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THE MAGIC GARDEN OF TROPES

Metaphorical variations of prose in the poetics of modernity

Theses of doctoral dissertation

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Introduction

Since Aristotle, metaphor is one of the most common expressions in the classical poetics, rhetoric and in everyday use, as well as in school exercises or idiomatic expressions, it comes up everywhere. Its occurrence cannot be narrowed only to literature, its analysis is made more difficult as it has its roots in classical rhetoric and the petrous examples that occur in stylistical studies. The amount of specialist literature on metaphor itself could fill a library, not counting the renaissance of the notion or “metaphor-mania” in the related disciplines and other fields of humanities.

Therefore, instead of an itemised account of concepts on metaphor and a historical overview, the dissertation examines the narrative technics and narratological relations as well as textual realizations of tropes and metaphoricity in prose and narratives. Ignoring the historical synthesis of the concepts of metaphor, touching only a part of the stylistical-rhetorical researches, the dissertation focuses on the main interdisciplinary occurrence and changes of the notion, referring to the prose poetic characteristics of metaphoricity and metaphoric organization.

By the rebirth of rhetoric in the 1970ies the disciplines of figures and tropes had been widened, the borders of strict categories became indistinct, starting a fruitful multiplication first within the literary language of prose and philosophy, then within a great variety of discourses and narratives influencing the cultural and artistic phenomena. Jurij Lotman and cultural semiotics connected these tropes as cultural codes with the concept of text and context. Thus, from a rhetorical category and text-organizing trope the metaphor became not only a descriptive, but also a determining characteristic of the cultural phenomenon.

The dissertation’s basic point of view is that the different cultural areas and phenomena can be examined in the semiotic context of communication and language. From the viewpoint of communication theory, cultural codes (concerning either religion, law, arts or everyday life) can be interpreted in the context of decoding and the interpreter. Communication theory or cultural theoreticians placed metaphor as a part of different discourses in a context, which does not appoint the genre-, stylistic- or rhetoric-based use of this trope, but induces the reinterpretation and reactualization of the connected phenomena and narratives.

Therefore the chosen topic does not allow to summarize the history or the theories of metaphor-concept, or the detailed introduction of the interdisciplinary use of the concept. The aim of the dissertation is to use metaphoricity as a basic relation and important area of figurativity in textual interpretation.

The ultimate aim of the dissertation is – considering the diversified theoretical researches on the metaphor – to prove that in textual interpretations the phenomena of metaphoricity in the poetics of prose does not depend from era, genre or type of the text. However, we should take into consideration that the metaphor has equally typical characteristics in literary texts from all ages. Thus, the metaphoric interpretation and the tropologic reading can influence the significance and historical place of the formerly canonized authors.

Theoretic background and the use of the concept

Tracing the researches of the past decades (Paul de Man, Nelson Goodman, Paul Ricoeur, Artur C. Danto etc.), the stress shifts to the importance of metaphor and metaphoricity as semantic operation that extends over the whole text. In this contextual system, *metaphorization* can be defined as a process, which results in a *metaphoric structure* made up by basic tropes and formal elements, and actively latches on to the textual structure influencing its comprehension. Process, as long as we do not ascribe any meaning to the tropes of the textual units treating them isolated, but meaning is formed during the analysis of the text in an interaction between the recipient and the text.

Metaphoric structure – according to the concept introduced by Ernő Kulcsár Szabó, Ferenc Odorics, Mihály Szegedy-Maszák or Beáta Thomka in the 1980's – includes every unit of the text that is (or can be interpreted as) trope-organized, which requires an interpretational attitude during denotation. In that case, the question is not whether there is a metaphor, metonym etc. or not, but what the reader – concerning the minimum characteristics of these tropes – recognizes as such. We can talk about *metaphorization* as text-organizing process not only when the words known as metaphors get into the text, but also when the textual units organized by these patterns (even phrases, syntaxes or longer units), get into an inherent relationship during interpretation. By shifting the stress from the organization of the metaphoric structure and its tropes to the relationship between the structure itself and a longer textual unit (concerning the context of the work or its literary, cultural background and intertextuality) the category of literality loses its dominating and correlating role.

From this viewpoint, other art works organized by the patterns of metaphoric structures and using different linguistic structures seem to be included in this analysis, e. g. from the field of fine arts and screen. So, metaphorization can be considered in the case of every linguistically expressed work. Jurij Lotman says in his study 'Rethoric' that "the scope of tropes is wider than arts, accompanying every type of work of art".

Metaphor-contexts (metaphor in the poetic of prose)

Following the mentioned shifts of theory and approach, many steps have been taken to consider tropes belonging to traditional rhetoric not only as argumental or ornamental elements, but parts of sense-generating structures, influencing textual interpretation. Besides the classic rhetorics' figure-typology or the linguistic- and stylistic-based scientific works, numerous studies emphasize the figurativity of language using semiotic, philosophic and other different viewpoints in the analysis of tropes also representing a serious theoretical base.

Abandoning the figure typology of classical rhetorics in the era after structuralism, as in the Anglo-Saxon trends of metaphor-concept and in the French theoretical initiations, in the beginning, there was a serious emphasis on interdisciplinarity. Besides the minimal change of the concept of trope, the approach that treats this phenomenon as a part of textuality gets an important role.

In one of his studies, Zoltán Abádi Nagy considers trope a basic element of the narrative and an expressive form of the narrator's relation to the text. In the light of these

evidences, the basic questions and approaching methods of the earlier theories can be carried on. Broadening the metaphor's interaction-theory, the importance of the context and of the dialogic relation of the textual area stands in the focus of approaches.

In the book of Gábor Bezeczky on metaphor and narration, the emphasis is on the relation between the trope of metaphor and the metaphORIZATION as a semantic process covering the whole text: metaphoricity arises dialogically from "the interference of two different contexts, two different minds and two sets of possible statements".

The semantic oscillation of tropes and dialogicity is strengthened within the relations of textual context and a wider cultural context. Thus, metaphor as a distinguished trope disappears and merges into a system that only mediates, and in this special middle position becomes an element of the relation that draws attention to textual actions.

Tale, metaphor, narration

In the correlative system of the textual organization of cultural metaphors, the narrative characteristic of cognitive metaphoricity or the textual and genre-aspects of traditional rhetoric can be the correlation between metaphor and tale as a simple form defined in the memory-tale-culture connection points. In the title of the dissertation (*The fabled garden of tropes*) the indicated topic of the tale is examined as oral tradition and from a prose poetic and communication theory viewpoint, so the connected metaphor is not interesting for us as a trope or a rhetoric element, but as a transferring relation, in which the medium of figurativity is the textual area as a part of cultural context, a linguistically composed narrative received in an interpretative way. Jenő Király, in his book *Mozifolklór és kameratöltőtoll* (*Movie-folklore and camera-pen*), dealing with the theory of popular culture of movie, also approaches the myth and the tale considering their role in the communication process. He notes that "the re-found simple forms made the first invention of the new communicational form, the new arts".

Some of the main manifestations of primordial human thinking and communication are myths and tales, showing several parallel features with the characteristics of language as primary semiotic system. Thus, the connection between tale and sacrality got higher stress in the researches of the last decades, and in the end, the analysis of tale and communication, too. Zoltán Bódis, referring to the myth- and tale-interpretation of Károly Kerényi, Jelezar Meletyinszkij and János Láng, in his book *Mese és szakrális kommunikáció* (*Tale and sacral communication*) alludes to the approach, that sacrality – like the real value of language and its social nature – and throughout this, the tale is treated as the main expressive form of human consciousness. The tale as a type of human consciousness is one of the instruments for understanding life, such a determining communicational form that shows the basic characteristics of human thinking and use of language.

Therefore, by judging tale, it is important to count with its archaic and sacral existence-explaining role, based on the oral tradition, also with its linguistic, narrative and poetic aspects, correlating the different textual types as communicational process. János Honti emphasises, not by coincidence, in his basic work the characteristic of the tale is that it goes beyond the genre categories: "the world of tales does exist outside the tale – *alles ist Märchen*

–, from the most archaic myths to the contemporary man’s mooning, the world of the tale is everywhere even if there is no tale”.

In connection with the relationship between tale as literary genre and short story, Beáta Thomka gives a strict definition: “in the everyday stories of the contemporary short prose there are anecdotic punch lines, other formal elements, prefigurations, tales and traces of myths coming up. Thus, there are *hidden afterimages* acting in literature (G. Hartman), there are memory-traces in culture and genre-memory does exist”.

Thus, the basic viewpoint of the present approach is to consider the characteristics of the tale connected to the oral tradition, which cannot be tackled independently from several rhetoric and communicational questions, either. The role of the tale as communicational strategy in the process of socialization is emphasised – among others – in the works of David Riesman. In his theoretical model on communication tale appears as a character-forming element, and becomes important in the relevance of language and power.

Besides the linguistic and socializational characteristic of tale, as an existing literary tradition, primarily its associative function and interpretation-inspiring effect gives the opportunity to raise questions on the poetic of prose and metaphor theory during the analysis. By judging tale as narrative process, its characteristics of genre raise the issues of the tropologic relations of metaphorizations, instead of the theories of prose models based on causal relations, which were thought to be organized metonymically.

In this approach, tale cannot be substituted simply by story-telling, and cannot be categorised as children’s literature because its genre-parameters, traditional and parlance-characteristics influence the judging of those (short) prose-forms which get in connection with them. Narratologically, in connection with the concepts of story and narration, it seems to be a term, in which – characteristically on narrative structures, too – “by deforming the main form, disharmony becomes the main element of the artistic effect” (Beáta Thomka). In this case, the referring studies, using psychological approach and structural or motive-based analysis on texts, can be ignored, and – not considering tale-typology or differentialization among written tales – the historic-traditional and prose poetic concern of tales should be considered primarily.

The interpretations of the dissertation do not focus on describing the tale motifs, but make an effort to construct the concept of the tale by rereading the texts.

Structure of the dissertation, methods and results

The first chapter of the dissertation, ‘*Tale, metaphor, narration*’ primarily clears the theoretical background, its viewpoints and the use of concepts. The second, ‘*Tale and metaphoricity in Gyula Szini’s and Géza Csáth’s textual areas*’ discusses the characteristics of metaphoric prose of the authors of the turn of the 19-20th centuries. In this chapter, divided to two subchapters, the author of the dissertation analyses Gyula Szini’s and Géza Csáth’s short stories, mainly on the borders of neorhetoric and prose poetic. The main issue of the research is the preparation of the metaphoric prose model in these works by connecting the characteristics of the genre and the approach of the tale, and the way they legitimate the story-telling by getting away from the anecdotic and secessional-symbolistic tradition.

It is a commonplace of literary history that the cult of tales and metaphoric text organization got more stress by the turn of the 19-20th centuries. The interpreters discuss both issues at the same time and examine the same corpus, ignoring the connecting points of these phenomena. Even though, this alternative consciousness, the newly born textual worlds by multiplication of the planes of reality or the presence of fiction and the story-forming of unreal elements makes it possible to connect the issues of metaphoric prose and simple forms with the text-organizing potential of the tale, myth, legend or superstition.

Style-characteristics of “tale” and “tale-short-stories” cannot be judged on their own, but as locution-determining phenomenon, following the linguistic or rhetoric solutions. The common significance of the differently styled and intonated short stories appears in finding the linguistic and poetic forms of dissonance and border position, which are paralleled by the close connection of psycho-analytic praxis and story-telling. It is common in both the characteristics of the tale recalling the ‘*Thousand-one Nights’ Tales*’ and the archaic and oral traditions become the ontological and textual condition of story-telling, of contiguous speech and of being-in-text.

Besides the thematic characteristics, the interpretation of the literary tradition and the interpretative and dialogic relation of the tale and myth is also significant. The tale with its parameters based on the opposition of real and unreal, dream-logic or a plot leaning towards fiction, mean the determining medium of metaphoric, associative and dissonant textual methods by both authors.

Examining Géza Csáth’s studies, essays or his diary, we can realise the importance of the concepts of story-telling and tale – and its theoretical foundations. In concordance, *tale* as *simple form*, literary tradition and communicational strategy, become determinative by infiltrating into the textual structure from the points of view of the genre and history of tradition. The limited ‘popularity’ of Csáth is based on such a canonization, which does not pay too much attention to his psychological-psycho-analytical, musical and theoretic work or literary criticism. These forms and media as linguistic formations, patterns and genre-imprints implicate poetic viewpoints, too.

In Csáth’s narration, the appearance of the tale-forms and narrative frames (e. g. ‘*The Stone-Hearted Maid*’, ‘*Tale on people’s low spirit*’, ‘*The Tales of The Master*’) is replenished with the experiences of traditions and the oral characteristics of the situation of story-telling and the desire of expression. That makes the thematically simple and colloquial stories of ‘*Tales with a Bad Ending*’ so complex, and validates their place in the volume ‘*The Magician’s Garden*’, and draws the attention to similar contexts of the other texts in his whole work.

The genre and thematic elements of tales (*Pest-tale*, *The Magician’s Garden*, *Story of The Three Maids*) examined as symbols, mean the legitimating media of the dissonant textual methods with the opposition of real and unreal, a plot leaning towards fiction, or a dream-logic based method. Indeed, primarily as a living literary tradition, it seems to be determining because of its associative and interpretation-inspiring role. Based on these connection points, short stories getting in a contextual and in an intertextual relation with each other and with tale-tradition, seem to be interpreted from a genre-specific viewpoint of tale. The mobility between the strict textual and genre borders is strengthened by that characteristic of the author

(Csáth) which attempts to make use of different, combined artistic approaches (primarily literary, musical and of the fine arts).

The tradition of tale as a plastic area of figurativity is given priority in some of the Csáth's short stories ('*Saturday evening*', '*Matricide*', '*The Frog*'). The owl-like description and behaviour of Sandman as a metaphoric shape and a form of indeterminacy and border position, is far from desultory in *Saturday evening*, its relevance, besides the pre-text of Hoffmann, from the point of view of Csáth's work, especially that of the '*Matricide*'s similar textual characteristics, can be considered. In '*Matricide*', the common presence of the old tales resounding in the head of the owl and the "scary voice, piercing to the bones", *echoing* the decrease of dissonance, medial and contradictional state of the forming subject and the "minimal distance between the public ideological discourse and its vague equivalent in the fiction" (Žižek). In '*The Frog*', the acoustical ambivalence of the narrator's physically discontinued voice extends to the rhetoric treble of the short story. In a different way the dissonance and the border position determining the '*Matricide*' can be interpreted also with the help of the similar parameters of the tale, which – due to their border position – always end up sadly.

The linguistic-rhetorical analysis of the corpus, considering the mentioned aspects, throws a new light upon Csáth's other works, too. In the Hungarian prose literature, the analysis of the mentioned author's works' can give some new viewpoints in interpreting the romantic, secessionist, anecdotic and 20th century metaphoric short stories.

In a less canonized section of Gyula Szini's works (that has been thematically detailed in '*Twilight of Tale*') the tale tradition related issues are also discussed. Texts like '*The Emerald*', '*Pink snow*' and '*The Woods of Walking Sticks*' show that the Szini-corpus and his life oeuvre cannot be judged only by his nostalgic and lyrical secessionist short stories.

Considering the significance of Szini's texts in literary history and their place and role in narrative prose, the poetic-rhetoric theoretic interpretation of so far ignored texts can be important. To understand the relationship between Gyula Szini's narration and the contemporary or the late narrative prose, it is necessary to analyse his entire work in the light of narration, even in connection with the latest theoretic researches.

The tale-like characteristics of Gyula Szini's short stories cannot be found in their lyrical tone or dreamful low-key. His texts using *tale* not only as an element of stylization or mood, but foreshadowing an approach more ahead of its time, that treats literary text in a wider context, as a part of a literary tradition. Besides thematic ambiguity, the interpretational characteristic of the literary and cultural tradition and a dialogic relation of tale and myth are also emphasised.

In many of Szini's short stories (e. g. '*The Emerald*', '*Pink snow*' or '*The Woods of Walking Sticks*') even the evolving fragmentation – caused by simple forms built into narration – and the metonymic progress of the linear plot – obstructed by tale-like episodes – are broken by the elements of the narrative structure. Exceeding the analysis of local metaphors and their stylistic and esthetical effects on the texts, metaphoricity cannot be detected only on a stylistic level in Szini's narration, e. g. the common use of metaphoric tropes (metaphor itself and personification) in the narrator's or in the actor's treble. Instead of enumerating the visual style-elements or stylistic figures – well-known from linguistic and stylistic approaches –, the title of the short story '*The Emerald*' seems to be a text organizing

trope, that has an important role as an area of authorial reflexivity in the perception, hereby in the reception of the text.

The primary aim of the third chapter, *'The variants of metaphoric prose in contemporary Hungarian literature'* is to introduce, how the various forms of metaphoric prose appear in the contemporary and latest Hungarian literature. The corpuses – at first sight chosen desultorily from other periods – are here to prove, that metaphoric prose-organization cannot only be found in several dedicated texts, or it is not a new trend in contemporary Hungarian literature. The research focuses on introducing the narrative technics and narratological connexions of the trope, primarily the textual appearance of metaphoricity in contemporary and latest prose.

In addition, the dissertation tries to take the opportunity to interpret the short story *'Love'* written by Tibor Déry as a part of a poetic and rhetoric system, that takes an eye on the prose literature of 1970ies and 1980ies, recalling the forms of metaphoric text-forming. In Déry's text, the relationship between man and woman, or the elementary desire stemming from its absence, as a part of an elegant system of denotations and motifs, by connecting the words in metaphoric relation, secures a widely-ranged interpretational possibility. In Déry's story, the revealing and romantic attitude, as a part of the literary tradition, is questioned by the irony of inapprehensivity and a linguistic unpossessibility, making textual action and stylistic issues the main subject of the narration.

'Milota', Pál Závada's novel, follows the successful *'Pillow of Jadviga'*, rewriting its poetic score and re-toning its intonation. The ontological and sexual-esthetical dilemmas are thematized differently, partly from the point of view of the acoustic elements of language, like verbalism and common phrases, and their echoing, and partly from the point of view of the bio-semiotic approach of bees and apiary and cultural history, by involving a meta-linguistic horizon. Instead of the incarnated text of the *'Pillow of Jadviga'*, in *'Milota'* the acoustic sophistication and auditive primarity will be determining. From the body of the book became a textual area, from the fertile erotica of reading the spoiled pleasure of sounding. In this tonal system, the pleasure of the text is determined by the figural elements of the novel and its rhetoric characteristics.

Far from a seasonal excursion in the land of the tropes by Tibor Zalán, the literal scenario of *'Papertown'*, as signs of his own and of the Hungarian literature, is dabbled by linguistic imprints of expressions of obscenity, stains, ejaculations and vomiting. It indicates, with the *'List of Free Ideas'* rude and blunt textual area and the self-destructing mechanism of Péter Hajnóczy's prose, and with the experience of sexuality a development of a 'literarchitectural' textual area in the literary topography.

The expressions of metaphoric text-forming in contemporary Hungarian literature, not independently from intertextuality and intermodality, are interconnected representatively with the opening up of the body surface and getting related to the mechanism following the cutting of the lines of linguistic incarnations. As signs of corporality these are followed by the formations of body-language, "language is a skin: I rub my language against the other" (Roland Barthes).

The parallel interpretations of third chapter of the dissertation emphasise, that in case of several contemporary texts, which are mainly based on different logic, metaphoricity can be a dominating phenomenon that can help the rethinking and rereading of the upstanding

interpretations of canonized authors' and texts, such as Péter Hajnóczy's, Miklós Mészöly's, Péter Nádas', Lajos Parti Nagy's, László Garaczi's and Endre Kukkorelly's prose.

Summary

In the literature of the turn of the 19-20th centuries, the metaphoricity of text-forming evolved by the effect of the interaction between simple forms, tales, myths etc. and the variations of narration, in their common literary and cultural connexion. At the same time, a part of the contemporary literary texts, reaches the land of tropes, as a self-interpretative gesture of the inapprehensivity of the subject, and as a frequent expressional form of the border- and existential experience of corporeality.

The problems, that are occurring in different ways in the work of different authors and eras, seem to be connectable by the mediation of the theoretical background of treating similar issues of poetics and narratology: the textualization of the body and the forms exploiting the incarnation of language, cultural-semiotic, prose-poetic and tropologic aspect and art-philosophical context.

The metaphor is not an innocent trimming any more, but rather a field abounding in meta-metaphors, proliferating rhizomelic plants, that – as the sunflower does – and as one of the many flowers of rhetoric, “stands under the metaphor...” (Jacques Derrida).

List of publications

Chapters and articles in books:

- Mese és elbeszélés Csáth Géza pszichoanalitikus novelláiban.
[TALE AND NARRATION IN THE PSYCHOANALYTICAL SHORT STORIES OF GÉZA CSÁTH]
= *A Tudás Fája* (Az I. Vajdasági Magyar Tudományos Diákköri Konferencia dolgozatai). Vajdasági Magyar Felsőoktatási Kollégium, [Hungarian College for Higher Education in Vojvodina] Szabadka, 2002. 479-496.
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[BODY LIQUOR AND KIDNEY SYRUP – TEXTUAL FLOW OF THE METAPHORICAL SHORT STORY (The prose of Péter Hajnóczky and Tibor Zalán)]
In: Dr. Steinerné dr. Molnár Judit (szerk.): *Kutatások az Eötvös József Főiskolán 2008*. Eötvös József Főiskolai Kiadó, Baja, 2009. 167–174.
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- „...»árny(-)ék« rajtunk és bennünk” – a mesehagyomány szerepe Csáth Géza prózájában.
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- Testtájak – a metaforikus elbeszélés végvidéke (Hajnóczky Péter, Závada Pál és Zalán Tibor prózája).
[BODY LANDSCAPE – THE BORDERLAND OF THE METAPHORICAL SHORT STORY (The prose of Péter Hajnóczky, Pál Závada and Tibor Zalán)]
Hungarológiai Közlemények, Újvidék, 2008/1. 55-64.

Book reviews:

- Versviszonyok – szöveg(belső)terek (Zalán Tibor: *Lassú halált játszik*).
Bárka, 2000/6. 119-126.
- „Írni, mintha mondanám. Hogy olvassa mintha hallaná” – regényes önéletírás és/vagy az önéletírás regénye? (Závada Pál: *Milota*). *Tiszatáj*, 2003/3. 89-97.
- „Szótestkupac” – (test)építés és (papír)hajtogatás (Zalán Tibor *Papírvárosai*)
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- *Mese és elbeszélés Csáth Géza „pszichoanalitikus” novelláiban.*
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- *A mese „alkonya”? – A mese mint „egyszerű forma” Szini Gyula novellisztikájában.*
[THE „TWILING” OF TALE? – TALE AS A „SIMPLE FROM” IN THE SHORT STORIES OF GYULA SZINI]
II. Vajdasági Magyar Tudományos Diákköri Konferencia. [Hungarian College for Higher Education in Vojvodina] Újvidék, 2003. november 14-16.
- *Mese-árnyak az elbeszélés sűrűjében – Szini Gyula és Csáth Géza novellisztikája.*
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- *A metafora mesekertje avagy a metaforavirágzás.* (A mese mint egyszerű forma és a metaforikus próza kapcsolata a modernitás retorikájában.) Magyar Tudomány Ünnepe, Baja, 2007. november 14.
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