Lukács and the Art of Film: On a Chapter of his *The Specificity of the Aesthetic*[1]

Abstract: Lukács's conception of film is analyzed here exclusively on basis of the chapter of "*The Specificity of the Aesthetic*," in which the philosopher endeavored to disentangle the aesthetic problems raised by cinematic art. Does film constitute an artistic form at all, and if it does, in which respect is it an art form? Lukács looked at the question in the framework in which Béla Balázs and Siegfried Kracauer examined it. He attempted to elaborate a proper film theory relying on the general categories of his *Aesthetic* like homogenous medium, double reflection, unity of atmosphere, undefined objectivity, and created immediacy. The fertility of these concepts is illustrated with numerous examples.

Keywords: created immediacy; double reflection; homogenous medium; undefined objectivity; unity of atmosphere

Many argue that a shortcoming of Georg Lukács's aesthetics derives from the lack of a proper analysis of film as an aesthetic phenomenon. Indeed, the problems of cinematic art pose many difficult questions and are the subject of ongoing discussions. Does film constitute an artistic form at all, and if it does, in which respect is it an art form?

Lukács himself did not discuss film art in detail. Apart from some sporadic remarks, brief essays and interviews, his theoretical and comprehensive discussion of the problem of film is limited to *The Specificity of the Aesthetic,* although it is worthy of note that in a youthful article (as early as in 1911!) he had already raised the question concerning a possible aesthetic approach to film (Lukács 1911).[2]

This chapter is an attempt to confirm that Lukács in *The Specificity of the Aesthetic* has indeed offered a proper starting point for the analysis of basic problems of film.[3] A further attempt will also be made to support the thesis that Lukács's aesthetic categories and the whole of his aesthetic theory altogether offer a proper theoretical framework for formulating and discussing basic problems of cinematic art.

As is well known, Lukács introduced the concept of "homogeneous medium" and its relation to everyday life when setting film art within the general framework of forms of consciousness. The concept of a homogenous medium serves as touchstone for distinguishing and characterizing various art forms. These two criteria form an organic unit: art is to be distinguished from everyday life whereby it develops a specific form of human experience within a homogenous medium (such as vision, audition, verbal language, etc.) as opposed to the heterogeneity of everyday life. Hence, the very problem here for Lukács (or the specific problem of the art of film in Lukács's approach) is to be found in the fact that these criteria cannot be applied to film art: film has not had a homogenous medium; cinematic art does not arise from the quotidian; on the contrary, it has just returned to everyday life.

How can we solve this contradiction? On which ground can we (or Lukács himself) consider film an artistic form of expression when basic categories of aesthetics cannot be introduced into the spheres of film?

Lukács himself, as a result of the dilemma discussed above, placed film into "marginal questions of aesthetic mimesis," discussing cinematic art only after music, architecture, applied arts, and horticulture. And only "problems of pleasureableness" follow film in his ranking. However, the sequence within his book reflects a structural arrangement and not some sort of evaluation. *The Specificity of the Aesthetic* is, of course, an unfinished work. The existing first half of this text defined art, distinguished it from everyday life and other forms of expression (i.e., science, religion), and developed a general theoretical framework for artistic mimesis (drawing its examples

mainly from the fields of literature and fine arts). Art forms based on *double reflection*, and among them not only film but also music and architecture, constitute marginal cases only in that respect as instances of *mimesis*.

How then, does Lukács analyze double reflection of film art? Not the aesthetic but merely the primary technological form of film is only a visual reflection of reality. First an image is formed reflecting reality in its authentic visible form and subsequently starts another process, the doubling of mimesis, its extension into aesthetic quality and thereby the homogenous medium, artistic form of film is created. To summerize Lukács's concept: authenticity is derived from the photographic base of film. Through a process of double reflection, film, while preserving authenticity of primary reflection, photography, forms reality in its unique way. It creates its own world. Film, due to its moving picture medium and strictly defined manifest positive character, on the one hand, does not abandon everyday life, the sphere of immediacy and objects; on the other hand, film art can transcend that immediacy of everyday life by mediating *unity of atmosphere (Stimmung)* in a quasi-unnoticed way through a second reflection; and can develop a second, created "immediacy," artistic composition, placing elements of the reflected factual life into new dimensions. Important aesthetic problems derive from this film-specific character of double reflection (namely, photographic authenticity constitutes a first reflection). Such a problem is, first of all, the tendency to diminish *undefined* objectivity, without doing away with it (because *defined* objectivity may be excessive: little is left to the imagination of an open-minded recipient, and too little remains unsaid and invisible). A second problem is the closeness to everyday life. Finally, a third one is a striving to minimize spiritual peaks.

The first reflection in Lukács's concept is considered desantropomorphic, a mechanically photographed reality. This is the only point in his discussion which may obviously be refused today. Even a photographer is able to select the fragments of reality appearing in front of his/her camera by choosing direction, exposure, etc. Nor does a documentary filmmaker present "life itself as it is," a depiction of reality. Stills and scenes of feature films, on the other hand, are arranged just for the camera. A filmmaker has a specific creative vision and decides what the camera will focus on; a player consciously develops his/her role; both *details* and the *whole feature film* are consciously formed. (We should also note that Lukács is not the only film theorist to regard film as mediated reality. For instance, Siegfried Kracauer considers the essence of film to be its direct revelation of physical reality. (Kracauer 1997).)

However, the basic feature of Lukács's concept is not a disanthropomorphic character of primary reflection, but rather the element of this *double reflection* itself whereby this process has essentially determined specific characteristics and potentials of film art. Film editing, montage, is thus not only a technical necessity. *Takes* by themselves are determined by a creative preconception, an approach whose creative process will then be refined via editing (montage). Through film editing filmmakers further select from among scenes directed by them and acted by the players; they sometimes counter visual elements by introducing musical scores, sound effects, or by re-interpreting some parts. A complex *artistic composition* is formed in this way. Through the artistic experience of recipients that double character of creative process is re-integrated, for, ~~as~~ Lukács emphasizes citing Walter Benjamin's seminal essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Benjamin, 1936), the duality of filming and editing is always there.

Another basic feature of Lukács's concept discussed is that film is too *close to life*. The substance of film, audiovisual moving pictures, is a multifold substance which is not homogeneous and cannot be reduced from a sensual point of view; it reproduces visible and auditory forms of reality and is too near to everyday perception, heterogeneity of reality. In view of Lukács's concept each art form has its own homogeneous substance; fine art is a clear case of visibility, music is audibility itself, and literature has language as its homogeneous medium. They *recall* other spheres of perception in an indirect way; nevertheless they all create a level of condensation and concentration that exceeds everyday perception: *an intense totality*. Modes of creating space and time differ in various art forms (fine arts, being spatial, refer to actual time, while music, being temporal, refers to an actual or quasi-space), and the extent of undefined objectivity differs from art form to art form. When external factors are defined (fine arts), the internal ones will be undefined, unsaid; when, on the other hand, inner life of humankind is reflected (in music), then the external factors will be undefined. If nothing remains unsaid or undefined, that is, possessing an evocative power, the capacity for artistic impact has been terminated. This is why the very character of film, in that it is close to our everyday perception, poses an important aesthetic problem: film possesses the elements of visibility, audibility, verbal language, space and time, actual objects of everyday life and various manifestations of humankind's inner life—nevertheless, none of them appears in its totality. But some sort of abstraction necessary to artistic qualities is given: objects and people are presented not in their physical reality but in terms of reproductions, images. However, the photographic medium is to such an extent life-like, suggestive, as to create an illusion of identification. During the actual process of perception, the developing of distance on the part of

the recipient is quite difficult, and can be reached only after seeing a film. Strengthening this process is a rather free wandering through time and the process whereby space is formed in front of our eyes—and even individually for each spectator: we approach or leave an object; we see it through the camera; distance and perspective are changing. As Béla Balázs puts it: our vision is directed by the filmmaker, with the result of not an actual public impact but rather a specific immediacy. Moving pictures themselves constitute abstraction and not immediate representation. It is still hard to create intensity, condensation, definite objectivity; to recall something, to refer to something beyond what can be seen directly on the screen or monitor, to create new systems of relation of phenomenon and substance; to create artistic *particularity* in film: an art so close to the ordinary and immediate, but so heterogeneous in its substance.

Lukács did not state that art cannot be created in film; rather, he emphasized how scarce such a case is and mainly that *atmosphere* awas a mediating substance, the basic atmosphere of *a whole film*, the *created immediacy* developed through the second reflection hides artistic potential. In this he relied on Balázs, as Balázs's thoughts on the role of objects and acting in film were rather similar to his own. Moreover, he too thought of film as the folk art of the 20th century.

Béla Balázs was one of Lukács's spiritual companions from his youth; he later achieved a reputation as a film critic, film theoretician and screenwriter in Vienna and Berlin. In a major early work on film theory, *Visible Man*, published in 1924 (*Der sichtbare Mensch,* see Balázs, 2001), Balázs asserted that atmosphere was the most important aesthetic feature of film. Lukács, too, considered this atmosphere to be something of central importance in film art; however, he never analyzed it in detail. We consider this idea the most inspiring one of the chapter on film in his *The Specificity of the Aesthetic.*

How does Lukács interpret this category?

Everything depends on the atmospheric value, most of which is manifested visually but with some auditory elements. If, as a result of the work of the director and cameraman, atmospheric unity is achieved in aesthetical and historically significant films, then it will determine the cinematic techniques (tone, tempo and rhythm), the acting style, and the montage. And this unified atmosphere will guide the viewer's experience. This unifying principle can be—in Russian montage films, for instance—the mode of representing objects, the *pars pro toto* rule (the montage of the close-up of boots and of the long-shut of soldiers in the staircase scene of Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin)*,

the portrayal of the crowd and the popular life in Italian neo-realism (in de Sica's *Bicycle Thieves)* and the suggestive presence of actors on the screen—determined by their physical features but also embodying a social type (the Garbo or Asta Nielsen phenomenon).

Thus, in Lukács's view, one of the most important actors was Chaplin, who created an emotional world closely resembling Kafka's and evoking a sense of horror and desperation both from within and—inseparably and concurrently—from without. The result was a kind of humor of world history, triumphing over terror and dismay and with a depth that enabled the esoteric to be transformed—in a popular fashion—into something exoterically effective.

This is a very original observation by Lukács. In film, the inner life remains undefined and is manifested as an external feature. Film not only displays and brings to life the external objective world; it also renders manifest the subjective aspects, those which are awakened in the actors by the outer world. In this way, it can represent the inner human world through the external material world.

The opportunities for depicting the inner world in film art are manifold and flexible. For instance, film can simultaneously demonstrate the dreamlike nature of a scene and the spiritual reality of the dream. But film can also —according to Lukács—give a feeling of reality and evidentiality to the most discursive fiction and fantasy. Since it can make anything believable and endow any object with reality, film has unlimited potential as a tool for portraying fiction. It can lead one towards everyday life and away from everyday life. And here too, the emotional range runs from a light and playful atmosphere to breathtakingly shocking horror. The boundary between closeness to life and authenticity on the one hand and stylization on the other is a relative one: the film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (by Robert Wiene) seems today to offer a distorted, misrepresented and stylized expressionistic pictorial world, but contemporaries considered it realistic. Here we are talking of the dreamlike phenomenon that even today we regard as a special feature of film, despite the closeness to life rooted in the photographer's milieu. Or, indeed, because of this closeness: the inner pictures of our consciousness, even our nightmares, appear on the film screen as something real. The inner world is mediated by the external and specific film picture.

In addition to the above thoughts (on the humor of world history and on dreams given a reality), Lukács's ideas on sound are also worth examining. These too are linked with humor.

Lukács wrote of the unity of atmosphere that is manifested by the visual but has some auditory elements. He argued that in sound movies the visual composition should be retained as the benchmark, even if a particular scene is primarily auditory. An excellent example of this is a scene from Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* where the musical dilettantism of the millionaire's wife is revealed, whose husband wishes to make her fashionable as a great singer. Here the humor stems not from the singer's botched job but rather from the look of despair on her teacher's face during the lessons, rehearsals and performance. If—says Lukács—we think in contrast of Beckmesser's purely musical comedy in Wagner's opera *The Master-Singers of Nuremberg*, then this unique feature of the film becomes evident to us.

While speech is the focus on stage, this is not so in film. Alongside noise and music, sound films include the spoken word, monologues, and dialogues—which in themselves represent just one of several elements of equal status, as determined by the visual and auditory atmosphere. The pure fact of a verbal utterance can be—by virtue of the atmosphere it creates—just as important as its content. By way of illustration, Lukács cites the great pacifist-humanist speech given by Charlie Chaplin at the conclusion of *The Great Dictator*. The sense of his words could be summed up more briefly, but the timing and the voice are determined by the underlying atmosphere of the whole film. This, Lukács stresses, is the human sounding of the nightmare we experienced in the war and in Hitlerism. In other words, the important thing in a film is not always *what* is said but *how* it is said, as well as the underlying emotional charge. Evidently, Lukács was touching upon one of the most essential principles of sound film dramaturgy.

Lukács expressed a similar view on the essence of the color film and the role played by colors in the atmospheric unity. He stressed that the decisive factor is whether the colors express the mood of the given moment, prepare the viewer for what is to follow, contribute to the atmospheric unity of the film as a whole, and merge in their integral unity with the other visual, auditory and content elements of the film. Here he cited one of the early color film masterpieces, *Henry V*, in which Laurence Olivier successfully assimilated a pictorial effect reminiscent of [the coloring of] Flemish painting into the late medieval atmosphere.

To what extent, though, is Lukács's category of atmospheric unity applicable to modern film? Let us illustrate the usefulness of this category through some examples taken from the history of film after Lukács.

Obviously the level of abstraction and conventionalized quality shown by theater is beyond question in film art when, for instance, a "forest" is indicated or just painted as scenery. A forest—that is the actual trees themselves —must be show non the screen if images of a forest are to be developed in the viewer's mind. However, we consider this film art only when these trees and this forest represent and refer to something more than trees and forest themselves (such as the forest in Andrzej Wajda's *Birch Forest*, or Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood. (Macbeth)*). Artistic abstraction, the extended and multifold meaning of motion picture images, may be reached through elaborating details and also through the very atmosphere of the *film as an organic unit*. Everything shown on the screen is something realistic, perceived immediately and directly, in visible and audible form: even images of a dream or flashbacks from the past are realistic. Not even the most abstract location, such as the fantasy landscapes of Andrei Tarkovsky's *Solaris or Stalker*, or a presentation of the inner life (Ingmar Bergman's *Cries and Whispers*) can be completely separated from the immediate objectivity, the visible elements. Beyond special effects through manipulation of color, exposure, the elaboration of visual details, the film in question as a unit radiates something more upon landscapes photographed and consequently the viewer, the audience will discover: we are now within the landscapes of imagination and inner spirit. Film art may overcome some difficulties derived from its specific substance: a composition may be integrated from various details which in turn will attribute new dimensions and aspects to these details themselves, or counteract them (this modern concept of *montage*, this contrapuntal character of filmic structure exceeds the traditional concept of montage inherent in direct changing parallel or contrapuntal meaning of sequences). An atmospheric unity may be formed which can, in turn, ensure the communication of something further, something undefined beyond reproducing visible and audible forms, as directly observed, of reality, and suggest interrelationships and inferred meanings. Within this undefined objectivity and quality a creative tension can be developed, because film art ultimately nevertheless homogenizes by developing itself as a *homogenous medium*, by the sensual *atmosphere* of human meanings in the world of the objects presented. This unity of atmosphere ensures some sort of separation from the visible as seen directly on the screen; effects an elevation, the formation of some rather abstract spiritual (emotional, cognitive) meanings; overcomes the difficulties inherent in the substance itself; all of which brings about the birth of some artistic experience of authenticity which may exceed the direct immediacy of moving pictures discussed above, or as defined by André Bazin, its irrationalistic power of persuasion. Hence, we have presented the theoretical significance of *atmospheric unity*. What, then, is the actual meaning of this concept?

Through this atmospheric unity, film art may include some facts of life in its presented world which are not included in the world of other art forms (or included but not in that way and not so directly): namely, the world of objects, things and human gestures.

Film art presents the world of things not by themselves but rather as *constituents of a human world*. Objects may take human faces; nature becomes landscape through filmic representation; something left behind by someone (a piece of clothing, a burning cigarette) may refer to its owner, an empty room may refer to its tenant—as was indicated, for example, by Béla Balázs in his *Visible Man*. Beyond the well-known examples offered by Béla Balázs and Siegfried Kracauer (motion pictures may show breath of wind via trembling leaves, tears in the corner of an eye, quiver of a hand, etc.) I would like to refer also to Ingmar Bergman's *Persona* in which we hear the monologue of Alma (Bibi Andersson) while we see *only* Liv Ullmann's face, her gaze, her trembling lips; and her silence, which attributes some additional meaning to this sequence and to the monologue. The eternal potential of verisimilitude may well be utilized in film art. An immediate presentation of external manifestations of an age as they are photographed in film also has its fascinating features: the way in which this art form catches the face of an age, outlook of its people, their preferred objects and belongings, images of streets, characteristic interiors, fashions; and beyond the world of material things also the characteristic human gestures, mimicry, behaviour, the system of communication and meta-communication characteristic of a *specific age and national culture*. The visual humor of some pieces of the Czechoslovakian New Wave is peculiarly "Bohemian," such as objects not functioning or out of place; a hen preening on top of a car (Ivan Passer: *Intimate Light*); the excessive quantity of broken-down objects in the home of a hobbyist (Jiří Menzel: *Festival of February Fair-Maids*). Articulation, mimicry and gestures of players in the films of Akira Kurosawa or Kaneto Shindo are to such an extent "Japanese" that they sometimes surpass the power of understanding or insight of European audiences.

The abstract qualities of an age can be preserved by music; its characteristic conflicts by drama; its everyday life through verbal language, literature. Only motion pictures, however, can directly register—audibility and visibility, and not through symbolic transformation—other important elements of an age: daily life, settings, the world of objects, characteristic faces, gestures, motion, style and atmosphere. Great potential for film art may be found in this quality. The *quotidian* represented in such a suggestive artistic power may overcome itself; it indeed communicates *history* itself, registering, photographing history as it is shown by human faces: this is the imprint of history in everyday life. Not only great historical events, rare moments, reversals of fortune, heroic deeds, or tragic

downfalls constitute the history of mankind, but also the everyday life of people, their faces, their gestures, their material possessions. Film is capable of presenting this *everyday face* of history: people living in history and history in people.

Atmosphere—in the hands of able authors—may turn photographed images into artworks, building an organic own world on those images. The more a film is separated from its original realism, the more its chance of attaining aesthetic authenticity. Miklós Jancsó's *The Round-Up*, or Jerzy Kawalerowicz's *Mater Johanna* have created an emphasized contrasts of black and white and a conventionalized world of the imaginary in this way. *Color* has its artistic impact when it does not imitate the actual colors of the outside world in a naturalistic way, but rather when a system of color characteristic of the auteur is developed, and thus becomes an organic part of an atmospheric unity. It can also be employed to develop additional artistic impact (for instance, the feast scenes in Sergei M. Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible* and the last minutes of Nikita Mikhalkov's *Five Evenings*). But it can also function as an all-encompassing determining factor: for example, the yellow smog, the industrial landscapes in Michelangelo Antonioni's *Red Desert*; or the basic red tonality in Ingmar Bergman's *Cries and Whispers*. Andrei Tarkovsky (*Andrei Rublev*) and Laurence Olivier (*Henry V*) have recalled the characteristic picturesque images of the ages presented. However, motion pictures demonstrating such atmospheric unity are not common. "Unity" for Lukács did not mean ~~an~~ exclusion of any changes w~~hi~~thin one film or more atmospheric elements in the same film; he only criticized a major break within the world or style within one film (and there is such a break in his view in Vittorio De Sica's *Miracle in Milan* when it turns from the real to the fantasy). Nowadays we experience such abrupt breaks when directors increase authenticity of their feature films by employing original pieces of documentary films, despite the fact that *factual* authenticity has nothing to do with aesthetic authenticity, created inner world of artworks. In our view Alan Pakula's *Sophie's Choice*, with its reconstructed war pictures featuring the participation of the main characters, has achieved a greater harmonic unity than the traditional documentary excerpts of Auschwitz featured in many other films.

Atmosphere of a film is constructed through various sequences, various elements of the same scene, and within the same film this atmosphere may turn into another one without any major break. Atmospheric unity constitutes a *dynamic* term. A basic tone of grotesque is composed by alternating tragic and comic elements, although we can also find moments which are tragic and comic *at the same time*. A grotesque picture may be of summarizing, a symbolic character (such as stamping the girl's bottom in Jiří Menzel's *Closely Watched Trains*; or

the broken-winged, strange run of the main character down the hillside in Nikita Mikhalkov's *Etudes for Autopiano*); however, a film cannot maintain such a high level of abstraction and generalization. Films that present an abstract or conventionalized world (such as science fiction, or grotesque or satiric films) usually require a higher level of unity in style and atmosphere that other films nearer to everyday life, the narrative ones of a simple story.

Beyond an object-world it is human gesture that may determine basic atmosphere of motion pictures; this is also a source of artistic potential. A gesture also constitutes a fact of life, which when developed properly and assimilated into the organic world of art may become a fact of aesthetic quality. General features of society and specific characteristics of individuals may be integrated into direct actions or into unique ways of reaction and may appear in an immediate experience—this is gesture in a larger sense. Cinematographic art has its greatest potential in this respect. The essence of personality and the basic problems of one's life may manifest themselves when one's gestures, verbal communication, meta-communication and actual actions show continuous contradictions; we observe this in the behaviour of the protagonists of Woody Allen and John Cassavetes; and we can experience their unique individuality and the social background of their conflicts through this very *divergency* in a way that could never be described through words. Another case is when the fate of a character is condensed into one single gesture when, for instance, Michel (Jean-Paul Belmondo) caresses his own lips with his thumb in Jean-Luc Godard's *A bout de souffle,* and this gesture is continuing in the final gesture of Patricia (Jean Seberg) at the end of the film. A similar example is Zbigniew Cybulski's pushing a glass of vodka on the counter in Andrzej Wajda's *Ashes and Diamonds,* or his moving with ease on a fast train, from one carriage onto the other, risking his life in Jerzy Kawalerowicz's *Night Train*. Obviously, when we separate a gesture characteristic of an actor, when we analyze the creative means of a player separately from our analysis of the object-world, we are simply succumbing to the constraints of analyzsing artistic works, following the boundaries and shortcomings of this kind of analysis. These elements cannot be separated from each other within the *artworks* themselves: we cannot separate features, inner life of a character/actor, like Zbigniew Cybulski, from his gestures, his dark eyeglasses; nor can we separate the high level of moral resistance of the old woman (Lili Darvas) in Károly Makk's *Love* from her bonnet, eyeglasses, interior of her room, citations from Goethe, and her German accent. It is the *atmosphere* in its entirety that allows us to experience them, in that moment, in their immediate unity—but at the same time, they are not too strictly defined.

Beyond this enhanced meaning of faces of things and human gestures, their atmospheric radiation and further development in montage modern film art has developed its potential to bring out something more than

immediately visible features. Skills repeated again and again, or the moving picture stopped (often at the end) can become of symbolic character, "elevating" levels of the film in question; such as the staring child in Nikita Mikhalkov's *Etudes for Autopiano*; or a trolly running nowhere (in Nikita Mikhalkov's *Prisoner of Love*). Repetition in Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* suggests various interpretations of the story told and of life itself: we can see the same events through the experiences of different people whereby the scenes are the same and only the interpretations, experiences differ. Through a lyric leading idea horses become of symbolic character in Zoltán Huszárik's *Elegy*. It is, in other cases, just a detailed, raw, prolonged elaboration of *one single picture* which emphasizes a metaphor; a picture more general in its artistic qualities than the one seen directly (Marco Ferreri: *La Grande Bouffe*). The *musical score* can also suggest something more general, some meaning not directly presented by moving pictures themselves: opera, for instance, as a substance in some Italian films (Federico Fellini's *And the Ship Sails On*; Bernardo Bertolucci's *Luna*). The musical score has a central role in Miklós Jancsó's film *Budapest*. Through the interrelated images of feasts and everyday life and music (Haydn, Bartók, Hungarian and Serbian folkmusic, popular songs by Joseph Kosma, choral works of Zoltán Kodály and a song of worker's movement) Miklós Jancsó has expressed the idea of national history and contemporary society, their meaning and the way in which they are the components of a national identity.

Film art presents the visible and audible world; however, it suggests, condenses, abstracts more than that visible part: it creates tension, it internalizes, presents something hard to define conceptually, something beyond words to be experienced through its atmosphere. This, in our view, makes motion picture a basic relative of *music* (while not refuting the presence of some elements of literature, drama, epic poetry and the fine arts). We refer not merely to external characteristics such as the musical accompaniment to silent films. *Music* is the very art which is sensual, emotional and at the same time abstract; it is capable of transmitting spiritual and psychological messages and yet it expresses not only subjective inner qualities but also the universal, through this inner quality.

Efforts to depict more than just the representation of the object-world could be observed as early as with the authors of *silent film*: they made an attempt to present human beings' inner world. The acting of the leading character in Carl Theodor Dreyer's *Jeanne d'Arc* conveys certain features which accompany, interpret and make understandable both the internal and external events, such as trial itself, the arguments and attempts to persuade her, and her inner conflicts. The significance of atmosphere and music can also be manifested in subtitles, which may

assume more than a purely informative function; calligraphic arrangement of lines (repeating, enhancing, increasing size of letters, etc.) have had their emotional impact and formed the rhythm of reception.

Dialogue in *sound film*, orally expressed ideas, and words, do not play as important a role as in drama, theater (where acting, scenery, spectacle music, etc. may indeed contribute to a complex impact; however, it is essentially the spoken text itself which constitutes the central expressions and impact). In film art, on the other hand, music, noise, sound track, and also their relation to the visual components (parallel, opposite, counterpoint) are at least as important as dialogue is. Content and meaning are composed only as a result of an *integration* of all of these elements and are not primarily a function of the dominant narrative or dialogue. Even if a dialogue or monologue has an increased contribution, the way in which the characters talk, their gestures, mimicry, intonation are at least as important as the pure content, information. Through gestures, meta-communication, the essence of personality and spirit are expressed in order to be directly experienced. It is not a conceptual meaning of speech which is a basic significance but rather the way in which it is integrated into the atmospheric unity of a film. Again, this feature makes film art a relative of music.

Dialogue may be subordinated, and in some exceptional cases may even be abandoned. In Kaneto Shindo's *The Island* and in Ettore Scola's *The Ball* no words are spoken. Music and meta-communication, gestures and motion can tell everything and anything: the struggle for survival in *The Island* and some decades of world history, beyond some minor private drama of characters, can be seen from an unconventional point of view.

Dialogue may assume a function quite different from its original one. In Ingmar Bergman's *The Silence* the leading characters are in a country whose language they do not understand. They can communicate with each other (although they cannot understand one another); however, they cannot speak with those outside people such as the waiter, or the lover. ("How nice that you don't understand me." Anna says to her lover.) Dialogue hides ideas rather than expresses them. The very title, *The Silence*, also refers to this fact and not only to the silence of God. The strange, obscure language has a peculiar dramaturgic function in reference to Esther's profession as interpreter and her desperate attempts to discover the meanings of some of the words in that strange language.

Dialogue has a (non-cognitive) function differing from its original one and this has become a basic factor in this film. This movie appears throughout the whole film; the presence or absence of speech has its dominant position (and not ideas to be expressed through speaking). Some sort of conspiracy of silence and the termination of

communication are also a starting point in Ingmar Bergman's *Persona*, including that of the motion picture and conflicts of the two leading actresses. A small child is taught to speak again in Andrei Tarkovsky's *The Mirror*, taking up a terminated dialogue in language again, just as he—as an adult—starts his self-analysis at the *very beginning* of the film.

Whereas dialogue is common to most films, the essence and contents of human relations may still be expressed in other ways, at least, at climatic emotional and structural points. This culmination may manifest itself in the form of meeting bodies, in dancing or lovemaking. Beyond *The Ball* already mentioned we can also recall Carlos Saura's *Carmen* in this respect (the sensual, erotic attraction of a woman expressed through her body, movements, the aura vibrating around her, as well as dancing itself: all these factors stimulate the irresistable passion of man); and also dancing in Krzysztof Zanussi's *A Year of the Sun of Calm* where it is a culmination of love as well as a farewell of the leading characters, and this shot will then return as an image of memory before the woman's death some decades later. This love was born between people who could not understand each other's language but yet could still understand each other. And if there is an interpreter who understands both languages, he still will not understand them.

Any love story in film might be recalled as presenting examples of meeting bodies, such as the well-known scenes in Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima Mon Amour*. Nevertheless, an example more interesting than the common scenes of kisses or lovemaking is the emotional and artistic culmination of Ingmar Bergman's *Cries and Whispers*, when sisters who hate each other so intensely begin to caress each other as we hear a Bach suite. Not words, but rather bodies coming together, touching, and music combined can express how they have finally found each other.

Due to minor role of dialogue and the major one of music, and because of a certain lack of immediate presence of intellectuality, eroticism estabilishes the particular quality of atmospherical units in film art. In Lukács's view intellectual heights can hardly be achieved by film. The central category of atmospheric unit may explain that although intellectuality is still present in film art, it cannot be manifested in the way in which it is found in literature, but rather in another way—*through mediating atmosphere*. Pure conceptuality, manifested in a direct manner, intellectuality without meditation are alien to the art of film. (This is the conclusion of Siegfried Kracauer's theory of film.)

Lukács, on the other hand, has proposed that film has not found (until now) the proper way of presenting spirituality. To conquer intellectuality, to elaborate its own unique potential, is a historic process, a task for film. Eventually, I hope to suggest through our examples that modern film art has already demonstrated some achievements in this respect.

In film art itself, just as in music, the inner world of mankind manifests itself, although through showing and mediating the outside world. It might not be accidental (and even supports the affinity of film and music) that terms of musical theory seem to be the most adequate to present montage structures of modern film art. Sergei M. Eisenstein has written of the rhythmical montage, of the tonal montage, of overtones, and counterpoint. An affinity of music and film has also been supported by the fact that music also constitutes a *double reflection* and its first level is not disanthropomorphic, either. An undefined intimacy expressed and felt through atmosphere has formed the basis of this affinity. It is our conviction that *atmosphere* has constituted a central term of film aesthetics. Extending the concept of Georg Lukács we may discover in atmospheric unity a functional analogy with the homogeneous medium characterizing other forms of art and expressions.

[1]   This chapter was written in co-authorship with Judit Bárdos

[2]   An enlarged version of this article was republished in 1913 (Lukács 1913).

[3]   There is little literature about this aspect of Lukács's aestetic, and few people appreciated his contribution to film theory. Among the few exceptions it is worth mentioning (Levin (1987).