

EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

**DOCTORIAL DISSERTATION – ABSTRACT**

**MOLNÁR TAMÁS**

**THE DOMINION OF DEATH**

**(ASPECTS OF DEATH IN SHORT STORIES OF ADY ENDRE)**

Doctorial School of Literature with leading of Dr. prof. Kállay Géza.

Modern Hungarian Literature, Doctorial Program 'Period of *Nyugat*'.

Head of program: Dr. prof. Tverdota György.

Chairman of Comittee: Dr. Tverdota György DSc.

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Dr. Bárdos László PhD.

Dr. Fráter Zoltán PhD.

Director of Studies: Dr. Kenyeres Zoltán DSc.

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## Abstract

In this dissertation I researched the aspects of death in short stories of Ady Endre. My method of investigation was the analysis of motives, I attempted to disclose the motivic context of death as the dissolve of personality and to approach the central problem of Ady's short stories (and poetry) which is the question of 'Who am I?' The first outcome of my investigations is the question on being belongs to three connotative motives, e. g. motives of *writing*, *kiss* and *myths*. The question of 'Who am I?' has been transformed into 'Who am I as a writer?', 'Who am I in the context of love?' and 'Who am I in the world of myths?' by these three fundamental motives. Ady's short stories offer different answers for these questions, and I tried to expose these answers as separate, autonomic essays. It means the form of my dissertation is not a linear train of thought but a composition of essays which dispose these variations of answers on a symbolic palette of motives. All in all my paper is an interpretation of only one sentence of Ady Endre about his short stories: 'These tales are about a world which is dominated by the Lord Death'. This phrase is frequently alleged from the preface of *Így is történhetik (It may happen so as well)*, from one of his collection of short stories published in 1910. For this analysis I had to break the strict dichotomy of life and death and I had to outline a more sophisticated and oscillating relationship between these two fundamental concepts of Ady Endre's oeuvre.

The first chapter is an interpretation of three short stories with the same topic, titled *Kovács Béla vallomása*, *Kocsikálvária* and *Levél egy Ilonának (Confession of Kovács Béla, Calvary in a Cab, Letter to a heroine)*. The common point of these three short text is the problem of heroine, i. e. we have to bring out two motives from the set of motives mentioned above: the

*writing* and *kiss*, these two will be the adequate view of our reading. The main problem of question on being here: can we call life the being of figures of a text, the so called literature life? Or the reverse, can we call life the being out of literature? The confrontation of these two questions occurs in the identification of writing and creation, this confrontation becomes a conflict of creator and created heroine. All of these three short stories' theoretical frame is the connection of writing as creation and the personality of writer as creator. This correspondance defines the question on being.

The next chapter is a detailed, all round analysis of a story with manifold problems, its title is *Tíz Forint vőlegénye (Bridegroom of Ten Forints)*. Out of accordance the previous group of interpretations, not the writing but the abortion of writing is the matter of life and death, however the basic motives remain the same: *writing (non-writing)* and *kiss*. Paradoxically both of them appear as an absence, the story's plot is writing of the process of missing writing of a valuable, important and shocking new novel. The result of this failed writing is a common and grey, daily consumption story. The *kiss* is 'only' imaginary here, the 'real' one would be the kiss of the romantic ideal of art. The Author (as a hero of the story) sells and changes her to the daily livelihood. Conclusion of the interpretation is the conflict of two ideals of art, the one is romantic (which is represented by a novel and a heroine of Jókai Mór, titled *Egy az Isten – God is One*), the other one is a modern ideal from Charles Baudelaire's prose, which identifies the art with a kind of prostitution. The total tragedy of this short story is the fail of both ideals, which results complete disillusion as a kind of death.

Third chapter focused on the motive of *kiss*, I have searched the problems of self seeking of the eight-year-old narrator as a hero in *Eszterkuthy Éva húga (Sister of Eszterkuthy Éva)*. To this analysis I had to approach three women figures of the story as three feminin archetypes. I looked for essential features of these figures in the Old and New Testament of the Holy Scripture, the Bible is the context of the child's (narrator's) self identification with his female

archetypes. With the success of this self identification the ego will lose its contours and temporal limits but this dissolve becomes the key of living personality. However this self identification can be realized only in a dream at the closing of the story. I found the context of this representation of *kiss* and feminin archetypes in the Bible as I mentioned above, the other informative text of comparative analysis was one of Ady's lyric cycle (*A Hágár oltára – Altar of Hagar*) from the book *Szeretném, ha szeretnének* (*I would like to be loved*).

In the next chapter I gave an interpretation of *Mihályi Rozália csókja* (*Kiss of Mihályi Rozália*) which is presumably the most known short story of Ady thanks to its topic, the lues. My interpretation's central motives are the *kiss* and *myths*, but the conclusion after the investigation of being differs from the prevoius chapter's: we will find a different type of self seeking and dissolve of ego. Here I found the feminine archetype in a frequently used topos of Ady, the so called 'Primordial Lady'. The rule of *kiss* will be dislocation of personality from its not reflected position and placing it to an endless mythical reticulation as a simple messenger. The questioned identity is explained by a paradoxical motto of Arthur Rimbaud: 'The Ego is the Other'. This self seeking is treated as an investigation for this 'Primordial Lady' in the endless mythical labyrinth and the closing of investigation will be just the recognition of this infinity. I found the wider context of this investigation in operetta of Florimond Hervé, Henrik Meilhac and Albert Millaud, titled '*Mamzelle Nitouche*' and one of Ady Endre's cycle of poems (*Halálvirág, a Csók – Mortal Flower, the Kiss*) from his book *Az Illés szekerén* (*On Eliah's Chariot*).

The last chapter's central motives are the *myths*, more precisely myths of Dionysus interpreted by Friedrich Nietzsche, by this we can explain the problems of ego in two short stories, *A Tilala-tó titka* and *A Pokol-játék* (*The Secret of Lake Tilala; The Played Hell*). The adequate but portentous life displays its reality in the Dionysian extasys (in the Lake Tilala which is imaginary however becomes the symbol of real life and in a village school of

childhood became the scene of Hell to the tune of some minutes children's game). In both cases the death will not be the dissolve of ego in this extasys but to live further after experience of displaying adequate and complete life. Living further is determined by Apollonian visuality and *principium individuationis* which seem to be an unbearable limitation of ego after the experience of Dionysian sinking into the stream of life.