who no longer corresponded to anything. History had moved on and they with their eyes turned to the past to such an extent that they were blind to the realities of their

country of adoption, while having no connection with Romania, no longer understood anything" ("oameni ai unei drepte, poate, stimabile, dar care nu mai corespundeau la nimic. Istoria se mișcase, însă ei, cu privirile întoarse spre trecut încât treceau pe lângă realitățile țării de adopțiune, ruți de România, nu mai înțelegeau absolut nimic" [Tănase, *România mea* 96]). Thus, the identity scenario entails a double alienation, that of the "displaced" by the Western reality, where he experiences an adjustment through the writing, now liberated from the constraints of the communist canon, and that of the internally motivated "retreat" from the life in exile. This is further highlighted in his writing, where he asserts that "I no longer wanted to participate in all those actions that I had made an obligation of supporting, considering that I had to use my prestige as a writer no matter how insignificant so as to defend those among whom I had been born" ("N-am mai vrut să particip la toate acele acțiuni pe care, până atunci, îmi făcusem o obligație să le susțin, considerând că trebuia să profit de prestigiul meu de scriitor, oricât de mărunț ar fi fost, pentru a-i apăra pe cei în mijlocul cărora mă născusem" [Tănase, *România mea* 97]). Stating that "there are two categories of exiles. Those who managed to live and to accomplish something professionally in their country of adoption (thinking, of course, of Romania) and those who use the idea of exile as an alibi for their failure" ("există două categorii de exilați. Cei care au reușit să trăiască și să se realizeze profesional în țara de adopțiune (gândind, desigur, la România) și cei care se servesc de ideea exilului pentru a furniza un alibi eșecului lor" [98]), but also adopting the exile as a paradoxical form of "freedom loss" (see Antofi, "The exile" 29-34), the Romanian writer publishes a destiny-novel, "accidental, seasonal overflows of this river of flesh and blood which is my life. The destiny, the purpose of a river is that of following its course within its banks, the overflow, even if a sign of power, of exuberance, even though it fertilizes fields covered by water is in the end no more than a side" ("debordări accidentale, sezoniere ale acestui fluviu de carne și sânge care este viața mea. Destinul, rostul unui râu este acela de a-și urma cursul între malurile sale, preaplinul, chiar dacă e semnul forței, al exuberanței, chiar dacă fertilizează câmpurile cotropite de ape, este, în cele din urmă, un accesoriu" [Tănase, *România mea* 146]).

Enacting the identity of a genuine "cultural traveler" (Nowicki), placed on the "in-between peripheral" space (Zepetnek, 1999), the direct effect of constructing a conflictive textual identity as in Norman Manea's or Herta Müller's works oscillates with Tănase's narrative — between "confused attitude, non-authenticity, unhealthy fascination accompanied by repulsion: these are the facets of the complex feelings of these writers coming from the Other Europe, who often tried, even if they not always succeeded, to make peace with the West" ("attitude confuse, inauthenticité, fascination malsaine accompagnée de répulsion: telles sont les différentes facettes des sentiments complexes éprouvés par ces écrivains venus de l'Autre Europe qui ont souvent tâché, sans toujours y parvenir, de se réconcilier avec l'Occident" [Nowicki, 293]). In Tănase's book, the "ego-graphic" pilgrimage between the retrieved identity and the European alterity, adopted as a reference, dissolves the distance between a totalitarian history narrated now and the interiorized perspective of the one "re-living" post-traumatically and cathartically the personal experience of ideological captivity. It projects the founding mythology of the power as the center of forces dominating Eastern-European literature during the totalitarian age. It explicitly converts into a referential system meant for the narrating self to project his own identity and historic dilemmas. Tănase, the "captive in history," redefines his identity by juxtaposing the events selected from the autobiography of the "totalitarian ideological outcast" on the post-communist ones of the "confrontation with a rediscovered West, open to the differences in national specificity of the "Other Europe."

In *România mea*, the three paths for the reconstruction of the identity profile, reflecting the gradual amplification of the identity discourse marker (ontological, socio-collective and historical), guide the construction of the East-European intellectual's autobiographical discourse. It configures a "pact with Europe" by means of which personal memory is coupled with the collective one, thus, transforming the individual experiences of dominant history into cathartic "Self-reconverting strategies."

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