articles

# In Search of Meaning in Context: Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*[1]

*By Judit Frigyesi*

> Every culture is the conquering of life, the unification of all manifestations of life (that is, of course, never the unification of concepts) with such force that whatever part we approach from a totality of life, we have to see, deep down, the same thing. In real culture, everything becomes symbolic, because everything is the expression—and everything is equally only the expression—of the only important thing: the manner of reaction to life, the manner with which the total self of the individual turns toward the totality of life. (Lukács 1977:424)[2]

These words come from one of those uniquely personal essays that György Lukács wrote during the first decade of the twentieth century, and that provided the basis for his major book on aesthetics, *Soul and Forms* (1978). What does Lukács want to say here? First and foremost, that there is an immediate connection between life and art; accordingly, in art "the only important thing [is] . . . the manner with which the total self of the individual turns toward the totality of life." But Lukács goes further: he emphasizes the fact that the connection is between the *totality* of life and the *totality* of the artwork. Art is symbolic, but not because its individual elements have symbolic meaning with reference to an everyday reality. The symbolism of art lies in that it is, in its totality, an emotional/intellectual response to the underlying question of life.

For Lukács, there is essentially one way to respond with a total work to the totality of life, though this allows for infinite artistic solutions. The key is in the inward-turning direction of art, meaning that it exclusively represents the struggles of the soul. This does not mean psychological drama, but rather an emotionally dense, imaginary stage for the artwork that in its symbolic connections is as complex and contradictory as reality. According to Lukács, only such a "narrowing" of the subject allows art to face the drama of reality:

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> Everything happens in the atmosphere of the soul, but this is not the weakening of things but their deepening, their transformation into something inner; this is the struggling through and the suffering through of all paradoxes of the soul. Because everything is ours, everything is of the soul, and everything that is tragic can happen only within it, all dissonances become sharper: precisely because they all become part of the inside and it is not possible to push them out, nor is it possible to transfer them to anything else outside of it. And the salvation—the redeeming power of form—is only at the end of all roads and all sufferings. It resides in this belief, which is impossible to prove and which lies vividly beyond all proofs, in the belief that the scattered multidirectional roads of the soul do meet at the end; they have to meet because they departed from the same center. And the form is the only proof of this belief, because it is its only realization, a realization more vivid than life itself. (Lukács 1977:434–35)

Totality in artwork, then, means the condensation of the greatest imaginable tensions in a system that reveals their inherent inner harmony, and this is, in Lukács's terminology, the meaning of "form." For Lukács, the extreme tensions of life may be explored only as the drama of the soul, for it is only in the realm of the soul where no question can be evaded. If everything happens in the atmosphere of the soul, then nothing can be pushed aside by pretending that it "does not concern us"—here everything *is* "us." Thus for Lukács, the soul is a symbol; it is the stage where the utmost tensions may be played out and brought back to their source.

The time period when Lukács wrote these lines coincides with the formation of Bartók's aesthetics and his first pieces in the modern style: the First String Quartet (1908), the *Allegro Barbaro* for piano (1911), and the opera *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* (1911). The fact that these two prominent figures of modernism created an integral conception of art at the same time and in the same place, and as we shall see, struggled with the same basic issues, suggests the presence of a meaningful relationship between their thoughts. But although I believe, and will attempt to show in this essay, that such a relationship exists, it is not as self-evident as it may seem at first glance.

Since Bartók and Lukács were working on these ideas during the same period, neither of them could have read or heard the work of the other in its completed form. Nor was their personal connection particularly strong. Of course, Bartók had many ties to the Sunday Circle, the group of intellectuals surrounding Lukács. Among others, he was the friend of Zoltán Kodály and Béla Balázs, both of whom—especially the latter—frequented

the weekly meetings of the group.[3] But Bartók himself was rarely present, and almost never took part in the debates. In general, Bartók shied away from intellectual circles. He had difficulty expressing ideas verbally, grew bored listening to arguments, and in fact detested intellectual debates which seemed to him an empty play with words.[4] After his youthful years, he likely never read a single philosophical work, and even during his youth he seems to have read only one in its entirety: Friedrich Nietzsche's *Human, All Too Human.*

All of this does not preclude a connection between Bartók's and Lukács's views. Nevertheless, the apparent lack of mutual personal interest in this otherwise extremely tight intellectual milieu should make one cautious. Why suppose that out of the many ideologies that characterized the complex cultural atmosphere of Budapest, the philosophy of Lukács would be the one to provide a meaningful context for the aesthetics of Bartók?

Still, the similarity of their ideas is striking. Lukács stressed that the artwork first and foremost expresses the reaction of the total self of the artist to the totality of life, a belief also held by Bartók. There are numerous references in Bartók's writings to the fact that his art aims at expressing above all a "general spirit," which, as he admitted, is "difficult to describe in words."[5] For Bartók, "general spirit" was not to be equated with a simple emotion; it was rather the integration of emotional opposites. Several of his first compositions in the modern style are in a two-movement form that expresses an opposition of characters (e.g., ideal–grotesque). As Bartók wrote to his wife, "I cannot imagine that an artwork could be anything but the manifestation of the infinite enthusiasm, despair, sorrow, vengeful anger, distorting and sarcastic irony of its creator."[6] Clearly, Bartók insists here on the demand that true art express the opposing passions of the soul.

The most immediate connection between Bartók and Lukács that comes to mind is the composer's first large-scale piece in the modern style, the opera *Duke Bluebeard's Castle.* The work was written in 1911 to the text of Béla Balázs, a prominent member of the Lukács circle. As if intended to be the artistic embodiment of the Lukácsian ideal, the piece is a symbolic drama in which everything happens inside of the soul.

An understanding of *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* entails two interrelated topics, which cannot be fully explored in the limited scope of this article. The first, the interpretation of the symbolism of the opera, would necessitate a thorough analysis of text and music and also the exploration of the cultural context in depth.[7] The second topic, the definition of a "meaningful context" in relation to the symbolic world of a musical piece, is even more problematic. Even if one were instantly convinced of the existence of an

inherent relationship between Lukács's aesthetic theory and Bartók's music, the problem remains of how to substantiate such an "insight" in the absence of demonstrable, concrete influences. In Bartók's case, this latter question concerns not only his relation to Lukács, but also his cultural environment at large. We will encounter the same situation when attempting to find parallels to Bartók's works in the poems of Endre Ady. While the meaning of influence is fairly straightforward in certain musical-technical aspects of Bartók's style, his global aesthetic concepts in relation to his cultural environment resist concretization. In attempting, on the one hand, to explore the basic symbolic ideas of the opera, and, on the other, to address the problem of finding the context that substantiates these symbols, my conclusions will necessarily remain fragmentary.

The setting of the opera is confined to the dark hall of Bluebeard's castle, whose closed doors hide secret chambers. The symbols correspond to this space: the castle is the metaphor for the soul, whose secrets are hidden.[8] When Judith enters, the castle is dark, its seven doors closed. She opens the doors one after another, bringing light into the castle and thereby revealing the secrets of Bluebeard's soul. But once all of the doors are opened and the secrets revealed, their love ends. Judith disappears behind the last door, the doors close, and Bluebeard remains in darkness forever.

Since the work of Sándor Veress, the opera has been generally regarded as the "eternal tragedy of the dualism of man and woman." Because most scholars today share Veress's interpretation, it is worth quoting his summary:

> Bluebeard and Judith represent the eternal tragedy of the dualism of man and woman, the heavenly and earthly perspective of their souls. Here is the drama of man's loneliness seeking complete fulfillment in woman and finding only partial satisfaction, and of woman, who, in her devotion to man, sacrifices her whole being. . . . [Bluebeard] finds in Judith the most beautiful one, the final fulfillment . . . whom he adorns with his most precious jewels; but he has to lose her, too, because Judith desires the disclosure of the secret behind that last door. It is in vain that he begs her not to open it . . . Judith insists . . . and with this her fate is sealed. (Veress 1949:33)

Taking this interpretation as a starting point, Bluebeard is usually characterized as wise and rational and Judith as impatient, passionate, and narrow-minded. For György Kroó, Bluebeard is a man of "wisdom and great experience in emotional life"; in contrast, Judith is "impatient, curious, jealous and stubborn" (Kroó 1962:83).[9]

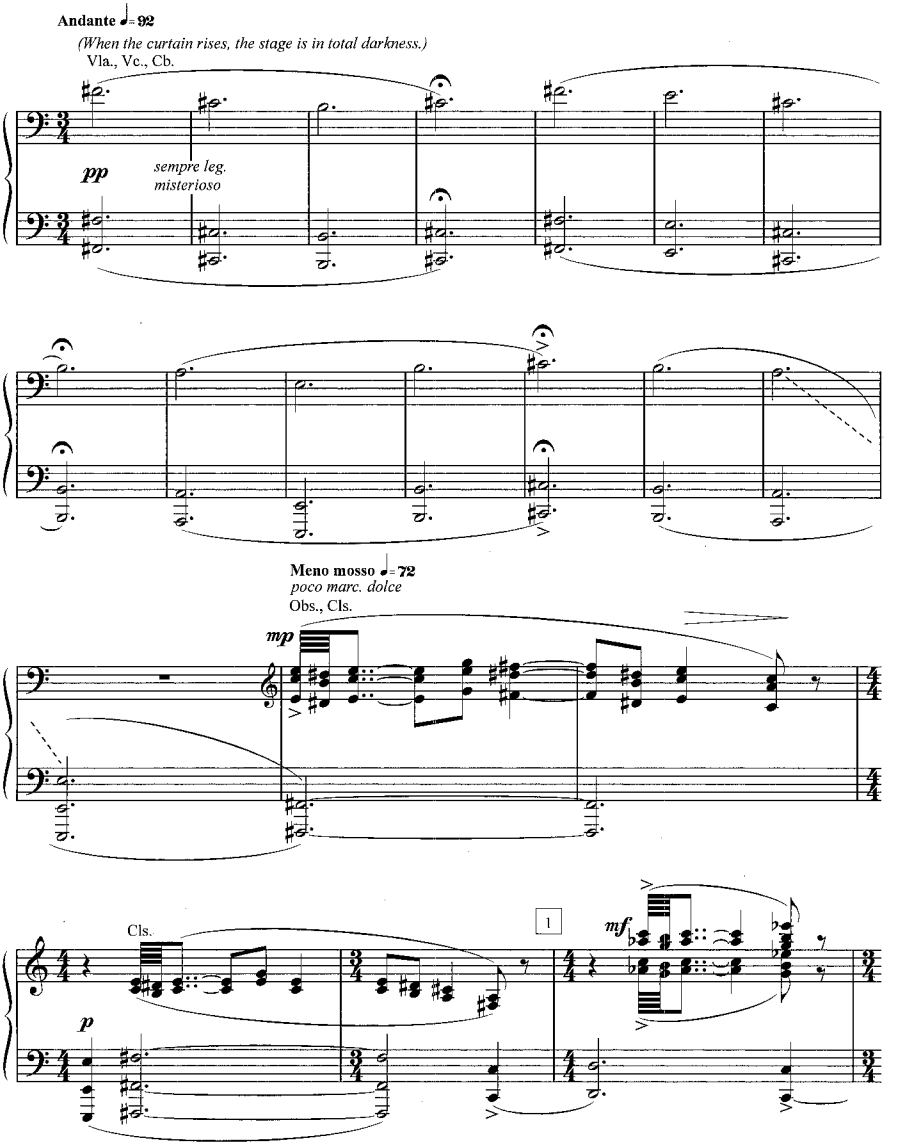
This interpretation—shared by Veress, Kroó, Elliot Antokoletz (2001), Carl Leafstedt (1999), Susan McClary (1991),[10] and indeed most analysts with the exception of Ernő Lendvai (1964)—collapses the moment we take the symbolism of the piece seriously. If the castle is Bluebeard's soul, then Judith is part of the castle inside Bluebeard. She is an inner desire, an attitude—she *is* Bluebeard. This symbolism precludes a traditional feminist interpretation. The opera is not about man and woman in the biological or social sense, but about a duality of desires in constant conflict within all human beings (which perhaps some would identify as masculine and feminine desires).

The traditional interpretation collapses not simply because it is illogical, but because it contradicts the basic feeling with which we are left when listening to the piece. I believe Lukács is right when he says that every piece is the symbolic expression "of the only important thing: the manner of reaction to life, the manner with which the total self of the individual turns toward the totality of life." We find, in every piece, a basic feeling or attitude, and in the case of *Bluebeard's Castle,* the underlying atmosphere is not that of destruction, collapse, or disaster. There is a passionate, desperate outburst of chromatic music before the seventh door; this is indeed a tragic moment, the last dramatic turning point of the piece.[11] But this climax is preceded and followed by moments of beauty and serenity. Many of the key points of the opera are gentle and lyrical; they suggest serenity rather than sadness. One might recall, for example, the two scenes that act as pillars before and after the opening of the doors: the peaceful, ornamental, pastoral scene that precedes the opening of the first door and Bluebeard's epic-like, calm quasi-aria chronicling his past loves. Finally, the closing measures are without any harshness or dissonance; they lead to the last mysterious, soft sound of the timpani and the lower strings that conclude with the last beat on the dominant, as if leaving the final question open.

How can one arrive at a new interpretation of a symbolic work when prior interpretations have hardened in our minds? In this essay, I proceed in two directions: first, I consider the dramatic meaning of a few segments based on the relation of dramatic action, music and staging, and second, I turn to the cultural-poetic context in order to explore the symbolic meaning of these dramatic situations. Let me begin with the first approach by looking at two sections more closely: the beginning of the opera and the opening of the fifth door.

The F♯ pentatonic theme in the opening measures is modeled on the melodic outline of a Hungarian old-style folk song, and analysts normally regard it as a representation of the calm and reserved nature of Bluebeard (ex. 1).[12] The second theme (m. 16), following Veress's interpretation, is

**Example 1:** The two contrasting themes at the beginning of the opera.



usually called the "menacing theme," thought of as a voice of intrusion into the calmness of the castle. At the same time, throughout the opera, F♯ is associated with darkness, while C serves as the tonality of light.[13] Pentatonicism is usually associated with peace and characterizes Bluebeard, chromaticism with pain and the restless, aggressive nature of Judith.

A closer look at the first few measures of the opera, however, suggests a more complex dramatic design. Although the melodic outline conforms to what Bartók and Kodály believed to be the most ancient Hungarian melodic type,[14] the theme as a whole is far removed from the atmosphere of a real folk song. According to Bartók, the most striking feature of the Hungarian old-style songs—the feature that distinguishes them from Western music—is their specific rubato that reflects the irregular speech-patterns of poetic declamation.[15] The performance of the old-style songs, typically sung by a solo voice, is rich in rhythmic subtleties and ornamentation. If we keep this in mind, it is immediately apparent that the first theme of *Bluebeard's Castle* does not aim to capture the atmosphere of a real folk song. Rather, it is a conceptual redaction, the tonal essence of a song *type*—a pentatonic *Urlinie,* so to speak.

By reducing folk song to its conceptual essence, Bartók creates a theme that contains the idea of folk song as much as it rejects it. Moreover, the theme evokes a *misterioso* atmosphere that is hardly folk song-like, and proceeds without any change in dynamics in a deliberately exaggerated, almost unbearably slow tempo. This slow tempo is meaningful only if Bartók's intention is carried out faithfully, namely if the theme is heard as background music to the Prologue, whose last lines are recited superimposed on the first half of the melody.

The second theme (m. 16) is composed of three gesture-like note pairs, the first one ascending (E with mordent–G) and the second and third descending (F♯–D♯, E–C). Contrary to the hollow sound of the F♯ pentatonic first theme, this second theme introduces C major and chromaticism. The harmonization is based on a series of parallel, "sweet" thirds both in the melody and harmony, and is performed *dolce* with changing dynamics. The minor second, which will have a central function in the opera, symbolizing pain in an almost *leitmotivic* fashion (the so-called "blood motive"), appears here for the first time as the opening ornament of the second theme (E–D♯–E with parallel thirds).

Both themes are enigmatic in their dramatic function. The symmetry, uniform rhythmic flow, simplicity, and clarity of structure in the pentatonic theme evoke a feeling of perfection, beauty and peacefulness. But precisely because it is so unproblematic and perfect, and because it lacks expressiveness in the performing style (lack of crescendo, vibrato, ritardando,

etc.), the theme strikes us as something cold, abstract, and lifeless. Bartók's dramatic design—the superposition of Prologue, dark stage, and non-expressive music—suggests that the drama has not started yet. We hear the barely audible, extremely slow, skeletal outline of a song coming from the background, "from behind" the words of the Prologue. The theme functions as a kind of creation music; it represents the mysterious depth of existence before real singing and feeling are born.

The character and function of the second theme are also unclear. What are we to make of Bartók's instruction that this theme is *dolce* but with a *poco-marcato* beginning? Should the sixty-fourth notes at the beginning be played as an ornament or as a sharp accent representing shuddering? Conductors have come to distinctly different solutions. For instance, János Ferencsik's early recording brings out the *dolce* character of the theme by making the ornament gentle and bringing out the sweet sound of the clarinet as the dominating sonority. Antal Dorati has opted for the opposite interpretation by emphasizing the sharpness of the ornament and choosing the shrieking sound of the oboes as the primary orchestral color.[16]

But whatever interpretation we accept, it is clear that the minor second and chromaticism are not the sole property of an aggressive Judith, as they are usually interpreted. The fact that these elements appear prominently in this theme signals that they are an inherent part of the castle, that is, of Bluebeard's soul—at this point, remember, Judith has not yet entered the castle. The tonal symbolism is similarly ambiguous. Throughout the opera, F♯ (minor) is associated with darkness and C (major) with light. Here, however, there is a prominent statement of the C tonality while the stage is still completely dark.

Light first enters the stage when, after this introductory music, a door in the back of the stage opens and we see Judith and Bluebeard appear at the top of the stairs. The spectators, by now used to staring into darkness, are blinded by the dazzling light pouring from the stage where they see the silhouettes of two characters. The viewer of the drama experiences the same discomfort that Judith will when she is blinded by the light at the opening of the fifth door ("Dazzled by the radiance, Judith shields her eyes with her hand"). Our first experience with light in this drama is unpleasant and gives us little to see. Could we say, after these few measures, that light and C major belong together and are positive while F♯ minor, chromaticism, and darkness are at the negative pole?

The turning point of the drama is the opening of the fifth door: Judith is dazed by the brightness and richness of Bluebeard's empire. This is the most positive moment of the opera, which Judith is unable to understand, or so it seems. Her refusal to take part in Bluebeard's happiness

and then her demand to open the last two doors bring about the return of darkness.

However, here again, the music tells a more complex story (ex. 2). The majestic and yet simple theme of this scene has an awe-inspiring effect in performance. Nothing really anticipates this sound: this is the first time that we hear the organ, the entire monumental orchestra, and an unequivocal C major with homophonic harmonization.

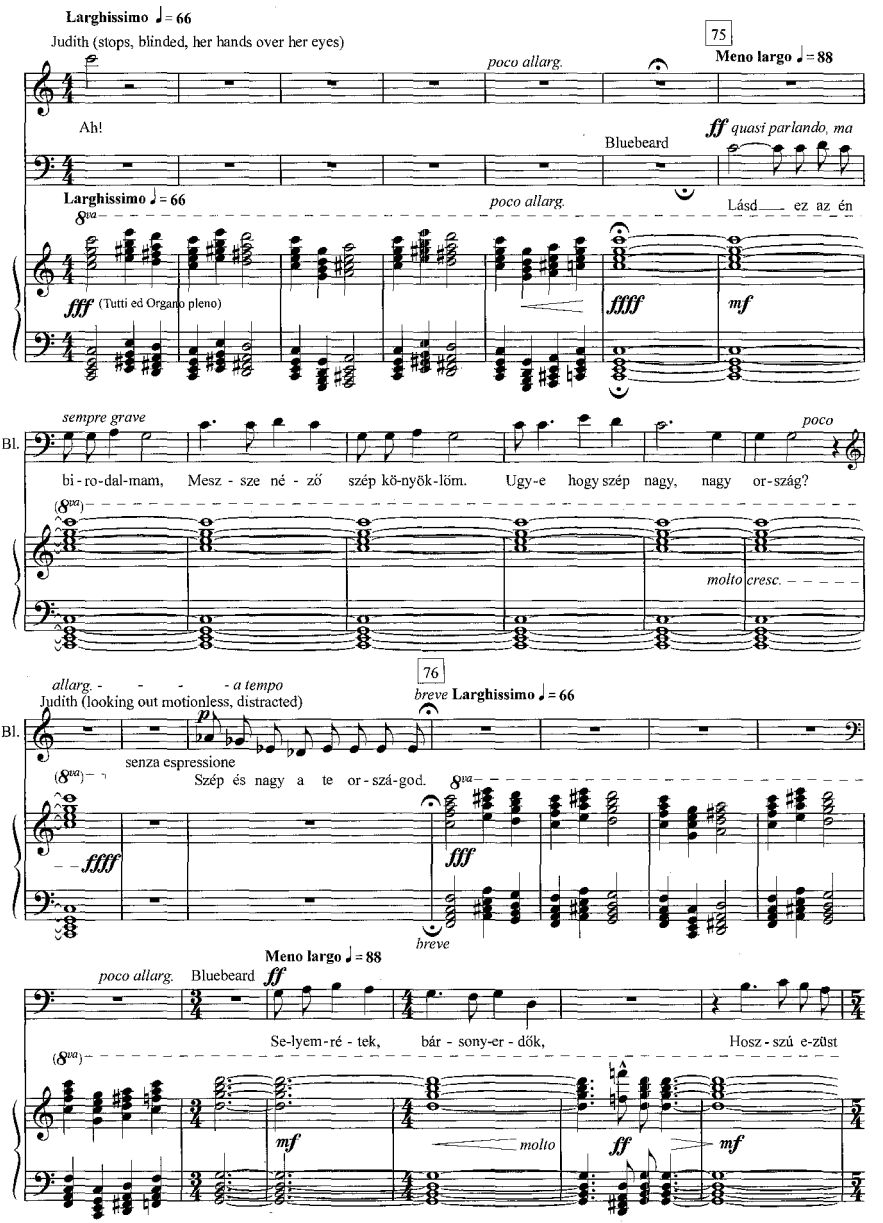
Yet after a few moments, the effect loses some of its power. We realize that the majestic theme is actually simple and repetitive, without rhythmic complications, ornaments, or chromaticism. The harmonization is naively "happy": a major chord for each note of the melody. This straightforward simplicity is truly non-organic in this piece—hence its captivating beauty, but also its failure.

Judith responds to this music by singing back to Bluebeard the pentatonic theme of the beginning of the opera, without orchestration, *senza espressione,* and *pianissimo.* Her melody in A♭ using the black keys on the piano, as it were, opposes Bluebeard's all-white-key melody.[17] Judith does not demand the opening of the other doors, but simply states: "Your country is beautiful and large." Her emotional reaction embodies a full chain of associations: "your country," "your castle," "but what really was your castle before?" Against Bluebeard's C-major happiness, Judith posits the tonality of darkness and the original theme of the castle.

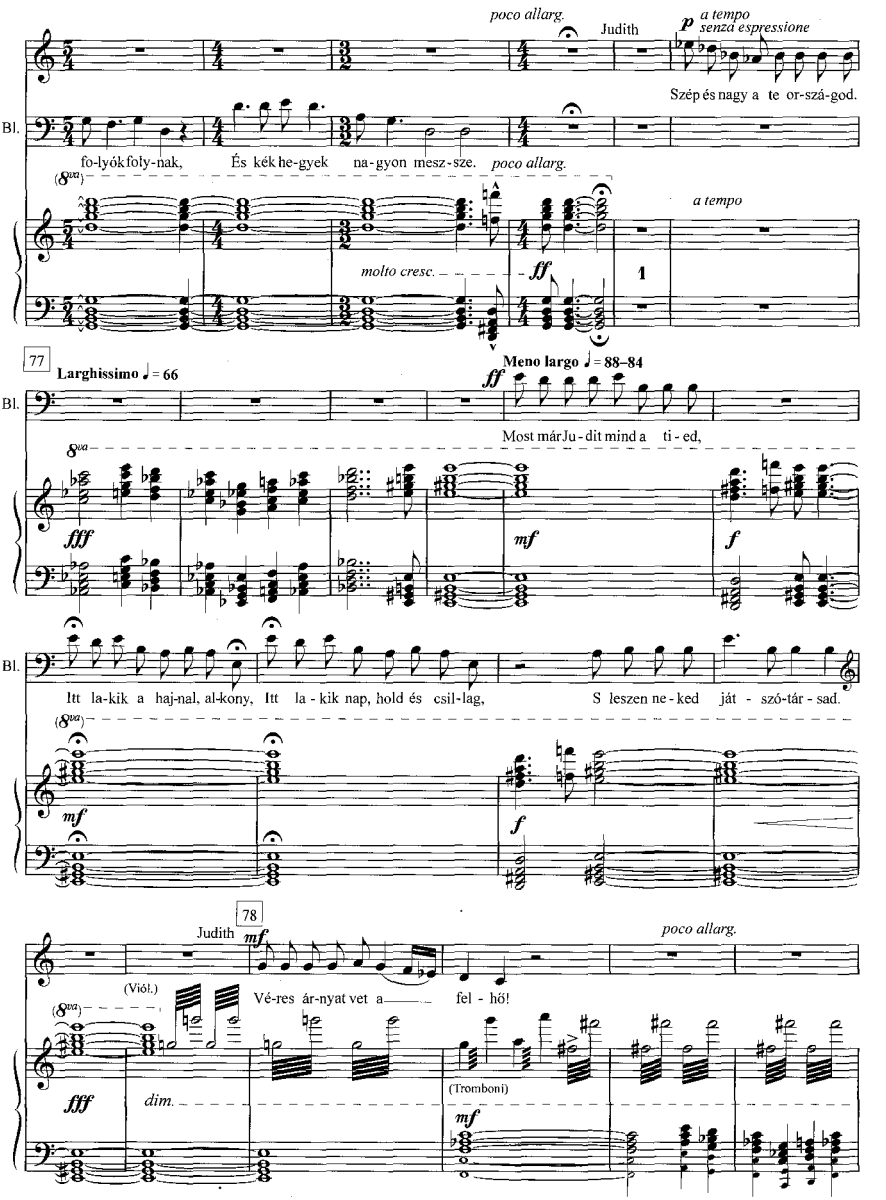
At the next appearance ([76]), the C-centered melody is harmonized in F major, cadencing on a G-major chord. Above the sustained G-major chord, Bluebeard sings in a G tonality with mixolydian touches, using F♮ instead of F♯, thus avoiding the minor-second clash with the G-major chord. Judith again insists on the castle theme, now in E♭ minor pentatonic. The orchestral theme returns for the third time ([77]), now in A♭, cadencing in E major. At this third stage, Bluebeard's E-minor pentatonic melody comes very close to Judith's interjections, that is, to the castle theme. However, his line carefully avoids G, the minor third of the pentatonic scale, so that his melody does not clash with the G♯ of the sustained E-major chord.

However we may choose to interpret this section, it is certain that the opening C-major tonality stays for only a few measures before the harmony moves away, oscillating between subdominant and dominant. Bluebeard's voice is gradually transformed. At the first appearance, his melody, though formally pentatonic, is different from the pentatonicism of Hungarian old-style songs. It is essentially major-sounding, oscillating between tonic and dominant with a dominant ending, somewhat in the style of operatic recitatives. Bluebeard's next entry is in the mixolydian mode, thus approaching the modal style of folk melodies. His final entry

**Example 2:** The fifth-door scene.



**Example 2** (cont.)



(section after [77]), though it contains only four notes, is shaped like a melodic progression from an old-style pentatonic song (minor pentatonic, descending melody: E–D–B–A–E). Both tonally and melodically, the changes follow the direction that Judith's reaction gave to the music, and her reaction undoubtedly points toward the original music of the castle: a move away from C major, pentatonicism, minor mode, and a descending melody.

Is it that the orchestra and Bluebeard gradually, perhaps subconsciously, accept Judith's voice? Or is it rather that this C-major happiness was predestined to move toward darker tonalities because of some other inner forces in Bluebeard's soul? Whatever interpretation we choose, the basic direction of this scene is clear: the dramatic force represented by Judith's soft, barely audible voice is stronger than the majestic sound of C major.

But there is another interesting detail. At the end of the second orchestral statement, a cadential gesture appears twice: a quasi dominant-tonic progression from D major to G major with a counter-voice descending from F♮, thus producing a minor-second clash with the F♯ of the D-major chord ([76], mm. 9–10, mm. 13–14). In the next statement, D major progresses to E major with the counter-voice touching again on F♮.

These are merely passing hints that a minor-second clash is unavoidable. But at the end of the third orchestral statement, like a sudden cloud, a *sforzato* string tremolo on the note G permanently darkens the bright sky of the sustained E-major chord (one measure before [78]).[18] G was precisely the pitch that Bluebeard avoided in his E-minor pentatonic scale in order to hold on to a world without minor seconds. Judith begins her final statement on G, telling us what she just heard in the tremolos of the strings: "The clouds cast bloody shadows."

And with these words we return to the real tonic. As Judith's motive descends from G to C in a quasi dominant-tonic gesture (hinting at C minor), the string tremolo moves to an F♯ ([78]). Thus we hear, for the first time in this scene, the F♯/C axis that together defined tonic at the beginning of the opera. The previous allusions to the F♮/F♯ minor second become meaningful at this point: under the F♯ tremolo, the majestic chord progression returns hauntingly in F minor, in the lower register of the brass.

The fifth door opens up Bluebeard's castle to a world of bliss and lightness. For a moment, perfect happiness reigns in his empire. The mysterious colors of the previous rooms dissolve in dazzling brightness, and the memory of the previous, delicate sound-effects of the orchestra are washed away by the sound of this monumental *tutti*. Bluebeard would like to remain in this happiness. But could the castle (the soul) be a place of

eternal dazzling light, a place without tears, memory, and sadness? It is impossible to interpret Judith's act as negative when it is she who holds up the memory of a deeper and more total self, showing the road toward the original, more complex tonic.

And it is this act that encapsulates Judith's dramatic-symbolic role. At many points in the opera—although, remarkably, not in the scene of the fifth door—Judith's vocal lines are somewhat more chromatic, while Bluebeard's melodies tend to be diatonic or pentatonic. But it would be wrong to conclude from this fact that the opposition of pentatonicism (diatonicism) and chromaticism captures the opposition of characters—calm Bluebeard versus cruel Judith. Bluebeard's soul is more than what he sings about; it is also what we see onstage and hear in the orchestra. The real tension is not between Bluebeard and Judith but between how Bluebeard sings and the reality of his soul; the orchestra communicates blood, tears, and sufferings, but Bluebeard insists on his tensionless pentatonicism. As Béla Balázs states in a 1907 diary note in connection with symbolist drama, "Words can tell little of what should be said—but it is precisely for this reason that words mean more than what they actually say" (Balázs 1982:408).[19]

Judith does not bring about the bloody shadows of the clouds. But it is she who has the courage to see and to name what can be seen. She is the tormenting voice from within the soul, the voice that does not forget the soul's original confusion, cruelty, and desires—the voice from which there is no escape. She is the mirror that asks: "Look at yourself. Is this really you?"

It is revealing to analyze the opera in this manner, considering all its local symbolism expressed in the superposition of music, text, dramatic action, lighting, and staging. However, we will not be able to penetrate the symbolism of the opera solely by such an analysis. What is the meaning of the return to the tonic: is it positive—a return to home, to one's own self—or is it negative—a return to a state of loneliness and darkness from which one hoped to break out? What is the symbolic meaning of the duality of man and woman, of light and darkness? What is the symbolic meaning of the circular motion that defines the form of the drama?

It is an ungrateful task to speak about symbols in a musicological article because the meaning of symbols cannot be proven or documented. They cannot even be argued about in the manner that is customary in scholarly discourse. The word "meaning" is somewhat out of place here. We cannot expect Bartók or Balázs to provide us, in their writings, with the possible associated meanings—for instance, of "night" in *Bluebeard's Castle*—because symbols cannot be grasped merely through logical-verbal associations. If

one could explore the symbolic meaning of night without arriving at ambiguity and contradiction, then night would become a simple signifier like any word that points toward concrete things outside of it. True symbols—and here I use the term "symbol" interchangeably with "metaphor" because in this symbolist context the two cannot be distinguished—are more like vessels. They contain (or better, they become one with) various feelings and concepts. They mean more than one thing in any given context, and their symbolic content is the complex totality of meanings, sometimes even contradictory meanings.

Symbols are tied to a specific contextual and cultural milieu. When a word or image travels to another place it changes or loses its earlier symbolic content entirely. The ephemeral nature of symbols makes an even stronger demand on the interpreter to find the relevant context, the concrete milieu of a particular symbol. But this demand in turn presents a series of problems that, though not insurmountable, often force the scholar to accept paradoxes and ambiguities to a degree that is not really desirable in scholarship.

Where can a scholar find the meaningful context of the symbols of Bartók's opera? One possible source is the contemporary Hungarian symbolic literature, which, in this case, is essentially poetry. We are lucky to have access to Bartók's huge personal library. But how can we delineate, out of this enormous collection, the body of literature that is relevant for this work? The scholar is inclined to look first at poems that Bartók mentioned in letters, that bear the typical red pencil markings found in the margins of the poetry books Bartók owned, or that he used as texts for his compositions.[20] While one may begin with such a selective group of sources, in the end this approach leads to the artificial limitation of the material. It gives the illusion of a scientific approach where nothing of the sort exists.

We know that Bartók read certain volumes of poetry many times, and in these there is mostly one set of markings. Is it far-fetched to suppose that certain nights, reading in bed, he did not have a pencil handy or he had no inclination to mark anything at all? Indeed, Bartók himself wrote in a letter that he was unable to mark the poem he loved the most among those by his favorite poet, Endre Ady; he was so deeply moved that any outward sign would have banalized this feeling.[21]

But even if we could establish exactly what influenced him in the writing of a certain piece, it is still questionable whether this connection alone would help us penetrate his symbolism. Let me give an example. It has already been noted that Endre Ady's poem "The castle's white woman" (*A vár fehér asszonya*), which was marked by Bartók in his volume, might have served as a model for Balázs's text. The opening line of the poem makes

the connection obvious: "My soul is an enchanted castle." The first three stanzas describe the mysterious castle, the wailing groans of enchanted spirits in the deserted halls, like those we hear in the opera. Interpolated into this description are rhetorical questions, in the form of asides to an unidentified listener, about the eyes of the poet, seemingly without any connection to the description of the castle: "See how tired these eyes are?" Then we arrive at the last stanza:

(Sometimes at secret night hours,
Suddenly those sad eyes light up.)
The white woman walks in the castle
And laughs out through the window.

The problem is that by pointing out the similarity between this poem and the opera, we explain nothing. We compare something we do not really understand to something else that we do not understand; the meaning of the shared symbols of poem and opera—the castle, the woman, eyes, whiteness, laughing, night, dark—remains enigmatic. Like Judith, the white woman in Ady's poem walks in the soul of man. But are these two women the symbol of the same thing? Ady's soul-castle has windows; it opens to the outside world (sympathetic or alien world?). The woman laughs, she looks out (is this the symbol of the positive act of cheering up or the sign of indifference?), she walks without words. In the opera, Judith does not laugh; she cannot walk around the castle freely, she questions, she fights in order to be able to move forward. How can one symbol-complex enlighten us about the meaning of the other?

In order to penetrate the symbols of Ady and Bartók, like any culture of symbols, one has to consider the totality of their artistic world in the context of the world of their contemporaries. Context here has dual implications. First, it refers to the aspect of real life in a historical past that contributed to the conceptualization of a work—something we will never be able to fully reconstruct. Second, however, context also refers to the imagined environment that we historians create out of a collage of existing documents. Although this context is constructed, we believe it to be a milieu that is meaningful and helps us to penetrate a work of art.

Still, the character of modern intellectual life (and perhaps every intellectual life) makes it extremely difficult for the historian to construct this imagined milieu responsibly and relatively objectively. It is not only that "context" as it was lived—every minute of every life—cannot be retrieved. More problematic is that the collage of historical-cultural phenomena that historians select from the surviving documents is bound to be arbitrary and lacking in some of the most crucial factors that determined the

symbolic world of the past. This is the case for two reasons: first, because the exchange of ideas in the turn-of-the-century intellectual milieu was unusually dense and, second, because it was primarily oral.

We have to remember that the manner of intellectual exchange that characterized turn-of-the-century Paris, Vienna, and Budapest is very different from that of the intellectual milieu of our times. In these cities at the beginning of the century, intellectuals and artists formed loose circles whose boundaries were not merely institutional, if at all, and the connections among their members resulted in real, physical, day-to-day encounters. These intellectuals did not learn about philosophy, politics, and culture primarily from books. Ideas were sorted out at the coffee table, at informal meetings in each other's houses, during walks on the boulevards after concerts, at the swimming pool, during excursions. There was nothing unusual about Bartók picking up Nietzsche without ever having studied philosophy, and it was also not surprising that Nietzsche had a greater influence on him than most musical works composed at the time in Hungary. There were dozens of café houses where the same group of intellectuals met regularly, several times a week, or even daily. The group formed around György Lukács normally met on Sundays at the house of Lukács—hence its name, the "Sunday Circle" (Gluck 1985). The trio of Emma Gruber, Bartók, and Kodály met at the house of Gruber two or three times a week for several years.[22] In this context, the exchange of ideas was so dense that it is impossible to untangle a chain of influences and establish the origin of an idea, or even sort out clearly what it meant for individuals at given times. Indeed, such an attempt at a genealogy of ideas becomes absurd.

What, then, is the cultural context of a musical work? Surely, it is much more than those direct influences where the connection can be proven as a fact. And clearly it is something much less and at the same time much more precise than the kind of schematic, general-historical surveys that we provide in textbooks under the label "cultural background." Context is not background; it is an actual, living, complex environment that constantly interferes in thousands of uncontrollable ways with creation.

Here I am struggling with a question asked by Rose Subotnik in her *Developing Variations:* what is the meaning of the word "and" in titles like "*Béla Bartók and Turn-of-the-Century Budapest*"? For all modern methodologies, we still feel secure only when we describe context in terms of individual influences. Influence, in turn, has four conditions: (1) temporal priority: *a* came before *b;* (2) dependence: if *a* had not occurred, *b* would not have the particular character that it does; (3) awareness: *a* was known to the producer of *b;* and (4) similarity: *b* in some respect is similar to *a* (Jones 1943).

Modern cultural studies, of course, go beyond a mechanical application of these conditions. We are more relaxed about the issue of temporal priority; when discussing a relatively short period of time, the fact that someone formulated an idea in writing at a certain moment does not mean that it was not known to certain circles earlier. It is harder, however, to loosen the requirements of awareness and similarity.

The problem is that scholarly argument by its nature is designed to reveal similarities, whereas we make sense of our surrounding world in real life through dissimilarities as much as through similarities. In real life and in art, from which our world of symbols emerges, one internalizes diverse experiences whose sole connection may be that they are present at the same time. These experiences reflect upon and teach about an essential aspect of our world precisely because they are different. But what can a scholarly essay do with the realization, say, that *a* was not known to *b,* and *a* is not similar to *b*? The task of a scholarly argument is to bring system to disorder and to show how things are related. If the ideas of an artist were not known to another and/or if their works show no similarity in the aspects the scholar is scrutinizing, then there is no scholarly argument whatsoever.

If we consider novels that we believe reflect their respective societies—Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina,* Mahfouz's *Arabian Nights and Days,* Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita,* Garcia Márquez's *Hundred Years of Solitude*—we find a very different pattern. These works convey a sense of integrity, a common spirit and worldview, even though the aspirations and fates of their characters are different, often incompatible. The stories reveal the forces within society through a web of seemingly irrational personal conclusions and actions. It is for this reason that Mikhail Bakhtin considered the novel, especially those of Dostoevsky, to be the superior form of literature. According to him, in Dostoevsky's "polyphonic novels" there is "a potential to create a plurality of equally valid consciousnesses, each with its own world." Bakhtin writes:

> The utterly incompatible elements comprising Dostoevsky's material are distributed among several worlds and several autonomous consciousnesses that combine in a higher unity. Thanks to these various worlds the material can develop to the furthest extent what is most original and peculiar in it, without disturbing the unity of the whole and without mechanizing it. (Bakhtin 1984:16)

I refer to the novel and to Bakhtin because I believe that the novel in some ways reflects society better than social studies because it does not strive to systematize it. Bakhtin's comments above are valid as a description

of society (at least modern society), and in fact all great works in the modern era bear the imprint of a plurality of worlds. Looking at society and culture as a web of contrasting worlds rather than in terms of similarities in concrete details—which, of course is not a new notion—allows us to speak about influence in a different manner, one not dictated primarily by the notion of similarity.

Essentially, any encounter with any event is influence. People respond to an event not only by imitating aspects of it, but also by integrating—or not integrating—it into their lives and attitudes. And we know all too well from everyday life that one can respond to an event even by doing exactly the opposite of what may seem logical. This too is influence.

The governing forces of cultures are those basic ideas and problems that somehow no one is able to avoid. In standing face-to-face with these forces, people create their extraordinarily unique systems of thought. These individual systems can never be entirely shared. The connection between two art works is found not in similarities but in differences of attitude, for each artist responds to the totality of life according to his/her unique perception of it. It is for this reason that Emmanuel Levinas characterized human relationships as *non-synthétisables.* In Levinas's existential philosophy, the fundamental condition of human beings is captured in the moment when one stands face-to-face with another. People are never simply "together." In a true relationship one is always "facing the other," and in the act of facing another, one encounters the "face" (Levinas's key word is "visage") that is in itself a totality, meaning that it is impossible to decompose it into its elements. In Hebrew—a language Levinas knew intimately—visage is *panim,* a word that comes from the verb "to turn toward something."[23] Levinas finds in this act, turning toward or facing the other, the primary situation that defines human encounters (Levinas 1982:71–72).[24]

What I propose here, therefore, is that instead of focusing exclusively on the notion of influence being revealed in similarities, we devise another method for the presentation of context. Such a presentation would focus first on the grasping of the underlying beliefs, problems, and anxieties of a society, and second, on the presentation of numerous valid but contradictory responses. This would mean looking at artistic context as a *collection of potential responses,* whose cohesion lies not in their similarity but in the fact that they were born from and exist in reference to the same thing. To put it differently: the cohesive force in society and culture lies in questions, rather than in responses.

My point is that there is no reason to suppose that Bartók was "influenced" only by those writings that he liked. In fact, one can be "influenced" by something that one does not even know about, meaning that

one can receive essential ideas from a source that one perhaps did not know directly. While we reconstruct ideas from writings, the contemporaries received them through oral encounters and integrated them spontaneously and with ease. They did not need to consult the literature that forms our "historical sources" in order to understand the spirit of their times. Bartók did not read the early articles of György Lukács, but this does not mean that they are irrelevant as a historical source to understand his attitude. Being in constant contact with members of the Lukács circle, Bartók likely integrated these ideas into his aesthetics even before Lukács formulated them in writing; he had no need to read the scholarly outcome of what he already understood and used as an artist.

However, even such a loosening of the notion of influence does not resolve the basic problem, namely that scholarship provides a system and clarity in describing something that is unsystematic and ambiguous. It is not only that the novel presents, in Bakhtin's words, "several worlds and several autonomous consciousnesses"; it also combines these "in a higher unity" by feeling, rather than by logic. Art has an advantage over scholarly discourse in that it may leave the questions it poses unanswered and may allow for widely different interpretations that together somehow contain the message of the work. After having read Márquez's *Hundred Years of Solitude,* one may notice the amazing differences between the fates of the members of a family. Another reader may see in these stories the same fate in variations *ad infinitum.* Mahfouz's *Arabian Nights and Days* is an even sharper dramatization of non-similarities within an integral context. The characters of this novel come from a closed Muslim society, but it is precisely the narrow outer boundaries of this world that provoke fantastic and extreme personal beliefs and stories. Yet on another level, these stories, too, can be seen as infinite metamorphoses of one life-essence. A recent film, *My Twentieth Century* by Ildikó Enyedi, excellently captures this multifaceted nature of sameness. The film recounts the life story of identical twins that were separated at a young age and grew up to be different characters, making diametrically opposed choices in life. It is left to the viewer to see how these characters, who apparently share nothing, are really one and the same person.

These works—like most artworks, in some ways—make us "feel" the integrity of a world, even though the narration reinforces the feeling of non-integrity by deliberately hiding those forces that bring oppositions together. This is in essence the Lukácsian demand of art, cited above: "the salvation—the redeeming power of form—is only at the end of all roads and all sufferings. It resides in this belief, which is impossible to prove and which lies vividly beyond all proofs, in the belief that the scattered multidirectional roads of the soul do meet at the end; they have

to meet because they departed from the same center." In a great work, the contrast between the two forces—the one that leads the reader along the "scattered multidirectional roads" and the one that brings these roads together—may be so extreme that it allows readers to see momentarily only one or the other force.

This kind of play is not allowed in scholarly writing. While every text is unfinished, reaching its final form in the mind of the reader, scholarly discourse gives much less freedom to the reader for creating the basic message of the writing. If the argument is not clear, if we are not sure what relates to what and what is similar to what, then the writing slips from scholarship to poetry. The inherent ambiguity of social life, cultural context, and the world of symbols cannot be matched by ambiguity in the discourse of an essay, even though this would be perhaps the most relevant form of representation. One possible response to this problem is the acceptance of the limitation of scholarship that rejects the attempt to express in a study what only art can do. Another approach is to experiment with an alternate scholarly discourse that stretches the limits of scholarship toward ambiguity for the sake of a better reflection of reality, but without giving up the option of arguing a point.

In *Béla Bartók and Turn-of-the-Century Budapest,* I chose the second option, though today it seems to me that I did not go far enough. The first question was how to delineate boundaries, that is, how to create an integral mass of documents out of the infinite flow of sources. Obviously, such a question can never be answered in an entirely objective manner. It was important, however, that the boundaries of the material should not be determined *a priori.* There are no absolute rules and methods that surely "work," not even the rule of influence in the traditional sense. In the end, the meaningful context turned out to be something that at first glance seemed to be "out of place": the philosophy of Lukács (which Bartók barely knew) and modern Hungarian poetry (Mihály Babits, Dezsö Kosztolányi, and Endre Ady—the last-named being the only one Bartók really liked).

In this poetic world, it is irrelevant whether a symbol means the same thing for Bartók that it does for someone else, and whether Bartók was influenced by one person or by another. It seems crucial, however, to let the diverse artistic worlds "speak for themselves," that is, to present them in their integrity as much as this is possible, regardless of how strongly they related to one another. The idea is to present worlds that are dissimilar even though they reflect upon the same existential problems. In order to penetrate the meaning of symbols, the important thing is to discover, in a never-ending process, new meanings of symbols, and then to discover in these multiple meanings the central questions of the era to which they relate, and for which they were created.

A method that attempts to interpret symbols through the presentation of multiple artistic worlds does not suit the scope of an article. Even a fragmentary interpretation of the symbols of *Bluebeard's Castle* demanded two long chapters in my book, and these chapters build on the exploration of artistic views outlined in previous chapters. For the conclusion of this essay, I selected one example in order to illustrate the potential of such an interpretation of symbols. The example concerns the symbolic meaning of night at the end of the opera.

I could never understand why Bluebeard's last words, "And there will be night forever," had been thought of as tragic and pessimistic. After all, from medieval *albas* to Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde,* we have a long tradition of associating night with love. In this tradition, it is the morning light that brings the tragic ending, the end of love.

Let me turn to some excerpts from the poem, "Even if the Moon is Cold" (*Hiába hideg a Hold,* 1909) by Endre Ady:

Even if the Moon is cold. Once
Our time came with warmth and heat
And sacred fever was beating the night,
Into which two, beautiful, miserable beings,
Were herded together by the arbitrary Time,
One of the many-faced Times,
Merciful, mad, rich Time,
That brought me together with my woman,
And that has not passed ever since.
. . . . . .

Thus we fall, thus we tremble
Into each other, as if never-never
We two had been two.

It was this woman I always loved
I was in her mouth and in her heart
And she was my mouth and my heart.
. . . . . .

It was then when she walked here,
Came to me, my dear woman
It was then when with great amazement
Two torn one-beings opened their arms
For embrace, and became one again.
It was not love,
Only the return of the spring into itself, here, again
In this merciless time of separation.

The atmosphere in this poem is very different from that in Bartók's opera. Ady's poem is exalted through and through; there is exuberance, passion and pain in each line. The story is absorbed into half-spoken sentences. There is some hastiness in the language; my English translation cannot capture how restless, often embarrassingly spontaneous, some phrases are. Even this first encounter with Ady shows the difference between Ady's and Bartók's basic attitudes toward life. For Ady, nothing was more important than a commitment to experience every emotion to its extreme and as a reflection of the universe, even if this demanded that he sacrifice language and form. For Bartók, the central question was how to create form while exploring feelings to their extreme.

And yet this poem, especially when read together with many others, opens the door to their common world of symbols and ideas. The first line, "Even if the Moon is cold," gives the key to the interpretation of the end of Bartók's opera: even if a great passion is over, some of it, perhaps its best part, remains with us. Here Ady intentionally superimposes different times and concepts of time: time is "arbitrary" and "many-faced," it "herded" people together, but it is also the "merciless time of separation." Most of the narration is in the past tense, but it refers to a past that "has not passed ever since." Embrace is at the same time burning and cold, separation and coming together, oneness being torn apart and two separate beings becoming one, standing against the other and a "return of the spring into itself." But the memory of embrace is eternal and clear. It is sadness born from the certainty of memory: "It was this woman I always loved." The two symbolic associations of "night" are posited against each other: the night is the symbol of the greatest passion and of the state of eternal sadness.

We learn from this poem that everything exists in duality, that everything is itself and at the same time its own opposite. We also learn that love, understanding of the self, and a return to loneliness are all one and the same thing. The greatest love is self-realization and thus it is death; it is self-transcendence and thus it is loneliness and separation.

The idea that the memory of love saturates life, even when real love is no longer possible to maintain, was not only a poetic image but also a feeling Ady and his contemporaries lived through in real life. About the same time Ady wrote this poem, Lukács, after the death of his beloved, wrote to a friend: "The ice age has begun. I have died but she lives within me, to the extent that anything can live within me. Quietly. Without reproaches. Without pain . . . In spite of everything, only she exists—even if I no longer love her, no longer desire her, no longer want her back. It makes no difference. The memory of one episode with her means more than a lifetime spent with someone else."[25]

It is as if Lukács had written these lines about *Bluebeard's Castle.* But Lukács could not have known the opera when he wrote this letter, and Bartók obviously had no access to a personal letter written by Lukács to a friend. And although the case of the Ady poem is different—Bartók marked it in the poetry volume he owned—it would not really be correct to say that this poem gave him the impetus for the conception of the opera. We are closer to the spirit of Bartók's milieu if we look at the attitudes and beliefs of Lukács and Ady not as possible influences or sources for Bartók's dramatic concept, but as various manifestations of the spiritual-emotional world of Bartók and his contemporaries.

Bartók's opera opens with darkness and ends with darkness. In Bluebeard's last phrase, "And there will be night forever" (an addition made by Bartók to the original text), "night" is a symbolic focus into which everything collapses. Night is the symbol of coldness and emotionlessness, but also the symbol of fiery love. Furthermore, night is the traditional symbol of womanness (here emphatically of Judith, who was found by Bluebeard at night), but also the symbol of the mystery of existence (here emphatically of the soul of Bluebeard). And finally, total darkness is the symbol of wholeness; it is the darkness of the cosmos, the source and the end of everything.

*Bluebeard's Castle* is an abstract drama; in the form of a sequence of clashes between man and his Other, it projects into time the timeless, ever-renewed force of love. The form of the piece, evolving from darkness and returning into darkness while being destroyed from inside by its inner forces, suggests both eternal circularity and completeness. Judith's love leads Bluebeard back to his origins so that he can be one with his self in beautiful loneliness.

But the darkness is not complete. Although the stage should be completely dark during Bluebeard's final words, the music suggests a somewhat different ending. We may recall that at the opening of the opera the two themes appeared one after the other, and their contrast reflected a motion from stillness/darkness toward movement/light. The two themes recapitulate at the end, but not in succession; they appear simultaneously. Fragments of the second theme are superposed on the pentatonic theme that provides a background for the floating second-theme fragments until it too disintegrates. At the end of the opera, both themes are reduced to fragments that gradually dissolve into one another, reaching the last melodic motion in *pianissimo*—an unfinished gesture.

The opera opened with the darkness of tension, with the desire to reveal the unknown, to move toward light. At the end, Bluebeard arrives at the darkness in which all contrasts dissolve. But the openness of the last

gesture reminds us that the darkness of the soul can never be complete. The soul's night is mystery and as long as life lives, this mystery desires to be revealed. Bluebeard's darkness may seem eternal, but in the larger cosmic scheme it is merely the stillness of the soul as it momentarily suspends its eternal desire to know its depth, and—what is the same—to love.

*Notes*

1. This paper was conceived parallel to the writing of my book (Frigyesi 1998), partly in order to elaborate on its approach to context, which I felt to be somewhat unusual. Aspects of Hungarian cultural life presented in this article in a summary manner are elaborated on in detail in the book. In this article, the musical analysis and interpretation of the opera are either entirely new or are revised versions of ideas presented in the book (especially regarding the fifth-door scene and the ending of the work).

This article was originally designed as a lecture and I am greatly indebted to the faculties and students of those universities that invited me to read it and contributed to its final form with comments: the University of California at Berkeley, the University of California at Santa Barbara, Stanford University, John Hopkins University, Columbia University, Wesleyan University, the Graduate Center of CUNY, the Conference of the International Musicological Society, and Tel-Aviv University. Finally, I would like to thank the Fulbright Foundation and the Collegium Budapest for grants that allowed me to work on this article.

2. All translations from the Hungarian (including poetry) are mine unless otherwise noted.

3. An excellent summary of the history of the Sunday Circle and its philosophy can be found in Gluck (1985).

4. This issue is discussed in the introduction to Frigyesi (1998).

5. Consider Bartók's insistence (in his 1928 essay "The Folk Songs of Hungary") that he aimed at grasping the spirit of folk music in his original compositions (Bartók 1976:332–33), and also the fact that he planned to devote the last lecture of his Harvard series to the "general spirit" of works (Tallián 1989, 1:181). The issues raised in this paragraph are explored in detail in the fifth chapter of Frigyesi (1998).

6. See this letter written to his wife in 1909 from Darázs (Slovakia) in Bartók (1981:187–88); English translation in Frigyesi (1998:120–21).

7. I hope that I have accomplished much of this work in the last two chapters of Frigyesi (1998).

8. Some basic symbols of the opera, such as the symbolic identification of the castle with the soul, I take for granted here for the sake of brevity. These are explained in previous studies about the opera, most importantly in the analyses of Antokoletz (2001), Kroó (1962), Lendvai (1964), and Veress (1949).

9. Carl Leafstedt's recent study complements this image by looking at the metaphorical representation of "Judith" in twentieth-century art. He suggests that Balázs might have been consciously evoking the character of the heroine of Friedrich Hebbel's play *Judith* since "both Judiths are placed into conflict with an

extremely masculine man against whom they must apply all their feminine cunning to obtain what they desire" (Leafstedt 1999:132).

10. Of course, McClary approaches the opera from the opposite side; she criticizes its message from a feminist perspective, though she does not question the truthfulness of this message.

11. This and the following sections can be found in the score as follows: the climax of the development of the chromatic motive before the seventh door at 112–118; the pastoral-like section preceding the first door at 24; and Bluebeard's quasi-aria after the last door at 127.

12. By traditional interpretation, I mean here the analyses mentioned above, most important, those by Antokoletz, Kroó, Lendvai, Leafstedt, and Veress. Although substantial differences exist in how these scholars view concrete musical and also some dramatic details of the opera, they agree with the basic characterizations of themes described here.

13. The tonal interpretation based on the polar opposition of C and F♯ has been most fully worked out by Lendvai (1964). This analysis was the first large-scale study in a series of tonal investigations that laid the foundation for the specific tonal interpretation that is commonly referred to today as "Lendvai's axis system."

14. This melodic line conforms to the scheme of the so-called fifth-shifting, pentatonic type of the old-style folk songs. The term "old-style" is used here in accordance with Bartók's and Kodály's terminology to designate a specific repertoire and style within Hungarian vocal peasant music.

15. "In the Hungarian peasant music, properly so called, the German observer is first of all struck by two types which are completely different from any Western European music. One type is our ancient, so-called 'rubato' melodies. Especially evident here is the free, declamatory rhythm as opposed to any uniformly measured music. The rhythm, seemingly very complex, can be reduced theoretically to a schema of eight equal eighths; the last eighth . . . is augmented by a fermata. Yet it is only infrequently that one hears such a simplified (perhaps 'primitive') pattern, and [even] then never in actually uniform eighths." See "Hungarian Folk Music" in Bartók (1976:72–73). Note that the two examples Bartók gives in this article to illustrate his point not only have unusual rhythmic patterns but also exuberant ornamentation.

16. János Ferencsik, Budapest National Opera Orchestra, with Mihály Székely and Klára Palánkay (recorded in 1956, reissued on Arlechino, ARL AO9); Antal Dorati, London Symphony Orchestra with Mihály Székely and Olga Szőnyi (recorded in 1962, first released as SR90311, reissued on Mercury Living Presence, D 101216).

17. In his analysis, Lendvai (1964:91) calls attention to the significance of the opposition of "white-note" and "black-note" melodies, referring to the white and black keys of the piano.

18. Note that the piano arrangement does not reflect the actual dynamics and orchestration. The sustained E-major chord, played by the winds, the timpani, and the organ, creates a cold, metallic sound. In the measure in which the strings enter with their G tremolo, marked ***sff***, the chord suddenly fades away; some of the

strongest brass instruments, as well as the timpani and the organ, cease playing and there is a sudden diminuendo (from *fff* to *f*). In this way, the entrance of the string tremolo is made the focus.

19. In a similar manner, Balázs regarded the dialogues in a symbolist drama to be a "technique of overtones."

20. A large part of Bartók's personal library is housed today in the Bartók Archive at the Institute for Musicology in Budapest. I am grateful to László Somfai and the staff of the archive for allowing me access to this collection and for their generous help.

21. "In these two volumes [*Longing for love (Szeretném, ha szeretnének)* and *Of all mysteries (Minden titkok versei)*], I have marked those strophes which speak to me—speak from me—the most. But there is one of them that was [so close to me that it was] impossible to mark: 'My bed calls (*Az ágyam hivogat*)' . . . I cannot tear myself away from it" (Dille 1990:293).

Endre Ady (1877–1919) was one of the greatest poets and journalists of the turn of the century. With his journalistic writings he created a revolutionary atmosphere in Hungary; his articles, written in a passionate tone with literary beauty, pointed to the problems of society with a sharpness that shocked contemporary readers. This prophetic-political tone also characterizes many of his poems. At the same time, he created a symbolic poetry that, although influenced by the French symbolists, especially Baudelaire, was in essence rather different from the French trend. Ady's symbolic poetry is always at the same time immediate and philosophical; images of everyday life are the means to grasp existential questions in a philosophical matrix of contradictions and paradoxes. Ady was an amazing influence on his contemporaries, and his personality and work had a basic role in shaping modern Hungarian life up to the present day.

22. I am greatly indebted to Mrs. Zoltán Kodály (formerly Sarolta Péczely) and to the late István Kecskeméti of the Kodály Archive, Budapest, for allowing me to see the diary of Emma Gruber in which she listed, every day, the names of people she received as guests.

23. I would like to thank Daniel Epstein for the many stimulating ideas he shared with me about Levinas and about the connection between his philosophy and Jewish thought. My reference to the Hebrew word *panim* follows his interpretation.

24. The pages referred to here from Levinas's *Ethique et Infini* (1982) provide a summary of the issues discussed more deeply in various parts of his *Totalité et Infini. Essai sur l'extériorité* (1992).

25. The letter was written to Leo Popper (Gluck 1985:122–23). It is important to note that Lukács's beloved Irma Seidler committed suicide. Their relationship reflects the difference between the feminine and masculine concept of human relations; the above lines could not have been written by Seidler. It appears that this idealized image of an eternity of past love, which is expressed in the Ady poem, in Lukács's letter and in the opera, was a typically male approach.

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