

Theses of doctoral (PhD) dissertation

**STYLE ELEMENTS OF LAJOS PARTI NAGY'S
POETIC LANGUAGE**

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1. Aim of the dissertation, definition of the topic

A typical figure of the era following the linguistic turn, Lajos Parti Nagy is an outstanding and renowned author of Hungarian postmodern literature who drew the attention of the literary public on himself by his creative language use opposing the conventions, and creating special language forms and thus a novel style. He has made his mark in several genres and forms. Still, my dissertation sticks to studying his poetic works only. My aim was a linguistic, stylistic and structural examination of his poetic texts, by presenting, describing and systematising his most important style elements and text formation practices in the most comprehensive way possible.

The main features of his poetic language use are presented by way of a linguistic and stylistic analysis of his collections of poems. The corpus includes his following volumes:

- Parti Nagy Lajos 1982. *Angyalstop*. Magvető. Budapest.
- Parti Nagy Lajos 1986. *Csuklógyakorlat*. Magvető. Budapest.
- Parti Nagy Lajos 1990. *Szódalovaglás*. Magvető. Budapest.
- Parti Nagy Lajos 1995. *Esti kréta*. Jelenkor. Pécs.
- Parti Nagy Lajos 2003. *Grafitmesz*. Magvető. Budapest.

Although Lajos Parti Nagy cannot be left from any discussion of Hungarian postmodern literature, his oeuvre has been studied mainly by literary historians so far. Some representatives of Hungarian stylistics, however, have already made steps to study the phenomenon of the postmodern. The most significant comprehensive discussion of the texts of postmodern literature has been provided by Zoltán Szabó: in the chapter entitled *A posztmodern irodalom stílusa* of his book *A magyar szépirói stílus történetének fő irányai* (1998). Here he discusses the style development trends of the contemporary era, describing its main stylistic features, too. However, we can miss examples other than those from Hungarian postmodern prose cited by him.

Some stylisticians have already analysed Parti Nagy's poetic and prosaic texts in particular. Ágnes Domonkosi studied the text formation practices in each linguistic level of Parti Nagy's *elrepullman* in his article published in *Magyar Nyelv* in 2001 (2001: 192–200), and it was also her to present the text and style creation role of the figures in Parti Nagy's poetry in Volume 20 of the series entitled *Az alakzatok világa* (2008). Irma Szikszainé Nagy compared Parti Nagy's poem *van utcarím van mintamondat* to Dezső Kosztolányi's poem

Boldog, szomorú dal using the methods of comparative style analysis in his article *A nyelvhasználat funkcionális varianciája és a stíluskohézió* in a collection of studies analysing the tools of style cohesion in modern and postmodern texts in 2011 (2011: 223–238). Researches by Károly Minya are also relevant here. First, in 2003, he analysed a Parti Nagy fiction (*Sárbogárdi Jolán: A test angyala*) by examining the style tool of hypercorrection (2003: 131–141), while in 2007, he explored the stylistic function of rare lexical derivation methods in a remake of the postmodern author (*A tisztújítás*) (2007: 315–322). His findings about the stylistic neologisms of Parti Nagy are also worth considering and guiding for those studying neologisms from multiple aspects (2011).

These stylistic analyses focussed on certain parts of the poetic language use or on a specific piece of the oeuvre which implies that the language use of Parti Nagy's poetic works has not been studied in a comprehensive and systematic way from the stylistic aspect yet. Therefore I think that the topic of my dissertation is relevant in being novel in this field, in examining the language and style of his collections of poems and exploring his poetic language use.

2. Studies performed so far and methods of processing

My dissertation is founded on the theory and methodology of functional stylistics. Functional stylistics is an approach in stylistics founded on functional lines of linguistics which “studies the established roles of linguistic and stylistic means as well as the so-called extralingual means as variants together with the function(s) in the expression of the message and in the whole work and the speech mode concerned” (Szathmári 2008a: 14). Following the method as outlined by István Szathmári of the functional complex style analysis, I have analysed the whole corpus of the collections of Parti Nagy's poems, including as many as 775 longer or shorter poems and fragments. Style phenomena are enumerated by linguistic level but only the most relevant style and text formation features of each stylistic level are described.

When examining linguistic phenomena, I relied on all occurring data, that is, the whole corpus of the collections of poems. Still, in two cases, I based the presentation of the style features on the volumes *Szódalovaglás* and *Angyalstop* in the chapters on metaplasms and repetition types, respectively. The reason was that my text analyses led me to conclude that the examined phenomena occur in these two volumes in an outstanding number, and that's why I decided to present these features based on these volumes.

The stylistic analysis of the works goes hand in hand with the examination of linguistic forms other than the vernacular of all the poems of the four volumes. It was necessary to ascertain that Parti Nagy's word usage creates hapax legomena by several lexical derivation methods that cannot be found in dictionaries. I explored the ways Parti Nagy forms and distorts available linguistic expressions. I analysed the linguistic and stylistic features of the works against their context. As regards their roles in the process of text interpretation, I tried to find out their function in the interpretation by the receiver, the associations these might raise in the receiver, and their possible style effects.

The discussion of the style phenomena begins with the most prominent one. First I presented Parti Nagy's irony (2.1.) as the major feature of his poems since it permeates all his poems. Then I studied types of intertextuality according to the concept of transtextuality (2.2.) as suggested by Gérard Genette (1996), since this category includes intertextual relations of more orientations and types. I presented the so-called semantic shifts and images in the context of changes of the semantic features of the texts (2.3.). Then I described the role in style formation of metaplasms (2.4.) and hapax legomena created by different lexical derivation methods (2.5.) based on the findings of *Magyar grammatika*. Finally, I studied the style formation role of the structural forms of poems (2.6.). I explained the condition of the coherence of the works with the concept of constringency based on the semiotic textology findings of János S. Petőfi.

My analyses have proved that the striking linguistic and stylistic features of Parti Nagy's poetry are those characterising the postmodern literature. Therefore I also took into consideration the following statements of the Hungarian stylistic literature on the style elements of the postmodern literature: style elements of the Hungarian postmodern literature by Zoltán Szabó (1998: 238–253) and statements on the characteristics of Parti Nagy's language use by Ágnes Domonkosi (2008: 7). Functional complex style analyses of Parti Nagy's poems confirmed the stylisticians' statements and also necessitated the discussion of features other than the style elements provided by them.

3. Scientific results of the dissertation

3.1. Means of irony in Parti Nagy's poetry

The most prominent style formation feature of Parti Nagy's poetry is irony which is present in all his poems. This enhanced presence of irony in his poetry results from the experience of the

priority of language. I state that the ironic purpose is manifest mainly in tropes, metataxes, metalexemes or metaplasms or, as a metalogism, comprises longer structural units in his oeuvre. Since irony is not linked to certain linguistic structures, its recognition is not simple in the written language. I illustrated with textual examples that irony is marked with capitalisation and quotation marks as typographic elements in Parti Nagy's poetry. I stated that, in most cases, irony is combined with mocking. However, as intertextuality is a basic factor in postmodern literary works, irony is also closely linked to allusion. The perception of the so-called intertextual irony is determined by the receiver's preliminary knowledge, reading experiences, and textual memory, and thus its interpretation necessitates more activity from the reader's part. Parti Nagy sometimes uses a litotes to express irony in his poems, that is, he denies the opposite of a concept or fact with a circumscription. I proved that self-irony has a prominent role in his poetry as well, in particular relating to intertextuality since he expresses his relationship with the previous poetic tradition, the history, the past and the present with (self-)ironically remaking certain pieces of the Hungarian literary canon, mostly relying on parodistic meanings.

3.2. The role in style creation of transtextuality in the poetry of Lajos Parti Nagy

I concluded that transtextuality is one of the most typical style and text formation features of his poetry. In his poems, types of intertextuality are predominant, being very diverse as regards the topic of the borrowed text and its insertion into the text. The linguistic and stylistic analysis of the corpus of the collections of poems showed that the borrowed texts are built into the intertext mainly unmarked and can be grouped into several types depending on the extent to which they keep their original textual forms. We can trace word by word quotations and also modified ones. In several cases, the architext is disintegrated, too, that is, the borrowed text is built in as a montage of one or two words. Another type is when it is the structure to have an allusive role in the text. Upon examining types of transtextuality, it became evident that borrowings in several tones from Hungarian literature come together with non-literary references, e.g., proverbs, idioms, everyday phrases or parts of well-known lyrics are borrowed in the poems. The analysis of these proved that the mixing of texts of different tones and types results in style pluralism. I explored that Parti Nagy creates intratextual relationships, too, by using the whole or a part of his own former works. I demonstrated that he refers to poem structures by hypertextuality, and, what's more, his whole poem cycles are determined by form and style imitation in several cases. I proved that Parti Nagy also re-

establishes the traditional relationship between the text and the epigraph as he distorts and rewrites the borrowed texts to conform post-modern text rendering. Less often, he places a text reflecting his own thoughts at the beginning of his work. These latter, although without alluding to literary classics in the poems, provide a wider context for their interpretation.

My stylistic analyses proved that types of transtextuality are effective means of style creation in his poetry, as a reader familiar with the architext is capable of more refined attribution of meaning.

3.3. Semantic features of the text: role of semantic transfers and images in Parti Nagy's poetry

Poetic and aspectual changes of postmodern poetry brought about by the linguistic turn are shown in the semantic features of Parti Nagy's texts. My text analyses demonstrated that the number of possible meanings is typically multiplied in his poems. I also underlined that the vivification of the objects of the world is often signalled by anthropomorphic images. These have unusual and brave metaphoric and/or metonymic structures, enhancing the mysterious and picturesque character of the poetic speech by creating a complex image together with individual similes. I proved that the specialty of the postmodern semantic structures of the poems is the result of a change in the structural features of texts, that is, the lack of the syntactical and grammatical coherence of the poems, as well as elliptic structures, on the one hand, and of new semantic possibilities offered by the lack of a sentence-like arrangement, that is, the reconsideration of the part of speech categories and uncertainty about syntactic roles, on the other. I came to conclude that the so-called semantic shifts are among the main linguistic and stylistic features of Parti Nagy's language usage, renewing the semantic features of the poems from a postmodern perspective. These mainly come from the re-evaluation of the part of speech category of metaplasms according to context, the mixing of several possible meanings of a linguistic element, text references with paronomasia, plays with word boundaries or oscillations between parallel semantic levels. I stated that he also utilises the style effect of unusual word coupling, since his poems place semantically non-matching items side by side. In his postmodern images, the semantic distance between levels of meaning is typically so great that the common realm of objectual and image elements can be explored with difficulties or be suspected only. I found that a semantic continuity is generally not characteristic of these texts of areferent semantic formation due to the

omissions, brave image couplings, semantic transfers, and short semantic chains and relationships on the textual level of cohesion.

3.4. Role of metaplasms in Parti Nagy's style creation

My studies proved my hypothesis according to which metaplasms have a dominant role in Parti Nagy's style. I demonstrated that all types and subtypes of metaplasms are present in his texts, since he interchanges, replaces, and rearranges the linguistic elements of words, and shortens or extends words. Parti Nagy's special linguistic forms in his collections of poems are characterised by the functions of metaplasms as described in *Alakzatlexikon* (2008b), that is, the expression of emotions, the extension or shortening due to prosodic reasons, the expression of a mood or a pronunciation in different variants, foreign-like speech or intertextual metaplasms. My analyses led me to conclude that the two most typical functions of the poetic language use is semantic concentration, that is, the linking of different concepts in one and the same word, and dazzle by intentionally getting rid of normative orthographical rules. The poems most often contain figures with immutation but a part of those practices which are considered modified phonetic forms can be interpreted as replacement of whole words, too. Parti Nagy's operations based on immutation often concern a standing locution or proverb. By transcribing well-known lines from old literary works based on sound replacement, he creates intertextual metaplasms. His poetry is largely characterised by detractions, that is, forms created by omitting a letter or a syllable. Besides its function showing the formability of the language, the operation based on apecope may also cause the new word thus created to harmonise with the rhythmic and rhyming features of the poem. Still, the most typical metaplasms in his language use are those that can be interpreted as hapax legomenon compounds or, even, as lexical formations. Being evocative forms highlighting the possibilities inherent in the language, these may imitate speech modes and also affect the syntactic and semantic features of the texts. These linguistic phenomena provide a major characteristic of Parti Nagy's poetic language use, that is, several possible interpretations of the text and the mixing of different possible meanings. That's why their studying facilitates the characterisation of his own poetic style.

3.5. *Hapax legomena created with different lexical derivation methods in Parti Nagy's poetry*

I demonstrated that the language of his collections of poems is not characterised by words created by lexical contraction, compounding and lexical derivation which are well known in the linguistic literature and widespread in everyday language use, but he renews these word formation methods, thus enhancing the style creating power of his poetry with hapax legomena.

His special words merging the sound structures of two words in several form variations are similar to those created by lexical contraction, however, this term is not appropriate as it refers to one type of Parti Nagy's word formation methods only. Therefore I created the term 'lexical form merging' for his six types of word merging as the hapax legomena thus created are different from the traditional examples where only the beginnings and the ends of certain words are contracted. His linguistic inventions created by lexical form merging can be grouped into types according to the part of the original words participating in the word formation. There are six such types. I demonstrated that his special lexical form mergings are characteristic of the language of mainly the later collections, especially *Szódalovaglás*.

Examining his word compounds, it became evident that these renew this word formation method which is one of the most frequent ones in Hungarian by overwriting the semantical, morphological and orthographical rules governing compounds. Despite the referentiality of the constituents of compounds, the meaning of compounds is usually areferent and the relational meaning of the constituents cannot be linked clearly to a single syntactic meaning type. Also, the orthographical rules on spelling words solidly or separately are breached in different ways. Their groupings according to part of speech category seem to be various. Just like compounds of everyday language use, their majority are nouns, that is, unmarked compounds of nouns of a distant meaning. Less frequently, they are adjectives and verbs. Adjectives are mainly based on comparison, while verbs are back-formed from compounds with a semantic concentration. His poems also contain compounds with hapax legomenon nonfinite verbs where the most productive ones are the present and past participles. His words used as nouns and declinable as lexemes created by constituent solidification, fixing different syntagmas or a whole utterance are also worth considering. His compounds are mainly organic subordinate compounds, with a semantic concentration meaning, including a metaphoric image. Despite their metaphoric and/or comparative meaning, the interaction of lexical meanings of the constituents hardly reveals a common semantic domain, if at all. Therefore he creates brand new associations or his words have an associative power only.

Upon examining the hapax legomena created by lexical derivation, it became evident that the majority of his derived forms is created by analogy and/or choosing a derivative not matching the part of speech category. These usually renew the noun-based derivation, generally using part of speech changing formatives. However, derivations based on verbs, adverbs and adjectives also occur, although in a lesser number. I highlighted that words created by analogy are justified with rhyming and mainly occur in coordinated syntagmata. Their creation may be motivated by a linguistic form created in a novel way, a paronomasia, or a foreign language word as well. Therefore their examination focuses on the interrelated and linguistically reflected character of the markers. In Parti Nagy's poetry, it seems that only the *-ód(ik)/őd(ik)* and *-od(ik)/-ed(ik)/-öd(ik)* type lexical derivations can be considered relatively frequent and productive. Such derivatives further derive words created with the *-z* denominal verb derivational suffix which most often express frequentative and continuous action in the poetic language.

He creates words in a way differing from the usual vocabulary formation. These are capable of expressing brand new concepts due to their areferent semantic formation. This novel formation of linguistic elements show Parti Nagy's playfulness and creativity as regards language.

3.6. The style forming role of structural forms in Parti Nagy's poetry

My text analyses proved my hypothesis according to which Parti Nagy's poems are not prototypical as regards textuality. As there is no sentence-like arrangement in his works, that is, the text is structured without textual sentences, we can only suspect that certain units belong together, and the sentence type of these suspected text units can be presumed only as there is no interpunction. Informality which characterises the postmodern language use is manifest in the frequent omission or interruption of sentence parts or whole sentences, that is, in elliptic sentences. I proved that his very frequent ellipses as opposed to the continuity of the prototypical text result in the lack of semantic continuity, thus rendering the texts polysemantic and fragmented. Distortion of grammatisedness is against the well-formed character of language, disintegrating the syntactic coherence of the linguistic texture. Hapax legomena cause semantic disruptions in cohesion and thus these text and style forming features are against the realisation of syntactic-structural and semantic coherence, connexity and cohesion. I used the concept of constringency by János S. Petőfi to explain the coherence of the linguistic texture of the poems since I am convinced that the receiver may assign a

uniform assembly of facts to the text, despite the fragmented character of the linguistic level. To have this statement proven, I extended the concept of constringency to the areferent semantic formation characteristic of postmodern texts. It comes hand in hand with the necessity to include the referent and the areferent meaning into the concept of the facts.

As regards repetition types, I analysed his collection entitled *Angyalstop* with the aim to prove that postmodern poems have textual features other than the features contradicting the context that facilitate the coherence between linguistic textures as linguistic tools of recurring reference. Types of repetition figures substantially influence the semantic formation of the receiver since the reader mostly assigns a plus meaning to the recurring element. I stated that the most characteristic style tool of the collection is repetition, a figure used by the traditional poetic toolbox. And what's more, this figure type is so frequent as compared to other poetic practices that some works raise the possibility of a forced repetition. My text analyses proved that repetition-based figures give a shape to the poems, help them to be divided into parts or sections, may separate semantic units or highlight certain parts. I proved that several postmodern repetition types participate in the formation of the text structure of the works. The most characteristic one among these is the repetition of the lines of the poems. Repeated lines are mostly present according to epizeuxis which means that there is no regularity or formula governing their occurrence as they can be repeated either in an invariant or a variant form. It was proved that the collection very often contains pre-repetition, too. This rhetorical and stylistical figure creates parallel structures in the meaning of the poems by repeating words or groups of words, and also suggests the semantic parallelism of the linguistic units. I demonstrated that the function of inclusion, that is, a framework structure which links the starting and the closing refrains, is highlighting. Parallelism works as a form creating principle in these poems creating parallels in the structure and content of the whole work. It was proven that repetition types in the poems may work as a means of arranging the text structure, creating poem-like criteria and style cohesion within the poems, that is, the repetition figures seem to create and keep together the structure.

On reviewing the style elements of Parti Nagy's poetry, I have concluded that all these elements are characteristic of the postmodern style and that Parti Nagy's so-called postmodern text formation technique results from the simultaneous presence of several textual features, which corresponds to the findings of literary historians.

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Hungarian book chapters (2)

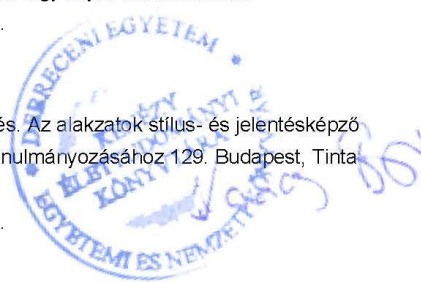
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