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IDENTITY AND ALTERITY IN A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY DIARY

Abstract: The theme of our research is the binomial identity-alterity, reflected in an intimate diary of the seventeenth century from Transylvania, written by Andreas Hegyes, captain of the Trabants in Brasov. He writes down between 1613-1617 aspects of the town's life with almost daily frequency, in the form of short sentences, and frugally, from his own biography. A double chronicle, of the social life and also of the author's emotional states, the diary appears as an impulse of the sixteenth century Reform that generated the unprecedented spread of reading and writing. We were preoccupied with the social, juridical and also personal reasons of the Diarium, borderline text between literary and non –literary. The confessions of captain Andreas Hegyes, about the Saxons' politics, about their relationships with two Empires, the Habsburg and the Ottoman, must be read as identity discourse. We can discover an important component in the imagological research in the memorialistic document of a remarkable personality of the Saxons, that of the relation between self-image and hetero-image, between the Saxons' self image and the relationship with the Other, with alterity. From this perspective, the diary unveils the Saxons' way of life but, mostly, the political and social relations, with other ethnies, especially the Hungarians. Andreas Hegyes' Diarium must not be read as literature of the subjective type, because its intentionality was not a direct-confessing one but of the documentary type, a forma mentis specific to the seventeenth century.

Keywords: imagology, identity, alterity, Saxons, Hungarians.

1. Introduction

Andreas Hegyes' *Diarium,* published in volume V of the documents collection Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt Kronstadt and revealed through its translation and partial publication by journalist Andrei Damian in 2011, casts a new light on the daily life in the seventeenth century in the most interesting medieval town in Transylvania, Brasov, that acquired an envious status of Stadtrepublik, meaning political, economical and social independence up until 1700. Blowing the dust off old chronicles, everything we learned from the history books on this period comes to life, becomes human and dynamic through the notes, though cautious enough and little intimate of Andreas Hegyes captain of the Trabants on the Saxons' culture, understanding the term culture in the definition that Emil Durkheim gives it, a way of life of the members' of a society (Durkheim, 2003, p. 68). We were not interested in the study of the species of the diary and its content (which must constitute the object of a consistent research together with other diaries of the Middle Ages in Brasov) but mostly the immanent process of self-defining of the diarist, through permanent relating to alterity. Judging the Other is done through the permanent answer that identity gives the stimuli coming from the other ethnies. Andreas Hegyes is a knight of the citadel and in the well-known chivalresque spirit he paints a luminous picture of those on whose behalf he speaks (although the diary is not written on order, but at his own initiative). "The Honourable Wise Council," "honest centumviri" (centumviri were made up of a hundred men, decision makers in managing the town, n.n.) or "honest gentlemen" are invoked each time facts or decisions of the town are written down. Talking about himself, the medieval diarist refers to

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the community he is proudly part of. The Self becomes consubstantial to All. From these positions, the image of alterity is materialized in the typology of the Foreigner , treated with hostility and exclusion, and that of the Traitor, as embodiment of evil, that needs exorcising. As we will see, these typologies are drawn from the Hungarian people, profoundly disapproved of.

2. The development of written culture in Brasov

The species of diary makes a timid appearance in the European cultural landscape, beginning with the seventeenth century, at first in the shape of the chronicle. The notorious example is Samuel Pepys' diary, a secretary in the British Royal Navy, than a member of the Chamber of deputies in England. A chronicler in the times of Charles the second, Pepys assiduously writes down, in approximately 11 volumes, happenings from the British political and social life, during the period 1659-1669. In the Transylvanian space, the medieval urban environment is the ferment of the appearance of the written culture, the economical development making this habit almost necessary. A hybrid literary text, a writing secondary to fiction, the diary enters the literary space coming from the sphere of the non-literal. The written culture develops in Transylvania beginning with the sixteenth century, when the spirit of the Reform brings along the spread of writing and reading. The prerogatives of the judges-mayors and magistrates, the sentences are the first forms of manifestation of writing, and the first "libraries" are the town's archives, that preserve the written document and consolidate thus the urban status of human settlements. Interestingly, fragments of chronicle or diary appear as para-textual forms of these documents of official character. As Adolf Armbruster notices "the beginnings of the Saxon historiography itself puts on the shape of occasional notes, made on the edges of calendars or manuscript prayer books. Such notes are also made in the acts and writings of the offices of Saxon towns, especially in the church's accounting books and the land registers" (Armbruster, 1980, p. 40) Before Andreas Hegyes, we keep in mind the chronicle of Hieronymus Ostermayer, the organist of the town of Brasov, who writes down the events of 1539. Michael Weiss (who Andreas Hegyes knew) left behind a diary with valences of a chronicle, *Liber annalium raptim scriptus*, written in German and Latin, a thesaurus of information with autobiographic character, but also a document of Transylvanian political life around 1600. A diplomat, officer, judge-mayor, but also a poet, his name is linked to one of the greatest failures of the Saxons on the battle field, in the battle of Feldioara against the troops of prince Gabriel Bathory, from 1612. The mansuscript of Andreas Hegyes' diary has the pages folded in half. On the right hand half he kept his diary, on the left hand side he wrote down quotes from Latin authors, copies of different chronicles (amongst them Ostermayer's) Hegyes' *Diarium* , such as the translator and editor of the text informs us, the journalist Andrei Damian, starts on the 21st of March 1613 and will preserve, through sentences written down daily, until the 14th of May 1617, happenings from the life of the town of Brasov, but also slices of personal life. The journalist Damian translates a first page of the Diary of the Saxon captain of the Trabants (March-December 1613) and publishes it on the internet in 2012, his initiative being an auspicious beginning for the researchers of the past, but also for the specialists of the confessing species, offering a diachronic perspective on this. Andreas Hegyes, captain of the Trabants, senator of the town of Brasov, then manager (a very important title in the self-governed Brasov administration) of the town, was a contemporary of Weiss, a symbol of the liberal spirit of the Saxons, who most of all wanted the preservation of their autonomy by maintaining unaltered the *Stadtrepublik.* A captain of the Trabants in *Res Publica Coronensis,* Andreas Hegyes is part of a family of military tradition. His father, Johann, was schooled in Wien and had been part of the personal guards of Emperors Ferdinand I and Maximilian II. He chooses to live in Brasov, preferring it to his native town, Sighisoara, being familiar with its extraordinary privileges given to the Saxons and the liberal spirit of the town from Tara Barsei.

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In humanist spirit, all diarists choose to write in Latin, even the impulse to write, to write down history belongs to the ideal of the same movement. The Brasov of reforming humanism of Honterus, of the Romanian printer Coresi, cultivates the interest and respect for literature, education, for science in general, *Schola Coronensis* founded by the great German reformist being the first humanist high school in the South-East Europe. The mark of the chronicler's spirit is profound and transforms Brasov into a promised land, the unprecedented spiritual development being reinforced by the economical and social blooming of the town, turned important centre of European trade, due to geo-political factors. Not by chance, Pierre Lescalopier describes it thus: "It is the first town in Transylvania. I thought I arrived to Mantova, so beautiful is the town, with houses all painted in oil on the outside, with beautiful churches, good walls, nice floors, civilised and obliging people."(Cernovodenu, Holban, Alexandrescu-Dresca, Bulgaru, 1970, p. 75)

3. The identity problem in Andreas Hegyes' diary

The special status of the town of Brasov, through the rights given to the Saxons, the inter-ethnicity , the eclectic spirit of the town are a living ferment for the appearance of the written culture. Inheriting since 1224, since the times of king Andrew II of Hungary through "Diploma Andreiana", absolute privileges, the Saxons could preoccupy themselves undisturbed with social and economical prosperity of Kronstadt, a town of strategic placement in the Middle Ages. The activity of the guilds, self-governing, perpetual re-confirmation of rights and privileges twenty one times, until 1627, turned the imperial land into one in which the Saxons benefitted following a positive discrimination and imposed themselves in an absolute manner. The Saxons' superiority consciousness stated of a political and juridical manner will play an important part in their relations with alterity, meaning with the Romanians, the Hungarians and the Szekely they lived along in Tara Barsei. It is an interesting fact that the Saxons colonised, such as the Slavs did in other times, these territories, being brought along by the Teutonic knights at the beginning of the thirteenth century from the Valley of the Rhine and they were given the right to property on the territory declared *fundus regius* by king Andrew and they defined national identity by isolation, enclaves, by rejecting the other ethnies, especially the Romanians, who were already living at their arrival in Scheii in Brasov. Without getting into sensitive matters of historical priority, we underline the fact that, as we will see in Andreas Hegyes' diary, the Saxons believe they rightfully belong to these places, and the native ethnicity, the alterity, is, in most situations, tackled depreciatively. The analyses of the Other's image triggers rupture, lack of communication. The Foreigner- the rightful, proteic and misleading protagonist of Andreas Hegyes' diary – no matter the ethnic or national component, is the representative of some systems of distinct, contradicting values, that sometimes provoke, in turns, fear, unrest (when it comes to Turks) or even disdain (in the case of the Hungarian people).

The seventeenth century diary might disappoint today's reader, avid for the sensational, for spiced aspects of personal life. The readers of diaries, of confessing texts of any kind will be amaze not to find in Hegyes' confessions the intimacies we would expect today. Obviously, the definition of intimacy suffers alterations along the centuries, and certainly Hegyes gave another meaning to the term. In his case it is about another perspective on what he considers to be more important: the emotional states or the action, the facts, meaning everything that happens *outwardly*. In fact, Andreas Hegyes' *Diarium* must be read not as literature, because obviously its intentionality was not meant to be confessing, but as a document of a *forma mentis* specific to the seventeenth century, placed in an inter-ethnic environment, but also about the extraordinary diplomatic ability of the Saxons, assaulted in troubled times by enemies of different ethnicities. The confessions of the captain of Trabants,

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Hegyes, do not answer the poetics of spontaneity: the insistency and seriousness with which he explains the historic fact, he analyses it and tries to convince every time contradict rather the thesis of spontaneity. The diary is the species, by excellence, of petty facts that carry no new meaning but (eventually) for the one writing them down. We have as an example the diary of Louis the sixteenth, who omits to write down in his confessions the fall of the Bastille. The non-essentiality, the subjectivity are pushed onto a secondary plan by Hegyes' intention to write a chronicle not his personal one, but of the citadel, that he serves with exemplary devotion, and the *Diarium* is an analyses made by a professional, the historical Hintergrund of the century in which the author lived. Hegyes advanced, as the diary and the archives documents show us, in the military hierarchy, enjoyed recognition of his merits in the service of the community; he lived in the middle of historical events. For this reason his writing needs to be read with interest: because it documents details of important political events from the beginning of the seventeenth century, remarkable for Brasov spirituality: the election in 1611 of Michael Weiss as judge of Brasov (marking figure of history, filled a Don Quixote like idealism, re-elected in 1612, he refuses to give up the city to Gabriel Bathory, becoming a hero through his decision with which he maintained the city's independence for 2 years. Illustrious figure of Transylvanian humanism, after his heroic death he will enter not only into history, but also into literature, as a dramatic character or evoked on poetry); the battle of Feldioara in 1612, between Michael Weiss and Gabriel Bathory's mercenaries, the irrational, aggressive prince of Transylvania between 1608 and 1613; the conflict with the Saxon noblemen form Brasov, starting with 1611, with prince Bathory; the relations with the Wallach princes and the Ottoman Empire represented by Magyaroglu Pasha and Abdy Aga Husse Ceaus; the direct involvement of the Saxons in electing a new Transylvanian prince, Gabriel Bethlen.

In Andreas Hegyes' confessions there appears a way of relating to the self and the others specific to an elitist, superior group, of privileged status. Identity, defined by Paul Ricoeur as "a field of tensions" (Ricoeur, 1990, p. 63) is born from the permanent meetings between the Self and the Others, permitting the discovery of identity in alterity, in the terms of a tensions between self-image and hetero-image. The identity of the diarist is profoundly culturally coded and is materialized in a psycho-social matrix, which is the Saxon ethnicity and the Stadtrepublik, to which the diarist proudly belongs. The individual's destiny is con-substantial with the community to which he belongs, community governed by the "The Honourable Wise Council". Numerous observations of Hegyes confess in this direction: all the decisions are taken by "The Honourable Wise Council and the honest centumviri together with the people of the entire country. (Hegyes, 2011, p. 3) The diarist of the seventeenth century never speaks in the singular. He invokes "our right" , he complains about "our trouble"and he prays to God for the well being of the town: "May God make this beginning be honoured by God to the use, devotion and solidity of the German nation" – he writes on the 3rd of June, when some talks to Gabriel Bathory ended. Hegyes' diary constitutes an identity discourse, an identity defined socially, politically and historically through the belonging to an ethnic group. The history of events set chronologically is grafted on a history of mentalities belonging to different ethnicities with which the Saxons come into contact in Brasov in the seventeenth century. "The Honourable Council" gathers regularly, receives and sends letters, meets the Ottoman, Wallach or Szekely messengers, governs the life of the citadel and decides on individual destinies. The safety and superiority with which Hegyes utters value judgements about the other ethnicities are sourced in the cohesion force of the group to which he is definitively subordinate.

The spaces of self-definition are the City Hall, the markets and the fairs, the surrounding nature where the hunting parties take place, the neighbourhoods, church and family. Outside this topos, his existence is unconceivableand any petty conflict from inside

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the walls sends shivers and awakens fears. In a note from August 5. 1613, the author prays "for the lack of unity, from which destruction is born, to disappear" (Hegyes, 2011, p.15). Without paying taxes, organized in guilds, allowing foreigners only to the weekly fairs, the Saxons lived in a closed universe, with very rare moments of openness, the mark of this claustration being evident in our text too. The memorialist notes down as an important fact the closing and opening of the gates, the digging of the protection moats or the flight of traitors, who escalade the walls. The Saxons do not have the personality cult, only that of work and the feeling of cohesion of the group they were part of. The identity discourse adds a minus: the memorialist mentions nothing about the cultural life of the citadel. In fact, culture, defined as the sums of spiritual preoccupations, did not define the Saxons. Except writing chronicles, they did not stand out through any cultural fact.

4. The Identity-Alterity Binomial

The perception on alterity in Hegyes' diary is done of a conflicting manner with the Other, that gives Brasov the image of a citadel under siege by a hostile Foreigner. History in itself is the becoming of the relation with the Other, the relation knowing moments of calm and of acuteness in moments of crisis. Classifying the individuals by different ethnic identity characteristics, the diarist makes up the typology of the Foreigner, but mainly that of the Traitor. Medieval Brasov, places in a transition area, on the border between West and East, between civilisation and savageness had to stand extraordinary external pressures. Andreas Hegyes' observations seem cruel and indelicate today and stir the wounds of inter-ethnic relations yet unclosed. The ethnicity to which the diarist relates himself conflictingly and from whose attitudes he delimits himself vehemently in the name of the ethnicity he belongs to, is the Hungarian one. The hostility with which Hegyes describes the Hungarians, in the context of the tense relations between the Saxon Coronensis republic and the irrational prince, Gabriel Bathory, is amazing, because, more over the diarist is extremely temperate, when it comes to the Saxons' relations with the others. The delimitation functions in the sense of the permanent re-affirmation that the Hungarians are "the others", meaning a foreign and hostile social group, to which"we" do not belong. The diary abounds in firm observations of the kind "no Hungarian must be believed" or "never again believe the Hungarian now or as long as they stand up". Speaking of the Hungarian traitors he concludes "he who pets a foreign dog will be bitten". Unsatisfied with the politics of the Hungarian ethnicity, represented by the irrational, sanguinary Gabriel Bathory, but also knowing the backstage of the power fight, the diarist builds the prototype of the traitor, whom he identifies in the person of Andreas Geczy, the one who had sworn loyalty to the judge of Brasov, but was peddling information in Gabriel Bathory's camp. "A dishonest scoundrel", "this foreigner Geczy", "this mean man Geczy", "the mean traitor" is closely followed by Hegyes, whose diary becomes a true history of treason, and also of punishing the traitor. We have to mention the fact that Andrei Geczy had been named commander of the mercenary troops, fighting for Brasov by the judge-mayor, Michael Weiss. We identify in Hegyes' confessions multiple axes of the identity problem, suggested by Tzvetan Todorov (Todorov, 1994, p. 7). First of all it is about the axiological plan of relating to the Other. The diarist builds his own identity discourse, emitting value judgements about the other ethnicity. Thus, on the 21st April 1613, Hegyes wrote: "But Geczy who swore to the town such a terrifying and unheard of oath that he will stand by the city against Gabriel Bathory... as soon as he got to Bathory, he fell on his knees and prayed for mercy and to be his servant that Bathory instantly granted. And thus mister Geczy, a truly dishonest scoundrel broke his oath towards the inhabitants of Brasov and stabbed them in the bacl." (Hegyes, 2011, p. 5) An observation from the 29th April suggests the common attitude of the Saxons to reject the treacherous Hungarians, identified with a historic evil that must be

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exorcised: "He let Mister Joannes Crestel, the manager of Sibiu, know that strong guard must be kept and no Hungarian must be believed." (Hegyes, 2011, p. 6) The diarist's observations closely follow gestures, attitudes, set characters in shades of shadow: an observation from the 3rd May lets us know that two Hungarians, Czerenyu and Puttnaky "had very bad behaviours" (Hegyes, 2011, p. 8), and on the 19th May the reader is advised "not to believe the Hungarians now or as long as they stand up!" (Hegyes, 2011, p. 8) The notes from the month of May detail the tough negotiations between the Saxons and prince Gabriel Bathory, who had occupied Sibiu and wanted the Saxons o Brasov to obey to him. The inhabitants of Brasov refuse to surrender to bathory, and on the 7th June 1612, in front of the prince's delegation, received in the Black Church, the city's representatives had pronounced themselves in favour of the resistance. Numerous clashes between Gabriel Bathory's outlaws and the Trabants of the city of Brasov will take place. The minor armed conflicts between the Saxons and the Szekely will lead to the bloody battles of Feldioara, on the 16th October 1612, when the much more numerous troops of Gabriel Bathory beats the inhabitants of Brasov. 300 inhabitants of Brasov will die then (Pavalache, 2008, p. 147), the former manager of the town, Georg Helther and Michael Weiss. The latter's head will be send to Sibiu to prince Bathory as sanction of the final victory. The Saxons' hatred against the Hungarians and, especially the disdain of Andreas Hegyes, captain of the Trabants for the double-faced Andrei Geczy, find a perfect justification. A note from the 24th May reconstitutes in grotesque colours the Hungarians' image –much more temperamental and volcanic than the diplomatic and temperate Saxons: "and this you will see particularly in the Hungarians, when they are not right they burst out in cries, tramples and stubbornness." (Hegyes, 2011, p. 7) The embodiment of a true demonism, governing irrationally and of a sanguinary manner, supported by the treacherous Szekely, Gabriel Bathory is executed with cruelness familiar to the Middle Ages, allowing Hegyes moments of jubilation, on the28th October: "this Gabriel Bathory after having been chased away by the Turks, Tatars, Moldavians and the Wallach almost to Oradea, was shot and cut, unclothed and thrown into a creek flowing in the suburbs, by his most remarkable outlaws... And Bathory was on his estate in a carriage pulled by an ox and a cow. And this was his great silvery carriage pulled by ten proud stallions!" (Hegyes, 2011, p. 21)

The diarist notes down more prudently the relations with the Ottoman Empire. The diary keeps some names, known in history, amongst them Magyaroglu Pasha (commander of the Ottoman troops, who comes to support a new prince at the command of Transylvania, Gabriel Bathory) or Abdy Aga. The Saxons' interests being common with those of the representatives of the Ottoman Empire, Hegyes writes down the diplomatic ability of the Saxon noblemen, who will succeed to impose their point of view with the Turks. The payments for the Ottoman Empire are done under the form of "honouring" Abdy Aga, for example, with money, objects and stallions (note from the 24th April) or receiving with great honour Hussein Ceaus (the 22nd of July 1613). The Saxons are obliging, but not obedient. The superiority of the ethnicity is pointed out in the relations with the feared Ottoman Empire, which had asked of the judge-mayor to meet Magyaroglu Pasha outside the town's citadel. Dated 3rd September, the diarist's comment keeps in mind in this sense that "Mister Judge cut it short (the Pasha's invitation, n.n) because it is contrary to the habit of the town for the Judge to come out of the town." (Hegyes, 2011, p. 22)

In the praxeological plan (Todorov, 1994, p.7), that of coming closer to or moving further from the Other, Andreas Hegyes' *Diarium* treats rather the moving away from anything that supposes alterity. Living in citadel-town, isolated and self-governed, the Saxons were self-sufficient. We can see a shade of closeness or openness, out of economical - commercial reasons, towards the Wallach who came to sell their merchandise at the weekly fairs. Numerous notes of the diarist confess in this sense, the Saxons showing their interest

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mainly in the purchase of grains and wine. On the 12th of September Bogdan Voievod's arrival is noted "with beautiful warriors, strong as 10,000." (Hegyes, 2011, p. 20)

Private history, Andreas Hegyes' diary re-opens from a new perspective the chapter of the inter-ethnic relations, of secular friendships or enmities that we will never cease to speak of, because present history is nothing but a replica to our stimuli inherited from the past.

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