Barnabás Szöllősi:

THE LANGUAGE OF THE SCREENPLAY

– Fragments from the history of Hungarian screenwriting –

English doctoral (PhD) dissertation theses

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INTRODUCTION

The main thesis of my dissertation is that the screenplay can exceed its narrative function. The text of a screenplay can cue its reader to imagine the future film's formal and stylistic peculiarities. Thus, the screenplay can be regarded as a specific, autonomous literary form, as an intermediary text, that can be positioned between literature and film.

In the first part of my dissertation, I examine how the screenplay can be approached with both literary and film theory.

The second part of the dissertation is a collection of case studies about Hungarian screenplays, in which I analyze the texts with close reading method, I present comparative analysis of the screenplays and the films made from them, as well as examine the practice and context of screenplay publication. There are four reasons why I only write about Hungarian texts: 1. During my research I had access only to the archive at the *Hungarian National Film Institute*. 2. The language of my original dissertation is Hungarian, thus the linguistic integrity of the entire text is stable, since both the source and analytical texts are written in the same language. 3.

There has been no research published about Hungarian screenwriting yet. 4. I also analyze the political-historical context of screenwriting and film-making, thus the dissertation joins the *New Cinema History* paradigm, and adds new aspects to Hungarian film history.

This English summary follows the original chapter structure of my thesis.

The question of literature – the theoretical discourse of the screenplay

The discourse about the screenplay can be described as a dichotomy of the theoretical and practical approach. The first subsection of my *Introduction* sums up the theoretical approach. Theoretical texts about the screenplay use various metaphors to grasp its essence. I analyze Jean-Claude Carrière's caterpillar-metaphor, Béla Balázs' and Arthur C. Clarke's musical metaphors, Steven Maras' blueprint theory and Yvette Bíró's fine arts/graphic design metaphor. Through these metaphors, the semantic and semiotic problems of the screenplay become apparent.

The most progressive text in this regard is Pier Paolo Pasolini's *The Screenplay as a "Structure that Wants to Be*

Another Structure'': the text of a screenplay is structured from written signs that want to become visual and auditive signs. This is why Pasolini and many other theorists claim that the screenplay is a specific and somewhat limited literary form. The French *Nouveau Roman* can be mentioned in this respect, since many of its members wrote screenplays and then used the specific qualities of the form in their autonomous literary texts as well. There are two case studies in the second part of my dissertation about two Hungarian author's screenwriting practices, both of which are connected to the *Nouveau Roman*: those of Miklós Mészöly and János Pilinszky.

Know-how *books – the practical discourse*

Practical discourse about screenwriting is dominated by *know-how* books. This tradition started with Lajos Egry's work, and then was continued by Syd Field and Robert McKee. These books share a narrative approach. They regard the screenplay as the story-core of a film to be made. Most *know-how* books deny the literary quality of the screenplay's text, and they are also limited in their narrative view, since they represent the Hollywood story-structure and style.

S i n c e *know-how* books dominate the complete

discourse about screenwriting, they reinforce the instrumental-industrial status of the screenplay and obstruct unfolding the idea of the screenplay as an autonomous textual form.

Summary

The Hungarian film history is not dominated by the Hollywood story-structure and style, thus the examination of Hungarian screenplays can produce new knowledge not only in a theoretical, but also in a practical aspect. Through my analyses I synthesize the practical and theoretical approach. The study of late-modern Hungarian screenplays can also demonstrate how Hungarian literature and cinema interacts with one another.

My dissertation regards the screenplay as an autonomous textual form that can cue its reader to cinematic imagination. In doing so, I hope to minimize the alienating effect of doing contract labour as a screenwriter and, in opposition, to reinforce the creative process of writing as an act of creation. It is also the aim of this dissertation to demonstrate the usefulness of reading screenplays for both film historians and film makers.

I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Literary theoretical approach

The chapter summarizes the literary theoretical concepts that help to reframe the screenplay as literature.

According to J. Hillis Miller and Jacques Derrida, the notion of literature is, historically speaking, an ever-changing construction. The word *literature* etymologically comes from ancient Roman language and culture: it can be described as the practice of archiving, re-writing, translating and adapting ancient Greek sources that were rooted in oral and not in written tradition. One of the most common arguments against reading screenplays is that they are not meant to be read, but to be produced; yet we see that the original concept of literature operated with sources that were not written at all. The most common notion of literature originates in the 19th century. General and compulsory public education made literature a part of the school curriculum, limited its corpus to the sum of imaginary texts, and determined its function as a sort of anthology of the morals and ideologies of a given language and

national community. Most screenwriting *know-how* books use this notion of literature, which is one reason why they regard the screenplay as non-literature.

Jean-Paul Sartre argues that literary discourse is also a power discourse: the very notion and function of literature is always determined by those who produce and consume literature. Thus, there can be no literature without ideology, yet the aforementioned 19th century concept regards literature as the universal encyclopedia of human existence. This concept is also reinforced by *know-how* books, which is why my criticism towards these books is similar to Sartre's criticism towards the bourgeois literature concept.

Sartre and Paul de Man highlighted why texts are context bound: every text carries its historical-linguistic ideas. This is also true for screenplay texts, the typography of which varies in historical context, historical genres being evincible from the text. Every screenplay is an idea for a film, and when the text turns into film, it generates expenses. Through these expenses, every film-maker comes into contact with film producing companies. Since almost every film in Hungary during every historical period was state-funded, most Hungarian filmmakers encountered the state power. In this

regard, one cannot eliminate the political context of a screenplay text.

Derrida and Sartre describe literature as an act of freedom. Derrida even stresses that literature is the most important institution of freedom of speech, since in literary texts one can say anything and everything. In this sense, texts that speak of the idea for a film – screenplays – cannot be dismissed from the institution of literature. In Sartre's opinion, reading is also an act of freedom, since the written text can never be finished without its reader. This is even more true in the context of screenplays, because the reader has to finish the text as an imaginary film.

Following Sartre's ideas, Roland Barthes demonstrated that reading in the capitalist system can lose its freedom and become labour. In most cases screenplays are only read as labour. One of the most important goals of my dissertation is to prove that screenplays can indeed be texts of enjoyment, as Barthes uses this notion as opposed to reading as labour.

Barthes' other main concept is inter-textuality, according to which we cannot only shift from one text to another through the infinite-text, but also that almost every medium can be regarded as text or reading material. This

concept enables the comparative and intermediary analysis of screenplays. Barthes also demonstrated in his works about the structural analysis method that narrative is highly adaptable among different medial forms: the untranslatable part of an artwork is always its language. This is why screenplays cannot be read without the help of film theory.

Steven Price highlighted that many analytical traditions can be used to examine screenplays. For dialogues we can use J. L. Austin's speech act theory. The *text-subtext* concept of the *know-how* books can be synthesized with Paul de Man's *rhetoric-figurative* concept. Kevin Alexander Boon wrote in depth about how modernist prose and Imagism are connected to screenplay descriptions, thus even poetic passages can emerge in a screenplay.

If we consider transitionality (from text to film) as the core characteristic of screenplays, we may see the concept of deconstruction useful. De Man and Derrida often wrote about how deconstruction is a part of every text. From the point of view of screenplays, this seems to be voluntary as the text wants to be something else than what it is: a film.

Miller wrote: "The end of literature is at hand." By this he meant that in the age of new media the notion of literature is

once again in transition. If the tendencies of our time do not change radically, we will consume more and more audio-visual and less textual content. Bearing in mind that the first notion of literature was based on the textualization of an oral culture, it could be imagined that our textual plans for audio-visual media (screenplay) might become for future generations the literature of our present.

Film theoretical approach

This chapter uses the concepts of Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell to examine to what degree a written text is capable of expressing the elements of film-language, seeking the boundaries of intermediary reading.

The elements of film-language
The shot

Most film theories share the idea that the smallest element of film is the shot. The smallest elements of language are the phonemes, morphemes and letters. Language is based on abstract signs, while every shot and every frame of a film

contains innumerable particular facts. Thus, there is no similarity between the smallest elements of language and film. All the same, written language can express the function of a shot, which can be stylistic or narrative as well.

Consensually, the shots are categorized by their sizes: long shot, medium shot, close up, etc. The "literary" screenplay differs from the "technical" or "shooting" screenplay in that the latter contains shot sizes. Most screenplays do not follow this rule, and I only use the "literary/technical" dichotomy in a critical aspect. The stylistic or narrative function of a shot is more important from the point of view of my dissertation than its size. Gilles Deleuze also criticized the use of the shot-size system in film theory, and in many situations I follow Deleuze's concepts.

The mise-en-scène

In Thompson's-Bordwell's use the *mise-en-scène* is the sum of every element of a shot that its size cannot indicate: space work, lighting, coloring, costumes, etc. Written language is capable of describing these qualities, and *know-how* books also stress the importance to write about them, since they create meaning.

Film-sequence

A sequence in a film contains more than one shot and in some regard represents causality. A sequence can have a narrative or descriptive function. Written language is capable of expressing sequences.

Editing / Cut

A cut or editing creates relation between two or more shots, thus creating sequences. Thompson and Bordwell write about four types of relation: graphic, rhythmic, spatial and temporal. Most editing can be regarded as *continuity editing* that aims to create flawless narratives in films. Screenplays do not indicate continuity editing in their texts. Graphic relations can create visual analogies, similes and metaphors, which are important elements of film poetics, and written language is capable of describing these effects. Rhythmic relations are created by the different durations of the connected shots: written language has many poetic tools to express rhythmic changes. Temporal relations in editing are usually used to create narration, which is one of the most important functions of a screenplay. Spatial relations create film-space from fragments. Written language is also capable of describing spaces in various details. The problem of writing about editing

in a screenplay emerges when the editing is unusual: transition, interior cut, musical montage, etc. In the second part of my dissertation, I analyze screenplays that use these effects.

Sound

Thompson and Bordwell wrote about three categories of film-sound: speech, music and noise. In addition, we can decide about every sound whether it falls into *diegetic* or *non-diegetic* categories. It is worth noting that *on-screen* and *off-screen* categories are not the same as diegetic and non-diegetic. Off-screen sounds were categorized by Noël Burch into six groups, and all of them can be expressed in the text of a screenplay. Furthermore, we can classify every sound into *external/objective* and *internal/subjective* categories. These categories are most important when we analyze voice-over narration. Though a screenplay can indicate any kind of spoken word, the expression of voice-over, or in Deleuze's notion: *image-sound*, is problematic, since on film it appears as a simultaneous audio-visual effect, but language is not capable of expressing simultaneity. The second part of my dissertation includes a case study for the closer analysis of voice-over in screenplays.

Thompson and Bordwell suggest examining every

sound in a film by the aspects of rhythm, space, time and fidelity. Rhythm can be expressed with written language. The space of a sound is determined by its direction, resonance, volume and echo, which a text can indicate but cannot express. The most important question about the time of a sound is whether it is in sync or not with the time of the images. Once again, this falls into audio-visual simultaneity, which cannot be expressed in a text. In the aspect of fidelity, we should examine the discrepancies between sound and image (e.g. we hear claps instead of foot-steps when the images show somebody walking) – which is also a simultaneous audio-visual effect, that can be indicated, but not expressed in a text.

To summarize, it should be said that since sound is a physical phenomenon, screenplay texts can describe or indicate the desired sound-effect in the film to be produced, but can never express it with the sensual capabilities of a film.

Audio-visual simultaneity

Among the most important and unique peculiarities of film is audio-visual simultaneity. The connection between image and sound can be described or analyzed in a text, but since language is linear in nature, the reading of a screenplays

cannot be an experience equivalent to the viewing of a film. Absence can be found in every art form, and the absence in a screenplay is audio-visual simultaneity. In the age of new media, the imaginary audio-visual completion of a screenplay is less and less problematic. The case studies in this dissertation examine the rhetorical and poetical methods with which a text can cue its reader to this audio-visual completion.

II. CASE STUDIES

Miklós Mészöly, the screenwriter

Miklós Mészöly wrote many essays about film, but never cooperated as a screenwriter in any of the films that were adapted from his texts. There is only one screenplay by him in the archive at the *Hungarian National Film Institute*, entitled *On the Road* (*Úton útfélen* 1967), which was never completed as a film. The director of the film would have been Zoltán Huszárik.

After the ministry rejected the project, Mészöly published his screenplay text in two different versions with two different titles: *Three Potato Beetles* (*Három burgonyabogár*, 1968) and *Whatever Comes* (*Ami jön*, 1979). All three versions share the same source text, a short story by Mészöly entitled *The Three Potato Beetles* (*A három burgonyabogár*, 1962). My case study is the comparative analysis of these four texts.

Following the different versions of the text, we can see how Mészöly integrated the methods of screenwriting step by step into his autonomous texts. In this regard, the three versions

o f *On the Road* can be seen as experimentation or as a preliminary study for his most famous novel: *Film* (1976). It is proven with textual facts that *The Three Potato Beetles* falls into a different creative era of Mészöly, whilst *On the Road*, *Three Potato Beetles* and *Whatever Comes* are written in a similar language as *Film*. Thus, we can claim that the one and only project Mészöly did as a screenwriter provided much inspiration for his later works.

The shift in Mészöly's writing style also means a shift in his philosophy. *The Three Potato Beetles* is a retrospective, ironic, picaresque short story written in the first person about the narrator's war traumas and about his integration into the socialist labour system, which reinforces the status quo of Mátyás Rákosi's dictatorship. From *On the Road* the narration changes from the first to the third person, from past to present tense, and the text becomes longer. There are less and less descriptions of the characters in *Three Potato Beetles* and in *Whatever Comes*; instead, Mészöly uses situational and dramatic scenes to expose the characters. Descriptive passages in the later versions are dominated by visual sensuality and media-specific awareness: Mészöly indicates editing, coloring, changes in focalisation, the disjunction of image and sound,

etc. A few scenes of the screenplay show much similarity with scenes in later films by Zoltán Huszárik, which suggests that the director used the screenplay as inspiration despite its incompletion as a film.

The Three Potato Beetles is a conversion narrative that uses religious notions and metaphors, whilst from *On the Road* the text's tropes and narrative show existentialist meanings. The later three versions of the text share all the core ideas of Mészöly's next creative era: war traumas cannot be resolved, freedom cannot be reached, happiness is temporal – the latter in this case seems to be bound to the present tense of film and screenplay narrative.

The genesis of *Cold Days* (*Hideg napok* , 1966.)
(*From the Idea to the Film:* András Kovács, Tibor Cseres: *Cold Days,* 1967.)

The case study is a critical examination of the first volume from the Hungarian publishing house, Magvető's series of books: *From the Idea to the Film*. The series can be regarded as an early example of generic film criticism, which showed to

a wider readership how a film is assembled. The first volume about András Kovács' *Cold Days*, which is an adaptation of Tibor Cseres' novel with the same title, contains the first ever screenplay in Hungarian history to be published in book form, thus it serves as an opportunity to examine the context of screenplay publication. My paper follows the chapters of the original book.

Documents: The first chapter of the book is an anthology of historical source texts about the 1942 Novi Sad massacre, in which the nationalist Hungarian army illegally executed 4000 Yugoslavian Serbs and Jews. Both Cseres' novel and Kovács' film have a unique status in Hungarian culture, since there were very few historical works about the Novi Sad massacre before the authors' art works were published. Thus, the first chapter of the book seems to have educational aim, and it also gives a taste to the reader about the kind of research that went into the completion of the novel and the film.

The screenplay: This chapter contains the screenplay of the film, which was written by András Kovács, based on the novel by Tibor Cseres. The screenplay published in the book is not the same as the final shooting draft preserved in the archive of the *Hungarian National Film Institute*. They differ in their

typographical layout: the final shooting draft is written in the two column format, typical of the era (visual information in the left column, auditive information in the right column), whilst the published text follows the consensual drama typography with a continuous narrative layout. In the case of *Cold Days* this difference has aesthetic significance. The film operates with plural voice-over narration, flashback and image-sound, which raises one of the most important question of screenwriting: how can the text indicate audio-visual simultaneity? The two column format can be an alternative solution to this problem, which is absent in the published version of the screenplay. The two texts also differ in their opening. The final shooting draft starts with an image different from the one in the finished film, but the published screenplay has the same opening as the film, the published text having been adjusted to the completed film. In his book, Steven Price calls this the *mnemonic* function of screenplay publication. The difference in the openings has film historic relevance: the finished film opens with an image of the frozen Danube, when suddenly an explosion creates a hole on the ice. The corpses of the victims of the massacre were hidden in the hole and under the ice, but we never see this abusive act represented in the

film. By only showing the hole on the frozen Danube, director Kovács joins a wider tradition in Hungarian cinema, which consistently represents the victims of any given dictatorial power system with images of absence. Kovács uses many other similar motifs in the film, with which he indicated that the Novi Sad massacre was a part of the Hungarian Holocaust. Through the study of the final shooting draft we can detect that most of these motifs were ready before the shooting, but the image of the frozen Danube, for example, only came in the editing process.

The audience: This part of the book contains a sociological study by Béla Taródi-Nagy. The study represents and analyzes the results of test-screenings of *Cold Days*. As in the case of the screenplay, the study also has two versions: one in the archive of the *Hungarian National Film Institute*, the other published in the book. The original version in the archive is marked as an encrypted document, which raises ethical questions about its publication. All the same, it seems that the aim of the test-screenings was not of a censorial nature: in the given era, *Cold Days* was a rather progressive film in its poetics and politics, and the research tried to discover what kind of discourse could emerge following its publication.

The authors: There are two essays in this chapter, one from Tibor Cseres, and the other from András Kovács. Cseres mainly writes about two subjects: reflecting on the process of adapting his novel into film, and on the social impact of *Cold Days*. Cseres describes himself as a progressive communist writer, who is more interested in the discoursive impact of his book than in its aesthetics. He is not satisfied with the discourse, and for this he blames the power-holders of the press. Kovács' text is a radical, new leftist critical analysis of the Kádár-regime. He reframes his film in a wider political context, and draws many analogies between the incidences represented in the film and phenomena in the present of his text (1967). He writes about self-censorship, about the revolution of 1956, about the bad impact of state-funded socialist youth movements (KISZ), and about patriarchal hierarchy still being present in the Hungarian society. Following Kovács' ideas, my case study ends with a feminist analysis of *Cold Days*, which has not yet been emphasized in the discourse about the film.

The Canonisation of Miklós Jancsó
(*From the Idea to the Film:* Miklós Jancsó, Gyula Hernádi:
The Round-Up [*Szegénylegények*]*, 1968.)

The case study follows the structure of the book *From the Idea to the Film* published about Miklós Jancsó's *The Round-Up* (*Szegénylegények*, 1966.) in order to discuss the genealogy of its screenplay, and the canonisation of Jancsó as an international author in the Kádár-era and following the political transition in Hungary (1989). My aim is to deconstruct two legends: 1. Gyula Hernádi and Miklós Jancsó worked with an improvisational method, without a shooting script. 2. *The Round-Up* is a parabolic re-enactment of the revolution of 1956.

Finding the Theme: The first chapter of the book tries to frame *The Round-Up* as a literary adaptation on the one hand, and as a historical drama on the other. In order to prove this thesis, a short story by Faustin Palotás (*A másli*) is published, the plot of which shows much similarity with that of the film. Furthermore, the chapter includes many historical source texts from the Ráday-era in which the film takes place. The conscious anachronisms of the film are never mentioned,

the entire text aims to deny them.

The "literary" screenplay: The published version of the screenplay follows the two column format, just as the version preserved in the archive of the *Hungarian National Film Institute*, yet the two texts have many differences. There are numerous side notes and sentences crossed out with pencil in the original shooting draft. The omitted sentences are all so-called "technical" details. These details make it clear that already in the writing process Jancsó and Hernádi planned with high precision the famous style of *The Round-Up*, which is based on long takes and interior cuts. This style, of course, cannot be isolated from the meanings of the film, thus in the case of this screenplay the distinction of "technical" and "literary" screenplay makes no sense. It is presumable that the original shooting draft was used in the editing process of the book, since all the sentences crossed out from the original shooting draft are missing from the published text. The side notes in the shooting draft are either notes on the sound effects of the film, or dialogues that are missing from the original text but present in the finished film. The use of sound in *The Round-Up* is an important element in the film, with which Jancsó also joins the tradition already mentioned in the context

o f *Cold Days*, he uses images and sounds of absence to represent the victims of a dictatorship. Gyula Hernádi's name is missing from the cover of the original shooting draft, but he is mentioned as a screenwriter in the published text. Hernádi was forbidden from publishing during the writing process of the film, but after its international success, he could work publicly again. There are two essays published in the book by István Nemeskürty and Zsolt Kézdi-Kovács, in which both authors discuss several screenplay texts by Jancsó and Hernádi that were not made into films. These essays can be regarded as early examples of screenplay research.

Hungarian and International criticism: This chapter of the book is a selection from Hungarian and International reviews that appeared at the premiere of the film. By examining the reviews not published in the book, it becomes clear that the interpretation of the film as a parabolic re-enactment of the revolution of 1956 was already present at the time of the premiere. State-funded newspapers published two interviews with Jancsó in which the director himself eliminated this interpretation. The selected reviews published in the book reinforce this position. This shows how a screenplay can be instrumentalized in order to ideologically canonize the film

made of it. In contrast, the discourse about the film after 1989 almost solely reads *The Round-Up* as the re-enactment of '56. My case study ends with an analysis of the film, in which I distance my reading of the film from both previous discourses. I concentrate on the power mechanisms represented in the film, which widens the political context of *The Round-Up* both in global and local aspects.

Three leftist versions of Electra
(László Gyurkó, Gyula Hernádi, Miklós Jancsó: *Electra, My Love* [*Szerelmem, Elektra*, 1974.])

The case study of *Electra, My Love* (*Szerelmem, Elektra*, 1974.) serves as a counterpoint in my dissertation in many respects. Here I analyze a screenplay that was not published, but made into a film, whilst all other screenplays in the dissertation were either published, but not produced, or were published and produced as well. The film is an adaptation of László Gyurkó's stage play of the same title, thus this case study is also an opportunity to examine the differences between stage play and screenplay form. *Electra, My Love* is considered

to be the last piece of Jancsó's creative era that started with *The Round-Up*. This can also be demonstrated in the text of the screenplay of *My Love, Electra*, the text being far more sketchy and functional than that of *The Round-Up*. When Hernádi and Jancsó wrote *My Love, Electra*, they were considered internationally known authors. They had nothing to prove with the screenplay for the national production company of the Hungarian state. There are also many differences between the screenplay and the final film.

I use close reading method to analyze Gyurkó's stage play, the screenplay by Gyurkó and Herándi and finally Jancsó's film. The three versions (stage play, screenplay, film) of *My Love, Electra* can be positioned on a spectrum: from the stage play to the film, the versions use the myth of Electra more and more abstractly in order to outline the leftist interpretation of the original story and to express criticism against the Hungarian socialist regime. The most important differences between the three are:

1. Clytemnestra in the stage play is an opportunist leader on the side of Agamemnon, and her death is left to interpretation (she either commits suicide, or she is murdered by Electra and Orestes). In the screenplay she is murdered by

Electra and Orestes on screen. Clytemnestra is absent from the film, which amplifies the film's critical approach towards patriarchy.

2. In the stage play, Electra and Orestes do not recognize each other (which is considered to be an obligatory scene in accordance with ancient Greek dramatics), and thus fall in love with each other. The same happens in the screenplay, until Orestes kills Agamemnon: at this point Electra recognizes his brother because he holds their father's dagger. The tragic love story is resolved by the murder of Electra by Orestes. The film creates a radically new narrative. First, Electra kills Orestes in the belief that he is a stranger, then Orestes rises from the dead, which proves that he is Orestes, who came to set the people free. Later, Electra and Orestes commit suicide, because they want to prevent themselves from becoming dictators like Agamemnon. Then they raise again from the dead to travel across the globe and to set every country of the world free.

3. In every Hungarian rework of the myth of Electra there is a so-called "celebration of the truth" scene, which takes place on the anniversary of Agamemnon's change of the regime. In the stage play this serves as a narrative climax:

Agamemnon is murdered when he celebrates. The screenplay uses the opportunity of the celebration to demonstrate Agamemnon's dominion with the stylistic elements of Jancsó's well-known ornamental style. The film pushes this to the point where the "celebration of the truth" becomes the staging of Bakhtin's famous Carnival-concept.

The self-reflective, stylistic and abstract gestures ranging from the stage play to the film are used by the three authors a.) to criticize both the Rákosi- and Kádár-regime, b.) to generally criticize all power-systems, c.) to stage the myth of Electra as the communist concept of permanent revolution, and d.) to express their own humanist, new-leftist ideas.

In the case of this screenplay, its textual autonomy appears in its narrative differences from both the stage-play and the film, not in its unique filmic writing style.

Erzsébet Galgóczi – screenwriting as critical realism
(*Spider Web* [*Pókháló*, 1972.], *The Common Sin* [*A közös bűn*, 1976.])

Critical realism is an essential feature in Erzsébet Galgóczi's body of work. Most of her texts examine the socialist society of Hungary after the revolution of 1956. The main characteristics of her writing style are conciseness and concreteness, and her sentences are undecorated. Galgóczi herself claimed that her years as a screenwriting student at the *Hungarian College of Theater and Film Arts* (*Színház- és Filmművészeti Főiskola*) had a great impact on her writing method. Most of her critics found her way of writing problematic. To clarify the connection between her prose and screenplays, my paper analyses two texts, both of which were published as prose fiction and then adapted to film.

Spider Web: The text has a unique history of origin. Director Félix Máriássy requested a screenplay from Galgóczi, who provided a first draft (this version cannot be found in the archive of the *Hungarian National Film Institute*), but Máriássy did not make the film. Galgóczi then reworked the text and published it as prose fiction. Later, this version was

adapted to film by director Imre Mihályfi. The narrative in both versions is about Niklai, the leader of an agricultural co-operative, a faithful socialist, who becomes a victim of political corruption. In the published text, Niklai's character is more vulnerable due to sapects of his private life affairs, such as having a lover while married, and he loses both women by the end of the story. In the film, he is not married; all he does is work, and no matter how hard he fights the politicians to protect the products of the co-operative, in the end corruption causes damage to his community as well. Reviews of the published text recognized its cinematic qualities (recurring scenes, present tense narration, imagery, dry style), yet marked it as non-literary.

The Common Sin: Galgóczi's novel was inspired by an unsolved murder case, about which she heard while she was working as a newspaper reporter. She called her work a *fake crime story.* During the revolution of 1956, two young men try to emigrate to Austria. In the night, they ask for shelter at a farm near the border, but by the morning one of them disappears, and the other is found dead. The owner of the family farm, the elder Sokorai, decides that the corpse has to be thrown in the Danube. The novel uses multiple plot structure to

demonstrate the incompetence of the local police, while the young peasant, Imre Sokorai (son of the elder) struggles with his guilt. The story-line of the investigation is based on several witness interrogations, presented in spoken-word style dialogues and monologues with almost no narration. The story-line of Imre Sokorai is written in a unique prose style in which Galgóczi creates tropes from the material characteristics of peasant life. Galgóczi clearly criticizes the Rákosi-era with a very realist style on the one hand, and with a highly poetic one on the other. Imre Mihályfi's film adaptation loses this critical approach. The screenplay was written by Galgóczi herself. There are two similar versions of the text, one in the archive of the *Hungarian National Film Institute*, the other published in the book *From the Idea to the Film*. The two versions differ only in their scene numberings. The investigation story-line is absent from the screenplay, but the conflict between the elder and younger Sokorai is amplified to the point where the screenplay becomes a family drama about a young peasant who cannot escape from his authoritarian father. Mihályfi's adaptation adds a melodramatic layer to this with his use of music, which is not indicated in the screenplay by Galgóczi.

All texts mentioned above have strong cinematic

qualities in their style and narrative. Most reviews at the time of publication celebrated Galgóczi's sense for dramatic plot structure: critics considered *Spider Web* a film and not literature, and they also urged film adaptation in the case of *The Common Sin*. In contrast, my standpoint is that Galgóczi's body of work should be reframed as one that incorporates screenwriting methods into literature.

The films of János Pilinszky – screenwriting as film-language performativity
(*Requiem* [*Rekviem*], *Day by Day* [*Nap mint nap*], *Museum* [*Múzeum*])

János Pilinszky wrote three film texts: *Requiem* (*Rekviem*, a screenplay), *Day by Day* (*Nap mint nap*, a film synopsis), and *Museum* (*Múzeum*, a treatment), but none of them were produced. These texts treat screenwriting as film-language performativity – if language has creative power (as God's words created our world in the Bible), then a screenplay can create a film with its text. There are several texts in Pilinszky's body of work in which he embraces this kind of language

theory. He often expressed his belief that a written word on a paper is not a sign that signifies something, but that writing is a performative act.

Performativity is not solely a religious and linguistic concept. It is an age-old question of film theory whether photographs and moving images are indexical or iconographic. They can be described as indexes, since light leaves a trace (index) on the sensitive material of film; yet photographs can be described as icons, since there is an ontological relationship between the model and the image of the model, just as the religious concept of iconography is that the images do not represent saints, but in fact bring them alive.

Pilinszky's *Requiem* (a Holocaust screenplay) stages all the concepts mentioned above. The text has many self-reflective elements, and so it creates an imagery that always reminds the reader/viewer that what is seen is in fact creation, and not representation. The specifics of the Holocaust are shown with alienating, indexical or documentary images. The marching column cannot be seen for a very long period, it can only be heard; the work in the concentration camp is only shown with documentary images by the SS, but not through moving images. At night in a flat, we see artificial light in

action as it creates (performs) sight in the dark. There are two moments in the screenplay when a still photograph suddenly starts to move, which synthesizes the indexical and iconographic characteristics of moving images, since it creates an illusion that the person on the photograph becomes alive. In the descriptive passages, Pilinszky uses his well-known poetic language, bringing forward the cinematic qualities of texts in rhythm and visuality. Performativity is also present in the dialogues and monologues of the characters. *Requiem* positions spoken-word as a way of communication that has creative powers, as if speech could make the past present.

All the three film texts by Pilinszky can be positioned in his complete body of work. Several intertextual connections can be shown with his poetry, prose, theoretical and critical writings, interviews and even with his correspondence. My standpoint is that his cinematic texts are important experiments within his body of work; his nominal writing style paired with narrative structures unite poetry, imagery and narration, which are the core of narrative film.

FAREWELL

Summary

With the help of international theoretical concepts and through case studies of Hungarian screenplays, my dissertation proves that the screenplay is an intermediary literary form of text. The study of literary theory shows that any text can be regarded as literature. The main medium of film theory is also text, thus most of its concepts can be used as analytical bases to study the textual plan of a film.

My case studies were selected according to the following categories: 1. A co-operative (writer-director) screenplay that was not produced (Miklós Mészöly). 2. An adapted screenplay that was produced and later published (*Cold Days*). 3. The contrast between a produced and published, and a produced but unpublished screenplay by the same authors (Jancsó-Hernádi: *The Round-Up*, *Electra, My Love*). 4. Screenplays that were first published as texts and later produced as films (Erzsébet Galgóczi). 5. Screenplays written without the desire to produce them (János Pilinszky).

During my research, I had to acknowledge that the universe of Hungarian screenplays is enormous. The

digitization of the archive at the *Hungarian National Film Institute* would make it possible to launch a group research project about the history of Hungarian screenwriting. This work could shed light on many unknown film projects (like the one by Huszárik-Mészöly in my first case study).

The methods used in my dissertation are relevant to both theoretical and practical approaches (widening the historical knowledge of Hungarian cinema, and the study of writing traditions, reading screenplays as texts of joy, respectively). In my point of view, it is essential for the dissemination of these ideas to engage in an educational practice in addition to research work. During the last year of my doctoral research, the oldest theater and film university (the *University of Theater and Film Arts*, Budapest), where I wrote my dissertation, was privatized by the Hungarian government. Changes in the regulations and leadership of the university after the privatization limited the autonomy of faculty members to a degree which makes it impossible for me to continue my teaching work at the institution where I initiated my research, mainly with the hope that one day I could work as an educator.

BARNABÁS SZÖLLŐSI

Curriculum Vitae

Personal information

Date and place of birth: 16th March, 1991. Budapest

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Education

2017-   *University of Theater and Film Art*, Budapest,

Doctoral School, PhD: *The Language of the Screenplay*

2011-2016   *University of Theater and Film Art*, Budapest,

Master of Arts in Film Script Editing (http://www.szfe.hu/)

Language Skills

English, C2 combined

French, B2 combined

Work Experience

2022   *Hit Space* (https://www.hitspace.hu)

	audio technical and synthesizer shop: marketing manager, webshop maintainer
2021	Fulbright Scholarship, Visiting Student Researcher at Temple University, Philadelphia (July-December)
	Music score for Fruzsina Tóth's *Legjobb éveink* (*Our Best Years*) documentary film.
2020	Editor of the special *Film Writing* issue of *Új Apertúra* academic journal: (https://www.apertura.hu/2020/tel/2020-tel-xv-evfolyam-2-szam/)
2019	Conference speech: *The questions of the Hungarian Screenwriting History* at the *Interwebs of film theory*, the annual conference of the *Hungarian Society of Film Theory.*
	Conference speech: *Text and Film in Jean-Marie Straub and Daniéle Huillet's* Dalla nube alla resistenza (1979) at *The*

	Literary Image & The Screen international conference in Genova. Conference speech: *On the literary Autonomy of Screenwriting* – ELTE EMV conference on aesthetics
2018	EFOP research program: *Narratology and Creative Writing* for High School Students – educational method research founded by the EU
2017	Script consultant for *Blossom Valley*, a film by László Csuja
	Script editor at *Hungarian RTL Television*
	Script and narration writing for *Four Days*, a documentary by Tamás Babos
2016 -	Teacher and teaching assistant at the *University of Theater and Film Art*
2016	English advertisement short stories for Lóránt Tamás jeweler's custom-made watches

(http://integralwatch.com/tamaslorant/references-m/)

Text and Film, Master of Arts thesis

2015	Scriptwriter: *The Price of The Cheesecake*, thesis script for Mátyás Szabó
2014	Libretto for Zsófia Tallér's opera: *Leander and Lenszirom* (based on the fairy tail by Andor Szilágyi) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uyP5Ee4hAlo
	Scriptwriter: *Border (Határ)*, a short film by Mátyás Szabó (presented at the *Karlovy Vary International Film Festival* in the *Future Frames* section) https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4713940/?ref_=nm_knf_t1
2013	Conference speech: *György Petri 70*
	Libretto for Szabolcs Mátyássy's one-act opera: *The Nightingale and the Rose*

(based on the fairy tale by Oscar Wilde)

2012	Conference speech: *The Péter Hajnóczy Workshop,* Szeged
	Published studies, articles, translations and prose writings at *Litera.hu, Prae.hu, Magyar Narancs, Ex Symposion, Műút, Apokrif, Kalligram*
2012 -	Script Translations for Fraktál Film Inc. (Bence Fliegauf)

Courses, Lectures and Workshops

<u>Courses, Lectures and Seminars</u> at *University of Theater and Film Art*, Budapest

Script and Film Analysis

Dramaturgy

Modern Film History

Thesis Writing Seminar – theoretical writing techniques

Hungarian Cinema during the Soviet Regime (in English for Erasmus students)

Creative Writing (both in Hungarian and in

English for Erasmus students)

Adult Animation Series – a brief history (*The Simpsons*, *South Park*, *Rick and Morty*, *BoJack Horseman*, *F is For Family*)

Narrativity in Sound Design

Low Budget Storytelling for Student Producers

The Dialogue Techniques of *The Wire*

The Hidden Philosophy of *Rick and Morty*

Narrative Theories in Voice-Over Films

Narrative Questions in Non-Narrative Films

Workshops

Narrative Games – *UbikEklektik* Festival, 2018.

Selected Publications

Theoretical works, essays, articles:

A filmírás mint kritikai realizmus – Galgóczi Erzsébet filmírásai (Filmwriting as critical realism – the screenplays by Erzsébet Galgóczi). Műhely 2021/5–6, 54–60.

Pilinszky filmjei – a forgatókönyv mint filmnyelvi performativitás. (The films of János Pilinszky – filmwriting as linguistic performativity) Litera.hu, 2021, URL:

https://litera.hu/irodalom/publicisztika/szollosi-barnabas-pilinszky-filmjei-ma-100-eve-szuletett-pilinszky-janos.html

The visible Screenplay in BoJack Horseman. Image&Narrative, Varia issue 2021. http://www.imageandnarrative.be/index.php/imagenarrative/article/view/2601

A filmíró Mészöly Miklós (Miklós Mészöly, the screenwriter). Literatura, 2020.

Három baloldali Elektra (Three leftist Electra's – on Miklós Jancsó's My love, Electra). Ókor, 2020.

A felnőtt mese káráról (*On the Harm of the Adult Fairy Tale – a leftist look at Game of Thrones*), 2019. April https://merce.hu/2019/04/20/a-felnott-mese-kararol/

A kreativitás lehetőségei az oktatásban (The Possibilities of Creativity in Public education), Taní-tani online, 2019. March: http://www.tani-tani.info/a_kreativitas_lehetosegei_az_oktatasban

Szöveg és film (Text and Film), Budapest, 2016 (MA dissertation)

Fiction:

Lehetőség (elbeszélés) (*Chance*, short story) , Kalligram 2017. June

Hazaút (novella) (*The Way Home*, short story), ExSympozion 2016. December

Egy tábor maradandósága (elbeszélő esszé) (*The Permanence of a Camp*, narrative   essay), Kalligram 2015. October

Rendezetlen sorok – nyílt levél (kispróza) (*Unorganized Notes – an open letter*),   Műút 2014. April

A negyedik (kispróza) (*The Fourth*), Apokrif 2013. October

Published translations:

Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio: Nem múlik az idő (Le temps ne passe pas – *Time does not Pass*), ExSymposion 2013. February (from French to Hungarian)