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A n n a S é r a - F e r e n c z

The Haunted Materiality of Focalization

Theses of Doctoral Dissertation

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The goal of the dissertation was to explore a discursive field, which is defined by focalization, point of view, space, place and ghost. As a discursive space this conceptual constellation cannot be interpreted in the framework of a single discipline (cultural or literary or social studies). From my interpretation-centered approach a methodology for the interpretation of narrative texts can be outlined. The study of focalization, of point of view and consequently of the literary space bring to the light such characteristics of a literary text which remain otherwise unexplored.

The first part of the dissertation - Space and point of view in literature - presents a sociological perspective. I focus on Pierre Bourdieu's and Michel de Certeau's works, especially on their interpretation about point of views and different practices in literary texts. This approach makes interpretable the relationships among literary space, discursive and non-discursive practices, problems which cannot be considered in a text-immanent research.

The most revelative part of Bourdieu's theoretical system is the description of the formation of the literary fields. He analyses the French literary movements and action of the turn of the 19th and 20th century. Bourdieu explores the autonomization of literary life: describes the literary institutes, formed by writers, critics, publishers, community places and official institutes. We got not only a historical state of this field, but the dynamic of the conflicts for the legitimacy: there are described the different movements and school who have their particular and symbolic place in the social space and they have different relationships with the field of authority. The primary material of the research are Flaubert's works. Bourdieu formulates the principle of double historization as the methodology of the research. According to this, the scientist has to keep in mind the historicity of the research object (in this case: the formation of the literary field) and the historical context of his own interpretative position. Only the sociologist is capable to apply this principle in practice, so Bourdieu thinks that the research can be carried out only in the context of social studies. We have to note that the inauguration of the social studies into the meta science of all sciences does not bring the results expected by Bourdieu: the study of the particular, everyday practices is postponed. Bourdieu does not want to take the discursive risk of such an analysis.

The main goal of Michel de Certeau's work is to study these everyday practices. The *Practice of Everyday Life* is valuable as a theoretical work: there is described the theoretical context of the research. The reader gets only a few sketch for the analysis of

particular practices. The main questions are the following: How are the different discursive formations founded in the different periods? What happens with those non-discursive practices which are not included in those formations? De Certeau's Foucault-reading becomes really exciting at this point: he asserts that the past practices cannot be originated from the present apparatuses. These non-discursive practices are important because – according to the de Certeau – they are those everyday practices which don't reflect to their function and meaning. In the same time they have indisputable role in the formation of space. By using them we can reinterpret the pair of production and consumption (it is not enough to know that a tv show is popular, one has to examine the viewers behavior during the airing time, too). In order to study these everyday practices, de Certeau introduces the strategy-tactics pair. The strategy evolves in harmony with the possibilities offered by the authority, and forms thus the legitimate space necessary for its functioning. In contrary with the strategy, tactics does not produce anything new: it uses the already given possibilities in such a way, that it subverts the present order. "La perruque" is a special case of tactics, it describes an activity which is performed in a certain place instead the officially allowed one (a worker from a factory produces objects for his private use instead the prescribed objects). Considering the relationship between strategy and tactics, we can describe the space as a practiced place. In this system literature becomes a special practice: it is in the same time the discursive practice of narration and the discourse about this practice. Beside, literature can preserve the tracks of other, everyday practices.

Krúdy Gyula's late, called documentarist novels can be interpreted from this perspective. A sample interpretation is given from the *Ady Endre éjszakái*. The text deals with the relationship of literary and social space through the main elements of the city, the walking and writing. These motif appear not only in the plot, but walking defines the logic and functioning of narration, too. Bourdieu's concept of field, de Certeau's definition of strategy and tactics makes possible to understand and describe this textual configuration and we can demonstrate how the ghost becomes the main formatting principle of the text.

Ady Endre éjszakái (1925) is one of the forgotten Krúdy texts. The critical discourse speaks about it rarely and with a kind of disturbance. The genre of the text is not clarified, some speak about it as documentarist novel, other as a short story, other as a novel cycle. There are even more textual variants: the texts edited by Anna Fábri and

András Bartha are different from several point of view (there are different texts included, the order is different, and even in the texts with same title there are textual differences). The role of the research would be the clarification of this confusing situation.

However it is not totally meaningless to read these texts together: the figure of Ady, his contemporaries and the different places give the net of relationships. We got a spatial network, which outlines the particular image of the city from the turn of century. The city is a literary space, shaped by the creation and wanderings of poets.

In the second part of the dissertation I revise those works which deal with the theory of focalization. This approach gives a history of narratological works, as well. However, the dissertation concentrates only on the theories of focalization, and does not aim to create a comprehensive narratological and methodological framework.

The overview of the works (Percy Lubbock's and Boris Uspenskij's) from the turn of the century and first half of 20th century was inevitable because these form the theoretical background in the period when Krúdy's discussed works were written. We can understand better why the relationship between narration and point of view became a discussed topic among writers and critics in that time

The theories of focalization (Genette, Mieke Bal, Manfred Jahn) elaborated the term of focalization: focalization describes the perception in the texts, as an action separated from the narration. Focalization plays a key role in the construction of the textual world as it makes possible the perception and the orientation of the characters in the space. Regarding the functioning of focalization there is a dispute between the authors: Genette thinks that it is related to the characters of a story, and their perception is related by an author, who does not perceive anything (the character and the narrator can be the same person only in the case of the present tense first person narration). Others, like Bal and Jahn, believe that the narrator himself perceives, and they give a role even to the reader.

According to the cognitive theories (Manfred Jahn) there is no difference between our everyday perception and the way we perceive the events and space from texts. Such an approach denies even the existence of fiction, because annihilates the difference of world and text. I believe that this border between text and world cannot be erased. It is not indifferent whether we walk on the Andrásy street or we read the description of the walk in a novel. In the case of the novel we will consider the narration, its role in the

story, the character who walks and so on. The textual spaces do not exist in themselves, they are always character-related, as they are perceived by them.

Asszonyságok díja (1919) is one of the most well-known novels of Krúdy. It presents a day of Czifra János, undertaker on Budapest. We visit with him different places - temple, brothel and bridal, and we make acquaintance with the life story of Natália, a prostitute who dies during giving birth to her child. The plot itself is not a complicated one, but to follow the relationship of the different narrative levels requires a lot of effort from the reader. One of the key figures of the novel is the ghost called Álom, who guides the hero through the different scenes. The reception is interpreted as the alter ego of the main person and thinks that the story is a version of the romantic alter ego stories. However, I think the Álom is the ghost of focalization: Czifra cannot see or perceive anything without it. The ghost mediates the events and assigns the perceiving positions for him (how can he observe the different rooms in the brothel, he transmits the story of Natália by reading it from the eye of the woman.). In the novel there is another ghost, Démon. It is responsible for the narration - it appears when the story of the undertaker begins. Démon and Álom are responsible for the functioning of the narrated world, and Krúdy's trick is to represent them as ghosts: focalization and narration are acts which cannot be anthropomorphized.