

PRISON NARRATIVES IN EASTERN EUROPE¹

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National literatures are often accompanied by similar phenomena, poetic transformations and changes. These – often parallel – phenomena or poetic events take place oblivious of each other, albeit not independent from the characteristics of the given cultural context. When interpreting various texts operating with so-called returning home narratives or ones focusing on migration and immigration, a transnational and transcultural perspective can provide an opportunity and viewpoints to enable one to incorporate similarities among national literatures into comparative analyses. The textual conditions and narrative structures of prison also display similarities. This paper makes an attempt to draw parallels among Ádám Bodor's *A börtön szaga*, Eginald Schlattner's *Rote Handschuhe* and Lucian Dan Teodorovici's *Matei Brunul* with special attention to representations of power, control, punishment and surveillance.

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In the comparative examination of Central and Eastern European national literatures it might be assumed that these literatures are often accompanied by similar phenomena, poetic developments and changes. Phenomena and poetic events often develop parallelly, oblivious of each other; however, they are dependent on the current cultural (and social) context. Therefore, seeing the increasing popularity of travelogues or travel literature after the nineties or reading texts operating with returning home narratives or ones placing migration and immigration in the foreground, it is apparent that these phenomena are not present separately, but they cross linguistic and national borders in terms of Central and Eastern European literatures. The perspective of transcultural phenomena provides us with an opportunity and a set of aspects to help us incorporate the resemblances

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of national literatures into our comparative analyses. On a related note, in his attempt to define transculturality, Wolfgang Iser claims that while examining interconnectedness, it can be seen how culturally marked elements are interwoven into various societies (Iser 2017). The issue might also be raised at this point that literary texts focusing on analogous phenomena can create a contextual corpus which can serve as a starting point not only for interpretations operating with comparative methodology, but the presentation of literatures in different languages i.e. in a foreign context.

In his paper on representations of history and identity István Ladányi makes an attempt to outline a Central European novel poetics. He claims to

see analogies in the Central and Eastern European novels of the last decades which might assist to outline a Central European poetics, besides geographical and biographical facts as well as thematic characteristics (Ladányi 2009, 22).

Moreover, when he claims at a later point of his paper that the novel's relationship with the past, communal remembrance and politics are thematised as well, it is worth adding what Éva Bányai says in connection with Bodor's novels, i.e. *Sinistra körzet (The Sinistra Zone)*, *Az érsek látogatása (The Visit of the Archbishop)* and *Verhovina madarai (The Birds of Verhovina)* start from totalitarianism, and through transmission to overness represent changes that defined social history of the Central Eastern European region in the past forty years (É. Bányai 2016, 12-3). Pointing out the parallels in Ladányi's and Bányai's conclusions is important, because it can be claimed that there is a scheme or pattern, which narrativizes social changes in the above novel trichotomy. Moreover, to quote Péter Szirák's book on travelogues, the revival and popularity of certain genres also point to the change, and in doing so it represents some kind of overness; in Szirák's book it is the literary travelogue itself, which was hardly encouraged by 'Europe's division [...] the elimination of the freedom of travel, speech and opinion' (Szirák 2016, 125), and its spectacular boom might mark a change.

Besides, it is worth paying some attention to the increased appreciation of referentiality, as from the 1990s certain genres (e.g. the above mentioned literary travelogues) or crossing genre boundaries might indicate how referential readings and the poetic portrayal of referentiality get in the focus of literary and cultural studies. Ladányi sees the prelude of this phenomenon in the postmodern novel of the eighties turning to the autobiographical diction, which resulted in these texts parallelly and mutually exclusively prompting 'the possibility of a fictional as well as autobiographical interpretation in a manner that it cannot be decided which'

(Ladányi 2006, 173). In terms of its appearance in the 90s, Ladányi emphasizes that ‘not only developments in world literature but historic changes contributed to the increasing presence of documentary, non-fictional diction in the genre of novel, and as a result, both individual and collective experiences and signs of fictionalization about one’s “own past” became apparent’ (Ladányi 2006, 174). By historic changes the author means ‘the fault lines of individual and collective experiences of the political transition, changeover, transformation and in some regions revolution or war’ (Ladányi 2006, 174). Besides, the question of referentiality in prose was also raised by Zoltán Németh as early as the beginning of the 2000s, and he urged the setup and use of a theoretical framework which ‘deals with social-historic constructions in the texts, the referential and experience-like nature of texts as well as textual analyses’ (Németh, 2004, 11). Furthermore, in terms of the experience of social-historic constructions, he rightfully remarks that it needs to be examined not only in the context of Hungarian literature,² but – keeping in mind the 1989 turn especially – it is necessary and productive to extend it to the literary representations of the Central Eastern European region (Németh 2004a, 13), which naturally – and that is closely linked to Ladányi’s later conclusions – may result in a broader perspective and more extensive experience. When the afore quoted Éva Bányai speaks about the narratibility of the turn in terms of Ádám Bodor’s and others’ novels, her analytic perspective is primarily directed to examine texts that undertake ‘the linguistic representation/construction of the 1989 historic/social Turn, the political transformation in Romania’ (É. Bányai 2016, 10). The term Turn Prose appearing in the title of Éva Bányai’s book focuses on pieces of prose depicting the events of the Romanian revolution and the political transformation, however, it might be worth taking into consideration the claims of István Ladányi and Zoltán Németh and extend it to see the social/historic turn as a strong manifestation of referentiality. If tendencies of Hungarian – in a broader perspective Central Eastern European – prose are considered to be the corpus, we might even talk about a *turn of referentiality*, to which Zoltán Németh indirectly refers in connection with placing variants of prose opposite the questions and concerns of literature studies. Moreover, Ladányi’s quotation highlights

² As for the Hungarian context, it might be worthwhile to quote another remark of Zoltán Németh, which puts the current approaches in literary theory in opposition with the development of prose: ‘Text-awareness, recognising the unrestrained nature of language, the experience of areferentiality, the disintegration of the narrative I as a centre, the natural play of the polyvalence of the text and the unfixing and the unmonopolized and unfixing play of the accentuated intertextuality and the dissemination of the text became the unavoidable terms of Hungarian prose reception in the 90s. Those texts had the chance to participate in the canonization process, which stood the test of this theory-focused reading technique.’ (Németh 2004b, 65).

that the individual and collective experiences of war as well as the revolution also mean the enhancement of referential portrayal and referential readings.

Analogously to the contextualisation of literary travelogues, texts may be the focus of analysis which construct prison narratives (indicated in the title), as they point out the operation of earlier totalitarian systems, which – to emphasize the bits of Szirák's quotation of freedom of speech and opinion – could not be spoken of before the social and political turn. In that sense it might be assumed that apart from their referential relevance, prison novels or texts with the theme of prison or prison years become markers of the turn, as their publication only became possible after the fall of the dictatorial Establishment that they thematised and represented. The textual conditions of discourse on prison show similarities with the aforementioned travelogue literature in the sense that the issue of fictionality and referentiality is increasingly relevant besides the narrative characteristics. I intend to compare Ádám Bodor's *A börtön szaga*³ (Bodor 2001) (*The Smell of Prison*), Eginald Schlattner's *Rote Handschuhe* (Schlattner 2006) [Red Gloves] and Lucian Dan Teodorovici's *Matei Brunul* (Teodorovici 2011) in terms of narrative structure and the relationship between fiction and referentiality. The choice of texts is partly due to the temporal closeness of their publications (Bodor's and Schlattner's texts came out in 2001 and partly because the reception in Romanian literature and therefore, its canonised nature makes Teodorovici's novel, which – as it will be discussed later – offers further basis for contextualisation with its own context and prelude in order to tackle this phenomenon in Central Eastern European framework.

Examining the three texts parallelly can be justified by three elements, i.e. the representation of prison, the narrative operation of remembrance and the exhibition of the problem of fiction vs. referentiality. From the latter point of view, the question raises immediately how an interview and two novels can be analysed at the same time. The interpretation of Ádám Bodor and Zsófia Balla's interview was defined by the doubts and dilemmas about the genre of the text in the early reception history. The experiences of prison are certainly in the centre of the text that displays itself as an interview, and *The Smell of Prison* demonstrated 'the concrete and close prison, which in its concreteness takes up a whole conversation, or maybe its most important part' (Balázs 2002, 1230). In Imre József Balázs's review the autobiographical, documentary-like reading is reinforced by the fact that the author links the Bodor–Balla book with another interview, *Vissza*

³ In this paper I refer to the excerpts of the English translation of *A börtön szaga* published in Hungarian Quarterly, translated by Ivan Sanders. Bodor, Ádám. *The Smell of Prison. Responses to Zsófia Balla. (Extracts)*. Translated by Ivan Sanders. «Hungarian Quarterly», 41(165), 42(166), 43(167).

a forrásokhoz (Balázs 2001) [Back to the Sources], which was published in the same year, and interprets them as complements of each other in terms of the representation of the era. Many literary criticisms highlight and quote the part in which Bodor distances himself from prison novels as a genre and in a broader context of the quotation, from writing about concrete reality:

‘I generally avoid true stories and situations. I write about things I have invented; [...] So my own childhood, too, is absent from my works. Or perhaps the only way it’s present is through its absence. For childhood’s many voices and colours and echoes, all the wondrous sensations of an emerging consciousness, are very much a part of these works, if only because these sensations are lodged deep and fixed forever in memory. And our adult sensibilities are all rooted in childhood experiences. But if I were to pierce the delicate skin enveloping the world of these experiences, and extract from under the wrap past happenings in all their tangible reality, I would strip them of their suggestiveness, their purity and strength, and ultimately of their power to inspire. For this reason I don’t intend to write a prison novel. For me the experience in the Gherla penitentiary is too real, to close, and still so powerful, I could not turn it into literature. Whatever is important in that experience is bound to show up in my writings in other ways’ (Bodor 2002c, 93).

While Bodor clearly distances himself from the genre of prison novel, a number of his critiques – Péter Dérczy for example – points out that this claim is to be treated with some suspicion, ‘as quite some features of *The Smell of Prison* indicate that eventually we are reading some kind of peculiar “novel” with Bodor’s prison years in the centre’ (Dérczy 2003, 289). This idea is reinforced by Gergely Angyalosi, who – referring to *The Sinistra Zone* as a space – claims that ‘in the Bodor-oeuvre the problem of “zone in the zone” which is a main focus started to take shape from the emanations of the prison in Gherla.’ (Angyalosi 2002, 27). The reception from his contemporaries and later interpretations dominantly linked the interview with the work that is referred to as ‘the first novel’, which had been in the centre of the Bodor-reception.

Sinistra dominates the Bodor-reception to such an extent that a good part of the interpretations approach the following two novels with that in mind, so these interpretations – even if not necessarily explicitly – outline a reading of a trilogy. The readings of the so-called ‘first novel’ defined the approaches to the 2001 *The Smell of Prison* in terms of reception at the time; it is worth recalling Zsófia Szilágyi’s paper, who proposes an interpretation as ‘it seems justified to turn the direction of reading around and re-read *Sinistra* from the point of view of *The Smell of Prison*, as the new Bodor-Balla book might connect instructively to the reading of *Sinistra*, the work which can clearly be seen as the centre of Bodor’s

poetics and is mentioned the most in *The Smell of Prison*.’ (Szilágyi 2005, 265). Sensing the central role of *Sinistra*, Szilágyi turns the direction of reading around as a starting point, and proposes an approach from the interview, then primarily from the aspect of the representation of spaces, she points out the prominent poetic and motific role of border crossing in *Sinistra*. However, if we dismiss the possibility of readings that head towards or originate from *Sinistra* and approach the interview in its own right, as Ákos Teslár’s paper suggests, the literariness of the text might be questioned, moreover, a dividing line might be sensed in terms of the narrated time: ‘accordingly prison is mentioned the most in *The Smell of Prison*, and it is emphasized in the title as well’. Understandably, we learn somewhat less about the years after the release in Romania. It is shocking, however, that nothing whatsoever is narrated in the book about the moving and the years in Hungary’ (Teslár 2005, 257). In my opinion the dividing line sensed and highlighted by Teslár is not to be seen as a line between the life in Transylvania and Hungary, but more as the representational patterns of prison and remembrance. These patterns become more apparent in the context of the two other aforementioned texts.

Eginald Schlattner’s *Rote Handschuhe*, defined as autobiographical by the literary criticism, is in fact a prison novel, with the young intellectual protagonist being a member of the Transylvanian Saxon community in Romania, who used to attend university in Cluj in the 50s, and was taken to prison from there on charges of treason. The protagonist, being the first person singular narrator is a central participant of the events; his story is in the centre of the novel. The narrative structure of the novel is built on a duality: on the one hand we can follow the capture and imprisonment of the protagonist, and on the other hand in connection with the names and happenings that come up during the interrogation, an associative and more metaphorical storytelling is constructed in which the events preceding the imprisonment are recalled and narrated. This is closely linked to what Michel Foucault says in connection with the function of prison as follows: ‘The prison, the place where the penalty is carried out, is also the place of observation of punished individuals. This takes two forms: surveillance, of course, but also knowledge of each inmate, of his behaviour, his deeper states of mind, his gradual improvement...’ (Foucault 1995, 249). Learning about the prisoner during the interrogations builds the story of the time before the prison, and the sequence of the events recalled lacks chronology, their evocation works in relation to the narrative depicting the interrogation and life in prison. If chronology and the metonymical, dominantly causal logics in the sequence of interrogations serve as a basis for narrative construction, it can be seen how that organises remembrance, the elements of the story are placed in new contexts, they are rearranged and given new interpretations. This type of development in the text (i.e. remembering from

interrogations and prison life) on the one hand controls the course of remembrance, the arrangement of memories, therefore to an extent it supervises them, and on the other hand the participant speaker of earlier events, the ‘I’ narrator is placed into the position of the observer to a more and more significant extent – in many cases it cannot be decided whether memories are meant to be in the records or just practices to avoid loneliness. To verify these claims, the extracts might be quoted from the text in which the interrogated narrator categorizes his fellow-writers: ‘There is one rule that applies to those who stayed, all of them stood up for the regime, but of course to various degrees. Let me say right away about Getz Schräg, writer of the first Saxon socialist novel, ‘As there is no lord and no servant’ and that of ‘Ode to Stalin’: he is a communist. The same goes for Hugo Hügel, considering his short story ‘The rat king and the flute player’ which received an award. Only after some hesitation, though. I am going to say only about the also awarded Oinz Erler: he is loyal.’ (Schlattner 2012, 257).⁴ At this point the ‘I’ narrator is executing the form of individual control tackled by Foucault, the control of the observing eye expected by the Establishment is inscribed into the recall and arrangement of his memories.⁵ Moreover, it is clearly noticeable how the practice of surveillance in prison is imposed upon and becomes an essential part of the world outside prison through remembrance, and after the prison years these cannot be seen as independent from each other.

Besides the dual narrative construction which displays confrontation, the process of rearrangement and the controlled operation of remembrance, Schlattner’s novel has a strong referential relevance. It is the 1959 Brasov writers’ trial of Saxon writers in Transylvania, a show trial in which Eginald Schlattner was sentenced to one and half years in prison for ‘failing to report treason’. ‘In the show trial of the representatives of German minority literature (in September 1959) he [Schlattner] was the star witness and his statement put five Transylvanian Saxon writers in prison. They were: Hans Bergel, editor-in-chief of the *Volkszeitung* in Brasov; Georg Scherg, head of the Department of German Studies in Cluj; priest and poet Andreas Birkner; poet, composer, painter Wolf von Aichelburg and the young writer, Harald Siegmund’ (Sánta-Jakabházi 2006, 105). German literary criticism and literary history used to interpret the novel as a chiefly autobiographical

⁴ In this paper I refer to the Hungarian translation of Rote Handschue: Schlattner, Eginald 2012. *Vörös kesztyű*, Translated by Fodor Zsuzsa. Kolozsvár. Koinónia.

⁵ See: ‘Generally speaking, all the authorities exercising individual control function according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding (mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal); and that of coercive assignment, of differential distribution (who he is; where he must be; how he is to be characterized; how he is to be recognized; how a constant surveillance is to be exercised over him in an individual way, etc.)’ (Foucault 1995, 199)

work, and the novel plays up on that as despite the aliases of the contemporaries, most of them are recognisable⁶ and ultimately can be identified based on the titles of their works.

As Réka Sánta-Jakabházi comments in her paper (Sánta-Jakabházi 2006, 105), literary historian Peter Motzan organized a gathering of writers in 1992 in order to discuss the trial mentioned, and as a result, the book *Worte als Gefahr und Gefährdung* (Motzan et al. 1993) edited by Peter Motzan and Stephan Sienerth was published, which fundamentally defined the reception of Schlattner’s novel which was published almost a decade later. The book published in 1993 displays the material of two meetings⁷ in 1992 and also includes secret service documents which became accessible only after the changes of 1989. It did not go down unnoticed that Eginald Schlattner as a star witness of the 1959 trial did not attend these meetings, although he was invited. The pieces of writing in the book edited by Motzan and Sienerth placed the writer trials of the 50s in a broader, Eastern European⁸ context, and on the other hand, in his paper Motzan thoroughly deals with the role of Eginald Schlattner, the youngest one arrested. He had been locked up in 1957, two years before the trial and they had started to interrogate and try to break him (Motzan 1993, 76-77). Schlattner’s role in the final sentence is proved by the records of the interview⁹ with him, in which – as Wolf von Aichelburg¹⁰ and Harald Siegmund (Motzan et al. 1993, 114-115) mentioned in the roundtable discussion of Freiburg – he sometimes defended, sometimes attacked the others, and talked about conversations which took place privately, with no witnesses (as Harald Siegmund highlights) (Motzan et al. 1993, 114-115). The compilation on the trial is a thorough documentation of the trial and unintentionally it also creates

⁶ See: ‘Writers, editors, journalists appear in the book with slightly modified aliases (Hans Bergel – Hugo Hügel, Harald Siegmund – Herwald Schönmund, Georg Scherg – Getz Schräg, Wolf von Aichelburg – Baron von Pottenhof, Andreas Birkner – Oinz Erler), those already passed appear with their real names’ (Sánta-Jakabházi 2006, 106).

⁷ The first gathering was held on 18-19 January 1992 in Freiburg, with the participation of all five German writers in the group trial (German: Gruppenprozeß deutscher Schriftsteller; Romanian: procesul lotului scriitorilor germani): Andreas Birkner, Hans Bergel, Harald Siegmund, Georg Scherg, Wolf von Aichelburg, while the second gathering took place in Bucharest on 10-13 June 1992 with one of the organisers being the head of the Romanian Writers’ Association at the time, Mircea Dinescu. See: (Motzan et al. 1993, 10-11).

⁸ It is worth mentioning that in his paper Peter Motzan sees a parallel between the 1959 Brasov writers’ trial and the Hungarian trial that resulted in the elimination of the Petőfi kör [Petőfi Society] and the convicted Tibor Déry’s role. See: Motzan 1993, 60-61.

⁹ Protokolle der Zeugenaussagen [Zeuge Eginald Schlattner] (Motzan et al. 1993, 320-325).

¹⁰ Podiumsdiskussion zum Schriftstellerprozeß. Mit Wolf von Aichelburg, Hans Bergel, Andreas Birkner, Georg Scherg und Harald Siegmund. (Motzan et al. 1993, 114-115).

a referential context for the Schlattner-novel published in 2001, makes it a key novel, offering or even encouraging its readings as a confession.

Similarly to the German literary and cultural context, referentiality enhanced in the Hungarian one as well,¹¹ on the one hand, in terms of the conclusions of criticisms and on the other hand, due to Farkas-Zoltán Hajdú's documentary work, *Szászok – egy árulás* (Hajdú 2004) [Saxons – A Betrayal] which uses Hans Bergel and Eginald Schlattner's extracts and operates with a dual narrative structure that is based on confrontation, in a similar way to the novel *Rote Handschuhe*.

In case of *Rote Handschuhe* extending surveillance and being surveilled which is so integral to prison life outside the prison also results in parallel storytelling and that element is strongly present in Lucian Dan Teodorovici's novel, *Matei Brunul*. It has a structure that is built on two parallel story lines which are governed by remembrance, similarly to *Rote Handschuhe*. Even for the older generation, such as Norman Manea, Gabriela Adameşteanu or Mircea Cărtărescu, the demand for processing the near past and the dictatorship was present, and it mainly manifested in writing about the regime of oppression. However, the depiction of the act of processing it and its everyday practices could be discovered, which made the past not only the theme of literary works as something to process, but the practices of processing were often thematised as well. As for the younger writers' prose, like Daniel Bănulescu, Dan Lungu, Filip Florian, Florin Lăzărescu or even Lucian Dan Teodorovici, the representation of the past is closely connected to the possibilities of processing it, and therefore, the emphasis is shifted from the representation of the past to the way the past is represented.

Teodorovici's novel can be summarized briefly: Bruno Matei leaves Romania as a child in the 30s with his parents, and returns in the post war years as a puppeteer master. In the beginning of the 50s he becomes the victim of a show trial and he is imprisoned. The reason is a made-up charge, i.e. he tried to leave the country with his students illegally. In the last years of prison he loses his memory due to an unfortunate accident, so he doesn't remember the time after his return and the years in prison. The he is released and gets back to the socialist society that is being built, and his only connection to the outside world is a liaison officer, Comrade Bojin and a friend, Elza who is also a collaborator. Then Barna (after his release Bojin calls him Barna) is busy trying to find out about his past, which his surroundings, especially Comrade Bojin is trying to prevent. In the

¹¹ This is what Balogh F. András suggests, when defines the text as unquestionably autobiographical just like his book published earlier: '[...] he blasted into the German culture from the poor Veresmart next to Nagyszeben, and became an accomplished, awarded writer with his autobiography-inspired work that describes how he betrayed his own brother and writer friends to the Securitate.' (Balogh F., 2007, 95).

denouement of the novel encouraged by Elza, Barna makes an attempt to really leave the country illegally, but decides to stay in the very last moment.

The structure of the novel consisting of twenty-five chapters is built on a fundamental duality. The succeeding chapters follow Bruno's (his name until the prison years) and Brunul's (aka Barna) story with shifts in time. Barna's story starts at the moment when Bruno's ends, i.e. with losing his memory and the release from prison. Separating the two stories so distinctly, and drawing up a parallel by the arrangement have dual consequences. The receiver is constantly informed about the development of the two stories in fragments, so the shifts alienate them from the threads and at the same time they become part of the access to the past. Placing the two narratives next to each other, the receiver becomes part of and knows about what Barna is part of and wants to know about i.e. his very own past. Bruno's imprisonment, the show trial that leads up to that, its course and operation offer an interpretation of the novel in terms of the experience and imprint of dictatorial regimes. The practices of power, discipline, the prison as a scene for institutional discipline and surveillance and its well-known tropes draw the course of interpretation towards the Foucaultian structures of surveillance and control. In the meanwhile it is worth noting the identical nature of the Bodor-interview, the Schlattner-novel as well as Teodorovici's text, in the sense that they not only represent the experience of prison, but the preceding show trial is also part of the depiction of the arbitrary operation of power. The trial itself and the interrogations leading up to it are not simply represented as events but, their disciplinary function can be realized and seen as a kind of punishment.¹²

Based on all the above, the text is rightfully called prison novel, as not only Bruno's story may be interpreted from this point of view, but Barna's life as well. While the portrayal of the prison years displays corporal humiliation, and disciplinary procedures of degradation and they can be experienced, the period after prison, i.e. the story after the release of Barna is not accessible, but it offers a model of the operation of power (embodied by Bojin and Eliza) that wishes to control every movement of the body.¹³ Due to the constant presence of Bojin and Eliza – in pretended love and friendship – Barna becomes a marionette puppet moved and controlled by them, and in this process it is Vasilache's (Barna's) marionette

¹² 'Disciplinary punishment has the function of reducing gaps. It must therefore be essentially corrective. In addition to punishments borrowed directly from the judicial model (fines, flogging, solitary confinement), the disciplinary systems favour punishments that are exercise – intensified, multiplied forms of training, several times repeated...' (Foucault 1995, 179).

¹³ 'Power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught up' (Foucault 1995, 202).

figure which represents total defencelessness in relation to the Establishment. It might be claimed that Foucault's disciplinary and control method (with Panopticon as an ideal form) extends the controlling strategies outside of the prison in the state of mind of surveilling and being surveilled. In this sense the story after the release may be seen as a display of that. It all becomes clear for Barna when he has not regained his memory yet but has recognized Bojin's and Eliza's intentions and experiences the visible but unverifiable presence of power. As Foucault puts it in connection with Panopticon, '...power should be visible and unverifiable. Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so' (Foucault 1995, 202). This approach might be considered in connection with Eginál Schlattner's novel, as most of the memories recalled are put in the foreground, because it turns out that the interrogators are aware of them, so some preceding surveillance can be assumed, and on the other hand, being surveilled, the surveillance of the protagonist and its significance clearly become meaningful.

If we examine Teodorovici's and Schlattner's novels from the aspect of surveillance, the double story line might be seen not only as a strategy of confronting past and present, but might be interpreted as a representation of the usual surveillance and supervision extended to society. The practices of control and surveillance in prison are imprinted into the practices of everyday life and they start to define them. Teodorovici's and Schlattner's texts provide a context that makes it possible to create a different reading for Bodor and Balla's interview, *The Smell of Prison*. From this perspective, the main question is not the literary nature of the text or its element of interpreting *Sinistra*, but it is much more interesting that if we consider *The Smell of Prison* a typical prison narrative, in which the representation of prison is constructed according to the features of a literary text, what is to be done with the narrative in the other two texts, not featuring a concrete prison in its physical reality and implementing the above practices in everyday life?

If Bodor's work prior to *The Smell of Prison* are re-visited from this perspective, we might arrive to the conclusion that the other narrative is constructed by the pieces of the Bodor-oeuvre that have the practices of surveillance and control as their essential feature, so integral to the every days that they go unnoticed. This is partly mentioned in Gergely Angyalosi's earlier quoted work, in which he claims – mainly about *The Sinistra Zone* – that the representation of the prison cannot be seen as independent from the prison experience in Gherla' (Angyalosi 2002, 27). János Bányai extends the prison experience in the text and its impact on reality in the Bodor-oeuvre: 'his pieces, short stories, chapters unspokenly

stink of prison, because this smell is not simply the experience of a convict, but a shared experience of happenings and all words ending up as lies in a no-so-short period of dictatorship and terror in Central Eastern European history' (J. Bányai 2003, 102). Bányai's work projects that to a landscape which was written later: '[...] in his short stories and chapters the landscape is not a scene of freedom; it is more that of being in danger, being helpless, a scene of torture by the Establishment that is alien to the landscape and humans' (J. Bányai 2003, 102). This latter passage can clearly be seen as a definition of prison that is extended to the landscape, where danger is primarily the unverifiable, but present power.

When talking about the extension of control and surveillance, *The Sinistra Zone* comes to mind as a central and significant piece of the Bodor-oeuvre, in which the movement of certain characters is often monitored, i.e. surveilled, or the relationships of some characters might be mentioned, which are dominated by the aspects of surveillance or being surveilled. However, the zone itself, as most of the commentary points out, can easily be identified with the operation and structure of prison in terms of confinement, control, register (e.g. naming), therefore I find it more interesting to examine pieces of short prose which were born before the 1989 social and political turn, ones which display the practices of power in a less explicit way and provide us with a context along the lines of Schlattner's and Teodorovic's novels for an extended, different reading of *The Smell of Prison*.

A number of short stories and pieces of short prose can be recalled in which the scenes have the essential elements of control, surveillance and some kind of power monitoring everything and everyone in the background. Györgyi Pozsvai's monograph claims about the whole of Bodor's prose apparatus that 'the short stories and pieces of prose [...] interact on the ground of grotesque, almost absurd' (Pozsvai 1998, 111), and an essential element of this interaction is 'constant peeping and snooping around others as a symptom of the aberrant nature of human relationships' (Pozsvai 1998, 111). This is what Éva Bányai refers to when she says: 'The discourse among speakers, various individuals and groups at different levels of the hierarchy in the Bodor-fiction takes place in accordance with the conditions determined by the Establishment: people defined by the ruling power become part of the order, and therefore users of the language of the regime' (É. Bányai 2012, 118). Some pieces of Bodor's short prose can be mentioned here, such as *Krétaízag* [Smell of Chalk], the opening piece of writing in *A Zangezur-hegység* [The Zangezur Mountains], which is a short story displaying the parallel of surveilling and being surveilled. The central character is Bundás Rekk, who 'usually sits on a high-legged chair at the window of his room darkened by the shutters. He sits in front of the hole in the board he drilled on the day when he

nailed it for good' (Bodor, 1981, 6). He monitors the street and his neighbours through that hole, but the text not only portrays the surveiller, but by operating with the effect of fear of the unknown and the strange, it shows how the surveiller becomes the surveilled: 'He turns on the light, while wiping his nose as he sees the note under the peephole: Your nose is covered in chalk. Amazing. The one that wrote this was writing the truth. Yes, as the chalk came from the prediction a stranger wrote on the inside of the shutters. Amazing. A somebody. Someone. An individual. Maybe he is crouching in the cupboard behind the little hole right now' (Bodor, 1981, 6). Another aspect of being surveilled becomes the theme of the writing *A borbély* (Bodor 1969a, 68-76) [The Barber] which was published in the book *A tanú* (Bodor 1969) [The witness]. The central event of the short story is not cutting into the client's hair i.e. doing the work imperfectly, but the completely 'natural' reaction of the client, that he goes immediately to report the incident, so the barber at fault, Boros's job is in danger. The extension of power influencing the relationship between people is what is placed in the foreground, and an important element is that – according to Foucault – that the extension or scattering of power is not connected to a person, but integrated into a number of relationships (Foucault 1995, 275). Another short story, *Az erdész és vendége* [The forest ranger and his guest] can be interpreted along the same lines: we learn about the meeting of a forest ranger and a hunting stranger, when the ranger's dog bites the stranger. The stranger's sentence 'I'll make sure you are known of' (Bodor 1969c, 142), is just casually mentioned, but again it demonstrates how meaning is assigned, as the ranger's answer ('"You will remember any way you want", said the ranger') (Bodor 1969c, 142) partly nuances that, and takes it towards a possible interrogation.

Bodor's short story *A tanú* [The Witness] (which is also the title of the book) describes the situation of a questioning which is part of a court trial, and demonstrates the operation of the show trials mentioned earlier. Jakab commits perjury at the request of Kuli, as he names an individual called Demeter as a participant of an unspecified event: 'On this tram he met Kuli, who had just seen something accidentally that was meant to be a dark secret of the street. Kuli then said to him, he couldn't understand, as it had a completely different meaning from what he saw. But he should report it, giving a different description from Kuli's, and when he is asked, he should recognize the culprit. Then he said he suspected that it could have a different meaning. Another night Kuli came for him, they went and saw a lit window in uptown' (Bodor 1969b, 48). The report and the perjury bring along aspects of meaning mentioned earlier, but the turn in the text is Demeter's behaviour, who confirms Jakab's perjury later, when Jakab confesses his own lie to him. This turn results in Jakab losing his confidence, the perjurer now cannot tell the difference

between what he had seen and the made-up story he was expected to say. Two points of view are confronted: The witness’s knowledge of what he had seen and the wish of all the other characters who clearly represent an inaccessible, concealed, but perceived (power) intention. As Foucault puts it: ‘The exercise of discipline presupposes a mechanism that coerces by means of observation; an apparatus in which the techniques that make it possible to see induce effects of power, and in which, conversely, the means of coercion make those on whom they are applied clearly visible’ (Foucault 1995, 170-171). A reading might become relevant about Jakab’s story in which it is not only perjury i.e. lying is in the focus of the short story, but the way Jakab, the protagonist of the text is included, and is made to be surveilled and controlled by the hierarchical nature of the Establishment that can be experienced on the level of the individual as well.

As an example of the extended power mechanisms in prison, let us talk about the piece of short prose *Milyen is a hágó?* (Bodor 1969d, 3) [So what is the mountain pass like?] which displays on a thematic as well as poetic level the technique of surveillance filtering into everyday life, more specifically into the act of creating, the act of writing. The story of the out-of-town girl with hidden intentions who arrives to the mountain pass unfolds in a description of the highland landscape; first the ‘somewhat urban, somewhat villager-like’ (Bodor 1969d, 3) woman is in the centre, who spends a day there sitting around, presumably trying to find out what a mountain pass is like, as the text ‘testifies’ (Bodor 1997, 69) The closure of the text published in *Utunk* suggest the narrator’s unawareness of the nature of the pass, while the later refined text variant displays this not-knowing or curiosity more from the point of view of the girl in focus. However, it is not a coincidence that the narrator’s voice in the closure of the refined version became more nuanced as the whole structure of the text points back to seeing, the origin of seeing. While this is less obvious in the description of the girl and the landscape, and we encounter a more neutral narrative point of view which is more difficult to capture, in the third part it becomes more significant, and clearly highlights the act of surveillance and being surveilled: ‘As if she wasn’t around with her face, so much so that one would want to look in her eyes very closely to see what’s there, but it would have scared him for sure’ (Bodor 1969d, 3).¹⁴ And in the next paragraph: ‘For no apparent reason, such an afternoon in the mountains can get a little sad. A pass, from where you can see a whole afternoon, a girl you shouldn’t scare’ (Bodor 1969d, 3).¹⁵ Scaring the girl is linked to the appearance of the surveiller

¹⁴ See also: ‘As if she wasn’t around with her face, so much so that one would want to look in her eyes very closely to see what’s there, but it might have scared her’ (Bodor 1997, 69).

¹⁵ See also: ‘For no apparent reason, such an afternoon in the mountains can get a little sad. A deserted mountain pass from where you can see an afternoon from north to south. A girl you

and revealing his identity, and from that point on the text is re-interpreted looking backwards, because the narrator (and his observant perspective) who has been hiding in the landscape (and from the girl) receives more emphasis in the construction of the text.

Reading Ádám Bodor's piece of short prose outlines a 'disciplinary society' (to quote Foucault), another extreme of which (besides prison is) '...panopticism, is the discipline-mechanism: a functional mechanism that must improve the exercise of power by making it lighter, more rapid, more effective, a design of subtle coercion for a society to come' (Foucault 1995, 209). In this society 'the disciplinary establishments increase, their mechanisms have a certain tendency to become "de-institutionalized", to emerge from the closed fortresses in which they once functioned, and to circulate in a "free" state; the massive, compact disciplines are broken down into flexible methods of control, which may be transferred and adapted' (Foucault 1995, 211). If we read Teodorovici's and Schlattner's novels in terms of and in the context of power mechanisms of disciplinary and supervisory practices of the prison which can be extend to the whole of society, it might be argued that the interview is an integral part of the oeuvre on different grounds: not primarily by the integration of the biography and by the explicit self-interpretation of the author in terms of the borderlands, but due to the duality of the pattern developed in the quoted Romanian and German novels for the purposes of contextualization. If the dual structure of *Rote Handschuhe* and *Matei Brunul* are interpreted in terms of the extending the prison techniques of supervision and surveillance to society, we might claim that the practices of extension in the Bodor-oeuvre were written earlier, and the very experience of the prison only later, which does become an integral part of the literary work. We might also claim that Bodor's, Schlattner's and Teodorevici's texts are different representations of the Central Eastern European prison experience which are designed along similar processes in terms of their structure and their approach to referentiality.

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shouldn't scare' (Bodor 1997, 69).

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