

SHORT THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PhD)

*„My creed is that man is good...”*

**Mitopoetics and mediality in the short prose of Ferenc Sánta**

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## **I. The objective of the dissertation, circumscription of the subject**

The study of the oeuvre of Ferenc Sánta – based on the tradition of Mórícz – is justifiable in several aspects. This is a complementary research because of the almost 40 years of relative receptional silence going on since the first and so far the only release of a monograph. In this monograph written by Géza Vasy published in 1975 Sánta's writings were approached from an oeuvre deemed to be open. However, after the death of the writer in 2008 it turns to be clear that this oeuvre thought to be open was already closed in the 70-ies-80-ies and hardly will be broaden by unknown writings. Whether the silence embracing the writer and his writings was caused by the author's passive creative attitude or possibly by his unwillingness to publish his works are only half-truths. Nor can the author alone be blamed for the „quasi-“conservation of the oeuvre because the author-centered theoretical approach has been inviable for a long time.

The dissertation concentrates on the short proses of Sánta. The aim was to demonstrate that these texts are deep-layered creations with their own scope, being able to disclose the ethics of Ferenc Sánta similarly to the more respected novels of the author. To prove the above conclusion (*Fairy world, Inauguration of people, God on the chariot, Death of death, Big and small,*) five text were text chosen from a thirty-seven-piece short story corpus being appropriate to demonstrate the previous statement the previous statement by intense analysis.

## II. Methods applied

The concepts in the chapter titles (short prose, mitopoetics, parabola, trauma, mediality) designate the main horizons determining the methodological-structural layout of the dissertation undertaking the re-read of the oeuvre. It is important to emphasise, that the above standpoints were not forced by outer, theoretical mechanisms but they were inspired by the writings themselves. The previous interpretive mode is also able to highlight the fact that the two determinative genres (novels and novellas) are characterized, „operated” by a common thematic connection as well.

1. In recent years many have taken efforts to ascertain the theoretical aspects of the genre of /short story/novellas/short prose. The previously highlighted generic relationships get on well with each other, so the only possible aspiration of my theoretical research conducted in this area could be which of the specific variables become stylistic features in the short proses of Ferenc Sánta. So the first, theoretical chapter of the dissertation undertakes a brief overview of the prosepoetic tradition based on the works of foreign and Hungarian theorists of short prose.

After the theoretical introduction the diverse interpretational approaches of five Sánta-proses follow. I think that traditional and modern prosepoetics can be involved in the interpretation of writings, for example **mitopoetic** (*Fairy world*, *Inauguration of people*), **gender/trauma** (*Big nad small*) or **phenomenologic reading** (*God on the chariot*), enrich and make the understanding of the oeuvre as a whole more integral.

2. I emphasize during the analysis of the *Fairy world* the visual-acoustic-metaforic layers which together form the interpretational web of the short story and at the same time highlight the **mythical-poetic deep-layers** of the writing,

furthermore demonstrate–how the text is able to carry the aesthetic quality of beauty and tragedy at the same time.

Namely what it is about it that the imagination of the mother emerged in the world of the window creates the fairy world whose inner world of ideas is explored for the readers in an almost scenic spectacular way by the text. This kind of inner suggestive vision monologue rises above the narrative point of view. When analyzing the cinematic narrative the above mentioned effect has an even more visible role. At this point not only the hidden spatial structure of the story is splitted into two, but also the consistence of its after-image becomes broken. In this way the „tale” of the traumatic bereavement experience turns into a separate story also within the visual point of view.

3. The reading strategy already known from the analysis of the mitopoetic layers of *Fairy world* is partly operable in case of *Inauguration of people*. Here on the way back home full of trials the child becomes a man ready for the father’s role, which can be perceived as a kind of **border crossing**. The manifestations of the main character are also strikingly changed during the search for his identity. How the child’s voice is silenced, at which stage the „man’s voice” enters and where Ferike finds his borders: those are the questions to be answered in the third chapter of the dissertation. I think it is an interesting possible interpretation that the narrated story can be read as a kind of *rewriting of initiatory rite*.

4. The *Big and small* transfers its characters from the endless experimental opportunities of getting acquainted with the world to another socially determined situation. The gender-reading of the story is luckily compatible with the trauma-aspect approach of the art work. The uniqueness of the story can be conceptualized in the fact that it points beyond the presentation of a social phenomenon with ethnographic authenticity. Through the child characters even

the writer's view of world can be expressed. Through the symbolic play „tunneled” in the plot of the novella both the latent family (sociocultural) complexes and individual (psychological) projections appear. The imitation of adults creates such a special situation in which this mapped reproduction playground becomes subordinated to the lyrics by the end of the novella. It is mainly the microanalysis of the film adaptation which proves that spacepoetics can be organically integrated into the interpretation in this case.

5. The main character of the next story analysed *God on the chariot* is also found in a other „quality” of border situation. The next chapter agreed to describe as a „parabola of self-understanding” chooses a **phenomenological perspective** for art interpretation. This horizon drives the attention of the researcher toward such a *Sánta*-text which seems to be a unique phenomenon in the oeuvre. The introduction of the transcendent character into the storyline implies the initiation of a new aspect dialogue with the work of art, but it can cause a narratopoetic fracture in the reading as well. (The latest *Sánta*-novella *Mirjám* coming to light recently seems to be the only match of it till now.) A question emerging is how it „could have happened” among the prevailing literature political conditions known from the 60-ies that the nonvisualizable Lord appears in *Sánta*'s novella. Further questions in this chapter are: how the layers of meaning of the art work opens new interpretational ways for strangeness-experience, for the Other of Levinas, for re-writing of folk and biblical tradition, as well as for the spooky and fantastic.

6. I investigate the film adaptations in the fourth chapter of the dissertation. I believe that we can get an authentic insight into the imagery ‘ab ovo’ hidden inside the *Sánta*-prose through the **criteria of intermediality**. Concerning mediality which has been the object of a lively discourse in literary theory

lately, the dissertation looks for answers here for the question *how the Ferenc Sánta's narrative can be re-read from the perspective of film adaptations, that is to say how the film re-reads the text*. Twelve out of thirty-seven stories of the writer were adapted for the screen (two adaptations from the one titled (*Death of death*). This high number is a proper reason for the dissertation to be concerned also with Sánta-adaptations in a more profound way as a pioneering undertaking. I investigate the adaptations always in context, together with the writings, including the philological investigation of the text of the film source material.

7. Finally: the grouping experiments raised in the theoretical chapters create genre frontiers inside Sánta's short prose from the beginning. The primal explanation of this phenomenon is that these short prose forms are historically very ductile, that is why it is necessary to evaluate the single works in their context of writing. This methodical process can have two yields: on the one hand – as sovereign works – they can show those unique features which are not yet settled in Sánta's volume editorial-structural organizing principles. On the other hand these prose pieces one by one can be true impressions of the transformation of a writing course, which can be dated in case of Sánta from the publication of his first volume titled *Winter bloom* in 1956 to the release of the last omnibus volume titled *God on the chariot* (1970). Since this active creative periode seems to be very short, it would only be proper to ask whether the poetic-ideological changes could be demonstrated during this time at all. If so, what is the arc of this path? The closing chapter of my dissertation wants to provide a kind of comprehensive overview with the multi-faceted interpretation – aspiring for global reading –, and motivic re-reading of Sánta's short prose.

### III. Results

I attempted to re-read Ferenc Sánta's short prose in my dissertation in a modern way. I undertook to open a window to some texts of Sánta's short prose sounded with diverse analytical methods after a deliberate corpus selection and construction of theoretical frameworks. These text analyses were used as the backbone of the thesis. In theoretical aspects the expression of *short story* fits the best to the Sánta-texts among the genre relations raised in the theoretical chapter. However, after the profound screening of Sánta-reception it can be concluded that *novella* is preferred by reviewer's term usage.

The methodological variegation of modern literary theory provided an opportunity to prove the adequate presence and tradition holder phenomenon in the Hungarian history of literature of Sánta's texts. Through the writing analyses it was proved that the sociological (sociocultural) theme selections of these texts are accurate molds of the historical memory.

Furthermore: the adaptation chapter of my dissertation „produced” a unique repository included in the appendix of the dissertation. The Sánta-filmography was prepared with the help of MTVA, with verified usage of show forms. The appendix of the thesis also includes an interview the author, which was printed in my dissertation for the first time. In addition the inset necessary for the analysis of the films and the interviews with directors were also put in this section.

In the interpretations the researcher keeps pursuing the multidirectional approach of the work, but inevitably the analysis remains partial. This lack originates mainly from the doubts of the position of the re-reader. The closing chapter of my dissertation tried to fill this hiatus which can be derived from the hermeneutic nature of the interpretation with the text analysis reviewing the full corpus of Sánta's short prose, during which the readings of the novellas depicted the road towards the novels.

#### IV. Publications in the Field of this Doctoral Thesis

1. Az „*őszült ráncú fájdalom*” novellája: Sánta Ferenc *Tündérvilágának mélyrétegei*. In.: *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 2010/5., 447–459.

2. *Határátlépések Sánta Ferenc Emberavatásában*. In.: *Hitel*, 2011/9., 106–111.

3. „*A forma artisztikuma*” (Sánta Ferenc rövidpóza munkáiról). In.: *Átmenet és különbözőség: Magyarságtudományok kelet-közép-európai kontextusban*. (Szerk.: Fenyvesi Kristóf), 2012, 225–235.

4. *Morális parabola filmen* (Sánta Ferenc: *Halálnak halála*). In.: *Szabolcsi Szemle*, 2013/2. (megjelenés alatt)

5. *Egy ablaktalan négyszög novellája* (Sánta Ferenc: *Kicsik és nagyok*). In.: *Gender és trauma; ELTE-konferenciakötet*, szerk.: Szabolcsi Gergely (megjelenés alatt)

## V. Further Publications

1. „*Poézis ludens*” (Kilián István: *A régi magyar képv. Bp., Felsőmagyarország Kiadó – Magyar Műhely Kiadó, 1998*), Új Holnap, 2000. augusztus, 167–170.

2. *Sajátos sárréti sorsszimfónia* (Rott József: *Csaposok, cselédek, csavargók*, Karcag, Barbaricum Könyvműhely, 2004), Hitel, 2005/3., 119–122.

3. *Milyen magasra jut el egy gyaluforgács? (Kényszerleszállás: Szilágyi Domokos emlékezete.* Válogatta, szerkesztette: Pécsi Györgyi, Bp., Nap Kiadó, 2005), Hitel, 2006/1., 124–128.

4. *A „sárga sziromsapka” szomorúsága Szilágyi Domokos privát magányának és egy nemzet magányának összefonódása Napraforgók című versében,* Forrás, 2006/12., 107–115.

5. *A művész stílusa: „József Attila, a stílus művésze”* (Tanulmányok József Attila stílusművészetéről. Szerk.: Szikszainé Nagy Irma, Debrecen, 2005), Pedagógiai Műhely, XXX. évfolyam, 4. szám, 82–88.

6. *„Amikor a hang csengeni, a szó mondani kezd...”* (Művészetesztétikai fejtegetések), Pedagógiai Műhely, XXXI. évfolyam, 4. szám, 7–16.

7. *Három impromptu: múzeumi séták* (Kosztolányi–Dsida–Babits), Debreceni Disputa, 2007/11–12., 65–66.

8. *Erdélyi szász tükör* (Cziráki Zsuzsanna: *Az erdélyi szászok története, Erdélyi szász irodalomtörténet,* Imedias Kiadó, 2006), Debreceni Disputa, 2008/1., 38–41.

9. *A „sárga sziromsapka” szomorúsága,* Társasági tükör III., Móricz Zsigmond évkönyv, Nyíregyháza, 2008, 59–74.

10. *A tiszta beszéd varázsa* (Görömbei András: *Azonosság, nemzet, irodalom,* Bp., Nap Kiadó, 2008), Pedagógiai Műhely, 2009/1., 26–31.

11. *Erdélyi szász tükkör* (Cziráki Zsuzsanna: *Az erdélyi szászok története, Erdélyi szász irodalomtörténet*, Imedias Kiadó, 2006), Hítel, 2008/8., 117–121. (másodközlés)
12. *A népi mozgalom kiskátéja* (Petrik Béla: *A teljes kép felé*, Miskolc, Felsőmagyarország Kiadó, 2008), Hítel, 2010/5., 116–122.
13. *Tehetségpont.hu* = Pedagógiai Műhely, 2010/3., 8–12.
14. *Nem csak Both és vászon* (Both Balázs: *Látogatód jön*, Bp., Magyar Napló, 2010), Hítel, 2010/10., 113–119.
15. *A nyugati igény szolgálatában* (Olasz Sándor: *A nyugati igény – Németh Lászlóról*, Bp., Nap Kiadó, 2011), Szépirodalmi Figyelő, 2011/4., 66–75.
16. *Négyszáz oldal a zsarnokságról* (Oláh János: *Száműzött történetek*, Bp., Magyar Napló Kiadó, 2011), Hítel, 2012/8., 108–113.
17. *Cantata sacra avagy egy versfüga margójára* (Farkas Gábor: *Törzsét tartó ág*, Bp., Hungarovox Kiadó, 2011), Magyar Napló, 2013/2., 16–19.