

Zsuzsanna Máté

THE MEANING-CONSTITUTING PROCESS OF
INTER-ARTISTRY IN 20TH CENTURY HUNGARIAN
BLUEBEARD STORIES
(BÉLA BALÁZS – BÉLA BARTÓK – JÁNOS KASS –
PÉTER ESTERHÁZY)

Perrault's 17th century tale of Bluebeard turned out to be a text living on in its intertextual relations in the shape of 20th century Bluebeard stories, among others, in Anatole France's work, in Béla Balázs's mystery play and Péter Esterházy's short story. In my study, I am going to examine, in addition to the intertextual relationship of the above works, Béla Balázs's mystery play from the aspects of comparative art research and intermediality. Focus shall also be on János Kass's 17-picture illustration series, and also on Bartók's opera, which latter shortens the mystery play and uses it as a libretto. Moreover, I also aim at exploring the semiotic configurations that constitute the collection of literary text, music and image, various mediums, as well as the meaning-constituting processes, with the formation history of aggression as an example.

The fundamental tale source of Béla Balázs's mystery play¹ titled „*Bluebeard's Castle*”, which actually is the libretto² of Béla Bartók's opera *Béla* with minor abridging, proved to be the folktale³ titled *Barbe Bleu*, written by Charles Perrault, published in its literary form in 1697, and was originally known as the French Bluebeard saga. It was presumably inspired by the real 15th century historical figure of Baron Gilles de Rais, a Marshal of France at the same time. The Marshal's dreadful acts committed against children and women are in detail discussed by Gyula Pekár. Compared to other accounts on Rais, he adds the interpretation claiming that the Marshall actually fought along with Jeanne d'Arc, being her loyal defender, then, all of a sudden, from a military hero he transformed into a monster, and was eventually executed by the inquisition⁴ in 1440. Acts originated from real

¹ BALÁZS 1960.

² BALÁZS – BARTÓK 1979.

³ PERRAULT 1992.

⁴ De Rais was executed for heresy on 26th October, in 1440. His trial was labeled upright comical by some, thus referring to the fabricated nature of charges and the procedure possibly being a show trial, however, the facts, the endless row of victims and certainly de Rais's

life or forged charges of the inquisition later took shape in a myth, then a folktale, which tale nevertheless had already been spread and told by the people. His character had become known due to Perrault's tale, in which „Bluebeard is by far the most terrible and evil of all husbands ever mentioned in tales”.⁵ The Bluebeard Myth is a story popular with the French, thus it can be found in number of editions and forms by the name *La Barbe-bleue*. Supposedly the Marshal's story served as one of the key sources, the other one perhaps stemmed from a Breton king named Cômor.⁶ The character of Bluebeard, an affluent man killing his wives can be observed in the folklore of other nations, too, its Hungarian version considered to be the ballad of Molnár Anna.⁷ It eventually became widespreadly known and earning a major impact due to Perrault's tale rich in realistic elements. This one is listed as a „warning-type” one by contemporary tale interpretations,⁸ while the figure of Bluebeard is considered as an „animal groom type”.⁹

testimony all proved to go against him. Parents of the kidnapped, tortured and murdered children all had borne witness against the monster. He committed his first demonic murder immediately after withdrawing from the military, and decided to serve evil forces. His detailed biography was recorded and written by Jean Benedetti in 1971: BENEDETTI, Jean, *Gilles de Rais*, New York: Stein, Day.

⁵ BETTELHEIM 2000. 309.

⁶ In his research regarding Bluebeard's character, Gyula Pekár refers to a French writer named Huysmans, who names a Breton king called Cômor as a „first ancestor”. He adds that Henry VII, a well-known 'wife-eater' king, may have also had an impact in the creation of the myth. Yet Pekár considers Rais as his major inspiration in dealing with Rais's transition to become a bloody monster. He sums up the birth of the Bluebeard legend as follows: „We are all very aware of the fact that legends do not emerge from one figure, but normally after the merging of several analogical heroes. This merge is carried out by the people's imagination in a way that the bravado of supporting characters are assigned to the most outstanding hero.” Gyula PEKÁR: *A kékszakállú herceg és egyéb elbeszélések. (Bluebeard and Other Stories.)* Bp.: Singer és Wolfner. 8. 1909.

György Kroó connects the alleged pattern of the tale's character to Rais, too, as well as to the 6th century Breton squire figure of Comor. BALÁZS – BARTÓK 1979. 51.

⁷ Its Hungarian version is the Ballad of Anna Molnár, in which Márton Ajgó acts as Bluebeard. Within the framework of classical ballads, Zoltán Kallós published in several version this story of seduced, but then (in such later versions) vengeful wife. KALLÓS 1977. 40-58.

⁸ Andrea Csűry's interpretation from her study titled *Charles Perrault*: „(...) it actually does not fall into the category of tales featuring miraculous elements, but rather into ones giving warnings, which tales are supposed to prove that marrying unknown people is quite dangerous.” In: *Közelítések a meséhez. (Approaches to the Tale.)* Edited by Péter Bálint. Debrecen: Didakt Kft., 2006. 201.

⁹ BETTELHEIM 2000. 309.

Andrea Csűry's and Bruno Bettelheim's tale-interpreting studies both claim that Perrault's 17th century tale cannot be regarded as a fairy tale, it not having any direct folktale antecedent. Although neither character's personality develops, the evil husband eventually expiates for his sins.

Bruno Bettelheim has a featuring psychoanalytic-like interpretation, which identifies the key symbol as a male sexual organ. In his view, it also symbolizes that guests arriving to the house while Bluebeard was away had „affairs of sexual nature” with Bluebeards’s wife, therefore this tale is in effect the test of the woman’s faithfulness.¹⁰ This interpretation of the tale is questioned by Tivadar Gorilovics, as it unequivocally becomes clear from the original French text that all visitors are female. According to Gorilovics, Bluebeard just simply sets a trap to prove that his wife will not be able to resist her curiosity.¹¹

Based on my comparisons, this tale narrative carries three crucial features which can be found in 20th century Hungarian Bluebeard stories appearing in various branches of art. The first one is female curiosity, working against man’s prohibition, thus breaking her promise made to her husband. The other motive being the target of man’s prohibition and the women’s curiosity is the mystery of the secret rooms,¹² while the third one is the phenomenon of bleeding, as a telltale sign of a sin. In the tale, the seventh wife is betrayed by the bleeding key regarding the breaking of her promise and the prohibition, that is, of some sins she had committed, indicating that presumably neither her nor her ancestors had been able to resist the temptation of curiosity. Relying on the low number of miraculous elements, eg. the unremovable blood stain on the secret room’s key, we can also conclude that this tale was rather written for adults (not children). In the end, Bluebeard pays for his evildoing, including the murdering of her previous wives, and gets his deserts as brothers of the seventh wife slay him.

The re-edition of Perrault’s tales in 1861 were illustrated with the tonic drawings by French painter Gustave Doré, whose drawings were already appraised by his contemporaries. Hereby let me note that it was Doré’s great plan to create a „world library” illustrated by himself.¹³ In addition to his illustrations of the Bible, works of Dante, La Fontaine, Cervantes, and Victor Hugo, Perrault’s Bluebeard include four Doré illustrations, of which the first one is the most expressive, it depicting the scene of key handover, with almost lifelike figures. With his formidable appearance and hands

¹⁰ BETTELHEIM 2000. 309-313.

¹¹ GORILOVICS 2006. 188-194.

¹² The concept of a „secret room”, a secret chamber, into which entry is forbidden occurs in several fairy tales. In Russian and Scandinavian tales the animal husband forbids the wife from entering. Also, it is also found in Grimm’s tales such as *Mr. Fox* or *The Bird*. The concept of a secret room or a chamber mostly represents the woman’s faithfulness to her husband, or just functions as her trial whether she keeps her promise or not.

¹³ KOVÁCS 1994. 233-234.

putting you on guard, Bluebeard is menacingly towering above his wife. She is timidly looking in his eyes from below, but still, it seems as if her entire postures suggest her intrinsic curiosity as to find out what is actually hidden behind the door.

The man's aggressive behaviour in this 17th century tale, that is the intention to murder the seventh wife is triggered by female curiosity, which itself bears a moral implication causing the breaking of her promise made to her husband, and, at the same time, it also means disobedience of the man's prohibition and his individual law. In the „Moral“ (*Moralité*) to be found at the end of tale provides help in interpreting Perrault. In the first poem, moral instructions are provided with reference to curiosity: „Io, curiosity, much as it gives us numerous minutes full of joy, Yet remains seldom unpunished; Day by day we see thousands of examples for that. For our senses desire light pleasures; Still they are immediately caught in the act, And the price paid was in vain.“¹⁴ The other lesson is articulated by Bruno Bettelheim's recent tale-interpretation. According to him, tales also warn us to realize the importance of forgiveness, since at the end of the tale (murder of the husband) Bluebeard's behaviour is condemned, since „it is a more human morality which understands and forgives (...) violations.“¹⁵

The essence of Bluebeard's aggressive behaviour is punishment, as, on the one hand, the one not complying and keeping the promise and the moral principles is punished. On the other hand, the infringement of the prohibition and law (opening the secret chamber) induced by the husband is severely punished. Bluebeard's punitive aggression, which actually means manslaughter, is of a large scale, too high compared to the sins he had committed. In the closing section of the tale, as Bluebeard's aggression falls into the type enforcing „normative or moral“ type, the same can be stated about the aggression represented by the wife's brothers. However, the brothers' aggressively enforced moral principle, as a rule, is actually forgiveness itself, namely, by means of the the murder of Bluebeard, who had been unable to forgive and slew his wives. Although the type of aggression proves to be the same, yet it differs in the validated normative and moral principle: Bluebeard's prohibition regarding the secret chamber acts as a law or individual norm „defending itself, since it attempts to conceal its sins“, while the brothers' moral principle of forgiveness belongs to a given group. Thus validation of the group's normative principle 'overwrites' that of the individual's, that is Bluebeard's punitive normative in the closing of the tale.

¹⁴ PERRAULT 1992.

¹⁵ BETTELHEIM 2000. 313.

In identifying this „normative or moral” aggression type, I have applied Vilmos Csányi’s description of aggression in human etology. According to his definition, members of a certain group (that is, the brothers of the wife in the 17th century tale, who in the end slay wife-killer outcast Bluebeard) „often take action against fellows who deviate from well-accepted behaviour patterns, habits, principles and norms. A highly important and characteristic feature of the individual lays in the background of moral aggression, which actually is that he/she is firmly bound to his/her group, and therefore is more or less in opposition with every person not belonging to the group itself.”¹⁶ As we could see, based on this standardization, the aggressions of Bluebeard in the 17th century tale and that of the wife’s brothers killing the prince fell into the same category. Yet this latter type of aggression is notably different. According to public perception, „we denominate any deliberate action as aggression, which aims at, either in an open or symbolic manner, causing harm, damage or pain to somebody or something.”¹⁷ Within this definition, being deliberate is a crucial criterion to the proper judgement of aggression. As a matter of fact, due to the difficult determination of being deliberate, Jenő Ranschburg considers the moral content of human behaviour as a genuine starting point. As a consequence, in his classification of aggressive behaviour he differentiates between „destructive, anti-social aggression, or pro-social aggression serving the interests of the community and the individual. In the case of the latter, this category matches the framework of the given group’s cultural expectations, moreover, it is deemed important whether „aggression is a mean or an end”, whether it is instrumental, emotional or retaliatory.”¹⁸ Taking this type of description as a basis, the aggression of the 17th century tale’s Bluebeard is antisocial and emotional, while the brothers’ aggression can be considered pro-social and instrumental from the aspect of behaviour.

In the 17th century tale Bluebeard expiates, while female curiosity, as an undesirable behaviour form, remains unpunished, moreover, by contrast, female figures embodying curiosity of biblical and mythological origins are penalized. To Eve, the very first female character in the Old Testament’s Book of Genesis, „that tree is desirable for its wisdom”, and its fruit is a „joy to the eye”, so as a result the first couple does not obey and breaks God’s prohibition, a God giving law, punishment and looking after its creatures. Lot’s wife turned into a „pillar of salt” as a punishment for her

¹⁶ CSÁNYI 1999. 174., CSÁNYI 2000. 122-139.

¹⁷ RANSCHBURG 2004. 90.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 92.

curiosity. Pandora, the first female figure in Greek mythology, also gets her severe retribution after revealing the secret of the box due to her curious 'behaviour' and denying her husband's ban. The inquisitiveness of these two women then becomes the direct cause of death for humanity, that is existence in the sense and approach of death. Also, in Greek mythology, fatigue, disease, aging, feud comes upon mankind, leaving hope as the only comfort. Of the ban-curiosity-penalty 'triangle' of the 17th century tale narrative, two can still be found in these ancient stories. Namely, these are the ban itself and female curiosity violating it in order to gain some secret knowledge, however, modern tales do not penalize women for their inquisitiveness, but instead strike down on men who are unable to show forgiveness.

In its 20th century Hungarian adaptations of Bluebeard's story, Perrault's tale is present in the background, yet in a reverse way. On the one hand, this reverse manner represents the transformation of aggression, it taking place along opposite polarity change of genders, presenting several types of aggressions, just as I am going to detail it in the second half of my study. Shift of poles already took place a year ago in Western Europe, let me refer to Anatole France's short story titled *The Seven Wives of Bluebeard* (*Les Sept Femmes de Barbe bleue*),¹⁹ published in 1909, which turns the original tale inside out in an ironic way, and attributes aggression to women. Anatole France's Bluebeard is a man fondly trusting women and assuming only good about them, however, due to women's selfishness and their wicked inclination, he gradually becomes a victim of circumstances and an aggressor, the above circumstances including women's violent behaviour, delusiveness and heavy drinking.

While in the 17th century tale, and then in 20th century literary works it is Bluebeard's aggression that is in the centre of attention, in Anatole France's and Béla Balazs's interpretation female aggression shifts into focus, coupled with curiosity, however, in late 20th century Hungarian literature it is men's aggression again to occupy this central role, thus representing another nuance and type. Here we can refer to Péter Eszterházy's short novel²⁰ titled *The Beautiful Life of Bluebeard*, published in 1994, and József Bényei's collection of poems titled *Elegies of Bluebeard* from 1997.²¹ Eszterházy's novel begins with a surprising upbeat, not only with his tale-like transcription of the opening formula, but also by using the „he lived happily

¹⁹ FRANCE 1959. 183-201.

²⁰ ESTERHÁZY 1994. 533-542.

²¹ BÉNYEI 1997. 538-541.

ever after” tale-type closing formula in the introduction. On the other hand, the opening summary of him „lived happily lived” not only stand in sharp contradiction with the intertextual relation of Bluebeard’s name, but with the factually enlisted life events in the novel’s possible world, be it his deportation, Balázs himself being a Jew, or the events after 1945, his joining the Communist Party, or imprisonment during the Rákosi era.²² At the beginning of the novel Bluebeard is a young piano student, whose mates were Don Juan and Casanova, and he started his studies under the guidance of Bartók. Before placing his figure into the legendary literary men in literature seducing women, the listing of life events based on timeline shifts and free associations. Here the layers of the individual’s spheres of choosing a profession and its private life are mounted on each other, with emphasis on the descriptions of finding one’s path in looking for a partner, absurd in its variety, and the related sexual habits. Their impact relies on a tension, that is one between the astonishing gender identity changes and the very fact of related sexual habits as well as the cold-livered descriptions dealing with them. On top of all, the strings of references these are heavily based, meaning references among the most significant historical and political changes taken place from 1945 until the political changes in 1989. This latter layer of the text provocatively does not take notice of the fact how well-informed the all-time recipient is regarding historical, social and political processes after 1945, yet it is capable of representing the irrational intertwinedness of personal life sphere and historical, social and political events. Mounting is held together by the similar quality of the layers. Bluebeard’s endeavour to find his path in terms of profession, his perpetual alternation of his sexual identity, his dating, sexual, partnership habits, as well as his life events are just as chaotic and absurd as the events of historical, social and political life. Within this novel, aggression is extended with a further nuance, that is humour. Bluebeard’s source of humour is a scene of jealousy, which is actually based on legal terms, rhetorical cross-talk in the tale, the tensions of its being struck to death, and controversy. This aggression is clearly manifested when „Bluebeard was cheated on.

– I want to know his name – he rattled.

– I can’t tell you even if you strike me to death – shrugged the fast woman, so he knocked her on the head, and she immediately died. Then the injured party handed the required information right away, so, and this is what really matters, it was proven that she had really lied to him before.”²³

²² ESTERHÁZY 1994. 533-534.

²³ Ibid., 538.

The end of the novel, the interpretation tendencies of both the text of Béla Balázs and the opera are recited, based on the Opera Guide 2, as items proving the prince's being tired of life. Bluebeard had lost interest in „Judith (...), more precisely in the eternal struggle between woman and man, the woman, who almost aimed to identify herself with the beloved man, seeing into all his concealed secrets, she also got tired of the man, who is compelled to secrecy by the interminable command of reservedness and solitude, as if he revealed his most inner and strictly kept secrets, he would therefore reveal himself, and he got tired of an ideal never-to-be-found, who does not intend to dig out the secret of secrets, one who loves Lohengrin-Bluebeard the way he is, together with his bloody, painful, teary and perhaps sinful secrets, as Bluebeard can only be loved, if you accept the torture chambers, the treasuring walls and blood-stalked roses, and the clouds of his grief dewing blood drops, (...).”²⁴ „When the time came, Bluebeard died. What can add to this now? Should I say he buried himself into his beard? By the time he was already not Bluebeard, his death left a void, perfectly with his shape and silhouette. Further on, people called this nothing Bluebeard (due to his beard being blue).”²⁵ Esterházy's novel, acting as a kind of post-modern closing chord, and as a result of intertextual relations is the interpretation of Béla Balázs's Bluebeard story, while, at the same time, it functions as its endpoint, due to its being tired of.

In József Bényei's *Bluebeard's Elegies*, each of the seven doors open to a part of Béla Balázs's works, thus forming an intertextual relation, and all of them deal with the self-torturing explanations of his state of mind. In accordance with the number of doors, the book is divided into seven chapters. The doors open to a part of Béla Balázs's script, then we find a room full of poems, which follow the Balázs quotation both in their mood and theme. Door VII is hiding the title poem of the book, that is the *Bluebeard Elegy*, and then it is broken down to 20 further elegies. Each elegies contain entirely negative words: death, dead-march, dead man, withered, parched, wounded, bleeding, decomposing, etc. Blood, as a motif, is present throughout the whole work. The whole book narrates Bluebeard's solitude, grief, coldness and situation in second person singular, with no answers received to his questions regarding his self-torturing questions and calls. As a matter of fact, Bluebeard's aggression here turns against himself, which as a consequence can be considered as auto-aggression.²⁶

²⁴ Ibid., 541.

²⁵ Ibid., 542.

²⁶ CSÁNYI 1999. 175.

I shall hereafter place the Szeged-born Béla Balázs's mystery play written in 1910 into the centre of focus,²⁷ in parallel with Bartók's opera²⁸ debuted in 1918, and the 17 illustrations published in 1979 of the also Szeged-born János Kass, graphic artist, illustrator and sculptor. As of the mystery play, the opera and the illustrations a number of separate analysis have been written. Comparison of the musical and visual components was already carried out by László Vass in 2004, presenting a synthesis the results of each analyses and, at the same time, comparing the „communicatum” made up of several medial components, being created within the text-music-image compound.²⁹ Then, in her book from 2007 written on János Kass's illustrations, Emőke Varga describes the text-image relations in the Bluebeard of Balázs-Kass from an interartistic aspect.³⁰ Both authors studied the permeability in the communicative forms in various mediums.

Contrary to my studies analyzing 20th century Bluebeard stories so far, my paper focuses on processes affecting interartistic courses, its hermeneutic act of raising questions aims at meaning-constituting processes within the text-image-music compound, by means of one example, that is the behaviour forms of aggression. The corpus investigated within my study is „*Bluebeard's Castle*”, published by Zeneműkiadó in 1979 – Bartók's opera's libretto is

²⁷ Béla Balázs completed his mystery play in 1910, published in the journal named „Szinjáték” („Play”) in its April 20th and June 13th issues. Cf. BALÁZS – BARTÓK 1979. 49. Following this, it appeared in Nuygat in 1912 as the first piece in Balázs's Mysteries series: this is considered to have the original text version of Bluebeard's Castle. Latest edition: BALÁZS 1960.

²⁸ György Kroó, a music historian summarizes the creation of Bartók's opera as follows: „Originally it was meant to be written to Kodály, Balázs even read it out to him in 1910. Bartók was also present himself during this session, and it was him to be fascinated by the topic.” Bartók „left the work unfinished and open” in 1911, then a year after he managed to form the concept we know now. Its final version was authored in the spring of 1918. Balázs's text was only shortened a little by Bartók. Bartók's opera debuted in the Budapest Opera House, on 24th May, 1918. BALÁZS – BARTÓK 1979. 49-50., KROÓ 1980. 60.

Why was Bartók fascinated by Balázs's mystery play? According to György Kroó, this mystery „awakens the deep and indelible Wagner experience within Bartók's mind. This applies to not only its musical aspects, referred to by the dozens of motifs and sounds in the opera's music, but to Bartók's notions ideology as well. Both Bartók and Balázs received the idea of »redeeming love« from Wagner, the motif of one-act ban thus directly refers to Lohengrin (Nie sollst du mich befragen – You shall see, but never question, Whatever you see, don't question!), the couple of the »chosen« man and the fallible woman represent the artist's (according to Wagner's interpretation) longing to be among ordinary people, looking down from the »heights of spiritual life«, and the unfeasibility of this desire.” KROÓ 1980. 61-62.

²⁹ VASS 2004. 99-144.

³⁰ VARGA 2007. – VARGA Emőke, Kalitka és korona, Kass János illusztrációi (Cage and Crown, Illustrations by János Kass), Budapest, L'Harmattan, 2007, 167-200.

significantly shorter than that of the original written by Balázs³¹ -, the pictures of the illustrations³² and the music of Béla Bartók's opera.³³

Béla Balázs's beat-stressing versification, eight-rhythm, rhymed-tale-like mystery play, the primarily standard work of *Bluebeard's Castle* firmly rewrites and twists Perrault's story, a sin in this case the trial of the wife's love gets in the centre of attention, and, on the other hand, it is the wife who becomes aggressive. The mystery play however keeps the three fundamental motifs of the 17th century tale, which are curiosity, the mystery of the secret room(s) and the act of bleeding. Yet this latter one is twisted, too, meaning that bleeding in the mystery play is not a telltale sign of the wife's breaking her promise, but they are the blood-motifs behind the six doors actually implying Bluebeard's sins.

As a matter of fact, it is Béla Balázs's first voluminous art theory work titled *Death Aesthetics* which is in the contextual background of the mystery play. It had become well-known in part due to Babits's critique published in 1908. Balázs's work was deemed by Babits to be naive, sophisticated, fragmented and one seeking genuineness.³⁴ Concerning the Hungarian reception history, two authors emphasize the connecting points regarding this mystery play, on the one hand to the tale, as an aesthetic category,³⁵ and the other, to Balázs's concept of death.³⁶

In his *Death Aesthetics*, Balázs connects art with death. He claims that fate provides us with self-consciousness, it is death or one of its forms that

³¹ László Vass László has compared the text of Balázs's mystery play with the significantly shortened libretto of Bartók's opera (BALÁZS 1960. BALÁZS – BARTÓK 1979.). Apart from repetitions, Bartók has deleted less successful and rhetoric manifestations, too. Cf. VASS 2004. 107.

³² BALÁZS – BARTÓK 1979.

János Kass was assigned by Helikon Kiadó („*Helikon Press*”) in 1960 to illustrate Bluebeard's Castle, and this is when the first version of illustrations were released: BALÁZS Béla, *A kékszakállú herceg vára (Bluebeard's Castle)*, illustrated by János Kass, epilogue by László Bóka. Budapest, Magyar Helikon, 1960.

Then he made more illustrations during the decades, what is more, he even provided the drawings to the screenplay. In his book published by Zeneműkiadó in 1979, built up from verbal, visual and musical components, János Kass changed the proportions of key characters to some extent, left colour symbolics unchanged, and only in the case of the torture chamber can we see a different type of illustration. Also, the house with weaponry and the flower garden can both be characterized as formally simplified, particularly if compared to the 1960 one. Nevertheless, the 1979 series are more firmly stylized, archaized and unsophisticated, this is why I have chosen this series as the basis of my comparisons.

³³ BARTÓK 1991.

³⁴ TÉGLÁS 1988. 17.

³⁵ SÓFI 2010. 9-17.

³⁶ GYÖRI 2010.

lets us know that how we actually live our lives. Whereby life is formed to be an entity and a whole by the sense of fate and passing, which actually is the act by man of mould when realizing the limits of his own life: „Death is a form of life. Its end, just as contours to a drawing, limits to a pattern, provides its shape.”³⁷ „Sensing the limits of our lives is sensing the whole.”³⁸ Art is called „the self-consciousness of life”,³⁹ since works of art, by forming a whole in their closedness, visualize fate, that is our death. Therefore, this is how the task of art will be, regardless of its actual topic, to provide a metaphysical projection of being a whole from the aspect of fate. The closing of the mystery play can be interpreted from this aspect of such approaches to death and art, implying that love and life can only be observed and perceived as a whole when viewed from its closed, formed shape. Similarly, Judith only realizes that she had been the most precious and beautiful to Bluebeard of the all the women after she had become one of the women in the past as the love had gone. In Balázs’s *Death Aesthetics* death and end are forces creating entity because the life phase they bound eventually gains form and value. All this becomes defined in his mystery play, as the love of Judith and Bluebeard receives the form and value during the „end”.

In his art theory work written in 1907 Béla Balázs outlines the directions, experiments and solutions he would go along as a writer. A nice example to represent this statement⁴⁰ made by Ferenc Fehér is the creation of the mystery play *Bluebeard’s Castle* in three years. Thus, agreeing with his oncoming interpretation, we can state that „Even if it is true that art is in real eternal life, life is mortality, even if it is true that this is why aesthetics is deemed as *death* aesthetics (aesthetics of life’s finiteness and the eternity of the opus), yet art is the self-consciousness of life, as he is passed the torch by Romantic artists, therefore it can only be the *art of pain*.”⁴¹

According to the preface of *Death Aesthetics*, essential things are excluded from rational scrutiny, therefore the task of art is nothing but mobilizing a metaphysical instinct in the individual in a secret manner, the existence of which is virtually indicated by the desire to obtain cognition of the world as a whole, nurturing from the deficiency of cognition itself.⁴²

³⁷ BALÁZS 1974. 294.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 299.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 292.

⁴⁰ FEHÉR 1974. 24.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴² Wider textual contexts for concepts of „metaphysical instinct” and „sense of transcendence” in early works are explained in the monograph of Emöke Mihályi, from Cluj-Napoca, Romania (Kolozsvár, in Hungarian), cf. MIHÁLY 2008. 41-47.

The manifestation of this metaphysical instinct is in fact „sensing life’s transcendence”,⁴³ which art itself is destined to make perceived: „It is perceiving that the image series of life phenomena around us are a sequence of unsolvable hieroglyphs, which are actually the manifestations of something.”⁴⁴

Béla Balázs’s mystery play interpretations even being relevant in our times, as ‘hieroglyphs’ are sequences of symbol solutions. That is, Bluebeard’s castle itself, a spiritual-mental space can be interpreted as the spiritual-mental space of man, a living ‘organism’, since tears go down from its soggy walls, the castle occasionally sighs, and blood appears in every room. Blood, bleeding acts here are interpreted here as additional symbols, mostly as the misdeeds in Bluebeard’s past. Moreover, the cyclic nature of darkness-light-darkness, parts of the day, the symbolical contents of the secret rooms, the very fact of their opening as the unfolding of the past may all symbolize the idealistic perception of Bluebeard’s complete personality. Women of the past behind the seventh door are ‘panopticons’ or ‘museums’ of old loves. Silence, nevertheless, can stand as the symbol of death. Women’s denominations based of various parts of the day might refer to the depth they had reached in Bluebeard’s soul or within its recognition, or realizing in which state of his life they were the man’s partners. Approaching to various readings,⁴⁵ whether from life event facts, or aiming to unveil contextual relations, or from the aspects of symbols’ typology or perhaps psychoanalysis, we can find that it is the symbols’ hermeneutic capability to be filled up that provides us with an opportunity to conduct several readings and interpretations.

Referring to the background of the impacts and aiming to emphasize only one symbol, let me add that the darkness-light-darkness signals the influence of Béla Balázs’s popular contemporary, Maeterlinck’s (a Belgian dramatist) *Ariane et Barbe-bleue*, published in 1901. Béla Balázs himself acclaimed this young dramatist,⁴⁶ just as the young Lukács did so in his *The Evolution of*

⁴³ BALÁZS 1974. 293.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 290.

⁴⁵ Boglárka Sófi compares the mystery play to parts of the *Death Aesthetics* dealing with the tale, where the tale is discussed as an aesthetic category, rather than a separate genre. Finally, the symbol of life is identified with death. Cf: SÓFI 2010. 9-17.

In her essayistic work, Orsolya Györi presents the value and form shaping principle of finiteness, as well as the artistic role of making death conscious, concretized with the mystery play. Cf: GYÖRI 2010.

László Bóka, a literary historian, launches his interpretation from the events of one’s personal life. Cf: BALÁZS 1960. 59-75.

⁴⁶ BALÁZS 1908. 446-454.

Modern Drama (A modern dráma fejlődéstörténete). Based on Jean Stranobinski's interpretation, in his drama Maeterlinck says a farewell to the „old women” who did not die, just as they didn't in Balázs's mystery play, either.⁴⁷ The same applies to László Bóka's interpretation, himself a literary historian, where Béla Balázs verses critical, interim period between the life periods of the young lad free in love, and the mature man seeking a spouse. László Bóka designates Bluebeard as the symbol of voracious youth. Then he calls him a „man seeking his partner”, who keeps his old loves in the mysterious and „gruesome panopticon” of his heart, and to whom „... the loves conquered yesterday, ... have become heavy, irremediable memories today”.⁴⁸ Beyond this biographical parallel, the other crucial common feature in the lives of both dramatists is the symbolism of darkness and light, however, Balázs's symbolism is deeper than that of his Belgian contemporary's. The operas, the first one being Messiaen Dukas's only opera, written on the basis of Maeterlinck in 1907, the other one musical composition of the Bartókian opera created in accordance with the libretto of Balázs's mystery play, both ones based on literary works set in a parallel of influence employ the darkness-light-darkness symbolics as a compositional and axiological basic component. In addition to Maeterlinck's influence, and the parallels relating to Death Aesthetics and pragmatizing art theory in the work of art, the mystery play also relies on Béla Balázs's metaphysical concept. Similarly to many then-contemporary intellectual writers, that is those gathering around the periodical called *Szellem (Spirit)* in 1911,⁴⁹ in his writings he contrasts the

⁴⁷ „It's not about Perrault's tale. The story is continuously in the background, yet re-read, re-interpreted, re-constructed and in a sense reversed. (...) Citing a famous story it retains the starting point, but then, by inserting new episodes and characters, the original meaning is completely distorted. the same was being done Bartók, too.” STRANOBINSKI 2009. 255-258. Let me note that in Maeterlinck's drama, upon opening the last door a sudden turn comes in, which was adopted by Bartók, too, that is, the previous wives do not die (they are held captive in the basement, having received their names from previous heroines in the author's earlier dramas). However, Ariane, contrary to them, is not merely a powerless female figure. She opens the closed door for the lively, vivid women, yet they, not wishing to be exposed to the light, recoil, and are afraid to abandon their desolate lives, which they had been accustomed to. In Maeterlinck's work, similarly to Balázs's, the light gradually flows in, until it reaches a wonderful brilliance. According to Ariane's inspiring words, the symbols of light realizes in life, nature and the love of freedom:

„Don't you miss the sunlight,
Birds on the trees,
And the huge gardens up there, full of flowers?
Don't you know it's spring now?”

⁴⁸ BALÁZS 1960. 59-75.

⁴⁹ MÁTÉ 1995. 40-43.

positivism of his own age with metaphysical instinct, as a kind of metaphysical experience, the last manifestation of which he believes to be found in the „romantic ideology". He considers Hebbel to be the last great metaphysical and romantic artist, as we can read in his studies titled „*The Metaphysical Theory of the Tragedy in German Romanticism and Friedrich Hebbel*", and „*A Dialogue on German Romanticism*", both published in Nyugat (*West*) in 1908, and also, in his doctoral dissertation on Hebbel in 1909.⁵⁰ It is no coincidence that the heroine of Balázs's tale was named Judith after Hebbel's drama with the same title. On the other hand, the basic parallel between the works of Hebbel and Balázs is the manifestation of female aggression, yet strung on a peculiar feminine fate and with aggression put into an instrumental function. In the case of Hebbel's Judith aggression generates the opposition of earthly moral and divine law upon the killing of Holofernest, leader of the enemy: "If God had placed sin between me and the deed enjoyed upon me – who am I to be able to escape it?" In Balázs's works female aggression shapes the fate of Judith, as from the first door to the fifth she feels compelled to bring light into the castle, in contrast with Bluebeard's fate predestined to be darkness, since the castle can be identified with the spiritual and emotional isolation, solitude, grave sins committed in the past, that is with everything the darkness of Bluebeard's castle can stand for. After the dramatic turn of the fifth door, the aggression of women's curiosity will be the instrument, which overwrites Judith's 'light bearer' fate, and turns her future fate to be darkness itself. Thus the woman's line of fate, even when turned to be the opposite, will not be different from that of a man's. In order to make this line of fate fulfilled and achieve sinking again into darkness Balázs used Judith's female curiosity as a dramatic tool, and converted to aggressive and exaggerated.

Can love redeem you? This post-romantic and metaphysical question is answered by Balázs, Bartók and Kass with a congruent denial. Verbal (Balázs's textbook), musical (the musical material of Bartók's opera) and visual (illustrations of Kass) mediums, and particularly the opera genre, which combined all three mediums, eventually create a complex multimedia and intermedial compound. Using their own set of forms and instruments, works of art separately existing, like the mystery play, the opera and the series of illustrations represent the rhythm, contrast and assimilation of male and female line organized into a system. Nevertheless, they require character and customized individualization to the extent where this dramatic

⁵⁰ Emöke Mihály's monograph analyses these metaphysical writings on art theory from his youth. Cf. MIHÁLY 2008. 39-78.

fate geometry can already be shaped. As a result, aggression with an altered nature, that is the aggression of the female as a formulation will become one of the substantial tools.

The mystery play begins with the prologue of Regös, after riddle of, a „seeking an evening's musical rest / from the only drama that you know best / that matters the most till the curtain's fall ...” we seem to be at the end of the 16th century, listening to Melancholy Jaques in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* („All the world's a stage, / And all the men and women merely players: / They have their exits and their entrances”), namely a new version of his ideas:

„Lonely faces. Intently, you
watch me – and I watch you too.
Where's the stage? Can you be certain?
Our eyelashes are the curtain,
the curtain ladies and gentlemen.”⁵¹

This is atmosphere evoked by the bard in renaissance clothes, playing his lyre. However, Bartók's opera, instead of this prologue, creates the gloomy „ballad-like” atmosphere with an instrumental foreplay reminding us to Hungarian folk songs, and, as a framework, this melody later returns in the last beats of the opera.⁵² The opera sets up all its medial components in an organized way, in the total configuration of music, text and image.

In Balázs's mystery play, the emphasis is on the trial of love, on the perseverance of woman's love, which relies on the opening of doors in the prince's castle, and on the act of facing hidden and symbolic contents behind these doors. Also, this fundamental element organizing the structure and indicating dramatic turns has a meaning-constituting and scenic function, too. The musical structure of Bartók's opera, in addition to the foreplay, is also divided into seven scenes, in accordance with the seven doors „the symbolic location, Bluebeard's castle, the symbol of man's soul, the seven doors of the castle conceals separate and relevant parts of the soul, a feature of man's character, a part of man's life”.⁵³ It can be observed to take place likewise in János Kass's series of illustrations, where the doors are placed into a dramatic and meaning constituting function. As János Kass writes: „I conceived pages of the book as doors, and this structure follows

⁵¹ BALÁZS – BARTÓK 1979. 6.

⁵² BALÁZS – BARTÓK 1979. 6-7., KROÓ 1980. 63.

⁵³ KROÓ 1980. 63.

the events. The doors, as dramatic intersections, grasp the psychological process coming off between the two characters.”⁵⁴ Five of Kass’s 17 illustrations refer indirectly to the denotations behind the doors, to the visualization of the torture chamber, the house of weaponry, the flower garden and the old women. Six pictures of the series illustrates only Judith. In the first one’s background, the first door’s „glowing crimson rectangle in the wall” is seen (as an extended rectangle),⁵⁵ then in the other four the excited and dynamic Judith hurrying to open some of the doors is portrayed. As for the last picture, it shows the „most beautiful woman” wearing the cape and a diamond crown, with the door being shut behind her. The tracing and colour dynamics of Kass’s pictures (blue, red, white and black, or any of them combined), gestures and mimics of the characters on the one hand indicate the dramatic actions, psychological processes and motivations, while on the other hand they overwrite, emphasize or compress them. Thus they not only stand in an interreferential relation with the text,⁵⁶ but the pictures also establish relations with each other that carry a meaning-constituting function, regardless of the text, existing separately. János Kass’s symbolics, quoting the artist is „the non-eternal struggle between the opposite sexes, black and white, positive and negative. The conflict rooted in the ultimate distinctness of man and woman is fate (...) It has been clear from the very first moment that emotions must be expressed with the use of colours. The contrast of blue, red, white and black builds up the rhythm of consecutive sheets.”⁵⁷

In the works of Balázs and Bartók, the attribute for the transformation history of the symbolics of darkness-light-darkness functions as the measuring value for love trials (in close connection with the opening of doors), that is, the slow death of love, and in line with this passing away, the growing power of female curiosity. In case of both the mystery play and the opera this symbolics determine the internal dynamic composition which moves together with the process of love’s trial, meaning the dramaturgy of the doors’ opening and their relating meaning constitutioning process.

Agreeing with Ernő Lendvai analyzing the opera, we can declare that it is framed by „the symbolics of light and darkness, day and night, life and death”. The opera emerges from the »night« to reach its peak after con-

⁵⁴ KASS 1994. 13.

⁵⁵ BALÁZS – BARTÓK 1979. 13.

⁵⁶ From a semiotic point of view, this relation is determined by Áron Kibédi as follows: „word and image are separate from each other, yet they appear on the same page. As a matter of fact, they are in interreferential relation, as they relate to each other.” KIBÉDI VARGA 1997. 307.

⁵⁷ BALÁZS – BARTÓK 1979. 13.

stantly rising at the time of the opening of the 5th door, in the amazing »light chord« of Bluebeard's empire. Then, with the gradual darkening of the stage it again falls back into the night. The formal arch drawn between polarities of light and darkness is followed by the opera's bridge-structure, too, and it piles up the scenes into a pyramid-shape. Thus the three positive images (doors 3, 4 and 5) are arranged in the middle, while the negative ones are placed (doors 1,2, 6 and 7) on the wings of the opera. (...) The major tonality axiom of the opera is the identification of the F minor and C key counterpoints with darkness and light, respectively. (...) The low of the opera, the »night-themes« of the beginning and the end are all rooted accordingly in the F minor pole, the opera's peak is the »light-theme« of the 5th door, erupting from the C key (...) Bartók places not only the F minor and C key poles in opposition, but the *la* and *do* (minor and major) *pentatony*, too, and these represent the most fundamental tonal concepts in the opera."⁵⁸

Within the text-music-image compound I will henceforward present the process of love put to the test, building up of the structure (opening the doors, the view inside and the light flowing out), the changes of the darkness-light-darkness symbols that provide the internal structure, along with the meaning-constituting process, thus indicating the aggression of woman's curiosity put into an instrumental function. I will also attempt to create a multi- and intermedial reception, which in individual mediums and intermediality is accompanied by continuous repositioning of the receptive situation. At the same time, I will not fill the given symbols with an exact content, meaning that I will not repeat the various and already existing interpretations regarding meaning (the eternal struggle between man and woman, which struggle is one for ourselves, each other and our love; the hidden layers of man's soul behind the doors; the woman longing to identify herself with the beloved man by entirely getting to know him; or the man, who is forced by his solitude to keep his secrets etc.).

Balázs's mystery play and Bartók's opera basically rely on one single dialogue in a slowly changing stage background, which are actually well-described by Béla Balázs's genuine instructions, precisely depicting the setup and view behind the door, describing the actors' moves as well as the

⁵⁸ LENDVAI 1971. 25-26-27.

Music researcher Ernő LENDVAI's analyses present, beyond the parts characteristic of the quoted musical dramatic sections, the poetry, style, key and tune. Also, they unfold the symbolism and the scenes, what is more, they deal with the dramaturgical laws, scenic variants and lighting effects of the opus. Cf. LENDVAI 1971. 25-58.

colour and strength of the light flowing out. Much as the pictures of János Kass fall into the genre of illustrations, still they are not performed subordinated to the text, but they at times overwrite, prepare or emphasize the libretto, highlighting an interpretation modality, also, sometimes these pictures compress them. Therefore the meaning-constituting function of illustrations is quite complex, and all this is bound to the status of being „in between”, so reception is thus directed not only on the text-to-image, but at the image-to-text meaning-constituting process, too, which already embodies the issue of intermediality. Illustrations only pretend to be subordinated to the text, as they also complement, modify, deform and sometimes corrupt, demoralize and falsify.⁵⁹ Thus one of the conditions to intermediality we can designate to be in its non-matching of text and image, and partial non-compliance. On the other hand, in conjunction with Mihály Szegedy-Maszák, „conducting a discourse on a picture actually means explaining the thesis of its position hidden space and time”.⁶⁰ In our case, I aim at realizing the assigning modality to the basic text’s linearity in time in the positioning of illustrations to one another, while I signal the intermediality of word-image relations, too.

Overwriting the text already takes place during the representation of the second illustration,⁶¹ since here the illustrator gives a perspective to the castle from the outside, as black blocks in the night, surrounded by blood-red thin clouds, while in the script, after the prologue of Regös, based on the instructions of Balázs, the huge, rounded, gothic hall of the castle is shown with characters entering the little iron door of „dazzling white light” framed by the doorway. The first lines of the dialogues are based on a question-answer pattern and directly refer to the prelude, that is when Judith left not only his family, but her fiancé for his unconditional and devoted love for Bluebeard, thus submitting herself to the man’s will: „Bluebeard! If you should dismiss me, / I would never leave your protal, / I would rest upon your threshold.” Kass’s third picture portaying Bluebeard,⁶² the fourth one portraying Judith,⁶³ both full-figure pictures, forecast their relationship, namely Bluebeard’s pride in contrast with Judith’s submission. Kass’s Bluebeard proudly stands in the blinding whiteness of the iron door, his contrasted black silhouette appearing as a solid, heavy block, so the deter-

⁵⁹ STEWART 1992:17.

⁶⁰ SZEGEDY-MASZÁK 2007. 35.

⁶¹ BALÁZS – BARTÓK 1979. 9. (Unnumbered page following numbered ones.)

⁶² Ibid. 11. (Unnumbered page following numbered ones.)

⁶³ Ibid. 13. (Unnumbered page following numbered ones.)

mined lines and the relative greatness dominate the picture. He is looking down from above, his knit brows seem to indicate his suspicion toward the strength and endurance of Judith's love for him. Differently from the proportions in previous pictures, Kass places Judith in the lower third of the illustration, indicating and preparing the hierarchy of the two characters. She also has her eyebrows knit, similarly to Bluebeard, yet due to her positioning, too, her countenance rather suggests worrying and cluelessness than suspicion. According to János Kass, Judith's peculiar headgear originates from Mary's Garden, close to Aristotle's village of birth.⁶⁴ In order to support contrast and emphasis, we can take the only picture with two figures,⁶⁵ the picture showing the scene before the last door was opened, which unequivocally indicates the hierarchy changed compared to the beginning of the opus by having altered proportions between man and woman, with the woman carrying the dominant role. This is backed up by the adverse relations between man and woman, with the two single-figure pictures at the beginning of the opus, having Judith in a subordinated position there. Compression of meaning is illustrated by, among others, the image of the torture chamber, as we can see below.

After the closure of the little iron door mentioned above, Judith, facing the darkness of the castle takes upon the task herself to bring light and warmth into it: „I shall dry up all the dampness; / With my own warmth, I shall dry it! / I shall warm the chilly stone walls; with my body, I shall warm them! / Won't you let me, won't you let me, / Bluebeard! / Let me light into your castle! / Let's tear down the walls together! / Let the winds come, and the sunshine, and the sunshine. / We shall make your castle glitter!”⁶⁶ then she reckons that opening the seven doors of the castle can help her in doing so. When opening the first one, she glimpses instruments of torture and bleeding walls. With a bloody background and positioning from all directions, János Kass's illustration displays the same paired white instruments of torture, two from above and under, differing in length, and two black ones, also of different size pointing from left and right. The two types of instruments meet according to the golden ration. A part indicates the whole, the collection of torturing instruments in the chamber. This stylized, tipped shape can also represent a stake, broach, nail, knives or the bloody wall, whatever Judith can see, according to the script. Therefore, this simplified repetition of the tipped shape enables us for all the hermenutic capa-

⁶⁴ VASS 2004. 108.

⁶⁵ BALÁZS – BARTÓK 1979. 37.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 15.

bility to be filled up carried by the text. Its meaning-constituting is complex, because of its compressed nature, and this is what manifests in the illustrations of the house of weaponry, the treasure chamber and the flower garden, too. According to Balázs's and Bartók's instructions, „the door opens, forming a blood-red frame in the wall, like a wound. From deep behind the door, a red glow casts a long beam to the lobby's floor”, which is later seen by Judit as a „stream of radiance”, while „bloody waters” by Bluebeard.⁶⁷ Three points of view, three value levels. In the opera, from deep behind the first door „with the sharply aching trills and screams of piccolos the F-sharp – do pentatonic theme rings out via seething-rippling-shivering harp and tooter effects (...), to hich, upon shifting to the counter key C a „blood them” connects to sordino trumpets.”⁶⁸

In the text, the opening of the second door is justified with Judith's love, slightly overwriting the libretto. The countenance of Judith in Kass's version is determined, yet worried. Behind the second door you can find the house of weaponry, and the girl marvels at the man's cruelty and power. However, this time no answer comes to the repeated questions of the prince („Fearful?”). The red and yellow, but still „disturbing” light coming from the doorframe is repeatedly believed to be a „Stream of radiance” by Judith. She, despite the recurring warnings of Bluebeard, him uttering „Take care, take care of my castle, / Take care, take care of us, Judith!” supports the justification of her request emphasizing her love, „I have come here for my true love. / Here I am, belonging to you. / You must show me every corner, / You must open all the door-locks!”⁶⁹ It is after this reasoning that Judith changes for the first time, using her feelings of affection to persuade Bluebeard, that is, her curiosity has become manipulative. Kass's illustration⁷⁰ intensifies Judith 'victory' achieved by means of manipulation, it being the only Judith-portrayal where a smile appears on her face. However, it towers above other Judith-portrayals by using other kinesic elements, such as the gesture of hands, posture, which are used to emphasize her dynamic figure over-excited by curiosity, made to be in a rush by the pleats of her dress. Bartók creates an astounding contrast between the two figures during the opening of the doors and the growth of light: “Judith sings in a dominant (!), while Bluebeard sings in a subdominant (!) key (...) according to Judith, with the symbolic increase and extension of the light, the orchestra's tones

⁶⁷ Ibid. 17-18.

⁶⁸ LENDVAI 1993. 79.

⁶⁹ BALÁZS – BARTÓK 1979. 23-24.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 25.

expand, too (...), and this expansion is repressed by Bluebeard without any transition to a minor third ambitus. Yet the most efficient contrast is shown by harmonization.”⁷¹

The prince hands over the further three keys that whatever she saw, she should never ask questions. Behind the third door is the treasure chamber, „the light behind it is golden, throwing a beam of light across the floor alongside the other two.” Bluebeard offers its treasures to Judith, who is admired by them, however, she realizes that there are blood stains on both the gemstones and the crown. Now Bluebeard urges the opening of the fourth door: „Let the light in – open, open...!”⁷² The beautiful garden of his castle is hidden behind this one, illuminating with blue and green light. Bluebeard asks Judith to look after the latter. However, she notices that the ground beneath the huge flowers is bloody, and she keeps on asking who had taken care of the garden before, to no avail: Bluebeard does not answer her: „Judith, love me, never question. / See the radiance of my castle? / Judith, open the fifth door!” Behind it a beautiful view to Bluebeard’s empire opens up, and „bright light floods the scene”.⁷³ Although Judith acknowledges the beauty and greatness of Bluebeard’s country, she still takes notice of the clouds casting bloody shades. Thus, these three doors represent entirely positive views to Judith, but the woman can see the negative qualities, symbolized by the motive of blood. After opening the five doors, the prince is contented with the full brightness of his castle, and with admiration and appreciation invites Judith to kiss and love him. Finally, she has achieved her objective by succeeding in bringing light and warmth into the castle, which is appreciated by Bluebeard: „See the castle’s sparkling radiance, / Blessed woman, you have done this, / Blessed are you woman, blessed. (...) Come to me, I yearn to hold you!”⁷⁴ Bluebeard’s love for Judith seems to have been fulfilled, yet she does not appreciate this affection.

Summarizing the scenes of the first five doors it can be stated that Judith’s value concept always the opposite way. The reason is that in the case of the 1st and 2 doors, which, according to the author’s instructions, were supposed to be regarded as negative ones, was deemed positive by Judith. On the other hand, as regards the 3rd, 4th and 5th doors, considered as valuable and positive ones by Bluebeard, he proudly showed them to others, offering all of them to the woman, well, much as Judith appreciates their value, she discovers their negative elements, too.

⁷¹ LENDVAI 1993. 81.

⁷² BALÁZS – BARTÓK 1979. 26.

⁷³ Ibid. 28.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 32.

This confrontation is expressed by János Kass with the total profile image of the the figures,⁷⁵ as well as with the static nature of Bluebeard's posture and the dynamic one of Judith's. Similarly, Judith gets confronted with her own set of values previously declared at the first door by bringing light and warmth into the castle, as when it is achieved during the opening of the 5th door, yet „blinded, she covers her eyes with her hand”,⁷⁶ yet it is not her but Bleabeard who delights at the light, the shining. Unlike him, Judith makes no comment on this, and does not return this confession of love. Instead, she demands that the further two closed doors be open. János Kass highlights this love confession, yet we can only see Bluebeard. The kinesic elements in his illustration,⁷⁷ that is Bluebeard's dignity, the reverence gently indicated with his hands, his being in love can at the same time represent his satisfaction about his glorious castle to us.

According to Ernő Lendvai, „each of the series of doors opening up act as a sealed painting, a static sound field”, while „the dialogue of the two characters moves on two independent dimensions”.⁷⁸ The fifth door in the opera's music reached its peak in its big *C major* chord: „The volume reaches its peak with Judith's scream and an enormous organ ringing! (...) at this point, not the »most tense« sounding modalities are played (...), but the most fundamental ones: the clear *pentatonic* and the *major scale* chords.”⁷⁹ The music in the love scene at the 5th door, as well as their relationship is „spoiled by Judith's behaviour (...) Since it is Bluebeard who is desparate to protect and maintain the tonal order to the end, while Judith aspires to achieve desintegration of the tonality order: with every step or hers she sings a tune of dictance (...) The tonal waiving of the scene thus gradually becomes and dissolves into moves of distance.”⁸⁰ By the end of the scene we are reaching the counterpoint of the big *C-major*.

Therefore, the real turning point, both in the libretto and the music or in the images, is the opening of the 5th door. So far, aggression has been linked to Bluebeard's character, in an indirect or direct manner, regarding the torture chamber and the house of weaponry in the castle, and also concerning the blood-motifs in the view behind the 3rd, 4th and 5th doors. Starting from the libretto's dramatic turning point, aggression changes gender, and from then on then the thus far natural female curiosity becomes

⁷⁵ Ibid. 33., 35.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 28.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 33.

⁷⁸ LENDVAI 1993. 84.

⁷⁹ LENDVAI 1971. 28.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 51.

aggressive, a Freudian 'drive', towards full recognition. The aggressive passion in the woman's cognitive curiosity distorts the image of their world, so Judith does not realize the genuine nature of Bluebeard's love, and likewise, she can't appreciate the glittering castle emerging as a consequence of the opening of the 5th door. Her curiosity now aggressive, longing for cognition, it energizes Judith's behaviour. János Kass expressly describes this intense and forceful dynamics and scurry, with the flitting pleats of her dress, all in contrast with the static dignity of Bluebeard in the previous scene.

Despite Bluebeard's warning („It shall not shine more brightly.") Judith does not want to see closed doors in front of her. Her will to get to know the other ones, the 6th and 7th doors here can be connected to a certain „aggression related to possessing, owning", using Vilmos Csányi's standardization.⁸¹ Upon the opening of the 6th door „there is a deep moan", then it becomes slightly darker in the hall. This brightness built up to the 5th door is constructed with geometric punctuality in the text. Judith sees a „Silent, tranquil stretch of water", gaining its water from women's tears from the past. The colour symbolics in János Kass's illustration indicate that a fundamental change has taken place in Judith's personality at the 6th door: love's red has disappeared from the background, and Judith's black dress and the blue background detail⁸² may remind us of the second illustration of the series; darkness awaits us in the night. After the 6th door, this altered blue and black, and white colour does not only reconnects Judith's figure to darkness in the process of reception, but also places it into a forecasting function. The reason is the it uses colours (blue-black-white) describing the women in the past after the picture with dual figures. The opera is built up similarly, each pole has its counterpole,⁸³ thus the „sinking" created with counterpoles after the buildup and elevation of the 5th door up until the end of the opus. At the 6th and 7th doors the „distance-model" prevails, as, according to Ernő Lendvai, it „eliminates the tonal sense", tonality of the other. For instance, C major becomes a „distance-model" with the adding of A flat minor, as it soon happens so at the 7th door.⁸⁴

The prince is simply unwilling to open the 7th door. His latest love confession („You're the radiance of my castle, / kiss me, kiss me, never question.") is interrupted by Judith's jealousy („Tell me, Bluebeard, tell me, /

⁸¹ CSÁNYI 2000. 128.

⁸² BALÁZS – BARTÓK 1979. 35.

⁸³ LENDVAI 1971. 38-39.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 45., 47.

Bluebeard of the loves who came before me... / (...) Tell me how you loved them; / were they fairer than I? / better than I?") and becomes broken off by her suspicion („I know, I know, I know Bluebeard, / know the source of all those teardrops. / All your former women lie there / in their own blood spilled in murder. / Oh, the rumours! Truthful rumours!"). Here is the point where Judith's aggressive curiosity is the strongest, almost obsessed, all because of the alleged beauty of women from the past. As a matter of fact, it is almost frustrated aggression. According to Vilmos Csányi, this modernity is the most frequent and at the same time strongest aggression type.⁸⁵ Quoting Jenő Ranschburg's summary: today's psychoanalysis considers aggression a mechanism which are created due to external circumstances, frustrating situations, these are situations generated as a consequence of attempting to prevent or delay targeted behaviour forms, and are directed towards the outside, the outer environment. Past experience and social learning have a major role in the birth of aggression.⁸⁶ Judith's goal is to defeat Bluebeard's resistance. The aggression of her her highly increased curiosity becomes ranking-generator, which Kass splendidly demonstrates with the proportion. He also emphasizes the altered dominance, even with the direction of looks: Judith, as a figure grown to be gigantic looks down from above to the prince placed in the right bottom corner.⁸⁷ At this point in Bartók's opera, before the opening of the seventh chamber „the disagreement between Bluebeard and Judith had never emerged to be so intense, during the course of action the roles, both in their motivational and harmonical image, were now sharply separated and distinct. The man in love is characterized by soaring music flowing like a melody; from behind the flattening words of Judith the face of a cunning, what's more, almost desparately fantic woman looks back to us, even the tone, contrary to Bluebeard, is typically and strictly mono-centered: it obsessively returns to the G sound and keeps repeating (...).” The part most critical, and almost disorganized in its tonality is the lobby of the seventh door, as here „we are entering the emotional nadir, the most touching opposition of the whole drama.”⁸⁸

Upon the opening of the 7th door, „the fifth and sixth doors close with a sigh. The stage darkens considerably”⁸⁹ – according to Balázs's instructions. The characters become visible in the „silver moonlight” glowing out

⁸⁵ CSÁNYI 2000. 128.

⁸⁶ RANSCHBURG 2004. 94-96.

⁸⁷ BALÁZS – BARTÓK 1979. 37.

⁸⁸ LENDVAI 1993. 96-97., 101.

⁸⁹ BALÁZS – BARTÓK 1979. 39.

of the door. Judith is amazed to see the women alive, and shall call herself a „shabby” beggar as compared to any of them. the three women of the past are the mistresses of dawn, noon and the evening, they look after the prince’s garden, collect his treasure, and make his empire great. By changing the earlier colour, symbolics of Judith’s appearance and using black-blue-white colours at the 6th door János Kass way previously predicted to the observer that Judith would once belong to the women of the past.

After the third woman had left to enter the seventh door, the process of darkening continues. Her curiosity having already become aggressive due to her suspicion and jealousy she had not recognized the prince’s love toward her, she did not stand the proof of love, she did not remain faithful to the original goal matching her womanly features set and fulfilled by herself, and, finally, she was not content with having been able to fill up the prince’s castle with brightness and light. Thus the strict order of the changed fate is set up by the prince. The tonal unity of this section is secured by organ points, which slope down on steps of whole notes (...) thus connecting F minor to the C key, the counterpoint. (...) yet this going down seem to have taken place only to create the opportunity of ultimate apotheosis: „You are lovely, you are lovely, you are lovely, you were my most special woman, most special woman!” (...) ⁹⁰ In the last image, János Kass presents the legal mistress of the night as „the ending apotheosis, with the gold and the black lock stretching behind Judith’s crown and cope finish the hopeless story.” ⁹¹

Bluebeard

(Bluebeard confronts Judith in silence for some time. The fourth door closes.)

Night fell when I found the fourth one.

Judith

Bluebeard, stop it! Bluebeard, stop it!

Bluebeard

Darkness loomed beneath the starlight.

Judith

No more! No more! Still, I’m with you!

Bluebeard

Your pale features bathed in starlight,
your hair lashed away the night clouds.

All the nights are your own since then.

⁹⁰ LENDVAI 1993. 108.

⁹¹ KASS 1994. 14-15

(Bluebeard goes to the third door and takes the crown, mantle and pendant from the threshold where Judith had left them. The third door now closes.

Bluebeard places the mantle on Judith's shoulders.)

Yours the mantle bright with starlight –

Judith

Bluebeard, spare me! Bluebeard, spare me!

Bluebeard

Yours the crown of night with diamonds.

Judith

No! No! Bluebeard! Take them all back!

Bluebeard

You have my most precious treasure.

Judith

No! No! Bluebeard! Take them all back!

Bluebeard

You are lovely, you are lovely,
you were my most special woman,
most special woman!

(Judith and Bluebeard stare at each other. Weighed down by the mantle and bowing her crowned head, Judith walks along the beam of silver light following the other women through the seventh door. It closes.)

Now it shall be night forever.

Always... Always...

(The stage is covered in complete darkness in which Bluebeard disappears.)

Judith's aggression has completely been neutralized by the „compliance” due to her belonging to the group (women).” The following quote by Vilmos Csányi tells us about this form of behaviour, a type of termination of aggression: „When one obeys to the rules, in effect one obeys to an impersonalized dominance. The dominant person is replaced by a new rule, endorsed by the community, and then the submissive individual carries out the instruction embodied in the new order.”⁹² Judith obediently joins the line of women, this we can call „dominance of a rule”. Here the person giving instructions and orders is Bluebeard, and he is the one determining the hierarchy, too. Thus Judith becomes mistress of the night, the most beautiful and delightful of them all. The prince of János Kass holds a crown in his hands, which at the same time appears as a cage, and oscillates as a folk metaphor. She occupies her position among the other women behind

⁹² CSÁNYI, 2000. 136-137.

the seventh door, her fate has now been fulfilled, the castle has become dark again.

In comparison with the fundamentals of the tale, a multiple shift of polarity take place as much as aggression is concerned, that is verbally, in images and music. On the one hand, the woman turns out to be aggressive, this latter driven by curiosity. Aggression of curiosity at first is manipulative, then it becomes frustrating by means of total cognizance. Female curiosity longing to have knowledge of everything contorts real perception and thus destroys the love that was thought to be a redeeming one. Luckily, it is the end of this love that enables one to realize the real form and value of this love.

Just as God has forbidden the first couple to take a fruit from the tree of knowledge, despite the ban they still commit the original sin. Similarly to their original sin, in Perrault's tale the wife opens, despite the ban, the door of the forbidden chamber, or does Judith the same in Balázs's mystery play to the seven doors. In the 20th century Bluebeard stories of Balázs, Bartók and Kass, the death sentence is directed at unconditional love, indirectly at Judith and Bluebeard. Moreover, aggressive female curiosity turns out to be the tool of punishment, and the killer of redeeming love. At the same time, to provide them some comfort, the death of their love yet provides eternal life to Judith behind the seventh door, and, her being the most beautiful of all the women, integrates into the order set up by Bluebeard, and in the end becomes the mistress of the night. Consequently, the fate of the woman bearing light will the same as man's, that is darkness.

References

- BALÁZS 1908. – BALÁZS Béla, *Maeterlinck*, Nyugat, 1908/8. 446-454.
- BALÁZS 1960. – BALÁZS Béla, *A kékszakállú herceg vára*, Kass János rajzaival, Bóka László utószavával. Budapest, Magyar Helikon, 1960.
- BALÁZS 1974. – BALÁZS Béla, *Halálesztika* = BALÁZS Béla, *Halálos fiatalság. Drámák, tanulmányok*, szerk. Fehér Ferenc és Radnóti Sándor, előszó: Fehér Ferenc, Budapest, Magyar Helikon, 1974, 285-328.
- BALÁZS – BARTÓK 1979. – BALÁZS Béla - BARTÓK Béla, *A kékszakállú herceg vára* (Kass János rajzaival, Kroó György utószavával), Budapest, Zeneműkiadó, 1979.
- BARTÓK 1991. – BARTÓK Béla, *A kékszakállú herceg vára, op.11. opera egy felvonásban*, A Budapesti Filharmóniai Zenekart Ferencsik János vezényli, Judit: Palánkay Klára, Kékszakállú: Székely Mihály. Hungaroton, HCD 11001. Budapest, 1991.

- BÉNYEI 1997. – BÉNYEI József: *Kékszakállú elégiai*, Miskolc, Felsőmagyarország Kiadó, 1997.
- BETTELHEIM 2000. – BETTELHEIM, Bruno, *A mese bűvölete és a bontakozó gyermeki lélek*, ford: Kúnos László, Szombathely, Corvina, 2000.
- CSÁNYI 1999. – CSÁNYI Vilmos, *Az emberi természet. Humánetológia*, Budapest, Vince Kiadó, 1999.
- CSÁNYI 2000. – CSÁNYI Vilmos: *Van-e ott valaki? (Válogatott írások)*, Budapest, Typotex Kiadó, 2000.
- CSÜRY 2006. 201. – CSÜRY Andrea, *Charles Perrault = Közelítések a meséhez*, szerk. Bálint Péter, Debrecen, Didakt Kft., 2006.
- ESTERHÁZY 1994. – ESTERHÁZY Péter, *A kékszakállú herceg csodálatos élete = ESTERHÁZY Péter, Írások*, Budapest, 1994. 533-542.
- FEHÉR 1974. – FEHÉR Ferenc, *Nárcisszusz drámái és teóriái = BALÁZS Béla, Halálesztétika = BALÁZS Béla, Halálos fiataltság. Drámák, tanulmányok*, szerk. Fehér Ferenc és Radnóti Sándor, előszó: Fehér Ferenc, Budapest, Magyar Helikon, 1974, 7-30.
- FRANCE 1959. – FRANCE, Anatole, *Kékszakáll hét felesége = Kékszakáll hét felesége és más elbeszélések*, ford. Murányi-Kovács Endre, Budapest, Európa, 1959.
- GORILOVICS 2006. – GORILOVICS Tivadar, *Kékszakáll – kérdőjelekkel = Közelítések a meséhez*, szerk. Bálint Péter, Debrecen, Didakt Kft., 2006.
- GYÖRI 2010. –GYÖRI Orsolya, *A vég és határoltság szerepe Balázs Béla Halálesztetikájában és A Kékszakállú herceg várában* (<http://www.filmtett.ro/cikk/1179/a-veg-es-hataroltság-szerepe-balazs-bela-halalesztetikajaban-es-a-kekszakallu-herceg-varaban> 2010.03.15
- KALLÓS 1977. – KALLÓS Zoltán, *Balladák könyve. Élő erdélyi és moldvai magyar népballadák*, Budapest, Magyar Helikon, 1977.
- KASS 1994. – KASS János, *Gondolatok a könyvillusztrációról = Szemiotikai szövegtan 7. A multimediális kommunikátorok szemiotikai textológiai megközelítéséhez*, szerk: Petőfi S. János – Békési Imre – Vass László, Szeged, JGYTF Kiadó, 1994. 9-17.
- KIBÉDI VARGA 1997. – KIBÉDI VARGA Áron, *A szó- és kép viszonyok leírásának ismérvei = Kép, feno-mén, valóság. I.*, szerk: Bacsó Béla, Bp., Kijarat, 1997, 300-320.
- KROÓ 1980. – KROÓ György, *Bartók-kalauz*, Budapest, Zeneműkiadó, 1980.
- KOVÁCS 1994. – KOVÁCS Ágnes, *Mesék illusztrátora = Lúdanyó meséi*, szerk. Tóth Emese, ford. Szűcs János, Budapest, Kossuth, 1994.

- LENDVAI 1971. – LENDVAI Ernő, *Bartók költői világa*, Budapest, Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1971.
- LENDVAI 1993. – LENDVAI Ernő, *Bartók dramaturgiája, Színpadi művek és a Cantata Profana*, Budapest, Akkord Zenei Kiadó, 1993.
- MÁTÉ 1995. – MÁTÉ Zsuzsanna, „Szép eszéről, szép lelkéről...” *Tanulmányok a fiatal Fülep Lajosról és művészetfilozófiájáról*, Szeged, JGYTF Kiadó, 1995.
- MIHÁLY 2008. – MIHÁLY Emőke, „Mint nyugtalanító, titkos gondolatok élnek...” *Balázs Béla elméleti írásainak egy mai megszólítása*, Kolozsvár, KOINÓNIA, 2008.
- PEKÁR 1909. – PEKÁR Gyula, *A kékszakállú herceg és egyéb elbeszélések*, Budapest, Singer és Wolfner, 1909.
- PERRAULT 1992. – PERRAULT, Charles: *A kékszakállú herceg*, = *Csipkerózsza. Charles Perrault legszebb meséi*, szerk. és ford. Rónay György, Budapest, Aqua, 1992.
- RANSCHBURG 2004. – DR. RANSCHBURG Jenő, *Félelem, harag, agresszió*. Budapest, Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 2004.
- SÓFI 2010. – SÓFI Boglárka, *Csend. Most a Halálesztétika szól hozzátok...* Ex Symposium, 2010/71., 9-17.
- STEWART 1992. – STEWART, Philip, *Engraven Desire: Eros, Image and Text in the French Eighteenth Century*, Durham, London, Duke University Press, 1992.
- STRANOBINSKI 2009. – STRANOBINSKI, Jean, *Ariadné és Kékszakáll, avagy a hasztalanul visszanyert szabadság*, Nagyvilág, LIV. 2009/3, 254-259. ford. Lörinszky Ildikó
- SZEGEDY-MASZÁK 2007. – SZEGEDY-MASZÁK Mihály, *Szó, kép, zene. A művészetek összehasonlító vizsgálata*, Pozsony, Kalligram, 2007.
- TÉGLÁS 1988. – *Babits és Balázs Béla (Levelek, cikkek, tanulmányok)*, szerk. Téglás János, Budapest, 1988.
- VARGA 2007. – VARGA Emőke, *Kalitka és korona, Kass János illusztrációi*, Budapest, L'Harmattan, 2007, 167-200.
- VASS 2004. – VASS László, *Balázs Béla – Bartók Béla – Kass János A kékszakállú herceg vára. Szélgjegyzetek a több mediális összetevőből felépített kommunikátumok megközelítéséhez*. = Szemiotikai szövegtan 16. szerk: Petőfi S. János – Békési Imre – Vass László, Szeged, JGYTF Kiadó, 2004. 99-144.