

Absence as temporal experience of the work of art

(IN STIG DAGERMAN'S DE DÖMDAS Ö AND THE MODERNISM)

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This interpretation started with the Hungarian translation of Stig Dagerman's novel *De dömdas ö* (*The Island of the Doomed*, 1946). As translator I met different theoretical problems which inspired further research. My dissertation focuses on the problem of 'Absence as temporal experience of the work of art'.

The framework of my dissertation is the history of Swedish Literature and its intertextual connection with European Literature. The modernist Stig Dagerman's literary contribution to the existential problem of 'humanism', 'fall', 'anxiety' made him the 'Swedish Camus'. My dissertation examines his early novel *De dömdas ö*, which is the base of other modernist novel's theoretical reading.

De dömdas ö represents „being and nothingness” in a sharpening situation like Sartre's *No exit*. In the first part of the analysis I compare the concept of humanism in Sartre's *Existentialism as a humanism* and Martin Heidegger's *Letter on Humanism* and Dagerman's novel (all texts from 1946). Furthermore I examine the concept of 'samvete' (conscience) and 'konstverk' (work of art) and the paradoxal relation between them.

The second part of the dissertation summarizes the features of surrealist novel and its dream aesthetics. The aim of that chapter is to prepare the aesthetical concept of Absence and modern fiction. The problem of absence reflects a very special narrative technique that is typical in surrealist texts, for example in some novels by Virginia Woolf and Stig Dagerman.

The fictive experience of Time is analyzed by Paul Ricoeur in his *Time and Narrative* would like to start from his statements and approach the concept of 'narrative paralysis': where the text is unable to articulate a narrative. Time cannot be caught, because it is permanently 'falling', escaping from the literary representation so these novels are characterized by 'narrative torsos'.

The basic metaphors of the existentialist novel like „anxiety”, „fall”, have their roots in the romantic sublime. The dissertation would like to approach the problem of time through a very common literary metaphor: “fall”.

What does ‘falling’ mean in the dramaturgy of the sublime? What kind of relation appears between the romantic and the modern perspectives of time? I examine the concept of temporality in the poetic representations of sublime and the modern aesthetics of madness.

Absence as the temporal experience of work of art is considered as a bigger set than the ‘past’ rather a set of many different temporal experiences such as dreams, trauma, madness, epilepsy, sublime etc. Presentiment and remembering are the temporal experiences of Heidegger’s Dasein. Dasein is the threshold of poetic eternity, so the threshold of *Absence* too. *Absence* (Wordsworth) or *Abwesenheit* (Thomas Mann) is the temporal experience of work of art and is inaccessible to memory.

The aim of my temporal research is to unfold *Absence* which includes different temporal directions. First, we have to make a distinction between presence and absence. *Absence* is not only the ‘mind’s abyss’ (Wordsworth), but it is also a very important element of the dramaturgy of the sublime. The temporal experience of the sublime can be compared with Heidegger’s Dasein, and that reflects the relation between Dasein and Absence. My dissertation analyzes different modernist novels by Proust, Woolf, Thomas Mann, Harry Martinson, and particularly Stig Dagerman. From romanticism I examine the works of P. D. Atterbom, C. J. L. Almqvist, William Wordsworth. The theoretical background of this research is built on Paul de Man’s concept of irony, Heidegger’s Dasein, and Julia Kristeva’s psychoanalytic literary theory.