

*University of Theatre and Film*

## **JEWISH VACATION**

From the experience of Ernő Szép to reconstructive fiction

*D.L.A. Thesis*

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### I. THE IDEA AND ITS REALMS

The idea of the script - chosen to be the subject of the thesis - *Jewish Vacation* came from Ernő Szép's book *The smell of humans (Emberszag)*. The writer's compulsive residency was set out in a yellow star house's fourth floor flat at Pozsonyi Street facing the Danube from June to October 1944. Baron D. the humane commandant of the house let the residents who were forced to live in the property have their 'vacation' on the rooftop floor. During the days following the Stauffenberg assassination the residents were in a state of euphoria. They had faith in the approaching end of war. The synod of the extraordinary location and the specific date creates a promising tableaux and could be an appropriate inspiration to the writing of a 55 minute long TV play's script. In *Jewish Vacation* I try to reconstruct the day when on the rooftop of the Dunapark house hope awoke that what up to that point seemed to be inevitable destiny might just be a nightmare. From which nightmare the persecuted will have the possibility to wake up.

The first chapter of my thesis starts with a sketchy Ernő Szép portrait then it observes the stylistic methods of the diary. After that I touch on personal motives. I grew up in a one-time yellow star house in number 48 Ó Street in the sixth district of Budapest. I went to primary school in Újlipótváros. As a child then as a teenager I was unbarred to perceive the atmosphere of my home of birth and “Újzséland” heavy of concealment and secrets. In the next chapter I identify Ernő Szép’s one-time compulsive residency following the going-over of the neighbourhood the house’s one-time description and the diary’s hints. Finally using the relevant portraits of *The smell of humans* depicted with one or two sentences I touch on sketching the possible characters of the story which is to be written.

## II. RESEARCH

In this chapter I aim to set out the limits of imagination and to prepare for the writing of the story by finding and analysing the possible source-materials. After the review of the reminiscences written by the compulsive residents of the yellow star house I analyse the description of the Hofstätter houses published in the periodical called *Tér és Forma* (Space and Shape). I review the one-time synthesis of the residents of Újlipótváros. I touch on the Stauffenberg assassination and the available news in connection with it of the following few days. To explore the linguistic layers I take examples from Hungarian slang and yiddish vocabulary. To widen the sphere of the potential actions I mention some of the social pastime activities of the middle class. Finally on the grounds of the location and the stylistic marks of the rooftop floor and the impulse of the historical situation I recall the metaphor of the ship as one of the motives in the story to be written with the help of Péter Forgács’s movie *Exodus* which is edited out of archive material.

## III. CONCEPT

The third chapter anchors the theorem of writing. While writing the script I was led by the purpose to differ from the pieces of art which deal with the Holocaust as a theme which operate with clichés of long standing full of pathos and tragedy. I rather chose amply use the stylistic marks of grotesque and reference the strategies of survival operating with tart humor about the Central European existence. In this chapter I mention briefly the planned movies’ determined linguistic layers and about the difficulty that the prohibition’s of the Jewish religious life meant for those who lived here one time. These prohibitions are rather possibilities and impulses from the perspective of editing the story. The script switches between three recitals. The first one takes place in the in the future the second one in the past

and the third one is the recollections of the protagonist connecting the other two. Thus the script will associate three specific camera angles to three different layers of the narrative.

## I. SCRIPT

The story begins on July 21 2018 when the survivor who was 12 during the Stauffenberg assassination and is now 86 - the main character, Pál Tábori who migrated to the States - who's visiting for a few days goes up to the rooftop floor of the Dunapark house to recall the time spent in the yellow star house. Here he meets 21 years old Lili who does yoga on the one time roof garden which died down perfectly over the years. The couple's unintentional meeting gives Tábori the possibility to relive what happened here. These events are shown and completed elements even the main character knows nothing about in the other main plot which takes place in 1994. The narrative is toned and articulated by the main characters's subjective flashing questions. My goal was to make the one-time events interpretable for the main character who doesn't seem to know everything.

## II. EPILOGUE

In the fifth chapter I confront the experience gained over the course of the writing with the precursory expectations marking the occurrent considerations of rewriting my supervisor's and opposers's critical comments on the script taken into account.

The DLA thesis is closed by a bibliography and an appendix in which I publish two texts. One of them is a diary written by Mária Magyar - who also lived in number 48 Ó Street - for the website of the yellow star house project's. The other one is a portion of *The scent of humans* in which Ernő Szép depicts the likeness of his fellow sufferers in mini portraits no longer than a few lines.