

Theses of Doctoral (Ph.D.) Dissertation

SELF-REFLEXION IN GYULA KRÚDY'S PROSE

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1. The objective and the applied methods of the dissertation

In my thesis I examine the problem of self-reflexion in Gyula Krúdy's prose. On the one hand, the choice of the issue is caused by the fact that the languagical self-reflection appears as the most significant formation of mediation. On the other hand, the results of previous studies on Krúdy confirmed all this, because the interpretations almost uniformly recognized the fictionality and the selfreflecting formations of the texts. Already the early Krúdy studies recognized the plenty of elements of texts, that – nowadays – we can call intertextualism. The recent Krúdy studies emphasize the languagical aspects of Krúdy's prose.

I base my examinations on the results of previous studies on Krúdy, which have mostly concentrated on the innovative studies of the representation of characters, remembrance, space-time structure and metaphorization in Krúdy's works. For example, in connection with remembrance, I reflect on its linguistic aspects, as well as I examine the *Doppelgänge problem*, not only as a question of the build-up of a literary character but also as a certain mode of narrativization which has a multiplying effect on the narrative structures.

Considering the extensive scope of Krúdy's oeuvre, this examination can not be exhaustive; it may rather be seen as a collection of comprehensive analyses of selected texts from the Krúdy corpus, with specific problems addressed.

The study of self-reflexion requires a specific theoretical frame. The most important problems in my research are the following: the relationship between live speech and writing, the mediation between vision and language, the relationship between remembrance and language, as well as the several dual structures of texts: how do the limits of mediation effect the interpretation, furthermore, how does this interpretation work to create a language?

In the course of this study, I adopted those theoretical frames from phenomenology and hermeneutics that I deemed most fruitful. When approaching *image* from a phenomenological viewpoint, I chose novels and short stories from the

Krúdy oeuvre which problematize the relationship between vision and language (e. g. literary portraits). In my analyses, the ideas of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Gottfried Boehm helped me a lot. Merleau-Ponty's most inspiring philosophical investigations are focused on the problem of perception. According to his theory, sight itself is a perpetual creation. Along the lines of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Gottfried Boehm also defines vision as a creative act.

Many of Krúdy's works manifest an interplay between vision and language. This interplay may be best captured through an analysis of the novel entitled *Mit látott Vak Béla Szerelemben és Bánatban* (*What Blind Béla saw in Love and Sorrow*). In my analysis, I detect a multiple play: in the novel's text we can find significant traces of the way linguistic signifying processes are determined by the vision of the narrator and the literary characters of the novel. Moreover, the relationship between *vision* and rhetorical *figures* also determines the concept of *metaphor* and *irony*.

The broader theoretical frame of my dissertation is provided by the hermeneutical tradition, mainly hermeneutical theories on language. According to Gadamer, language is not simply subjacent to the subject-object relationship, but, on the contrary, language is the articulation, the potentiality of creation itself. For Gadamer, language is a live and generative activity, which first of all means *dialogue*. However, the event of dialogue is transmitted by tradition, which means that it already holds linguistic dispositions. Following Gadamer, I study the presence of live speech not only in its stylistic function, in the diction, but also in its virtuality, as a process of creation. Nevertheless, I present this Gadamerian interconnection between dialogue, tradition and language in Krúdy's works. In the analyses of Krúdy's imitation of live speech and his contribution to the great literary tradition of the *anecdote* are drawn on the hermeneutical concept of dialogue, in which the physical presence of the speakers is not required.

Most of Krúdy's prose is based on a certain experience of the past, in the first place on the 19th century. In this question I analysed different works, which utilize peripheric traditions of community images of Hungarian history. Krúdy's novel *Rózsa Sándor* utilizes the tradition of Hungarian national past in connection with the 1848 revolution. Regarding to the role of the past of Krúdy's works I examine the concept

of tradition, which I recognize with a double meaning in Krúdy's prose. On the one hand, tradition in Krúdy means an evocation of the national past. On the other hand, according to the hermeneutical concept of tradition, tradition is a way of *understanding relationship* to the past. In Krúdy's historical novels, we can recognize an interactive play with both of these concepts of tradition in the narrative roles.

For the purposes of this study, the most important phenomenon in the quoted novel is the circulating exchange between the narrator's multiple positions. The multiple approach to the evoked past results in interactions, *dialogues*, between the multiple interpretations of the past, which adds an additional level to the aesthetic reception of the novel.

The idea of "past as literature" – as the dominant idea of Krúdy-oeuvre - plays an important role in my thesis, too. In the analysis of Krúdy's "nostalgic" writings about the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, I present two different conceptions of rhetorics and linguistics. In its everyday meaning, the term "*rhetorics*" means conviction. On the one hand, Krúdy's writings utilize rhetorics in this sense of the word. On the other hand, as emphasized by Paul de Man, rhetorics means the active aspect of the powerful language holds to play with multiple meanings. These multiple structures can also be studied in an anthropological frame. For the German literary scholar, Wolfgang Iser, the medium of literature – through its multiple structures – also holds the possibility for self-creation. This anthropological idea is well-represented in Krúdy's novels *Az útitárs* (*The Travel Companion*) and *Asszonyságok díja* (*Ladies' Prize*) through their self-reflective structures. In these novels the concept of 'occurrence of meaning' is manifested in centreless, iterative structures, such as *Doppelgänger*s. The double or *Doppelgänger* – according to Wolfgang Iser – appears not only on the character's narrative level, but the narration itself is based on duality. As concepts of narratology, *metalepsis* and *mise en abyme* are similar, centreless structures. In the analysis of Krúdy's novel *Ál-Petőfi* we can follow the way metaleptical structures relate to identification, or rather, the process of identification. Moreover, in the last chapter of my thesis I analyze the novel entitled *N. N.* Here, the *rhetorical figures* have the same doubling function. These figures are linguistic masks, which are not there to mask meanings, but rather to create them. Although

these masks have a certain place in the textual space, the textual space is created by the masks themselves.

2. Outcomes of the essay

The aim of dissertation was reinterpretation of Krúdy prose from the point of view of self-reflexion. I did not endeavour general examination, but, on the one hand, I chose texts preferred by early Krúdy studies, on the other hand, I examined less studied texts, too. Preceding novels – *What Blind Béla saw in Love and Sorrow*, *The Travel Company*, *Ladies' Prize* – I analyzed from the view of formation of selfreflection. In the novel entitled of *What Blind Béla...*, I studied the blindness-sightening as a borderposition of metaphor and irony. In the novels entitled of *The Travel Company (Az útitárs)* and *Ladies' Prize (Asszonyságok díja)*, I emphasized the structures based on reiteration. In the last two novels, I connected the narration and the double-ganger. In *The Travel Company (Az útitárs)*, the remembering narrator - with the double-ganger of himself – redoubles the story too. Similarly in the *Ladies' Prize (Asszonyságok díja)*, I pointed out the endless structures. In this novel, the multiplications of stories is connected with the appearing of an other as a mediator (narrator, spectator, voyeur). Because the stories lead not into the final substance, but they lead into the stories about each others' others, the *Doppelgänger* (Wolfgang Iser) I extended on the level of narration. In this point I moved away from biographical Krúdy studies.

In addition, I also re-examined the novels entitled *Rózsa Sándor* and *Ál-Petőfi* – which were marginalized in earlier receptions - from the point of view of self-reflection. In the *Rózsa Sándor* the most important question is its connection with tradition (here the tradition means remembering of national past), namely the conflict between traditional and interpreting language. In the novel entitled *Ál-Petőfi*, I pointed out its double, iterative structures. The expected Petőfi's identity always postponed while the novel deals with the search for the „real”, identical poet. The

connection with embedded stories of the novel helped me in studying both as the maintaining of otherness as well as the starting-points of meaning.

The early short stories (from 1900 till first Szindbád stories) I re-examined from the point of view of dialogical structures. These dialogical structures create the narration. In this early period, I interpreted live speech as dialogical relationship, namely according to *speech-like* of language. That live-speech is not a style, namely similar to live speech, but a creative process. We can observe the narrator as one of the story's readers. The narrator has no decisive role in the interpretation. We can not speak of only narrator, but roles of narrators, multiple narrators. The play of points of view multiplies the stories too, thus one story can hide many stories, moving by the point of view.

Summarizing: the re-interpretation of Krúdy's prose based on notions of *limit*, *otherness*, *effect*, (strongly related to the last) *occurrence* and *experience*. I endeavoured to grasp such a comprehensive experience of mediation, in which the motive power of interpretation is the otherness, the indefinable phase.