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THE BORDER’S SPACE IN THE FICTION OF ÁDÁM BODOR

ABSTRACT

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Goals, tasks and methods

This thesis explores the border's space in three prose works by the Hungarian author Ádám Bodor, *The Sinistra Region*, *The Archbishop's Visit* and *The Birds of Verhovina*, and examines the implications, which an evaluative reading of the border produces literally and figuratively. The autotextuality which is traceable in the books also predetermines their categorization as a trilogy, and the common threads between them emerge most clearly along the lines of the periphery space created by Bodor's pen. The reader is drawn into a world with a distinctive atmosphere, a world that in many ways appears to be the antipode of conventionally accepted manifestations in our own reality. The first edition of *The Sinistra Zone* (1992) was followed by a considerable number of articles and reviews. The book has become a landmark of contemporary Hungarian literature, and over the years the author's name has ranked among literary critic considered canonical. This predetermined the endless interest in each of his subsequent books. Bodor's work became an inexhaustible source of literary interpretations, comparisons and literary-critical polemics. A reflexive reading of Bodor that considers the author's origins and background – a native of Cluj-Napoca (Hung. Kolozsvár), raised in a multilingual and multicultural environment, a first-hand victim of Romania's communist regime - may provide a reason for his choice of setting for his novels action, an isolated space under someone's, visible or hidden, declared authority, but it does not explain the books' fairy-tale-like, absurd canvas. The main goal of the present study is to provide a new perspective on already highlighted, but also still unexamined highlights of Bodor's fiction that have remained in the shadows, interpreting them in the context of the space of the border and outlining a typology of the peripheral. The main tasks facing the goal thus set are the following:

- To clarify the definitions of *border* and *space* in literary-cultural and sociological aspects;
- To trace their representation in a particular literary works
- To trace the active role of space as a meaning-former;
- To interpret narrative decisions in the context of this boundary-space perspective.

The present research is of an interdisciplinary character, which requires a complex approach, on the basis of which the methodological apparatus has been developed. The methods are based

on the theoretical frameworks set out in Chapter Three, which are determinant for the subsequent interpretative and comparative analysis. However, the analytic part of the study combines close reading, structuralist, semiotic and discourse analysis.

2. Significance and Relevance of the Study

The present dissertation is among the few in the critical reception of A. Bodor that simultaneously examines all three of his novels, which are conventionally defined as a trilogy, in a thematic-comparative analysis, tracing and interpreting the autotextual elements in the books. The study references theoretical writings that have not previously served as points of reference in the interpretation of Bodor's fiction, and if their authors have been referred to, it has been in contexts other than the present dissertation, and in this sense the dissertation provides a fully independent spatiotemporal analysis. Other significant elements of the study include the highlighting of new motives from Bodor's novels, such as that of memory, and the afterward comment on them in the light of the formulated title. Here presented themes would easily fit into the field of literary-cultural dialogue among scholars of contemporary Eastern European literature, especially with regard to the correlation language – memory – culture or individual – society, considered in the context of liminality in its various realizations – symbolic, geopoetic, socio-historical. This validates the actuality of the current research and its applicability to other fields of Humanities besides Hungarian Studies.

II. THE AUTHOR, THE BOOKS, THE LITERARY CRITICS

1. *The Sinistra Zone, The Archbishop's Visit, The Birds of Verhovina*

The novels' plot could be defined as complex. *The Sinistra Zone* and *The Birds of Verhovina* can in some respects be read as collections of short stories, which makes difficult any attempt to summarize their content, in contrast to their relatively small size. In this chapter, we have extracted and retold the basic plot in each novel. In *The Sinistra Zone* (Bodor 2000) and *The Archbishop's Visit* (Bodor 2016), it unfolds as a story of the arrival in the peripheral region of a specific character with a specific mission. In *The Birds of Verhovina* (Bodor 2011), this character has already established himself in the 'region', following its rules and acting against any foreign invasion.

2. **Through the Eyes of Others. Studies on Ádám Bodor.**

This current chapter traces the critical reception of Bodor's works in Bulgaria and Hungary. To the Bulgarian reader A. Bodor is known for his probably most famous work – the novel *The Sinistra Zone*, translated by Svetla Kyoseva; as well as for several of his short stories published in various literary magazines and anthologies. The publication of the book, here in Bulgaria, in 2000 was followed by a review by Amelia Licheva in “Kultura” and by Svetla Kyoseva's interview with the writer – “Literature - a solitary vocation” (Kyoseva 2000). In A. Licheva's text, which completely breaks away from any referential reading due to her first encounter with the author and with Hungarian literature in general, the novel is read as an anti-utopia, a representation of a totalitarian world “in which the human is not respected, the life is being drained out of it”, a phenomenon which in this thesis we consider mainly from the perspective of spatiality and its underlying animalization, not of power. At the end of her review A. Licheva makes a particularly essential point about the novel's topography, in which place is seen as signifying and signified: “Yet it is places that anchor us, or that help us to reclaim our right to move freely, to not be used with it, to feel it like foreign, and permeable. And yet it is place through which this novel can be read allegorically” (Licheva 2010: 156–157). The book *Places of Encounters*, which consists of essays about Hungarian books translated in Bulgarian, contains Éva Bányai's text on *The Sinistra Zone* (Bányai 2017). This completes the list of all written from

and about A. Bodor in Bulgarian, but this sample demonstrates that the author himself is somewhat familiar to local readers.

The Hungarian critical reception of Bodor's texts could be summarized in several categories. It consists of studies that from the distance of time have distinguished themselves as canonical, a benchmark for subsequent works, a beacon among the existing abundance. They constitute a kind of corpus of critical literature on A. Bodor, and their opinions have been adopted and elaborated, with isolated attempts at refutation. Examples of this type of reviews are these of László Márton, "The Damned Periphery" (Márton 2005) (as well as those of Margit Ács, "The Demonic Attraction of the Forest" (Ács 1992); Gergely Angyalosi, "The Unknowable Brilliant Work" (Angyalosi 1999); Péter Szirák, "Periphery's Poetics" (Szirák1997), and Györgyi Pozsvai's monograph (Pozsvai 1998)). Another group of studies focuses on summarizing what has been written so far, referencing the aforementioned canonical critiques and elaborating on those highlights of them which, although marked, have remained uncommented. Some of them dare to question some parts of previously mentioned articles, for instance L. Bengi "The Iteration of Textual Segments as a Means of Creating an Epic World" (Bengi 2005), D. Kiss – "The Construction of Textual Worlds" (Kiss 2005).

Some of the most significant studies on Bodor's prose up to 2000 found their place in the book *Exchanging Experience: Essays and Studies on Ádám Bodor* (Sheibner, Vaderna 2005). Gy. Pozsvai had written a monograph about A. Bodor and his fiction. She traced the Hungarian reception of the author, focusing on his late rediscovery by Hungarian critics, but also emphasizing the enormous influence this discovery generated on his creative output (Pozsvai 1998). Her reflections aimed at developing new interpretations, which, from the distance of time, we would now situate among classical canonical studies. One of the most recent readings of Bodor is the dissertation of Zófia Pál-Lukács (Pál-Lukács 2017), a narratological study of foreignness as an iterative element in Bodor's novelistic trilogy. Zs. Pál-Lukács's writing is also one of the few attempts, alongside the present work, to consider all three books in a comparative perspective.

III. THE BORDER'S SPACE

1. Theorizing Space

The present work examines space through three theoretical frameworks, the first is that of Mikhail Bakhtin on the chronotope, the second focuses on Michel Foucault's reflections on heterotopias, and the third refers to Juri Lotman's semiotic interpretation of space through his introduction of the term semiosphere. The reflections of these three particular researchers, help us in the attempt to justify how separate and isolated is the space in Bodor's fiction, on the one hand in a chronotopic aspect, through Bakhtin's and Foucault's ideas, but also in a linguistic-cultural aspect, for which purpose Lotman's concepts are drawn.

This chapter also clarifies what the choice of the theoretical framework is based on and at what points we can speak of ideological continuity or similarities in the theories of the chosen theorists.

Bakhtin's, Foucault's, and Lotman's ideas applied to the analysis of Bodor's space contribute to the critical and research reception of the Hungarian author. However, in the interest of the current work and its significance, we have mentioned those authors in whose texts the works of A. Bodor have been interpreted by referencing our selected theorists – É. Bányai, L. Bengi, Zs. Tapodi and Sz. Molnár.

1.1. The Space-time Continuum

1.1. 1. Mikhail Bakhtin's Chronotope

In this chapter, we have outlined the main reflections of the Russian scholar, philosopher, and literary critic M. Bakhtin around the term *chronotope*, which he introduced into literary studies, as denoting the relationship between temporal and spatial relations in literature and the way specific chronotope could correspondent to particular genres (*generic significance*). Bakhtin's arguments also highlight the organizing role of the chronotope across the plot, which predetermines the progress of the action and the behavior of the novel's characters (Bakhtin 1983: 446).

Despite the connectedness between time and space implied in the introductory part of the text, Bakhtin, in the course of his study, emphasizes the category of time as “the dominant principle in the chronotope” (273) and outlines three main types of time: adventure-time, cyclical everyday time and biographical time. Additionally, tracing the novel in its historical development, he identifies several other chronotopes (folkloric, Rabelaisian, idyllic, etc.), which, along with the first three, he defines as typologically stable (439). Bakhtin points out that any motif in a work of fiction can be penetrated by chronotopical values, and as a result, he also identifies a chronotope of the encounter, of the road; and subsequently localities – “places of intersection of temporal and spatial sequences” (443), such as the castle, the salon, the provincial town, and the threshold. The border at Bodor, as both a reality and a topological figure, also summarizes in itself the chronotope of the encounter and the road, where “the spatial and temporal paths of the most varied people –representatives of all social classes, estates, religions, nationalities, ages – intersect at one spatial and temporal point” (439–440). In the concluding remarks to his article, Bakhtin makes an important clarification, pointing out that the chronotopes “are mutually inclusive, they co-exist, they may be interwoven with, replace or oppose one another, contradict one another or find themselves in ever more complex interrelationships” (448).

For our study, we have focused mainly on his reflections on adventurous time in the novel (Bakhtin 1983: 273– 299), since the main features of this time are also traceable in Bodor's novels, without excluding the traces of other chronotopes in them. Immediately following the summary of Bakhtin's ideas, we have indicated how and where they are realized in Bodor's novels.

1.1.2. Michel Foucault's Heterotopias

The French philosopher Michel Foucault introduced the concept of heterotopia, through which he tried to describe and explain the existence of certain spaces that are in some aspect different from the generally accepted ones. Already in the preface of his book *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, he defines heterotopias as anomalies more disturbing than the incongruous. These are unthinkable spaces that disturb the order of our perceived reality. Utopias, “although they have no real locality there is nevertheless a fantastic, untroubled region in which they are able to unfold”; heterotopias, on the other hand, with their

transcending 'incongruity' heterocliticity, subvert the confidence in our ability to name things permanently "because they destroy syntax in advance", "contest the very possibility of grammar at its source" (Foucault 1992: 28–29). In his essay "Of Other Spaces", Foucault speaks of them as real places that, although related to other spaces contradict them, problematizing and contesting them. M. Foucault classifies heterotopias into two categories, the crisis heterotopias, which are "reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis: adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women, the elderly, etc." (Foucault 2003: 12). Foucault thinks that the heterotopias of this category are about to disappear and are gradually replaced by the so-called heterotopias of deviation: "those in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed". Among these, he points to prisons, rest homes, psychiatric hospitals, and retirement homes.

Space in Bodor's books is a heterotopia because it could be located in a fictional reality. Although it reflects this reality in a dystopian, in the reader's mind, way, we deliberately do not categorize it as an anti-utopia. Its conditioning by the reality and the contestation of it at the same time, as well as the presence of heterotopic subspaces within the very space seen as a heterotopia of fictional reality, could not be exhausted and interpreted solely through the utopia/anti-utopia binary. The extreme forms of dehumanization and the pre-apocalyptic pictures tempt us to view Bodor's space in this way as well, but as we have already made clear, space in Bodor is more complex.

In *The Sinistra Zone*, *The Archbishop's Visit*, and *The Birds of Verhovina*, the action takes place in a location with a selective control, a place-prison where people are excluded from the norm – forcibly deported or refugees. Within this isolated space, however, there are also institutions functioning on their own from those listed above (reformatory, camp, prison, reserve, etc.) whose heterotopic role is not so much in their ability to normalize deviance but in their attempt to hold on identity (Bundzhulov 1995: 15).

Foucault proposes that the description of these heterotopias should be called *heterotopology*, and in the text of "Of Other Spaces", he outlines its basic principles (Foucault 2003: 12). The theoretical chapter of this dissertation draws out some of these principles and traces their

realizations in Bodor's novels for greater exemplification. The analytical part also traces how they operate on the author's narrative.

1.2. Juri Lotman's Semiosphere

J. Lotman in his semiotic studies, starting from the idea of the text as a complex of signs, where the sign is an elementary semiotic element, managed to outline culture as a system of countless texts, languages, and artifacts. For him, culture is information and can be seen as an open text in the study to which the researcher could apply the general methods of semiotics and structural linguistics (Lotman 1990: 263).

The exchange and generation of information (communication) take place in a certain space, which he denotes by the term *semiosphere*. The semiosphere can be thought of as a closed space since it possesses all its features. In this space is formed a coherent meaningful sphere of culture (Randviir 2022: 201). Lotman views the semiosphere as a system of texts that excludes those texts which, from its position, are extra-semiotic and untranslated into its language, hence non-semiotic, because as external elements of internal space, they are not subject to semiotization. This could be due to their belonging to the space of another semiosphere (Lotman 1992: 220), respectively another culture.

We relate the term semiosphere to Bodor's space in a way that seeks to outline its linguistic-cultural separateness.

2. The Conceptual Thinking of Border

2.1. Semiotic Interpretations

The most important feature of the semiosphere discussed by Lotman is its delimitation. The concept of boundary is fundamental to Lotman's theories. For him, the *boundary* belongs to both the inner and the outer space. The semiosphere, which possesses all the characteristics of the closed space, could not enter into a relationship with extra-semiotic texts, or if it does enter into such a relationship, in case they remain untranslated, they are incomprehensible to it, they do not become an assimilated reality, and this leads to their "ejection". The boundary is the buffer zone,

the place where the translation of these extra-semiotic signs/texts/culture occurs to enter a culture as new and meaningful information. Therefore, the border belongs to both the outer and the inner space and proves to be the necessary factor for the communication between them, simultaneously uniting, but also disconnecting the spheres of semiosis (Lotman 1992: 19–21).

For Lotman, each semiosphere has a *core* and a *periphery*. The boundary, being located in the periphery, is a field of accelerated semiotic processes, because unlike the center/core of the semiosphere, which is characterized by a more expressed organization, the boundary is under the influence of the "unorganized" (non-semiotized) external environment and its continuous invasion, and the need to transform information. This why there is difficult to impose the norm existing in the center and to apply it in an identical way there, or to exercise control over its maintenance. According to Lotman, the periphery experiences rapid cultural, semiotic, and economic growth, which after a while translates its semiotic structures into the center and conquers the "sphere of the cultural center" (21). His other conception of the boundary sees it as the necessary factor for constructing opposition and bringing out the binary pairs that characterize each culture.

Lotman's ideas are traced in their specific realization in Bodor's narrative. The border in his case is considered as a filter that "translates" what has passed it into the systemic language of inner space. The dissertation also points out the crucial differences that Bodor's narrative produces in the structural organization of the semiosphere, because of the distorted way memory and communication functions in novels. The result of these differences is highlighted in the analysis of the periphery, which does manage to undermine the stability of the core, not by translating new patterns, but by becoming a zone of dynamic animalization.

2.2. Cultural Aspects

In his reasoning, Lotman points out another particularly significant function of the semiosphere – its memory, without which it could not operate, the semiosphere possesses diachronic depth (Lotman 1992: 28). This memory is represented in Bodor's novels as a memory of a particular semiotic structure – once generated, it has reproduced in every subsequent book of

his, and the existence of which is most generally evidenced by the callbacks to already known motives; for instance the identical way in which power operates.

The signs that culture has produced are preserved and can be reconstructed, even in terms of their suppression or forgetting; they are indelible, after temporary inactivity, they “reappear”, and remembering (re-semeioticization) and forgetting (de-semeioticization) become dynamics inherent to the culture. This mechanism of memory secures the semiotic individuality of culture and guarantees its invariance, and its texts, even inactive ones, are preserved and updated based on a certain conceptual invariant (Lachmann 2022: 236–237).

Lotman's reflections on cultural memory distinguish two types of it: “informative”, which has a temporal dimension and a linear character, and “creative”, which is perceived as panchronic and spatially continuous; it resists time. In Jan Assmann these two types of memory are seen as “communicative” and “cultural” (Lachmann 238-239).

This distinction of memory is also deducible in Bodor's novels, where the ideas of identity, society, language, communication, memory, and culture interact in a rather contradictory way. Memory in all three books is semiotically conditioned; it functions as a memory of the structure of the semiosphere because this structure is re-enacted in each successive novel of *The Sinistra Zone*. In the sense of this persistence of it, we can classify it as the kind of memory that Assmann defines as “cultural” and Lotman as “creative”. Communication, however, as a socialization practice, is delimited. By crossing the boundaries of space, newcomers are conditioned to stop remembering and sharing, and those, already belonging to the space, remain silent. This requires us to assume that the “communicative” (“informative”) memory in the space is to some extent damaged. According to Assmann, communicative memory is historically merged with the group, and according to Lotman it has a linear-historical character, whereas in Bodor's books we can speak of a group not as a consequence of social belonging, the result of socializing practices, but in the sense of a spatially attached crowd of people who do not relate to the past, do not remember. In this sense, we cannot speak of a continuity of consciousness, much less of an accumulation of experience (Lotman 1990: 243) inherent to culture (memory) and society.

According to Assmann, an important condition for the realization of communication processes in which memory is strengthened, generating a collective, is the existence of identity. The absence of this identity can often be spatial. Assmann specifies that “free space is a

precondition" for its emergence (Assmann 2001: 137), while Bodor's characters are isolated. It is also not specified in what language the interaction between them happens, and language itself can have a grouping function (139). Still, in them, as situated in a certain space, some common features are observable, based on which they can be defined as a collective, but if culture and society are basic structures and principle conditions for the human as a whole, thinkable only within their framework (133), and if they mediate the generation of identity, both individual and collective; then the Bodor's heroes are crippled human beings, a civilization in decline, and the commonality between them is interpreted not in the paradigm of the cultural and the human, but in that of the natural and the animalistic, which we will trace in the analytical chapters of this dissertation. It is no coincidence that these characters, as a consequence of their inability to self-identify, become replaceable, in analogy with the herd animals, because "the human with an identity is not a replaceable" (Bankov 2004: 24).

2.3. The Border in the Context of Ádám Bodor's Fiction

In Bodor's trilogy (*The Sinistra Zone*, *The Archbishop's Visit*, *The Birds of Verhovina*), the choice of the setting is the first distinctive feature between the books. This space is always located next to a border, fenced off, with a strong control regarding the access (in *The Sinistra Zone* it is a territorial border, in *The Archbishop's Visit* it is the garbage piles surrounding the city, and in *The Birds of Verhovina* it is the unwelcome smell of the thermal springs that indicate an invasion in a separate space). The border as a zone of exchange (Lotman) also proves to be a determinant of the protagonists' ethnic and linguistic diversity. It is not always openly declared, but it always operates on a symbolic level to reinforce the limitation and the semantic oppositions that are born out of it – e.g. inside–outside; alive–dead, local–foreign, etc.

IV. REFLECTIONS OF THE BORDER ON THE NARRATIVE

1. The Time-space

The first subchapter of the first analytical chapter of the dissertation revisits the theoretical propositions laid out earlier, applying concrete examples from the textual corpus to illustrate the applicability of Bakhtin's and Foucault's ideas to Bodor's works.

2. On the Genre's Paradigm

In the concluding remarks to “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel”, Bakhtin mentions Ernst Cassirer's analysis in *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, where he reveals the reflection of the time in language, as further evidence of the defining importance of the category of chronotope in the novel. In this chapter, we follow Cassirer's reflections as he attempts to demonstrate how all terms of language, even the most abstract, are bound up with the Kantian intuitive forms – time, space and number – in which they are fundamentally rooted, and through the intuitions of which “the language can perform its essentially logical operation” (Cassirer 1998: 166–167). Cassirer examines how the conceptualization of spatiality influences the construction of parts of speech in different populations. Lotman draws a similar conclusion in his reflections on space as a universal modelling language, and in this sense he prioritizes it over the time, which is the dominant principle at Bakhtin. Cassirer considers a consciousness where everything is conceptualized in relation to spatial analogies and where temporal ones do not have the potentials for expansion, respectively the necessary linguistic arsenal to concretize time, which also reflects on the ability to infer causal relations. Time extends to the limit of the memory, and everything beyond is a “dark sphere” (191). This leads to the decomposition of action by consciousness into separate points, into plenty forms of present (a “bright sphere”), which “cannot yield the percept of a true temporal continuum” (Cassirer 1998: 197). In “Epic and Novel”, Bakhtin's temporal theories crystallize in his comments on the “incomplete present” in novels, as opposed to the completeness and distance of the epic world (Bakhtin 1983: 510). We speak of a state of happening/existence without its incorporation into any logical order and coherence – a chronological framework. This dynamic of the present and the lack of a determinate act of recollection (memory) is also responsible for Bodor novels' fragmentary.

The reader is often forced to read stories already familiar to him but in the appearance of information completely new to him. This narrative, marked by continuous repetitions, or new versions of the same story, does not contribute to the perception of the individual chapters as part of a larger whole – a novel – but on the contrary, they are interchangeable. L. Bengi designates them as variant-simulacrum and claims that they become a consistent text (novel) not through the additions that every single chapter provides us with, but through the choices the reader makes

(Bengi 2005: 129). This made it impossible to decide whether *The Sinistra Zone* (and the following books) is a novel or a collection of short stories.

3. The Crisis of Identity

In this chapter, we focus on the identity crisis as a result of the failure to relate to the binarity of self/other in the most elementary way, respectively the inability of the characters to join any of the differentiated groups, which deprives them of a sense of belonging to the collective. It leaves them without a point of reference in their self-definition, which is realized in the process of communication with the right to accept or reject collective categorizations.

3.1. Uniformization and Role Determinism

In this subchapter, we comment on how the closed space contributes to the dictatorship's consolidation, the imposition, and affirmation of restrictions, the result of which is the strong uniformization of Bodor's characters. This process is also traceable in their appearance - their color representation, clothes, hairstyles, badges; even in their patterned language, devoid of the subjective factor in its speech realization. The silences suggest that language belongs to the power and the speaker is obliged to communicate according to the norms imposed on him, sometimes indirect. This chapter gives specific examples illustrating how far from unique Bodor's protagonists are, and how easy they could be replaced.

3.2. The Real and the Fictional Bodor

Bodor's books can make it difficult for the reader to distinguish the autobiographical from the fictional. The author does not facilitate but seems to deliberately concentrate the reader's hesitations with supposedly random coincidences of names, dates, or realities. This explains why plenty of literary critics rely on a referential reading, and why Bodor's characters are perceived as his alter ego.

4. On Memory Deficits

Memory as a functioning phenomenon could be thought of in several ways in the context of Bodor's prose – memory as spatially conditioned, in the context of the diachronic depth that the semiosphere possesses, and in this sense stable, able to preserve the pattern for a given structure; or memory as the derivation of individual memories produced after socio-communicative processes and along this line – of the collective act of remembering. The second principle of its functioning is violated in Bodor's novels. The dynamics of this process have been most clearly evident in the process of interaction between memory and identity. Here, with specific textual examples, we trace how this phenomenon develops in Bodor.

5. The drama of speech

As the physical presence of power in books weakens, we find its reflection mostly in the linguistic sphere, as a consequence of the knowledge of its actual presence in the role of a lurking puppeteer. The observations of Bodor's characters are always kept to a minimum, the communication between them is carried out along the lines of silences, what is spoken in a large percentage of cases is just empty talk, behind whose veiled emptiness is the true meaning of what is unspoken. The power constrains many socio-formative processes, which results in the characters' ultimate form of apathy, they build a fortress of ignorance. First of all, this can be thought of as behavioral code, also accompanied by purifying practices of power such as the burning of books in *The Birds of Verhovina*.

5.1. Language

Lotman's idea of the semiosphere, as a space where semiosis is realized, as a system outside of which everything else is perceived to be extra-systemic, and consequently anti or non-culture, in opposition to a particular culture (located in a particular semiosphere), is illustrated in the tendency to consider foreign language as non-language, to pronounce it wrong (Lotman 1992: 99–100). The attempt to determine in what language goes already extremely reduced communication in Bodor's books, fails. The characters' speech is unrelated to a particular speech

discourse. Yet we notice a clear tendency in the functioning of language as code, which is expressed in its determination by space. The liminal space, the isolated periphery, with the vigilance exercised by the local authorities, fits in with common understandings of a prison, a territory not easily accessed but not easily left once settled too. A prison that uses its own language, without excessive verbosity, the characters manage to exchange seemingly nonsensical information, whose absurdity is underlined by the impossibility to process it logically, yet they seem to understand each other, which testifies to the existence of some kind of regularity in their communication, to the existence of a unified behavioral and communicative code.

5.2. Renaming

5.2.1. Anthroponyms

The three novels provide us with a variety of names and nicknames with an international origin. This makes it difficult to even attempt to identify the characters in terms of their nationality. The process of naming and renaming can be quite intentional, marking the transition from one state to a new one, and by finding oneself in a new place the object could lose its connection to the previous state and become another object (Lotman 1992: 40 46). In *The Sinistra Zone*, those who have crossed the border of the region have acquired new nicknames, and this marks their subjective-psychological transformation. The main purpose of the renaming practice consists in the effort to erase the characters' past. The new name does not individualize them, on the contrary, it helps to unify them. The tin nameplate they wear around their necks (*The Sinistra Zone*), is in fact a sign of belonging to the district, it legitimizes their presence on the territory of Sinistra.

In this subchapter we examine the names' case in several aspects – renaming; the confusion around the number of holders of a name and around the number of names and nicknames of a particular character. From the highlighted examples, it is noticeable that the nominative trend initiated in *The Sinistra Zone* migrates into *The Archbishop's Visit* and *The Birds of Verhovina*.

5.2.2. Toponyms

We encounter other nominative paradoxes that undermine the validity of the names of certain topos in the novels, including with regard to autotextuality. In this subchapter, we also consider the ways in which particular toponyms reflects or produces ideas embedded in Bodor's texts and, consequently, serve as evidence for propositions that are initial to his work.

V. THE BORDER AS A LIMIT OF CULTURALLY MASTERED SPACE

1. The Eternal Antagonism between Man and Nature

Lotman states that culture is a condition for the existence of a community, but its very presence is directly related to the dynamism of social life in the society (Lotman 1990: 254). This dynamism is mostly expressed in the exchange and generation of new information, which is carried out through communication and reference to the past. The culture is memory. In this respect, the animalization in Bodor's novels may be communicative. On the other hand, the animalization could also be due to the absolute depersonalization of the main protagonists – from the loss of identity as a result of the power regimentation. The space is understood as a prison in which animal instincts are unleashed. Bodor's heroes are caged animals, not fully aware of the dimensions and outcome of their inaction. They are deprived of will, which could be essential in their confrontation with power; and their ethical standards of behavior have been reduced. The animal in their human nature prevails (sniffing, urinating, defecating...), a process that results in their complete animalization.

Bodor's reader is left with the impression that all that lies beyond the culturally appropriated space, in this case, the habitation – Dobrin, Bogdanski Dolina, or Jablonska Poljana, all that has been driven to its periphery – is nature. The nature is chaos, disorder, and disorganization. It is the meeting zone between the humane and the animalistic. This encounter is also a dynamic collision and exchange between them. Humans become animals, but their presence has a direct impact on nature. M. Szilágyi registers the results of this confrontation in a conception according to which the characters begin to perceive the paranoid logic of power as a caprice of nature (Szilágyi 1993: 83). This is also the reason why the interaction between humans and nature does not follow its traditional logic. István Margócsy defines nature as humane because it is exposed

to destructive human interventions and suffers from human malice's manifestations (Margócsy 1996: 29). At a certain point, nature becomes an instrument of the authority that oppresses humans.

2. Animalization in the Periphery

Bodor's characters suffer a noticeable metamorphosis with the crossing of the border. It starts with the loss of identity, the progressive effacement of morality, which leads to the dulling of all humane in them, an escalation of their unconscious behavior, which, along with the zoomorphic gradation, brings them to an end within the everlasting absolute – the nature. They die as an integral part of it. Or as Gy. Pozsvai sums it up, “The human being becomes one with the realm of the existent. At the end of his life, he turns into an element of nature.” In this case, she is referring to the characters' transformation even after their death, when they are breaking down into the basic components of nature (Pozsvai 1995: 522–524). This subchapter of the thesis traces all forms of animalization in the novels.

3. Animal symptoms

3.1. Odors

This chapter analyses the role of smells in Bodor's novels, with an emphasis on those of them that support the thesis of widespread animalization. Smells in Bodor both mark one's presence but are also a differentiator. Their signaling role, accompanied by the constant sniffing the protagonists exercise, connotes the animalistic.

3.2. Physiological Processes

How the characters defecate or fart is not determined by particular cultural conventions. Instead, they perform it without regard to their location, as in the case of animals.

3.3. Sounds and Speech

We would also categorize the sounds that accompany the speech or movement of the novels' characters as a kind of paralinguistic element that, in the processes of informative decoding, can also be conceived as a relation between the human and the animal. The speech is in a possession of the power controlling the space, and this presupposes the imposition of a new communicative order among the inhabitants of the area, beyond the comprehension of the power and from this point of view uncontrollable, but also affirming animalization.

VI. CLOSURE

1. Summary and Conclusions

The Hungarian novelist Ádám Bodor and his works have been object of enormous interest among Hungarian literary critics and scholars over the past 30 years following the first Hungarian edition of *The Sinistra Zone* in 1992. This resonance has found its logical sequel in the 2005' publication of *Exchanging Experience: Essays and Studies on Ádám Bodor*, a compilation of the most intriguing texts on Bodor born out of the first wave of admiration for his pen. Writing about Bodor has not stopped, but now happens at a considerably slowest pace.

The novels examined in this dissertation were published with a gap of approximately ten years between them. These decades have given birth to critical texts that draw their material from the most recent and up-to-date editions, and initiatives with a retrospective character are rare, the attempts to compare the three novels in detail too. This dissertation compares the three books through deep analysis, drawing on theoretical studies new to the Bodor's analytic tradition as points of entry in its interpretive approach. It brings original conclusions concerning the reflection of liminal space on the individual, his memory, language, and culture, and respectively on his animalistic manifestations, a concrete realization of the loss of his identity's ground.

The dissertation considers Bodor's space as peripheral and extremely isolated. This isolation is seen in different aspects – spatio-temporal, but also cultural and linguistic. In relation to time, through the thoughts of M. Bakhtin on the adventure-time, which is shown in a sequence of adventures closed between two biographically important moments. So in this aspect *adventure-*

time is somehow static and extra-temporal; a line that Bakhtin also developed in his ideas on the *incomplete present* in the European novel. It was found that Bodor's time could be thought in this way, it indeed functions as an infinite present with no prospect of opening to the past or the future. This time lay outside of human chronologically derivable order. The cyclicity of the nature made us see how it passes, but the repetition (day periods, seasons) does not help its opening, exactly the opposite, consolidates it in its separateness.

Space was perceived as heterotopic through the concepts of M. Foucault, which also implements the idea of power. The power in Bodor was seen as the main factor in the processes of deindividuation, contributing to the uniformization in the appearance of characters and their speech. Bodor's characters are unable to relate to the past, and this, in the context of extra-temporality (Bakhtin) they are situated in, costs them memory, a principle condition for the existence of culture, without which human society is unthinkable, a consequence of which is the dynamic animalization. This, along with the power model exercised in the heterotopic space (Foucault), where knowledge is the privilege of those in power, is confirming our thesis about the impossibility of normal functioning of language, memory, and knowledge in Bodor's fictional space. The conclusions of this reflection were again channeled towards the animality as an antipode of the human and the culture.

The insularity of Bodor's space was approached on a macro level, in a way that affirms heterotopia to the maximum, as excluding and controlling. On the one hand, through the inherent separateness of space, where the motif of the 'boundary' always appears – physically materialized but also inducing a particular behavioral pattern; on the other hand, through the huge concentration of heterotopic subspaces within the boundaries of heterotopia itself, working with special regimes of control and self-control.

Based on J. Lotman's concept of the semiosphere, we were able to conclude that Bodor's space functions as a culture with its sign system. And here, through the assertion that culture, respectively the semiosphere, could not operate without memory, through the concepts of J. Lotman, M. Halbwachs, and J. Assmann, we have made an important clarification, that memory in Bodor is a semiotically determined one, functioning as a memory of the structure of the semiosphere reproduced in all three novels (cultural memory).

This memory was also seen as a determinant of the autotextuality embedded in all three novels, which is the reason for their being titled as a trilogy, and which, in addition to the structural level, was also traceable in various narrative motifs. Having clarified that memory (communicative), the product of communicative-socializing practices, does not work, the first analytical chapter of the dissertation elaborated in detail all the arguments for this claim concerning the identity – memory – communication – language line. Our reflections on memory took a direction not previously discussed, reaching the claim that the novel's characters form a sort of distorted collective, not in the context of human culture and society, but seen as the result of the animalization enacted in the isolated space, the evidence for which was brought out in the second analytical chapter. The collapse of memory is directly linked to the refusal of communicating, and at a further step this leads to the breakdown of any chance of speech, the language becomes barking and all humane is reduced to the animalistic.

The periphery in Bodor's fiction is a closed space that fragments the narrative, degrades individuality, and leads to a loss of memory and language. This can be interpreted in a political or allegorical way. The present work adopts an auto-textual, narrative reading, that draws out the repetitive structures, motifs, and characters in the novel trilogy *The Sinistra Zone*, *The Archbishop's Visit*, and *The Birds of Verhovina*. The border's space in Bodor's fiction poses a radical questioning of the place of the external, the possibility of moving beyond these closed boundaries, and of the cost of residing on the periphery.

2. Contributions

- The research imposes an interdisciplinary approach on Ádám Bodor's works. The novels are analyzed not only from literary but also from cultural and sociological perspectives.
- The analysis and conclusions interpret Bodor's novels through previously undiscussed theoretical frameworks that attempt to fix Bodor's space as peripheral and isolated through a wide range of displays of this enclosure/isolation – spatio-temporal, linguocultural.
- This dissertation conceptualizes time through Bakhtin's ideas of adventure-time and the *incomplete present* in the novels. In doing so, it discusses it as situated outside the

human chronologically derivable order, as an infinite present that implies a lack of relation to the past and the future. This temporal encapsulation reflects on the memory of Bodor's characters and their progressive deindividuation.

- The time in Bodor was also thought to be the primary cause of the impossibility of establishing causal links: contingency with its absurdities replaces logically deducible regularity, and the result of this replacement also reflects on the narrative and its inherent iterations.
- Through the Foucauldian conception of heterotopia, the dissertation conceptualizes Bodor's space and the subspaces situated within it as real places with their regime of control, which, through the principle of exclusion, strengthens the motif of the border. In the light of these considerations, the dissertation has distinguished itself from the previously held perception of Bodor's novels as anti-utopian.
- The dissertation, referring to J. Lotman, was able to prove that Bodor's space functions as a culture with its sign system.
- These thoughts brought out an important and contributory highlight of the thesis, that memory, which is essential for the functioning of culture, is preserved in Bodor's novels only as a memory of the structure of the semiosphere, reappearing in each subsequent novel. The most visible result of this process was registered along the lines of the autotextuality embedded in the books.
- The dissertation brought forward new perspectives to analyze Bodor's novels. The topic of memory was considered on a macro level, drawing significant conclusions about the dysfunction of communicative memory in Bodor, which hinders the formation of a collective/society.
- Memory was understood as a constructive cultural entity that facilitates the formation of community. Culture and society are fundamental structural and principled conditions of the human. In this line, the unfolding animalization was also seen.
- The dissertation expands the corpus of secondary text sources on Bodor in Bulgaria and may be applicable in subsequent studies on contemporary Hungarian literature, including its traditions of it outside Hungary, in this case, we have in mind Transylvania.

- All the translations of Bodor's quotations, which are translated into Bulgarian for the first time by the author and facilitate the Bulgarian reception of the Hungarian author, can also be considered as a contributory element of the dissertation.

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VIII. PUBLICATIONS ON THE STUDY'S TOPIC

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