THEATRE CINEMATO-GRAPHY MEDIA

URANIA

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACADEMIC JOURNAL

2021
VOLUME 1
NUMBER 1

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2021 | VOLUME 1 | NUMBER 1

Double-blind peer-reviewed, open-access scholarly journal. Not for commercial use.

Editor-in-Chief: Zsolt Antal

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1088 Budapest, 21 Rákóczi Road

Online access: urania.szfe.hu

Managing Editor: Rector of the University of Theatre and Film Arts, Budapest

Publisher: University of Theatre and Film Arts, 1088 Budapest, 21 Rákóczi Road

Design, layout, prepress: WellCom Graphic Studio

Press: Conint Print Inc.

ISSN 2786-3263

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Preface to the Reader

'For the preservation of the Hungarian race, its social welfare and successful future, the only path is through outstanding education and research...'[1]

The leadership of the University of Theatre and Film Arts, in harmony with the goals set down in its founding document in the course of the university system's restructuring, is committed to raising interest in the institution's students, instructors and researchers by achieving and promoting results, both artistic and scholarly, that showcase the values of universal and natural culture.

With the establishment of the peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary journal **Urania,** released each semester and made readily available, the time has come for our colleagues to make their artistic and scholastic statements public on their own published platform – as it is done at similar universities. The goal of the journal is to fill a central role in bringing to light research and publications that integrate theatre, film and media studies within the country and internationally.

As we wish to provide a forum for the authors, our paramount goal is to strengthen, in our country's scholarly community, the existence of a dialogue in scholarly and artistic areas that defines our national culture. Moreover, by these means, we wish to offer our readers alternatives to prejudices and ingrained ideas related to these themes. This aim is also served by the English-language version of Urania, which we release with the intended goal of further strengthening our university's international relationships and establishing more effective and diverse cooperation with our partners.

When choosing a name (besides the divine Greek muse and the naming of an Enlightenment period journal), our imposing main building, the Urania, which

1 Quotation from the text of the deed certificate, according to which the University of Theatre and Film Arts, in compliance with Law LXXII ratified by Parliament in 2020, is to continue its operation as a renewed institution of higher education under the aegis of the University of Theatre and Film Arts Foundation, a trustee foundation of public duty and interest.

figures in our university's centuries-old tradition, also played a role. At the end of the nineteenth century, it was home to the Urania Academic Theatre and later the Urania Cinema and Hungarian theatre training.

By publishing scholarly tracts, the journal, in line with the university's profile and the unique role it serves, will provide a forum for objectively measurable achievements and expectations, thereby supporting our institution in the improvement of its competitiveness, effectiveness and quality.

We recommend our journal to all individuals active in artistic and scholastic fields, students of these fields, and everyone who has an interest in Hungarian theatre, film and media culture.

Zsolt Antal
Editor-in-Chief

10.56044/UA.2021.1.1.eng

Géza Balázs:

The Birth of the Language of Art

An artistic and linguistic approach

Introduction

The undertaking may be alarming at first. I wish to shed light on the common root and common origin of art and language. How can they be brought together? After all, although both are cultural phenomena, art is non-verbal, while language is verbal. In order to elucidate these phenomena as a whole, I am positing an extensive art-theory and language-theory approach, which would best be termed anthropological or metaphysical (organic). My linguistic starting point: language is not merely a means of thought transfer; instead, it, too, from its very inception, bears the essence of art – namely, mimesis. It is a social and creative form of activity which, similar to games, brings entertainment or joy. Beyond this, art and language merge on many planes. The original link is lost to the obscurity of Time, but it can be deduced. All linguistic and artistic activities make up Mankind's most idiosyncratic qualities. Through this structural, functional and metaphysical approach to art and language, we may postulate strong ontological (anthropological) ties, common to both. When comparing the formation of art and language, the following phenomena merit special attention: ancient undifferentiated modes of thought, syncretism, primeval folklore and basic forms. In these features, we can already discern abstraction. The basis of art and language is the transfer of meaning – that is, the meanings of concrete, tangible signs are transferred to other signified objects by means of abstraction – the initial combination (or syncretism) being activated by analogy or fundamental concepts and instinctive interrelations (rhythm, repetition and iconic or indexical signs). Language originates from

movement, melody, song and image, with transitions among these phenomena being facilitated by isomorphism. The result comes about with advances and strides in evolution, along with cultural evolution built upon biology. As a result of this abstraction, Mankind becomes capable of dual codification, bringing into existence again and again new forms of thought and secondary systems of modelling.

Ancient syncretism	Processes	Speech/Language/Art
motion – dance – melody – music >>> SPEECH depiction, image >>> SPEECH	combination, isomorphism, analogy, instinctive interrelation, advancement, rhythm (repetition, symmetry), icon, index, abstraction	duality, codification, distinction, secondary systems of modelling

Table 1. **Basic diagram of connections between art and language**

Joint codification of language and art in Mankind

Language itself meets the criteria of art. The basis of my assertion is that language is the starting point and main factor in the process of becoming a person. Several signs point to this – for example, the development of individuality. The infant forms a relationship to the world practically immediately, voicing sounds and series of noises. Initially, however, the child's language is not linguistic in nature. Instead, it is actually motion and melody – that is, music-based. Melodious gurgling develops into distinct sounds or sound combinations; later, interjections; and eventually, articulated sentences. The initial, pre-linguistic period of language clearly shows that sounds, feelings and intellectual development (self-development and wishes directed at the outside world) are perfectly unified at the infantile stage. The infant's baby talk is both melodic and musical, developing with time into a linguistic (verbal) phenomenon. Musical and linguistic developments proceed simultaneously as the child grows. Incipient musical skill and talent are separate questions – as is language skill. Yet, on some level, everyone can sing, just as everyone can also talk (if there is no

other impeding factor). Therefore, everyone sings and speaks, but not everyone will become an opera singer or an orator. Music is encoded in our everyday use of language. In other words, all people who speak use musical means of expression as they talk. Linguists even use the term music – 'the musicality of language' – but they do not trace this back to the development of a tribal or individual identity. What are language's musical tools? As a chapter on phonetics from a former introduction to linguistics described it: 'Sounds have characteristic values as well. Some are more musical than others. The "l" is more melodious and sonorous than the "t", which is sheer noise. The musicality of sounds plays a role in the emotional undercurrents of speech. Often, though, the emotional role is not tied to one distinct sound, but the relationship and blending of multiple sounds (cf. Kosztolányi's poem "Ilona")' (Bárczi 1953, 34). One modern encyclopaedia of linguistics covered the phenomenon thus: 'Intonation is often referred to as the melody or music of language. […] The areas of speech and music are mutually enriched by their obvious similarities' (Crystal 1998, 221). As a rule, the musical means of language are treated in the closing chapter of texts on syntax. Of these 'insubstantial' means, they mention the following: emphasis, intonation, word order and pauses. Under the title 'Spoken Word's Musical Means of Expression', the following phenomena are listed: vocal pitch, vocal scale, volume, tone of voice, emphasis, intonation (melody of speech), tempo (speed of speech) and pauses (Balázs 2000, 61–65). In the initial editions of a general volume compiled with Mária Kovács, the same are mentioned under 'Spoken Word's Musical Means of Expression: Texts When Read and Read Aloud' (Balázs 1994, 169–172, later published 2005).

The expression 'verbal arts', by which we understand oratory, artistic interpretation and poetry recital, also refers to the connection between art and language. The sound of language itself contains aesthetic value – for example, a pleasing voice. According to psychological research over a wide range of cultures, a thin, high-pitched, 'dry' voice is uninteresting and sometimes unpleasant. Above all, a low-pitched voice commands attention. Deep voices resonate with more 'body', radiating personality and warmth. Hungarian culture favours the moderately low-pitched baritone male voice and the mezzo-soprano female or child voice between alto and soprano (Balázs 2000, 32, citing psychologist László Vékassy).

Linguistic science and guides to correct usage mention the musicality and melody of speech in relation to its aesthetic effect. The sound, when pleasant,

is euphony; when unpleasant, cacophony. Certain musical means and sounds are pleasant on their own, or they may have an unpleasant effect. Instructors in the field point out that language has an aesthetic function not only in arts or poetry, but also in colloquial communication. This arises from the given language's acoustic attributes. '[In the Hungarian language], the average ratio of vowels to consonants is 42:58. Between voiced and voiceless consonants, it is 36:23. From a musical standpoint, both ratios are advantageous. Also favourable is the rare occurrence of consonant clusters. Variety, however, is somewhat limited by the rules of vowel quality and harmony, as well as the great preponderance of the 'short e' sound (ĕ) in everyday speech' (Grétsy and Kovalovszky 1985, 2/1278). Avoiding consonant clusters and complicated expressions (as well as the monotonous repetition of sounds, syllables, words and the 'short e' sound) is conducive to euphony.

Mankind's passion for games and playing reveals the connection, relationship and evolution that arise between language and art. The way we play and experiment with the opportunities afforded by language (word games, plays on words, jokes and puns) is also reminiscent of artistic means of expression.

We clearly regard art as a typically human pursuit, even if we can discover precedents of it in the animal world. We also regard language as a typically human endeavour, even if we can detect antecedents, in the form of simple systems of symbols, in the animal world. Semiotician Thomas Sebeok, who demonstrated numerous instances of art precedents in the animal world, raises the following question regarding the origin of both written and oral forms of verbal art: 'How sensible is it to seek prototypes of aesthetic and non-verbal sign systems among Mankind's animal predecessors?' (Sebeok 1983, 10). After posing the question, he provides a series of examples of 'aesthetic' behaviour in animals. That is, the origins of linguistic and non-linguistic (verbal and non-verbal) activities exhibit parallels.

We have other proof of how deeply language and art are codified together in Mankind. Indeed, both are deeply connected to our basic emotions. For example, one such basic emotion is joy. We need not prove that art provides enjoyment, but we speak much less about language as a source of joy, even though joy is codified in language. (I express my ideas about the joys of language in more detail elsewhere: Balázs 2010 and 2020.) We can best uncover the codification of joy in so-called figures of thought, which are manifestations of different thought forms – that is, techniques of creative language organiza-

tion (or the methods whereby language changes). (I write about the anthropological character of figures of thought elsewhere in more detail: Balázs 2008; while the deep codification of figures of thought can also be shown in dreams: 2013.) The best known figures of thought fall into the adjective (as in additive) category, which includes repetition and its numerous variations. A baby's first manifestations of communication are also repetitions. In music and the fine arts, the simplest source of pleasure is repetition (recapitulation or refrain). Thus, even talking to oneself (and babies love to talk to themselves) is a source of joy. Later, this is supplemented by company. Human beings are social creatures, so every exchange between mother and child (or parent and child) and eventually all emotionally-charged conversations are further sources of joy. István Hárdi explicitly wrote that, in friendly conversations, there is a circulation of libido – in other words, an exchange of pleasure. Here is the quotation verbatim: 'On one occasion during my chats with István Hollós, he referred to the psychoanalytic concept regarding speech. In friendly conversation, a unique exchange of thoughts occurs. An emotionally instinctive circulation of libido (in his words) takes place, whereby the individuals practically fertilize one another intellectually' (Hárdi and Vértes 1985, 18). The power of language and art merge in the resulting catharsis in both speaker (creator) and audience alike.

This phenomenon is easy to prove. How often do we 'just happen' to be talking to a person (or people) and lose track of time? Later, we do not even know what we were discussing so freely and at such length. Following the lead of Mihály Csíkszentmihályi (2007), pop psychology calls this state 'flow'. The point of flow is a transcendence of space and time. We may observe it in many activities, pursuits and forms of creation, but (which has not been stressed enough) also in the use of language. Therefore, enjoyment is codified in language – just as it is, for example, in sexuality, consumption, movement and every sort of human creative endeavour. Moreover, repetitive activities and creativity are components of the so-called human behavioural complex, described by Vilmos Csányi in 1999. In other words, they are part of human behaviour.

Consequently, we may state that language and art share the same root; and thus, in their original state, language and art were one. That is, language itself is art; or, to put it another way, art can be considered language.

From simple to complicated or from complicated to simple?

From a material mindset, human progress can be seen in development, in the advancement from the simple to the more complex. From a metaphysical (organic) standpoint, we suppose a world that was at one time complete, compared to which the human world represents a simplification (or degradation). On the basis of Eastern (non-Aristotelian, mainly Asian) multi-layered logical thought, we need not form an argument concerning this. One view could be true, or the other, or a combination of both. Nevertheless, I shall sketch out a logical possibility. We may call it a hypothesis, because it can be reached both by logic and by experience, even if ultimately (like everything else) it remains unproved. 'All phenomena can only be comprehended metaphysically. By contrast, scholarship sees the human community as the result of long development…' (Hamvas 1995, II/344).

The origins of the arts and language are indivisible. Common to both is a break from concrete, biological, life-sustaining activity. This is simple to prove. After all, life exists without language and artistic pursuit. In all probability, it did so; and it is our current experience that, in a world that possess language and art, there are some for whom they are not only pointless, but superfluous as well. That is, the evolution-devolution dynamic adopted by Hamvas (1995, II/357) still applies in our day. The basic concept of evolution is also present in ancient thought. Neklyudov (1982, 199) mentions that in the folklore of peoples from Southeast Asia, there is a round chimerical figure with neither arms nor legs that does not walk, but rolls along the ground. The servant Saura, who turns up in Russian folklore, seems to have no body. Anthropomorphic and zoomorphic creatures, present in practically all mythologies, can be understood as some sort of transition (passage, development). The transformation of mythical and legendary figures is common in folklore. From the myths of Australian Aboriginals, Meletinsky (1982, 161) cites a notion that could even be termed reverse evolution: 'This occurred when the animals were still humans.'

Ancient syncretism and isomorphism

Cultural historians and folklorists agree that, in ancient societies, they neither distinguished nor separated the economic and spiritual spheres and thought

processes. Ivanov summarised it thus: 'We may suppose that, during phylogenesis, art – just like writing, religion and a few other sign systems – separated from some undifferentiated, unified system [...], which we may term syncretism' (Ivanov 1982, 115). We must imagine that the economic, spiritual, material and intellectual ideals were all united. In an ancient culture, production of goods, movement, drawing, music and language were undivided, and all activity drifted from its concrete nature in the direction of abstract, symbolic meaning. Perhaps I am not wrong in illustrating this by quoting as an example a thought that Vilmos Tánczos expressed in 2007 with regard to Hungarians living in Moldavia: 'Prayer filled their entire day.' Or a titbit of my own from Szilágy County [now Sălaj in Romania], which amounts to the same thing: 'At Christmas, the village was filled with song.' Hence, to put it another way, it was all is one. Every activity was practical and symbolic at once. Béla Hamvas (1995, II/172-173) had this to say: 'The metaphysical *hen kai pan* means All and One; or, all is one. [...] Because *hen panta einai* means all One.' To explain it a bit more fully: 'An analogy exists between the passage of the stars and the individual person's psyche, physical life, social standing, lifestyle and history. But the passage of the stars refers to something even loftier: the world of ideas and spirituality. [...] Analogy signifies that what is on high is the same as what is below. The stars see out of Mankind's eyes, and cosmic lines run across Mankind's palms' (Hamvas 1995, II/171-172).

Ancient folklore is characterised by primeval syncretism, in which the make-up of myths and tales can be seen as identical (Meletinsky 1982, 183). Syncretism is always present in cultural periods and genres. Such was the sung ballad or, in our time, poetry set to music, as well as operettas, operas and musical. Yet, we may also consider completely new media genres such as radio plays, films and television shows.

From syncretism arises transition and transfer between forms of thought, and its structural basis is isomorphism. Dance, music, creative art and imitation are all inseparable. Ritualistic folk performance syncretically unites the elements of dance, pantomime, music, fine arts (partially) and eventually poetry' (Meletinsky 1982, 149). Therefore, movement, dance, song and speech are all characterised by the presence of isomorphism, which allows for the transfer of corresponding (isomorphic) qualities. One such isomorphic feature (and a natural phenomenon as well) that appears in all these areas is rhythm (repetition) – not to mention its refined variation, symmetry. Because of this, we can apply

expressions (quite typical in Hungarian) to primeval syncretism and isomorphism – such as material, handicrafts and musical mother tongue.

Certain regressions and deteriorations indicate primeval syncretism – for example, the confusion of written and pictorial signs typical of schizophrenia, in which case 'we may witness the return to archaic forms' (Ivanov 1982, 142). At this same time, this is demonstrated by some children's drawings that employ primeval symbols.

If we suppose a primeval lack of differentiation, then there must have also been a primeval lack of forms. That is, there were primeval, undifferentiated – natural – ancient forms, which in time, through gradual differentiation, became (or developed into) distinct formations. Undoubtedly, occurrences of symmetry (and rhythm in particular) apply here.

Correspondences and combinations

In the most ancient forms, mimicry (mimesis) and motor characteristics such as rhythmic motions, movement, melody and articulation turn up as instinctive manifestations, combined and interrelated. I stress that these are instinctive activities. They stand in relation to two instinctive motives: growing up (learning) and the basic need for motion and the perpetuation of the species. Growing up requires mimicry, and motion is needed to remain upright and maintain the species. We may call these the initial stirrings of independence: basic actions, doodling, customary greeting, gurgling-mumbling and musical outbursts. Out of the elementary actions, crafts and professions develop (such as pottery and carving). Doodling becomes decorative or fine arts, greetings become dance, outbursts music and song, and gurgling-mumbling speech. Yet, all of them have a single shared element: rhythm. It seems the most fundamental motive and motivation of human activity is rhythm. It is strongly related to natural forms (the passage of days and months) and basic forms (symmetry); and, as we know, all this is identical to repetition. Toporov (1982, 90) also refers to the relationship between symmetry and repetition: 'Symmetrical repetition can be associated with rhythmic repetition.' Rhythm (and elsewhere repetition) could be the most ancient instinctive and elementary activity, the basis for all human activity. This phenomenon can be observed in all people even now. After all, every individual displays rhythmic moving patterns, repeating, counting and a striving or motivation for symmetry. Therefore, these represent out anthropological idiosyn-

crasies. 'The principle of rhythm can be observed everywhere. Semantic rhythm goes along with composition and stylistic rhythm' (Neklyudov 1982, 208).

Further combinations occur in basic formations. At first, melody, music and speech appear together, melded into one another, followed by pictures and writing. Later, according to the necessity and compulsion to communicate, they are simultaneously divided into the basic forms: music, song, speech, writing and pictorial depiction. Many signs point to this combination. 'By virtue of the physical and physiological nature of vocal music (music's oldest form to emerge), it resembles the elements of speech' (Langleben 1982, 454). Thus, it is possible, the quotation continues, after the division of cultural strata, that 'the development of the majority of known musical notation began with the attempt to use the accustomed written form to jot down music.' Because music and language – as I alluded to earlier – are isomorphic. 'To be precise, writing's coming into existence must have been simultaneous with the break from primeval art's syncretic unity, in order for its communicative and mnemonic function to be distinct from the syncretic whole. […] The appearance of writing was not called into existence by the requirement to record oral speech, but by the need to convey information over time and space, and the artistic means of depiction suited this goal better than the expressive means of language' (Karapetyantz 1982, 467–468).

Arbitrariness and advancement

Hence, at one time, there was unity, analogy and a lack of differentiation (primeval, archaic, analogous thinking). Yet, how could progress come about? Was it some necessity or compulsion? Perhaps it was the growing population density, the hordes coming into contact, and provision (hunting, gathering) requiring ever more organisation. Perhaps it was something arbitrary.

Speaking of the arbitrary: 'In the biological progress of evolution, arbitrary processes are among the indispensible factors upon which the pursuit of perfection depends. […] Another key feature is the occurrence of selection. A portion of the new, randomly appearing features are retained, and others are discarded. […] The practice of modern painters shows that they accept the arbitrary as a potentially valuable factor in the creative process' (Waddington, quoted in Sebeok 1983, 7).

One explanation is progress or advancement. In our case, it spans from passive perception of the world to consideration of it and the will to influence and

reform it. Another phenomenon of advancement is concrete symbols becoming symbolic symbols. But how? Progress as a phenomenon is practical in nature, but with human beings, it is unquestionable and continuous. The invention and 'advancement' of abstraction undoubtedly marked the starting point of human culture and language. (Presumably, today's 'advancement' phenomena do not necessarily lead to good. Such examples include the love of sweets, comfort and laziness – a team of biologists raises the example of the Fall of Roman Empire.)

As I conceive it, such an 'advancement' – the aforementioned change from concrete to abstract – brought about human (artistic, linguistic) communication. Moreover, as others see it, 'In order for us "to create a new system of communication", we need more than the old signs or signals. We also need new ones. People are constantly forced to create new sentences (new systems) from the language they use and "apply" in human communication. What is more, they are continuously compelled to generate new information. This probably explains the most important characteristic of the forefather ("Adam") who lived 30-50,000 years ago: creativity. Use of the human language and the continuous use of human communication made him constantly practice the method of creating new systems' (Bárány et al. 2012, 42).

According to this, the key factor is creativity. Yet, this is no particular cause, rather an effect. Creativity follows from something – from 'progress'. Of course, it could have, but this random 'advancement' in question continues to remain an enigma. Meanwhile, at the instant of language creation, there was already metaphor (transfer of meaning, depiction). After all, 'language is naturally, "by its very nature" metaphorical' (Neklyudov 1982, 207). To this day, it is the driving force behind our artistic, scholarly and everyday thinking.

Semiotic explanation of progress

With semiotic terminology, it is quite simple to describe the process by which signs transformed into symbols (human signs). In the beginning, there was the index and the icon. The former is a symptomatic or indicative sign. Animals also use these signs. Animal signs make up a bounded system, and the quantity can be determined – allegedly from the cuckoo's single sign to at most several dozen. As a result of this particular 'advancement', the original symptomatic, indexical and iconic signs become increasingly abstract (abstraction); they lose their natural connection to nature in part or entirely (denaturalisation); occa-

sionally, as a result of further abstraction, they become unrecognisably divorced from what they signify (dematerialisation). '[The] "denaturalisation" and "dematerialisation" of creative forms [...] is in harmony with the historical-logical progress of the formation of thought.' (In terms of depiction, it is the continuation.) 'To a significant extent, this comes about in the process of active depiction itself' (Stoljar, 1982, 76). In semiotic terminology: initially, there is a decrease in indexicality (de-indexicality) and iconicity (de-iconicity), leading to the appearance and proliferation of symbolic signs (symbolisation) that can soon be called arbitrary. As a result, the language has become by now 'a graveyard of dead metaphors' (Lotz 1976, 26). To generalise, probably every linguistic form is motivated, but we can no longer prove it, only perhaps sense it. The same thing occurred with symbols; yet, this happened on another level. Our primeval symbols had their own meaning and probably a concrete link to reality, but we have forgotten them. Hence, with today's mind and knowledge, it is impossible or difficult to understand them. 'At one time, Mankind wrote a ceremonial drama across the sky, distributing the main roles among the stars and constellations. In this way, they tried to live up to God's will: "on Earth as it is in Heaven". And this was successful. I believe the customs of the time spoke to this – the star that shone upon them on Christmas night, what they could read on the church's altarpiece, what the priest preached. Meanwhile, the Christmas decorations and material objects informed it,' wrote Marcell Jankovics (1988, 7). This knowledge and awareness wore away with the passage of centuries and millennia.

Dichotomy

One of the preconditions and forerunners of progress and advancement could be the emergence of dichotomy. What is dichotomy? Dichotomy can be shown at every level of symbolic systems. It can have several dimensions: one or the other, old and new, concrete and abstract. The point is that certain systems and planes reflect and develop from each other. To use a linguistic analogy, Ivanov (1982, 115) named the ancient culture's art-communication syncretism 'original bilingualism', in which fine arts, pictographs and hieroglyphic writing is united. Iván Fónagy (1996/97) mentioned the dual-coding of speech, whereby the natural, motivated, archaic code is present and operates in the depths of today's further developed and arbitrary code. Thus, dual-coding signifies that, in linguistic communication, signs are naturally archaic and arbitrary (or becoming

arbitrary) at the same time. Following Uexküll's lead, Sebeok (1983, 13) theorised that a more archaic and (interspecies) non-verbal code precedes and accompanies the verbal code to this day. We may even call this human communication's dual code (or dual organisation). The main characteristic of human speech is dual organization or division (separation). In other words, it is made up of two abstract structural levels: elements that bear no meaning (sounds, letters) and elements with meaning built upon them (e.g., words). 'The peculiarity of the human language is how even its smallest elements with meaning are structured. The words with meaning are made up of sound formations. […] At the higher level, sentences and declarations are made up of elements with meaning (roots of words and affixes); at the lower level, meaningful elements are made up of those without meaning (sounds)' (Szabolcsi 1978, 51). The dichotomy has further stages: the basis of speech's secondary system of symbols (e.g., writing) (Lotz 1976, 12). Similarly, in the Tartu school of thought, more complex modelling procedures (arts) are built upon the primary modelling systems (language), by which means they express reality's relationship on two levels (Voigt 2014, 221). In Juri Lotman's original definition (1973, 236, 239), 'those systems based upon the natural language gain auxiliary structures and constitute two-pronged languages – self-evidently called secondary modelling systems. [...] Art is a unique modelling activity.' Vilmos Voigt (2014, 221) wrote this about primary and secondary modelling systems: 'Compared to simple physiological-psychological reactions, a secondary system would be behaviour or the etiquette within a culture, as well as a piece of art built upon the language or a literary work. This thought ties in with the semiotic arrangement (that of the Tartu school), in which primary and secondary signifying systems are distinguished from each other, and the arts belong to the latter category' (Voigt 2014, 221).

The origin of variations – accompanied by the phenomena of dissection and unification (divergence and convergence) – begins with the process of separating the 'combinations'. This comprises particular forms of thought – including, for example, the emergence of creative forms (genres).

Art hidden in nature

In many respects, biological organisation and structure give a pre-indication of cultures – in other words, we depart from what is natural and proceed towards culture (Sebeok 1983, 64). There are transitional forms – for example, architec-

ture in nature and animals that are master builders (Sebeok 1983, 64). Consider the beavers' dams and the ants' architecture. A token of our special relation to animals is that, in every corner of the Earth, on the most ancient artistic artefacts and cave drawings, we find animals (buffalos, mammoths) with iconic signs everywhere. Sprinkled throughout the animal world, there are phenomena that provide models. We my even consider that, embarking from them, the higher order of thought forms came into being, formed by perhaps imitating them or perhaps through further development ('advancement'). In this case, this 'forward leap' or 'progress' signifies abstraction.

From the point of view of a joint examination of art and language, Thomas Sebeok (1983) approached the theme best. He sought to answer the question whether the optimal organisation of certain animals' communication systems would make it possible to build an aesthetic function upon them (Sebeok 1983, 10). In the field of animal communication, Sebeok observed the following phenomena that he considered artistic – that is, aesthetic in nature and approaching the communication of human beings: the pleasure principle (joy, stimulation, thrill) (1983, 11, 58), symmetry, repetition, the impulse for play, and love of goods or activities (1983, 15–17). In the latter case, there was a ritualising use of tools (1983, 66). Also of great significance is the fact that art is both useless and meaningful, aimless and yet important. People are able to live out passions which they would be unable to indulge in their everyday lives (1983, 47). From the perspective of language, we may add that language use, despite its towering importance, is very often just an occasional, 'useless' activity that serves to pass or fill the time.

Investigation of animal communication did not reach the level of human communication, although there are analogies and some connections. For the purposes of communication, animals employ a limited number of signs (signals, indices) in various sign systems. 'In the course of their comparative research, they summarised the number of distinct varieties of signals used by the different animal species; and with six species of fish, they identified between 10 and 26 different signals. Naturally, species with a complicated system of social relationships had the highest number. What is interesting is that these numbers did not at all lag behind what they experienced among birds and mammals' (Markó 2012, 63). From the animal's biologically organised communication, the following features approached human communication: rhythm (based on that of birds, Sebeok 1983, 32), answering (replying: ibid, 40) and a phenomenon that can be

observed among birds, the ability to pick out certain series of sounds from the background noise (cocktail party problem: ibid, 33).

It is no accident that we find fundamental relationships among our relationships with animals, in animal stories (to this day) and our first depictions of them. The higher level, at which people mimic nature or the behaviour of animals – for example, copying the dances of birds – is considerably widespread (Sebeok 1983, 30). The most ancient form of theatre was pantomimes imitating animals (Meletinsky 1982, 30). Dürer as quoted by Sebeok maintains, 'Truly art lies hidden in nature, and those who can lift it out of nature take possession of it' (1983, 81). The imitation of nature appears in the copying of certain natural forms.

We might think that the language of social animals, those that live in a society, would be the closest to that of humans. That is why the communication of bees and ants aroused the researchers' interest. The ants' language is exciting. 'It is inaudible to the human ear, and the human nose cannot grasp it. […] If they could write poetry, it is likely that our most elegant perfumes would not match the harmony of an ant sonnet' (Markó 2012, 63). Yet, interestingly, bird speech stands the closest to the human register. According to Sándor Wilhelm, 'Speaking animals – that is, those that reproduce human words, using them properly when the opportunity arises – turn up among parakeets, crows, ravens and birds possessing especially developed voice-producing organs' (Wilhelm 2012, 69).

From the very beginning, people have wanted to understand animals. Spying on animals and noticing how they communicate led to luring animals close and catching them. Such, for example, are the fishermen's 'decoys'. There is a method still practiced on the Tisza River whereby a 'clapper' decoy instrument emits a deceptive sound that spreads far through the water at regular intervals. It is reminiscent of the catfish's noisy feeding, to which their gluttonous fellow species respond.

The mimicry of animal communication and animal sounds is a linguistic and anthropological phenomenon.

Analogous thought: art and language

Primeval, archaic thought is characterised by analogy. 'Ancient Mankind saw analogy directly – living it, uttering it, constantly discovering new analogies and perceiving new pictures. [...] The pictures in the primeval language were not poetic semblances. The ancient images corresponded to the content of the

ideas, in the Platonic sense, which is none other than transcendent intelligence. […] The primeval language was built upon analogy, and analogy upon things' intrinsic nature…" (Hamvas 1995, II/167, 169). Hence, analogy signified an actual connection – index (isomorphism) or icon (semblance, correspondence). Both indexicality (concrete reference or indication) and iconicity (imitation, picturing and depiction of nature and environment) played a decisive role in the birth of the arts. The art of movement could have been primary, with motion and dance leading to melody on the way to language. 'Speaking and singing in the beginning meant the same thing' (Pracs quoted by Harlap 1982, 269). Melodies not bearing meaning proceeded songs – that is, language. Just like language, music is an exclusively human phenomenon (Sebeok 1983, 29). Out of the rhythmic activities and motions, what took shape were melodies, music and, at the same time, verbal arts (poetry and language itself). The rhythm of primeval music was both musical and possessed the rhythm of speech (Harlap 1982, 225). With arts related to drawing, growth in the communicative function of depiction, imitation of nature and pictorial representation brought about picture writing. De-iconisation (abstraction) of picture writing led to the other writing systems.

Meletinsky supposes that arts related to drawing (the fine arts) were likely primary, only followed by the art of words (1982, 47). Among the most ancient (and most current) drawings are vulva signs (30 BCE) and animal depictions. In all certainty, the symmetry found in nature served as a pattern for Mankind. The psychological reason for this is probably the desire for harmony and order. Symmetry can be observed in depictions since the Palaeolithic Era (Ivanov 1982, 125). 'Observing the forms of animals, plants and their own bodies, as well as the rhythm and technique of work processes, the sense of proportion and symmetry was cultivated [in people]' (Meletinsky 1982, 147–148). Then, with one leap in progress, rhythmic and repetitive phenomena of symmetry and asymmetry appeared in speech and then eventually in oral folklore (Toporov 1982, 90; Neklyudov 1982, 207). Psychological parallelism is the association of human emotional life with natural phenomena (Toporov 1982, 152).

Indeed, the parallel between depiction and communication may have existed from our very origins. This may be supposed from puppetry in our own time, as well as stage acting and storytelling with gestures. We may observe how 'on relics from the time of ancient civilizations, they used the tools of depictive art to illustrate the message also conveyed by the pictorial signs. This is similar to the Eskimo practice of always accompanying their stories with drawings and sym-

bols, which are expected in the course of the narration or made out of snow' (Ivanov 1982, 115). Today, we would refer to this phenomenon as multimedia communication or multimedia text.

There is no proof of what caused primeval, concrete, pictorial thought to become abstract thought formations. One answer is that it came about by itself, but it is clearly more complicated than that. Language arising from pictures is one piece of evidence that, in the most archaic languages (for example, Aranda in Australia), the word is inalienable from a definitive visual image (Stoljar 1982, 77). The link between primeval art and picture writing is indubitable (Karapetyantz 1982, 467). Some researchers investigating the sign system found in Hungarian folk art claim that these signs were once elements in a system of picture writing and possessed meaning – as the term picture writing implies (Pap 1993). Only by now, we have forgotten this code. Nowadays, art serves to revive it and sensitise us to the code.

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A full elaboration of the thoughts expressed in this study can be read in the book entitled **A művészet és a nyelv születése by Balázs Géza,** *published in Budapest in 2021 by MNYKNT-IKU.*

10.56044/UA.2021.1.2.eng

István Fazekas

The Dramatic Power of Language

Approaches to Active Understanding

Language and dramatic plot

Language is constantly changing. Words are often altered in terms of content and meaning. Shades of meaning appear, and the relationship between text and context is reshaped to a certain extent from time to time. As a result, the text – not necessarily its content, but, by all means, its dynamics – must be regularly re-examined and reinterpreted, reconsidered in terms of spoken language. Occasionally, foreign works must be re-translated. George Steiner cannot be disputed when he states, 'Language – according to one of the cardinal principles of certain schools of semantics – is a perfect model of Heraclitean flux' (Steiner 2009, 17). Naturally, changes in the meaning of words and expressions also affect the evolution of language for the stage. After all, a term of praise might even become insulting. What was effective can become affected, and, naturally, the reverse can happen.

Hans-Georg Gadamer stressed that, in spoken language, objective understanding is always 'a function of knowledge' (Gadamer 2001, 11). Therefore, a thorough exploration of a text's integrity, as well as its peculiarities of content, is always possible, given a grammatically- and philosophically-inspired understanding. Without wishing to compete with Gadamer's crystal-clear language philosophy methodology and his thoroughness that strives for completeness, we must add that, when it comes to stage language, his statement does not entirely cover the reality. It is an indisputable fact that occurring of speech is meaning; thus, an occurrence of language is an 'occurrence of meaning' as well. Yet, if we state that language is meaning, we must also state that the language of

drama is active meaning, clearly manifested in the stage performance. This perception-inducing system of symbols is determined, in effect, by the intersecting points fundamental to theatre, stage, community and drama. In this manner, an occurrence of language onstage is primarily a human activity generating perception; although, on the stage, language is just one of the media in use. Therefore, in this case, intellectual-cognitive activity is the most defining condition of reception, but it is not an indispensible one (Heller 2020, 263–265). One provocative example of this is when, in a medieval mystery play presented in the national language, an exorcism scene retains the form of the exorcism ritual; hence, for the average audience, an incomprehensible language is heard (Warning 1974, 74). Yet, everyone understands the act of exorcism independent of the content of the muttered Latin words. At the same time, the compilation of sounds in the religious language (with a grain of salt) becomes dramaturgically charged, embodying the intensity and quality of emotions collected so far, to the point where it facilitates understanding of the work as a whole.[1] Truly, this dramaturgy, organically suited to the drama's tension, draws spectators into the narrative, guiding them into the story so far that 'the corporeal human becomes a spiritual one' (Czakó 1987, 134). This twist is crucial in order to awaken in the viewer *empathy* in the word's original sense – identification that seeks resolution while recognising the unsolvable nature of the problem, the co-joined feelings of fear and pity. As to its genesis, Aristotle wrote the following: '"Εστιν μὲν οὖν τὸ φοβερὸν καὶ ἐλεεινὸν ἐκ τῆς ὄψεως γίγνεσθαι, ἔστιν δὲ καὶ ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς συστάσεως τῶν πραγμάτων, ὅπερ ἐστὶ πρότερον καὶ ποιητοῦ ἀμείνονος.'[2] And before continuing any further, allow me to bring this up to date with an observation worth examining from multiple standpoints!

The expression ποιητοῦ ἀμείνονος is the *genetivus proprietatis* (i.e., the ability to bear or convey properties) in the verbal arrangement of words, which, from my standpoint, European translators have not concentrated upon adequately.

1 Reflections of this phenomenon are also discernible in modern drama literature. Their role here, too, is to expand the dramaturgical background and to delineate the contours of the referenced past more strongly. In the stage play *Csíksomlyói passió* by Balogh Elemér and Kerényi Imre, Pilate speaks thus: 'This already constitutes crimen laesae majestatis,/ Ut quisquam tributum praetendat caesaris' (Balogh and Kerényi 1983, 857).

2 I have re-translated certain chapters of the Greek text of *The Poetics,* which was justified on account of the variety of opinions on theatre and drama – as well as the fact that the traditional theatre model, in a certain sense, has become a barrier to text interpretation in recent centuries. The original Greek text can be read here: *https://www.greek-language.gr/digitalResources/ancient_greek/library/browse.html?text_id=76&page=10*

For instance, János Sarkady, the best-known Hungarian translator of *The Poetics,* renders the quoted passage thus: 'Fear and pity may come about from the drama's spectacle, but also from the plot itself. The later is more advantageous, and this suits the good poet.' A remark is justified here. The expression ἐκ τῆς ὄψεως not only includes creation through spectacle. It also refers to how sheer spectacle is not is not the only determinant in the provocation of pity and fear; indeed, it is the manner of how we regard the given spectacle. To explain, a well-written drama is not borne simply out of spectacle; it also guides our manner of seeing. At the same time, it is important to note that, besides the generously handled *genetivus proprietatis,* instead of 'more advantageous', a more exact translation of πρότερον would be 'primary in nature' or 'higher in importance'. Therefore, Aristotle taught us that fear and pity can be evoked by the drama's spectacle, but also by the plot itself, and the latter is of higher importance and typical of better poets. But what are we to understand as plot? And what did Aristotle understand it to mean?

Dramatic plot and stage business

The dramatic plot is a concentration of existence, just as stage business is a compromised form of real action (Ruszt 1960, 15). From this it follows that stage business in itself is not action, only a portion of true action, insofar as it is coherent with the plot's unfolding and the conflict's catching sparks. Hence, the plot is that, in which and through which tension is created, through which the opposing sides in the struggle acquire force, and through which these forces sooner or later collide once and for all. Stage business is the artistic representation of the dramatic plot, and its *sine qua non* conditions are the actor's transformation and the drama's language becoming a living factor. The primary medium and means of all of this is language itself. Thus, we may say – while, at the same time, supplementing Gadamer's language philosophy – essentially, the dramatic plot and the stage business are most readily identified with language. That is why Aristotle expressed that awakening feelings of fear and pity simultaneously through plot itself is the trait of superior poets.

Some representatives of liberal trends in modern drama analysis argue with the thesis of a relative union between language and plot as it apples to Greek tragedy. Thorwald Dethlefsen expressly states, 'Tragedy has no plot. That is what distinguishes drama from modern tragedies (e.g., Shakespeare and Schiller) […]

Tragedy lacks the intention to show anything. That is why we may not speak of performers in the strict sense of the word. After all, they perform nothing at all. They merely speak. This is also why tragedy is far removed from people today. A dramatic story and performance are precisely what they expect from the theatre' (Dethlefsen 1997, 35). Let us see if this statement is more serious than it appears! For what is he saying? It just so happens, for example, in the final scene of *Antigone,* Creon enters with the corpse of Haimon in his arms. No dramatic action or stage business whatsoever, in spite of his wailing in the meantime, 'Oh, woe is me! I now see the curse of a wrathful god has smote me on the head, casting me into a labyrinth from which there is no escape.' According to the postmodern concept of drama analysis, this speech only illustrates something not presented onstage. Yet, I believe one can easily see that it requires spiritual masochism for someone to wish to identify with this viewpoint. That is, the point under debate is not constructive criticism; rather, it displays an alienation from language itself. This standpoint is risky, because those who are alienated from language are ultimately alienated from humanity. Such a concept leads one to view even the unnatural as natural. According to the proponents of this view, anything could happen on the stage, although nothing can happen there besides the actual drama itself. Drama, whose most fundamental medium and means is language. How does Aristotle continue the train of thought quoted above? Here is his following statement: 'δεῖ γὰρ καὶ ἄνευ τοῦ ὁρᾶν οὕτω συνεστάναι τὸν μῦθον ὥστε τὸν ἀκούοντα τὰ πράγματα γινόμενα καὶ φρίττειν καὶ ἐλεεῖν ἐκ τῶν συμβαινόντων· ἅπερ ἂν πάθοι τις ἀκούων τὸν τοῦ Οἰδίπου μῦθον.' That is, even without spectacle (καὶ ἄνευ τοῦ ὁρᾶν), the story comes together, so that those who hear (ἀκούοντα) what happened shudder and also feel pity (καὶ φρίττειν καὶ ἐλεεῖν) at the event they have lived through upon hearing (ἀκούων) the tale of Oedipus. This is not the same as the phenomenon that John Austen expressed as executing something performatively through the act of speaking (Austin 1990, 33). This is something entirely different! It is precisely what József Ruszt formulated in this manner: '[Delivery of] the role's text, speech itself, is most essential act of existence on the stage – better still, it is the continuous process of action' (Ruszt 1960, 16).

On the basis of all this, we may establish that the most important dramaturgical tool is language itself, and – as noted above – dramaturgy that is organically suited to the dramatic tension draws viewers into the story. Identification with the protagonist in crisis makes the receiver a participant in the plot, and if the

receiver is drawn into the epicentre of dramatic tension, initiation occurs. Initiation is none other than active interpretation of what is spoken onstage – while maintaining some degree of distance. Undoubtedly, then, by this means, 'we appreciate the thought process behind the text, the strength and quality of the impetus (the intellectual or emotional content) that shapes and evokes thoughts, and the momentary will of the speaker through the composed words' (Ruszt 1960, 35). First, the initiated viewers are 'in the drama'. By all means, the tension they experience can even affect their sense of self. Second, due to the auditorium's (at least simulated) differentiation from the stage, viewers maintain a distance from the life circumstances of the drama, which is necessary in order to live out the situation. In view of this, Miklós Almási formulated one of his basic tenets, which states, '*The punctum saliens* for the understanding of theatre and the dramatic form is that the situation exists for the viewer and the collective audience – that each event or twist will have an effect on individuals who see and understand it' (Almási 1966, 28).

The play's text and the play's living speech – that is, the active meaning's form as recorded in writing – becomes a living reality through the actor's performance. Thus, by virtue of the stage production, the initiated viewer becomes part of the drama, which is born before their eyes and perishes eternally, irrevocably. After all, the next performance can never be a perfect copy of the previous one. That is because language has no manifestations that exist 'in and of themselves', independent of contingency; for, word and thing, sight and matter, tradition and subjectivity, past and present – all essentially exist in unity (Retiu 2001, 179). Partially with regard to this, we find in Manfred Pfister's book *Das Drama* the opposite: that we define the nature of drama in the Aristotlean conception – that is, Aristotle's definition is overly narrow. With communication theory as a starting point, we arrive at the conclusion that 'the intrinsic melding of multimedia in dramatic text disrupts the traditional, institutionalised separation of theatre and literature studies' (Pfister 2001, 24–25). Pfister's 'melding of multimedia' expands the text, which, in essence, incorporates elements of the production as well. Hence, it is invested with unlimited influence. That is how the 'dramatic text as super-sign' comes into being (Pfister 2001, 41). Although, to be completely objective, was the text not a 'super-sign' for Aristotle as well?

Pfister equated the essence of communication with the dramatic plot. For him, the drama's plot could include everything that constituted a communicative sign on the stage. The actor and the stage (encompassing the lights, the sound, the noises and the music) are understood as conveyors, sending viewers verbal and

non-verbal codes over visual and aural channels (Pfister 2001, 20-21). In his view, the various code types 'assume a hierarchy, with the text becoming an iconicising super-sign' (Pfister 2001, 41). From this, Pfister draws into the concept of drama forms previously excluded for the most part – for example, *commedia dell'arte* scenarios, certain forms of street theatre, both epic and absurd dramas, happenings and ritual theatre (Pfister 2001, 41–45). Erika Fischer-Lichte firmly rejects Pfister's drama theory in terms of her basic principle – namely, that the literary substratum and the multimedia aspect, present in the codes and channels activated audio-visually, give dramatic texts a dual layer. She regards the relationship of drama and theatre as two different types of artistic communication, and eliminating the distinction impedes any complex investigation of precisely this relationship (Fischer-Lichte 1984, 137–173).

The dramaturgical link between language and time

Gadamer stresses that what makes linguistic articulation possible is already present in the language. After all, words give meaning to things, and only through language can things be understood. In this manner, the exemplary representative of modern-day hermeneutics unintentionally comes close to Heidegger's concept of existence. Here is how he summarises his language philosophy: 'comprehensible existence – language' (Gadamer 2001, 13). The question of the connection between time and being is always an existential one, and perhaps it is not difficult to see how, on the basis of Gadamer's logic, this also has to do with how language and time are linked.

According to Aristotle, time is the material aspect of motion. Yet, like action, this is not merely movement. Instead, related to this, there exists hidden in our consciousness a 'counting soul' that deals with processes that have occurred and awaits their continuation. 'It is a question, if there were no awareness and no soul, whether time would exist or not. For, in the absence of a being that could count, that which is counted could not exist. Consequently, numbers would not exist either' (quoted in Anzenbacher 1993, 100).

By all means, a pre-condition of time is the subject that perceives its passing. 'The following considerations would make one suspect that time either does not exist at all or barely and in an obscure way. One part of it has been and is not, while the other is going to be and is not yet. […] Time is made up of these. One would naturally suppose that what is made up of things which do not exist could

have no share in reality. […] But of time, some parts have been, while others have yet to be, and no part of it is, though it is divisible' (quoted in Azenbacher 1993, 100). Saint Augustine resolved this paradox, that of time, by examining it from the side of the subject that 'summons it into being': 'But what now is manifest and clear is that there is neither future nor past. Nor is it right to say, "There are three times: past, present and future." But it might be right to say, "There are three times: a present of past, a present of present, and a present of future." For these three times do somehow exist in the soul. Otherwise, I would not see them: present of past, memory; present of present, sight; present of future, expectation' (Augustine 1987, 365).

An analysis of the philosophical understanding of time is beyond the scope of the present paper, so further dissection of the quality of time is superfluous. What must be clear for us is that we interpret the stage's time and the plot's time in a different manner than we perceive the duration of the running time. The stage's time and the plot's time can only be interpreted in an atmosphere of 'initiation' and only by those who, on the basis of practical experience, have gained an intellectual-spiritual sense of objective time's tangibility – to be exact, the sense of passing away. Of course, one is able to indicate stage time with light and sound cues, but only if we are made aware of the plot's time with at least minimal linguistic signs. Within Greek tragic poetry, we can easily trace this type of endeavour – to make the plot's time, the stage's time and the running time (at least mostly) of equal duration. Aristotle clearly pointed out that this tendency was the result of the development of a serious genre: 'Tragedy endeavours, as far as possible, to confine itself to a single revolution of the sun, or but slightly to exceed this limit; whereas, the epic action has no limits of time […] though, at first, the same freedom was admitted in tragedy as in epic poetry' (Aristotle 1974, 14). Clearly, the harmonisation of plot time, stage time and running time is one of the most effective dramaturgical techniques and, without a doubt, one of the hardest dramaturgical tools to implement. Yet, the distinct portrayal of multiple planes of time can be just as effective and momentous. The effect and appropriateness of how time is handled depends exclusively on what is demanded in order to develop the dramatic conflict powerfully, accurately and authentically.

Plot time and stage time are the so-called dramaturgical time. Primarily, language serves to makes its presence felt – but besides language, any dramaturgical tool can be used. A blackout after a monologue or dialogue can give us the sense of a second, a night or a longer period in the future; however, we can

also turn back into the past. It all depends on how the succeeding speech continues, or the situation as revealed in the linguistic content of the next dialogue. If in a scene – particularly one with only minor characters onstage – many people speak heatedly about an irrelevant matter, and it does not advance the plot; then the plot's time, in relation to the running time, will seem much longer – and the stage's time even longer. When the plot's time, the stage's time and the running time are actually in synch, then, too, subjective time remains – insofar as spectators will always live out a particular piece of stage business according to how close they are to the wellspring of the dramatic conflict.[3] If something disturbs them (e.g., a confusion in understanding), the disturbance can make the scene slower or even faster depending on where the viewers have grounded themselves emotionally at that point in the play.

Language, space and dramaturgy

The illustration of space onstage (or in the reader's imagination) is a representation tool just like the portrayal or suspension of tension (Almási 1966, 42–49). Even in the case of the most realistic depictions, the set pieces are allegorical and symbolic. In every case, they manipulate the spectators and, through language, draw them not only into the space onstage, but also into the territory of the dramatic plot. If the set does not indicate the magnitude of the plot's territory with strong contours, then the stage speech will primarily define it, whereby the tools of dramaturgy and stage tech can only be effective accompaniments. This is well illustrated, for example, by József Ruszt's signature version of *Othello,* as well as Iván Kamarás' portrayal of the protagonist therein. However, it is the language of the drama that circumscribes the territory of the drama's plot. Indeed, the dramaturgical space is the force-field upon which the tensions arise, swell, flare up and catch sparks. The drama's language always designates the active dramaturgical space. If the set aligns with this, then the stage space is harmonious; if this sort of alignment is lacking, then the elements are contrasting or explicitly at odds.

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3 The plot's time and the stage's time can be easily distinguished – if, for example, they present a vehicular journey onstage, and it occurs to the viewer that making the journey from A to B would actually last several hours. Onstage, it will mean one or two minutes in terms of the plot, but then several hours in stage time. The stage's time – depending on what happens in the meantime – can be longer or shorter than the running time.

Language and identity: the diction of heroes as linguistic self-representation

Sense of identity is only possible through language. Personal identity, which significantly distinguishes the individual from everyone else, demands a sort of constant inner monologue (Assman 2018, 43) wherein the ego speaks 'its own tongue'. In fact, it is nothing other than a voiceless (or only rarely audible) 'dialect' of the mother tongue that, outside of self-definition, is organically linked to the community. If this inner monologue is problematic, so will be the person's identity within the community. In German Egyptologist Jan Assman's book, entitled *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance and Political Imagination,* he postulates that all identity types are cultural formations (Assman 2018, 129–141). He expands the I-identity and We-identity dichotomy into a three-fold division, distinguishing within the 'I' an individual and a personal identity. This is very important, because, ultimately, drama does this, too. The true conflict always plays out within the dramatic hero, in whom the crisis of identity takes shape. The most powerful motor of the drama's plot becomes the clash of individual and personal identity.

Naturally, the discipline of drama theory has not ignores how individual destiny and the community's destiny are united through language either. Consequently, the mother tongue, in the socio-linguistic sense, is none other than a community's historical experience. What happens to a people can be expressed in its language. Indeed, fateful questions are echoed in every single word, expression and linguistic change. That is why when the language is endangered, so is the identity of the community; and where the language that binds the community ceases, the history of the community also comes to an end. Therefore, the local oral traditions are far more important from the aspect of identity, even more so than the aspect of maintaining the language, although the two are deeply interwoven. These traditions, within a community that undergoes crisis and weathers it, sooner or later appear in the post-crisis literary output. Andreas Kotte clearly showed this when he wrote: 'With *Odyssey* and *Iliad,* Homer attempted to overcome the dark centuries mythically, noting it down as poetry, which the classic Greek singers and rhapsodists codified as local verbal tradition.' (Kotte 2020, 29).

Crisis of identity bears the same conflicts as a poorly remembered identity. When, instead of brave self-understanding, superstitious fear imbues a language,

self-definition becomes distorted; thus, an act assumed to be heroic may easily be horrifying. We may be witness to this in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon,* the first play of his *Oresteia* trilogy, where the curse on the Atreus clan results in a negative identity within the family community. The family members' identification with the family is buttressed and ensured by 'the deed' with which they commit violence on the other members of their generation: Atreus kills his brother Thyestes' children and serves them to him (*Agamemnon,* 1095–1097, 1217–1222, 1590–1602). Agamemnon sacrifices his older daughter Iphigenia on the altar of Artemis so that good winds will accompany them on the way to Troy (*Agamemnon,* 205–247). When Agamemnon returns home from Troy, Clytemnestra kills him in the bath with an axe to avenge her daughter; and, finally, Orestes avenges his fathers death by killing his mother (Fischer-Lichte 2001, 28). Obviously, it is not true that, as a result of the ancient curse, the Atreus clan has no choice but to kill their relatives. Their bad understanding of identity on account of the curse becomes the reason why, when it comes to a decision, they repeatedly choose the violent option. Erika Fischer-Lichte clearly demonstrates that, in every case, the perpetrator – Agamemnon, Clytemnestra and Orestes – makes a conscious decision before committing murder, and that is why Aeschylus placed special emphasis on these situations. Let us take a glimpse at the decision Agamemnon is faced with. He has two options: abandon the campaign of revenge against Troy or sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia:

> *Silence. Then steps Agamemnon forth,*
> *first of the blood, the elder by his birth.*
> *'A hard thing this if our obedience fails;*
> *No less hard for a father – for a trail*
> *of a daughter's blood across the altar poured*
> *tracked by my child-red hands for ever more.*
> *But tell me what's the course free of ill?*
> *I can't turn deserter,*
> *a general double-crossing troops he promised a bounty-day.*
> *If virgin blood will stop the winds,*
> *they're bound to want to urge her blood.*
> *May it be well. There is no other way."*
>
> (*Agamemnon,* 205–217)

Mimesis and history writing – language and dramatics

In *The Poetics,* Aristotle made references in relation to how dramatics and its dramaturgical tools turned up in history writing, too, by necessity – that is, if the plot were suited to arousing feelings of fear and pity simultaneously. In one place, he writes: 'As, in the serious style, Homer is pre-eminent among poets – for he alone combined dramatic form with excellence of imitation – so he too first laid down the main lines of comedy, by dramatising the ludicrous instead of writing personal satire. His *Margites* bears the same relation to comedy that *Iliad* and *Odyssey* do to tragedy' (Aristotle 1974, 11). It is obviously no accident that, in a few cases, Greek tragedy is the dramatisation of history sung by none other than Homer. Sophocles, when he wrote *Ajax,* envisioned the story's conflict primarily on the basis of Homer's description. Also, the language of *Iliad* significantly aided in the recognition of the proper dramatic means. After all, the 'life of a language' only appears to be an 'exterior' life. If it demonstrates dramatic power, then there is drama in it – it only needs to be uncovered! Above all, drama is a heuristic medium. (This is also related to why certain novels, short stories, novellas and narrative poems are easy to dramatise.) In the following – especially in light of what has been covered so far – I wish to show, in the interest of promoting dramatisation, how we must analyse a text in which we can clearly recognise the presence of dramatic conflict. After all, the playwright/dramaturge must know everything about history writing – both from the history and the language aspects. As the topic of my demonstrative analysis, I selected the well-known Biblical text corpus which deals with David's adultery with Bathsheba, his murder of her husband Uriah, and the prophet Nathan's conversation, revealing the crimes.

Illustrative analysis – dramatising the history of David's sin

According to one point of view, the structure of the two books of Samuel from the Old Testament is primarily defined by a particular view of history that considered the reign of David a partial fulfilment of earlier promises given to Israel and the patriarchs. David's assuming the throne signified a turning point in both Is-

rael's history and the fulfilment of God's plan of redemption (Dietrich 1997, 228–249). The story of the reign and ascension to the throne of a leader of a band of mercenaries comprises a dense literary unit. Rost's opinion of it is thought-provoking – namely, that in this organic mass of text (which, in terms of history writing, has modern features as well), the so-called 'throne succession' narrative is dominant (Rost 1982, 121). The overture to this string of chronicles is the relation of the tale of the dissolution of Bathsheba's marriage.

The basic context and tangible background of the story is the war against the Ammonites, which systematically binds together Chapters 10–12 of 2 Samuel and is related, in part, to Chapter 9. It is hardly debatable to say that the story-complex primarily presents David, the *homo politicus*. In the interest of expanding into a mosaic state and solidifying Judeo-Israel's personal union, he was capable of nurturing faithful alliances with his internal rival Mephibosheth and his foreign enemies: Hanun, son of Nahash, and his crew of vassals. At the same time, it sketches how David, at the height of power, increasing embodied the model of an Eastern autocrat, practically abandoning the role of the charismatic commander typical of him up to that point. Together with resigning his duties as a war leader, it is as though he shed his perspicacious caution and strategic cunning which had strongly characterised him till then. Due to all this, his private sphere, although drawn in bold contours, becomes apparent. Exposed to us is the portrait of a man who is guided primarily by his feelings and deepest secrets, not by his wise insights.

The plot begins with an establishment of time and schedule that is debated to this day. Clearly, this downbeat does not commence the story in an *ad hoc* or *l'art pour l'art* fashion; instead, it is called for by the literary style (or the extreme, burning tension that defines it). After all, it is relevant if we interpret the series of events in terms of content. Staring from the לְעֶת צֵאת הַמְּלָאכִים expression, Garsiel argues at length that the kings' marching into battle never followed a set schedule. He feels that these words refer to the return of the messengers sent out earlier (Garsiel 2018, 231). Only he neglects two things. The first is that the infinitive construct form of צֵאת is *qal* (the simplest). Thus, when Garsiel translates it as *hiphil* (the causative form), it is a little free. Secondly, and more importantly, this is actually the opening sentence of a historical novel, in which the צֵאת הַמְּלָאכִים expression is none other than the special *locus a fictione* version – especially suited to the preposition – which, in this genre, is practically an obligatory feature in stories that unfold a dramatic conflict, precisely in the interest

of strengthening the appearance of authenticity. The sentence uses the convention attribute to make it more obvious that David should have been among his soldiers at that time. This is bravura writing. The protagonist is not even on the scene yet, and the reader is already confronted with his greatest flaw. The author of the Scripture, as Schultz also noted, 'does not hide the royal family members' characteristic weaknesses' (Schultz 2014, 116). Nor does the writer hesitate when it comes to realistic representation – not withholding, for example, that David, the former pastor boy who became king, was certainly corrupted by power. Using irony to introduce this is a powerful tool, which runs to the end of the story in an extraordinarily disciplined manner.[4]

The composition leading up to the complication is a bit like an absurd drama, an exercise in randomness, although there is nothing absurd in it. Beginning with Chapter 11 of 2 Samuel, the main character in every scene is David: David and Bathsheba (vers. 2–5), David and Uriah (vers. 6–13), David and Joab (vers. 14–25), David and the Lord (vers. 27), and David and Nathan (2Sam 12:1–12). The writing gets to the point, free of artifice – as though, besides the spoken and the speakable, there is nothing unspeakable. The sweeping flow of text not only provides a historical portrait, but is also indicative of the sinful overflow of David's desire. He lounges about, he rises, he strolls, he sees a beautiful woman bathing, he learns about her, sends for her and sleeps with her. The woman conceives and is sent away. Later, she sends a message: I am pregnant. There is no dialogue, nothing contrived, only the bare plot. Yet, by the time we get to Bathsheba's message, we are already at the flashpoint of one the greatest bone- and heart-crushing sins: adultery, which, among Israelites at that time, was more heinous than homicide. (Perhaps that is why Uriah's status as a Hittite is raised to an *epitheton ornans*.) The king was not only the highest legal forum in Israeli society – much rather, the king had special rights and privileges. Nonetheless, there were limits to those special rights and privileges. He was not allowed to commit a crime, especially not adultery.

4 In the work cited, Garsiel indicates a series of ironic instances as literary characteristic of this short story introducing the theme of adultery. The keeping of the prescribed rituals (vers. 4c) is paired with the crude transgression of moral law (vers. 4b). Uriah does not follow the king's order (vers. 8–9), and yet his disobedience is explained by his extraordinary faithfulness (vers. 11). David questions and speaks about peace and well-being (Shalom – peace, welfare, health; vers. 7). Meanwhile, he is doing everything to deprive Uriah of his peace and his marriage. Finally, there is a remark that suggests it is David's policy not to risk the life of a single man (vers. 20), but he joyfully receives the news of a few men's death as long as Uriah is among the fallen (vers. 25).

In the next phase of the story, the consequences of David's sin are introduced. From the perspective of writing for the stage, the first half of the initial sentence introducing vital power mistaking its purpose, אֶת־אֽוּרִיָּה הַחִתִּי וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד אֶל־יוֹאָב שִׁלַּח אֵלַי, is especially important. After all, from the continuation, it becomes clear – especially for those who know what follows – that David has no remorse at all for his lechery. In fact, the adulterous man is calculating, his emotions fretting over the story's complications. Essentially, it is the beginning of his identity crisis. David, the straightforward man, tries to hide his sin of adultery. At first, he believes that an apparently trifling *pious fraud* is allowed to be overlooked. In truth, ordering Uriah home and sending him to his wife is not a snare, but a seemingly benevolent gesture/trick, which – either because Uriah suspects something or he truly is faithful – does not succeed. The sin kept in secret grows rank. David set a trap, got the husband intoxicated, but he remains unbending even when inebriated, holding himself to the strict regulations of the frontline even on the home front. This awakens in David the ungodly thought which the *Book of Wisdom,* found in the Alexandrine cannon, expressed later about such cases: ἐνεδρεύσωμεν τὸν δίκαιον ὅτι δύσχρηστος ἡμῖν ἐστιν – that is, 'Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is inconvenient to us' (*Wisdom,* 2:12).

The beginning of the part about the now ungodly David shows, with ingenuous literary means, the base treachery, paving the way for the tragic resolution: 'And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter, saying, "See ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten and die." And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that the valiant men were. And the men of the city want out and fought with Joab: and there fell some of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also' (2Sam 11: 14–17). Now, several commentaries argue that, by morning, the intent to murder had taken shape in David, and he decided to be rid of Uriah once and for all, בְּחֶרֶב בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן – that is, 'by the sword of the sons of Ammon' (2Sam 12:9). Nevertheless, whether this is a case of *dolus directus* (in criminal law terms, a deliberate intention to kill) is still up for question on account of the following:

a) According to the actual content of the letter, Uriah has a chance of remaining alive, since his death is not guaranteed by sending him to the frontline and

leaving him on his own (he could win honours, be captured escape, etc.), it is only more likely.

b) David sent the letter by Uriah, who, no matter how devoted he is to him, is still in the position to get to know the contents of the letter.

c) Considering that Uriah is in the practice of flouting commands (after all, when he did not go home, he failed to disobeyed the orders of the highest commander, the king), this would give David a simple opportunity to liquidate Uriah.

On the other hand, *dolus eventualis* is when a possible intent to kill can be construed as likely. In the portion of the text dramatised as a dialogue, it reveals that Joab immediately suspects something of the sort. After the losing battle, the wily general gives this command to his messenger: 'When thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war to the king, and it so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, "Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? Knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall? Who smote Abimelech, the son of Jerubbesheth? Did not a woman cast a piece of millstone upon him from the wall, that he did die in Thebez?" then say thou, "Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also"' (2Sam 11:19–21). Joab predicted David's outrage because of the defeat, and, although he did not know the motive, he recognised the intention regarding Uriah's death. That is how he knew that news of his death would placate the king. It is a great, eternal question in law history. When soldiers in war are sent to the frontline as punishment, can it be interpreted as intent on the part of the commander from a criminal law point of view? (Dangelmaier 1893, 46) Can we say, in this case, that it was *dolus specialis,* where the aim undeniably confirms the intent; although otherwise, with regard to the possibility of the outcome, the essence of the order was *dolus indirectus*? Can we claim this despite the fact that law history, in numerous cases, has refuted the argument that the presence of a purpose in and of itself should prove actual responsibility for the result? (Hacker 1224, 38–53) And why are these questions relevant to our theme? When it comes to legal fault, undoubtedly, an individual's responsibility can be measured in some manner. The legal system defines the crime and establishes the consequences. Punitive sanctions – even in the case of applying rules that originate from God – are always entangled with life's interrelations in accordance with the logic of legal norms. Yet, life is enmeshed in such an extensive network of sin (whether related to moral, spiritual or biological considerations) that law can barely tie all the strands in one knot. In a legal sense, the narrative being examined raises two grandiose

and tightly interwoven questions: 1. Is David an indirect perpetrator of murder? (determination of *dolus directus* and *dolus eventualis*) 2. Did David consider the order given in the letter to be participation in murder? (determination of *dolus indirectus*) The next chapter of the history writing under analysis will provide answers to much of this.

The ancient law of Israel was plainly religious law. The legal system rested mainly upon the basis of religion. Meanwhile, there was a complementary relationship between the legal apparatus and worship, both jointly legitimising godly revelations (Horst 1956, 49–75). In this relation – paying attention to the sociological peculiarities of Israeli society (see Kessler 2011, 66–76) – the rape of a woman was not simply a crime, but an existential deconstruction as well, since such an abuse – as, for example, a pre-marital sex life – ruined society's judgment of the woman. Hence, when such a thing occurred, the perpetrator was required to pay compensation to the woman's father and marry the woman (Deut 22: 28–29). If it involves a woman that is engaged who defends herself – since here another man's rights are affected – the rapist had to expect the penalty of death (Deut 22: 25–26). In Israeli society, adultery was one of the most serious crimes, as it endangered society to the same considerable extent that it offended God's law. Thus, holding someone responsible for it could not be omitted. The apodictic and casuistic laws related to this were in total agreement (Alt 1953, 278–332). Hence, it is evident that David wished to cover up this misdeed and did everything in the interest of warding off the question of responsibility for the sin.[5] Thus, with David, the sin of adultery becomes a crime that is kept secret – if you like, a sort of secret crime.[6] This type of secrecy, however, is not born out of ignorance, it is deliberate. David is the active subject of the verb סתר.

In the closing scene, Nathan's fable is a parable of jurisdiction. His method is to present the situation through the most clearly true-to-life story possible, in which the individual can pass judgment upon himself – without recognizing that it constantly applies to himself. This is precisely why his delivery style is a delib-

5 Already in Genesis, Chapter 3 – the tale of the expulsion from Paradise – in the framework of a story mythological in nature, the refusal to assume responsibility for sin comes under debate when they try to shift responsibility for wrong behaviour. Adam accuses Eve of indulging in the forbidden fruit, which she gives to him. Eve holds the snake responsible for enticing her to defy the prohibition. In general, they seek in others the cause of their own sinfulness, and if it is not possible to evade, they try to hide the misdeed.

6 With its paradigmatic character, the story refers to how denial spreads – that is, the habit of passing on responsibility – and makes it clear that such behaviour will not find acceptance with God.

erate imitation of a trial (Karasszon 2002, 142).[7] David receives Nathan's address as a trial discussion of an event (and a scenario with the poor and the rich living side by side in the city) that could be utterly commonplace. The king, as 'the supreme legal forum' (Karasszon 2002, 142), is not at all astonished by the outline of the case. It is the type of dramaturgical tool that makes a prose text perfectly dramatic. The scene would hold up on the stage as well with no alteration.

At the same time, rhetorically speaking, the parable is a classic trial argument. Nathan begins: שְׁנֵי אֲנָשִׁים הָיוּ בְּעִיר – *exordium* and *propositio* in one (Cicero 2012, 362–371). That this is still a sort of parable is indicated by the בְּ prefix (there is no definite article, so he speaks of a city 'chosen at random'), but it is not explicit. The prophet's fact-conveying speech is fascinating and upsetting, and one can feel from its unnerving sentences that it is not motivated by knowledge or mud-slinging – not even the intention to unmask David. Inspiration from God makes every word burn like poetry. It is a perfect implicit allegory: in the text, there is no lexical trace of the hidden thought, that the rich man could be identical to David; and the greatest playwright could be envious of the closing – that is the הַבָּא אֵלָיו expression (although a modern version of the text would rule out the *silluk*), which is a palpable *interruptio* in the rhetorical sense. From this, we can tell that Nathan would have continued his accusation with אַתָּה הָאִישׁ, if David had not interrupted. The author of the chronicle wrote this dialogue, crackling with dramatic tension, with David interrupting and impulsively proclaiming his verdict. Thus, not only will the realisation and judgment of God carry annihilating power, but David's admission of guilt, given as a reply: חָטָאתִי לַיהוָה. With David's interruption and his judgment born out of sincere outrage, as well as his answer given upon being confronted with God's judgment, the author suggest that David did not truly consider himself Uriah's murderer up until this point. Clearly, it is no accident that the prophet emphasises וְאֹתָהּ הָרַגְתָּ בְחֶרֶב בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן. David hid his sin of

7 Karasszon István notes: 'According to Chapter 14 of 2 Samuel, Joab, in an attempt to convince David to call home Absolom, who had been exiled for fratricide, came up with a test, whereby he sent to David a woman who laid before the king this complicated legal case, in which one of her children killed the other. 2 Samuel (14:7) beautifully describes the local proceedings conducted according to the law, and that murder called for the death penalty. Thus, the local court was justified in their verdict on the case, and if there had been no other complication, the sentence would have been carried out. However, the criminal is the family's last offspring. That is why, in Israel, the ruling judge had to face two possible options, both considered shameful: either kill off a family or leave the fratricide unpunished. In this complicated case, the king had jurisdiction; otherwise, the matter would not have come before him. From the story, it is possible to draw this conclusion: the king was truly the 'supreme legal forum' (Karasszon 2002, 142).

adultery. That he actually committed murder (as Noll also referred to in in one of his works[8]) is hidden from him. The text presents this psychologically, as well as how people continually at the mercy of their emotions stray again and again into the dead end of secret sins. From the point of view of our theme, the parable's great lesson is that failure to recognise personal sin, or keeping it a secret, can easily end up wounding other people's lives. The secret sin can also swell to the point where the sinner shrinks with fear from the world. David's downfall – similar to the collapse of Oedipus – horrifies the audience, but it is also suffused with the spirit of compassion.

Conclusion

On the basis of what I have sketched here, perhaps I have succeeded in showing clearly that the discipline of drama theory is not a pendant of aesthetic philosophies. That does not mean, however, that one should not use methods and categories from philosophy and aesthetics in certain cases. The most fundamental genre rules for constructing drama are eternal laws, although we may also declare – with the agreement of Brecht and Dürrenmatt – that there is no universal principle of drama construction. There is history writing, dramatics, dramatic conflict and language – the latter being a means of drama just as much as its medium. No matter how much we know about them, drama may be merely a work of art. On top of that: heuristic. Because of that, without true talent, no one can become a playwright or dramaturge. Yet, talent itself is not enough for the creation of art, since those who do not know the language better than palm of their hand will never be able to evoke dramatic power in text written for the stage. With all this in mind, by nurturing talent and providing guidance, in all certainty, we can revive our drama literature and theatre arts.

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8 Nathan proclaims three well-circumscribed punishments: 1. The sword will never depart from David's house. 2. The Lord will take his wives before his eyes and give them to his neighbour, who will lie with them in broad daylight. 3. The son that David sired with Bathsheba will certainly die. Each of the punishments is linked to a concrete cause. 1. Because David despised the Lord and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be his own. 2. Because he always acted secretly. 3. Because he gave the enemies of the Lord an occasion to blaspheme. Noll points out that David's second sin, the murder of Uriah, is mentioned two times in the third line of the announcement of the punishment. In Verse 9, however, it is not directly levelled at him until David's outburst in the first half of Verse 14. From Nathan's answer, it is completely certain that David will be punished for the murder. Since Nathan replied that 'The Lord hath taken away thy sin; thou shall not die!', it means that the Lord will not kill David for the rape of Bathsheba. The suffering for his sin will come about through the declared punishment to be meted out to his family. The death of the child to be born will be reparation for the death of Uriah.

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10.56044/UA.2021.1.3.eng

György Lukácsy

The Style and the Man Himself

Marcell Jankovics' Lifework in the Postmodern Age

Few aphorisms have enjoyed a greater career than that of Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, who was inducted into L'Académie Française in 1753. His statement that 'the style is the man himself' – with all its obscurity – is especially oppressive in a time when organised style movements are outdated. If there is no style of the time to act as a great narrative or an intellectual framework defining the artist's creative parameters, then artists arrive at a tormenting crossroads. They may either build a universe out of their own style (in the spirit of faith in art's immanent nature); or they may seek some basis, something outside themselves to grab hold of (inevitably making their output questionable for all those who doubt the existence of an exterior foundation). However controversial it may seem, Marcell Jankovics, who died last year, made some elegiac statements at the end of his life that allow us to deduce how he experienced this theoretical, artistic dilemma as a personal inner conflict, despite general and widespread knowledge of his oeuvre.

When MMA Kiadó released the volume spanning his lifework and supplemented with studies, what pained Marcell Jankovics was that he never had a style. Few took this remark seriously. Nonetheless, he truly had something at stake – whether he had any relevance on account of his substantial creative career. He expressed the very same complaint earlier, on the occasion of his lifework's exhibition at Art Hall. (The exhibit entitled Life Praxes II was opened on 6 December 2019, by curators Réka Fazakas and Mihály Medve with the aid of György Szemadám as an expert advisor). 'I have no formulated style that I am

Photo: MTI/Tibor Oláh

able to force upon a given theme. There are famous graphic artists whose work can be identified at first glance. If you look over the Trianon pictures on display now, it is not certain you will say that I produced them. I draw in a variety of ways, and this variety arises from a "lack of discipline". Having graduated, I became an assistant, then a maker of animated films, although there were several fine artists among my ancestors. There is a professional reason as well. As an assigned drawer, I had to match the style of various directors. In my childhood, I already drew better than average. At the Benedictine Secondary School of Pannonhalma, I was given the decoration tasks, and I had to illustrate the priests' poems, but I never developed a style under the guidance of a master. Pál Kő is a very good friend of mine, and his sculptures are unmistakable, just as Miklós Melocco has completely clear indications of style. My creative style is most apparent in my choice of themes' (Seres 2021). When we spoke personally, he mentioned in a similar tone the examples of Líviusz Gyulai and János Kass, the definitive graphic artists and illustrators of the period, whose styles could be

Fig. 1. The Tragedy of Man – Scene 1: Creation

recognized with one glance at their artwork (Lukácsy 2021). What could be the reason for Marcell Jankovics' unease?

The dilemma, clearly controversial in nature and only capable of being unravelled theoretically, can be expressed thus: Is it possible for an artist with a conservative worldview to be postmodern? What makes the issue especially tense is the following question, which has bearing both personally and on art history at the same time: Does a conservative mindset 'traditionally' exclude one from the label of postmodernism? A typical expression of this exclusion comes from literary critic Márton Falusi: 'Postmodern art perfectly takes the form of the "lukewarm middlebrow culture" alienated from us, because it does not strive to depict matters so that we may recognise and transcend them. Instead, it subordinates itself to hard and fast rules, incorporating, distorting and overwriting outside texts. "Lukewarm middlebrow culture" is not naturally comprised of classic works considered fundamental. It is the manner whereby tradition is used, unconcerned with the challenges of *hic et nunc*. In fact, it makes a mockery of

tradition – not pondering over it, merely making it its plaything' (Falusi 2011, 62). Marcell Jankovics himself tried resolving this contradiction the following way: 'I quite like the novel *Celestial Harmonies* and the bagatelles of Péter Esterházy, one of Hungary's most confirmed postmodern figures. As for me, I do not feel the postmodern label fits. Postmodern has become a sort of worldview. In that sense, I find it unpleasant. If I were to label myself, I would describe my disposition as liberal, patriotic and Christian. However, I have thought much over the question of style, and I have realised that it is not which graphical techniques I use that is important, but the thought with which I approach my subject. Many say that, when something bears traces of my handiwork, it is unmistakable. It is interesting that all of this arises from the fact that I do not stick to a single style per se' (Lukácsy 2021). In the following, I will endeavour to clarify Marcell Jankovics' aversion to postmodernism and his art's relation to postmodern style attributes.

The problem lies precisely in the concept of style. Firstly, its overemphasis would lead us into the (self-)scrutiny that tormented Marcell Jankovics (as his elegiac passages cited above reveal). Secondly, with the concept of style, we would simply be unable to grasp the relevant intellectual concept of Marcell Jankovics' artwork on a theoretical level. In the course of a work's creation, as well as in its comprehension, style only becomes a valid concept in terms of its local value. Erwin Panofsky's thoughts on art history come to our aid when determining this 'local value', because, during his research into the seemingly distant Renaissance, he was the one who framed the concept of style as part of a hierarchy, thereby depriving it of its dominant theoretical role. Panofsky introduced three distinct stages in terms of the artwork's reception and interpretation. For the first (pre-iconographic) stage, Panofsky used the term history of style. The secondary iconographic stage deals with the history of types. Only with knowledge of the latter can iconologic investigation come about. My supposition is that this works similarly with artistic disposition as well. In the course of Marcell Jankovics' theoretical, cultural and educational work, he primarily approached his subjects from an iconographic aspect. We may define his popular *Collection of Symbols* as conceptual iconography, but also his highly valuable series devoted to the description of churches in Upper Hungary [former Hungarian territory in present-day Slovakia] (Jankovics and Méry 2020).

At the first and actually superficial stage of a Panofsky-style hierarchy, iconography plays a role. 'The suffix *-graphy* originates from *graphein,* the Greek verb

for to write, indicating a purely descriptive and possibly static method. Based on this, iconography is the description and categorisation of depictions, just as ethnography is the description and categorisation of human races. It is a bounded territory of knowledge, seemingly serving to inform us where, when and by what means certain themes were cloaked in visual expression. In short, iconography deals solely with the category of motifs that comprise the artwork's inner content – that which must be expressed by all means – if our purpose is to grasp the picture's content in an articulate and communicable way' (Panofsky 1984, 257). From Marcell Jankovics' statements and later analyses of his pieces, it becomes clear why interpretation runs into a dead end if we approach his work only in terms of iconography. (This is the activity we refer to as criticism in our country, practising a type of comparative analysis or statistical analysis of the stylistic elements. After all, the work of art's success is evaluated on the basis of its iconographic ingenuity.) Of course, this activity has its uses, but it is incapable of achieving tangible results if we are seeking what makes Marcell Jankovics' oeuvre truly unique. It is much more useful to view his lifework from the third level of Panofsky's observational pyramid – that is, from the *iconological* perspective located at its peak. 'While the suffix *-graphy* refers to something that is descriptive in nature, the suffix *-logy* (which comes from *logos* and means *thought* or *idea*) signifies something interpretive' (Panofsky 1984, 257). Naturally, there are some preconditions for *ideological* perception. The most obvious one is also the most problematic when it comes to contemporary art: the presumption of *logos*. The wealth of iconography often distracts us from the feeling of emptiness that arises when there is no *logos* behind *graphein* – or, if there is, this thought or idea is simply empty, shallow or hollow (deconstructed). In Marcell Jankovics' case, this is precisely the point. From time to time, the *graphein* is not original, but this leads us to recognise the originality of the *logos*. His artwork's vision is not iconographic, but *iconological*. It is Marcell Jankovics' reflective, synthesising tendency that is actually important to us.

At the iconographic level, Marcell Jankovics' art does show signs of postmodernism. It is commonly known to critics that, in many respects, Marcell Jankovics' process as an animation director is related to what is described in literature as wordplay or the incorporation of an outside text. Naturally, in his case, this method of quoting deserves a separate study. What is of interest to us is the quoting attitude itself. The first decisive step in his career is also worth regarding in this light. Painter György Szemadám, Jankovics' intellectual companion to

the end of his life, recalls it thus: 'The big change occurred in 1968. That was Air India. [...] Jankovics got the commission, because the traffic company's artistic director saw the film *Transformations* by György Kovásznai. He wanted to have an advertisement made in that style, but Kovásznai said no. Knowing Jankovics' hard work, his speed and his ability to produce the given assignment in any graphic style, the studio's leadership entrusted the work to him' (Szemadám 1987, 9 – author's emphasis). Clearly, this 'any style' was a token of respect. Nevertheless, despite the intention, it expresses the sense of Jankovics' lack of a signature style. It is well-known that even his first full-length animated film in 1973, *John, the Valiant,* quoted the visual world of contemporary animation and music video. Marcell Jankovics lifted the pictorial expression from The Beatles' *Yellow Submarine* video clip and full-length animated feature to make his adaptation of Sándor Petőfi's narrative poem. German pop artist Heinz Edelmann's graphic designs

Fig. 2. The Tragedy of Man – Scene 6: Hercules at the Crossroads

had an effect on Jankovics – not just visually (Neo-Art Nouveau style), but also intellectually. For one thing, in both cases, the protagonist was depicted from a low angle with both feet on the ground (practical, his actions rooted in reality). At the same time, thanks to the depiction's horizontal orientation – that is, the distorted perspective of the figure – it is open to the vertical axis (celestial, transcendent, cosmic).

The list of similar quotations from Jankovics' oeuvre is practically endless. For example, his opus entitled *The Tragedy of Man,* based on Imre Madách's work and completed over thirty years, commits itself to a full military-style inspection of these quotations and motifs. 'The influence of Henri Rousseau comes through in the depiction of the Garden of Eden, while there is a pronounced use of Impressionistic music (Debussy and Ravel), particularly in the instrumentation' (Varga 2019, 48–49). After Adam and Eve's expulsion from Paradise, there is a sort of luminescent mirror which reflects a distorted image of the reality that surrounds them, similar to Surrealist Desmond Morris' style of expression. In the London scene, these motifs' dance of death is already clear. The figures of Ferenc Puskás,

Fig. 3. The Tragedy of Man – Scene 9: Revolution

Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály, Marilyn Monroe, James Bond or Elvis Presley are not merely present onscreen, but appear as iconographic quotations – in iconic depictions now inseparable from the given individual. (More precisely, it is the memory of them preserved in pictures.) Yet, on occasion, the quotations do not simply strive for resemblance. They are not intended as mere iconographic references, but 'literal' references. The Santa Claus character in Marcell Jankovics' *Tragedy* is a copy of the Coca-Cola Company's ad figure. The visual source material for his last work, an adaptation of János Arany's *Toldi,* covers remarkably vast territory. Besides the Illuminated Chronicle or the Manesse Codex from the time of Hungary's King Louis the Great, he draws from Pinterest, a public image-sharing service on the internet.

What he draws from his sources may raise many questions – from evocation to plagiarism – still, one thing is certain. This artistic process builds not upon his signature style, but upon summoning outside cultural references and thus activating their meaning and content. This is clearly a feature of postmodernism. Yet, in Jankovics' case, this feature is not absolute. This is proved by the classic *Son of the White Mare,* the crowning jewel of his lifework, as well as by his book illustrations. Indeed, in these instances, there are no similar visual quotations or patterns to uncover; and still, they are perceptibly the work of the same artist. *Son of the White Mare* naturally references the (visual) symbolism of Hungarian, Hun and Avar creation myths, but these quotations are not arbitrary. They are necessary on account of the film's archetypal figures and its weaving of mythical plots. 'This is one of most Hungarian hero tales, and it is featured under that heading as a stand-alone type of tale in János Berze-Nagy catalogue of myths. […] The tale centres upon a white mare that miraculously becomes pregnant, and its son or sons perform herculean labours' (Jankovics 2004, 91). What is peculiar about Marcell Jankovics' process is that the more he adheres to the iconography and symbolism of this uniquely Hungarian legendary world, the more general it becomes, as ancient myths are nourished by the same *common* source. In his study written about *Son of the White Mare,* 'Folktale and Animated Film', ethnologist and folklorist Mihály Hoppál surveys the precise territory of this common source when comparing the son's return to the myths of peoples from the Russian and Uzbek plains, as well as to motifs from Greek mythology. He draws a typical conclusion at the end of his comparative analysis: 'It is apparent, with the aid of a single motif, how the mythical worlds of Ancient Greek and the East are connected. Thus, a theme pulled from national folklore speaks an

Fig. 4. The Tragedy of Man – Scene 10: More Light

international language, comprehensible to the descendents of other peoples' (Hoppál 1998, 137). Hence, Marcell Jankovics draws from a legendary source that has its own iconography. This is not a feature of postmodernism. The storyteller of antiquity also alludes to common (as well as invisible) iconography when he begins speaking about Odysseus. This community-consciousness is present in Marcell Jankovics' art; yet, it presents an art theory challenge, since Jankovics no longer counted upon the common (knowledge, mythology, iconography) to exist in the community and in the nation the same way it resided in him. One of the most beautiful aspects of his lifework is that he presumed and intended to demonstrate all this: that, despite all appearances, the original common still indeed exists; that deconstruction leads nowhere; that the hermeneutical world-view is valid after all, in spite of the fashionable ironic and critical approach; that there is room for education (upbringing or *Bildung*) and the spread of knowledge; and that identity does not have to be worked out or played with, since we already recognise it – our identity is given from the start.

That is why Marcell Jankovics' art can only be termed postmodern in the sense of its characteristic tendency to classicise – that is, through quotation, he also builds up a sort of canon. At the same time, the way he achieves all this – constituting a spiritual authority – is alien to postmodernism. With him, the quotations always have local value. By referencing what is common, every quotation finds its place. Speaking about *John, the Valiant,* György Szemadám called this common quality inevitable (in the sense of physical laws) and unchanging[1] (Szemadám 1987, 23). In other words, with Jankovics, the quotations cannot withstand an (autonomous) authorial power; instead, they are subordinate to common knowledge. In terms of Panofsky's construction, this means Jankovics can be regarded as postmodern at no higher than the iconographic (first) level. At the iconologic and reflective level, however, his approach is absolutely not postmodern. So what it is, then?

From Lyotard's explanation of the postmodernism concept, it is clear that Marcell Jankovics' disposition is removed from postmodernism. 'Simplified to the extreme, I define postmodern as insecurity in the face of grand narratives. Undoubtedly, this insecurity is the result of scientific development, which is a condition for our development at the same time' (Lyotard 1993, 8). Marcell Jankovics always found support in grand narratives, even if the narrative framework (worldview) is difficult to outline.

He identified as a cultural Christian. 'I have been a believer starting from my mother's womb.' Yet, his religious convictions could not fit in any denomination of institutionalised (and, in his opinion, derailed) Christianity; whereas, Gnostic and universal faiths were neither revolutionary nor rebellious – merely doubting[2] (Jankovics 1996, 198–237). Or struggling. His book about the story preserved in the 'Legend of Saint László' mural elaborates upon this struggle. The clash of

1 cf: 'For the figures in *John, the Valiant,* Jankovics had to seek out constant attributes – "graphic, ornamental epithets" – in the inevitable and the unchanging. Perhaps that is why he turned to the masks of Kabuki and Noh Theatre. Thus, he was able to learn how they could express a complete inner world. The characters' faces in *John, the Valiant* are masks in motion. Compared to the many foreground shots (premier plan) in live-action films, which mostly imitate the span of our attention, the role of facial expressions here was condensed down to minimalism. Naturally, this again raised the question of opportunities for emotional identification with the story. The expressiveness of *John, the Valiant* solved this difficult problem. The feelings are not only on the faces, but permeate the entire frame. When the protagonist is sad, all the colours are gloomy. When he is cheerful, everything brightens up (Szemadám 1987, 23).

2 Perhaps his lifework's most personal study examines the borderlines of religious activity in Judeo-Christian circles. He demonstrates the function of humour, sexual fixations, complexes and repressions that come up in religion, all the way to transgressions – for example, blasphemy (cf: Jankovics 1996, 198–237).

Saint László and the Cuman warrior is a parable of Hungarian history, for which there is even an astrological explanation; still, most importantly, it is also an inner spiritual struggle. It is the uniquely resonant clash of the Christian and pagan world in the soul of Mankind. Yet, Marcell Jankovics is a pessimist. For him, the legend does not end with Saint László's victory, but with a surrender of identity: 'That was the fate of the legend-frescoes. They got plastered over; or, in the course of renovations, they vanished for centuries before the believers' eyes' (Jankovics 1987, 91). What was perhaps important to Marcell Jankovics, in terms of his faith and its relation to his art, was that the religious – be they Christian or Chinese Taoist – should declare the same ethical foundation: 'Technological development separates Mankind from the humility needed to behave and act properly in the world. [...] Hence, the greatest sin that people can commit against themselves and the world is not to accept the world's obvious, inevitable order and to try forcing their own will upon the world. That is like Mankind wishing to

Fig. 5. The Tragedy of Man – Scene 11: O, Fortuna!

rise above God' (Kovács 2001, 14). In Marcell Jankovics' art, this worldview is manifest in the orientation toward a cosmic order.

From the *Hungarian Folk Tales* series and *John, the Valiant* to *Son of the White Mare,* he creates figures whose feelings and intentions are not projected. Instead, through motion (animation), they extend past their contours. That is, their change of shape is transcendent. Flames of anger often go beyond the figure. Signs of sensuality also exceed the character's outlines, thus becoming love. Compositions reminiscent of mandalas incessantly exceed the picture's boundaries. However, the most characteristic manifestation of this is the sun's being in a state of eternal, dynamic overflow. Marcell Jankovics did more than devote a volume to presenting the sun's mystical aspects. The sun's illumination held a cosmic message. Not just in its mythological settings (*Hungarian Folk Tales* and *Son of the White Mare*), in profane stories as well, the sun is an emblem of order and physical law. With him, even János Arany's hero, Toldi, is represented by the sun. 'Toldi's mythical basis – in a legendary mantle, enriched with folktale motifs – peeps out from under the other "narrative layers". Our protagonist's form bears universal attributes of the sun – those of Samson (to whom the poet refers separately in the third chapter), Heracles, the folk hero János Erős, and Kullervo from *The Kalevala*. In addition to the hero's supernatural strength and untamed nature, his mythical basis is alluded to by the work's division in twelve chapters. Further, he fights a mystical battle with a bull and is compared once to a storm god and another time to the abovementioned mystical animal' (Jankovics 2018, 19). Is all this alien to the Christian faith? Hardly. This worldview simply has precedents.

The Middle Age could not yet know of animation, but its architecture expressed the same thought by orienting churches to the east. As a symbol of the resurrection, the light of the sun rising at dawn illuminated the shrine from above, causing the frescoes seen on the walls to shine in the light and tell a story. Thus, the builder created a unique dramaturgy of light. He did not suit the holy building to the landscape or the environment, but to the cosmos. The church was not christened, because they believed that the space was already blessed, and they 'only' had to arrange it. Knowing this, it is not so hard to imagine why Marcell Jankovics was so attracted to the winged altars of Upper Hungary's gothic churches. Marcell Jankovics instinctively transplanted this Middle Age outlook into the art world typical of his time. On account of this artistic desire, he is hard to categorise. In his creative means and his style, he could be postmodern. As an individual seeking God's illuminating light, he is clearly not. This is the thought that ties

together the seemingly disparate career. He is at once an educator, a cultural historian, a pedagogue (Jankovics 2015, 2019), a cultural politician – serving on the board of the cultural committee for the FIDESZ Party since 2003, president of the National Cultural Fund from 2010 to 2011, and honorary president of the Hungarian Art Academy since 2020 – a pundit, but first of all an artist. Our time believes in roles, not in a well-rounded life or in missions. Based on the statements he made at the end of his life, it seems as though Marcell Jankovics himself was uncertain whether it was worthwhile to play so many roles. He reassured himself this way: 'If I had done everything I did not do, I would not have been able to do what I did' (Fejérvári 2009, 9). His actions speak for him and for our good – and that is to His greater glory.

Fig. 6. The Tragedy of Man – Scene 13: Space

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10.56044/UA.2021.1.4.eng

Ferenc Veress

Following the Star

Nativity Scenes and Sacred Drama from the Middle Ages to the Baroque[1]

In his volume of essays, József Szauder, a literary historian residing in Rome, published an intriguing piece in which he noted his observations upon seeing the nativity scenes in the 1970s at Christmastime. In the Piazza Navona, he wrote, the tortoise-shaped square of antique origin transformed into a 'world stage'. Only at that time can one truly imagine how the lively bustle of people might have populated the marketplace square decades ago, along with the merchants' stalls filled with all manner of dolls, the nativity scene figurines. 'Here the third smaller stage thoroughly lined the second, the row of stalls, which in turn corresponded to the urban stage' (Szauder 1977, 338). The whole world, all humanity, trooped around the infant Jesus' crib – and not just on account of the holy parents Mary and Joseph or the donkey and ox exhaling warm breath over the manger, but also for the shepherds and the Three Kings from the East.

Insofar as I would like to trace the origin of the nativity scene genre, we are obliged to seek it in the very roots of Christianity. Following Edict of Milan made by Emperor Constantine the Great in 313 CE, ambitious construction projects began in the Holy Land. That is when they laid the foundation of the basilica at Jesus' birthplace in Bethlehem, above the grotto where he was born. Additions made to the basilica, arranged longitudinally on an octagonal base, included a courtyard surrounded by a hall with columns that served as a resting place for visiting pilgrims (Krautheimer 1963, 36).

Revived interest in the scenes of Jesus' life motivated numerous pilgrims to travel to the Holy Land. Church Father Saint Jerome testified to their experiences

1 The author's research was made possible by the Program for Post-Doctoral Excellence 2018 (NKFIH PD 18), Grant No. 128219.

in a letter in which he gives a tangible account of the state of mind of his travelling companion, a noblewoman named Paula: 'From there, she entered the cave of the Saviour and beheld the Virgin's inn and the stall, where "the oxen knew its owner and the donkey its master's crib" (Isaiah 32:20) [...] I heard her swear that she could see, with the eyes of faith, the gurgling infant wrapped in swaddling clothes in his crib; the Magi worshipping him as God; the star shining down from on high; the Virgin Mother; the attentive foster-father; and the shepherds coming by night to see "the Word become flesh" [...] Shedding tears mixed with joy, she said, "Hail, Bethlehem, house of bread, where the Bread that comes down from Heaven was born."' (Saint Jerome 2005, 116–117).

During the Middle Ages, interest in the holy site in Bethlehem did not decrease. Indeed, it grew by leaps and bounds, and new legends were associated with it. In his travel journal entry from 1519, Hungarian Franciscan friar Gábor Pécsváradi mentions the quaint legend, according to which Saint Jerome's body returned to its burial site from the altar built by the Patriarch of Constantinople. Then, appearing to the patriarch in a dream, he said, 'Let me remain in my original place, since, in times to come, the pagans will occupy the Holy Land, and my body will be taken to Rome.' (Holl 1983, 153).

Saint Jerome's ashes were truly reburied in Rome at the end of the twelfth century, the body receiving a place in the Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica, near the chapel where the relic of the manger in Bethlehem is kept. The relic could be displayed in Rome as early as the seventh century, and the service in which the Pope places the Holy Host on the manger-relic during Christmas mass could date back to this time as well (Young 1933, 25). Thus, in the liturgy, the manger in Bethlehem is connected to the transformation of the Eucharist, the miraculous transubstantiation of Christ's body.

During the offering, in the course of the liturgy, believers copy the gesture of the Magi from the East by bringing presents to the altar, and the priest gives thanks over them. Developing out of this offering is the 'Three Kings' liturgical performance, a beautiful example of which is the eleventh-century play entitled *Tractus Stellae,* preserved in the missal of Bishop Hartvik of Győr. The liturgical drama presents the Magi's reverence in the following manner. 1. Procession: the Wise Men enter from the vestry. 2. Station: meeting at the main altar, where they collect the gifts. 3. Procession: crossing the chancel, they proceed to Herod's throne in Jerusalem, situated in the centre of the nave. 4. Station: Herod receives the Magi. 5. Procession: journey to Bethlehem, sighting the star. 6. Station: at the

Photo: Hungarian Museum of Architecture – Monument Protection Documentation Center

Fig. 1. Adoration of the Magi. Pécs (Hungary), Cathedral

manger (probably located at a Virgin Mary statue), they give their gifts to the infant. 7. Procession: the Magi exit (Karsai 1938, 54).

Art historian Dezső Dercsényi links the text of the liturgical drama in Győr to the relief (c. 1170–1180) along the descent to the undercroft of the cathedral in Pécs. The depictions along the descent to the undercroft show in rich detail the reverence of the three sages from the East before the Virgin Mary's throne and their conversation with Herod, as well as their dream, which motivates them to return home by a different way than they arrived. *(Fig. 1)* The sack carried by the Three Kings was an attribute of pilgrims, and they asked the church for a blessing upon it before their journey, later donating it to a church out of gratitude at the completion of their pilgrimage (Dercsényi 1950, 93).

As the same time as the creation of the reliefs in Pécs, Emperor Frederick I (Frederick Barbarossa) had the relics of the Wise Men conveyed from Milan to Cologne in 1164. There an ornate reliquary was constructed for their three skulls,

which numerous pilgrims sought out during the Middle Ages. We possess an especially detailed account of the Hungarian pilgrims in Cologne. According to Sándor Bálint, the Hungarian pilgrims arrived in May and resided in Cologne for six weeks as guests of the city. After passing the Hahnentor city gate, they proceeded, singing and praying, to the cathedral, where the men rang the great bell and offered up candles to the relics of the Three Kings. To combat fatigue, those setting out bound the names of the Three Kings around their knees and wore coins around their necks in their honour (Bálint 1989, 141–142).

In all certainty, Franciscan spirituality marked a new level in the development and growing splendour of the Christmas celebration. In the legend of Saint Francis of Assisi's life, we may read of the miracle that occurred in the cave chapel in Greccio. At Christmastime in 1223, at the saint's request, a manger was set up at the altar of the Greccio Chapel with a likeness of the baby Jesus. In the course of the holy mass held 'over the manger', as Saint Francis testified to the Saviour's birth in a soul-stirring sermon, the baby Jesus came to life for the congregation. Thomas of Celano, author of the legend, acknowledged the significance of the saint's deed. '[…] For the Child Jesus had been forgotten in the hearts of many; but, by the working of His grace, He was brought to life again through His servant Saint Francis and stamped upon their fervent memory' (Celano 1996, 90–93).

Photo: Ferenc Veress

Fig. 2. Giotto di Bondone: The Miracle at Greccio. Assisi (Italy), Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi

The Miracle in Greccio made its way into the 'canonical' events of Saint Francis' life. Thus, Giotto di Bondone also captured it in the fresco series at the Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi (c. 1297). Giotto's fresco

Photo: Ferenc Veress

Fig. 3. Arnolfo di Cambio: Nativity Scene. Rome (Italy), Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica

depicts in detail the church's apse, the structure of the rood screen (partition between the chancel and nave), and the columned canopy towering above the altar. *(Fig. 2)* The faces and gestures of the congregation reflect how they are moved. The curious women may not step beyond the rood screen, since, with the exception of certain members of the laity, only priests could be there. Still, in order to convey credibly the universal significance of Saint Francis' deed, Giotto felt it important to portray the laity's bearing witness as well.

At the same time as the Assisi frescoes, Giotto's contemporary, the sculptor Arnolfo di Cambio, carved the nativity scene for the Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome at the commission of Pope Nicholas IV. The pope himself originated from Saint Francis' order, and his great largess made possible the decoration of the basilicas in Assisi and Rome. On the basis of reconstructions, the arch of the recess which housed Arnolfo's Roman sculpture group was framed by the figures of two prophets. Saint Joseph stands on the left. To the right are two of the kings conversing along their journey. *(Fig. 3)* The figure of the Virgin Mary (now lost) occupied the centre with an old magus kneeling before her. The assembly

was completed by the donkey and the ox on the left, bowing towards the manger. For the visitor or pilgrim, moving and changing position, Arnolfo's sculpture group was exposed from every side. Thus, it may also be considered a *sacra rappresentazione* or sacred play (Pomarici 1988, 155–174).

Franciscan spirituality definitely played a role in the nativity scene's gradually becoming a permanent or seasonal fixture of churches and wealthy Italian homes. Rudolf Berliner, a great expert on the topic, claims that those who had nativity scenes made seemed to wish to see the miraculous birth before them, to become part of it themselves (Berliner 1946 and 1953). To illustrate this phenomenon, we may cite numerous examples from the most varied of genres. For instance, in one limestone sculpture group from Burgundy, we find an older Saint Joseph drying his clothes by the fire (Forsyth 1989, 117–126). The young Virgin Mary kneels at the cradle, embellished with Gothic tracery; however, instead of lying there, the baby Jesus reclines in the manger. *(Fig. 4)* He is warmed at his head by the donkey and the ox, while an angel holds the swaddling clothes at his feet. Inquisitive shepherds and angels peep in through the crumbling walls.

Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Fig. 4. **Sculpture from Burgundy, France: Nativity Scene. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art**

Photo: Ferenc Veress

Fig. 5. **Hugo van der Goes: Adoration of the Shepherds. Central panel of the Portinari altarpiece. Florence (Italy), Uffizi Gallery**

The image is cheerful and harmonious, befitting the Christmas celebration and the happiness people experience during the season.

Merchants established connections between Italy and Burgundy. In the course of their travels, they selected the Three Kings as their patrons. Tommaso Portinari and Francesco Sassetti commissioned the best and most famous artists of the time to paint the Adoration of the Shepherds with the Wise Men's journey in the background. Playing a role in their choice could have been the Medici family's Florentine custom of commemorating the Feast of the Epiphany with a lighted parade on the streets of the city. The procession organised by the Compagna de' Magi (the Brotherhood of the Three Kings) went from Herod's Palace, erected on the Piazza della Signoria, to the Dominican Convento di San

Marco, where they paid their respects to the Virgin Mary (Hatfield 1970, 146). Benozzo Gozzoli's fresco on wall of the Palazzo Medici in Florence is the best evidence of the pomp and decorative costumes of that time.

The Portinari altarpiece (c. 1476), commissioned by Florentine banker and merchant Tommaso Portinari, can now be seen in Florence's Uffizi Gallery. Its creator, the master Hugo van der Goes, surrounds the birth scene with the sacred aura and symbolism of the Holy Mass. *(Fig. 5)* The fragile figure of the Virgin Mary occupies the centre, worshipping her child, who lies on the ground. The bundle of wheat, on which the child rests, is repeated in the foreground, making the Eucharist message clear. The space surrounding Mary is a holy area, made evident by Joseph's removed sandals. The angels that kneel in a circle are wearing vestments (Panofsky 1953, 333). Yet, the viewer is most struck by the rich emotion in the facial expressions of the three shepherds. Hugo van der Goes was probably influenced the Devotio Moderna, a Dutch Reformation movement which taught its followers that people should keep certain details of the Scripture as read in their hearts and minds and act accordingly (Ridderbos 1990, 137-152). Therefore, we may interpret the three shepherds' facial expressions as three different ways of experiencing the holy event. Their gestures and expressions testify to the painter's interest in the impact on their souls.

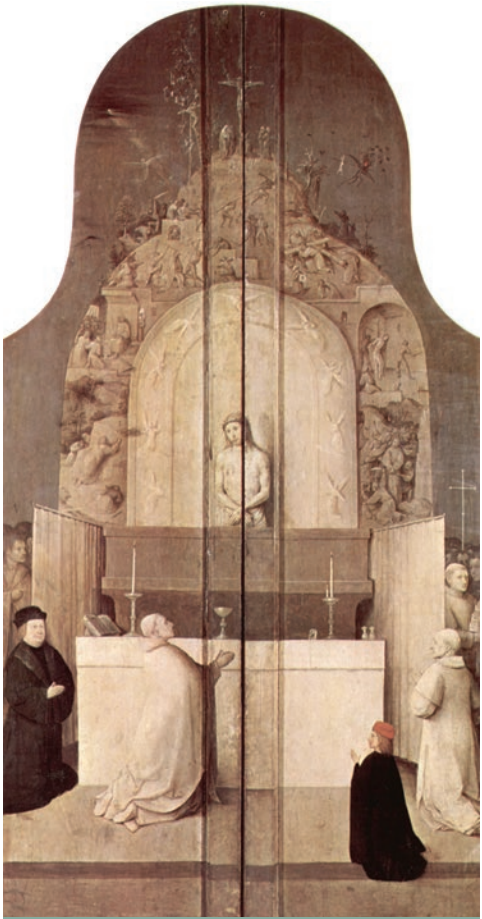

Photo: Ferenc Veress

Fig. 6. **Hieronymus Bosch: Epiphany triptych. Madrid (Spain), Prado Museum**

Hieronymus Bosch's 1495 triptych, housed at the Prado in Madrid, links the mass of Pope Gregory I (Saint Gregory the Great) and the adoration of the Magi. When closed, the shutters show a monochrome scene of the pope kneeling at an altar spread with a white cloth. *(Fig. 6)* On the altar, candles burn in the can-

dlesticks. There is the open missal on the left, cruets (containers for the water and wine) on the right, and a chalice in the centre. It is possible that the image depicts the moment of transformation (transubstantiation), when, according to tradition, Christ himself appeared to the pope. There are no clear witnesses to the miracle in the picture. Most of the figures wait behind a drawn screen.

For altars in the Middle Ages, screens primarily served a practical function: shielding the priest from curious onlookers and creating an intimate space for the performance of the mass (Braun 1924, 135). Nonetheless, this does not exclude an allegorical interpretation of the screen and its role in the liturgical drama. We find reference to the use of a screen in medieval mystery plays presenting the adoration of the Magi, when the screen is drawn aside at the moment the Three Kings spot the Holy Family in the grotto. For instance, a reference to a fourteenth-century drama from Rouen explicitly mentions the screen: 'Then, two [people] wearing dalmatics draw apart the curtain while saying, "Lo, here is the child you seek, make haste to adore him, for he is the Saviour of the world"' (Young 1933, 44). In mystery plays, it is known that pieces were introduced by *festaioli* or celebrants holding the curtain. They also mediated between the viewers and the actors during the performance (Baxandall 1986, 81–81). In the altarpiece *Adoration of the Shepherds* by Hugo van der Goes, now at the Gemäldegalerie in Berlin, the curtain is held apart on either side by the prophets Isaiah and Habakkuk, who prophesised the birth of the Messiah.

The screen likely has a deeper meaning in Bosch's *Epiphany* triptych, in line with the teachings of Devotio Moderna, which distinguished between physical sight and spiritual or intellectual insight (Williamson 2013, 12–13). Indeed, Gert Groote considered pictures effective pillars of faith, but only if they evoked the desired feelings. He disapproved of people remaining prisoners to their emotions. He had more respect for intellectual insight – no longer thinking in pictures, but divorced from them – although he was aware that the everyday man only attained that level in exceptional cases. Hence, the Devotio Moderna theology expected of the laity an active, emotionally rich outlook that pervaded their everyday activities. Perhaps this is alluded to by the shepherds' expressions of rapt devotion in Hugo van der Goes' pictures (Ridderbos 1990, 137–152). In Bosch's altarpiece, the screen seems to separate the people, who are slaves to the emotional world, from the spiritual world, where the miracle of the Eucharist occurs. Although the people behind the screen could not be direct participants, they could be witnesses to the miracle and, with the aid of faith, comprehend its meaning.

Photo: Ferenc Veress

Fig. 7. **Hieronymus Bosch: Epiphany triptych. Madrid (Spain), Prado Museum**

Bosch's philosophy regarding sight is also manifest in the triptych's inner panels, which depicts the scene of the adoration of the Three Kings. *(Fig. 7)* The Virgin Mary and her child are depicted with special care and detail by a dilapidated cabin. Behind the forms of the reverent Magi, we can spot strange figures through the door, including one in an odd headdress that research has identified as the ruler Herod (Falenburg 2007, 178–206). King Herod did not believe in the birth of Jesus, not recognising him as the Messiah. That is why, like his companions, he looks off into nowhere with no concrete goal or object. By contrast, the look of the pastor peering through a crack in the cabin on the right side shows that, in his case, there is true insight. He is moved; he recognises the Messiah. Franciscan spirituality in the thirteenth century and the Devotio Moderna in the fifteenth century ushered in the possibility of redemption for believers, and these pictures also played a large role in that.

In the early sixteenth century, the orders (brotherhoods) promoted a reform in faith, represented in Florence by the tragically-fated Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola. In 1517, San Gaetano da Thiene (a.k.a. Saint Cajetan, founder of the Theatine Order) kneeled in prayer before the Crypt of the Nativity in Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica when the Virgin Mary appeared to him with the infant Jesus on her arm. In addition, resting near the crypt, Saint Jerome 'was present' and encouraged Gaetano to approach Mary, whereupon the Virgin placed the holy infant in the saint's arms (Ostrow 1996, 46). The symbolic message of this story is notable. It is precisely at the Santa Maria Maggiore's Crypt of the Nativity that the founder of an order instrumental in the Catholic Reformation gained a well-spring of spirituality. In competition with the Jesuits, the Theatine Order erected their church, Sant'Andrea della Valle, in the vicinity of Il Gesù, outdoing even the Jesuit church in terms of architectural feats – for example, the effect of its monumental cupola.

In all certainty, the Franciscan Pope Sixtus V followed the example of Saint Francis of Assisi's manger in Greccio when he used his builder, Carlo Fontana, to construct his own chapel in Santa Maria Maggiore. The pieces from the medieval Nativity Crypt found a new setting in the centre of Sixtus V's chapel, above which was raised a tabernacle carried by angels, the work of Bastiano Torrigiano and Lodovico del Duca (Guinnomet 2017, 101–103). The tabernacle hovering over the relic shrine established a permanent connection between the

Photo: Ferenc Veress

Fig. 8. Lodovico del Duca: Tabernacle.
Rome (Italy), Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica

mystery of the Word made flesh and the transformation (transubstantiation) that occurs during Holy Mass, whereby Christ is continuously present in the community of believers and the sacred space. *(Fig. 8)*

A special figure of the Catholic Reformation was the Florentine Saint Philip Neri, who lived in Rome. Philip's Congregation of the Oratory, made up of clergy and laity members, originally formed next to the Hospital of San Girolamo della Carità and later moved to the Santa Maria Parish Church in Vallicella. Around 1534, Philip arrived in Rome; and, perhaps not by chance, his spiritual renewal took place at the church built on the site of Saint Jerome's former residence. He came to know the Brotherhood of Charity (Confraternita della Carità), operating at San Girolamo, in 1534; and this order, which regarded as its mission the care of the poor, orphans, prison inmates and the condemned, had a decisive effect on Saint Philip (Türks 2004, 74).

One follower of Philip's congregation, the church historian Cesare Baronio, recounted the gatherings, in 1557, as a return to the times of early Christianity: 'Those who visited the aforementioned site found themselves in a religious gathering, the essence of which was the following. After deep prayer, one of the brothers read a passage from one of the holy books. Then, the father – who was one of the leaders of the entire order – spoke on what we had heard. His explanation was tied to the written word, as though to aid in our understanding of it. The audience, engrossed, hung upon his words. There was even the opportunity for one of the participants to contribute his view of the theme. [...] Following this – on a small platform – a certain scene from the life of some saint was presented. The presenter himself did not speak a word. After the performance, its details were read from the Gospel, or the congregation heard the teachings of the fathers. [...] The atmosphere of it all was like the early Apostolic Age, as though recalling that beautiful period.' For these gatherings and the performances, Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina, the papal choirmaster, composed motets (Türks 2004, 180).

Because Saint Philip Neri spoke to the people of the street in a direct manner, the research draws a parallel between him and one of Baroque painting's greatest figures, Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (Friedlaender 1955, 123). Caravaggio's painting was rooted in everyday reality. Evidence of this is his picture *Adoration of the Shepherds,* painted for the Capuchin church in 1609 at the commission of the senator of Messina. The realism of the scene is startling. In a simple barn with plank walls, we see Mary sitting on the ground while leaning upon the manger and holding her child in her lap. The ox and the donkey placidly eat hay from the

manger in the background. Two men of different ages kneel, marvelling at Maria and her child. A third companion stands behind them, leaning upon his staff and observing the scene. *(Fig. 9)* Similar to Hugo van der Goes' Pontinari altarpiece, the shepherds' facial expressions and gestures testify to their rapt attention. As for their differing ages: one man is old and bald, spreading his hands above the infant; the one to his right is a younger, half-naked man, clasping his hands in prayer. The man sitting closer to us, wrapped in a mantle, is Saint Joseph (identifiable on the basis of his personal halo of light). He appears rather mature and worn-out; nonetheless, a rich spiritual life smoulders within him. The emphatic starkness of the setting – in addition to the wonderfully painted travelling basket and carpenters tools in the foreground – make the miraculous birth tangible and authentic on an everyday level (Chiesa 1997, 101).

Photo: Ferenc Veress

Fig. 9. **Caravaggio: Adoration of the Shepherds. Messina (Italy), Museo Nazionale**

Without Saint Philip Neri and Caravaggio, we can barely conceive how the new Baroque style took shape, becoming a movement that dominated all of Europe. Yet, already in the sixteenth century, in the Italian province of Emilia-Romagna, increased realism showed up in the many-sided, theatrical terracotta statue groups of Antonio Begarelli (c. 1499–1565). Such, for

Photo: Ferenc Veress

Fig. 10. Antonio Begarelli: Nativity Scene. Modena (Italy), Cathedral

example, is his *Adoration of the Shepherds* group (1526–1527) in the cathedral of Modena. *(Fig. 10)* Hans Degler produced his work, three vast altarpieces for the Basilica of Saints Ulrich and Afra in Augsburg, Bavaria, at the start of the following century (1604–1607). In Degler's tabernacles, the figures are arranged as though on a stage, betraying a kinship to nativity scenes and the marionette stages of the time (Groiss 1979, 90). At the Saint Afra (Sankt Afra) Church, the scene of the shepherds' adoration is displayed above the main altar – with the Holy Family arranged on the right in front of the humble cabin, along with the figures of shepherds on the left and a number of angels above. We may note that the baby Jesus' crib is directly above the church tabernacle, as though occupying the spot on top of it.

In Hungary in the seventeenth century, while the middle of the country was held under Turkish rule, Middle-Age churches remained in German-speaking, Evangelical towns in Transylvania (now part of Romania) and Upper Hungary (now part of Slovakia). In many cases, the Evangelicals preserved the Catholic images and decorations, protecting them as their own. When the Jesuits reclaimed the Gothic churches from them by force, these edifices gained new Baroque furnishings. On 14 November 1698, Master Pál Lőcsei's Gothic statue group of the birth of Jesus emerged from the basement of the town hall of Lőcse (now Levoča in Slo-

Photo: Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Art History Institute, Photo Archive

Fig. 11. Georg Schweitzer: Three Kings Altar. Pér (Hungary), Parish Church

vakia), later occupying the Csáky altar cabinet of the Saint Jacob Parish Church (Baranyai 1975, 340–341). The discovery of this medieval statue group is linked to the Counterreformation. Like statues of the Virgin Mary and holy crucifixes, the depiction of Christ's birth may have emphasised the Catholic reverence for images. As noted before, the statue group was situated on the Epistle (south or right) side of the church, which may have signified a visual parallel with the sanctuary of the Eucharist, the tabernacle with its Gothic walls, on the opposite Gospel side (Végh 2000, 471).

In the Saint Michael Churches of both Sopron and Kolozsvár (now Cluj-Napoca in Romania) alike, we may note the establishment of 'Three Kings' altars during the Baroque Period, which had Middle-Age precedents in both places. In Sopron, two citizens, Imre and Péter Lederer, set up the 'Three Kings' Altar Fund for the Saint Michael Church in 1457. Later, the church was used by Evangelicals (Házi 1939, 107). Following the church's return to the Catholics, Georg Schweitzer, a sculptor of Bavarian origin, carved the *Adoration of the Magi* statue group, which can now be found in the parish church of Pér, a village in Hungary (Dávid 1983, 84). On the basis of its composition, the statue group can be linked to a specific pillar of the Gothic church. In front of the cabin, it portrays the Holy Family. Mary sits holding her child on her knee, and Saint Joseph stands beside her. *(Fig. 11)* Revering the Holy Family are three shepherd (on the right) and the Three Wise Men (on the left), all painstakingly rendered by the sculptor. We may compare the *Adoration of the Shepherds* statue group in Sopron to the 'Three

Kings' altarpiece in the Saint Michael Church of Kolozsvár, the latter being an early work by Franz Anton Maulbertsch (Garas 1960, 9). However, we may also draw parallels to Joseph Thaddeus Stammel's nativity scenes as well.

In Sümeg (a town in Hungary), on the parish church's vault, painted by Maulbertsch in 1757–1758, we can see the Magi approaching from the East. Below them, on the southern wall of the nave (the Epistle side), scenes of the shepherds' and the Three Kings' adoration are portrayed beside one another (Kapossy 1930, 189). Its significance is emphasised by the fact that Maulbertsch, in his scheme, wished to have the adoration of the infant Jesus by the shepherds and by the Magi depicted separately. *(Fig. 12-13)* In the shepherds' adoration, it is worth noting the infant lying in the manger in the foreground with the donkey and ox on either side – while in the centre, we find baby Jesus again in the crib, although there he is cared for by the Virgin Mary, bending over him. Perhaps it is not superfluous to mention that relics of the crib and the manger are kept separately at the Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica in Rome – the former at the main altar and the latter in the Crypt of the Nativity. The fifteenth-century limestone statue group in Burgundy, mentioned at the beginning of this study, depicted the crib and manger separately. In that case, the infant Jesus lay in the manger. The shepherds and the Wise Men represent Humanity. That is perhaps why the group of Eastern figures wearing turbans returns on the right side of the main altar (the Epistle side) as witnesses of the resurrection.

Photo: Ferenc Veress

Fig. 12. **Anton Maulbertsch: Adoration of the Shepherds. Sümeg (Hungary), Parish Church**

The equivalents of Maulbertsch's *theatrum sacrum* in sculpture are the monumental and colourful nativity scenes produced by Alessandro Mauro in Dresden and Giuseppe Sanmartino in Naples. According József Szauder, 'We need

Photo: Ferenc Veress

Fig. 13. Anton Maulbertsch: Adoration of the Magi. Sümeg (Hungary), Parish Church

to investigate the seventeenth century, which, according to current church policy, was able to reconcile perfectly the views of the Counterreformation with the Baroque philosophy on the world stage – resulting in the theatrical nativity scenes, displayed year after year only at Christmastime, made up of dolls and *pupazzi* that can be dressed and moved about, rearranging the setting' (Szauder 1977, 335). The nativity scene genre – we may add – is eternally relevant, just like the colourful Christmas bustle on the Piazza Navona with its figurine stalls. Visitors feel at home among Maulbertsch's frescoes in Sümeg, even though the scholastic worldview contained in the Latin script accompanying the pictures is far removed from them and might cause them serious headaches…

The Three Kings, as figures, connect continents and civilizations, which were brought together again momentarily by the marvellous conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter on 22 December 2020. The old prophecy related to the birth of the Messiah – according to which 'A star will arise from Patriarch Jacob' – might have occurred to some. According to the *Legenda aurea* (or Golden Legend), the disciples of Balaam, the three Wise Men from the East, met under a similar constellation, whereupon they resolved to set out. The legend appears, in an authentic Hungarian translation from 1519, in the Codex of Debrecen: 'The noble, saintly Kings embarked from the territory of Persida in the East, which they now call Inner India and the Land of Saba […] All three were wise in the study of nature. They had acquired great knowledge of the motions of the Firmament. They were what remained of the disciples of the Prophet Balaam, the idol-worshipping priest of the pagans. For as Balaam prophesised to his generation: "A star will arise from Patriarch Jacob, a scourge out of Israel that will vanquish and scourge the Princes of Moab."' (Bálint 1989, 140).

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10.56044/UA.2021.1.5.eng

Seeing the Person, and an Angel Flies Past

András Schreiber's interview Lajos Koltai

At 75, Lajos Koltai is considered one of the world's best cinematographers. He has photographed nearly 90 moving pictures. He operated the camera for works significant to both Hungarian and international film history – such as *Adoption, Confidence,* the Oscar-winning *Mephisto, Mrs Déry Where Are You?,* and *Time Stands Still*. His direction of photography has been recognized at numerous international festivals. For example, in 1999, he won the distinguished European Film Award for best European cinematography on account of the films *Sunshine,* shot with István Szabó, and *The Legend of 1900,* jointly created with Giuseppe Tornatore. Then, in 2001, he was nominated for an Oscar for *Malena,* also directed by Tornatore; yet, for both Tornatore films, he won the most prestigious Italian prize, the Italian Film Academy's David di Donatello Award. Having received both the Béla Balázs Prize and the Kossuth Prize in addition to the title Artist of the Nation, Lajos Koltai made his directorial debut in 2005 with his adaptation of Imre Kertész' novel *Fateless*. Two years later, he adapted Susan Minot's *Evening* for the silver screen with great success. Starting in September 2021, he has taught the master program in film direction at the renewed University of Theatre and Film Arts. Moreover, he will soon begin shooting his new film about Ignaz Semmelweis' years in Vienna.

Photo: Barbara Baska

'It all began when we broke the ice.' With that statement, Francois Truffaut began his monumental volume of interviews with Alfred Hitchcock, published in 1966, recounting how he fell into a pool with Claude Chabrol ten years earlier at the Saint-Maurice Studio in Joinville, where the British director was working on the post-synchronisation for To Catch a Thief. Also, thanks to that fall in the water, Hitchcock would never forget either the critic or the director that Truffaut later became; since, ultimately, one of film history's most exciting conversations arose from that accident. I brought up that story, only because I find it an interesting parallel to the destined nature of your career. As far as I know, your passion for composing pictures began precisely with a plunge in the water...

■ Yes, and what's more, it happened quite early, when I was three years old. It was a summer vacation at my grandparents' in Tiszadob, at a dead branch of the Tisza River that the natives call the Tisza Corpse. People went there to take dips, and, in one unfortunate instant, I also set off into the water. I was already immersed when a woman in multiple skirts soaking her feet noticed, and all she screamed to my father was 'The child!' My father leaped in after

me, but he only saw my pants, not me. Fortunately, I had on pants with red straps, which were fashionable then and easy to spot. My mother, who sewed her whole life, made them. So finally, grabbing the strap, my father hauled me out of the water. That's when I saw that particular image that's burned in me forever – strangely distorted and yet clear – I could see the opposite shore and the poplar trees.

Decades later, I went there with my daughters to see the Tisza Corpse and the poplars. The trees were much bigger, but otherwise, everything was how I remembered it. The image stayed with me. I've thought a lot about it – how the palpable experience in that image started me on my career, how then and there my fate was decided, that I would compose pictures. After all, a person's fate must be sealed some time. At some point, it's born in them, the orientation that they will pursue. And I believe that was it. I embarked on the path of visualisation, and I staked my life on it. It came about when I was three years old.

It is just like in the Tornatore film that you photographed,* The Legend of 1900, *when the little orphan boy spots the piano in blurry outlines through the glass wall of the luxurious ocean liner's ballroom, and then his fate sealed. It's as though the scene is a reflection of that inciting experience of your immersion...

■ Even more. There's another relevant scene in that film – namely, when the character 1900, played by Tim Roth, is in the lowest part of the ship, seeking the girl in third class who inspired him. I wanted to make that moment memorable, when the man sees the sleeping woman. I thought that there are so many things on that liner that create inexplicable light patterns, so why couldn't we build a glass ceiling and a pool filled with water, so I could light the woman's face through it? As the ship moves, the water undulates constantly; and that's just how the broken, reflected light danced in waves, lending the woman a supernatural presence. The pianist is walking down the stairs. There are bunks everywhere, children sleeping, a little baby cries out. Tiny petroleum lamps are burning, so the world has a warm feeling despite the poverty. Then, the man suddenly turns into one row of beds, and he proceeds into this strange, blue, aquarium-like phenomenon. And that's where he finds her, the woman in this marvellous light with tiny little waves rippling over her face. I feel here my own decisive experience underwater reoccurred quite strongly.

Getting back to the parallel with Truffaut that you mentioned, there's something uniquely humorous in that statement about everything happening with a fall into water if we consider that he's one of the greatest figures of the French New Wave as both a director and film critic, just as I started my cinematography career at the time of Hungarian film's new wave. And speaking of waves, water is inevitably my first association. So, in both cases, it makes sense in two ways – everything beginning with immersion.

I suppose, now that the first master course in direction has commenced at the renewed University of Theatre and Film Arts, in the case of the eight selected pupils as well, their personal initial motivations came up during the admission process. Were their similar inciting incidents?

■ Those types of palpable experiences, caught in a strong, early, vivid image, did not come up. So far. Because, of course, already during the selection process and ever since, I've sought out the motivations of my students – what brought them there, what brought them to me. I don't go digging into family matters. These things come to the surface on their own. The midterm exam film, for example, when we talk about the screenplay or a synopsis. Many times, it's revealed that there's some personal experience behind the idea. It's practically unavoidable. For some time, artists have nothing else to cling to besides their own lives – at least, if they want to be credible. Indeed, later as well, when they've had a career for a long time, often they will draw on their memories to produce situations. In the course of creative work, we inevitably reflect upon what we learned from our parents and teachers, how we grew up, and what impressions we had.

While I was growing up, it was during a period of total political and societal upheaval. That's what *Time Stands Still* is about, which comes to my mind now, because recently I was asked to screen it and talk about it at my former school. And of course, at the mere question, old memories immediately came up – not just about the film and the shooting, but the Sándor Kőrösi-Csoma Secondary School in Óbuda, where I graduated. What's more, I was born in the house next to the school, so my mother could see from the window if I went into the building or not, and everyone called me by my nickname Sutyi by that time – even the teachers and the principal. Ultimately, that film is also about my life; and during the filming, I drew on experiences from my adolescence – the light, the

colours, the atmosphere. In terms of style, I drew inspiration from what I had lived through. I should add that this is typical as a teacher, too. First of all, I'm in the unique position that, by and large, the subject I was asked to teach is me. After all, my career is rich in both films and experiences. So much happened to me, and on top of that, I have more than a little international experience. So it's a bit like the university has invited someone from here and from abroad. And everything that I can pass on is what I've lived through. It happened to me. I wasn't told about it. Therefore, I am trying to convey the experiences and knowledge I acquired from everywhere in the course of my rich lifetime.

Your master was György Illés, a decisive individual at the school for camera operators after World War Two. What values did you learn from his as a technician and instructor?

■ As a teacher, pedagogy was central to Papi *(his nickname for György Illés – trans.),* but perhaps I can most tellingly explain his distinct pedagogical sensitivity through our shared work. We were very close. When I left college, he invited me with him. I worked on three films beside him. For example, in *Ant Hill,* directed by Zoltán Fábri, I sat behind the camera, because Papi was the only one in the county who used the American method – that is, instead of the directory of photography, the camera operator handles the machine. He regularly groomed someone and put them behind the camera. Here he chose me and would not allow me to stand. He said, 'Sit there and do it.' We were on formal terms then. It took three films before I could speak to him informally. And I pulled off the most complicated takes, so by the end, he and Fabri would come up to me and say, 'Look, Lajos, this is the set-up, but go ahead and make it your own.' As a rule, I worked fearlessly with Papi. What's more, we got our hands on an especially sensitive colour raw material, and we started showing off with it. In one of the loveliest scenes, when the nuns rebel, there were two bulbs on the ceiling originally; but, before shooting, I came up with the idea of removing one of the bulbs. György immediately told me, in especially crude terms, to go to Hell. Then, I saw him walking around, and ten minutes later, only one bulb was burning. And the scene turned out gorgeous. I'll just add that back in college we worked a lot with one light. Literally, we got famous after a while for making our films with a single bulb, which caught on with people in the other departments. That here are these guys who see the world differently, and collaborating with

Photo: Filmarchívum/Sándor Domonkos

Fig. 1. **Ant Hill**

them is terribly simple, because they hold the camera, bring one light with them, and still work wonders.

To return to Papi, his pedagogy consisted of allowing people to develop. This was his principle – that his pupils should think, dare to experiment, and not even accidentally follow his lead. In college, he showed three ways to illuminate a face or a space, but there's at least one hundred other versions besides those; and he knew that his pupils, if they were individuals, would eventually find the hundred-and-second way. He showed the basics, but he was careful not to smother individuality; and if he saw anyone embark on a path that was traversable, then he'd gently guide them onward. As a teacher, I also find this guidance in a good direction to be favourable. It's almost a bigger deal than teaching in the strict sense. Old Man György extended a helping hand, but he never nudged anyone, since that could have accidentally propelled them in a certain direction. He was simply there, making sure that no one had a chance to stray from the journey that they had commenced and considered correct – and which was, by all means, their very own.

Regarding your own journey, it's fitting to mention in connection with your work as a camera operator, that in the 1980s and 1990s, you worked as an equal creative partner with directors of the most diverse stylistic principles, playing a leading role in the creation of the visual world of both documentary features and aesthetic and stylistically-oriented Hungarian feature films. In connection with this, and in a manner unique among Hungarian cinematographers, you incorporated into black-and-white filming the ideas you developed in colour film photography. Do you agree with this?

■ This is film history and film aesthetics – and from that perspective, it's true. Of course, experiments, if done well, yield results. Something takes shape, and then it becomes increasingly refined. It gets visibly more polished. As far as documentaries and aesthetics, for me, the two are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they support one another and form one unit. Take, for example, my thesis film, *The Agitators,* which Dezső Magyar directed. It was his first full-length film, too – and, what's more, it was the Béla Balázs Studio's first full-evening production. Obviously, you know it was made in 1969. The screenplay won a competition to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. Yet, ultimately, the authorities felt that the finished film captured the nature of revolutions in an excessively lively manner. They found it pessimistic, too, and on top of that – if only on account of the co-writer and star Gábor Bódy – remarkably complicated and hard to digest. The film demanded great attention and literally exuded youthful impatience. It's precisely for these reasons that it was banned for a good long time.

And in numerous respects, it was a groundbreaking work which made bold and innovative use of archive clips…

■ Yes. And that's exactly what I wish to expand upon. In the film, there were actually original, archive clips, but not primarily for illustrative purposes. Instead, they served to counteract the overweening verbosity and, other times, to evoke associations. To this end, we had to film the fictional story, which was filled with essay-like debates performed by the actors, to suit the authentic documentary clips – fittingly in black and white. Thus, on account of the film's utterly strange, fanatical structure, it succeeded in being both aesthetic and documentary-style. We knew that this philosophical story, at the time of the Hungarian

Soviet Republic, could only be told one way. We had to shoot it so the film would have the scent of a newspaper. Therefore, in terms of the images, we had to create a world that somewhat imitated a document, as though we just happened to record actual events from reality. At the same time, it was not our genuine experience of that period, only our imagination – therefore, it was an artificial documentary that was actually fiction. There was no tradition for this approach whatsoever – or rather, Dezső Magyar and I had a bit of a shared past, and we'd presented this style, because we made our third-year final film together. That was also a sort of feature film performed in a documentary style, in which three girls are on holiday at Lake Balaton and happen upon a deserting soldier. But the more interesting aspect of the exam film was that I used hand-held shooting. In order to express the story, we had to give the camera great freedom. Later, in *This Day is a Gift,* it became truly typical of me – the way the camera behaved like a speck of dust in the air, zooming into the space naturally, circling a face or a figure. Thanks to this natural freedom, the camera could always go where something of significance happened. Everything has its roots – to such an extent that I myself was amazed when, not too long ago, I watched my first-year exam film – which I shot with Gyula Gazdag about a boy's weekend, a documentary story about confinement – because it already bore signs that appear in my later films as well.

In connection with the black-and-white* Agitators *and its dramaturgy, you also mentioned the experimental spirit of* This Day is a Gift, *but ten years passed between the two works. Meanwhile, you worked on such films as* Adoption, *which was directed by Márta Mészáros and won the main prize in Berlin, or* Mrs Déry, Where Are You?, *considered the greatest of your early colour films. It was directed by Gyula Maár, and Mari Törőcsik won the Best Actress Prize for it at Cannes…

■ You're thinking of comparing black-and-white and colour film. Obviously, both techniques communicate different types of thoughts. Besides, back then, we were many times forced to shoot on black and white, because it was simply impossible to obtain colour raw material. But it's no accident that many films are made in black and white today for various aesthetic reasons – mainly because the lack of colours benefits the story. *Schindler's List,* for instance, would have never been good in colour. Among my own works, the colours in

Fateless are greyer, because the visual world should look the way that the historical period, within the death camps, lives on in human memory. The authentic archive documents and pictures of that period that remain are only available in black and white. Hence, if the film is in colour, it must be adjusted to the black-and-white recollection. Moreover, it was a hardened world. Thus, the lack of colour or the greyish base tone accentuates the era's darkness in every sense of the word.

In part, the same applies to *Adoption,* which is set in the foggy Communist era of the 70s. A middle-aged, widowed, working-class woman wants a child, but her married lover is not willing to assume responsibility for an illegitimate child. Finally, thanks to a random meeting, the woman decides upon adoption. So we have a brave, independent woman who decides to take her fate in her own hands. In the very middle of the Communist era! Simply on account of the story and the time period, it suited the film for us to shoot in black and white. First of all, it had a sort of documentary tone, which strongly resonated with the gloomy reality of Communism and society's mood. Meanwhile, it expressed no ideology, because it was a remarkably natural film.

Of course, in its own subtle, heartbreaking manner, the sensitive and lyrical *Mrs Déry, Where Are You?* presents an actor's fate. It's about an uncertain age and a woman having to make a decision – and not so very indirectly about the artist's situation, which is subject to the zeitgeist and various trends, her dilemmas and stubborn resolutions. But here the nineteenth-century world and story practically demanded colours, if only because we remember the vibrant paintings depicting that period. True, in terms of colouration, *Mrs Déry, Where Are You?* is a highpoint in my cinematography career, because it represented the pinnacle of that light and colour palette later referred to as 'honey-brown twilight'. It's practically my cinematic trademark.

Then, four years later in 1978, István Szabó sought me out and said, 'The honey-brown twilight is a prime accomplishment, but without forgetting any of that, please, let's go in another direction.' From that request came our first joint film, *Confidence,* a drama about love taking place in a cold period around the Second World War – which, on account of the visual memory I mentioned earlier, was not suited to warm tones either. Instead, we had to create a stark, blue and greyish, inexplicable world. Furthermore, a large part of the film is set in a single tiny room. We filmed for fifty days in this cold, tight space. It was a huge challenge. Luckily, though, István is an absolutely visual director who is

capable of composing images very precisely. We always planned out everything beforehand – the scene, the takes, the placement of the actor on the set, where the light comes from… Then, we were painting the walls and furniture for weeks to get the greenish-grey that we'd imagined, in order to convey that strange bleakness. In the film, history brings together two people, and what was initially most important was how the woman, portrayed by Ildikó Bánsági, would arrive at the flat where she had never been. However, she is compelled to, since she is stopped on the street by a man – played by none other than Gyula Gazdag – who tells her that she cannot go home. Instead, she must go into a flat where there's a man, and she must pretend to be in a relationship with him. So the woman goes into the flat and steps into the room where there's a single bulb burning in the chandelier – not surprising due to war shortages – and that perfectly suited the visual bleakness, that light itself had abandoned Mankind. At the same time, in the mirror, you could see a fire in the fireplace, only its heat does not reach people. So the woman enters a strange place, and she feels strange, because she sits on the love seat in her long coat. Now, already sitting in a strange place on a strange love seat in a long coat – that's a decision. It's the result of some very bad inner feeling. On account of the palette and the light patterns, the image is very lonesome – the lonely feeling of sitting in a long coat in a heated room. Confidence is a very realist film, and it's aesthetic at the same time, precisely because István always worked to get the psychological underpinnings into the image.

That same year, you made* This Day Is a Gift, *directed by Péter Gothár, in which the exceptionally stunning colour dramaturgy, balanced on the edge of reality and fantasy, supports in large part the absurd tone, which crosses from realism into grotesque, surreal territory…

■ That was considered a very special film at the time, containing warmth and bleakness alike. It addressed the housing situation – quite a popular topic in the film community. That's why it had a documentary style, but, at the same time, it didn't deal with huge societal questions. Instead, it really focused on the people. It was concerned with what people were capable of, the lengths they would go to obtain a flat, and – just like in reality – the impossible human situations created by the housing shortage. This realism veering into absurdity was an unbelievable success abroad. *This Day Is a Gift* won the prize for Best First

Film in Venice! That's when I began using neon light, which was also considered completely groundbreaking and ahead of its time. Only later did many people marvel over how the grotesque counterbalance in the film was aided by the neon's disturbing and cold presence – or how neon is unique in that it brings out certain features. We discover things we hadn't noticed before on a face or in the set.

Three years later in *Time Stands Still,* for example, the people in the kitchen look as though they're in a tunnel. This resulted in precisely the sort of aquarium-like settings that we talked about earlier – a little bit underground, a little bit underwater. Still, the actors inhabit it as they would in the real world, only they're surrounded by this type of environment. At the beginning of *Time Stands Still,* the mother says, 'Well, fine, here's where we going to live.' But where is here, and what is meant by 'live'? It's the beginning of the Kádár Era, when the everyday compromises of that grey reality are breaking the adolescent spirit. *Time Stands Still* looks back at the past, set mostly in the early 1960s. Gothár's first film was set in the present day, at the end of the 70s, but if we watch the two films in the reverse order of their creation, we realise how much nothing has changed in the meantime. Under Communism, time actually stood still.

I referred to this earlier, but *This Day Is a Gift* was not only exciting on account of the colour dramaturgy and the neon world, but because, like *Confidence,* we shot it mostly in a tight interior with a hand-held camera. This gave rise to the 'speck of dust' situation I mentioned. In spite of the cramped space, I could zoom in quite freely – but so close that the faces were almost distorted, enhancing the scene's claustrophobic effect. There is a scene which is taught all over, when Tamás Major bursts in and ransacks the flat. So the basic situation is that the woman, played by Cecília Esztergályos, signed a certain contract with an older woman who later died, so the flat could be hers. All of a sudden, though, the old woman's brother arrives; and this man, a complete stranger to her played by Major, starts rearranging the flat at an incredible pace, turning everything upside down, searching for valuables. At the same time, the brother brings in movers who take away the furniture while he confiscates the beer left on the kitchen table. So I recorded this whole motion-filled sequence in one long take. Thanks to the 'speck of dust' technique, there was a natural feel to the camera – when it approached and when it retreated – and the two-min-

Photo: Filmarchívum/István Jávor

Fig. 2. **This Day Is a Gift (Judit Pogány and Cecília Esztergályos)**

ute take from the flat's entrance to the kitchen was only interrupted once, with a double jump cut when Major takes out a knife and begins brandishing it.

To this day, they write about the formal virtuosity of the film's camera work. I agree with that, if only because executing it in that tight space truly was masterful camera work. I shot it with this old Arriflex camera, which was developed for the war. Correspondents worked with it, only back then the casing was still made of wood, so the machine was lighter. Now it's made of metal. So with the camera on my shoulder, I operated the focus with my right hand – with my finger – and with my left hand, I was always pulling the actors into the best position. I literally dragged Cecília Esztergályos into the composition. She came with me, where I led her. Meanwhile, I was so close to her, I could practically only see her flaws. Still, that's not why I was so close. It was so people would fall in love with her. I wanted to see her as someone we love, or someone we want to help in a bad moment when they're beaten down. We produced remarkably tense and active images this way – which I teach now, too, because we have to create images with tension. Since the picture always conveys a message about a setting, a face or a person, it must have tension.

The way you recount this 'speck of dust' scene and its execution, a person is struck by how you were already in effect directing. After all, you were handling the actors – at least, in the space and in terms of their positioning in front of the camera...

■ Yes, of course – only then, I was conscious of it differently. In Hungary at the time, that was the convention. The director of photography was a co-creator of equal status. He was responsible for the synergy of story and pictures, for creating the light – in other words, he directed the images. At that time, there was much tighter camaraderie among actors and cinematographers, because he saw the people, and the people would appear as the camera operator saw them. Even the director was more at his mercy, up until video technology made it possible to project the image on a monitor. Before shooting, the director would look through the view-finder and check the set-up; but, during the filming, only the camera operator could see what was important. I've often said how István Szabó would always ask after calling cut, 'Did you see the angel fly by?' And if I said no, we would shoot it again until the angel flew past in the scene. I should add that

Photo: Filmarchívum/Buda Gulyás

Fig. 3. On the shoot of Fateless

István is a completely exceptional director who's aware of the image. The way he thinks is very rare among directors. It's no accident that I've made fourteen films with him, more than with anyone else. From *Confidence* on, with the exception of *The Door,* I've photographed all his films. And when I decided to put down the camera and direct exclusively, I said I would only be willing to work as director of photography again for Szabó.

I don't want to name names, but I've worked with plenty of directors who had no clue about the image. But it wasn't just me. All the great camera operators of my generation encountered this. It's no accident that for a while they said the cinematographer was king in Hungary, because the situation came about through necessity. As far as the image was concerned, most directors had to rely on us completely. I dare say that many times we, the camera operators, created an organic whole from the films' stories with our images. That makes it seem like there's an emphatic message, when actually it was not thought out at the time. All the tiny details come together through the images – or feelings that arose in the cinematographer, and he followed through with them consistently. Good films – many times, masterpieces – were born this way. In the long run, it's thanks to the camera operator and his subjective presence. He doesn't direct in the traditional sense, but in many ways, he created that film.

After that, this question seems a little shameless, although that's not my intention. Still, I am bound to ask. When you began directing, how did your opinion of the director-cinematographer partnership change? Did you handle it differently? How much freedom did you give to Gyula Pados who photographed your 2005 directorial debut,* Fateless, *and* Evening *two years later?

■ When directing, I think like a cinematographer. That's an inalienable trait of mine. Gyula accepted this completely. After all, he was aware that, in order to direct, I had to arrange the set and know it through and through. So he only got behind the camera once I had decided on the image. That's how it was with *Fateless* – and *Evening,* too, when we were already working together in America. This is not to detract from his merits. Both films turned out lovely. Still, he primarily did what I'd already choreographed in the space with actors.

Otherwise, on *Fateless,* I had to think through matters seriously with the set designer, Tibor Lázár. We had to construct the entire Buchenwald Camp. It was a huge undertaking, because we had to make a set that not only corresponded

to reality, but also suited my directorial vision. I'm sure he remembers the scene where the child, who is skin and bones, is being carted into the lager. There's practically no life left in him, and he suspects this is his final journey. There, for instance, we had to plan very precisely where he was headed, so the boy, who was wasting away, could look back one more time at the camp, just as they were carrying past a big cauldron of soup, his favourite thing in the lager. I remember we shot the scene in July, when it was hottest. Luckily, though, everything came together, so the sequence could pass for late autumn. Still, we had to create the conditions – for example, with the set – so the light would fall at the right angle, so the mud on the ground seemed authentic while giving off that greyish base tone... You must always do everything around the set in order to create the image and preserve it. By the way, this type of set knowledge already came about in my work with István Szabó. As I said, we planned everything in advance, but particularly locations and sets – including what time of day the scene occurs, where the light comes from and when. Film is remarkably complex – a Renaissance art, if you like. You have to know a little about everything, because it incorporates something from everywhere. Nothing comes about on its own. Everything that's created, I put it there; and it has a certain colour, because I chose that colour, since it expresses what I have to say. If we shoot on a set, then there's a window cut out of the wall; and it's cut out precisely there, because I know that I will want to light from there. I want to direct the light from there onto a performer's face.

I taught once at Norman Jewison's film school in Toronto, where I analysed *Colonel Redl* shot for shot – why it's there and how it's interrelated. Parenthetically, it was attended by people like Michael Ondaatje, who wrote *The English Patient;* and he came because of me, because *Time Stands Still* was one of his favourite films. After the class, a young Japanese girl came up to me and said she had never heard such a fantastic and intense presentation about the process of filmmaking, but she wanted to ask, 'Did it have to be taken so seriously?' Well, yes. It has to be taken so seriously. That's what I teach my students now. Nothing happens by itself in a film – only what I envision, plan and execute. I'll add here that previously I'd taught a cinematography course at a college in Munich. At the end of it, I did a lighting practice, illustrating everything I had told them. I set up two walls like a corridor and started playing around. What happens if it has an open door or an open window? How is it if I light it like a hospital corridor? What all could be at the end of the hallway, and so on? In two days, I had created seventy-five different moods in the space made up of those same two

Photo: Filmarchívum/István Jávor

Fig. 4. **On the shoot of Time Stands Still**

walls. I myself was shocked, although I knew, more than that, simply everything is possible between two walls. But the point here is that a camera operator will only do one version on a shoot, so it's not at all the same – the make-up of the set, his intentions and those of the director.

This kind of creative consciousness combined with your subjective presence, which can be felt in your films – and I'm asking this of Lajos Koltai, the cinematographer – how easy was it, do you feel, to develop overseas? Since the second half of the 80s, you worked as a director of photography mainly in the United States. When you did return to Europe and Hungary as a cinematographer, it was usually for the sake of István Szabó and Giuseppe Tornatore, as well as Klaus Maria Brandauer...

■ As for the outcome, it is not for me to decide. Still, I feel, in most cases, it's quite clear that I managed to acquit myself, even if I had to battle a producer, an

Photo: Filmarchívum/István Jávor

Fig. 5. **Vera Angi (centre, Vera Pap)**

actor or a director from time to time. I'll add right away that, in most cases, I was hired for American productions, because they liked my work and my vision in the first place. That's how I got to Mexico, and from there to Hollywood, because the Mexican documentary filmmaker Luis Mandoki, who was well-known then, had seen *Vera Angi* four years earlier at a Mexican festival and really liked it. While preparing for his first American production, he decided he wanted the camera operator from *Vera Angi* by all means; because, the way he saw it, that guy over in Hungary – the name escaped Mandoki at the time – was the man for him. So, all of a sudden, a telex arrived at Hungarofilm – which made it possible back then to arrange work like that abroad – that he was looking for the cinematographer on *Vera Angi,* because he wanted to shoot with him a biopic entitled *Gaby: A True Story* about the author Gabriela Brimmer – who, as a result of central nervous paralysis, could only communicate with her left foot, and that's how she wrote the novel that was the basis of the film.

I met with Mandoki at a tennis club in Mexico. We sat across from each other in the garden, and he confessed that he was terribly pleased, because he wanted the cinematographer from *Vera Angi,* and he hadn't known – it only became clear to him when Hungofilm wrote it in a reply telex – that I'd done the Oscar-win-

ning *Mephisto* and *Time Stands Still,* too, which had a huge cult following then in America. It was a very interesting talk, since Mandoki didn't speak a word of Hungarian, although he had Hungarian roots. I couldn't speak English yet, only German. Around that time, Szabó and I shot a lot in Germany; and, besides that, I did plenty there, including a beautiful film with the legendary Wolfgang Staudte. And there was an aristocratic woman there who spoke five languages. She was the film's co-producer. I spoke to her in German, and she translated for Mandoki in Spanish. It soon turned out that they didn't handle things the way I was used to with Szabó, because when I asked when we would go over the screenplay, he immediately answered, 'Why should we? It's all written.' I told him how we usually did it, and, of course, Mandoki was filled with enthusiasm. 'What a fantastic working method!' Later, we went through all the scenes. Mandoki always rehearsed with the actors in the afternoon. Huge names – Liv Ullmann, Robert Loggia and Norma Aleandro, who was nominated for an Oscar for that performance – and he took along notes about what we'd talked over in the morning. The stars were bowled over by how prepared the director was. Later, when we made our films *White Palace* and *When a Man Loves a Woman,* Mandoki himself asked when we'd sit down and go over the screenplay. Disney was behind the latter, and the film's producers envisioned a very cautious handling of the theme. After all, *When a Man Loves a Woman* is about an alcoholic woman and her husband, and the topic quite simply scared the studio. I maintained that, for the film to be credible, we had to show alcoholism by all means. We couldn't present the problem without seeing the woman drink, but the producers didn't want us to discuss drinking so openly. To this, Mandoki replied that he wanted to do it the way Lajos did. We had to fight a battle in order to film the scene where the woman walks out of her house, takes the bottle out of the trash and drinks from it. But without that, the whole film would have amounted to nothing!

Did any conflict arise with Meg Ryan, who portrayed the alcoholic young woman, over showing the visible signs of alcohol abuse on a person?

■ Not at all! Stars can be very sensitive about their appearance and the image that they've created about themselves, but eventually she understood I was there to serve her – along with the story, of course. But if we're on the subject of actors' sensitivity, it was during the filming of *White Palace* that I received the best compliment, directly from Susan Sarandon. Part of the story is that Mark Rosenberg,

one of the film's producers, really liked and supported me, and he was a big fan of European artists in general. He recommended having a camera operator for filming, because he saw how much I helped Mandoki, all the while sitting behind the camera. I was not too keen on giving up that position, but I went along with it. The guy showed up for the shoot, Michael Stone, who had unbelievably good credentials. From a technical standpoint, he knew everything. He was terribly professional, but he lacked soul. He had no idea what I was doing or why. He just sat behind the camera and toiled away. I always had to tell him to follow the actors. In the film, the two leads, Sarandon and James Spader, constantly talk about what on earth keeps them together. After all, there a vast gulf between them, in terms of both class and age. It's about a young man in marketing and a middle-aged waitress. In scenes like that, there were separate cuts. We shot it where the actor was not really talking to the other actor. Instead, they looked at tiny dots painted on a filter in front of the camera's optics and spoke, but behind the dots, there was the face of the cameraman as well. Intimate, personal statements were delivered this way. When Susan Sarandon came to the shoot and saw that someone who meant nothing to her was seated behind the camera, she told Mandoki, 'I'm sorry, but I can't say this to that person. I'd like to see Lajos' face when I say it.' What's more, I'd be looking through the view finder with one of my eyes closed. Still, she asked for that half face with one closed eye. At that, Spader said right away that he wanted Lajos, too.

In that same film, there is a rather intense, erotic scene between Sarandon and Spader with many close-ups...

■ Yes, right at the beginning – which is necessary, because we wouldn't believe the story without it. There Susan told me separately to take care, because she had given birth not long before, so I should photograph her cautiously. I didn't show her unfavourably. I remember lighting that early-hour lovemaking scene. I saw to everything, so it would look like an angelic visitation, bathed in warm light. As I worked, I suddenly realised that Susan was standing behind me. She looked at me and said that all she wanted me to know was that she trusted me with her life.

There are situations like that with male actors, too – huge American legends. In *Wrestling with Hemingway,* I lit the cinema where Richard Harris, dressed in a dinner suit, was hitting on Piper Laurie. Robert Duvall was having fun watching them from a distance. So while I'm lighting, I realise that Duvall is sitting in one of

the boxes. He was a very tough guy who always stayed in character till the end of filming. You couldn't really speak to him, but he didn't have to be there, anyway, because it was his break. He could have easily gone off to eat or rest in his trailer. I wasn't especially occupied with him, but it eventually dawned on me that he was watching how I worked, because it would determine how he treated me. Then once, when a bad lighting situation came up, because the sun shone in an unfavourable spot in the Florida park where we were shooting outdoors, I told him to move his chair a little to one side. Immediately, he answered, 'Are *you* asking me, or the director?' I told him I was, at which he nodded, 'Fine, then I'll do it.' Later, Jodie Foster saw that film, and right away she invited me to handle photography on *Home for the Holidays,* which she directed, because she said she wanted to work with someone who saw people the way I do.

***One decade later, you were working with huge stars as a director on* Evening...**

■ Vanessa Redgrave, Claire Daines, Toni Colette, Meryl Streep, Glenn Close... A monumental cast came together. It was a very good feeling that they accepted me and believed in me. Especially Redgrave, who happens to be mad for Hungarians. In 1956, she went all over London to demonstrate for us. You can work really well with her, because she's constantly asking what you want and how, because she'll do it that way. I have *Fateless* to thank in part for that film. Susan Minot wrote the novel, and Michael Cunningham, who also wrote *The Hours,* did the screenplay. One afternoon, they went together to see *Fateless,* which was playing at a single art cinema in New York. Later, they told me they were practically bouncing down the street, because they finally had their director. From then on, the whole shoot continued in a spirit of love.

I'd like to foster the same loving spirit on my next film's shoot. Next year, I'm filming about Ignaz Semmelweis, the hardest period of his life, his Viennese years. It's a very beautiful script, written by Balázs Maruszki, among others. The producer is Tamás Lajos, whom we have to thank for many successful historical films. And, of course, the whole project will feature subtle parallels between the challenges of researchers and doctors in the face of today's global pandemic and Semmelweis' discovery, which made him the saviour of mothers. I can hardly wait for the filming – as a teacher as well, because then I can carry out the master training in a practical setting. Indeed, I'll take my pupils to the shoot, so they can see what I'm talking about.

Who will be the cinematographer?

■ András Nagy, who is considered one of his generation's best Hungarian camera operators. He's done very beautiful things. (White Palms, Johanna, Bibliothèque Pascal, Eternal Winter and Tall Tales – ed.) I feel that he thinks a lot like me. How he sees people and how he caresses their faces with light is quite similar to my style. We met on the shoot of Zoltán Kamondi's film *Drop Dead, Please!* I was the creative producer on that. Then, he worked with me as a direct assistant on Szabó's latest film *Final Report*.

Final Report, *released in 2020, is also his first digital film. Many feel that digital technology will take the place of celluloid for good. What do you foresee as the practical and aesthetic consequences?*

■ It was actually András who assisted with all the digital technology on *Final Report*. So, first of all, there's one side to it, that old bikers like me have to adjust to new technology. But, in terms of lighting, composition and the like, there's hardly any difference if the man behind the camera not only knows his work, but feels and understands what he has to do and why. I, too, struggled a lot with it, because a person is capable of clinging to what he's used to and what he likes. Still, nowadays, the digital image is really not so far removed from raw material, and raw material is a huge expenditure. You have to purchase it, you must be economical with it, you need to take it to the lab, and it's good if the man there has a talented developer on staff, and so on.

Of course, we are still used to the classic analogue camera. As I said before, I began with an old Arriflex camera. What's more, it made so much noise that I couldn't hear the actors over it. Everything had to be done with post-synchronisation. There's still a great advantage to that. You could still rewrite the dialogue if something no longer pleased you. They were actors who were geniuses at that. Mari Törőcsik could act and say dialogue during shooting, so later anything could be changed to anything. While it's absolutely certain that the actors were bothered by the noisy machine, they were still able to perform.

That's how we did all our full-length films. I shot *Vera Angi*, *The Stud Farm* and *Mephisto* with such cameras. Moreover, we in Eastern Europe at that time couldn't get anything. Buying a camera was practically impossible, because it counted as a hard-currency item. Yet, we could obtain parts. There were real

Photo: Filmarchívum/István Jávor

Fig. 6. **The Stud Farm (József Madaras)**

geniuses among us, truly wonder technicians, who could assemble a camera out of parts. They knew so much that if it had reached the ears of the Arriflex engineers, they would have offered them jobs straightaway. Those were heroic times, but digital technology does not rob an image of its soul or spirit.

Well, there are some who says that digital technology means the death of the cinema…

■ I know these sentiments. Back in the day, Vittorio Storaro – the legendary cinematographer for *Last Tango in Paris, Apocolypse Now, Reds* and *The Last Emperor* – who is my very good friend, practically said in despair that our lives were over, that film reels would disappear. Then, look. A few years ago, he convinced another celluloid Mohican, Woody Allen, to film digitally, because there were heaps of things they could do that were not possible with film. Also, Spielberg said that, as long as there was Kodak, he would film on that. Later, even he tried

out digital camera work. Of course, I can understand the stubbornness, because Kodak has a unique scent when we thread it. It frees something up, like the smell of benzene for a drag racer.

These examples also show that there are some who formerly rejected digital photography out of principle; still, they could be tempted to try it out of curiosity, the spirit of experimentation or some other reason. It could simply be because technological development is a blessing that the creator is not able to halt on his own. Naturally, he wants to see if he's capable of getting somewhere with the new gear. What I'm getting at is that this debate has become overheated. It's good that some stick to celluloid tooth and nail and want to protect it as long as possible. It's also good that, thanks to digital technology, artists who must really watch their expenses can also create, and they can tell a beautiful story precisely because of the digital camera.

At the same time, the digital revolution affects the entire film industry, including film-watching habits as well. In the time of streaming services, many are panicked, trying to find the niche for cinema houses…

■ Serving the comfort of viewers who sit at home already began with VHS. In fact, at the time of television's appearance, many sounded the death knell, but the cinema still didn't die. Meanwhile, television workshops have produced a bunch of exciting film artists. Back in the day, Szabó and I made TV shows for the Germans. Meanwhile, though, we were preparing our next feature film. Everything depends on whether the artist can finds his freedom within the given framework. Can he produce something of value that's appealing? Would he like to experiment? Does he have any ambition? For example, there is Alfonso Cuarón, who was my assistant, together with Emmanuel Lubezki, on *Gaby.* They are good friends and have worked together a lot. They won their first Oscars for the very same film. Cuarón's latest film, *Roma,* was produced for Netflix, and he earned three Oscars for it – out of which, in my opinion, Best Cinematography was an exaggeration. But that's not the point here. The point is that even a currently popular and in-demand artist (or a legend like Scorsese) may feel it is worthwhile to accept the offer of a company that basically specialises in home movie viewing – not purely for the sake of survival, but because he can realise a project that's important to him. Or while streaming could be a source of peril from the point of view of cinemas, it could also represent an opportunity for creators.

Photo: Filmarchivum/Magda B. Müller

Fig. 7. **Mephisto (Klaus Maria Brandauer)**

Then, afterwards, the same creators want to shot films again for the cinemas, where there's an oversupply, anyway.

As far as I know, there's a lighting technique called 'lajos-ing', named after you, which is part of the American cinematographers' jargon, and it arose out of a television production...

■ To be completely accurate, it was an HBO production shot in Canada, *Descending Angel*. Yes, it came about in the New World, born out of necessity. I was forced to consider how I could use reflected light unconventionally. I wanted a warm-toned world, so I finally used the reflected light from the dark furniture. Hence, set pieces coloured the light. After that, my colleagues abroad called it 'lajos-ing'. That is, if they want to do this trick with reflected light, they 'lajos it'.

Anyway, on that shoot, I had an unpleasant experience with an actor. George C. Scott played the lead role, and there was simply no way to establish a connection with him. There was a long take. Scott stands singing in a flat. Then, the camera turns around him, goes through the whole flat, later returning to him. We didn't succeed in getting the shot the way we wanted the first time, so the director Jeremy Kagan told Scott that we needed another take. At this, he began to protest. Why on earth would we want to shoot it again? Kagan began to explain very patiently that it was a very long take, and we had to do it again, because there were some mistakes. So Scott replied, 'I was good the first time.' After an awful argument, he was willing to do it one more time. That's how Scott was, just like his role in *Patton* or in *Dr Strangelove* by Kubrick. I almost shot a film with him a little later.

You mean with Stanley Kubrick?

■ Yes. The producer Jan Harlan, who is also Kubrick's brother-in-law, called my flat in Budapest to say Kubrick wanted to meet me. This was in 1993, and I had some business in London, anyway. A failed producer was paying me twenty-five thousand dollars in compensation, so it was easy to accept this invitation of rather unclear intent. It didn't get much clearer later, either; although it turned out Kubrick knew some half dozen of my films by heart, shot for shot. He sent a chauffeur to pick me up and take me to his home, where Kubrick began questioning me. His appearance was frightening. He wore an old, threadbare army

coat, worn-out jeans with holes in many places, and white sneakers also full of holes. He went off to pee every five minutes, and in the meantime, he simply questioned me non-stop. But about totally baffling things like 'where in Budapest can you get the type of shirt they wore in the 40s, as well as buttons for it?' Or 'where is it possible to speak with Holocaust survivors?' Just stuff like that. After a while, it was obvious that he wanted to make a Holocaust film, for which he wanted to get me under contract for 24 weeks. Yet, he kept delaying. Meanwhile, Brandauer contacted me, because he got an offer to direct *Mario and the Magician,* but he wouldn't film it without me, and if I said I wouldn't take it on, he would go to the studio and inform them that there would be no film. I wrote to Kubrick that I would be making a film with a friend, and I did not know how long I could go on waiting for our joint project or when the shoot would begin, to which he wrote back, 'You must help your friend now.' Then, I learned that he invited others to join the film. He seriously wanted to do it, but he finally abandoned the idea when he saw *Schindler's List*.

I have tons of stories like this. My life is full of such experiences, which I can draw from as a creator and as a teacher. Because I must teach my students how to deal with a failed shoot, how to form relationships with creative partners and actors, how to persuade them, how to get them on our side, and also how to get them to accept our instructions and arguments. To this end, János Vecsernyés, head of the master program for camera operators, and I have brought together the two departments to forge strong director-cinematographer relationships. As a teacher, my task now is to pass along knowledge, to aid in forming contacts, and mainly to perceive their individuality, their unique way of thinking. As for pedagogy, there is only one thing I stand by, because it is what ultimately connects everyone – love.

András Timár

Eugenio Barba – Nicola Savarese: The Secret Art of the Performer – A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology

'Theatre anthropology seeks useful directions rather than universal principles. It does not have the humility of a science, but an ambition to uncover knowledge which can be useful to a performer's work.' **Eugenio Barba**

The Gáspár Károli University of the Reformed Church in Hungary and L'Harmattan Kiadó have filled a long-standing gap by releasing *The Secret Art of the Performer: A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* by contemporary Italian theatre director Eugenio Barba and theatre theoretician Nicola Savarese – first published in 1991, then expanded and revised in 2005. While the original work was written in Italian, the excellent translators, Zsófia Rideg and János Regős, have rendered it in Hungarian based on published editions in French and English approved by the authors.

Barba's art is not unknown to Hungarian theatregoers. His work was presented at Szkéné Theatre as early as 1985 – then, after a long break, at the Csokonai Theatre in Debrecen. Since 2015, Barba's company has been a regular guest at the MITEM Festival (Madách International Theatre Meeting), organized by the National Theatre. In 1964, Barba founded the Odin Teatret Company, which he transferred two years later from Oslo to the Danish city of Holstebro. It was there in 1979 that he created the so-called 'travelling university', the International School of Theatre Anthropology (or ISTA, for short). Up until the volume's appearance in 2005, ISTA held altogether 14 international meetings in different locations with participants arriving from a variety of cultural traditions – per-

formers and creative artists (actors, dancers, directors and choreographers), as well as scholars (theatre critics and experts in history and theory). At such occasions, all of which lasted several weeks, the courses – centred upon a particular theme – explored proposed fundamentals common to theatre technique in an empirical manner with physical exercises, work demonstrations and comparative analysis.

This volume represents the legacy of ISTA's 25 years, including the writings of Barba and Savarese, as well as texts by members of the research team. Thus, it assembles scholars such as Franco Ruffini, Ferdinando Taviani and Fabricio Cruciani as authors of the terminology chapters within the 'dictionary', as well excerpts from the writings of Marcel Mauss, Jerzy Grotowski, Marco De Marinis and Richard Schechner, among others, each receiving a single chapter. All throughout the dictionary volume, the sections share a uniform treatment of content, which is demanded by the work's systematizing endeavours. Barba and Savarese have created a comprehensive collection out of writings that make use of theatre anthropology's basic principles, methods and previously conducted historical inquiries. Thus, it clarifies concepts, which makes its appearance in the Hungarian language especially significant – not only in terms of promoting awareness and the canonization of Barba's theatre pedagogy work in Hungary, but also from the perspective of theatre anthropology research and theatre practices that incorporate the inter-cultural and trans-cultural theories of the twentieth century.

Just like the defining creators of director's theatre in the twentieth century (Craig, Meyerhold, Artaud, Brecht, Grotowski, Brook, Mnouchkine and Wilson), Barba and Savarese's theatre anthropology research gravitates towards traditional, non-Western rituals in the interest of radically renewing Western theatre (the theatrical conventions of the logic-centred, text-illustrative, bourgeois theatre of realism and its depictive style built upon the causality of psychological processes) in terms of its worldview and its means of expression. Under the powerful influence of his master Grotowski, Barba and his collaborators sought to discover the source of energy in the Eastern dancers and actors they studied, the basic principles governing the creation of a performer's stage presence, and how forms of movement from sacred Eastern rituals could be incorporated into contemporary European performance. In terms of the general interest in Eastern cultures, we must not ignore two facts. First, there is more extensive written documentation concerning Eastern traditions, so they are ripe for study and

more easily accessible than, for example, the cultural treasures of tribal African societies. Second, they represent the crystallized artistic forms of such advanced civilizations that, at the start of the twentieth century (for example, in India), their revival and methodological development were instrumental in strengthening national identity in the face of British colonialism.

In *The Secret Art of the Performer,* Barba and his colleagues' theatre anthropology worldview can be traced through accounts of their theoretical considerations and practical experiments, spanning several decades. The primary goal of this lab-style research – which is scholastic in spirit, but centred on actors and training – is to discover *basic principles* nurtured by performative techniques, embracing multiple cultures and built upon universal laws. Employing the thoughts of anthropologist Marcel Mauss, who can also be read in the volume, Barba distinguishes daily (lokadharmi) and extra-daily (natyadharmi) use of the body in terms of technique. These two techniques inform how in European culture – where there is much less room for sacred ritual and practically no physical techniques associated with ceremonies – it can be quite difficult to separate the sacred from the profane, daily from extra-daily, and realistic from stylised forms. Barba's theatre anthropology researches awareness of body use in Western dance and theatre, as well as its relationship to rhythm, while delving into the creation of extra-daily energy and the conditions and tensions related to the actor's pre-expressive state. From these, he derives the basic trans-cultural principles of balance, equivalence, omission and opposition. He also seeks methods of manifesting presence in the dilated body or purposive body, which gives rise to extra-daily physical technique.

The lexical volume of almost 350 pages containing more than 650 photos and illustrations, both in colour and black and white, explains principles and techniques, drawing most of its exciting examples from the traditions of Eastern dance theatre (Chinese opera, Noh theatre, the Odissi dance, Balinese dance theatre, Hindu Kathakali, Butoh, Kabuki, etc.). After all, in Eastern dance theatre, the performer's body is a ritual body, always using extra-daily techniques according to the given style and genre's unchanging set of rules. These forms are not built upon imitation. They are stylised artistic languages, all with an artistic logic and all radically departing from the tradition of European theatre in terms of their references. Yet, it is important for us to note that, besides Eastern examples, the volume's authors often cite other European creators as well – such as the artistic methods of Craig, Stanislavski, Meyerhold, Grotowski,

Mikhail Chekhov or the pantomime artist Étienne Decroux – all of whom have worked out their own creative codification (technique) and conventions in line with their personal views.

A great number of the volume's examples, based on inter-cultural and trans-cultural comparisons, place side-by-side (physical) techniques evolved from spatially and temporally distant practices – religious, ceremonial or theatrical in nature. Under categories presumed to be common, the actor's full range of face, eye, hand and foot expression, the role of acrobatics, and the redefinition of rhythm are all investigated within stand-alone chapters. The variety of physical technique attains the quality of a *body orchestra* in the experience of the viewer, since the body's individual means of communication (body parts, voice, rhythm) are able to act simultaneously. The entire range of tools is a constant source of inspiration for creators from all different cultures.

Authors of the terminology chapters explore the methodology of *planned* spontaneity – that is, how traditional dance and theatre technique can aid Western creators, who possess a mimetic and verbal background, in manifesting presence and in summoning the purposive body and the performer's concentrated mind-body energy (the dilated mind-body).

The Odin Company plays an ever-current role in this work's progress, which continues to this day. With its productions, publications, masters of traditional performance, established network of contacts and regular guest appearances, it has become an inter-cultural, global theatre workshop. Their stated purpose – identical to the philosophy of ISTA – is to forge a relationship with what is alien to them and to acknowledge and appreciate the merits of others. After all, these encounters are the best means of challenging the notion of anything belonging to a given culture – the manner of expression and gestures, the assumption of roles and the rules of conduct. The Odin Company's international network places great emphasis on the acceptance of third-world masters, artists, scholars and companies as equal creative partners in the global workshop effort, as well as on solidarity with so-called third-world theatre – in which, as opposed to established permanent theatres and commercial entertainment venues, the group represents organized, nascent, fringe theatre movements. (It is worth mentioning that Barba himself operated throughout his career on the 'independent' alternative scene, outside of the establishment.)

Consequently, Barba's concept argues for common basic principles and equality with regard to body technique, as well as freedom of experimentation that

can be removed from societal and cultural contexts. In Richard Schechner's opinion, however, not even the methods can be considered universal, since 1) its aesthetic principles are culture-specific (similarly, Erika Fischer-Lichte views the exercises as varying with the culture), and 2) the range of examples is relatively limited, as the study focuses mainly on traditions existing in Indian, Chinese and Japanese territories. Danish anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup argues that the presentational experiences of different cultural communities can, in fact, be built into the cultural-artistic product; moreover, theatrical dialogue among cultures does not signify the creation of Barba's conceptual union, merely its temporary fusion.

From the perspective of dance and theatre pedagogy, the significance of the Barba–Savarese volume is indisputable. For that very reason, it can be regarded as a *textbook* – not just for those interested in physical theatre, but for every creator and researcher dealing with theatre arts. It is not made up insular methodology solely of concern to scholars, but seeks methods, in the course of training and instruction, to reach the aim of stripping the dancer's or actor's body of its everyday, automatic behaviour. Practicing the ritual, organic motions developed over decades can serve as excellent training elements for European actors, making them aware of their own bodies' manifestations. It gives them an applicable theoretical basis for their creative work, in addition to an understanding that, as a result of the exercises, their artistic bodies generate energy that can be transferred to the spectators. The series and system of acting-dancing exercises make up a long process, and to master them demands life-long development. In the course of generational knowledge transfer, certain secrets of mastery are also formulated; yet, they can only be passed on through step-by-step experience. Within this volume, the extensive visual documentation – typical of the Hungarian publisher's quality – provides great assistance in picturing the exercises and concrete examples and in making the descriptions clear and accessible, so the creative body may undergo the prescribed process.

Barba, Eugenio and Nicola Savarese. 2020. *A színész titkos művészete. Színházantropológiai szótár*. Budapest: Károli Gáspár University of Reformed Church in Hungary – L'Harmattan Kiadó.

Károly Hauber

Géza Balázs: The Birth of Art and Language

Géza Balázs has put forward a serious volume. It is a profound and extensive work sprinkled with quotations and references, and yet it is as readable as a good novel. Only its heroes and events are different. Instead of dreamed-up characters, the greats of scholarship and cultural history figure in it, while excitement is supplied not by unexpected twists, but by sizzling intellectual revelations.

As the title indicates, the author has researched the origins of art and language, and his investigation is so far-reaching, it extends beyond linguistics and the arts to the realms of folklore, psychology and the entire history of culture. That in itself can be deemed arrestingly versatile. Indeed, it seeks to shed light on matters which, in terms of research, are shrouded in mystery; although, as we have long known, both art and language are conditions of becoming human. Nevertheless, the process began some 100,000 years ago, and only a few thousand years of it can be documented. The preceding millennia can only be examined indirectly (through folklore, children's language, depth psychology, primitive races, etc.).

It is no accident that the book considers art and language together. The latter is not simply a masterful system of signs and symbols, but a metaphysical development incorporating all of Humanity, just as art does. In fact, language itself is art – i.e., mimesis – as well as being a creative activity that brings joy. Currently, linguistic signs overwhelmingly count as symbols based on common consensus; whereas, originally, the majority were iconic or indexical signs based on similarities or correspondences – which can often be uncovered. This is also important, since, just like our common dreams, it incorporates Humanity's collective unconsciousness. It informs us of our past, of Mankind that was originally one with the world. Mankind did not think in concepts, but in signs that represented the surrounding reality, whereby the relationship between signifier and signified was still clear.

When and how did the change happen? How did concepts supersede pictorial signs? How did language in today's sense come to be? Here the author is not at pains to express anything new; instead, he summarises the foregoing research,

which has undergone many changes as development accelerated and 'advances' occurred. However, he does present an original hypothesis with regard to the inception of language and the arts. As he sees it, the two have a common source and developed simultaneously. To start with, in the ancient syncretic culture, language and music existed together. In fact, language was practically preceded by melodies based on natural models. This was the dynamic basis upon which expressions were built – at first, monosyllabic and indistinct; then, two-syllable and so on. Indeed, we can still feel the relationship between language and music quite well. Even the 'primeval language' can be approached from different angles. Myth researchers surmise it through mythology. Psychoanalysts following Jung use the collective unconsciousness as revealed in common dreams. Folklorists discern it through spells, working songs, lullabies, dance lyrics, dirges and so on. Today, we find a number of linguistic declarations that lead back to this. As stated in the work: 'Further instinctive declarations, which have received little attention, reveal elementary forms: slips of the tongue; passionate cries; vulgarity; muttering; sighs; prayers; speech during sex, birth or other euphoric states (drug- or alcohol-induced); aphasia and deteriorating speech as the result of senility. These instincts can be easily perceived in rhythmic counting and doodling' (Balázs 2021, 28). The common origin of art and language may also be traced back to certain natural, basic shapes – for example, the circle and the ball, symmetry, or the relationship between signifier and signified.

Géza Balázs expounds upon his message with disarming thoroughness. His conclusions are always to-the-point; and, besides supporting his thesis, they are remarkably interesting on their own. There is no end to the pithy and exciting elaboration. Could there be a more insightful illumination of Mihály Csíkszentmihályi's theory of flow state? 'Often times we just happen to be talking to someone (or some people), and time flies or slips away… the point of flow state is transcending time and space… Therefore, encoded in language is the experience of joy – just as it is, for example, in sexuality and every sort of creative human activity' (Balázs 2021, 84). And could there be a more convincing argument that 'art and language are the basis of our human existence' than one of neurobiologist Tamás Freund's statements? 'Besides physical exercise, people need daily catharsis as well. Artistic exercise provides that, and it is most effective when a person participates in its creation… With a rich inner world, one's scientific or scholarly work is much more effective… I am certain that what I was able to produce from my mind's creative sphere, I produced thanks to music' (Balázs 2021, 167).

I believe *The Birth of Art and Language* represents an original and important work for many branches of scholarship. It connects several disciplines and considers all human history while being cogent and comprehensible. I hereby highlight three of its pioneering features.

The first has to do with method. The author does not approach the theme with worn clichés. He does not think in terms of either/or, promulgated throughout Western scholarship. Instead, whenever possible, he keeps in mind the both/and tradition, rooted in Eastern thought. That is, he does not always unconditionally accept the basic logic principle of the excluded middle – i.e., given two contradictory propositions, one must be true. This approach is both conscious (indicated by the fact that the author devotes a separate chapter to the topic) and especially productive. Otherwise, we could hardly embark on the journey that the book invites us to join. This makes the book no less scholarly, however. In fact, it allows for a truly credible discussion of the theme.

The second important innovation is how he roots his concept in Hungarian tradition. It is related to thinkers whom, in the glory days of Structuralism and Post-Structuralism, Hungarian scholarship was prone to forget, even though they left behind life-works of European standard. Above all, we must highlight here Béla Hamvas, Nándor Várkonyi, Tivadar Thass-Thienemann and Sándor Karácsony, who were original thinkers that paid attention to the total man. They observed the tiniest of details, but never lost sight of the big picture, of Mankind's purpose. Besides them, he cites the work of a number of other scholars from Sándor N. Szilágyi and Vilmos Tánczos to Vilmos Voigt – just to mention a few Hungarian thinkers, although the author has a thorough knowledge of the international literature as well.

Thirdly, we should note that, following in the footsteps of Sándor Karácsony and Béla Hamva, Géza Balázs also observes the total man. Although not explicitly, he seeks answers to the large questions: Who are we? Where did we come from? Where are we headed? From this perspective, the book is unsettling to read. It appears that not only art testifies to modern Mankind's growing alienation. It is also conveyed by the use of language, which is increasingly divorced from tradition and which 'distorts nature, manifesting Mankind's (linguistic) worldview of the world, society and identity' (Balázs 2021, 284).

Balázs Géza. 2021. *A művészet és a nyelv születése. Szemiotika, művészetelmélet, antropológiai nyelvészet.* Budapest: MNYKNT–IKU.

Balázs Véghelyi

István Fazekas: The Palace of Time

'This town was originally built to be a palace of time in space. In the stones of its foundation, there is peace and heroism, protection and eternal sacrifice.' As though the earth's heart opened and sad Celtic music issued forth, so begins István Fazekas' docudrama entitled *Town of Great Times* with the lyrical statements delivered by the narrator, played by Gábor Koncz. Beneath the starry sky projected on the stage's borders, there appear the strong contours of three burial mounds. In the slowly strengthening glare of lights on the horizon, we are soon witnesses to an Iron Age funeral. Then, thunder is heard. Lightening flashes across the angered firmament, and from that moment on, we take part in a unique journey through time – just like in Madách's great work, *The Tragedy of Man,* only here we are tied to one concrete location.

The docudrama's subtitle is *Fables from the History of Százhalombatta,* and truly, the allegories plucked from time (from extinct ages to gradually more factual scenes approaching the present) are primarily tied to the territory of Százhalom. Nevertheless, so that the play, which explicitly follows the main currents of its setting's history, does not become mired in its locale, Fazekas cites moments from the past which make the fight for survival its binding element. The fables, which span centuries, are thus organically linked. Scenes of dialogue are separated by narration (which helps by supplying temporal and spatial orientation, as well as background information) and dance numbers that reflect the nature of the given period. Still, they are linked by cross-references, as well as by a Bronze-Age coin that can always be found in the territory of Százhalombatta, both physically and over the span of a millennium. Already considered antique in the Iron Age, it was engraved with a cross in Roman times to serve as a tangible testimony to Christianity – later gaining its final, contemporary significance in 1996, when the church, based on the designs of Imre Makovecz, was erected in the main square of Százhalombatta, incorporating the coin as its central symbol.

The central feature of the set is also constant. In the background of the stage, Annamária Húros, a well-known pupil of Makovecz, situates three stylised hills, which serve different functions with the changing scenes and eras. Their mobility aids in the fast changes, also assisted by the images and video clips projected onto them. Thus, the Bronze Age burial mounds can transform into yurts from the time of the country's conquest, as well as into oil tanks and churches. Their concave sides can delineate a school, a tavern, or occasionally the background for a throne room. As geographical elements, these three mounds are the least likely to wear away with time, indicated onstage by a shrieking wind effect. This is truly a modern set design, which will not bear anything superfluous on the stage.

The location binds together these distinct and interwoven fables. Százhalombatta is a settlement that clearly displays the layers of time. It acquired its name from the 122 burial mounds that store the remains of Iron-Age elites, but archaeologists have also discovered finds from the Bronze Age. In Roman times, a military camp named Matrica existed in today's territory of Százhalombatta as one of the borderline's guard posts. The remains of a thermal bath built of stone on the Danube bank remind us of the Romans' presence. Hun and Avar artefacts have been found from later centuries, and the conquering Hungarians settled this spot as well. Demeter Csáti recorded this in 1526, in the lines of his *Song of the Purchase of Pannonia:* 'Árpád came with the Hungarian people / Rising up in the land of Kelem on the Danube / They checked that of Cseke / And held sway in Tétén. // They achieved much in Érd / And settled at Százhalom, / Battling with princes' (Csáti 2010). Following this description from the *Gesta Hungarorum* (by an anonymous author), the conquering ruler embarked from here to subdue Transdanubia. It was also the site of an occupied settlement in the Middle Ages, proved by the remains of a thirteenth-century church. Until the mid-twentieth century, Százhalombatta was a quiet village inhabited by Hungarians and Serbians. Most of the residents lived from fishing and agriculture. In 1960, the central administration decided to build Hungary's largest power plant here, in addition to a petroleum refinery. In the wake of the investment, workers arrived from every corner of the country. Thus, beside the village, a consciously designed town grew up out of the cornfields. The settlement attained the status of a town on 1 April 1970, kicking off the dynamic development of the succeeding years.

This broad sketch of the settlement's history may even be excluded from the text; for, despite more or less adapting the documented history of a precise

settlement, István Fazekas' work evokes a general expression of a town (as an organised unit), its memory and its community. According to American city planner Kevin Lynch, people form a unique mental picture of their town; nonetheless, these singular images have qualities in common that arise from a shared culture, shared experiences and strategies, as well as the physical attributes of the settled environment. From the sum of individual perceptions, a cognitive map constantly takes shape, which not only aids in making the space comprehensible and liveable, but also allows people to determine more easily their place and circumstances in their own environment. Therefore, Százhalombatta could be any other Hungarian (or foreign) settlement looking back upon a long past while still enjoying an active community life. Hence, the location referred to onstage can be understood as an allegory in and of itself, and an exact knowledge of the place is unnecessary. It is an indisputable fact that theatre is a sensitive seismograph of life's phenomena, and this is well demonstrated by this docudrama, unprecedented in the history of Hungarian drama.

Town of Great Times consists of two acts. The first extends from the Iron Age to the First World War. Ancient mound-building people, Roman soldiers, early Christians and late pagans, stingy landowners and arriving Turks, soldiers leaving for war and deserted lovers – each appear for one short scene. Fictional characters (indicative of their times) and historic figures take the stage for a few emblematic statements. In the second scene, for example, a Christian couple accused of cannibalism is led before Marcus Aurelius in chains, and they inform the emperor of the mystery of the Last Supper, the symbolism of Christ's body and blood. In the sixth scene, King Matthias Corvinus passes judgment over a usurious counterfeiter. In the tenth scene, Maria Theresa serves justice in the case of local serfs unfairly toiling for a landowner. These scenes are based on historical sources. For example, Marcus Aurelius in fact came in person to the camps on the border. He surely turned up in Campona, which is close to Matrica. Therefore, it is realistic to suppose that he reached Matrica, and there are written documents concerning the two aforementioned legal cases.

The second act follows history of the village (and later town) from 1936 to the 1990s. The author touches upon the period of industrialisation and the process of building the town, as well as the conflict between local and county-level Party leadership. In the background of the public sphere, the opinions of the workers who settled the town are heard within the confines of the tavern. At the conclusion of the piece, we are shown a settlement in which the people who have

arrived from every point of the compass make up a community. In the shadow of industrial projects, culture and the preservation of traditions play an important role in the lives of the residents. The docudrama begins with a funeral, but by the closing scene, bursting forth in a prophetic vision, actual church bells toll for the living – in such a way that the Iron Age chieftain eulogising over the dead delivers almost the exact same monologue as the modern-day mayor, which serves as a frame for the play. The fateful repetition of the declaration 'I have a dream…' in the finale makes clear the intended, inter-textural reflection upon Mankind's cathartic expression of solidarity and the desire for freedom. In one interview conducted with the author, he summarized the conception of the drama this way: 'To begin with, […] I wanted to adapt the period between the 1960s and 1970, although when it occurred to me that the clashes waged for the sake of the town between the local leaders and the heads of two great companies made up a drama of such volcanic proportions, I immediately had to place the chronicle of its becoming a town in a larger historical perspective. That way, its true value, its rays of hope that still shape our lives today, would be apparent. I remember it was on Christmas Eve that I got the idea of commencing the writing of the play with an Iron-Age funeral, with a burial mound that people would enter at the centre of the stage. Then, at the piece's conclusion, the same burial mound had to become a symbol of life and resurrection. Hence, it had to transform into the Makovecz church, from which, following one of the Summerfest's ecumenical services, heroes of today and the past would step forth to proclaim the love of life in a grand, communal celebration' (Kovács 2021).

Through the means of realism, director János Bozsogi guides the viewers through time. Meanwhile, the piece's mosaic nature allows actors to create multiple roles. Thus, in the span of a performance, Irén Bordán can be Maria Theresa, an old village woman and a stern Party functionary. Bernadett Gregor plays a teacher, a museum-founding archaeologist and an author working in Százhalombatta. Zsuzsa Vathy and Márta Brunner portray a kind-hearted teacher and an outspoken tavern-keeper.

Dance makes up an integral part of the performance, establishing a rhythm to the scenes and the narrative. In Százhalombatta, dance culture established serious traditions in the past three decades. Since 1994, the town has hosted the Summerfest International Folk Dance Festival. Many of the local children and youths choose folk dancing as a leisure activity, while a ballet studio and modern dance ensembles also operate in the town. They also feature in the performance.

Still, the dance numbers do not merely serve as filler or dividing elements. They strengthen the sense of local colour. We must also mention the role of music in the production. Sándor 'Sündi' Csoóri, Jr., has composed secular folk music that suits the atmosphere of the scenes and subtly supports them.

In a televised statement a good ten years ago, Miklós Hubay spoke of István Fazekas as a possible reviver of Hungarian history drama. *Town of Great Times* is a worthy continuation of his works: *Károly Kis,* which examines the causes of Hungary's discord; *Ilona Zrínyi,* a monodrama with a lively modern format; *The Night of Pilate,* which analyses the human requisites for the phenomenon of Christ in a realistic manner; and the historical dramas entitled *Charged with Crime*. The piece *Town of Great Times* premiered on 23 October 2021, and it can be viewed by the public at the The Friendship & Cultural Centre (Barátság Kulturális Központ).

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Csaba Galántai:

Puppets Don't Cry

Exhibit of the Lifework of Puppeteer Zsolt Szász

A puppet exhibit featuring highlights from the lifework of the Géza Blattner Award-winning puppet artist Zsolt Szász opened on 17 September on the third storey of the National Theatre's public space. On the same day, an exhibition of production photos by the theatre's photographer Zsolt Eöri-Szabó opened on the first and second storeys. The two exhibitions were open to the public until 16 October, and were introduced on 27 September by Kossuth Prize-winning performer, folk singer and story teller András Berecz. From this point on, we shall concentrate on the puppet exhibit.

Zsolt Szász gazed into the deep well of time and captured the essence of puppetry by entitling his exhibit 'Puppets Don't Cry'. Puppets do not cry, just as the angels do not cry, and neither do gods. Puppets are not allowed to cry; for, in the cult ceremonies of ancient civilizations, they represented God or gods. That is, they themselves were gods. Zsolt Szász harkens back to the Grand Narrative, seeking out grand tales, because he believes in the truth of recounting stories. The best of the old Czech masters would praise his puppets if they could see this exhibit. Where does Zsolt Szász' value as a creator lie? I have been to a number of puppet exhibitions where, observing the mechanical puppets in display cases, I felt something was missing. I could not fully appreciate these beings as a whole. As Martin Heidegger wrote about paintings and statues on display, '[they are] divorced from their sphere of Being' and 'placed in a collection, they are deprived of their World' (Heidegger 1988, 67). In relation to the puppets, their sphere of Being is the theatrical performance. Depriving them of their World results in the loss of their identity, since they are unable to move, and they are not in service to a play. Because the puppets are displayed here together with their sticks and string, their functionality is striking. Given the figures' mechanical features, we sense an opportunity to unlock this particular World. It preserves their nature – i.e., the puppets' potential to move and perform. Nevertheless, Zsolt Szász'

creations call our attention to another world – one that no longer exists – by not hiding from the viewer either the marionette's crossed sticks or the wooden rods typical of Javanese *wayang* puppetry. Observing the puppets, we feel as though they have just stopped, that they will continue and resume the performance. However, in order to divine their identities, we do not necessarily need the puppets to move. For the lifeless material to come to life, we need only know the story, because the puppets are present in their historic sense. They are tied to the ancient narrative in which they were born. This makes them authentic and remarkably topical. They are of this world, linked to the given culture as a whole. Besides the choice of theme and texture of the fabric, the wood's subtle carving, the presence of folk symbols, and the tiny signs on the clothing, lending them an old appearance – all strengthen the puppets' link to their narratives. Nonetheless, they appear to us not merely as preserved, traditional objects. After all, they are broken in, puppets that have weathered performances and are ready to recount their tales again at any time. With regard to the exhibit, a critic could remark that 'it is lifeless material brought to life', which is the definition of puppetry in current use. Still, that is flawed, since it focuses solely on the movement and momentum, ignoring the fact that the puppet figures are rooted in a story as well. Can we honestly remark that any puppet figure of László the Valiant is dead material that needs to be revived? László the Valiant does not need to be brought to life; he already lives. He exists. We know him, and know his tales. We could say the same of the devil, too, as well as all puppet effigies representing archetypes.

Although we may not have seen Zsolt Szász' puppets, they strike us as familiar. We sense in them the long forgotten story. Most designers rely on workshops for the puppets' execution. Zsolt Szász, who works with natural materials, not only designs his puppets, but makes them as well (carving them, dressing them and supplying the mechanics). Henrik Kemény worked similarly, as did his master František Vítek. Zsolt Szász forces Hungarians less versed in their cultural past to reflect. Certainly, they would like to learn from the puppets, to be reminded who they are. We know that the goal of theatre is not to cultivate tradition, but to present it, make it current and fill it with life. Vilmos Diószegi, an Eastern scholar, wrote: 'Folk poetry is like layers of coal in the depths of the earth. The layers, stacked on top of one another, faithfully preserve traces of olden times' (Diószegi 1998, 4). Our puppet artist recognized this, and his work exposes and uncovers ever newer layers.

Photo: Zsolt Előri Szabó

Fig. 1. **Blattner Award-winning puppeteer Zsolt Szász**

Zsolt Szász burst onto the puppetry scene in 1998, as a performer in the production entitled *Bluebeard the Knight; or, the Female Tyrant*. That is when he founded his puppet theatre with the telling name Prolihystrió. [A portmanteau of *common man* and *Renaissance man* – trans.] Later, he created the no less tellingly named Mystery and Gravitation Theatre Company and later the Royal Hungarian Puppet Theatre formation. (Visitors to the exhibit can view on the monitor the production of *The Tale of Saint László* that he created for Swan Song Theatre in 2000.) Meanwhile, Zsolt Szász also designed contemporary shows at permanent theatres as well. As an artistic product of his meeting of the minds with Gábor Papp, he presented his folk-tale adaptation *The Beautifully Singing Pelican* in Debrecen. He also designed and directed shows in Pécs *(Master of Wind and Mistress of Rain, Japanese Tales* and *Parsifal, the Foolish Knight),* Kecskemét *(Thyl Ulenspiegel)* and Szombathely *(The Garden of Wonders)*. Showing his affinity for Eastern theatre, he often used *bunraku*-style puppets – for example in *The Talisman* (Csokonai Theatre, Debrecen) and *Japanese Tales*.

Photo: András Káptalan

Fig. 2. **Puppets from *Parsifal, the Foolish Knight* on display in Pécs, Bóbita Puppet Theatre, 2005**

From 1993, he was artistic director of the Winged Dragon International Street Theatre and Puppet Festival for 20 years. He organized the International Nativity Meeting with Márta Tömöry for 30 years. From 2006 to 2012, he worked at the Csokonai Theatre in Debrecen. Since 2013, he has served as dramaturge at the National Theatre and editor-in-chief of the journal entitled *Scenarium*.

It makes one wonder how a distinguish expert on puppets (by international standards as well) has never found a lasting home in any puppet theatre in Hungary. The puppetry community can only thank the National Theatre for providing a venue for this exhibition during MITEM (The Madách International Theatre Meeting). The exhibit itself is certainly suited to the philosophy and artistic calibre of this event.

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