

## Atmospheric Adaptation as Cultural Translation<sup>1</sup>

(Ádám Bodor – Gábor Ferenczi: *The Possibilities of Making Friends*, 2007)

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**Abstract.** In the theoretical part of my article, based primarily on the works of Gernot Böhme, Peter Zumthor, Mădălina Diaconu, Juhani Pallasmaa, I define the atmosphere as a complex phenomenon in which the aesthetic, social and geocultural potentials are simultaneously present. It equally depends on the represented environment, on medial representation as well as on the receiver's (cultural, social and emotional) education. Analysing Gábor Ferenczi's adaptation of short stories of Ádám Bodor, *The Possibilities of Making Friends* (2007), I investigate the creation and effect of atmosphere. The film employs narrative intermissions, but connects them into a (detective story-like) linearity, that closes with a punchline and applies the duality of optic and haptic visuality, keeps its viewers curious while also bodily involving them. This mode of cultural translation draws the viewers, hopefully not only Eastern Europeans socialised in the atmosphere of communism, into the community atmosphere of a dual dictatorial world of interwoven codes of observation and intimacy.

**Keywords:** atmosphere, adaptation, contact zones, intimacy, surveillance, landscape, optical and haptic visuality, Ádám Bodor, Gábor Ferenczi

### Atmosphere as Intercorporeal Aesthetic Category

In the complex reception of the Hungarian writer Ádám Bodor's works there appears to be consensus in the sense that the author's writings are characterised by a powerful and unique atmosphere. Atmosphere, which is created between nature/architecture/city and their reader/perceiver, is the manifestation of human affectivity (e.g. perceiving nature as landscape), this is why it carries *aesthetic potential*. In his 1991 study which has become a basic reference ever since, Gernot Böhme introduces atmosphere as a new aesthetic category: "Atmosphere can only become a concept, however, if we succeed in accounting for the peculiar intermediary status of atmospheres between subject and object" (Gernot Böhme 1993, 114). It is not localizable, not clearly definable, this is why it is related to the qualities of uncertain and obscure – as Böhme wrote, "'atmosphere' is meant to indicate something indeterminate, difficult to express, even if it is only in order to hide the speaker's own speechlessness" (Böhme 1993, 113). Still, it is evidently spatial, it has *spatial dimension*

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similar to the aura. Referring to Hermann Schmitz, Böhme says: “Atmospheres are always spatially ‘without borders, disseminated and yet without place, that is, not localizable’. They are affective powers of feeling, spatial bearers of moods” (Böhme 1993, 119). *Bodily presence* is an important part of it: “Atmospheres are evidently what are experienced in bodily presence in relation to persons and things or in spaces” (Böhme 1993, 119). At the same time, atmosphere also has a *synthetic function* as the common reality of the perceived and the perceiver.<sup>2</sup> It is the *quality* of a feeling extended as (indeterminate) spatial presence. The sphere of the perceived evokes an atmosphere which can have an effect through affective participation, through the bodily presence of the perceiver.<sup>3</sup> As the Romanian philosopher Mădălina Diaconu summarises:

“Finally, when we speak of atmosphere we mean the air in a particular place and, by extension, the pervading mood of a place or a place or situation, its aura or flair. Correspondingly, the atmosphere of a city is the total impression of the urban reality which people share with one another in that city. (...) they [atmospheres] are neither purely objective, so that people would react instinctively to objective features of a space, nor purely subjective, that is, mere projections of one’s affective disposition into a basically neutral environment, but express a specific interaction between subject and object. Nor is the experience of atmosphere abstract knowledge, like reading a map. It requires very corporeal presence in situ, as the necessary condition for feeling it: you have to be there and move through the space in order to feel the atmosphere” (Mădălina Diaconu 2011, 228–229).

Thus, atmosphere requires bodily presence, it surrounds and covers the perceiver, and at the same time the intensity of a feeling is extrapolated through/within it. Intensity – according to Gertrud Lehnert – is formed within the encounter with people, things or spaces, where the perceiving person becomes “grabbed” through the aroused interest.<sup>4</sup> Feelings are also bound to bodily presence, as Lehnert writes: “Feeling itself is totally present and not really reproducible (in the sense of re-living, re-activation). However, the feeling creates the possibility of remembering things, events, people and spaces” (Gertrud Lehnert 2011, 16–

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<sup>2</sup> See: “Atmosphere designates both the fundamental concept of a new aesthetics and its central object of cognition. Atmosphere is the common reality of the perceiver and the perceived. It is the reality of the perceived as the sphere of its presence and the reality of the perceiver, insofar as in sensing the atmosphere s/he is bodily present in a certain way. This synthetic function of atmosphere is at the same time the legitimization of the particular forms of speech in which an evening is called melancholy or a garden serene. If we consider it more exactly, such a manner of speech is as legitimate as calling a leaf green” (Böhme 1993, 122).

<sup>3</sup> See: “Atmosphere is the common reality of the perceiver and the perceived. It is the reality of the perceived as the sphere of its presence and the reality of the perceiver, insofar as in sensing the atmosphere s/he is bodily present in a certain way” (Böhme 1993, 122).

<sup>4</sup> See: “Intensität kommt in der Begegnung mit Menschen, Dingen oder Räumen zustande, die Aufmerksamkeit erzeugen und die wahrnehmende Person ‘ergreifen’. Die Intensität von Eindrücken und Gefühlen ist wesentlich für die Qualität von Wahrnehmungen, sie macht Ereignisse und Dinge bedeutsam, hebt sie anderen gegenüber hervor und macht sie überhaupt erst erinnerbar” (Gertrud Lehnert 2011, 16).

17).<sup>5</sup> This is why feeling and atmosphere get close to each other in Hermann Schmitz's interpretation; atmosphere can be grabbed as extended feeling-space situated on the side of the body's space: "Atmosphere in this sense is a frameless, indivisibly extended occupation of a surfaceless space" (Hermann Schmitz 2011, 89).<sup>6</sup> As emanation, it floats, it is formed in the co-presence of the subjective and the objective as intersubjective experience. And as such it can create *collective intimacy* as integrating potential. The unique atmosphere of a landscape, a city or a building can turn its perceivers into a community. As Juhani Pallasmaa states:

"Our culture of control and speed has favoured the architecture of the eye, with its instantaneous imagery and distanced impact, whereas haptic and atmospheric architecture promotes slowness and intimacy, appreciated and comprehended gradually as images of the body and the skin. The architecture of the eye detaches and controls, whereas haptic and atmospheric architecture engages and unites. Tactile sensibility replaces distancing visual imagery through enhanced materiality, nearness, identification, and intimacy" (Juhani Pallasmaa 2014, 38).

According to him, the *real* experience of buildings is created out of peripheral vision (and not out of perspectival, fixed spatial vision) through the *sense of imagination*, through the projected (anticipated imaginary) spectacle/vision: "Perspectival space leaves us as outside observers, whereas multi-perspectival and atmospheric space and peripheral vision encloses and enfolds us in its embrace" (Pallasmaa 2014, 38). We get into the atmosphere of a building, which is at the same time our extended space of perception, and the fact that it is not merely subjective is shown by atmosphere's power of creating collective intimacy; we can experience an atmosphere on our own or we can experience it together with others. At the same time, atmosphere can also individualise its perceiver as long as it is grounded on emotional sensitivity (and its individual differences). We perceive atmosphere first as mental formation and then we "comprehend" it rationally. First it touches us (spontaneously), and it is only later that we identify and interpret it:

"It provides the unifying coherence and character for a room, space, place, and landscape, or a social encounter. It is 'the common denominator', 'the colouring' or 'the feel' of the experiential situation. Atmosphere is a mental 'thing', an experiential

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<sup>5</sup> In original: "Das Gefühl selbst ist vollkommen präsentisch, es kann nicht wirklich erinnert werden (im Sinne von: wieder-erlebt, re-aktiviert). Aber das Gefühl bringt die Möglichkeit der Erinnerungen an Dinge, Ereignisse, Menschen und Räume hervor."

<sup>6</sup> See: "Gefühle – wohl zu unterscheiden vom Fühlen als Wahrnehmen oder als affektives Betroffensein von Gefühlen – sind ausgedehnte Atmosphären in einem flächenlosen Raum, einem Gefühlsraum, der sich den unter 2 erwähnten flächenlosen Räumen, darunter dem Raum des Leibes, an die Seite stellt. Raumform, um die es sich handelt. (...) Eine *Atmosphäre* im hier gemeinten Sinn ist eine randlose, unteilbar ausgedehnte Besetzung eines flächenlosen Raumes" (Hermann Schmitz 2011, 89).

property or characteristic that is suspended between the object and the subject. Paradoxically, we grasp the atmosphere of a place before we identify its details or understand it intellectually. In fact, we may be completely unable to say anything meaningful about the characteristics of a situation, yet have a firm image and recall of it, as well as an emotive attitude towards it” (Pallasmaa 2014, 21).

Atmosphere, according to Peter Zumthor, “addresses” emotional perception.<sup>7</sup> This quick pre-intellectual perception is simultaneously multisensorial corporeal experience and polyphonic understanding. Thus atmosphere works similarly to the medium of invisible scent and smell, stimulates imagination as unlocalizable air and presupposes the presence and contribution of the body as (breathing) whole. At the same time, as Hermann Schmitz writes, “atmospheres dispose of such total corporeal vibrations as freshness, total exhaustion or total satisfaction” (Schmitz 2011, 89).<sup>8</sup> Atmosphere is an intercorporeal contact zone, it is outside the body, however, it is inseparable from it as multisensorial space of perception, the basis of which is touch, “the mother of the senses” (Ashley Montagu, see Pallasmaa 2014, 34). According to the etymology of the German language, similarly to the English, feeling also means touching, in other words, feeling means feeling haptically.<sup>9</sup> As Pallasmaa points out:

“All of the senses, including vision, are extensions of the sense of touch: the senses are specialisations of the skin, and all sensory experiences are related to tactility. We can also acknowledge that overpowering atmospheres have a haptic, almost material presence, as if we were surrounded and embraced by a specific substance” (Pallasmaa 2014, 34).

Thus, irresistible atmospheres have a strong presence of materiality, a haptic presence. Referring to Hubert Tellenbach, Diaconu calls the sense of olfaction – as what is between the smell and the taste – a sense of proximity and intimacy and connects it with *memory*: it stores from the present what is not transient, namely the dimension of the atmospherical. (See Diaconu 2007, 42–43.) In other words, the sense of olfaction is in interference with the atmosphere of memories, memories can be evoked through it. However, *evocation* does not necessarily presuppose only an acting subject but also one with whom all this happens. According to Diaconu smell disarms and decentralises its subject. The olfactive subject is simultaneously active and passive, it is no longer the triggering subject but the one exposed to external impacts. Diaconu uses the term *passibilité* borrowed from Jean-François Lyotard for

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<sup>7</sup> See: “Atmosphäre spricht die emotionale Wahrnehmung an, das ist die Wahrnehmung, die unglaublich rasch funktioniert, die wir Menschen offenbar haben, um zu überleben” (Peter Zumthor 2004, 12).

<sup>8</sup> In original: “Atmosphären haben auch die ganzheitlichen leiblichen Regungen, wie Frische, ganzheitliche Müdigkeit, ganzheitliches Behagen.”

<sup>9</sup> See: “Das deutsche Wort “fühlen“ hat etymologisch zu tun mit Betasten, d.h. mit dem haptischen Fühlen;” (Lehnert 2011, 17.)

this in-betweenness. (See Diaconu 2007, 53.) When we breathe, we interiorise the transpiration of other bodies in an intimate way, and fill it with its pleasant or unpleasant character. Besides the aesthetics based on the Kantian “still the noblest”, i.e. vision<sup>10</sup>, olfaction and atmosphere through its function of evoking, triggering memories can also have their place in an aesthetics integrating the senses of smell and touch.

Thus atmosphere as an aesthetic category (Gernote Böhme), as multisensorial bodily experience, as *passibilité* calling forth reception (Mădălina Diaconu), as “energy” with a powerful effect on the senses of olfaction and touch (Peter Zumthor), as the in-betweenness of emanation and perception can be grabbed as an “affective power” (Böhme). As Pallasmaa summarises: “Atmosphere is the overarching perceptual, sensory, and emotive impression of a space, setting, or social situation” (Pallasmaa 2014, 20).

I regard the atmosphere defined above as a complex phenomenon in which the aesthetic, social and geocultural potentials are simultaneously present. It equally depends on the represented environment, on medial representation as well as on the receiver’s (cultural, social and emotional) education. Thus it simultaneously links the works of art to their specific geocultural and natural environment and mediates about them. The works exercise their impact and can be evoked again and again through the intensity of their atmosphere and they resist the mere social gaze through the connection between atmosphere and the aesthetic potential. At the same time, the objectifying atmosphere can be the basis of exoticization. Atmosphere simultaneously carries the potential of localization as characteristic and creates the medium of aesthetic layeredness of nuances. It requires an intimate relation, sensuous “education”, which is organised not merely by vision and cognition, and, according to my hypothesis, it can be a common ground for the social and the aesthetic gazes.

### **Adaptation as Cultural Contact Zone**

The television production *The Possibilities of Making Friends* (2007), directed by Gábor Ferenczi is the adaptation of four short stories by Ádám Bodor. By interweaving the four

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<sup>10</sup> See: “The sense of sight, even if it is not more indispensable than that of hearing, is still the noblest, because among all the senses, it is furthest removed from the sense of touch, the most limited condition of perception: it not only has the widest sphere of perception in space, but also its organ feels least affected (because otherwise it would not be merely sight). Thus sight comes nearer to being a *pure intuition* (the immediate representation of the given object, without admixture of noticeable sensation).” (Kant 2006, 48.) See also: “Which organic sense is the most ungrateful and also seems to be the most dispensable? The sense of *smell*. It does not pay to cultivate it or refine it at all in order to enjoy; for there are more disgusting objects than pleasant ones (especially in crowded places), and even when we come across something fragrant, the pleasure coming from the sense of smell is always fleeting and transient” (Kant 2006, 50-51).

texts, the film highlights their unique common atmosphere as the distinctive mark of the literary texts, which at the same time also depends on some kind of interpretation. The atmosphere is always created as a specificity and as what is the most difficult to grab through the text, through the effect of the text. Thus Gábor Ferenczi's film, while it creates characters, landscapes, spaces and occurrences, also turns the atmospheric effect of the texts into film language. In each others' proximity the literary texts and their adaptation first of all dissolve the misconception that they can replace each other. While the media specificities of film and literature, their uniqueness and irreplaceability are represented through the intermedial relational space, the contact zone resulting from their relation which no longer belongs to either of them also becomes more powerful. At the same time, this intermedial contact zone also reveals the differences of the correlating media. I use the term contact zone according to Mary Louise Pratt in a social, political and intercultural sense, as where the various uses of space, temporalities and cultures meet;<sup>11</sup> at the same time I also use the term according to Doris Bachmann-Medick in an aesthetic and intermedial, interdisciplinary sense in the case of the literary adaptation in question, as what creates the common space of film and literature, the zones of translation.<sup>12</sup>

The narratorial positions of the four short stories (*Our Driver Has a Bad Day*, *A Muggy Morning*, *The Possibilities of Making Friends*, *So We'll See Each Other Then*) simultaneously employ the duality of intimacy and surveillance. In the first short story, as its

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<sup>11</sup> See: "I use this term to refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today. Eventually I will use the term to reconsider the models of community that many of us rely on in reaching and theorizing and that are under challenge today." Mary Louise Pratt: *Arts of the Contact Zone*. Web: <http://www2.fiu.edu/~ereserve/010035191-1.pdf> Last accessed 07. 07. 2016.

<sup>12</sup> See: Doris Bachmann-Medick: *Epistemological and Methodological Dimensions of the Translational Turn*. In Doris Bachmann-Medick: *Cultural Turns: New Orientations in the Study of Culture* Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2016. See also: "Reclaiming mediation processes (that are not necessarily always smooth, always successful, or capable of 'bridging gaps') that are sensitive to translational qualities and differentiation thus enriches much more than the analysis of cultural contacts. Furthermore, the decisive qualities of translation actually also embody the basic elements for a *self-reflection of interdisciplinarity*. Only by exceeding the current limits of explorations at the margins and borders of the disciplines will it be possible to clearly understand the zones of overlap between different disciplines as perhaps conflictual yet productive and readily negotiable zones of translation. This is where the points of interconnection between subjects, problem fields, and cultures – in the sense of readily translatable 'contact zones' – become accessible. It is because of this, among other reasons, that cultural studies/Kulturwissenschaften itself can be seen as translation studies. With its almost programmatic pluralization and transgression of borders, this translational approach to cultural studies demands broadening its horizon to include cultural reflections beyond Western Europe. It is because of this orientation, among other reasons, that cultural studies is equipped to lay bare or even conceptualize translation(al) horizons. These would certainly be more globally accessible than the more culture-specific approaches rooted in the universalistic horizons of the humanities/Geisteswissenschaften and its outmoded role as an orientational and integrative science." Doris Bachmann-Medick / Boris Buden: *Cultural Studies – a Translational Perspective*. Translated by Erika Doucette Web: <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0908/bachmannmedick-buden/en> Last accessed 07. 07. 2016.

title also suggests, with the community subject of “our driver”, in the second one with the female figure eavesdropping in the muggy morning public space (petrol station) the subject positions are inherently placed in some kind of public/common sphere. The private world (a driver’s day, the private conversation between a man and a woman) manifests through others’ *mediation*, the linguistic position is simultaneously informative, mediating and surveilling. The last two short stories focus on private relations, on the possibility of a friendship and on the breaking off of an intimate relationship, however, we experience again the presence of some kind of alienating effect, distancing device, which is inherently present in the private relation: in the third short story *Amirás*, the tenant, cannot easily make friends with the owner of the house for some reason, in the fourth the man breaking off the relationship gives one of his binoculars as a prosthesis creating intimacy instead of himself to his (former) lover, and at the same time interiorises the structure of a surveillance system based on keeping secret in the private sphere of breakup. We can read the man’s decision which he will later carry out on the basis of confidentiality in the last short story entitled *So We’ll See Each Other Then*.

“Dzsoni Kuptor, the former observer of roes, made up his mind while he still was an observer of roes that he would break up with Gizella Weisz. [...] But when she inquired about the new job, Dzsoni Kuptor’s face became stiff: – The world is severe. A new job, that should be enough. I cannot tell you what it is” (Bodor 2016, 39).

The private and the public, the individual and the community, intimacy and surveillance structures appear as inseparable bonds in these human relations and stage one of Ádám Bodor’s most characteristic features: intimacy, the private sphere can be created in the grid of the public, of the community, of surveillance, and language itself is displayed as such a grid. His texts display the ambiguity of interdependence and observing each other also as one feature of Eastern Europeanness. The hotel receptionist tries to decode the hotel driver’s behaviour from unusual external signs and verbal omissions and becomes more and more involved due to the unusual character of the situation. Based on the conversation heard in the petrol station, the eavesdropping woman becomes curious about the relationship of the interlocutors; the house owner will force his attention and friendship onto his tenant; the binoculars as the device of optical intimacy will make this ambiguity medially evident. Still, hypothetically, the binoculars replacing intimacy and serving to bridge distance – through its linguistic ambiguity – become the technical aid of looking into each others’ eyes. Thus it is not only the ridiculing of an imagined/hypotetical route of quest of the dismissed woman, but the text also marks ironically the mediatedness of interpersonal relations. At the same time,

the false male narratorial viewpoint of this short story, which keeps the new job secret, uses this underlying expectation for private separation. This lie also deprives the female subject of her intimacy and alienates her as a surveillor. Surveillance is given, however, it is a private matter – in this case a male private matter – how it is applied, “utilized” in the private sphere and how it is turned into the basic experience of the intimacy of the other subject.

The short story that inspires the title of the film can stage the linguistic difference between friendship and making friends. The house owner, Emerik wants to make friends with his tenant called Amirás. Similarly to the in-between spaces of the other short stories (hotel, petrol station), the rented flat endows the tenant with an Eastern European pseudo-private subject position depending on the owner. The stake of the short story will be whether the two characters are capable of transforming this hierarchical and material structure in the direction of making friends. The possibility is created by the owner’s initiating a conversation and by floating together in the salty water. However, the possibility remains hypothetical; the subjects of making friends are situated in a medium emanating mistrust, they are influenced by this (mental) atmosphere. After the scene of their bathing together we read this dialogue:

“– Mr. Emerik, you want something from me – said Amirás.  
– Sure I do – said Mr. Emerik – I want you to have a good time!” (Bodor 2016, 35.)

The inner surveillance and the mistrust of the subordinated and distrustful Amirás – manifesting in the preconception “you want something from me” – becomes public in his attitude towards a concrete person.

The structure of mutual surveillance and mistrust inherent in interpersonal relations is created in a similar way also in the adaptation dialogues of *Our Driver Has a Bad Day*:

“Receptionist: I haven’t seen Dujmond yet today.  
Juci: Me neither.  
Receptionist: Exactly!  
Juci: But has he seen us?  
Receptionist: You’re right. We’d better get this straight right now.  
Receptionist: The boss asked about you.  
Driver: Thought so.  
Receptionist: I fronted for you this once.  
Driver: You fronted for yourself.  
Receptionist: For myself, sure... But because of you!  
Driver: Well, don’t then!  
Receptionist: We won’t.” (Ferenczi 2007)



The hotel as a transit place (non-place) and workplace is simultaneously the scene of public and private relations. The personal relation at the workplace, the “fronting” for each other takes place within the framework of a panoptical surveillance structure. At the same time, private and common property is not sharply separated in it (the receptionist takes home the coffee from the hotel).

Thus the four short stories create nuances of human relations unfolding within the (Eastern European) panoptic sphere; the ironical linguistic attitude simultaneously familiarises the reader and distances him or her into an observing position.

The narration of the film, launching all the narrative threads in the opening scene(s), applies interruption, intercalation and punch line ending similarly to the short stories, thus it simultaneously has a framework, a non-linear and linear narrative structure, where the absences and contacts, jumps and links equally shape the narrative flow. The most expressive visualization of this structure is provided by the connecting, intersecting and separating roads and travellers transforming nature into landscape as well as by public spaces such as petrol stations, which are the connecting points of the distinct narrative threads and where the travellers can come into contact with other intimacies [Figs.1–4.].



[Figs.1–4.] Roads, travellers, public intersections

Richard Sennett writes about the capital space: “The idea of space as derivative from motion parallels exactly the relations of space to motion produced by the private automobile” (Sennett 2002, 14). This is related to social isolation, to the right to be mute, resulting from the public visibility in cities: “in public places, an isolation directly produced by one’s visibility to others. (...) When everyone has each other under surveillance, sociability decreases, silence being the only form of protection” (Sennett 2002, 15). And about this silence Sennett writes:

“In this society on its way to becoming intimate – wherein character was expressed beyond the control of the will, the private was superimposed on the public, the defense against being read by others was to stop feeling – one’s behavior in public was altered in its fundamental terms. Silence in public became the only way one could experience public life, especially street life, without feeling overwhelmed. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century there grew up in Paris and London, and thence in other Western capitals, a pattern of behavior unlike what was known in London or Paris a century before, or is known in most of the non-Western world today” (Sennett 2002, 27).

Contrary to Western capitals, the passengers of the cars moving in the mountain landscape and in the Eastern European post-industrial public space are driven by a surveillor’s curiosity directed towards each other: There is a girl sitting on the side of the road; the female passenger of the car passing by her asks her husband what she is doing there. This curiosity is at the same time historical/social – the dictatorial conditioning of communism – and cultural, Eastern European, on the other hand [Figs. 5–6.].



[Figs. 5–6.] Intimate silence and curiosity

With its concealments and panoramas, the mountain as narrative space can simultaneously turn into the medium of movement in space and the medium of the observer’s gaze. On the one hand, we can hardly see (we first see with technical amplification) the slowly advancing Dacia in the huge mountain, while a man in leather coat observes the landscape with binoculars [Figs.7–10.].



[Figs. 7–10.] Landscape and observer's gaze

The mountain turns into the medium of encounter and surveillance, into the common space and mood of the voyeur and flaneur in the filmic diegesis. The duality of hiding and merging into the environment and of the grid of surveillance organises the visual strategies of both the natural landscape and the constructed spaces. The grid of observers and observed signals the presence of the represented world in a general surveillance through mediation [Figs.11–16.].







[Figs. 11–16.] Observer's gaze, grid and structure of surveillance

The adaptation alters the short stories through subtle nuances; out of the four narrative threads, it is only one in which the characters speak in Hungarian, but they are also overheard by a curious Romanian woman, who understands the other language, in this way the film places the narrative into a Romanian-Hungarian intercultural contact zone and thus it stages the use of the mixed names of the characters from the short stories [Figs.17–18.].



[Figs. 17–18.] Hungarian speakers and Romanian eavesdropping woman in the petrol station

A nomadic female character links the narrative threads performing the connecting function of the roads or public spaces. However, the male position indicated in connection with the last short story (separation is not contextualised by lie) gets isolated from this female character.

Thus she can leave as the subject of a mutual intimacy, *passibilité*; this is an important change in the film from a gender viewpoint [Figs. 19–20.].



[Figs. 19–20.] Nomadic, animalised and jumper women figure

The dialogues of the short story entitled *The Possibilities of Making Friends* also become understandable from the perspective of the gender codes especially for a spectator not socialised in communism. The mechanism of power revealed in the dialogue of the two men (which consists not only of the strength of the superior position but also of the static nature of subordination) stages Amirás's character as “feminized” through haptic visuality<sup>13</sup> [Figs.21–22.].



[Figs. 21–22.] Perceived (tactile/haptic) landscape

Through the man's attempt of making friends the humanization of the landscape takes place; one teaches the other to swim, then eats from his hand, that is, the landscape becomes the medium of cultural and intimate habits [Figs.23–28.].

<sup>13</sup> For distinction between optical and haptic visuality, and for haptic visuality as possible “feminine kind of visuality” see Laura U. Marks: *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses*. Durham and London : Duke University Press, 2000, 162–164, 170.





[Figs. 23–28.] Landscape and human praxis. Visual framing

The con-sent structure of surveillance and the con-sentiment condition of friendship get merged. Referring to Aristotle, Giorgio Agamben writes:

“The expression that we have rendered as ‘share the pasture together’ (...) means in the middle voice ‘partaking’, and so the Aristotelian expression could simply stand for ‘partaking in the same’. It is essential at any rate that the human community comes to be defined here, in contrast to the animal community, through a living together (syzen acquires here a technical meaning) that is not defined by the participation in a common substance, but rather by a sharing that is purely existential, a con-division that, so to speak, lacks an object: friendship, as the con-sentiment of the pure fact of being. Friends do not share something (birth, law, place, taste): they are shared by the experience of friendship. Friendship is the con-division that precedes every division, since what has to be shared is the very fact of existence, life itself. And it is this sharing without an object, this original con-senting, that constitutes the political” (Agamben 2009, 47).

The female character, however, melts into the landscape both as observer and observed, and will belong to it once and for all; due to the driver's inattentiveness, she gets back to nature and definitely gets out of the panoptical structure. Thus the film recreates the opposition of the classical female closeness to nature vs. male cultural coding. The contact with the landscape seems to be culturally coded from an optical perspective in the case of making friends (the camera lifts into the optical perspective of male friendship also the figure of Amirás, who previously also perceived the landscape haptically, see figures 21–22) while in the case of the dismissed female figure the haptic contact becomes (optically) invisible for the driver [Figs. 29–30.].



[Figs. 29–30.] Optical (with Christian iconography) and haptic visuality

The female figure getting from optical surveillance to haptic closeness melting into the landscape walks on the mountain as a wild animal, she does not follow the order of roads but intersects, jumps through them and thus becomes the passive subject of the narrative closure. (In this way the film transposes the ironical female rambling of the last short story, the quest for intimacy with binoculars into a tragic outcome.) The driver doesn't see her because he moves optically, along the order of roads; the woman hears the approaching car too late because she is elsewhere with her senses, she looks into the binoculars and without the other's gaze (through binoculars) she becomes an imperceptible image. (Paradoxically, she could become visible as a woman only for a thorough pair of binoculars perceiving every motion on the mountain.)

Contrary to the optical (iconographical) perspective of the men's making friends, the female figure gets animalised through haptic representation in the landscape. Thus the woman's (private) trail/route connects the threads and ends the film as the clash between the car regularly moving on the road and the woman animalised in her pain [Fig.31.].



[Fig. 31.] The clash from optical perspective/distance

On the one hand, the film localises the scenes through particularities of nature (e.g. salty lake), through languages and mental structures; on the other hand, those image sequences when the camera, accompanied by the Romanian mountain horn, pans the painting that creates the common space of wildlife and socialist architecture, can be understood as self-reflexive, ironical scenes of the ethnicisation of landscape. The self-irony of visual representation also recreates the subtle (self-)irony of Bodor's texts [Figs. 32–33.].



[Figs. 32–33.] Camera-movement on the painted landscape as visual self-irony

In the film the natural landscape as atmosphere – as what smoothes the ruptures and contacts the routes and narratives – stages surveillance and the experience of being observed. At the same time, with the duality of the surveilled (optical) landscape and the perceived (haptic) landscape it also creates the landscape as the connecting and chiasmic medium of the natural, the human and the cultural. All this makes the role of the camera self-reflexive: the surveilling camera, showing extreme long shots and panoramas, as well as the camera swaying in a handy camera-like manner/melting into the landscape simultaneously require the perspectival/observing and the peripheral/atmospheric perception. This ambiguity folds back on the language of the short stories as well, which transmit (observed) intimacies in an



intimate way – also involving the senses of smell and touch – through which they also (bodily) involve their (Western as well as young) readers (who weren't socialised in communism, but can be sensitive to atmosphere) and initiate them into the historical public surveillance (characteristic of communism).

The analysed adaptation mediates a world based on a post-industrial Eastern European surveillance system, and stages the way surveillance structures the curiosity between interpersonal relationships, human attention, and also the codes of intimacy (see the ironic objectification in the telescope and in the part *So We'll See Each Other Then*). The film interiorises the experience of surveillance through optical extreme long shots and the bodily proximity of haptic representation, creating the pervasive atmosphere of dictatorial regimes, in the sense of the expression “it is in the air”.

The narrative structure built on interruptions (lacks) and ended with punchlines, the cohesion and interchange of observed and observing elements created in optical and haptic representation ask for affective participation, the viewers are drawn in, and thus the film resists the objectifying gaze of colonialisation, exoticisation. It becomes cultural translation in such a way that it offers the experience of the atmosphere of a dictatorship, and turns the viewers from external contemplators into a community. Through staging encounters on roads, the film creates nostalgia, not only in an Eastern-European viewer, for the duality of surveillance and human attentiveness. At the same time, it also highlights that the most powerful element of an observing dictatorial regime is the atmosphere. The dictatorship as community atmosphere has a much deeper effect/consequence because it does not disappear with the elimination of the institutional frameworks: the interiorised mechanisms, resulting in a long transition, are materialised for a long time afterwards as being truly present.

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