



first publication

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1 Cf. Blanchot, Maurice: *L'entretien infini*. Paris: Gallimard 1969.

2 To this problem in general cf. Demirovic, Alex: *Führung und Rekrutierung. Die Geburt des Intellektuellen und die Organisation der Kultur*. In: Prigge, Walter (Ed.): *Städtische Intellektuelle. Urbane Milieus im 20. Jahrhundert*. Stuttgart: Fischer 1992, pp. 47-77, and Giesen, Bernhard: *Die Intellektuellen und die Nation*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 1993.

3 To the complex of the »daily fiction« cf. Gumbrecht, Hans-Ulrich: *Erzählen in der Literatur – Erzählen im Alltag*. In: Ehlich, Karl (Ed.): *Erzählen im Alltag*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 1980, pp. 403-418.

4 Schmidt, Siegfried J.: *Medien, Kultur: Medienkultur*. In: Faulstich, Werner (Ed.): *Medien und Kultur. Beiträge zu einem interdisziplinären Symposium der Universität Lüneburg*. In: *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik, Beiheft 16* (1991), pp. 36-50.

5 Adorno, Theodor W.: *Heine the Wound*. In: Adorno, Th.W.: *Notes to Literature*. Columbia: Columbia UP 1994.

6 Baecker, Dirk: *Oszillierende Öffentlichkeit*. In: Maresch, Rudolf (Ed.): *Medien und Öffentlichkeit. Positionierungen, Symptome, Simulationsbrüche*. Munich: Boer 1996, p. 95.

7 To the figure of »published privacy« based on the performative reality of a self-referential rhetoric cf. Oesterreich, Peter L.: *Selbsterfindung. Zur rhetorischen Entstehung des Subjekts*. In: Metzger, Stefan/Rapp, Wolfgang (Eds.): *Homo inveniens. Heuristik und Anthropologie am Modell der Rhetorik*. Tübingen: Narr 2003 (*Literatur und Anthropologie* 19), pp. 45-57.

8 Böhme, Hartmut/Matussek, Peter/Müller, Lothar: *Orientierung Kulturwissenschaft. Was sie kann, was sie will*. Reinbek: Rowohlt 2000, p. 14.

The following case study focuses on the aspects of regionalism, especially on the Central-European spatial imaginations of the Balkan-reports in Hungarian Journalism of the last years. I will explain the function of territorial segmentation and spatial concepts in the process of the so-called journalistic preparation of reality. Based on two reports on Sarajevo and Novi Sad and on a provincial report from Vojvodina by a journalist writing under the pseudonym György Szerbhorváth (»George Serbo-Croatian«), the question of ethnic and spatial articulation will be connected with analyses of the journalistic recourses to the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy as memory-founding functionalisation of spatial topoi.

Let me start with some basic theoretical considerations: Thinking in front of the public can be considered as a rhetorical position that requires the temporary synopsis of disparate phenomena.¹ The position of trust held by intellectuals can be connected to the aesthetical formation and narration,² or, in a specific Eastern European context, with the anecdotal formation of everyday life.³ The central problem of media studies relies therefore most of all on the discernments of system theory: How far can the medium press create urges and, thus, yield an influence on the expectations of the readers, how far can it establish public memory and oral communication. The processes of the cultural industry, which make uniform and neutral, will always be pointed out: The cultural power based on manipulation and standardisation produces obligatory models of reality which regulate, synchronise and stabilise excessive cognitive capacities, on the one hand, and enjoin a collective and authentic participation, on the other hand.⁴ But the cultural power produces also its own subversion, which is, however, covered by the anonymity of the market, by a closed function system, whose interrelations are usually described as manipulating barterers: »The facelessness of the cultural market«, said Adorno, »allows the journalist to act falsely purely and autonomously, and this illusion itself is honoured.«⁵

The connection between the public and journalism will be approached in system-theoretical rather descriptive disclosures as the relation of the public need for the synchronization and journalistic construction of actuality. The temporal structure of this bisection places the temporary parataxis of the given ranking of events, on the one hand, and the presence of the journalistic event production, on the other, in the foreground.⁶ The public recognises hence the journalistic announcement as a border which can be committed in such or in another way, i.e., acceptance is directed to the contingency of the journalistic intervention respectively to its plausibility, which can be achieved by the breaking of its self-referentiality.

By turning the collective into the private, one can note the main aspects of the criticism of the role of journalistic speakers: A journalist, trying to define himself as a private person in front of the readers, rests necessarily in the act of building opinions which unites in it the mechanisms of the market and the matter of construction. The ideal remains, although to supersede the certainty of opinion through a knowledge which asserts the claims of truth and makes at least the rhetorical concept of the announcement transparent.⁷

If culture is understood from an anthropological point of view as a symbolic system, as the circulation, transformation and exchange of cultural practices and spheres of discourses,⁸ how can it be possible to find a fixed point in the diversity and contingency of communicative situations? In other words: can the goal on this basis only be to keep the work with the experience of authenticity/inauthenticity, with the necessary involvement in daily events transparent?⁹ How can the effectivity of the situational aspects, of the presence of the speech be examined?

In the following I will discuss some examples of Hungarian language journalism in Vojvodina and explain some reflections on the post-Trianon-situation. It seems particularly relevant to me how far Hungary can remain a point of reference and which other spatial concepts occur. Finally I will examine the hitherto singular attempt at giving account of Sarajevo in form of a monograph to Hungarian readers with special regard on the question of the active presence in a multiethnic city.

László Végel lives in Novi Sad and writes for several Hungarian newspapers. He discusses the phenomenon of the possibility of experiences in his book *Exterritory*, a diary on the NATO-bombardments of Novi Sad, as follows:



9 Cf. Lethen, Helmut: *Versionen des Authentischen: Sechs Gemeinplätze*. In: Böhme, Hartmut/Scherpe, Klaus R. (Eds.): *Literatur und Kulturwissenschaften. Positionen, Theorien, Modelle*. Reinbek: Rowohlt 1996, pp. 205-231.

10 Végel, László: *Exterritórium. Ezredvégi jelenetek*. Pécs: Jelenkor 2000, p. 9.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 118.

12 Végel, László: *Hontalan esszék*. Pécs: Jelenkor 2003, pp. 24-32.

13 Cf. Deleuze, Gilles/Guattari, Felix: *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Transl. by Dana Polan. Minnesota: Minnesota UP 1986.

14 Végel 2003, p. 157.

15 Szerbhorváth, György: *Pis-pauza*. In: <http://www.litera.hu/hangszoro/2flekken/14950.html> (January 2004).

16 Szerbhorváth, György: *– forma, haza, maffia –*. In: *Üzenet* (Winter 2002).

This war killed your experiences, it seems as if your knowledge had been completely needless. However You try to originate a sample of your memories. Maybe You can save anything, maybe not everything is like you mean.¹⁰

This vacancy towards memorial reinforcement results in a carnevalesque mixture of ideologically loaded but blurry phrases. In the parataxis of these hegemonic ideas valuations, critics and the possibility of comparison *par excellence* are entirely eliminated. The levelling presentation of these concepts, which brings greater spatial and ethnic topoi into play, is counteracted by local images. Images of the streets and local anecdotes come into play, whose space-time interlaces static and historicity. The historical time is hardly divisible, the transformations appear as the floating of the decades, starting after the dissolution of the monarchy, symbolised by the bridge of Novi Sad. It shows and showed the oscillation between Central-Europe and the Balkans, between tradition and modernity, as in the following passage of the book, in a kind of summary of Novi Sad's history:

Novi Sad preserved meanwhile since eight decades its decaying past and enjoyed its tricky present. [...] Past and present didn't collide in the city, it remained an injured civilized city at the border with an always somehow alternating identity. By this way it could dissolve the Balkan for a time. [...] But the boundaries of the state can't endure this position in-between, they always stamp out the centaurs or compel them to go under the earth. The civilized city at the border became gradually an old-maidish, defamed Serbian province. It thought it would be similar, although it didn't want to be similar, it only flirted with the otherness, its make-up was the bourgeois past, which it couldn't interpret because it had great citizens indeed, but no civic layer.¹¹

Végel defines his own position as »homeless patriotism« in his book *Homeless Essays* which appeared last year. Before the war, this notion meant a confidence, which remains a confidence in the periphery, in the minorities even if the idealistic conceptions of an ambiguous and negotiating culture of Novi Sad disappear: »A ghost is haunting the map of the generally human,« he wrote after Marx, »the ghost of the people in the minorities.«¹² And if we adapt this image to the phenomenon of intellectuals, there appears the overlapping notion of the collective after the pattern of the »littérature mineure« by Deleuze and Guattari¹³ where the individual will inevitably be absorbed by the pathos of the collective political rhetoric. This kind of collectivism proved as an Eastern European characteristic permits one to define oneself as a searching person implied in the self appellative forms of the early essays. This form of local collectivism disappeared after the ethnic war which didn't leave one any choices: »The dissolution of the former Yugoslavia made suspect the hybrid paradigm of Novi Sad«, states Végel, »which was formed at the border of Central Europe and the Balkan as a proof of the otherness. Novi Sad has lost its autonomous image and became a province of Belgrade.«¹⁴

Some kind of satirical drama of Végel's concept is the next example. The young journalist from the Vojvodina who publishes under the name in the collective singular form György Szerbhorváth sees the local effectivity as a so-called »pub-to-pub election campaign method.«¹⁵ The »at us, at the periphery« situation of the humoristic or rather sarcastic speeches is applied to the scene of the reports, to a small village with the basic idea: »Our Homeland is where our act will in the course of time become meaningful.«¹⁶ The ultra-material milieu of the reports is combined with the ethos of the personal and impersonal communication, hence the anecdotic basic pattern of the reports on the village can be transposed to the commentaries on the whole country.

In his study for the special issue *The Banality of Evil* of the journal *Symposion* in Novi Sad, Szerbhorváth cites the paradox from Leszek Kolakowski's lecture *The Big Lie*, according to which we are absolutely obliged even to those things that we are born in: to the homeland, nation and family. The ethical consequences of this announcement become evident through the anecdotic broken identification with the provincial community that goes together with the relatively wide panorama of Serbia-Montenegro. The horizon of Szerbhorváth's texts offers with a kind of carnival licence an image for the Hungarian readers which attempts to overcome the contingency of the forming opinions even through proof of an active communicative presence, although the figure of the reporter seems to be pretty often a piccaro like in the adventure novels. The involvement in daily banalities or absurdities and their matching with greater political concepts can well be exemplified with the following passage:

17 Szerbhorváth, György: Kvász és reték. In: Ex-Symposion 1999.

18 Kőbányai, János: Balkáni krónika. Szarajevói jelentés háborúban és békében. Budapest: Múlt és Jövő 1998.

19 Ibid., p. 71ff.

20 Ibid., p. 185f.

In the pub I investigated about a school-day friend, I asked whether he really became a mafioso. As long as he stays outside, I get to know, yes, he is one of them, and many of the present company works for him. My theory that we Hungarians in the Vojvodina are so powerless and paralysed that we can't even have a proper mafia, seems to have been defeated.¹⁷

It is characteristic, that in the reports from Vojvodina we are more and more confronted with the Central European and Balkanian concepts, but without any concrete territorial examples demonstrating the opposite, like Hungary, and without the phenomenon of mythologizing and manicheizing political speech. Patriotism and national identity are replaced by a disbordered notion of culture and its local and provincial variations fulfil a verifying function emphasising the presence.

The last examples of my lecture are taken from the *Balkanian Chronicle. Report on Sarajevo in War and Peace*¹⁸ by János Kőbányai, which covers the years between 1993 and 1996. The journalist, who spent two years in Sarajevo on behalf of the Jewish peace mission, wrote reports on the co-operations of the diverse missionary organisations. His book comprising more than 300 pages shows an encyclopaedic aim: the groundwork of the report consists of shorter scientific studies on the cultural life and on the Hungarian and Jewish community in Sarajevo that are supplied by biographies arrived at through personally meetings. In this kind of Baedeker there is conveyed an image that focuses largely on the trans-ethnic co-operations, whereas the integrative function of the Jewish community, i.e., its aid for non-Jewish inhabitants of Sarajevo, is pointed out as an example of many others for the forms of supports. One example can be mentioned as an emblematic story of the position of ethnic differentiation: János Kőbányai's program was featured on radio ZID. Contrary to his own concept he was asked rather to leave the Hungarian and Jewish folk music pieces, because these were equal in this dramatic situation to isolation and nationalism. Instead of this, he should propagate like the radio itself urban culture and its symbol, pop music. Kőbányai's answer that all good rock music is based on progressive folk music, was not heard und Kőbányai was only given the microphone with this proviso. After that, Kőbányai spoke, accompanied by Hungarian and Jewish folk music, of the rebuilding and building of Hungary and Israel after the wars, his optimism and encouragement nearly coloured by pathos and prophetic verve. The reaction of the people in the radio: »It was great. Bye, I've got no time to talk, I have to write the ten o'clock news.«¹⁹ This accelerated time and the pragmatic tendency combined with an active presence give the basic motives of the reports: the observer of the life in Sarajevo, also as the engaged participant in the rescuing actions has to disassemble the hegemonic image of Hungary und has to profile Hungary itself as a bunching of heterogeneous entities, as he remarks it in an relevant passage:

If Sarajevo wins, we Hungarians are going to win, too. The right and the possibility of the marginality are going to win. This basic experience of the Eastern European region can result in an equal ranking union of othernesses.²⁰

The important question, finally, why there are only so few Hungarian monographs on the Balkans, can only insufficiently be answered with the small temporal distance. The fact that in the last years the most interesting approaches to the situation on the Balkans were translations from English should be reflected on, too. A possible answer is that Hungary's involvement because of the Hungarian minorities in the Balkans required more caution in the expression of opinions; just think of the requests from the Vojvodina addressed to the Hungarian politicians not to force so intensively the notion of the NATO-Minority. Now it would be time to have confidence in a dialogue that, free of hegemonic suspects, can stress the similarities in the region.