

INTRODUCTION: IMAGE IN FILM AND THEATRE

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Communication through images occupies a prominent place in contemporary culture. However, in theoretical writing it is often detached from the dimension of time. A reduction to a film frame or engraving (which is the most frequent pre-photographic means of capturing the theatre) has its limitations. As a consequence of these limitations we proposed to consider a film shot or a theatre act as the time units found in films or theatrical performances. Contributors were invited to submit papers devoted to exploring this topic in areas such as the image as a result of acting, image in art and art theory, its emotional and cognitive dimensions, its evocative power and complexity (or, eventually its platitude), archetypality, memorability, density, the socio-cultural contexts and revalorization of the cliché.

Although contributors were asked to write about specific films or theatre performances, this editorial also considers the theories of important figures in theatre and cinema as the advantages of considering thoughts coming straight from the film and theatre practice are obvious.

In the realm of cinematography, there are basically two conceptions of the image: the first is a *montage of shots* as postulated by Sergei Eisenstein and having origins in photo-montage. The second conception is based on the notion of *sealed time*, or *sculpted time* as Andrei Tarkovski named it. This is a method that is less dependent on *film cuts* (editing) and emphasizes *long takes* (as favored by the French theorist André Bazin), bringing it closer to the theatre time flow. If we are to translate this into basic film units, then we would have *frame vs. shot*.

Attitudes to the long take relate to questions over the relationship between image and imaginativeness. As Cristian Mungiu put it in his interview on *Beyond the hills*: “cuts will tell us what to look at, music what to feel about the situations.”¹ In terms of the visual aspect, Mungiu clearly supports Tarkovski’s sculptural concept of film-making, though both directors differ in their conceptions of the role of music.

¹ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pw2XOE_U3Kk&feature=related

In theatre research, there is no consensus on what image means, there is only general agreement as to the fact that the theatrical image develops in time, and comes out from the process of staging. Some define the *referential field of theatre metaphor* as the tension between the person of the actor and the character to be performed (Erika Fischer-Lichte). In accordance with this definition we suggest that the stage image is considered the result of *acting*, or—in connection with literature—as an *act*, or *scene*. But in theatre history there are many ways of organizing plays and so there are also many different ways of employing these terms. Since contemporary theatre repertory includes drama from antiquity, there is often a dissonance or even a clash between the play as it was written and the play as it is performed, which makes our task no easier. Some directors superimpose one prop onto the whole performance—often with the good intention of safeguarding its unity, but at the same time adding to the complexity of our task. In order to escape cognitive skepticism, let us discuss a living phenomenon with the leading theatre directors.

Peter Brook (as probably the most representative follower of Edward Gordon Craig) rejects anything that does not come from the needs of the play and as a result of acting. Ariane Mnouchkine strongly opposes everything that is imported onto the stage, every “pre-fabricated idea”. Her actors start from a state of *disponibilité* (openness) so that they can achieve the right *état* (state of being), and from this she helps them find and fix *l’image*. The whole process is achieved with the crucial help of music. This is true not only of *Les Atrides*: in a way, through her use of music produced on stage, Mnouchkine always tries to recreate the situation of the ancient Greek choir, out of which gradually emerge the individual actors to take on their characters. Anatoly Vasiliev starts building his performance on the basis of the improvisation of the actors and only towards the end of the staging process does he add the scenography—which functions as a sort of challenging obstacle that will refine and elevate what has already been found. All these directors prefer the onstage music.

In the call for papers, the topic of *image* had already been narrowed down to include just film and theatre as processual arts—arts that are revealing their meanings gradually. In order to narrow the field in this way, we had to add the adjectives *scenic/ cinematographic* to the word *image*. But it was the introduction of the notion of *time* that would allow different forms of image interpretation to emerge and brought a certain heterogeneity to the papers given at our issue. What is important, though, is the fact that all the contributors took the parameters laid down in the call for papers seriously and expressed their ideas in relation to a specific example.

Thus, Breitingner’s article differs significantly from Dudková’s primarily because they analyse the films chosen on the basis of completely different criteria. In case of the first film we should not be afraid to speak about deliberately ideological ambitions of the film makers Med Hondo and Carlos Diegues, although their narratives are of a counter discursive and revisionist nature *vis à vis* the colonialist perspective and they both rightly stand on the side of the oppressed—an attitude reminiscent of Sergei Eisenstein. In the second case, that of Béla Tarr we might speak instead of pertinently formulated existential questions—indeed, what is coming out from Tarr’s images has a form of question. These questions are like half-articulated by the cinematographic means by which spectators are moved not only emotionally, but intellectually as well. In the context of our reflection, Tarr’s *long takes approach* to film-making is approximable to that of Tarkovski.

Eckhard Breiting introduces the issue of the visual representation of resistance heroes in contrast to imperial aggressors. Both the films he discusses—*Quilombo*, a Brazilian production and *Sarraounia*, a Mauretanian production—share typological similarities. For instance, the main characters are isolated from the continuum of the cinematographic narrative by pauses showing the shot in detail and this contributes to the monumentalisation of the native heroes. Their portraits are enhanced by the glorious panoramic views that are evidence of the fact that nature—hostile or indifferent to the aggressors—has opted for the side of justice. The unity of the landscape and the people portrayed within it evokes the ideal of renaissance painting, incarnated in a modern visual format.

Jana Dudková decided to analyse the ultra-long métrage *Sátántangó* by Hungarian director Béla Tarr, the film based on long shots and with the sober use of montage. Her article concentrates on the image of time that returns via sound—as does the never ending tango motive—and on the images related to views; as are the window-framed and window black-outed exterior situations.

Mungiu's quotation above on the way in which the cuts focus the viewer on the image while the music focuses the viewer on the emotion should be borne in mind when reading about Klim's aesthetics in the article by Alyona Karas. Both directors not only reject all music that is not sung by actors (on stage, or in long take), but they also allow the spectator's eye to roam unaided by the hierarchisation of what is happening in the visual field (on stage, or in the cinematographic image). In treating their audiences as their equals, these two directors grant the spectator the freedom to observe and interpret the meanings. In Klim's performances, theatre becomes once again *musisch*—to borrow a term from German art theory that is also radiating into the neighbouring Slav countries. Klim's theatre, where the word should be sung, differs substantially from the majority of contemporary productions, whose directors have become lost in the visual, as if they had forgotten that the theatre has its origins common with music.

Analysing the sophisticated stage imaginativeness and the genuine auditory aspect of Klim's performances in relation to the audience's expectations and fulfillment, Alyona Karas introduces the international readership to the image of the Podval generation as personified by Ukrainian-born playwright and theatremaker Klim. Her study implies moral judgement: a generation of aesthetes had been unjustly overshadowed by the pragmatism of the younger theatremakers. This occurred at the price of impoverished content and communication and so it was not done for the benefit of theatre art and society.

Anna A. Hlaváčová also argues for subtle meanings, but searches for them in the distant past. Beginning with an analysis of the *Košice medieval painting of St. Elisabeth*, characterized by a semantic density of image resulting from the fact that it was conceived as a theatrical mise-en-scène compressed to the moment, author goes on to reflect on the similarities that can be found between this painting and the phenomenon of the Japanese Noh performance *Matsukaze*. Concentrating on the crucial gestures of both enacted stories she compares the active and the contemplative attitudes, arguing that they are both in fact complementary.

All the remaining contributors analyse phenomena that the history of theatre art would probably classify as better standard performances. That is all right within the scope of larger platform represented by Human Affairs—concerned also by other than aesthetic aspects of theatre.

Michal Pavlovski analyses the complex image of Europe beginning from a textual analysis of the plays *Euralien* and *Hotel Europa* by Macedonian playwright Goran Stefanovski. Although arguing that from the Balkan perspective, it seems that the EU still means only Western Europe, he comes to the conclusion that the scenic image cannot be reduced to a political construct.

Michaela Mojžišová discusses the *fin-de-siècle* opera trends that were brought to the forefront by the second millennium. After analyzing a few examples of performances involving historical subjects that sometimes use rather shocking methods, she concludes that contemporary opera directors are more successful in their treatment of the subjects of mythology. She sees this as being true of the *Orpheus and Eurydice*, staged recently in Bratislava—a positive example of how to avoid operatic opulence.

Jozef Ovečka studies the semantic changes that occur in the transposition of Slovak traditional folk theatre to the contemporary stage. Although he is particularly considered with a case study on a contemporary performance called *Spooks*, the serious methodological approach he takes combining both theatre studies and ethnography enables him to come to some rather universal conclusions.

Dagmar Podmaková devotes her study to the stage image of the first lady of Slovak theatre directors—Magda Lokvencová-Husáková. Beginning with a comparison between Nadežda Lindovská's book on Lokvencová-Husáková and Sláva Daubnerová's performance *MHL*, she concentrates on the image of a lift as the scenographic element via which the heroine is able to convey her ups and downs, and as a prop that enables us to travel into the recent past.

It must be said that the intention of this issue was not to cover the subject in great depth nor to have the last word in image-oriented research, but to enable a modest group of researchers to come together around the basic concept of the scenic/cinematographic image and to see whether the researchers' individual pathways led them to a common arena.

There are also two book reviews that relate to the topic of this Human Affairs issue.

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