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**THE SYMMETRY-ORDER OF THE PULSATION OF POETIC SYLLABIC  
DURATION IN THE FIRST SEQUENCE OF SÁNDOR WEÖRES' POEMS:  
"MAGYAR ETÜDÖK" [*HUNGARIAN ETUDES*]**

*Theses of the PhD. Dissertation*

The dissertation wishes to introduce a novel way of examining poetic rhythm both in theory and on the level of descriptive metrical practice on the basis of the computerized study of the musical symmetry-relations between the syllables of poetic texts. This examination will need further refinement and elaboration in the future.

With the help of certain clearly defined binary phonetic qualities coded in the lexemes, I wish to reveal, numerically interpret and place in the order of rhythmical examinations the musical-symmetric order of rhythmical possibilities that surround the actual rhythm of the text, which lie beneath the line-forming metrical notions participating in poetic segmentation. In the Hungarian language, this phonetic quality is the duration of syllables, therefore the examination will reveal the order of the symmetry of the pulsation of syllabic duration (SPSD).

The dissertation wishes to contribute to the hardly definable, problematic acoustic relationship that exists between segmentation and line formation. However, rather than undertaking the rhythmical investigation of free verse, my approach wishes to combine two phenomena: a quantitative and a qualitative one. The quantitative one is metric regularity known from the theory of prosody: this is the prosodic principle of quantitative (numerically regulated) metric regularity coming about with line-formation. The qualitative factor is the principle of the chaotic musical symmetry of language; this way, conscious poetic metre-forming devices and half-conscious rhythm-creating poetic forms are examined side by side with fractal-connections of musical symmetries behind unconscious, chaotically ordered metric structures (metre of lines, varieties of metre and poetic measure). The investigation of symmetry does not only include the elements forming metre but it shows, at every individual syllable, the chaotic fractals of various musical sound-kaleidoscopes as well, which might be accidental, yet help the unconscious-musical correlations in the creation of meaning through analogies following the patterns of repetitions and counter-movements. At the same time, this investigation of symmetry by no means wishes to become a device which would create rhythmical tropes in an ad hoc manner or would simply semanticise texts with the help of rhetorical analogies. The examination of the symmetry of the pulsation of syllabic duration (SPSD), implied by the poetic minimum of line-formation, maps out the musical fractal-connections behind the phenomenological interpretation, showing these fractal-connections of rhythm as factors which can hardly be systematically accounted for, and exist in opposition to rhetorical devices. Instead of identifying sounding and tonality as the fundamental phenomenon of investigation, the dissertation scrutinizes the symmetry-connections of sounds and tones from the side of accidental creation, these sounds and tones coded into lexical units (words). The system-theoretic building of rhythm-models is able to reveal that rhythm – as opposed to language – is a primary realm of consensus-formation and as such, it does not contain semantic descriptions. At the same time, the application of the transformational-creative model of the Baroque fugue as the dynamic pattern of “rhythm in creation” to rhythmic patterns of verse may allow a further insight into the stress-pattern relations of segmentation as well; it may enrich the descriptive approach to metre with giving an account of the layers of rhythm that cannot be made the subject-matter of a direct phenomenological investigation.

After giving an overview of the basic problems and the fundamental research methods, the dissertation, following, primarily, the poetic-theoretical approach worked out in Aviram's monograph, *Telling Rhythm*, provides the brief context of SPSPD in literary theory.

According to Aviram's basic tenet – treated in detail in section 2.1 of my dissertation – verse-rhythm cannot be considered as the layer of a poem that could be made the subject-matter of an exhaustive phenomenological investigation. Aviram, while heavily concentrating on a better understanding of the nature of prosody, offers a new interpretation of rhythm by extending the equivalence-theory of Roman Jakobson, by drawing on the poetical implications of Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* and its after-life in psychoanalysis (Lacan), as well as considering the tradition of ideology-criticism that can mainly be found in cultural studies (Kristeva, Abraham). This interpretation bears resemblance to a mystical and kabalistic approach while never becoming esoteric or unscientific. For Aviram, the poem is an unsuccessful allegorisation of rhythm where the various layers, interpretable from the tropological and the textual-semiotic point of view, undertake the allegorisation of rhythm which is a psychoanalytic drive (or, it is the Nietzschean-Dionysian "primal unity"), something that can never become the meaningful form of a poem. At the same time rhythm, Aviram argues, precisely because of being the realm of primal consensus and withdrawing itself from rhetorical organization, while also demonstrating the unsuccessful allegorisation of its own, keeps the semantic- and energy-connections of a poem in a highly organic and fertile tension. Thus, for him a poem is a poem because rhythm opposes becoming the subject-matter of phenomenalization, and in eternal attempts of language it wishes to unsuccessfully allegorize the physical layers of the text, these layers standing closest to bodily perception. Here Aviram wishes to rehabilitate the conception of the sublime from the romantic heritage, taking an approach akin to deconstruction but at the same time denying the all-inclusive power of rhetorics; it is to perform this task that he emphasizes the fundamental opposition between rhythmic and rhetorical (ultimately: linguistic) patterns.

After giving a sketch of Aviram's line of argumentation in section 2.1., I confront this with the views of some of the representatives of those schools who still define rhythm within the framework of rhetorics. My primary concern here is with the Rhetorical School of Liege, with the so-called  $\mu$ -group and, later, as their ideas got evaluated and further elaborated by András Vajda. The complex semiotic analysis of the poetic text as pertaining especially to the nature of rhythm by János S. Petőfi and the Szeged-school would also belong here but this is rather dealt with in section 3.1., in connection with *Hungarian Etudes*. A significant further possible comparison is with the article "Irodalom és medialitás" [*Literature and Mediality*] by Zoltán Kulcsár-Szabó; this article may also be confronted with Aviram's rhythm-interpretation opposing the inclusion of rhythm into rhetorics.

In the contextual space of the above discourse, the descriptive-poetic symmetry-analysis of my own might be interpreted as an exciting paradox as far as the musical-symmetrical operations transform (in a certain sense: loosen, soften) the physical-musical layer of the poem incapable of being phenomenalised into quasi-rhetorical structures; the musical order of patterns behind the segmentation and the semantic units can really be taken, as revealed by formal analysis, as an intricate network of repetition- and counterpoint-fractals resisting allegorisation while remaining richly energetic. This network may later be integrated into the complex rhetorical order of the poem by the intricate metre-and stress-patterns, for example through a traditional metric ordering, thus yielding a form eventually capable of becoming the subject-matter of phenomenological interpretation. Musical symmetry and complex stress-and metre-patterning in this sense is analogous to the axiom-pair of rhetoric-resistant rhythm-conception of Aviram on the one hand and to the notion of rhythm belonging to metataxes as worked out by the Rhetorical School of Liege on the other.

In the next, relatively short section of the chapter (2.2), I look at and assess my symmetry-investigation against the background of generative metrical research and refer to some results in informatics-based Hungarian structuralist literary theory as represented by Iván Horváth's "Gépeskönyv" [*Machined-book*] and some further computer-based approaches to prosody, contrasting these with the experiments of my own. For reasons of space, I make mention of results of international informatics-based research only very briefly. It is also here that I point out the theoretical differences between my musical symmetry-investigation and the verse-interpretation of the OuLiPo-School, the latter making use of systematic constraints induced by mathematical and theoretical considerations. Finally, it is here that I give an account of the interdisciplinary significance of fractal-theories and the similarities and differences between symmetry-analysis and other fractal-approaches.

The concluding part of the chapter (2. 3) is different from the others in terms of style since before I get deeply engaged with the complex, prosodic, musical symmetry-investigation, I present a personal essay on the song-composing art of Sándor Weöres. This essay emphasizes the characteristic features of song-composition and the Proteus-like persona in Weöres's poetry, thus providing an introduction to the textual-ontological complexity of the rhythmic studies examining the series *Hungarian Etudes* at the beginning of the next chapter (3. 1). The rhythmical experiments of *Hungarian Etudes* – the "poems of play" in the terminology of Zoltán Kenyeres – bestow a semantic borderline-status on rhythm: the serenity and the playfulness (in contrast with the sublime of Aviram) reverse the relationship between rhythm and tropology through the total erasure of rhythmical transparency, through the excess of rhythmic bravura and through the conscious reduction of the layers of the texts which would be capable of serving as subject-matter for phenomenological analysis. In Zoltán Kenyeres's words, the images become the background-structure, the accompaniment of rhythm. In the above-mentioned essay I give an account of why my choice fell on *Hungarian Etudes* in searching for an example of demonstrating the practical possibilities of a musical symmetry-investigation in descriptive prosody. The footnotes of the essay refer to some significant insights in the Weöres-reception, and in chapter 3.1. I provide references to the results of traditional descriptive prosody in the interpretation of Weöres's poems, as well as to the relationship between the conclusions obtainable through the respective traditional approaches and through musical symmetry-investigations. Here I first and foremost give an account of the insights provided by Zoltán Kenyeres, András Kecskés, Erika Szepes and János L. Nagy. In connection with the *Hungarian Etude*-series, I also make mention of some significant problems known from the Hungarian history of prosody. It is here that I also give a short account of various approaches to Weöres's poetry provided by structuralist methods and schools of cognitive linguistics.

In the final, concluding chapter of the dissertation I provide a complex analysis of the first twelve poems of *Hungarian Etudes*. The descriptive interpretations contain, besides the traditional metrical accounts, the complex figures of rhythmical stress-and metre-patterns. The three figures of the *SPSD-analysis* serve as a deconstructive background to the rhythmic analysis: the first figure provides the representation of macrosymmetrical relations and the transformational space of group dynamics in "Csoporttérképek" (*Map of Groups*); the second figure of linear representation shows the musical transformational hit-numbers falling on syllables that follow the increasing colon-syllable numbers; and the third, global figure indicates the symmetry-qualities falling on individual syllables broken down to qualified transformations. While evaluating the *SPSD-investigations*, I also give an account of the dynamic representation of stress- and metre-patterning, of the rhythmic relations of syntactic patterns and of the functional prosodic hypotheses that can be formulated on a case-to-case basis.

Finally, mention should be made of further possible lines of research.

SPSD-investigations raise several questions that can only be answered after further thorough studies. On a representative sample, also satisfactory from the statistical point of view, the following issues could be clarified:

1. The relations between the contingent nature of symmetry-figures and their typological classification. To what extent should the correlation observable between the ordering brought about by segmentation and the ordering of the symmetry-patterns be considered accidental? Within this problematic, the relationship between prose-texts, texts of everyday language and poetic (versified) texts deserve special attention. Is there a distinct feature, either clearly identifiable, or just indicating opposing tendencies when one compares spontaneous symmetry-figures of rhythmically and metrically ordered texts in contrast with unordered ones?
2. The thorough scrutiny of various principles of rhythms and of metric texts based on these principles. Is there a connection that could be formulated with respect to tendencies observable in symmetry-figures?
3. Thorough, symmetry-focused research of various poetic oeuvres and periods. Analyses of rhythm and metre and the statistically representative relations between SPSPD-investigations.
4. The more thorough investigation of the nature of fractals in SPSPD-analyses and of fractal-analyses of artworks. Rhythmic-focused, complex fractal-analyses of individual art-works. Comparisons between the fractal-relations of SPSPD-figures and the results of instrumental phonetics.
5. The complex method and practice of supplementing the vehicle-structure of paraphrastic analyses with SPSPD-investigations. The connection between relation-structures and the vehicle-structure supplemented by SPSPD-investigations.
6. Constructing theories for SPSPD-investigations in other languages than Hungarian. The identification of various tense-lax patterns besides, and often functioning instead of, the binary principle of the pulsation of poetic syllabic duration.
7. The refinement of the inner structure of the SPSPD-method. Selecting novel approaches to symmetry. The elaboration of the syntactic model that would live up to the standards of generative linguistics as well.

The dissertation was unable to answer all the above questions. Its purpose was to introduce and work out the theory and method of the new approach, to place it on the map of other theories, and to provide a practical example for the analysis of versified texts, thus contributing to descriptive prosody.

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