

DÓRA GIMESI 3D HEROES

**SOME DRAMATURGICAL ASPECTS OF
ADAPTATION IN CONTEMPORARY PUPPET THEATRE
DLA THESIS**



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3D HEROES

3 LAYERS OF TELLING A STORY



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**SOME DRAMATURGICAL ASPECTS
OF ADAPTATION IN CONTEMPORARY PUPPET
THEATRE DLA THESIS**

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INTRODUCTION OR: WHAT DOES THE PUPPETRY DRAMATURGE DO?



1. Tristan and Isolde, Budapest Puppet Theatre (photo: Vera Éder)

Dramaturge or writer?

I had to realise early in my career as puppetry dramaturge the lack or rarity of canonised scripts and plays meant for the puppet stage. Ninety per cent of puppetry theatre performances is premieres, as new stage adaptations are made in almost every case of even the best-known stories. Some of these texts are good or even excellent, but with only a few exceptions the plays themselves do not make it to the next puppet theatre where they would be interpreted by another director.¹

This phenomenon is due to what is probably the most prominent feature of the genre itself: the extremely close integration of the work of director, designer and script writer.

(1) NB: Throughout the paper, the pronouns he/his shall be taken to include both he/his and she/her as appropriate.

Creating the text of a contemporary puppetry play is the task not only of the playwright (dramaturge), but also of the director and the designer. The puppetry technique (form) they have in mind impacts on how the text is treated, on its dramaturgy and interpretation so, ideally, they have to cooperate closely from the moment when the idea of the production is born. One of the main virtues of a puppet script is to consider and even consider essential and integrate in the dramaturgy the puppetry technique to be applied. The same, however, is also a shortcoming in the sense that such a puppet script can only be interpreted in the context of the technique and the concept associated with it originally.

Human and/or puppet?

Glove or rod puppetry shows creating a perfect illusion, with the puppeteer hidden behind the screen, are rare on the contemporary Hungarian puppet theatre: most productions use mixed techniques and the manipulators are often visible. However, whereas in performances using the table-top or Bunraku technique demanding great humility and concentration on the actor's part the puppeteers typically do not take on own roles (i.e., they are visible, but their attention is focused completely on the puppet, they communicate exclusively through the puppet, they have no personality, no opinion of their own and no contact with each other), there were many examples in the previous decades of puppets and puppeteers being present in the performance together, as equal partners.

The puppetry dramaturge must be aware of the specifics, limits and potentials of the various puppetry techniques; of the type of story and amount of text that can be associated with and borne by a glove, rod or marionette play, and also the consequences of making the animator of the puppet visible.

The relationship between puppet and puppeteer affects also the adaptation. The same story may have many different aspects depending on which characters appear as manipulators and as puppets, respectively.

Tale and puppet

Puppet theatre dramaturgy is a broad concept encompassing many science fields. Familiarisation with the various science-of-tales trends may be particularly useful for the puppetry dramaturge, and not only because the decisive majority of puppet plays is based on contemporary or classical tales. The dramatic - even live theatrical - adaptation of a tale often raises the same questions as those encountered by the puppet theatre author: Does/can the hero change or is his personality constant? Does he have a personality of his own or is he no more than an archetype? How to write an actable character based on an archetype? How to express the personality changes of a puppet? My thesis will review the science-of-

tales findings of relevance for puppetry dramaturges: the structuralist tale theory of Vladimir Yakovlevich Propp will help us understand the structure of the tale drama; the writings of Ildikó Boldizsár will assist with classification and analysis, and the concepts of Bruno Bettelheim will let us gain a deeper understanding of the personality of the characters.

Personality and archetype

In some cases it is the relationship of the puppet and the manipulator that holds the answer to the most difficult dramaturgical questions: if the tale hero is present at the same time as puppet and as flesh-and-blood human being, he can be a signal and also a dramatic hero with a full-fledged personality. The contemporary approach to puppetry has opened up new vistas for tale adaptation by making it possible to preserve the traditional tale roles while also showing the change and development of the hero who may also rebel against his role. This arrangement may provide the basis of performances suitable for being interpreted in several ways that address simultaneously the child and the adult audience at two different levels (those of the puppets and the movers).

My thesis will present the relevant puppetry dramaturgy issues through the analysis of the puppetry adaptation of three pieces of different genres, addressing different age-groups.

The adaptation of *Amalia*, the story book of Ildikó Boldizsár, investigates the problems of the tale/dramatic hero and the targeted audiences. The analysis of *Csongor and Tünde*, the play and the performance, presents a possible puppetry concept through the wondertale hidden in the dramatic poem. And the adaptation of Janne Teller's youth novel entitled *Nothing* seeks a dramatic form as a contrast to the thesis-like story and two-dimensional characters of the book where the real loss and tragedy involved in growing up is shown through sacrificing the puppets representing childhood.

The puppet theatre scripts I made for *The Princess Who Saw Everything* and *Amalia* are attached to the thesis as annexes.

I. THE PREDOMINANCE OF ADAPTATIONS ON THE PUPPET STAGE



2. Rose and Violet, Budapest Puppet Theatre (photo: Vera Éder)

There are currently 12 puppet theatres with a permanent building and many independent ones in Hungary, and they announce some 2-5 premieres per season each. This, together with the genre features mentioned in the Introduction, means that an incredible amount of puppet show pieces is needed in each season. A negligible part is based on original works (that is, plays written expressly for the puppetry stage), a small part consists of puppetry adaptations of live theatre pieces, but most are tale, short story or novel adaptations made for the given performance.

In the last case, the puppetry dramaturge has several options:

- To do the adaptation himself, in close cooperation with the director and the designer, that is, to take an active part in the workflow as script writer;
- To invite a contemporary writer to do the adaptation and cooperate with him from the moment of writing the synopsis to give effect to the puppetry criteria in the text;

- To revise (adapt and streamline) an existing adaptation to adapt it to the puppetry concept defined jointly with the director and the designer.

As István Nánay writes in the introduction to the first volume of the puppetry play collection, *dráMAI mesék (Dramatic Contemporary Tales)* published in 2014:

"...there are no classic dramatic stage plays in puppetry; there are no collections for the dramaturges and puppetry/theatre directors to take from the bookshelf (...) If a new work is written at all, that is generally some adaptation. It would go beyond the scope of the present introduction to discuss why adaptation became the almost exclusive basis for puppetry literature. Of course, this is no value judgement, since a prose-tale story is as good a starting point of a plot as any fictitious idea or real-life experience, so this is not the primary criterion of the value and quality of a script. The decisive point is that a new version of the same text is to be created for each and every performance in function of the puppetry technique being chosen, the space concerned, the number of actors and other parameters."

Moreover,

"With some simplification, I used to interpret adaptation as the fitting of a text or story to the stage. However, in a good many cases, the process of adaptation is much more differentiated than that, and the outcome is closer to the re-creation of an old work or even the creation of a new one. As folk tales are handed down in different versions by region or ethnic group, various versions of the same tale may emerge and coexist in puppetry."²

Nánay stresses that contemporary puppet plays are usually written upon request, for a specific company, and the script often attains its ultimate form through improvisations and modifications at the rehearsals. This procedure is not rare in contemporary live theatre either, but whereas pieces by the Mohácsi brothers or Béla Pintér feature in the programmes of other theatres as well, the puppet theatre makes such practice more difficult as the technique itself and the director and designer concepts are so inextricably bound to the text.

The paradigm change of European puppetry art in the second half of the 20th century has led to the gradual replacement of (folding) screen puppetry by the visible puppeteer and his/her puppet, i.e. mixed-technique performances increasingly relying also on the relationship of the mover and the moved.³ The change in form has brought about a radical change of the relevant dramaturgy and text treatment. Given the fact that puppet script collections dating from the 1930s-1940s and the 1950s-1960s, respectively, published for boy-scouts or self-motivated groups⁴ were meant for the folding screen, glove or rod techniques,

(2) István Nánay: Boldogságkeresők, avagy mit keres itt egy mókus? (Happiness-seekers or what does a squirrel do here?"), in: Róbert Markó - Tímea Papp (eds): *dráMAI mesék 1. - Régi magyar történetek (Dramatic Contemporary Tales 1 - Old Hungarian Stories)*. Győr, Vaskakas Bábszínház, 2014. 10-11.

(3) Cf. Henryk Jurkowski: *Aspects of Puppet Theatre*. Ed.: Penny Francis, Palgrave Macmillan, second, revised, edition, 2013. 33-35.

(4) Cf. Nánay, op.cit. 10.

except for a few they can hardly be used by the contemporary puppet theatre. In vain do we know of several *Little Red Riding-Hood* and *the Wolf or Snow-white* adaptations if those can be realised in only one way, by the puppetry technique encoded in the text.

This is not just a Hungarian phenomenon: contemporary European and American puppet art also struggles with a shortage of reusable pieces.

Matthew Isaac Cohen demonstrated on the example of mainly avant-garde puppet play scripts dating from between 1896 and 1962 that the writer often acted also as director: the pieces of Edward Gordon Craig, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti or Samuel Beckett written for the puppet stage could not be interpreted without the visual concepts and instructions of the authors.⁵

Claire Voisard, a Canadian writer specialised in puppet plays expressed the problem as follows:

“Writing for puppets? What puppets? Given the diversity of styles, some traditional, some modern, that this art form offers, this is the principal question that haunts me right through my writing process. What is the ideal type of puppet that will serve the text, that will best establish communication with the public and arouse in them the emotions that are worthy of this ‘theatrical magic’? It is easily discovered that two glove puppets will hold a dialogue different from that held by two string marionettes.”⁶

Voisard uses the examples of classical glove and marionette plays to point out how the physique and movement of the puppet influences the characters and thus also the work of the writer. The glove puppet exists by being pulled on the hand of its mover, almost as a part of his body and is therefore capable of lively, dynamic movement resulting in voluble dialogues. The marionette, on the other hand, is at a distance from its mover also physically, so each of its gestures must be worked out in detail, and that makes it suitable even for long tirades.

“True, these are extreme examples of the classic forms of the profession. But I think that this reveals a problematic that we find over and over again in the work of research and innovation in puppet theatre, both in the traditional and the avant-garde. In the form on the one hand, the potential movement of the puppet on the other, lie the characteristics that the writer ignores at her peril. S/he has to bear in mind the style of the puppet taking a role in the show’s delivery, exhibit great humility from the first rehearsals, and often accept certain modifications of the text solely to serve the group’s vision of the show.”⁷

Penny Francis dedicates a whole chapter of her comprehensive *Puppetry: A Reader in Theatre Practice* to contemporary puppetry dramaturgy. She considers it a problem that part of the 20th century texts written for puppet stages in the 20th century fail to take into account the characteristics of the genre:

5 Matthew Isaac Cohen: *Modernist Etudes*. in: *Animations Online* 29 – Spring 2010. http://animations.puppetcentre.org.uk/aotwenty-nine/feat_modernist.html (last download: 25.04.2017)

(6) Claire Voisard: ‘Écrire pour la Marionnette’, *Cahiers de Théâtre Jeu*, 51, 1989. 108. Quoted in: Penny Francis: *Puppetry: A Reader in Theatre Practice*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 81.

(7) Voisard op. cit. 108.

“Dozens of books of plays intended for children, heavy with dialogue, were produced in the middle years of the twentieth century. Surprisingly few manifested any sensibility to puppetry aesthetics, knowledge of techniques or the tastes of a modern child”⁸

On the other hand, she says, another part of works written for the puppet theatre do take into account the technical options offered by this genre, so much so that “showmanship”, i.e. extraordinary designer and actor performance, sometimes overrides storytelling itself. The works concerned are more like performance texts bound to the given director and designer visions and even the abilities of the actor than dramas on their own right, which makes their use for other productions rather problematic.

As for the shift in mindset experienced in the past decades, she remarks the following:

“Since the 1990s the productions by professional puppeteers and theatre-makers employing puppetry have surpassed – in richness of forms, themes and ingenuity of presentation – anything seen before. This incontrovertible renewal of the art form can be largely attributed to its closer ties with the human theatre. From these ties have come an injection of new dramaturgical ideas springing from a fresh approach by professional artists, theatre-makers trained to stage productions that rely on content as much as form, on adult audiences more than children. They have provided a necessary ballast, as it were, to puppet performance that formerly paid too little regard to theatrical values, relying too much on visual attractions and on craftsmanship. Both are of course intrinsic and essential to puppetry, and, because of the growing numbers of practitioners with little or no experience of puppetry technique, the problem of how to balance the technical, the visual and the verbal, has not been completely solved.”⁹

Puppet plays relying on advanced technical effects but neglecting story-telling are of as little use today as those plays from the second half of the 20th century where the enacted situation was crushed by the great amount of text piled on it. The former are inextricably linked to a certain technique, the latter do not meet the requirements of the renewed genre and the contemporary audience. Now and then some Hungarian and foreign works suitable for today’s stage are found, but their number is relatively low and a high proportion still presents the problem of “technique encoded in the text”. Thus it is no accident that contemporary directors and dramaturges choose what is apparently the more difficult route and prepare their own adaptations.

Consequently, the most acute problems – and maybe also the most interesting questions – of contemporary puppet dramaturgy can be expressed as follows:

- Is it possible to have reusable/re-enactable puppet stage texts, or does the new director/designer concept inevitably require rewriting, a new adaptation?
- How is adaptation influenced by the puppetry approach?

(8) Francis op. cit. 109.

(9) Francis op. cit. 112.

- Are puppetry criteria asserted from the moment of the choice of the reference work, or does performance with puppets follow from the analysis of the reference work?

In the following chapters of my thesis I will try to give answers to the above questions while presenting the practical aspects of adaptation from the choice of the reference work to the development of the language of puppetry.

II. THE TALE AS REFERENCE TEXT



3. Rose and Violet, Budapest Puppet Theatre (photo: Vera Éder)

In line with the global trends, contemporary Hungarian puppetry tends to open up increasingly to the youth and adult audiences. Although it has been considered an evidence for decades, and even in the early 20th century, at the time of the blossoming of the avant-garde, that puppetry was not exclusively a children's genre, it was only in the past decades that adult spectators re-discovered its potentials. Although puppetry is slowly re-conquering its adult spectators, performances made expressly for them will always raise the attention of a narrow group only.

Consequently, children of pre-school/lower primary school age will remain the primary audience of the puppet theatre, and the tale will remain the most frequently adapted genre there.¹⁰

(10) Later on, we'll see examples showing that neither is the tale exclusively a children's genre, and a puppet play for children can also include elements meant for the adult spectator in the first place.

1. From the science of tales to tale adaptation

The research of the stage adaptation of tales may start from two directions: that of the tale or that of the drama. I opted for the second alternative although initially, as I reviewed the many fields, schools and possibilities of the scientific processing of the genre, that seemed a hopelessly large task. Finally, the tales themselves came to my rescue in the labyrinth of often controversial interpretations, studies and schools. Who has ever seen a folktale hero give up at the first hurdle, halt at the first difficult assignment, go dumb after the first question? So I started to select (like Cinderella, wheat from chuff, the relevant from the irrelevant), to work patiently and systematically (like the princess in the *Wild Swans* knitting shirts of stinging nettles), and behold: doom started to dissipate.

In the chapter below, I assembled - somewhat selfishly and without aiming at completeness - those science-of-tales findings that I consider useful and even indispensable for the work of the dramaturge. I think that a dramaturge or writer adapting a tale must know these works by all means, even if he does not necessarily use them or agree with them.

Trends in tale research

Tale research affects many fields of science such as folklore, literary science, linguistics, philology, anthropology, and psychology that all investigate the genre from different aspects and by different methods.¹¹

In his paper *Mese és szakrális kommunikáció* (Tale and Sacral Communication)¹², Zoltán Bódis assigns the interpretation options of the tale into three main categories: the positivistic approach applies tale-related "methods for processing data suitable for specification", whether it comes from the field of ethnography, social science, religious science or linguistics. He labels "structural interpretation" the schools breaking down the tale into structural elements. They think in terms of structural units, subject matters and motifs typical of every tale rather than of tale texts (Lévi-Strauss, Propp). Finally, "semantic readings" represent the third class: these are interpretations originating from depth psychology and mythology (Freud, Rank, Jung, Marie-Louise von Franz; Eliade, Marcell Jankovics).

My work does not - cannot - aim at understanding and processing every trend, so I will rely exclusively on those schools that concern the structure, dramaturgy, style, characters and mechanisms of action of the tale.

(11) For a summary of the various trends, see Ildikó Boldizsár: A mese és a tudományok (The Tale and the Sciences). Introduction, in: *Magic and Slimming. Mesék, mesemondók, motívumok* (Magic and Slimming. Tales, Story-tellers, Motifs.). JAK - Kijárat Kiadó, Budapest, 1997. 7-15.

(12) Zoltán Bódis: Mese és szakrális kommunikáció (Tale and Sacral Communication). In: Péter Bálint (ed.): *Közelítések a meséhez* (Approaches to the Tale). Debrecen, Didakt, 2003. 68.

Folktale and literary tale

The academic literature of the tale (incl. its ethnographic, historical, history-of-religion and psychological readings) mostly focuses exclusively on folktale. But what should be regarded as folktale as opposed to literary tale? Is there a clear fault line between the two?

As Zoltán Bódis puts it, “[the tale text] can never be considered finalised in terms of space or time. Starting out from the ‘folklore tales’, the stories handed down from story-teller to story-teller become texts, fabrics, where the elements are (and remain) variable in certain special ways, and the new versions emerge through identical motifs (as understood by Propp) being combined in different ways. Literary tales, on the other hand, transform and trans-code elements offered by the folklore texts and associate them with the given author’s set of signals and style.”¹³

In *Magic and Slimming*, Ildikó Boldizsár subjects the texts of literary tales as compared to folk tales to a typological survey and concludes that they use the motifs of the latter, transforming and rationalising their elements and sometimes converting “a fossilised sign/referent relationship into a nonce, ad hoc, one”¹⁴. Her tale typology is based on a sample of more than a thousand tales that she assigns to five main categories:

1. “The first group, let’s call it ‘basic form’, comprises tales recorded by the collectors at a given moment of their being handed down by word of mouth”,¹⁵ without any stylistic correction or rewriting”.
2. “I assign to the second group adapted/processed tales adapting folk tales ‘considered authentic’ in diverse variants, primarily by altering their style and using some tale elements in other than the usual ways, rounding them up into didactic or funny stories. This intervention may involve deleting/replacing moments that do not suit the individual experience or purpose (e.g. adaptation for children) of the intervener (‘re-writer’), or make no sense due to the historical changes.”¹⁶ Folk tale collections for children such as the adaptations of László Arany, Elek Benedek, Gyula Illyés, Charles Perrault and the Brothers Grimm belong here. The texts concerned project a clear image of the style, attitude to tales and world view of the adapter.¹⁷
3. “Tales deforming rather than adapting fairy tales, distorting or neglecting some of their essential elements, make up the third group.”¹⁸

(13) Bódis op. cit. 70.

(14) Boldizsár: *Magic and Slimming*.18.

(15) Boldizsár: *Magic and Slimming* 16.

(16) Boldizsár: *Magic and Slimming* 16

(17) For Elek Benedek, for example, “the tale is first and foremost a children’s tale adapted for the bourgeoisie, interwoven with peasant elements, useful also in school education, a moral code taking into consideration “sekler honour” as well as the tenets of the Protestant Church; an inexhaustible arsenal of emotions and sentimentality and the repository of didactic exhortations.” Boldizsár: *Magic and Slimming* 192.

(18) Boldizsár: *Magic and Slimming* 17.

4. "The fourth group consists of literary tales that can also be regarded as combinations of fairy tales, but the modality and function of certain actions are recreated within the structure; motifs differ from their fairy-tale peers and hence also from each other at crucial points; the alteration/transformations concern mainly – but not necessarily– the wondrous parts and the value hierarchy of the tale, and give a new meaning to the tale".¹⁹ Cf. inter alia the tales of Ervin Lázár, A.A. Milne or Lewis Carroll.
5. In this category of tales "where the basis is again a time-tested/fossilised tale structure, upon which a new subject, a new set of motifs evolves, fossilised sign/referent relationships turn into ad hoc ones and the semantic content is trans-coded instead of only shifting as in the previous group. These tales will not lose their validity and creditworthiness even if they tell something that could not happen according to our previous experience of tales, or if something required by the genre does not take place."²⁰ Ildikó Boldizsár assigns to this group inter alia the tales of H. C. Andersen, Oscar Wilde, Wilhelm Hauff and János Pilinszky.

As can be seen, the typology developed by Ildikó Boldizsár does not treat folk and literary tales apart, but focuses on their discernible interconnections instead.

I consider the above classification most useful for the work of the puppetry dramaturge as it helps define the first steps of the adaptation work: you can look up and assess the relevance and interconnections of specific motifs in the various (folklore and literary) versions of a tale and clarify the concept of the "reference work".

Tale classifications

The most complete tale typology is the one by Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson.²¹ Their folk tale classification system gives guidance in the international folk tale universe: it assigns tale type indices to the various subject matters to be able to identify all the international variants of a given topic. The Aarne-Thompson classifications system divides tales into four main groups: animal tales, mythic or realistic tales, anecdotes/jokes and formula tales. The Hungarian Folk Tale Catalogue (*Magyar Népmesekatalógus*) also classifies the subject matters of Hungarian folk tales by assigning type numbers to them (type numbers AaTh and MNK overlap at certain points and are different at others), and defines also further sub-classes: animal tales, fairy tales, legends, short stories, funny tales: tales on the stupid devil, village mockers ("rátótiáda"), lie tales, formula tales.

A review of the tale adaptations of the past twenty years clearly shows that fairy tale adaptations are the most frequent.

(19) Boldizsár: *Magic and Slimming* 17.

(20) Boldizsár: *Magic and Slimming* 18.

(21) Antti Aarne - Stith Thompson: *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography*. Helsinki, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1961.

The fairy tale

This is how Vladimir Yakovlevich Propp defines the fairy tale from a structuralist point of view in his *Historical Roots of the Wonder Tale*:

“A wondertale begins with some harm or villainy done to someone (for example, abduction or banishment) or with a desire to have something (a king sends his son in quest of the firebird), and develops through the hero’s departure from home and encounter with the donor, who provides him with a magic agent that helps the hero find the object of the search. Further along, the tale includes combat with an adversary (the most important form is slaying a dragon), a return, and a pursuit. Often this structure is more complicated, for example, when the hero is on his way home and his brothers throw him into a pit. Later he escapes, is subjected to a trial by difficult tasks, and becomes king and marries, either in his own kingdom or in that of his father-in-law. This is the compositional core of many plots in brief outline.”²²

The Jungian psychoanalytic school (e.g. Marie-Louise von Franz) offers a reading that collates the archetypes of the collective unconscious, the tale, and the initiation ceremonies (e.g. Mircea Eliade), deriving the latter from the former; demonstrates the presence of elements and symbols of the ritual in the fairy tales. Bruno Bettelheim associates the motifs of the fairy tale with the developmental stages of the child. Ildikó Boldizsár underlines the presence of the magic element: “the most popular figures of the fairy tales are beings with supernatural or super-human capabilities, and wondrous helpers and spell-casting objects”.²³

Structure of the fairy tale

When it comes to the examination of the structure of the fairy tale, I cannot do without a brief review of the formalist system drawn up by Vladimir Yakovlevich Propp in *Morphology of the Folktale*. Apart from being probably the most often quoted reference work in tale research, the *Morphology* has a lot to say about fairy tales that is relevant for dramaturgy.

Propp considered the motif and not the subject matter the basic building block/fundamental component of the tale. He revealed how the various tale motifs could interconnect and noticed that some motifs must be present together whereas others must not whatever the subject matter concerned. Propp identified 31 tale functions (such as absentation, interdiction, violation of interdiction, reconnaissance, trickery, lacking, villainy, pursuit, rescue) that serve as stable, constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled. He associated the functions with seven characters (villain, donor, helper, princess or prize and often her father, dispatcher, hero, false hero). Moreover, he specified the attributes

²² Vladimir Yakovlevich Propp: *The Historical Roots of Fairy-tales*. (Hungarian translation. Márton Istvánovits), Budapest, L'Harmattan, 2006. 15.

²³ Boldizsár: *Magic and Slimming* 10.

of the characters and the versions of their possible interrelationships. As for the sequence of the functions, he showed that their sequence is always the same, but not every function is included in every tale. In the opinion of Propp, all fairy tales are of one type in regard to their structure.²⁴

Note, however, that the scope of Propp's examination was limited to the Russian folk tale, and in particular the wondertale collection by Afanasjev.²⁵ His structural analysis is nevertheless an asset for studying any fairy tale: it provides a frame of reference that facilitates the identification of similarities and differences.

From a dramaturgical point of view, Propp's key finding is probably the definition of the term "move" deriving from his examination of how the various story components are interconnected.

"Morphologically, a tale (skadzka) may be termed any development proceeding from villainy (A) or a lack (a), through intermediary functions to marriage (W*), or to other functions employed as a denouement. Terminal functions are at times a reward (F), a gain or in general the liquidation of misfortune (K), an escape from pursuit (Rs), etc. This type of development is termed by us a move (xod). Each new act of villainy, each new lack creates a new move. One tale may have several moves, and when analyzing a text, one must first of all determine the number of moves of which it consists. One move may directly follow another, but they may also interweave; a development which has begun pauses, and a new move is inserted. Singling out a move is not always an easy matter, but it is always possible with complete exactitude."²⁶

Propp lists six possible sequence of moves:

1. one move directly follows another;
2. new move begun before end of old move / action interrupted by an episode-like move, then resumed;
3. the episode is also interrupted, an "inverted pyramid" develops;
4. the tale begins by two villainies, of which the first is eliminated earlier;
5. two moves have a common ending;
6. tale containing two protagonists as seekers who move together in the first move and part at a road marker.

Separating the moves and analysing their linkages is a must for the adaptation of the fairy tale. One must know exactly which move can be omitted or simplified without violating the logic of the tale. The following general rules represent the starting point of any further adaptation work:

1. The move must be terminated. In dramaturgical terms: in the tale, there are generally no open-ended story threads, no unresolved conflicts. A decision to have an open ending in the adapted version will impact on the entire tale.

(24) Cf. Vladimir Yakovlevich Propp: *Morphology of the Folktale*. <https://utpress.utexas.edu/books/promor>; pp. 21-24.

25 *Fire-bird*. Russian wondertales from the tale collection of A. N. Afanasyev (Hungarian translation by Zoltán Hermann, Emília Kornél, Angelika Molnár) Budapest, Magvető Kiadó, 2006.

26 Propp: *Morphology of the Folktale*. 92.

2. As each move comprises a conflict and its solution, in case of several successive moves, the adaptation may in some cases skip one or several moves or insert them in another move.
3. The relations between the moves must be defined also in the dramaturgical sense: there may be subordinated or coordinated moves (an example of the latter is *Mother Holle* including two moves), or consecutive moves in a causal relationship or suitable for being interpreted on their own, escalating successive moves or moves carrying dramatic conflicts.

Fairy tale heroes and heroines

Propp defines the following fairy tale roles: villain, donor, helper, princess or her father, dispatcher, hero, false hero. One character may have several roles (for example, the *Cat Princess* is not only the daughter of the tsar, but also a donor and/or helper in the tale entitled *The Cat Princess*), but some roles must not be assigned concurrently to the same character (the same person cannot be hero and villain in the same tale). Consequently, the roles are characterised by their functions and their place in the story.

Now we have come to the most exciting and also most problematic issue of tale adaptation: Do the characters have a personality in the dramaturgical sense? Do they need one? If they do, how do they acquire it? Should the tale heroes have any inner motives?

As a first step, let's see what the literature has to say about this.

"There is reason to think that motivations formulated in words are alien to the tale on the whole, and that motivations in general may be considered with a great degree of probability as new formations"²⁷

"One may observe in general that the feelings and intentions of the dramatis personae do not have an effect on the course of action in any instances at all".

and

"Thus once again we come upon the phenomenon that the will of personages, their intentions, cannot be considered as an essential motif for their definition. The important thing is not what they want to do, nor how they feel, but their deeds as such, evaluated and defined from the viewpoint of their meaning for the hero and for the course of the action"²⁸

That is, from the point of view of structure, the character of the personae is indifferent. It is irrelevant why the hero is banished from home, why the stepmother is angry at her foster daughter, why the dragon demands virgins. Propp comes to the conclusion that these circumstances do not affect the structure.

Based on his study of tale protagonists, Propp distinguishes two types of heroes: the active seeker and the distressed victim. The first is dispatched on his way

(27) Propp: *Morphology of the Folktale*, 75.

(28) Propp: *Morphology of the Folktale*. 77.

by some lack in the order of the world, the second lands in trouble despite his will. Propp shows that certain functions can only be fulfilled by the active seeker hero.

Marie-Louise von Franz as follower of the Jungian school explains the character of the heroes based on the archetypes they embody. Her tale analyses can be most helpful in the case of certain characters: she provides an interesting, nuanced, description of the adolescent heroines on the brink of adulthood (*Sleeping Beauty*, *Vasilisa*). She also raises the issue of the difference between male and female protagonists: in a tale, men and women face different tasks and trials. She observes that whereas men usually struggle until the wedding, a significant part of heroines is tested after that (e.g. *Little Brother and Little Sister*, *The Six Swans*). Whereas the focal issue for man is courage, defeating the adversary (and themselves), heroines must often stand the test of patience and discipline.

"First you have to ask the question who the heroine of the tale is or who she represents. Is she a real woman at all? (...) We know that, psychologically, both the myth and the tale is about archetypal characters, having little to do with everyday human beings at a cursory glance: they are symbolic characters, whose meaning needs to be sought out yet"²⁹

In the opinion of tale aesthetician Max Lüthi, "the hero in the tale (...) is not capable of development during the tale. He stands ready from the first moment we see him: we know exactly what he does and what he will do/what he is to do under certain conditions and trials."³⁰

The view that the hero undergoes an initiation ceremony and the essence of the tale is exactly the ensuing change, the mystery of initiation, the hero's change from child to adult, is diametrically opposed to the idea of the hero's inability for development suggested by Lüthi.

"Undeniably, the ordeals and adventures of the tale heroes and heroines can also be interpreted almost without exception as initiation moments. I also consider it of extraordinary importance that ever since the existence of the tale as such (...) the primitive and the civilised audience has always listened to it with joy, repeat it as many times as you will. This means that the initiation ceremonies - even in a concealed form as in a tale - are the means of expression of psychodrama satisfying a profound human need" (Bettelheim quoting Eliade)³¹

Eliade, Propp and Boldizsár all emphasise that life beyond and return from it are frequent stations along the road covered by the hero. In *The Historical Roots of Fairy-tales* Propp expounds in detail the places (revolving house, gate, glass mountain), characters (yaga) and motifs (hero sawn in animal skin, hero flying on a Gryphon) that indicate crossing over to the Beyond, to afterlife, at a certain point in the tale. The schools collating the tale and Satanism have devoted outstanding

(29) Marie-Louise von Franz: *The Feminine in Fairy Tales* (Hungarian translation: Miklós Bodrog), Budapest, Európa Kiadó, 1992. 14.

(30) Max Lüthi: *Das europäische Volksmärchen*, Bern und München, 1960, 15. Quoted in: Boldizsár: *Magic and Slimming*. 36.

(31) Bruno Bettelheim: *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*; (Hungarian translation: László Kúnos), Budapest, Gondolat Kiadó, 1985.

attention to the motifs of crossing over to the Beyond, of symbolic death and resurrection. This is important to me here for one reason, namely that a hero "crossing over" (whether as dragon-killer, as the young swineherd in *The Sky-high Tree*, or in the form of a death-dream lasting for a hundred years as in *The Sleeping Beauty*) will certainly return a *different (wo)man*. Death and resurrection inevitably imply *change*, and that may be important dramatically, from the point of view of the character of the protagonist.

Bettelheim raises another problem concerning the character of the heroes: the bipolar world view of the tale, where the protagonists are either good or bad:

"The figures in fairy tales are not ambivalent - not good and bad at the same time, as we all are in reality. But since polarization dominates the child's mind, it also dominates fairy tales. A person is either good or bad, nothing in between (...) Presenting the polarities of character permits the child to comprehend easily the difference between the two, which he could not do as readily were the figures drawn more true to life, with all the complexities that characterize real people. Ambiguities must wait until a relatively firm personality has been established on the basis of positive identifications."³²

That is, Bettelheim explains the character of the figures in a tale by the simplicity of the world view of the child. This, however, contrasts with the known fact that, basically, the tale is not a children's genre, but one addressing every member of the community. Moreover, black-and-white heroes are not very interesting from the point of view of adaptation either and folk tales feature many heroes with a more complex character and more traits. I do not think that a more colourful protagonist whose deeds derive from his character would cause any confusion in the psyche of the child - in what follows, I will do my best to support this statement by examples.

Dramatic heroes in the folk tale

So far we have spoken about the functions/roles of the characters in the tale, the incarnation of archetypes, personality development and whether the character of the tale hero could be made more complex. Now let us see some fairy tales with a discernible potential for dramatic heroes and conflicts.³³

1. Stories of heroes and heroines growing up: *The Sleeping Beauty*, *Snow White*, *Princess and the Pea*, *The Goose-girl*, *Son of the White Mare*. The protagonist reaches adulthood by the end of the tale: his personality develops through the difficulties, trials and adventures. This may create exciting dramatic situations and, furthermore, evoke situations/concerns familiar to the age group targeted by the performance.

(32) Bettelheim op. cit. 15.: <http://faculty.winthrop.edu/kosterj/engl200/HarryPotter/readings/Bettelheim.htm>

(33) The lists below are arbitrary and could be extended indefinitely: here and now they are only meant to show that the drama is not at all alien to the folk tale.

2. Tales where the protagonist loses his lover due to his own error, omission or curiosity (by falling asleep, letting the dragon loose by mistake, burning her husband's animal skin despite the prohibition): *Prince Argilus*, *East of the Sun, West of the Moon*. The common denominator of the tales concerned is the dramatic flaw of the hero/heroine, and the long road he or she must cover to find his lover again.
3. Tales where the protagonist forgets his lover: *The Fairy from the Oak Tree*, *Rose and Violet*, *Seven Times Beautiful*. In these tales, everything works out well initially. The hero finds a mate for life, but before taking her home to his palace, they part and the man forgets her due to some curse (*Rose and Violet*) or guile (the girl is attacked and killed by a witch who sometimes replaces her by her own ugly daughter: *The Fairy from the Oak Tree*). The heroine then undergoes various metamorphoses, then meets the prince again, in a disguise (as servant girl, old woman or a boy), but the latter recognises and marries her.
4. Self-sacrificing heroes/heroines fighting for their lover or sibling: *The Six Swans*, *Little Brother and Little Sister*. With some exaggeration, they could be called melodramatic heroes, since they face a decision, choose the more difficult course instead of the easier one, endure humiliation and injustice, and at the climax of the tale even undertake death for their loved ones.
5. Dramatic tension is generated by the male/female game of two protagonists with strong personalities: *The Princess Who Saw Everything*, *King Thrushbeard*, *The Three Aunts*.
6. The hero tries to fight death and succeeds temporarily: *The Prince Aspiring for Immortality*, *Death Was His Godfather*, *The Old Woman and Death*.
7. Tales where a minor hero/heroine becomes a central figure of the drama: *The Sleeping Beauty* (the neglected fairy), *Snow White* (the stepmother), *Three Golden Hairs of the Devil* (the intriguer king), *The Fisherman and His Wife* (the ambitious wife), *Salt* (the king disowning his daughter).

Characters in literary tales

“The characters in the literary tale are more complex, more colourful, not black and white. The folk tale hero is never uncertain, he never doubts he will be successful, in contrast with the heroes of literary tales who have concerns and worries and who experience crises. Their reflections, emotions become the subject matter of the representation instead of being transferred to the plane of action. The folk tale hero is a typical representative of the community, whereas the protagonists and secondary characters of the literary tale may be individualised or stylised”³⁴, Tünde Tímárné Hunya writes in her paper comparing the folk and the literary tale.³⁵

General rules are less discernible in literary tales - due to their being individual literary creations, their author’s visions. Ildikó Boldizsár examines them according to their relationship to the folk tale:

“Doing away with the ‘closed system’ of the fairy tale has brought about - unless the user was characterised by dilettantism - two types of tales. One is the rare ‘artificial tale’ or ‘literary tale’ trans-coding, specialising the meaning of the tale by replacing the permanent relations with ad hoc ones (e.g. Andersen, Hauff, Wilde, Hoffmann, Pilinszky), the other is the tale transforming the structural units, developing autonomous stories out of the motifs instead of interlacing them. The latter mostly preserve the lines of thought and formal arsenal typical of the fairy tale, but add new forms to the ways the protagonists are acting, and disregard the supernatural and miraculous elements of the tale or replace them by inverse forms. (Milne, Baum, Travers, Collodi, Lázár Ervin).”³⁶

The protagonist of the literary tale may be an object (*King Elek, the Chairleg*), a toy (*Winnie-the-Pooh, The Tin Soldier*), a plant (*Old Elder Nanny*), a person with disability (*Birthday of the Infanta*), or a child (*Alice in Wonderland, The Little Match Girl*).

Tragedy and melodrama in the literary tale

The concepts of the tragic hero, hamartia, the dramatic flaw and of tragic fate are not alien to the folk tale: in a popular tale type, for example, the king lost in the forest promises the devil to give him what he takes sight of first upon his return home - as it turns out later, his child is born while he is away; the child runs to greet him, so the king must give him to the devil. In the various versions of the tale the fate of the child then takes a favourable turn, but that does not alter the tragedy

(34) Tímárné Hunya Tünde: A népmese és a műmese sajátosságairól (On the specifics of the folk and the literary tale). in: Bálint Péter (ed.): *Közelítések a meséhez (Approaches to the Tale)*. Debrecen, Didakt, 2003. 128.

(35) For the literary historical role and aesthetics of the literary tale, see also: Komáromi Gabriella (ed.): *Gyermekirodalom (Children’s Literature)*. A meseregény (The Tale Novel) 109-130, and *Mesék, meseregények, gyermektörténetek (Tales, Tale Novels, Children’s Stories)*. 207-228.

(36) Boldizsár: *Magic and Slimming* 196.

of the initial situation. However, an adaptation of the tale could not be a tragedy since the father, the tragic hero, plays no role later on and the subsequent events are not tragic at all.

In the literary tale (especially in stylised fairy tales), however, the positive outcome is often missing.

Ildikó Boldizsár makes an essential point regarding the ending of these tales. Whereas the outcome of the folk tale and the transformed fairy tale is always positive, however tragic or horrible the events preceding that, a significant part of specialised fairy tale denouements bring no reassurance or are outright tragic.

“It is dubious throughout the literary tales that are thinking in other than folk-tale patterns whether the apparently diffuse fates of the protagonists come to a ‘happy’ ending; it is far from certain whether dreams about happiness would come true, the evil, the sinful would be punished and the good rewarded. The catharsis may in these cases lie in the termination of the inner pains of the soul (metamorphosis, death) or annihilation after happiness, or the success of being outsiders, of intransigence and resistance to being moved.”³⁷

These stories are thus highly sensitive to the tragic – even if the end is positive after all. Their group includes a major part of the tales by Andersen and Wilde, but we could also mention *The Little Prince*. However, one must not forget that the same authors often apply also melodramatic elements – a rather swampy area as far as stage adaptation is concerned.

2. Swans in folk and literary tales – Andersen and the stage effect

The work of Hans Christian Andersen is not only an essential piece of literature, but also includes nice examples of exploiting the dramatic effects to the full. His scene-building technique, use of the effects of tragedy or melodrama approximate even his tales written in prose to the dramatic genres. He unfolds the character of his protagonists, mediates their ideas and emotions in a way that makes the reader get attached to them. Contrary to the event-centred approach of the folk tale, he puts the character in the centre of the story.

Many of Andersen’s tales are specialised fairy tales. He often re-tells well-known stories, enriching them by new details and a special atmosphere that is so typical of him. It is not difficult to discover the thinking of the stage author, the consideration of the action mechanisms of the theatre in his tales – this may be the reason why they are so popular and frequent sources of stage adaptations. Perhaps it is not too far-fetched an assumption that the way of thinking and dramaturgical methods of Andersen must have been influenced by the popular stage genre of the melodrama.

(37) Boldizsár: *Magic and Slimming* 121.

Melodramatic effects in the tale

Eric Bentley distinguishes tragedy from melodrama based on the different assessments of deliberation, responsibility and sin.³⁸ He describes the first as an adult genre with a sense of responsibility, capable of facing sin, and associates the latter with childishness, self-pity and the transfer of responsibility. The heroes of the melodrama have no tragic flaws, they suffer innocently and this provokes pity (as a matter of fact self-pity) and sympathy on the side of the spectator. Whereas the hero of the tragedy is an active, acting person whose tragic fate is determined by his acts, that of the melodrama is the passive victim of the events.

These two hero types appear also in the typology of Propp: the mission of heroes of the *passive victim* type as opposed to the *active seekers* is to ascend to the next development level by standing the tests of patience, perseverance and sometimes humiliation. Whereas the active seeker leaves home of his own will - in search of adventure or due to some assignment -, the passive hero happens to be in a life-changing situation despite his will. He experiences other trials and adventures than the active seeker; the tests of his virtue and goodness are often less spectacular yet equally hard.

The kinship between the stories focusing on the passive tale hero and the melodrama is confirmed also by the definition of Thomas Elsaesser:

"(...) melodramatic stories are usually told from the point of view of the victim, entailing a special pathos due to the positive assessment of helplessness. The protagonists are women and additionally also often children who also offer, as a matter of course, the perspective of innocence and helplessness. Thus contrary to the heroes of the tragedy they are without fatal flaw, hamartia, but as in the tragedy, the moment of recognition, anagnorisis, usually comes too late."³⁹

Bettelheim's statement quoted above on the bipolar world view of the fairy tale (it is an essential need of the child's psyche to sharply separate good and evil) is true also of the classical melodrama. Comparing that and the words of Bentley about the melodrama being a "childish" genre makes it clear that there are more connection points between the fairy tale and the melodrama than one would have thought.

Andersen and the swans

Although the aesthetics of the melodrama and the striving for stage effects plays a considerable part also in Andersen's own tales - suffice it to mention the inno-

(38) Eric Bentley: *A dráma élete*. (Life of the Drama) (translation to Hungarian: F. László Földényi), Pécs, Jelenkor Kiadó, 1998. pp. 159-176.

(39) Thomas Elsaesser: *A Mode of Feeling or a View of the World? Family Melodrama and the Melodramatic Imagination Revisited*. 2004. Quoted in: *Stóhr Lóránt: A késő modern filmmelodráma változatai: Fassbinder, Wong Kar-wai, Lars von Trier*. 5. http://szfe.hu/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/stohr_lorant_andras_dolgozat.pdf (Last download: 2017. 05. 10.)

cent young girl heroine living on the periphery of society in the *Little Match Girl*, or *The Little Mermaid* who became the symbol of self-sacrificing love – it is easiest to demonstrate in his folk tale paraphrases known also in other versions. In the following, I will compare such a tale (*The Six Swans*) with the corresponding version by Andersen (*Wild Swans*).

The story of *The Six Swans* is based on a tale type that has been popular all over Europe, i.e. that of the sister who redeems her brothers turned into birds by heavy work (the German variant had been recorded by the Brothers Grimm).⁴⁰

The original folk tale is already packed with melodramatic elements: the figure of the passive heroine, accused, though innocent, and suffering for her brothers; the evil stepmother and the devilish mother-in-law and her irrational ill-will; the motifs of helplessness and innocence; redemption at the last minute all point towards the melodrama, intensified by Andersen with an outstanding dramaturgical sense to the extreme.

The most significant change made by Andersen is the differentiation and alteration of the figures of the two evil women, the stepmother and the mother-in-law. For the stepmother, he stresses female meanness, evilness: the stepmother is not only a dangerous sorceress who curses the brothers, but she is also a jealous and frivolous woman who – like the stepmother of *Snow White* – considers her foster daughter her main rival. Whereas in the folk story the girl starts out after her brothers on her own will (as an active heroine), in the story by Andersen she is chased from the palace by the guile of her evil stepmother. First she attempts to disface the beautiful girl by putting toads into her bath, but the toads turn into flowers, then she chooses a simpler way: she anoints the princess with nut juice, so she is not recognised even by her father who kicks out the ugly creature. Andersen underlines the passive victim role of the princess already at the start of the tale and keeps working on it as he proceeds.

(40) The tale in brief: There was once a king who remarried after being widowed. The new queen did not like his children born of his former wife and did everything to ruin them, six boys and a girl. Her evil machinations were finally crowned with success: she sewed six small silk shirts for the boys who transformed into swans and flew away. The little girl witnessed her evil step-mother's doing and set out to find her accursed brothers. After a long and tiring journey she arrived to a forest hut where she found six beds. She lay down on the floor and fell asleep, but a little after she heard the rustle of wings. Six swans arrived to the hut, her six brothers. They told her that they had to live as swans forever because of the curse of the evil stepmother, and could only change back to human beings for a quarter of an hour at night. The only way of their redemption is for their little sister to knit six shirts made of nettles over six years, without speaking a word or laughing during that time. The little princess undertakes the task without further thinking and sets out to do the work at once. The years come and go and the nettle shirts are being made. One day a prince is hunting game in the forest where the young princess lives. He sees her and falls in love with her, and takes her to his castle and marries the beautiful mute girl. However, his mother hates the silent, sad queen, and when she gives birth to a healthy infant, she steals him and accuses her of having killed the child. The prince does not believe his mother, but the same occurs two more times. The queen does not defend herself, she remains silent as the grave and is finally condemned to be burnt on the stake. She is almost ready with the six nettle shirts when the day of her execution comes. The queen takes the stake without a word, with the six little shirts on her arm – and the six swans appear at that moment. The girl throws the shirts on them, and the boys change back to human beings and tell their story to the prince. At last, the queen can also speak and she reveals that her children had been stolen by her mother-in-law. Finally, the evil mother-in-law is burnt on the stake and the prince and the girl live happily ever after.

In contrast with the compactness of the Brothers Grimm' version, Andersen pays special attention to the minute details and the graphic representation of physical suffering. The princess meets her brothers turned into swans on a barren rock, and they fly with her overseas using every bit of their strength. The folk tale does not say a word about mutual self-sacrifice, but Andersen considers it important to emphasise that the swan brothers are ready to risk their lives to take their little sister to another country. This reciprocity strengthens the relationship of the siblings and motivates the princess' later willingness to sacrifice herself.

It is an apparently tiny, yet significant difference that whereas in the folk tale the shirts are to be knit of starwort, here the six swan shirts must be woven out of stinging-nettles. Andersen deliberately escalates the horrors when she associates the work of the princess with permanent and most understandable physical pain. Moreover, she can only use nettles picked in the cemetery, something that makes her situation, not easy at all, even more complicated as we proceed in the tale.

Whereas in the tale of the Brothers Grimm the prince's mother appears as a second intriguer, in the *Wild Swans* the situation is more complicated. Instead of a female antagonist on a similar scale, Andersen - again with an excellent sense for the stage effect - makes the whole court or even society the ill-wisher of the new queen. Her muteness is suspicious, her unsmiling face is repulsive, her secret activity (knitting) is unworthy of a queen. The advocate of the slanders is the court priest, convinced that the silent girl is a sorceress, raising his voice in the name of ethics, morale and custom. Thus the king must defend his wife not only against an Oedipal mother, but through the figure of the priest also against an entire world order, law and society - his character, torn between love and obligation, is thus more interesting also dramatically than that of the prince in the Brothers Grimm' version. The young queen is obviously a sorceress, as is witnessed by her night visits to the graveyard: on the last occasion when she goes to pick nettles, her husband sees her himself going to the graveyard that is full of sorcerers. Instead of the forceful, yet unlikely child-kidnapping story, Andersen chooses a more rational and hence dramatically more effective motif: in possession of the evidence, the king cannot decide otherwise but send his wife to the stake.

Andersen delays the happy ending of the tale as long as possible: he gives a vivid portrayal of the people who debase the queen who keeps knitting even on her way to the stake, of the efforts of the swan brothers to get into the castle in human form at night until, at the last moment, everything turns out well.

Andersen's variant of the tale obviously puts the even fuller exploitation of the action mechanism of the melodrama in the centre: he subjects his innocent protagonist to extremely humiliating, physically and mentally painful torture to make the happy ending even more moving.

Andersen in the theatre

As explained by Bettelheim in connection with the tale and the melodrama, emotional identification, experiencing great emotional amplitudes has a clearly positive effect on the soul of the spectator/reader, and in such a case it is indifferent whether the receiver is a child or an adult.

The aesthetics of the melodrama, its mechanism of action, is clearly present in the tale dramas of the contemporary children and puppet theatres – typically in the works of Andersen and Oscar Wilde, but sometimes also in other, suitable, tale adaptations. Its rationale is not dubious, but the targeted audiences definitely are. Our theatre experience confirms the belief of the child psychologists and pedagogues that children become mature enough for the tales of Andersen at the age of 6-7. The tales of the Brothers Grimm, on the other hand – considered sometimes more frightening, more horrible – can reach already the 4-5-year-old ones, of kindergarten age. At that age, the stories of Andersen seem difficult, almost “unbearable”. According to Bettelheim, children can cope with the horrors of the Grimm tales – that are symbolic horrors – much more easily than with the corresponding tales by Andersen. In my opinion, the underlying reason is obviously the action mechanism of the melodrama.

Whereas a child of pre-school age, of 4-5 years – who is the absolute centre of his own world – cannot identify with the self-sacrificing hero suffering from injustice, a child older by a few years will understand the situation of a figure like that and refer it to himself. The emotional intensity, the delaying and contrast-based structure typical of the melodrama creates the possibility of catharsis without the weight of “real” tragedy for the young schoolchildren (or even young adolescents). (Cf. Bentley: “Melodrama is present in every tragedy, the same as the child is present in every adult.” and “Tragedy is melodrama plus something.”)⁴¹

In the era of the post-dramatic theatre, the ambition of contemporary puppet theatre to turn tale adaptations into “real” dramas may seem something conservative. As the creator of such adaptations, however, I still think that, instead of producing dramas without drama that the child cannot interpret, a possible solution is to identify the classical dramatic genres inherent in the tales and extricate them as part of the adaptation.

⁴¹ Bentley op. cit. 176.

III. THE PRINCESS WHO SAW EVERYTHING: THE PROCESS OF ADAPTATION IN PRACTICE



4. The Princess Who Saw Everyting, Vaskakas Puppet Theatre (photo: Gyenese Péter)

1. Basic forms and variants

The question to be asked is a practical one: Where should you start work if you are invited to adapt a tale for the stage?

If the assignment concerns a folk tale (revised folk tale), you could examine the extent of the changes made by the reviser relative to the basic form. Using the AaTh and MNK classification codes, you can look up the variants of the tale concerned, and maybe even find some originating directly from the data supplier. But does adaptation require a “pure source”? And, anyway, can anything be considered a pure source?

Has the tale, handed down by one generation to the next century after century, not been altered by the informant? Has he not moulded it on his own image? As Zoltán Bódis writes in his already quoted paper “...On the one hand, one may

perhaps risk the statement that there are no pure tale texts; there is no 'text object' without interpretation. The tale is part of a special communication process where it has a listener/reader, a sender and a transfer medium. The narrator (or the person who records and/or revises the text of the tale) does not figure in this process as the sender of some kind of message, but as a channel through which the tale 'gets from one point in time to another'. The position of the sender, on the other hand, is occupied by language itself – as a kind of impersonal force –, as very often what remains of the former message is only the reassuring rhythm of the fixed formulae, the linguistic elements. That is, the text of the tale cannot be objectified – not in the modern, i.e. 'read' form of the tale: we always face the text somehow in an understood form. The various interpretations differ only in degree: some are more explicit than others, but interpretation has no zero degree".⁴²

That is: there are as many variants as there are narrators, and as many interpretations as variants. Every new narrator (whether informant or literary person) has the right to create his own version. The author of the stage adaptation is no exception.

However, such freedom implies responsibility: the good narrator knows which elements can or cannot be changed or replaced by others. The good narrator will never deform a tale in the way illustrated in the third group of the typology of Ildikó Boldizsár:

"The rewrite of the original fairy tale texts becomes problematic when dilettante hands adjust the tale to the presumed expectations of the 'average reader', disregarding the essence of the meaning and compositional rules of the tale. The revised or adapted tales of the Brothers Grimm, Elek Benedek, Gyula Illyés assigned by Ms Boldizsár to the first group, adapting texts recorded at a given moment of transfer by word of mouth in various forms, can be conceived of as text 'variants' provided that the transformation did not affect the 'constant' core, to be handed down unchanged by each narrator. The dilettante fairy tale user rudely deprives the text of the original semantic connotations of the tale motifs or its tale character and, moreover, also of its meaning. (...) For, from apparently irrelevant insertions and removals to explanations, every procedure alters the meaning of the tale. The tale components may vary in several ways already in the forms transmitted by word of mouth, but it is a frequent, albeit not inevitable, phenomenon that some tale elements show close affinity with a specific other one. The reason why the above interventions are contrary to all tale experience is that the skeleton plot left intact requires the logical matching of certain motifs. Changing one motif triggers a 'chain reaction', and if the intervener does not recognise that, the outcome will be a text that has no meaning and cannot be interpreted."⁴³

A person who adapts a tale must be a good storyteller himself. He must be aware of the structural rules, the consequences of giving the characters more traits. At the same time, he must keep an eye on the drama, the dynamic unity of characters, relationships and conflicts. At the moment I think that, to proceed

(42) Bódis op. cit. 69.

(43) Boldizsár: *Magic and Slimming* 194.

correctly, one must transform the moves making up the tale into actable dramatic situations without altering the logic of the plot.

We have seen in the example of Andersen how the action mechanism of the melodrama changes the basic atmosphere of the tale, how it raises the ideal age of the audience by a few years – without inflicting any damage on the tale itself.

“The tale therefore means the most complete and limitless creative freedom, except for the concurrent structural looseness. Hartmann expresses this precisely: ‘To create freely – this does not mean that the artist makes arbitrary attempts or chases novelties, but that he instinctively grasps the internal unity and necessity of the entire structure [...] and then finds the sensual form of the material that goes with it.’ We mostly deem a tale ineffective because the narrator does not observe the consistency requirements at the level of its structure.”⁴⁴

The situation is even more complex for the *dramatis personae*, the characters. Bettelheim is obviously right when he places the figures in a black-and-white, bipolar, view of the world, and neither is it by accident that the Jungian tale interpreters emphasise the archetypes embodied by the characters. As active drama-turge, however, I think that you cannot act out a symbol, a sign, an archetype. The stage makes it imperative to have multi-layered characters and their interrelationships must indeed play a part in shaping the plot.

2. Making the stage version of a folk tale: The Princess Who Saw Everything

Let’s assume a puppet theatre asks you to adapt the folk tale entitled *The Princess Who Saw Everything*.

The first step is to identify and compare the various variants of the tale.

The subject matter of the tale

The tale is classified under tale type AaTh 329, that is, *Hide from the Princess*, and it has several known Hungarian and foreign versions.

A princess sets a heavy task to her suitors: to win her hand, they have to hide so that the princess cannot find them. The task is apparently easy, but the girl has a special ability: she sees everything (in some versions, from her 12-windowed tower, in others with the help of her magic rose/mirror/spellbook). Whoever is found by the princess is put to death. The hundredth candidate is a young swineherd or the youngest son. On his way to the realm of the princess or during game-hunting, the boy meets three animals in trouble (one aquatic, one from the sky and a terrestrial one – most often a fish, an eagle and a fox). Later on, he hides twice with the help of the grateful animals (to the depth of the sea and into the egg of a bird or behind

(44) Boldizsár: *Magic and Slimming* 190.

the Sun), but the princess finds him on both occasions. On the third occasion, the boy does not only hide, but also changes shape: in some versions he transforms into a small rabbit, in others into a rose or a needle, hiding in the hair of the girl/ behind her back/in her book/behind her mirror - that is, in her direct proximity. The princess looks for him in vain and, enraged, she smashes her magical instrument - the boy then reveals himself and asks her to marry him. This being a widespread tale type in European folklore, there may be quite essential differences between its variants. Different magical instruments, hiding places, helper animals may be presented, and sometimes even the point of departure of the tale changes. Some variants start with the announcement of the conditions set by the princess, whereas others with the young swineherd who lies lazily by his mother's skirt and does not even start on his way to get the princess, but "simply" to try his luck. In the Transylvanian Saxon version, the boy reports to the palace with his two brothers, and he is offered his three rounds of hiding after his brothers' impalement.

Mandatory elements

After the review of the variants, here is a summary of the elements present in every version of *The Princess Who Saw Everything*:

1. One protagonist of the tale is the princess who sees everything (with a magical tool or due to a natural ability).
2. The princess will only marry someone who can hide so that she cannot find him.
3. The other protagonist of the tale is the boy (the youngest brother or the young swineherd), helping three animals in trouble during his journey or a hunt.
4. The boy hides three times, each time with the help of an animal he saved. The first attempt fails.
5. On the occasion of the last attempt, he does not only hide, but also transforms and stays close to the princess. This time the girl does not find him.
6. The boy transforms back and they have their wedding.

Structure of the tale

Most versions of the tale consist of two moves: the first is the journey of the boy (or the three brothers), the second is the game played by the princess and the boy, with the three hiding episodes inserted in it. The Transylvanian Saxon version has a somewhat different structure: the boy there reports to the palace with his two brothers, asks for a day to think things over after their death, and goes hunting. That's where he meets the helping animals. Thus the helping hand move does not occur in the beginning of the tale, but it is present as an inserted move.

After the analysis of the motifs present in all variants and the analysis of the structure, let's get acquainted with the protagonists and define the dramatic conflict.

The female protagonist to be defeated

Many tales portray women one-sidedly: the hero sees a picture of the princess or hears about her far-famed beauty and immediately falls in love with her and sets out to save/free her and win her hand. In these tales, the emphasis is on the journey of the protagonist, the princess being its apparent destination – yet the tale is more about defeating the enemy, the road to adulthood, the personality development of the hero. Marriage is a kind of bonus, the well-deserved award that goes with half the kingdom at the end of the adventures. And the princess always falls in love with her saviour, and there is no doubt about their very happy future.

However resourceful the writer may be, the love strand of tales built on such and similar schemes is not interesting on stage. Of course, the princess may be endowed with extraordinary traits, she can be a witty talker or a genius mathematician, show her smartness or some special ability in one or two scenes, but she will nevertheless remain “the reward” –and if her relationship to the hero remains the same, neither will her function change. Her special abilities are absolutely in vain if they are not expressed by deeds.

Luckily, there are also other kinds of female tale protagonists, more exciting ones, besides the shy princesses waiting for their saviours.

There are haughty, vain and insolent princesses, to be tamed or defeated in a word game by the hero (*King Thrushbeard*, *Contest in Repartee*), there are women committing a dramatic error driven by curiosity who must fight for their love after breaching a ban (*East of the Sun, West of the Moon*), or ingenious girls and women using their brain (*The Smart Girl*). A rare, yet existing type is the figure of the female dragon-slayer who has male characteristics and goes to the battle instead of the men, and we may come across female protagonists endowed with magical traits.

This is how Propp describes the two types of princesses in *The Historical Roots of Fairy-tales*:

“Those who think of the princess of the tale as a ‘generous beautiful maiden’ are mistaken (...). On the one hand, she is really a faithful bride waiting for the groom. On the other hand, she is insidious, vindictive and evil (...). The primary task of the hero embracing the princess, literally or almost, is to tame her. Sometimes the princess has knightly qualities, she is combative, a good markswoman, good at running and riding. Her animosity as regards her groom may even take the form of open rivalry. These two types of princesses are determined not so much by their personal traits, but rather by the moves of the plot itself. The hero saves the princess from the dragon, so he is her saviour. This is the type of the shy bride. The other is taken by force. The cunning guy who solved her tasks and riddles takes her or kidnaps her against her will.”⁴⁵

Propp underlines that this second “combative” or “autonomous” type of princess can often play other roles besides her own. She can be a dispatcher, a donor, a helper or even an adversary. Generally speaking, if the tale features a controver-

(45) Two types of tsar’s daughters, cf. Propp: *The Historical Roots of Fairy-tales*. 295.

sial female protagonist playing several roles, the love strand will be interesting also dramatically.

The character of the shrew, “problematic” heroine, to be defeated, occurs in several folk tales, but the motif of her taming might be most familiar from *King Thrushbeard*. After being married by her father to a king disguised as beggar, the princess who had refused her suitors with stinging sarcasm is forced to undergo a Calvary of physical and mental torments until she turns into a humble and meek wife by the end. A cruel tale, yet one recalls it as the most romantic love story.

Psychoanalytic tale science explains this by saying that, besides the naive, the shy, the victims, there are also female protagonists who incorporate the more shady parts of the soul of the listener – like evil stepmothers and scheming witches –, but in addition to their negative traits, these characters are endowed with the ability to admit their errors: they change, they develop, they move on to a higher level.⁴⁶ They are deviant figures in the tales, rebellious tale characters. They do not want to meet the expectations associated with their roles; they do not want to join the league of either the good or the evil: they are dramatic heroes in quest of their own identity.

A typical representative of this type is the already mentioned haughty wife of King Thrushbeard but, obviously, *The Princess Who Saw Everything* also belongs here.

These women do not give in easily, they must be defeated. They must be confronted with themselves, shown their limits. The princess in the *Thrushbeard* story is busy testing her limits when she ridicules her high-ranking suitors: all her wicked words, her pointed remarks conceal the desire to have someone contradict her. She may do everything, say everything and this is exactly what makes her lonely – until she finally meets her match in the person of the mocked King Thrushbeard. The despised beggar becomes her mate and the miserable hut her home. And by the end it is completely irrelevant that the beggar is actually a king. *The Princess Who Saw Everything* declares already at the beginning of the tale that she would marry only the person outwitting her. She is looking for a partner who is smarter, more intelligent than she is, who is an intellectual challenge for her.

At the end of these tales, it is also revealed that the victory of the men is not a defeat for the women either. It is not even important who wins and who loses. What is important is the game itself, their common game.

Thus we can state that the dramatic stakes of *The Princess Who Saw Everything* is the slow adaptation to each other of two strong personalities, a man and a woman; the outcome of their fight for and with each other. But the question arises whether this is still a fairy tale adaptation or already a relationship drama. In the analytical phase, it is easy to get carried away with analysing the tale from the adult perspective. This is not necessarily a problem, since good adaptation inevi-

(46) Cf. Ildikó Boldizsár: Mit nem lát a mindent látó királylány? (What does the princess who saw everything not see?) in: *Meseapoétika. Írások mesékről, gyerekekről, könyvekről*. Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 2004. 51-53.

tably requires the personal interest/concern of the writer (obviously an adult) in the story to be processed.

An outlook to world literature: *Taming of the Shrew*

As the work of Andersen made us think of the action mechanism of the melodrama, the story of the tale heroine to be defeated projects the image of a relationship comedy, a cut-throat male-female game. All the more so since Shakespeare admittedly invoked the woman-taming folk tales of rural England to write *The Taming of the Shrew*.⁴⁷ Although it may seem a detour in our discussion of the adaptation process, it is worth diving deeper into the story of the shrewd Katherine at this point.

Shakespeare - maybe instinctively - plays with one of the most important motifs of the tale when he puts changing (clothes) and transformation into the centre of the play. The framework play, truncated at the beginning, creates a theatrical setting anyway: the actors are playing a trick on the tinker fancying himself a lord by presenting the story of shrew-taming, full of clothes-changing, lies and play-pretend. The actors of the play-in-the-play keep turning round and round in the spinning top with a sophisticated dramaturgy: they change clothes, exchange clothes, change roles. Hortensio becomes Lício, Tranio Lucenzio, Lucentio Cambio (it is no accident that the last name means 'changed'), the Pedant Vincentio. The many tricks, role-changes and dissimulations, however, would not be more interesting than a mediocre farce: what is at stake, i.e. love. gets lost amidst so many disguises. The hopeless superficiality of the Italian trick comedy is unveiled by the folktale strand: despite its apparent cruelty, the story of Petruchio and Kate is deep, serious and true. While the others babble about love, we finally see two persons who really love each other.

When exactly their love begins is open to dispute. On the awful wedding night? When the tailor is sent home? Or later, while joking about the sun and the moon, on their way home?

I think much earlier. At the time of the first meeting, in the heat of the first debate, somewhere between the wasp and the capon. Kate and Petruchio argue with each other passionately, with joy. Their lines complement each other, their repartees impose a new formal rhythm. This exchange is not as refined as the one we later hear from Beatrice and Benedetto,⁴⁸ it contains more vulgar jokes, more foul allusions, but the sexual tension, the glow, the game is the same. Katherine (who had kept testing her limits before, as did her tale-precursor) and Petruchio (who according to his own account came in search of adventure, to try his luck) suddenly marvel at each other in this scene. They see the playfellow in the other. Whereas the game of the others is an old masquerade, theirs has a real stake: life.

(47) Cf. István Géher: *Shakespeare-olvasókönyv* (Shakespeare Reader). Budapest, Cserépfalvi Könyvkiadó - Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1991. 110..

(48) Cf. Shakespeare: *Much Ado about Nothing* (Hungarian translation: Dezső Mészöly), Budapest, Európa Könyvkiadó, 1987.

Although she is sparkingly clever, Katherine is like a hedgehog who prefers to use her spines to prevent being hurt. That's her defence mechanism, the defence of a clever woman who, however, still has much to learn: for example, that you have to lose, get wounds in the game called life to merit happiness. Before the wedding, Katherine probably thinks she could get away from this detour. She is already in love with Petruchio, she is waiting, looking out for him, she obviously keeps deliberating how she could poignantly, wittily and originally say 'yes' and live happily ever after. The first slap in the face comes when Petruchio arrives dressed as a clown instead of a loving knight, late. Then he drags her to Verona, all muddy, hungry and tired, on foot. A rough game, governed by boyish rules - it takes the otherwise brilliant Kate time even to understand that it is a game at all. The woman, humiliated and insulted at the wedding, her brain blurred by her emotions, comes to realise some time during her awful wedding night that she is being mocked, played a game! The other person is testing her borders, like she does herself. Kate realises the new rules and joins the game - apparently, after some time, she even lets Petruchio win and feel superior.

On the day after their wedding, Petruchio has a hat and a gown made, and calls the tailor: The hero, dressed as a clown, builds a new game around the various costumes, to reproach and revile the stylish, impeccable dress of the wife. While the actors in the other story strand keep changing dresses back and forth without thinking, Petruchio raises his voice against costumes as such here. Kate is standing by his side in a plain, dirty dress, like some "inverted" Cinderella, and he says this is how he loves her. For herself. Who could want a more beautiful, more romantic love confession?

In the beginning of the play, Kate despises marriage as the others play it: a horse fair, the forced adjustment of social roles. Now Petruchio has shown that he does not want to impose any role on her, he would not dress her in costumes, he wants her to be herself. The highest praise, boosting her self-confidence: you are fine as you are, no need for your hedgehog spines, for the snow-white wedding kitsch, for any costume or conduct. I need You. That's how it is.

From that point on, they play together, in perfect agreement, like two unbridled children. First they play the taming of the shrew for Hortensio - their dialogue about the sun and the moon would drive mad any lunatic poet, but they profess their love for each other this way, by turning the poetic images upside down. Playing a trick on old Vincenzo is also a shared joke ending in loud laughter. They are boundlessly happy, adolescents, rebels, non-conformists. They are happy and they are themselves, so much so that they are joking with the self-identity of others. (Poor old Vincenzo gets another dose of the same later, in line with the rules of the farce, and in the end he is completely at a loss as to who is who).

Identity is exactly the topic that Petruchio and Kate can already feel free to joke with now that they are completely sure of each other and themselves. They do not need costumes, social status symbols, they don't care about rules and expectations. They have rules of their own, a game of their own. The complicity of these two is

stronger than the social community of the loud-voiced men and resentfully withdrawing women. Their game can contain Kate's humble monologue, so full of mischievous winks: a series of poetic exaggerations on one side, sophisticated female finesse on the other. Looking at the front of it, Kate has won themselves a bunch of money by a tiny technical bravura. At the back: this is where Kate wraps her husband around her little finger definitely and for good. For, who would not like to hear this monologue from his wife? He understands the exaggeration, the irony, but for the same reason he thinks he also hears sincerity. And, who knows, maybe it does contain a tiny bit of sincerity. Kate stages a spectacular victory for her husband, that's how she becomes the real winner herself. The game does not end, it will last forever, with ever new boyish and girlish rules. This is what makes it so beautiful.

From a stubborn, rude female, Kate apparently turns into an obedient wife by the end of the play but, in reality, the essence of her development is quite different: from a clever little hedgehog unable to surrender and engage herself, she becomes a wise and sophisticated woman. She is strong: she had already been wounded, yet she recovered. She plays the game of social coexistence, with nothing at stake, perfectly, since she has realised that it is a pathetically simple game. She does not need the mask and manners of unruliness to excel from among the others, because she knows she is special. In the beginning of the play, she did not know who she was, only who she did not want to become – by the end, she grows up and gets to know herself. Finally, she becomes a woman, because she can be that by the side of Petruchio. And Petruchio – don't forget the rebel, adventurer, fortune-seeking clown – becomes a man, because she can be that by Kate's side. They have changed, both of them, together: they have mature into a couple, a man and a woman, together.

To return to the tale: the above makes it obvious these two stories seem similar not simply because of the figure of the woman to be defeated and of the ragged outlaw. The key to the story of *The Princess Who Saw Everything* is also the development of the relationship of the partners: their change relative to each other, by each other and for each other. The boy must discard his old self, transform, to approach the princess, and the girl must let the boy approach her and let him defeat her. At the end of the tale, they stand tightly side by side, without magical tools and abilities, as man and woman.

Dramaturgical problems: repetition and enhancement

After the identification of the dramatic conflict, the next step is to expose the dramaturgical problems inherent in the tale. The No 1 pitfall in the tale under study is obviously the power of three or rule of three, so frequent in folk tales.

Patterns repeated thrice are a problem on stage, since they can easily become predictable and boring – especially if the three similar events follow one another. There are various ways to avoid that: one solution is to intensify tension (e.g. the

enemy devises more and more evil tricks - as in the case of the three murder attempts of the stepmother of Snow White), or unpredictability (in case of three tests, the hero originally prepares for one, then finds out there is one more, and yet another more), or increasing the stakes (the two cut sisters of *Miss Reed-stem Beauty* die, so if the hero spoiled the last option, he would never have a wife). Three animals landing in trouble in the beginning of the tale can be nothing but boring - when it comes to the second, we already know there will be a third one, we have to get through the inevitable lend-a-hand scene and, moreover, we do not learn more about the hero than what was communicated on the first occasion, i.e. that he is a pure-hearted, unselfish and helpful individual.

In *The Princess Who Saw Everything* there are two series of thrice repeated patterns: three animals saved and three hiding places found. Since the latter can be made interesting by using the means of enhancement and by raising the stakes, associating the animal scenes directly with the hiding scenes seems the obvious solution: separated from each other this way and offering a solution always for the problem at hand, the trap of redundancy can be avoided.

The structure is therefore the following (in broad lines): the boy is given the task - realises he cannot do it - he meets an animal with which they can mutually help each other - he hides - the princess finds him. In this version, the hero does not meet the animals on his journey, but during his stay in the palace ... but how do the animals make it to the palace? And, anyway, in what form do the animals appear in this fairy tale turning into a relationship drama?

Characters and transformations

Sometimes the dramaturgical problem is solved by the form - in our case the "puppet or human" issue. At this point of the adaptation (after the structural, conceptual and dramaturgical analysis of the tale), the script-writer doing the adaptation must start thinking together with the director and the designer: What puppet technique, what type of puppet/mover relationship is best for the story?

The Princess Who Saw Everything offers several solutions. The miraculous hiding and transformation scenes may induce an exciting puppetry solution or, on the contrary, the whole concept may shift in the direction of a realistic, live theatre performance. In what follows, I will trace the development phases of a specific adaptation, that of the play adapted for the Children's Theatre of Szabadka.⁴⁹

In the performance directed by Kata Csató, we chose the second option: the human characters in the drama are actors, and the animals appear as puppets. The manipulator actor is visible behind the puppet, without any screen or other hiding device between them. The number of the actors is also given: two men and two women.

(49) *The Princess Who Saw Everything*. Director: Kata Csató, Szabadkai Gyermekszínház, 2009. For the text of the performance, see the Annex at the end of the thesis.

Since those who play the roles of the princess and the boy cannot play animals, that task is relegated to the other two actors. But who are they? Odd-job men cast in several roles? Untermans? The court? The environment of the princess needs to be portrayed somehow, but what kind of environment is that? Should we include a servant and a maid? A companion and chamberlain?

The various versions of the tale say nothing about the surroundings of the princess, except for mentioning that her father definitely wants her to get married – but the king himself appears in a few versions only, and the princess often handles her affairs herself. What kind of king is he who is hardly present in a tale about his daughter? Does he reign at all, or does his daughter do that? And: if the princess is her own boss, who wants her to get married?

Of course, several promising scenarios are inherent in the above: I decided that I was interested in the parents of the princess. Let the extra two actors be the king and the queen. Firstly, because the tale is essentially a “relationship comedy” where the princess and the boy are the “romantic” couple – whereas the grouchy older couple could be the funny counter-point to their emerging love. Secondly, the aim of the parents is always to marry their daughter and see her happy. And the parents of *The Princess Who Saw Everything* are even more desperate: they want to get rid of their daughter, at all costs, so they are ideal extra personae.

The reason for their insistence lies in the character of the princess. To return to Propp’s analysis of princesses to be defeated: What could a princess who sees everything be like? Clever, curious, nosy. Intelligent. Adamant. You cannot lie to her because she knows the truth. You cannot surprise her. You cannot hold her to account, because she will promptly do the same to you. The princess who sees everything is an excellent, albeit merciless ruler: she sees (knows) who is up to some mischief, who is lying, cheating or stealing. She knows who is guilty and she has no mercy. If her parents want to educate her, she educates them instead, unveiling their weaknesses. An uncompromising adolescent who, with some exaggeration, keeps the country and her father in terror. The princess who sees everything sees everything in black and white. She knows everything, but she hardly feels anything. She brushes aside her female side, her instinctive reactions, her empathy. Her special ability, seeing everything, makes her haughty and lonesome: she does not want to marry because only a perfect man would be good enough for her.

Propp analysing the Russian version of the tale states that the figure of the princess is closest to the mythological topos of the magician. A lonely, intelligent, dominant type. In the Russian tale, she has special magical tools: a book and a mirror, to find those who are hiding.⁵⁰ Those who interpret hiding as a mere physical act (hiding in the granary, the chimney or the bushes) are inevitably lost – the hero is to hide in an animal nest or transform into an animal.⁵¹ In this reading, the three phases of the hide-and-seek are the “magicians’ duel”: the struggle of the

(50) Propp: *The Historical Roots of Fairy-tales*, 318.

(51) For the forms, meanings and ritual roots of being clad in animal skins, see Propp: *The Historical Roots of Fairy-tales*, 320-321.

princess with magical powers and the boy acquiring magical powers through the animals. The ultimate solution is invisibility: the boy is unified with the magical tool of the princess (standing behind the mirror or becoming a needle in the magical book) who therefore cannot find him.

The princess of the Hungarian versions is "less magical": she must look out of the twelve windows of her tower to see everything, or read the solution to a riddle from the petals of the most beautiful rose in her garden.

Since I did not want to make the princess a magician murmuring incantations, I chose the most prosaic solution, the tower.⁵² In this version of the tale, the boy finally turns into a small animal (a lumpfish) and sits on the shoulder of the princess - I retained that, since an agile little animal is a good source of humour and play in the puppet theatre, and this is what fitted the essentially funny play best. In another Hungarian version, the magical tool is the rose and the boy himself also transforms into a rose (or hides among the rose petals) that the girl puts into her hair/on her breast. This lyrical version, easy to interpret also as a symbol, could function well in a live theatre.

Thus the princess sees everything and the boy can transform with the help of the magical animals - but we still have not solved the problem of the origin of these animals.

The key - as I have indicated above - is the puppet theatre convention: the animal puppets must be moved by the actors playing the role of king and queen (and we actually see them do that), who play no other role than their own, so it goes without saying, based merely on the dramatic situation, that the helper animals are identical with the parents. The parents, who want to marry their daughter by all means, and therefore give the boy every assistance while also testing him. By identifying the royal couple and the animals, the fish out of water and broken-winged eagle prove their worth - the meeting of the boy and the animals is not accidental: it is a test of the boy's helpfulness, in return for which he obtains magical (and parental) assistance.

A tough situation

Postponing the animal scenes makes the boy's journey superfluous - thus the play begins in the palace, with the princess. The sun is rising, and the princess is trying to find the hiding place of her actual (ninety-ninth) suitor - she is looking out of the tower windows one by one. This is the first time we see this ritual, so it must not be cut short: she catches sight of the unfortunate candidate at around the seventh or eighth window, and orders his being beheaded right away. (The degree of abstraction offered by the puppet show makes that possible). The king and the queen are desperately watching the girl who had started to rule as well: she ex-

(52) The mirror would have been a good alternative, hiding behind that is a brilliant idea, but a mirror that sees everything is too direct a reference to the stepmother in Snow White.

amines who is lazy in the fields, who is stealing firewood etc. When they try to talk to her, the princess retorts jauntily: she knows the king inhales snuff in secret and the queen keeps eating chocolate – parents like that should not tell her what to do. The couple, left alone, decide to put an end to that. The king swears that they will help the next candidate, whoever he is, by all means. And that's when the young swineherd enters the scene.

In the tale, the boy comes to make a marriage proposal, but in the theatre it is more interesting if he is the victim of some misunderstanding: he wants to say something about the swine⁵³ when the king suddenly embraces him and assures him of his support. The queen is on the brink of fainting, this is not the son-in-law she was dreaming of, but the king is adamant, the young swineherd must hide. The boy is clever and has no intention of risking his life: he refuses. And that's when the princess rushes in.

Two strong personalities

The “love at first sight” scene here reminds one most of the first meeting of Kate and Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*: the princess immediately starts to insult the boy who retorts and a battle of words ensues. Finally, the boy gets so angry he says he will take up the challenge. The princess is satisfied and promises to have him beheaded the next morning. No word of love, but it is quite clear that these two were made for each other.

After the first, failing, hiding attempt (assisted by the fish-queen, at the bottom of the sea) the boy is waiting for his execution when the princess suddenly changes her mind and gives him as 100th candidate another chance. This way we avoid the predictability of the three trials: first there is only a single trial, then another is added due to the psychologically motivated decision of the princess. The boy does not want mercy -- no fooling, I am ready for the execution. The princess is in a rage, no one should speak to her like that, no execution! She is surprised that this boy is different from his predecessors. He is talking back and even making jokes. The princess, consistently arrogant until then, suddenly becomes interested in the young swineherd. Their dialogue, a duel again, is turning into a game where the girl also wants to please and the boy is also courting her.

The second hiding attempt is almost successful. The princess is already at the last window when she catches sight of the boy hidden behind the sun with the help of the eagle-king. She seems to hesitate for a second, but finally she cannot withstand the urge to say “I see you, you are caught”. The princess may be stalling for time, but she cannot offer another opportunity – that would be as boring a repetition as those in the original tale. The parents, however, may intervene. The king and the queen have come to love the boy sincerely, so they prevent his execution

(53) Thus the motive of the hero is altered relative to that in the basic tale, but its function as understood by Prop and consequently the logic of the tale remain unchanged.

and ask their daughter to let him go, since he had not even wanted to apply as suitor, he did not want to marry her, it was all their idea.

This time, however, the boy digs in his heels: he declares that he wants to marry the princess. This is the game of these two, and this time it is the girl's turn to take up the challenge. Let him hide once more, and if she cannot not find him, she would marry him. The parents pray the boy to take flight, they cannot help him anymore, but the boy is adamant. The next morning, when the sun rises, a small rabbit is hopping up the stairs by the side of the princess and joins her looking out of the windows. But when she reaches the last window, the rabbit jumps into her arms then on her shoulder, blinking. Since the spectator sees also the mover, this is what the image looks like: the princess is standing by the window, with the boy, imitating her every move, standing close behind, the puppet on his hand. The essence is concentrated in this image: the princess cannot see the boy, he is so close. This scene is interpreted differently by spectators of different ages – those of pre-school age care only for the rabbit, being moved around in a funny way, older spectators focus on the two actors, moving in perfect synchrony, and it may occur to the adults that the “I do not see you” originates here from the express decision of the princess who does not turn around and does not expose the boy, because she, too, would like to have their wedding.

The princess in the tale breaks the windows or the mirror: she does not want to see everything anymore. This absolute negation, although a popular turn in the “female-taming tales”, is not consistent with the stage version where the princess develops from a strict, smile-less, clever adolescent to a playful woman who discovers the colours between black and white and discovers emotions. She learns that you do not have to see everything all the time, no need to watch over the lives of others, when you have your own life – but if she wants to, she can nevertheless see everything and already has someone to share her knowledge with.

Form and content – director's concept encoded in the adaptation

As can be seen from the above, in the puppet theatre adaptation, the fact that the director and the designer join the work in its relatively early (analytical) phase and the specifics of the theatre itself (the composition of the company, programme policy considerations) both affect the text being prepared. In the above adaptation, the given form (technique) is not a must: the same text may be presented as pure puppet show (if puppets of different techniques are used to represent humans and animals), or live performance may be accompanied in the hiding and the transformation scenes by an even more stylised form, the object play or motion theatre.⁵⁴

(54) The play was included in the repertoire of Vaskakas Bábszínház of Győr in 2013. Director Angéla Kolozsi and designer Kati Sipos retained live acting, but complemented it with some stylised, puppet-like movement. The scenography featured the board of a board game where the actors strode according to a specific arrangement. Transformation into an animal was solved by altering the actors' dresses in a symbolic way.

This relative freedom is due to the fact that the script of *The Princess Who Saw Everything* basically assumes live performance, and instead of the relationship of the puppeteer and the puppet, in the scenes of the animal characters appearing during the transformations, the two forms (animal and human) are present together to produce the intended stage effect.

A more fixed text, more closely bound to the director's concept is produced by building the play on the (changes of the) relationship of the puppet and the mover. The next three chapters discuss the most frequent cases of this relationship.

IV. THE MOVERS AND THE MOVED



5. The Seven-Headed Fairy, Budapest Puppet Theatre (photo: Vera Éder)

Now that we have got acquainted, in great lines, with the bases of the science of tales, read and compared different versions of the same tale and found that the underlying dramatic genres can be used also in tale adaptations everything seems to be ready to make an adaptation of our own.

Sometimes, the material we choose yields relatively easily: the events unfold into dramatic situations on the monitor, the characters come to life and fit into the slots of one or another of the established dramatic conventions. In such a case it may happen that the drama would stand on its feet even irrespective of the specifics of the performance being prepared, that is, the text being produced would not bound by the form it takes on the occasion of its first stage performance and might thus be performed also at another place, at some other time. My experience is that this happens mainly to texts that are not tightly linked to a given puppetry technique, a puppet-based line of thought, the special physical limits of a

given puppet, and do not exploit, at the level of the text, the possibilities inherent in the combined presence of the puppet and the mover.

My career offers several examples of such versatility: *Rose and Violet* and *Cinderella* were presented at several theatres, under diverse directorial concepts. The common denominator of the plays concerned is that they were made with a single type of (puppet) technique in mind. I wrote *Rose* originally⁵⁵ for rod puppets, and *Cinderella* was meant to be a stylised live play⁵⁶. In later productions, the first was put on stage also as a play drama with giant puppets⁵⁷ and live actors⁵⁸, respectively, and the latter in the form actor work complemented with object play.⁵⁹ Although both tale adaptations were made for puppet theatres, they cannot be regarded as puppet plays as a matter of course as they can be performed any time as live play, without any harm to the story or the loss of a semantic layer.

In a classification based on the feasibility of re-enacting the plays currently on the programmes of puppet theatres in Hungary, one end of the list would certainly be occupied by such plays as the above, not closely linked to puppetry technique and therefore suitable for being performed again and again, even in a live theatre.⁶⁰

The other end of the virtual list would contain plays that are inseparable not only from a specific director concept and one (or several) puppetry techniques, but also from the acting persons (their physiognomy, personality, technical skills). The "performance text" contains here not only the text being heard, but also the actions, games, rhythms, the technical parameters of the puppet show, the movement of the puppets - the "score". Good examples of this type of work are offered by the tradition of fairground puppet shows.⁶¹

A substantial part of puppet theatre performances in Hungary is somewhere between the above two extremes. Although the movers are often visible, they have no role of their own; as movers, they are not relevant for the story, and such plays can be performed also with other techniques, even with invisible movers. In a somewhat more restricted case, certain turns in the story require the presence of two different qualities (mover and puppet or two puppets of different forms). In some scripts, the use of narration induces two different (puppet and live) forms of appearance. And in certain plays the effect is created by the relationship of mover and puppet inseparably intertwined with the story and the complementary and joint presence of action, text and the relationship of puppet and mover.

(55) *Rose and Violet*. Director: Géza Kovács, Budapest Bábszínház, 2012.

(56) *Cinderella*. Director: Ágnes Kuthy, Vojtina Bábszínház, 2011.

(57) Director: Rita Bartal Kiss, Vojtina Bábszínház, 2013.

(58) Director: László Barnák, Szegedi Nemzeti Színház, 2015.

(59) Director: György Vidovszky, Ciróka Bábszínház, 2014.

(60) Some examples from the current repertoire of puppet theatres in Hungary: Balázs Szálinger: *The Star-eyed Shepherd*, Mosonyi Alíz: *The Sleeping Beauty*, Angéla Kolozsi: *Salt*, Borbála Szabó - Dániel Varró: *Lyric and Epic*.

(61) Of course, it may also happen that the text and "score" of a fairground puppet show lives on, independent of the original player(s). The texts of Henrik Kemény are played also by others, who fashion the original in their own image at places.

As mentioned already in the introduction, in a best-case scenario, both the director and the designer are present in the preparatory stage of the puppet theatre script (most often an adaptation of some kind) in addition to the writer. That's when the main questions, to be answered preferably at the start, are raised:

- What form (puppet and live, homogenous or mixed) suits the chosen story best?
- Are the puppeteers visible and if so what role do we intend to cast them in?
- To what extent does the relationship of the puppet and the puppeteer determine the method of story-telling?

One of the core issues of modern puppet dramaturgy is the simultaneous presence of the movers and the moved, the actors and the puppets, their relationship and interaction on stage. The director and the dramaturge must define who the animators are and what powers they have over their puppets; whether they guide the story or are part of a story themselves; whether the movers and the moved communicate with each other and, if they do, in what way. Do the puppeteer and the puppet represent one character together or do they have separate roles? What puppet-puppeteer relationship is suggested by the story?

Speaking of modern puppetry aesthetics, Henryk Jurkowski emphasises that the possibilities are boundless.

"The place of the traditional⁶² puppet actors have been taken over by artist-creators with extensive artistic interest who use several different means in their performances. Sometimes they step on the stage themselves; at others, they use masks or puppets. (...)The contemporary puppet theatre exists thanks to the will of the theatre artist. The artist applies various means of stage expression which he thinks necessary to achieve his artistic objective. Sometimes these means originate from the world of the human performance, sometimes from that of animated objects (puppets), sometimes from the world of utilizable objects. Sometimes the artist mixes them in one production. When the artist decides to use only puppets, the 'puppet theatre' is allowed to exist. The artist may use puppets throughout a production, or now and then, or only fleetingly (exceptionally). He may choose various conventions for his show - the mimetic theatre, the epic theatre, the literary or visual theatre. He is the demiurge of his artistic world and also its constant innovator."⁶³

(62) Here Jurkowski uses the term mainly for puppeteers who exercise and perfect a single technique throughout their life.

(63) Jurkowski: Puppetry aesthetics at the start of the twenty-first century. in: Penny Francis (ed.): *Puppetry: A Reader in Theatre Practice*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 132.

It would be impossible to list the many ways/situations in which the puppet and the mover may be present on stage, since every performance, every director concept creates new forms, solutions, "sub-categories".⁶⁴ In what follows, I will examine the most frequent cases (that could also be called typical) where the adaptation is determined by the relationship of the live actor and the animated one in the context of Hungarian premieres of the last 15 years.

1. Mortals and immortals



6. Noah's Ark, Budapest Puppet Theatr (photo: Éva Izsák)
Olympos High School, SZFE (photo: Dániel Borovi)

Genesis

In puppet theatre adaptations of biblical or mythological stories, humans entering the stage as puppets are often manipulated by supernatural powers (angels, devils, spirits, gods, demons) appearing as live actors. The dramatic conflict thus typically unfolds among the resurrected immortals, and the stakes of the game is usually the soul of the human or control over his fate.

The production of Budapest Bábszínház entitled Noah's Ark⁶⁵ based on texts of medieval mystery plays and moralities tells the story from the Old Testament starting with Genesis. The scene is arranged by puppet-actors entering the stage as angels (one of them becomes the fallen angel, Lucifer) - acting also as movers

(64) Already in the 1960s, Jurkowski described the trend that had gradually replaced the "secret" theatre, unveiling the mover behind the puppet, as a "third way". Whereas the genre features of the traditional forms are easy to describe, the so called "mixed-genre" puppet theatre is difficult to classify due exactly to its diversity, since that would require a typology covering the many artistic visions of many authors/directors. However, the experience is that certain patterns, some popular dramaturgical arrangements liked by several artists have emerged during the decades. The overall situation is more complex due to the nationally different preferences, but we can nevertheless say that the "mixed-genre" puppet theatre has gradually developed (and sometimes even exhausted) its specific sub-categories. Cf. Jurkowski: Literary Views on Puppet Theatre. in: Aspects of Puppet Theatre. 1-68.

(65) Géza Kovács: *Noé bárkája - Teremtésjáték*. (Noah's Ark - Genesis) Director: Géza Kovács, Budapest Bábszínház, 2003

of the first human couple, Adam and Eve. When Lucifer is exiled from Heaven, he cuts the strings of the marionette humans to give them the freedom of choice. The puppets, however, are not able to move alone, their puppet character does not change with the form: in the original scene and the Cain and Abel scene, they become glove puppets on the hand of Satan. What is at stake in this performance is not so much the outcome of the game between Lucifer and the Angels, but whether humans will ultimately be able to exercise their free will. The character of the positive hero, Noah, is therefore of a special, dual, nature: he is no longer a powerless puppet, nor of the same rank as the angels and Lucifer; consequently, he appears as a highly stylised, masked, but human-sized character, capable of autonomous movement, but unable to move others.

Front and back of Greek mythology

Gábor Tengely as director of the *Odyssey* adaptation called *Olympus High School*⁶⁶ examined the free will issue from another aspect. In the production made for secondary school students, the Olympian gods are bored secondary school students (their characters correspond to the stereotypes known from American films: Ares, the strong boy, Aphrodite, the beautiful girl, Pallas Athene the bespectacled geek) who move the mortal Greek gods stolen from the supply closet like puppets. Odysseus is the only one whom they cannot manipulate for he has his own mover, clad in black: he has free will. The gods help or hinder the hero – as becomes their respective temperaments –, but they cannot really influence his fate: Odysseus is guided along his journey by his own decisions, faults and merits, as opposed to the other puppet characters directed by the Gods (the *kyklops* is moved by Poseidon, the nymph Kalypso and Kirke by Aphrodite, the companions by Hephaestus). The relationships, conflicts and love affairs of the secondary-school gods waiting for Professor Zeus unfold in parallel with the story of the “self-moving” Odysseus. The two planes of the performance keep reflecting on each other, showing the front and the back of things: what is a single, skipped lesson for the gods is decades of wandering for Odysseus, what is the rest of the tea-time meal for the first is the highest feast on the land of the Phaleks, what is no more than playing a joke on a lame school mate means the death of the mates of Odysseus in puppet-reality. Paradoxically, the two dimensions (actors and puppets, gods and humans) change places in the production: the irresponsible, smug immortals living with nothing at stake, played by flesh-and-blood actors, seem papier-mâché figures by the side of the puppet characters, Odysseus and Penelope, made of rags, of utmost simplicity, but moving along a rich emotional scale.

(66) *Olympos High School* – *Odyssey* in one part. Director: Gábor Tengely, SZFE, 2011.

2. Homo ludens



7. *The Little Red One and The Roast Swan and Other Tales*, Vaskakas Puppet Theatre
(photo: Edina H. Baranyai)

Whereas in the above examples man becomes the plaything of supernatural powers, sometimes he is the one who plays with inanimate objects, for various purposes: to demonstrate or show something, to tell a tale or simply to pass his time. In these performances man (the actor) has a definite, individual, character, and he is linked to his mates by a complex system of relations, whereas the puppet appears more like a demonstration tool. The dramas of the puppeteer and the puppet go their separate ways - the puppeteer is not the participant, only the mover, the performer of the story of the puppets, but the story of the latter often reacts on that of the former.

Man and woman

*The Little Red One*⁶⁷, the paraphrase of *Little Red Riding Hood* by Angéla Kolozsi, restricts (or extends) the tale of the Brothers Grimm to the eternal game of men and women. The drama unfolds from the conflict of the Actor and the Actress about to perform the *Little Red Riding Hood* story the n^{th} time. The woman wants to perform it differently, whereas the man insists on the tested routine, and the rhythm of the play is given by the dynamic alternation of their balance of powers. The fate of the puppets (the characters of the tale) depends fully on the mood and relationship ever of the Actor and the Actress, so much so that the characters often become the mediators of the opinions of their movers. The pitfall of performances of this type is that the actors themselves become more interesting than the tale itself - this is no problem for children aged 11+, but it makes the production frustrating for the younger ones who are less sensitive to irony.

(67) Angéla Kolozsi: *A kis Piros*. Director: Csilla Bereczki, Vaskakas Bábszínház, 2011.

Demonstration and group psychology

Whereas the movers in *The Little Red One* performed the male-female relationship, *The Roast Swan and Other Tales* based on the tales of Lajos Parti Nagy⁶⁸ presents the development of balance-of-power relations within a group. The baseline situation is the involuntary and prolonged stay of eight very different persons (an easy-going adventurer, a beautiful young girl, a loudmouthed Gypsy woman, a clumsy carpenter, a middle-aged woman who is an obsessive cleaner, the reclusive spinster, the neurotic intellectual and the taciturn musician) in a closed space (the performance does not specify where exactly, but the scene recalls something like air-raid shelter). The characters, locked up together in spite of their will – as in *Decameron* – start to tell tales (stories), enacting them with their personal objects, the accessories of their trade. In line with the puppet theatre convention, the objects may transform into anything, from the simplest things (feather duster to rooster, buttons to treasure) to highly complex ones (in the tale about the feast of the poor man, a loaf of bread and a bottle of pickled cucumber play every protagonist of the tale, while our characters have lunch). The trouvaille of this production is exactly this duality that is emphatically present every moment: every tale, every idea for a game, every object being used stems from the character and relationships of the protagonists. The stories told with the help of the objects react on the narrator and the audience: under the effect of the tales being performed, the initial atmosphere of mistrust gradually eases and transform into friendships and loves. Although here again the drama unfolds at the level of the live actors, not that of the puppets, one does not have a sense of loss, of something missing, because the object plays, sometimes funny, at others exciting, complement and counterpoint the fate of the human characters, projecting a complete picture of the world where diverse people and diverse stories can coexist.

3. Imagination and reality

The most obvious (and most frequent) way of putting the actor and the puppet together on the stage is to make the performance proceed along two planes: those of imagination/dream and of reality. Moreover, this form lets the real-life characters – brought to life on stage by actors – act as movers in the world of imagination, and thus complement or counterpoint the role they play in reality. A major part of classical literary tales is easiest to adapt in this form: let's just think of the dual worlds of *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Wizard of Oz* or *The NeverEnding Story*, but *Mary Poppins* and *Poor Johnny and Arnica* also fit into this line.

(68) Lajos Parti Nagy: *A pecsenyehattyú és más mesék* (The Roast Swan and Other Tales). Director: Réka Pelsőczy, Vaskakas Bábszínház, 2010. Excerpts from the performance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A5faAzllT40> (Last download: 25.04.2017)

Dream trip

The tale of Viktória Jeli and István Tasnádi, *Rosie in the Sky*⁶⁹ begins in reality, as a tale play with live actors. The framework story depicts an evening of six-year-old Rosie: Mother is on the phone, Father is looking for his football shoes and the girl thinks they have forgotten her birthday. Then Rosie sets out on a very special journey towards the stars with the help of a red balloon flying loose. The alteration of the dimensions makes it possible for the protagonist, present first as live actress, to continue her dream trip as puppet (her mover being the actress playing her role). Her adventures bring her to exciting and dangerous situations, she gets to know the various star signs, from Sagittarius to Scorpion, that all speak through the voices of her Father or Mother, the actors playing the parents being the main movers of the supporting characters. Thus Rosie keeps meeting the alter egos of her parents while looking for her lost birthday.

At the end of the performance, the framework setting returns: Father and Mother (already as human characters) wake Rosie up on the morning of her “found” birthday.

Similar “framework plays” featuring live actors occur at the beginning and end of many puppet plays. In a rarer and more exciting arrangement, live acting not only frames, but also “permeates” the story told through puppets and gives it a new impetus at the turning points, so as to make tale-weaving an organic part of the play.

Tale-weaving

The possibility of a double play is inherent in the tale *Poor Johnny and Arnica*⁷⁰ by Ervin Lázár: the fate of the cursed lovers in the tale is shaped by the ideas and conversations of the Father acting as narrator and the Girl listening to him. Although in the Budapest Bábszínház performance the puppet movers are not visible, the two live actors are present throughout the play: they guide, direct and comment the events taking place on the puppet stage that is clearly delimited also spatially. Dialogue keeps bridging the two planes of the same room, and one recognises the two narrators in characters (Arnica and King Östör).

(69) Viktória Jeli –István Tasnádi: *Rozi az égen* (Rosie in the Sky). Director: Gábor Tengely. Budapest Bábszínház, 2009. For a review of the performance, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JoK9Hu-6i91s> Last download: 25.04.2017.

(70) Ervin Lázár: *Szegény Dzsoni és Árnika* (Poor Johnny and Arnica). Director: Pál Lengyel. Budapest Bábszínház, 2005.

4. The power of the story-teller



8. Fairy Godmother, Orlai Production - Harlekin Puppet Theatre (photo: Gábor Gál)
Ten Storeys of Happiness, Budapest Puppet Theatre (photo: Vera Éder)

One-man plays – not built on the fair-ground convention – represent a category of their own within puppet arts. In the performances concerned, the actor acts also as narrator, the person who knows the story (that may turn out to be, as we progress, about the narrator himself). The narrator/actor facing the audience alone recalls, of course, the ancient story-tellers and the performative nature of story-telling. The combination of this ancient form with contemporary stories creates an interesting contrast.

Panel buildings and homeless people

*Fairy Godmother*⁷¹, a piece written by András Veres based on a Gypsy tale, starts with a casually uncomfortable scene: a scavenger woman pushing an old stroller packed with junk enters the stage. Her first words are definitely rude: she does not want to tell a tale, no one would listen anyway, the world is rushing past her. When, however, the objects (mainly old dolls) found among other junk make her start her tale, the pile of garbage constitutes not only the home and family of the poor Gypsy woman, but also fabulous Copperland and Silverland and Goldland. By putting on a mask, the homeless woman transforms into the Fairy Godmother: from that point on, she directs the fate of the child Zsiga born in poverty. This is in line with her roles as godmother (who is to shepherd her godchild in life), as transcendent helper (fairy) and as story-teller respectively. The most interesting arrangement in the play is actually linked to this “triple power”, since Zsiga sometimes acts against the express will of his mover (narrator, creator, godmother). He rushes to Copperland, without waiting for counsel or warning, and almost gets killed. The same happens to him in Silverland, where the cold-hearted Silver Princess wants to paralyze his heart. Zsiga, however, is brave and smart enough to

(71) András Veres: *Tündérkeresztanya* (Fairy Godmother). Director: Kata Csató. Orlai Produkciós Iroda - Harlekin Bábszínház, 2010.

overcome the obstacles by his own powers, without any transcendent help. In one-man performances, the omnipotent quality of the narrator, the *homo ludens*, is a typical dramaturgical problem (if the narrator has control over everything, the stakes of the narrative is lost) – but András Veres solves this problem excellently by letting “brainless” Zsiga run loose. The one-man performance directed by Kata Csató was played by Eszter Csákányi. In her acting, the realistic figure of the scavenger woman contrasted in a most productive way with the highly poetic story and the simple, almost symbolic use of objects. At the end of the tale, Zsiga marries the Golden Princess, Zsuzsi, made of wood like himself: the happy ending of the tale is actually ordinary domestic happiness. And the homeless woman, who started to tell her tale half-heartedly, without being asked, is actually a creator/story-teller fairy.

In another one-man performance of Budapest Bábszínház entitled *Ten Storeys of Happiness*⁷², Zoltán Hannus plays the role of Astronomer, studying the secrets of the universe, but accidentally dropping into a real Budapest story. He enters the set – showing two panel buildings with the River Danube in between – as outsider. Thus the Astronomer is not the maker of this world: the town exists independent of him. What does not exist, however, is the story: the houses get populated by his noticing their residents. He recognises, catches sight of (and thus creates for the spectator) the invisible: two giants living in the two houses. He sees, projects, a tale into the city, weaves a tale out of everyday life. If a giant is weeping, the ceiling leaks; if he is in love, electricity is cut off; if he is nervous, the elevator stops. The resident communities of the two houses get upset, and their fates unfold under the hands of the Astronomer. The turn comes when the *homo ludens* (observing the story and showing it to the audience without interfering in it) suddenly understands that his personal involvement is necessary for the end game to unfold. From outsider he becomes the mover of this world; from observer the moulder of the tale: he rolls up the Danube, and pushes the lonely houses together. The storeys merge, a new house, a new quality is created. And the Astronomer, before walking out of the stage, casts a last glance in the sky wondering whether he, too, is being watched by someone from above.

(72) Dóra Gimesi – András Veres: *Tíz emelet boldogság* (Ten Storeys of Happiness). Director: Petra Eszter Kovács. Budapest Bábszínház, 2013. Excerpts from the performance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=doUkMOhSmLU> (Last download: 25.04.2017)

5. The stakes of story-telling



9. Laci Iron, Vaskakas Puppet Theatre (photo: Edina H. Baranyai)

Tale-weaving, the narrative, may turn into dramatic action in a special way if the narrator who is identical with the mover becomes a character in the tale; if his further fate is determined also by how the puppet plot unfolds. This dramaturgical trick may work particularly well in tales where the fate of a hero in a difficult situation due to some misunderstanding or a previous flaw depends on the story that he recalls. A good example is the tale type where a pseudo-hero takes the place of the hero who can only prove himself by telling the antecedents.⁷³

Versions of memory

A tense dramatic situation, a court hearing is the *à propos* for recollection in *Wolf and Little Red Riding Hood*⁷⁴, a play by István Tasnádi made for school-age children. The Judge, the defendant Wolf and the claimants, Little Red Riding Hood and Granny appear at a hearing as live actors facing the audience (the jury) to wrap up what had actually happened on that beautiful summer day. Tasnádi plays with contradictory versions of the well-known tale: the respective versions of Little Red Riding Hood, the Wolf and Granny are completely different. In the performance, the puppets are moved by the narrator ever - consequently, the figures themselves also look different in the interpretations of the various actors. The Wolf describes himself as a mild retired vegetarian (and his puppet projects

(73) One of the best known tales of this type is the *Fairy from the Three-trunk Oak* present in several versions in both the European and the Asian tale collections, but one could also mention here the denouement of the Brothers Grimm's tales of *The Six Swans* and the *Gold-haired Twins*. In the latter, the queen, unjustly accused of the murder of her children, is released from prison and tells the truth after twenty years.

(74) István Tasnádi: *Farkas és Piroška* (Wolf and Little Red Riding Hood). Director: Gábor Tengely. Ciróka Bábszínház, Kecskemét, 2008. For the performance, see the links below: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9Ab7tC1PGY>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJauuP2iqmQ> (Last download: 25.04.2017)

the same image); in the reading of the Little Red Riding Hood, his character is a frightening, toothy monster. The inverse, however, is equally true: Little Red Riding Hood is a wide-eyed innocent likable little girl, but in the version of the Wolf she is a dangerous, antipathetic adolescent prone to vandalism. The trick in the play is that, by the end, despite our knowledge we feel inclined to take the side of the Wolf (as the actor playing him is really a likable retired elderly person and his story is quite credible) when, under the effect of an unexpected turn of events, we see the beast in him bursts out suddenly. The denouement adheres to the tale as we know it, and the Wolf is finally punished.

Former glory

*Vas Laci! (Laci Iron!)*⁷⁵, a folk tale adaptation by Róbert Markó and Gábor Tengely apparently involves story-telling with nothing at stake. The former hero, the aging László Iron appearing as live actor, tells a tale of his youth, his former adventures, as does János Hány in the folk tale. His wonderful story about freeing his three sisters carried away to the Underworld, defeating the dragons, about death and rebirth and winning the hand of the beautiful Snake Princess comes to life in the form of puppets behind the narrator's back. The downstage dominated by the narrator is separated from the puppet-events, the past coming to life, by transparent curtains, and there is no communication between the two planes. Laci Iron is present in the performance tripled: in the downstage area as live actor who cannot join, only recalls the action, the elderly László Iron, behind the curtain the young, able-bodied Laci Iron, also a live actor, and in the hands of the latter the puppet Laci Iron who can die and rise again, seven times stronger, the textile figure that can be twisted and turned, tormented, bearing the traits of cartoon heroes together with stylised Hungarian folk motifs. In the final scene of the performance, funny for children, but poignant for adults, a grouchy, obnoxious woman enters the front stage (we have already heard her voice scolding László, insisting that he should end his tale). When we see her, it becomes obvious that she is the once so beautiful Snake Princess, wife of Laci Iron. Story-telling is thus explained and also given a tragic overtone in the closing image: nothing has remained of the glory of the aging hero, it has turned into the most common, banal life, that's why he needs to recall and tell it again and again. However thin and transparent the partitioning wall, the narrator cannot communicate with the upstage area populated by young movers and puppets, i.e. his own past so full of miraculous events and heroic deeds.

(75) Róbert Markó - Gábor Tengely: *Vas Laci! (Laci Iron!)* Director: Gábor Tengely. Vaskakas Bábszínház, Győr, 2013.

6. Two sides of personality



10. *The Deerking*, Budapest Puppet Theatre (photo: Éva Izsák)
Flying Lessons for Beginners, ESZME-Vaskakas (photo: Vaskakas Puppet Theatre)

The (fairy-)tale heroes (Laci Iron or the protagonists of *Little Red Riding Hood*) were present in the puppet theatre pieces discussed in the previous sections in two forms: as live actors telling their story in the present tense of the drama and as puppets involved in the stories of the past. Thus mover and moved represented two sides of the same figure separated by time only.

Contemporary puppet theatre offers many examples of a role being played by a puppet and a puppeteer together. Body and soul, instinct and will, childhood and adult self, heart and brain - the figure gets constructed of the complex symbiosis of the mover and the moved; the two figures merge, become one in the mind of the spectator or, on the contrary, they are distanced from each other, drawn into conflicts with each other (with themselves). This form, besides offering numberless possibilities for the tragic and the comic in the puppet theatre, offers a suitable arrangement for playing heroes undergoing several metamorphoses but remaining the same deep in their soul.

The transformed protagonist

A good example of the separation of body and soul is Jenő Heltai's adaptation of *The Deerking* by Carlo Gozzi, directed by Géza Balogh.⁷⁶ In the story, Tartaglia, the evil court wizard, captures the soul of King Deramo in the body of a deer, whereas he himself takes the body of the king in an effort to fulfil his ambitions for power and love. Although puppets and puppeteers do not communicate with each other in the performance, the presence of the visible movers (the souls) makes it obvious who exactly is in the body of the given character. At the end of

(76) Carlo Gozzi - Jenő Heltai: *A szarvaskirály* (The Deer King). Director: Géza Balogh. Budapest Bábszínház, 2007.

the tale, the actor playing Deramo gets back his original puppet (and concurrently his life, love and empire), so the order of the world is restored in the story as well as on the stage.

Cats, birds and humans

The performance of ESZME entitled *Aviation Lesson for Beginners*⁷⁷ depicts two radically different (yet identical) stories. One is a beast fable. Despite his will, the morose black tomcat hatches out then raises an orphaned seagull and teaches it to fly with great difficulty. This is the story taking place at the level of the puppets: with lots of humour, real danger represented by other cats, tension and a liberating flight at the end. This story is understandable, readable, followed with excitement by even the youngest children; it could be played also by secret theatre means, by invisible manipulators. The manipulators, however, are visible in this performance, and they even have their own roles: when you are not looking at the beast fable, you get a glimpse of the life of two women, an elderly mother and her adult daughter. Janka Ujvári and Angéla Kolozsi communicate in a language that is unintelligible for the kids: in Italian. Their relationship system, however, is obvious: they undergo the same development as the cat and the little seagull: the girl slowly standing on her own feet, leaving the nest and her mother letting her go. The beast fable is interwoven with a painful human story that is not a framework scene, but a parallel universe. The two women do not find a solution to their own life situation by, but independent of, *beside*, the beast fable. The two stories are linked only by the fact that they are played by the same actresses. As if they showed the human and animal (real life and tale) variants of the same two figures, the same relationship.

Summary

Puppet and puppeteer, moved and mover can impact on each other in many ways on stage. Whether they incorporate various aspects of the personality of the same character or the duality of reality and imagination; whether they are in a hierarchical relationship, being inferior or superior to one another, the common stage presence of the puppet and its mover appearing also as independent character is a strong dramatic gesture through which the duality of a personality or situation, the front and back of a scene can be expressed. By separating the mover and the moved, the puppet theatre is able to condense in a single image the ideal and the truth, past and present, action and its consequence.

(77) Luis Sepúlveda - Dóra Gimesi: *Repülési lecke kezdőknek* (Aviation Lesson for Beginners). Director: Gábor Tengely. ESZME -Vaskakas Bábszínház, 2010. Puppet theatre adaptation of the tale by Luis Sepúlveda: A sirályfióka esete a macskával, aki megtanította repülni (The Case of the Young Scamel with the Cat who Taught it to Fly). Excerpt from the performance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUernD3satQ> (Last download: 2017. 04. 25.)

The author of the puppet theatre adaptation may choose many other possibilities in addition to those listed above, but his key function is to find (together with the director and the designer) the form that suits the given story best and think over consistently - logically as well as dramaturgically - the relationship of puppet and puppeteer, moved and mover in the performance.

We may conclude that, by putting the relationship of the puppet and its mover into a dramaturgical system, the resulting text will be more restricted, more closely linked to the director's concept. Instead of plays that can be interpreted on their own, one must speak rather of performance texts that cannot be performed in another form, based on some other director's concept unless the text itself is also adjusted to the new setting/form. Let's recall the words of Claire Voisard: humility and flexibility are the most important characteristics of the puppet theatre script writer.

In the following, the paper will analyse the texts of three performances where the puppet technique and the manipulator/puppet relationship had a substantial impact on text treatment and on the dramaturgical solutions.

V. AMALIA: TALE PROTAGONIST OR HUMAN BEING?



11. Amalia, Mesebolt Puppet Theatre (photo: László Büki)

1. Contemporary tale woven of classical motifs: the witch Amalia, today's "single" person

In contemporary tale literature, the writer often puts well-known motifs or tale heroes in the context of our days. A good example is the bumbling wizard living in a panel building invented by Pál Békés, or Magda Szabó's hero Lala the Fairy coming from Fairyland, a parallel world, to us, today's humans. The Amalia stories by Ildikó Boldizsár⁷⁸, on the other hand, are literary tales with magic tale motifs and archetypes put into the context of our days, without the tale being squeezed among specific time-and-space coordinates by the author. Its protagonists in-

(78) Ildikó Boldizsár: *Amalia álmái* (Amalia's Dreams). *Mesék a világ legszomorúbb boszorkányáról* (Tales of the saddest witch of the world). Budapest, Lánchíd Kiadó, 1991. Ildikó Boldizsár: *A Fekete Világkerülő Ember meséi*. (Tales of the Black Globe-trotting Man) Budapest, Elektra Kiadóház, 1997. Ildikó Boldizsár: *Boszorkányos mesék* (Witch Stories). Budapest, Móra, 2006.

clude wizards, princes and princesses at palaces and huts at the edge of the forest, but instead of dragons and giants, the characters struggle with themselves, their own roles and tale functions.

The “tale hero identity” problem is strongest in the first story of the *Witch Tales*, and it generates a conflict, exciting also in the dramatic sense, that makes the text particularly suitable for stage adaptation.

The 2008 performance based on the *Amalia* tales was made on the request of Mesebolt Bábszínház in Szombathely, and it was directed by Gábor Tengely.⁷⁹

The story in brief

Amalia, the young witch living a lonely life at the edge of the forest had never wanted to be a witch in the first place. She is friendly with the animals, the waters and the vegetation, but she does not like to use charms and spells, she does not like to divert princes coming to the forest from their path. Nevertheless, this is what she does, again and again, since this is her function as a witch: the princes, dukes, wanderers take a rest at her place and after a while she gets bored with them and forgets them. One day another prince comes, but he does not want to stop at Amalia’s hut, for he is looking for the most beautiful princess of the world. The witch falls in love with him, but she cannot make him stay whatever tricks and magic she uses – she even transforms into the most beautiful Princess of the world for a minute. When the Prince realises the trick, he becomes terribly angry at her and moves on, and Amalia turns old and bitter in only three days. She does not even remember how long she has been mourning the lost opportunity when her witch master, Frida tells her the news that the Prince is unhappy. Amalia sets out to help him, but Frida warns her that witchcraft would not help this time, she would have to find some other way to save the boy. When she arrives to the palace of the Princess, she is shocked to see a barren garden, without a single flower, tree or bird. The Prince is wandering unhappily in the barren garden, without even noticing the aged Amalia. He did find the most beautiful princess of the world and married her, but she is not what he had expected her to be: she never laughs, it is impossible to have a conversation with her, and she only cares for herself. Not only is the garden of their palace barren: their life is also without joy. Amalia knows what she must do: she plants the parched garden full of flowers overnight, then populates it with birds and butterflies. In the morning, the Prince recognises the rejuvenated witch, thanks her for the miracle then sadly parts with her. Amalia understands that the Prince would never leave the girl for whom “he stood so many tests, and about whom he had dreamed the most beautiful dreams, because he sticks to his dreams”.⁸⁰

(79) Ildikó Boldizsár: *Amalia*. Stage adaptation: Dóra Gimesi. Director: Gábor Tengely. Mesebolt Bábszínház, Szombathely, 2008. For the performance, see the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJ2VU39QN0k> (Last download: 25.04.2017)

(80) Ildikó Boldizsár: *Boszorkányos mesék* (Witch Tales). Móra, Budapest, 2006.

The backbone of the adaptation is the above tale, the first of the volume, but the play itself is interwoven time and again with motifs from the other Amalia tales (*Amalia and the Rains, Everyone's Flower, World-weeping Woman, Star-gazing Boy*)⁸¹

The saddest witch in the world

The character of Amalia is controversial in terms of both the roles defined by Propp and the Jungian archetypes, and she therefore has the potential of becoming a dramatic hero. In Hungarian tale literature, we may consider her predecessor the youngest witch of Ervin Lázár, refusing the role cast on her who, instead of being a malefic force, becomes the helper of Király Kis Miklós, because she falls in love with the prince.⁸²

The figure of the witch, the sorceress or yaga associated with both supporting and harmful functions, as well as the Kirke of Greek mythology⁸³ or the classical "femme fatale" are equally present in her: Amalia is beautiful and young, her mission is to divert princes from the right way. In the beginning of the tale the witch is actually busy fulfilling (executing) the functions associated with her role. What makes her figure interesting is her dissatisfaction with all that. This is what she thinks after her first successful conquest:

"What kind of prince is he, she was asking herself while sipping her morning thyme tea from her favourite green polka-dot mug, who is diverted from his path by the first yellow primrose, the first good word! If only someone came who would not overwhelm me with treats, heavenly and earthly goods, but could fly with me over the ocean instead?

But no such person came, only the number of the youth falling in love with her at first sight and forgetting the girl who waited for them as their saviour multiplied around Amalia..."⁸⁴

Folk tale heroes always succeed if they act in line with their role, fulfilling their functions. Whether they are happy in their role is no question, and the same goes for their emotions and thoughts. When the hero and the princess get married, "they live happily ever after". This is as true for the heroines having a more complex character, to be defeated, as for the ingénues to be saved. Marriage is the safe harbour they all reach: there are, there cannot be, more questions about it.

(81) The last two occur only in the first Amalia story collection, *Amalia's Dreams*.

(82) Rebelling against the wondertale role has tragic consequences yet in the tale of Ervin Lázár: At the end of the tale, the youngest witch is transformed into a breeze by way of punishment by her mother.

(83) György Karsai mentions in a study that Kirke actually enchants Odysseus not in her capacity of sorceress, but in a much more common way, as beautiful and intelligent woman. Their relationship is true love, so much so that Odysseus does not want to leave the Isle of Aiaie where he is so happy. Finally, under pressure by his mates, he continues his journey for, "that's his duty", his function. From this point of view, the relationship of Kirke and Odysseus is quite close to what is represented by Amalia and the Prince. Cf. György Karsai: *Kirké*, In: Ókor 2003/1, 31-16.

(84) Ildikó Boldizsár: *Boszorkányos mesék* (Witch Tales). 7.

None of the protagonists of the tale of Ildikó Boldizsár feel all right in the role cast on them by the tale and, consequently, they cannot fulfil their functions to the full. Amalia finds witchcraft, seducing princes, boring and (as is revealed by her ruminations) she secretly longs for the role of a princess. The Prince sticks to his role and functions to the end and even beyond, but his utterances leave no doubt as to his heart being broken. The Princess, on the other hand, although beautiful, is lacking in kindness, cheerfulness, humour, so she cannot fulfil her main function: she cannot make the Prince happy.

2. Puppet and mover: epitome of the tale archetype and personality rebellling against that role

The dramatic core of the tale is thus no other but the antagonism between the wondertale role of the protagonists and their thoughts and ambitions. In other words: the soul of all three protagonists is the battleground of the fight of archetype and personality.

The form of the stage adaptation is the direct consequence of this state of affairs: the protagonists are doubled, they appear as puppets and also as humans. The puppet represents the ancient, the tale, i.e. the archetype (witch, prince, princess), whereas the mover, the live person reveals the quivers of the soul, the personality forced behind the role.

This duality manifests itself also visually: the Bunraku puppets designed by Kati Sipos wear clothes identical with those of their movers. This magnifies the importance of minor differences: the actor playing the Prince has a hood, his puppet a crown, so his personality unites the ordinary humanities scholar in a striped pull-over and the classical tale hero.

The course of the performance

Structurally, the tale and the play made of it both consist of three parts: the first part is a monodrama where Amalia alone is on the stage. The second part is the duo of the Prince and Amalia in the failed seduction scene. The third part is the most dynamic one: we get to know the Princess and her palace, and that's where the story reaches its dramatic climax. In the closing scene, we return to the starting point, i.e. to Amalia's hut.

Dramaturgically, the main challenge was the first, monodrama, part of the play. What does a witch do, what activities are most typical of her? Does she communicate with her alter ego? Is it necessary at all for both of them to be present from the beginning of the play?

The solution was the consequence, as elsewhere, of the form being chosen: if the everyday reality of the character is represented by the actor and his tale projection by the puppet, then Amalia, characterised basically by her withdrawal from witchcraft and her longing for a normal life, must be present in the exposition as a human being. Her more playful, tale-like witch-self gains emphasis and takes control only after the arrival of the Prince.

Therefore, in the beginning of the play, the actress dominates the stage alone: this situation, more typical of adult theatre, is mitigated by the presence of the talking, moving mugs (moved, of course, by the actress playing Amalia). But how do mugs that speak and move happen to be in the kitchen cabinet of a sorceress who had basically retired from witchcraft?

As we know from the tale of Ildikó Boldizsár, Amalia has a considerable collection of polka-dotted mugs. We also know that the princes she had seduced during the years remain around the hut in some form, but they do not appear in the tale. While making the adaptation, it had occurred to me to make mugs of the princes who had met with an unfortunate end (Hugó, Huba, Herbert, Kázmér, Kelemen, Fülöp, Frigyes, Flórián and Lajoska by name): Amalia transformed the princes into mugs, like some joking Kirke, after getting bored with them. The presence of the princes transformed into mugs facilitates dramatically and technically the realisation of the monodrama in the first part of the play (the mugs can be asked questions, answered by Amalia herself, of course; they can be used, played with, as absolutely simple theatre objects to have a funny effect which, however, deepens the loneliness of the witch even further), but they also represent the source of humour in this otherwise essentially sad story.

The puppetry convention applied in the performance later on is based on the entry of the Prince: he arrives as a puppet and trips over the threshold. Amalia, still present in her live form, hurries to help him up, but then catches sight of his mover: the two actors look at each other for a long time, then Amalia springs up and she also takes her puppet from the chest of drawers. After that – except for a few emphatic glances and touches present also at the level of the actors – only the puppets communicate with each other; the scene is played by them. When Amalia transforms into a beautiful princess for a minute, the actress playing the witch holds in her hand the Princess puppet that is to appear later on: the white-skinned, tulle-skirted figure is in sharp contrast with the colourful and chaotic witch-hut. When the Prince refuses the attempt at his seduction, the witch promptly transforms back into her own figure, but it is too late already: she loses the Prince because of applying witchcraft, because of her irresponsible play with identity.

The simultaneous, dual, presence of the dramatis personae plays an emphatic role also in the further course of the performance.

Amalia is immersed in deep sadness after the departure of the Prince, and she converses again with her mugs. In the original tale, she also ages (this motif is postponed in the adaptation), and only her former witch master, Frida, is capable of overcoming her depression by giving her a task. I omitted from the stage ver-

sion the figure of the great witch, retaining her function: the mission is communicated to Amalia by telegram. The unexpectedly unrolling telegram is a humorous element, easy to solve from a puppetry point of view, and counterpointing the melancholic mood of the scene.

In the third part of the play, Amalia gets to the palace of the Princess. At this point the hut at the edge of the forest built on the revolving stage turns around, and the homely chaos suggested by warm tones and tiny objects is replaced by a sterilely beautiful scenography. The Princess looks like a porcelain doll in her rose-coloured tulle skirt. Her mover, the actress, also clad in rose-coloured tulle, responds to every movement of the Prince by a disapproving frown.

Amalia does not enter this space: she remains outside the revolving stage, watching the unsmiling life of the Prince and the Princess from her position. In the original tale, she waits in front of the palace for days until the Prince comes out of the gate, but he does not recognise her, he looks through her. This motif was retained and even strengthened in the adaptation. When the Prince leaves Amalia, very angry, he brings down a curse on her: "I don't want to see you ever again". Thus the two figures meet in vain in the palace gardens: the melancholic Prince does not see Amalia, present in her dual witch-form.

We have already relied on the witch's ability to transform when Amalia took the shape of the Princess for a minute. She has recourse to the same ability now: he visits the Prince first in the form of a ladybird, then a bird and finally a cat. The boy pours out his heart to the animals, telling them about the witch who keeps coming to his mind, and the Princess who cannot laugh. Thanks to the doubling of the protagonists - although the Prince does not understand what the witch hidden in the guise of the animal figures tells him - a subconscious dialogue-connection is established between the two actors.

After three ineffective attempts to lift the Prince's spirit, Amalia has recourse to other means: the actress puts down her puppet and starts to plant flowers around the palace, that is, in the downstage area. When she takes up the puppet again in the morning, that is not what it was: instead of the young, beautiful witch, it is an old-old woman. When the Prince steps out into the garden he notices the old woman at once and, as they talk, he slowly recognises Amalia in her. Thus the performance tells in a single, condensed image that the relationship of these two will never be consummated: in vain do the two actors notice each other and look at each other, the puppets they hold in their hands are those of a young Prince and a withered Old Woman.

Catching sight of the flower garden, the Princess finally starts to laugh: the contrast between the actress, unsmiling up to then, and her pleasant-faced puppet disappears, and the Princess finally manages to become fully identical with her role.

As for the Prince, the situation is more contradictory. For a long, protracted moment, the two movers, Amalia and the Prince, who even lower their puppets for that time, are present not as witch and prince, but as a man and a woman. As if their desires overrode their roles for that moment. The boy, however, finally def-

cides to take up his crowned puppet, takes his leave from Amalia and follows the Princess into the palace. He takes up and accepts his role, his fate.

At the end of the play, Amalia returns home, and she also puts down her Old Woman puppet: she exits the tale and she is released from her role of the witch. Thus some kind of happy ending occurs as she attained what she had always wanted: we say goodbye to her as a normal, ordinary person.

3. The targeted age groups: a tale meant for children and for adults

The Amalia tales by Ildikó Boldizsár are not meant for children only: the adult reader can also identify with the characters easily. One can discern all the pain, tragedy and depth of a traditional love triangle behind the tale motifs. The question is how to show both levels on stage without imposing too much burden on the child audience by depicting the hopelessness of the adult story, while retaining the basic mood of the tale.

The solution lies in the puppet-human relationship, in the charms and in the visual appearance of the puppets. Kati Sipos made child-sized Bunraku puppets out of textile, carrying the properties of the archetype in their appearance and, furthermore, offering a possibility for identification for the child audience. Such simple stage magic as the flowers growing out of the pots, the mugs rattling on their own or the coloured rain that starts to fall in the last scene reinforce the tale aspect and fascinate the children. Simultaneously, the movers beside/behind the puppets use small gestures and visual effects to enact the adult story. This level of the performance goes almost unnoticed by the children, but the adults accompanying them can easily identify with what is presented there.

The form thus highlights the duality that is typical of both the basic tale and the performance: the tale is meant for both children and adults. Children focus on the tale unfolding at the level of the puppets, full of magic, transformation and humour, while the latter watch the painfully common drama communicated by the human actors.

VI. BODY AND SOUL. CSONGOR AND TÜNDE IN THE WONDERTALE AND ON THE PUPPET STAGE



12. Csongor and Tünde, National Theatre (photo: István Znamenák)

A major part of Hungarian puppet theatre performances is meant for children, so the puppet dramaturge seldom meets with "adult" plays. World literature, however, offers an ample supply of (adult) dramas that are ideal for the puppet stage: for example, the plays of Shakespeare taking place in two worlds (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest*) or suitable for being defined in the coordinate system of movers and moved (*Richard III*, *Hamlet*), the story of Faust rising from the status of medieval marionette hero to a dramatic hero, Jarry's trilogy of *Ubu Roi*, the wise tales by Brecht and the protozoa of Beckett are all suitable for puppet theatre adaptation. And the same goes for two Hungarian classical dramatic poems, *The Tragedy of Man* by Imre Madách and *Csongor and Tünde* by Mihály Vörösmarty.

The Tragedy offers excellent opportunities for spectacular puppet art solutions. The director may use different puppet techniques by scene (as in the work of Géza

Blattner shown in Paris in 1937), follow the instructions of Madách, never realised before (the system of planets revolving like the parts of a machine; the glory getting clouded; Eve's London necklace turning into a snake on her neck), but the presence of the puppets and their movers may also induce a brand new interpretation exploring the more hidden layers of the play. Where the director is keen on stressing the clash of the higher powers, humans will be puppets and God and Lucifer their movers (this was the method chosen e.g. by Dezső Garas at Budapest Bábszínház). If the performance focuses on the dream dramaturgy of the play, the dreaming Adam (as mover) and the wandering Adam (as puppet) may be present simultaneously in the historical scenes, offering a solution also for presenting the alternately active and passive attitude of the hero as the scenes proceed. The relationship of the puppets and the puppeteers puts the concept of free will and predestination into a new light, opening up new vistas for interpretation for the spectator.

Whereas the *Tragedy* is predestined for the puppet stage first of all by its philosophical level, the relationship of the creators and the creatures, so to say, in *Csongor and Tünde* it is the difference of the two worlds (the fairy and the human one), the need to present mortal and immortal characters, and the emphatic presence of the wondertale motifs that can be used as a starting point. Can the work of Vörösmarty be considered a tale adaptation at all? Does the presence of the known tale motifs promote or hinder reception? Does the *Csongor* story have to be simplified into a tale play to be presented on the puppet stage or, on the contrary, can puppetry as a genre add some extra semantic content to this dramatic poem and thus enrich it?

1. Wondertale or “bella storia”?

Usually, a “bella storia”, more precisely the epico-lyrical poem entitled *History of a Prince Named Argirus and of a Fairy Virgin*⁸⁵, still highly popular in the early 19th century and sold on tarpaulins, is regarded as the direct antecedent of *Csongor and Tünde*. The literary integration of pulp fiction considered vulgar, junk and even despicable by the literary élite of the time had started as early as 1830, albeit it was not considered established practice at that time - hence Vörösmarty's choice of topic came as a surprise even for his contemporaries.⁸⁶ Why a cheap love story, a “bella storia” tattered by reading? What could Vörösmarty find in the basic material that he thought worth developing and unfolding? I assume that the question can be answered by the tale motifs used in the text by Gergei.

(85) For more detail on the Argirus story, its sources and reception history, see Tibor Kardos: *Az Argirus-széphistória* (The Argirus bella storia). Budapest, Akadémiai, 1967.

(86) “Vörösmarty probably considered less important, more or less respectful the topic and the source. He saw material suitable for processing, for further development where others noticed only lack or annoying fallibility.” Cf. Mária Zentai: Álmodók hármasságján. Vörösmarty Mihály: *Csongor és Tünde* (On the triple road of dreams. Mihály Vörösmarty: *Csongor and Tünde*), in: Mihály Szegedy-Maszácz - András Veres (eds): *A magyar irodalom története II. 1800-tól 1919-ig* (Stories of Hungarian Literature, II, 1800 to 1919). Budapest, Gondolat Kiadó, 2007. 169. http://www.tankonyvtar.hu/hu/tartalom/tamop425/2011_0001_542_04_A_magyar_irodalom_tortenetei_2/ch13.html#_Imok_h_rmas_tj__n (Last download: 24.04.2017)

The story of the prince Argirus is constructed of wondertale components, but its folk variants known today can be regarded, without exception, as re-folklorised⁸⁷ versions of the 16th century *bella storia*. It is not known whether the “folk ur-version” had been widely distributed by word of mouth in the early 19th century (or whether it had existed at all), nor whether Vörösmarty knew the folk tale version of the story. This is what Mária Zentai writes about the genesis of the play:

“According to Imre Sallay, a former schoolmate of Vörösmarty, the poet asked him in October 1821 to buy the tale poem of King Argyrus and send it to him to Börzsöny. The Székesfehérvár censor authorised the printing of Csongor and Tünde in February 1831. Ilona the Fairy is mentioned in the correspondence of the group of close friends in 1828 and 1829 concerning the “parts” of the poem (songs) under preparation.”⁸⁸

Zentai (quoting István Fried) lists many works that might have inspired Vörösmarty, from *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* to the *Magic Flute*. She attributes the wondertale motifs of *Csongor and Tünde* mainly to the effect of *Argirus*, but mentions also other tales briefly.

Carrying on the line of thought of Zentai and re-reading the text of Gergei makes it obvious that Vörösmarty used much more tale motifs (known from other wondertales) than the *bella storia*. Thus – although the *Argirus* story is, no doubt, the primary source of *Csongor* – one wonders where from and especially why the others were included. What exactly is their contribution to the drama?

A topic found

Vörösmarty dedicated a whole chapter of his dramaturgical work *Theoretical Fragments* to the problem of choice of topic. After explaining which topics are suitable for being developed into dramatic action by the writer, he raises also the issue of their originality:

“It is a question also whether it should be freshly composed altogether or rather drawn from known sources such as a historiography, epos, novel, myths and legends etc?”⁸⁹

Vörösmarty illustrates – inter alia on the example of Shakespeare – the advantages of adapting a known basic story: if the playwright adapts a known story, he does not have to invent the character and relationships of the protagonists, so he can devote more time to poetic craftsmanship. He discusses at length the dramatic adaptation of historical events and mentions also another option: the folk myth.

(87) Cf. “Oh, this leg could be a leg!” in: Zoltán Hermann: *Varázs/szer/tár* (Magic Supplies Closet). *Varázsmesei kánonok a régiségben és a romantikában* (Magic tale canons in ancient times and in Romanticism). Budapest, L’Harmattan, 2012

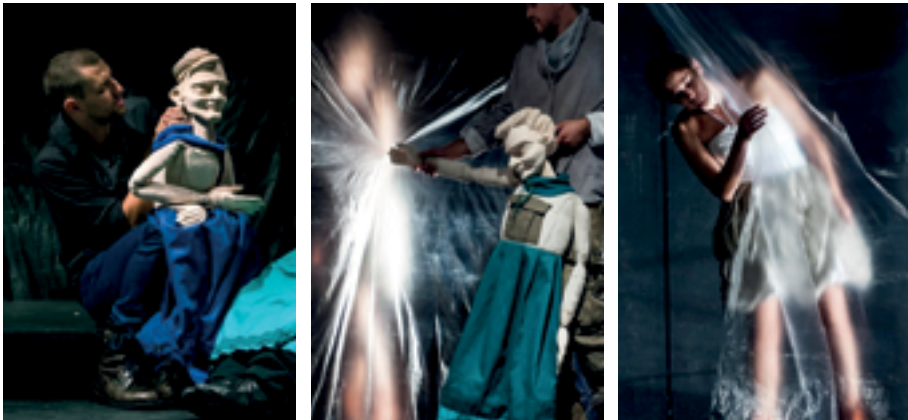
(88) Zentai op. cit. 169.

(89) Vörösmarty Mihály: *Dramaturgiai lapok* (Dramaturgical papers) (Elméleti töredékek – Színbírálólatok) (Theoretical Fragments – Drama Reviews). Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1969, pp. 252-254.

“Such priority is deserved not only by the heroes of the story, but also all those who are personalised and created by these excellent poems, folk myths and legends in accordance with the eternal laws of nature, who have become almost our properties, the residents of the world of our memory, and when they take action, they arouse our curiosity and engage our attention by being known to us.”⁹⁰

That is, Vörösmarty recognises the relevance of folk tales preserved by collective memory and their dramatic potential. He discerns dramatic heroes in the tale heroes “created in accordance with the eternal laws of nature”. The tale motifs we encounter in *Csongor and Tünde* are not simply used, but also put into a new context, given new meaning (sometimes contrary to the original one) by Vörösmarty.

2. Tale motifs in a new context



13. *Csongor and Tünde*, National Theatre (photo: István Znamenák)

Human boy - fairy girl

Love between mortals and immortals is one of the most ancient topoi⁹¹, and lots of relevant adaptations are known, from the Greek mythological stories to *The Lord of the Rings*. It is good material also in the dramatic sense: lovers coming from two worlds can only be united at the cost of sacrificing one of those worlds. Whether the mortal party chooses immortality (that is, the termination of earthly life), or the immortal becomes mortal (giving up eternal life for finite happiness), the happy ending will have a tragic tinge of necessity.

Prince Argirus leaves his earthly world to start a new life with his love in Fairyland – his family, father, country are therefore definitely lost, dead to him. He

(90) Vörösmarty: *Dramaturgiai lapok*. 293-299.

(91) Cf. “Az Argirus-történet mitológiai háttere: a szent nász” (Mythological background of the Argirus story: The Holy Wedding”. Tibor Kardos: *Az Argirus-széphistória* (The Argirus bella storia). Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1967.

chooses the world of the tale, eternal life without worries and stakes by the side of the fairy girl.

Csongor, on the contrary, does not make it to Fairyland – Fairyland comes to him on Earth. Although in the last scene the palace built by Tünde at the place of the old tree is a fairy castle, it is still on Earth, within the coordinates of finite in space and time. Happiness acquires its significance, the stakes being love, due exactly to this transience. Tünde is made mortal by Night, that's how they finally happen to be in the same dimension with Csongor.

The Golden Apple Tree

The tree growing miraculous fruit is quite a common motif in folk tale literature. Whether we think of the tree in the garden of Eden, the vertical axis connecting the three levels of the world (the bottom, middle and upper world), or the fairy tree growing healing fruit⁹², the tree always acts as a link, a passage in the various stories. It interconnects worlds, dimensions, and lets the earthly hero meet celestial creatures.

The Argirus story starts with one of the most frequent motifs encountered in many tales: a golden apple tree of a special origin is growing in the garden of the king: it blossoms thrice in one day, grows golden apples, but in vain: the fruit is always stolen by the next morning. The king first sends his servants, then his sons to guard the tree, but they fall asleep. The last one to try his luck is the youngest prince, Argirus, who does not fall asleep, so he meets Fairy Ilona coming in the form of a swan. The fairy tells him that the reason why she had planted the tree was to meet the prince: the passage so created was meant to serve the consummation of their love, and it would open only to the person for whom it had been created.

The tree in *Argirus* – in contrast with the original tale, in a somewhat earthbound way – is considered significant and worth guarding by the king because of the wealth it represents in the form of the golden apples. Argirus tries to protect that wealth when he unexpectedly encounters love. Vörösmarty retains the idea of the tree planted by the fairy (the conversation between Tünde and Ilma reveals that the purpose of planting the magic tree was to meet Csongor as in the original version), but expands the scope of associations centred on this motif. The fairy tree grows in the garden of Csongor, its branches extend to the sky (Ilma's dress gets stuck in it while she is landing), but the tree is also connected to the Underworld through the chained Mirígy. When Csongor catches sight of the tree, he catches sight at the same time also of Mirígy: thus the tree of Tünde (i.e. Tünde herself), growing in the garden of Csongor, is linked from the first moment to the evil tied to it.

(92) For a detailed analysis of the apple tree as tale motif cf. Katalin Benedek: The Sky-high Tree (comparative analysis) in: *A meseszövés változatai* (Versions of tale-weaving); (ed. Péter Bálint) Didakt, Debrecen, 2003.

The monster in the hoop



14. Csongor and Tünde, National Theatre (photo: István Znamenák)

In the initial scene of *Mirigy* tied to the tree one can recognise the type of the monster closed in a hoop. The evil monster who is first praying for being set free, then upsets the order of the world has become known as the source of the initial conflict of many wondertales (maybe the version of *The Sky-high Tree* by Illyés is one of the best-known). In these tales, the locked adversary is usually associated with some ban or warning (e.g. do not enter the 12th room), that is, finding the adversary (before setting him/her free) already means violating some ban. The pleading monster usually tries a trick (asks for water) and tries to appeal to the good-heartedness of her saviour (the prince).

Mirigy is pleading exactly like that, and when she does not succeed this way, she proposes a business deal: information for being set free. Her remarks reveal that she does not intend to tell everything, but finally she must speak of the secret of the magic tree. Thus Csongor learns about Tünde through *Mirigy*: after his futile wanderings, he suddenly has a goal, and he learns about that goal from the hag. This is where the Underworld and the Upper World are connected verbally for the first time (visually, they are interconnected by the presence of the tree).

The prince in the tales usually loses his lover, won already, by setting the monster free - Csongor, however, finds her through that act. He lets the Evil lose in the world, to let the Good come to the world. By setting *Mirigy* free, the hero "who has been to every country", but could not disassociate himself from the world, opens a passage through the dimensions, stepping over from the world on Earth to the dangerous, yet exciting world of tales and dreams.

The swan woman and the lost wife

Similarly to Fairy Ilona, Tünde and Ilma arrive to the earthly world as swans. However, whereas Fairy Ilona must be caught by Argirus to transform to her worldly form, Tünde transforms on her own. Vörösmarty alters an essential motif of not only the *bella storia*, but also of the wondertale, identical in every part of the world: the woman arriving in the form of a bird must be watched and caught everywhere, and her bird clothes destroyed⁹³ to make her stay on Earth. Csongor does nothing like that: he is actually asleep. Tünde takes off her swan clothes herself and wakes up the sleeping boy - the Proppian functions are reversed, the woman takes charge, so the swan skin loses its significance and it is simplified into a tale ornament (and in Ilma's case a joke). The swan-shape is necessary only for travelling between the sky and the earth.

Relegating the swan motif into the background becomes understandable as the drama proceeds. Vörösmarty overrides the *bella storia*, its illogical dramaturgy: If the tree had been planted by the fairy to meet a certain boy, why would any violence be needed, why should the swan be caught? In the wondertales, the swan women do not want to stay on Earth - but Fairy Ilona (and Tünde) do, so similarity with the tales of the animal bride type is but apparent.

Many types of animal bride stories are known. The animal bride may be cursed, (*Ribike*, *The Cat Princess*), or she may be born an animal (*The Red Pig*), she may take the shape *inter alia* of a serpent, lizard, frog, cat, piglet or bird. Where the heroine appears as a bird, the following tale subjects are the most frequent:

1. The hero takes a peek at the swan woman and takes away/burns her bird clothes. He marries her, they have children, but the girl is longing for her home and with time she actually finds a way to return.
2. The woman is cursed and must live in the shape of a bird from time to time. If the man destroys the animal skin before the curse expires, the girl disappears and can only be won back at the cost of very difficult trials.

In *Argirus* one can recognise the lost wife motif of this second type, but there the disappearance of the girl is linked not to the loss of the animal shape, but to the cutting of her hair. Vörösmarty recognises that the two motifs (condensing many semantic layers even if we look at them one by one), the swan skin and the cut hair, would be too much of a burden for the tale, so he only mentions the swan shape, eliminating thereby the animal bride motif, present in a fragmentary way yet in *Argirus*.

The hair of Fairy Ilona is cut by an old woman in the court, to be brought to the king as evidence (*Argirus* actually has her executed for that later on), thus the initial conflict does not originate from some dramatic flaw (as in the animal bride stories), and not even of ill-will or evilness. Gergei offers no explanation why the

93 Cf. A. T. Hatto: *The Swan Maiden*, A Folktale of North Eurasian Origin?, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 24, 1961. 326.

fairy must go away to the end of the world (shame is not a very convincing motive). Vörösmarty probably deemed this a weak solution and, therefore, had the hair of Tünde cut by her arch-enemy, Mirígy, to adorn her own daughter with it. Tünde's hair (the essence of her fairy being) thus acquires yet another connotation: it becomes the symbol of ruling.

The further development of the tale (and the drama) is determined by the *lost wife motif* (associated in many tales actually with the *monster enclosed in a hoop*): Tünde must leave Earth, and Csongor must seek Tünde. Apparently, the Proppian functions are restored: the boy becomes the wandering hero, fulfilling difficult tasks to find and set free the victim-type heroine. Or does he not? Vörösmarty considers the tale structure only his starting point: the character of Csongor is determined later on exactly by the fact that he does not fulfil his tale function.

Csongor, the drifting hero

Vörösmarty takes a strong decision when he paints the character of Csongor: he defines the young hero not in line with, but against a well-known conventional hero type. As regards his function, he is a wandering hero who is to pass tests, but Csongor is not tested, nor challenged by difficult assignments. Whereas Prince Argirus is an active hero (he does not fall asleep under the apple tree, catches the swan, has the old woman executed, asks for help from the "big man", takes the heritage of the devils, kills his traitor servant, climbs the mountain at the edge of the world for three days), Csongor tends to drift with the events.

Setting Mirígy free is by and large his only deliberate autonomous action, the rest is done by others in his stead: Tünde arranges the meeting, Ilma reveals the right direction, Balga finds the footprints, Kurrah puts him to sleep, Mirígy misleads him in the shape of a young girl ascending from the well ... The heritage of the devils is taken by Csongor, but that is neither a difficult task, nor a heroic act.

Csongor is dreaming, and he is drifting among his dreams in a strange tale-world defined by Mirígy and Tünde. His contemporaries blamed Vörösmarty for the error, the clumsiness of having no active hero – but Csongor's passivity was a highly conscious decision on the part of the writer. As witnessed by the *Theoretical Fragments*, Vörösmarty was fully aware of the rules of the tale and of dramaturgy, and yet he drew a drifting hero, without marked contours. I do not know what effect this malleable Csongor had on the young spectators of the 19th century, but I know for certain that he is highly familiar to those of our days.

He is looking for something, stakes his life on his search, but keeps questioning himself, his journey, his life. Is all that happens reality or just a dream? Does Tünde exist at all, is there a purpose? Csongor goes ahead, but he does not choose a way, does not choose a profession, he does not grow up, take decisions: he is chasing a dream that he only hopes exists. Csongor is like us, today's 20-30-year-old: a drifter, a wanderer, aspiring for something bigger, unable to settle down and calm

down. Apparently, he is a hero, but in reality, he is not that at all – and that’s what makes him an accurate, yet cruel mirror: we recognise ourselves in his character. As children, we used to identify with the active, dragon-killer heroes, but we have all grown into Csongors.

The character of Csongor suggests that the functions attracted by the constant tale heroes in the sense of Propp (hero, adversary, princess, helper, dispatcher, donor) may change in the stage adaptation of the tale. The properties of the characters may stand in productive contrast with the original tale functions, defining the character relative to the latter, by their absence.

Mirígy, the schemer

There is no real schemer in the Argirus story: there are schemers in certain episodes (in the beginning, by accident rather than intentionally, the old woman, in the Black City the widow, then in a sense the devils), but there is no Evil to be fought. Vörösmarty again goes back to the wondertale when he makes the character of Mirígy a permanently present adversary: the hag triggers the story, then sustains and catalyses it. Without Mirígy there is no Tünde, without Underworld, there is no Upper World, without darkness there is no light. The boring, tale-less, dreamless world of Csongor is altered and overturned by Mirígy.

The motives of the hag keep changing during the play: first she wants to marry her daughter to Csongor, then (when the daughter is torn to pieces by the sons of the Devil) she hinders the meeting of Tünde and Csongor, then finds a pseudo-bride for the hero in the form of Ledér and finally she would like to eat the fruit of the magic tree herself to rejuvenate. Her ever-changing intentions are focussed on Csongor: he is being fought for, his soul is to be taken, and if that is impossible, at least it should not go to Tünde. The story, as a matter of fact, is not about the game of Mirígy and Csongor, but that of Mirígy and Tünde, where it is easy to discern the lead motif of *The Fairy from the Oak Tree*. The fairy and the witch, the positive and the negative female principia struggle for the passive, drifting man.

The pseudo-bride

One phase of this struggle, occurring in many wondertales, is the deceit of the hero with the help of a *pseudo-bride*. Mirígy first tries to endow her own daughter, then Ledér with the tale function of the pseudo-bride, but her efforts fail. What is the most tragically tinged motif in the tale (the hero failing to recognise his true love) becomes a clown’s joke here in the Ledér-Balga scene.

The devils

Vörösmarty retains and expands the role of the three quarrelling devils. Their function is not limited to the transfer of the magic tools, but they become organic parts of the drama: their opposition to, then alliance with Mirigy sketches the power relations of the Underworld, and the transformation of Kurrah into Balga provides a dramatic reason for the unintentional betrayal of the servant. Vörösmarty esteems a Sancho-type loyal, but simple-minded servant character higher, so he must depart from the traitor servant scene of the *bella storia*, and he solves the problem brilliantly by the devil trick, creating an excellently playable scene at the same time.

3. Csongor and Tünde on the puppet stage

Vörösmarty uses the wondertale motifs relatively freely, but he arranges them in a logical order: he writes a drama that is easy to play, he paints excellent characters and keeps reflecting on the tale as his chosen genre. This dramatic poem raises the attention of the puppet theatre artist thinking in terms of the mover/moved relationship for several reasons: the human and the puppet actors can be played along the dream/reality, and also the immortality/mortal life axes.

By keeping the dream motif throughout his play, Vörösmarty offers a (Calderonian) reading that functions particularly well in the puppet theatre: accordingly, from the moment of Tünde's appearance, the whole story is a dream, the projection of a dream journey and a series of dream adventures, ideal to be depicted in the puppet theatre. As the characters fall asleep and wake up in the play, dream and reality, puppet theatre and live acting merge, giving the special duality observable in every scene of the dramatic poem a corresponding stage form.

Although the dream play may be a valid puppet theatrical reading, I consider it even more interesting to emphasise the mortality/immortality and fairy existence/human existence topics. This latter concept was the starting point of a performance realised in 2012 at Nemzeti Színház, directed by Gábor Tengely.⁹⁴ In the following, we are going to analyse the puppet arts solutions of the performance concerned.

Mortals and immortals

The soliloquy of the Night is about man, entering the scene young and an idealist, his soul a stream of light reflecting the universe, happy about his place between

(94) Mihály Vörösmarty: *Csongor és Tünde*. Director: Gábor Tengely. Nemzeti Színház, 2012. For a critique and detailed analysis of the performance, see Zoltán Hermann: *Vörösmarty tér* (Vörösmarty Place). In: Színház. 2012/12.

the sky and the earth, but losing his strength in a few years' time and realising his mortality - then doing his utmost to create something with his mortal hands that he self-concededly assumes would be immortal...⁹⁵

The Night expresses in her monologue one of the core issues of the dramatic poem: the tragedy of the immortal soul forced into a mortal body. From the puppetry point of view, the mortality motif is one of the most interesting of the many layers of this work.⁹⁶ Its actors include immortal tale heroes as well as mortal humans, and the main dramatic point is actually when Tünde resigns immortality, and becomes human to be happy, if only for a short time.

But what does mortality and immortality mean in the relationship of the puppet and the mover?

In the performance of Nemzeti Színház, the puppet is the body and the mover is the soul. Thus the human actors (Csongor, Balga, Ilma, Ledér) are present throughout in doubled form: the puppet and the mover represent the character together. The immortals (Tünde, Mirígy, the devils, Night) have no puppets.

Night, the creator

The actors in *Csongor and Tünde* can be divided into two main groups: ordinary figures and tale figures. The immortality of the tale figures does not so much mean eternal life, but rather permanence, lack of change. Tünde, the "daughter of light" and the guardian spirits incorporate the positive aspect of the world of tales, and Mirígy and the devils the negative, dark side of the same dimension. One can discern in their roles the classical wondertale functions: their properties are permanent, fixed, they are typical characters rather than personalities. Tünde is not just beautiful and young: she is eternal beauty and youth itself. And Mirígy "is perhaps the sister of ancient Time", the epitome of mortality, deterioration, ugliness. In the hierarchy of the play, the Night is above them: she is the beginning and the end of everything: she is the creator and the destroyer.

The Night is not just a tale character, but also a figure that is permanently present above, under and next to everything; who incorporates, yet exists outside everything. Her solitude is enormous and inconceivable. In the production of Nemzeti Színház - contrary to most *Csongor* performances - she is present throughout the scene as silent witness of the events. Her monologue is heard twice, first in the beginning of the performance, then upon her meeting with Tünde. Upon second hearing, the text speaks more definitely of the solitude of immortality and the stakes of mortal life.

(95) Mihály Vörösmarty: *Csongor és Tünde* (Csongor and Tünde). Matúra Klasszikusok. Ikon Kiadó, Budapest, 1992, lines 2698-2721;

96 "Vörösmarty ingeniously makes this topic, at the centre of his attention, almost unrecognisable. Csongor, Tünde and the Night speak in the language of poetry of what is discussed by Balga, Ilma and Mirígy in the stylised clumsiness of contemporary common language: the transience of human life, the abstract permanence of beauty and the far-from-metaphysical reality of sexuality." Hermann: *Vörösmarty tér*.

Thus the performance starts with the soliloquy of the Night: she had created the world, the space and the actors of the play from darkness and from nothing. Initially, we only hear her voice, then the three-level space surrounding the spectators becomes visible. The Underworld (the area under the podium) comes to life as well as the Upper World (the gallery), and the encircling platform system indicating the course of human life. The characters present with a puppet and also as live actors can only move around the middle level. Mirígy, in chains, is sitting at the lower level, whereas the gallery represents the restricted motion space of Tünde. The three levels are interlinked at a single point: the tree representing the starting point and the end, where motion between the dimensions is made feasible by the ladders installed there.

This is what Zoltán Hermann wrote about the use of space in his review of the performance:

“The new production at Nemzeti Színház starts out from the time and space paradox of the play. In his accompanying texts, [Ferenc] Kerényi presents rather vividly, with reference to the researches of Antal Németh and József Szauder, and the study by István Fried examining the relationship of the “three opposing worlds”, the triple structure of the play that can and should be interpreted also in scenographic terms, on the stage. According to the paper by István Fried, the play has three spheres: a mythic/celestial one (the world of the fairies and the Night), the sphere of early existence (the world of Csongor, Balga and one-time Böske), and the interim sphere at the meeting point of the two planes, the tale plot, tale referring to the fact that the story is about the journey of our earthly hero in the world of the fairies, in the other world and – most importantly – his return from there. Gábor Tengely et al. divide the space of the Gobbi Hilda Studio of Nemzeti Színház (...) accordingly. They make the spectator sit on the plane of life on Earth, on the revolving chairs screwed to the flooring; the celestial world is placed on a series of ambulatory galleries hanging at a height, and the story is being played on a series of circularly raised platforms. The movements of the actors between the planes – and the spectators’ sight and changing focal point – finally links visually, too, the connotations, the linguistic symbols that remain invisible under the circumstances offered by the box theatre”⁹⁷

The Night sculpts the mortal characters in a sandbox: the Bunraku-type puppets have no feet and they can be stuffed into a backpack by rolling up their skirt-part. The simultaneous presence of the puppet and the mover, that is, body and soul, generates permanent tension in the case of the ordinary characters and in particular of Csongor among them: the puppet is often a lump, a weight to be carried throughout life. Csongor longs for the fairy world of the immortals, he is ever more desperate to find it, whereas Tünde, on the contrary, would prefer a human body that is mortal, yet capable of happiness instead of eternal life with nothing at stake.

97 Hermann: *Vörösmarty tér*.

The powerlessness of the stolen body

Tünde takes on a human form to be able to unite with Csongor. In the convention system of the performance this means that the apple, the magic fruit, on the apple tree planted in order to have a passage is no other but Tünde's puppet hidden in her backpack: her human body.

Soul can communicate only with soul, body with body: therefore, Tünde takes on a human form, she turns into a puppet to be able to lie down by the sleeping Csongor under the tree. Tünde's puppet (her human shape) will thus become, in terms of its function, something like the swan skin in the animal bride tales, like the golden hair in Csongor - should Mirígy steal this body, the puppet of Tünde, the girl, present already only as fairy, as soul, could really not stay with Csongor.

At the place of Mirígy, the human body of Tünde becomes an empty shell that she first hands over to Ledér. Ledér has her own puppet, but the hag convinces her to accept the Tünde figure and then seduce Csongor with it. (In the version by Vörösmarty, she receives the golden hair of the fairy.) However, instead of the hero, she meets Balga who clearly thinks she is Tünde. This, of course, could be realised by an actress wearing a wig, but by including the puppet, the scene acquires another layer: the harmony, or lack of it, between the mover and the moved has a dramaturgical function. The Tünde puppet moving and speaking as Ledér instructs it becomes no more than a strangely spasming body, a powerless toy doll moving provocatively. An abused, inverted Tünde. When Ledér gets bored with the toy, she simply throws it away.

The puppet of Tünde thus gets first to the devils, then to Mirígy again who deceives Csongor at the well with its help. She holds the puppet high and leads the boy back to the triple road junction in a roundabout way. When they arrive and Csongor is on the brink of exhaustion, she lets it down, makes the puppet disappear as if it had been no more than an illusion.

Similar deception takes place in the scene of Balga, moved by Kurrah, and of Ilma teasing him. In the garden of Noon, Kurrah beats and encloses Balga (the mover of Balga), and communicates with Csongor and then also with Tünde and Ilma by taking on the shape of the servant (that is, by expropriating his puppet). Ilma gets suspicious when she sees the figure pulled by the devil, and actually realises the deceit when the devil kisses her (this happens between the two movers). Unlike Csongor, who starts to chase Balga moved by Kurrah in the next scene, but when he catches him, it is already the actor playing Balga who is standing behind the puppet, who of course does not, cannot, understand why his master is so angry at him.

Life courses and opportunities

Csongor meets three wayfarers at the triple junction: the Merchant, the Monarch and the Scientist flash him three possible life courses, but finally he does not step on any of those paths, but chooses Tünde and love instead. The three allegoric figures may be interpreted as three options faced by a young man on the brink of adulthood and career choice: they show what he would become by choosing one road or the other. As if the adult from the future held a mirror to the current adolescent. As the three figures act as signs rather than playing real roles, they all show the future, the road that might be chosen by the protagonist - in terms of puppetry conventions, they could be moved by the actor playing Csongor.⁹⁸ They could be masks or replaceable heads for him to try on, or maybe less specific figures, capable of a certain, limited, set of motions. Thus the technique being chosen carries a dramaturgical role again:⁹⁹ one would by no means replace a Csongor puppet moving in a differentiated way by something that is beautiful, but capable of a single movement. Thus Vörösmarty's statement that wealth, power or knowledge are insufficient in themselves to make you happy can be presented also visually.

The visible and the invisible

The relationship system of the puppets and their movers who are unable to communicate with them maps why Csongor and Tünde never meet, albeit they keep crossing each other's course.

In the palace of the Dawn, the vow of silence is strong, but the image is stronger: although Csongor and Balga see two figures, they do not recognise them as Tünde and Ilma. On the puppet stage, this paradox turns into a clear image: the girls without puppets, visible as shadows behind the curtains, and the boys present with puppets do sense each other's presence, but cannot communicate.

The situation is similar when Csongor dozes in the Garden of the Noon: Kurrah, scheming in the shape of Balga, first makes the puppet fall asleep, but the mover of Csongor (the soul or consciousness fighting the physical symptoms of sleep) keeps waking him up and keeping him awake. Finally, the devil must knock off and remove the mover to make the Csongor puppet fall into death-like sleep, i.e. freeze into immobility. The sleeping puppet, left alone by his mover, is dead: in vain does Tünde try to wake it up by even the most desperate methods.

In the realm of the Night. Tünde resigns immortality and becomes human: she therefore gets a puppet from the Night representing finite life. Thus she re-enters the dimension where Csongor is, and nothing prevents their meeting.

(98) "The monarch, the merchant and the scientist are the same philosophical or psychological entities, different aspects, of the same entity. The dialogue is but the form of distinguishing the "faces", not always its essence." Hermann: *Vörösmarty tér*.

(99) In the performance, the designer, Gábor Michac finally chose the mask solution, but from a dramaturgical point of view, the other options would have carried the same meaning.

The price of mortal life



15. Csongor and Tünde, National Theatre (photo: István Znamenák)

As the Night puts it: I know you, restless girl, your fairy home would have offered you so many good things, but your heart was attracted by the Earth and you fled from your home of the Light - but happiness forsake you there, and you might have preferred to return, but it was too late: you will be an exile forever. Let the Earth be your home, let your life be hours, a few years of pleasure, instead of centuries¹⁰⁰

With these words, the Night makes Tünde mortal, so she can meet Csongor who is reaching the end of his journey, again. The use of puppets opens yet another semantic field, perhaps impossible to realise in live theatre: it shows the perishable nature of the flesh, its finite nature, i.e. that it can grow old. In the performance by Gábor Tengely, the one-day journey of Csongor really covers an entire life,¹⁰¹ so the young mover takes out a new puppet from his pack at each station, at every turn of life, first one that has an adolescent body, then an adult, a middle-aged and finally an old one. Balga, his loyal companion, ages with him. As he says, "Böske will no longer bake her soft loaves for me, nor make my bed at nightfall, we'll be leaving in distress as we had started off, and what is the end of these courses? Pestilence."¹⁰²

The two travellers returning to the barren, dry garden are old and distressed. The meeting of Balga and Ilma - made human again by Tünde and therefore also old - is thus given a tragicomic overtone. The teasing dialogue of the old couple, their not-so-subtle, joking banter becomes both grotesque and heartbreaking.

Csongor is waited by Tünde, turned mortal, under the tree. The two old puppets go to sleep, whereas their young movers watch over them. This is how the infinitely sad happy end of the dramatic poem is turned into an image:

(100) Vörösmarty: *Csongor és Tünde*, lines 2734-2745

(101) Cf. Ferenc Kerényi: Vezérfonal a műelemzéshez (Guideline to the analysis of the work of art). in: Vörösmarty Mihály: *Csongor és Tünde*. Matúra Klasszikusok. Ikon Kiadó, Budapest, 1992.

(102) Vörösmarty: *Csongor és Tünde*, lines 3048-3051

It is midnight, it's gloomy, it is trembling cold,
 the moon is so mournfully sad to behold,
 but love is awake, it enchants you tonight,
 in love you rejoice, and in love to unite.¹⁰³

Summary

A dramaturge working also with tale adaptations can learn a lot from *Csongor and Tünde*. Vörösmarty integrates the wondertale motives cleverly and logically, sometimes according to their original meaning (fairy/human love, devil episode), and sometimes with a contrary meaning (the character of Csongor), or using them as part of a more complex system (Mirigy as monster confined to a hoop and catalyst of the story). He invents funny companions for the hero and the heroine in the persons of Ilma and Balga who, moreover, keep reflecting on the tale features and folk roots of the plot. He smuggles back into the story the cosmic, mythological level that is present in the original tale, but missing from the *bella storia* (in particular in the figure of the Night and the ever-present triple structure), while building up scenes having an excellent rhythm that can be played well around his characters.

The puppet theatre performance highlights the significance of the wondertale motifs, and mirrors the duality that is present throughout the play: tale and reality, dream and wakefulness, body and soul can be present simultaneously. The relationship of the puppet and the mover transposes the philosophical issues into images, while being capable of representing the problem of mortality and immortality in a highly specific form.

Csongor and Tünde is a tale meant for adults that can expose its previously unknown layers in a puppet show addressing an adult audience.

(103) Vörösmarty: *Csongor és Tünde*, lines 3669-3672.

VII. PAST AND PRESENT. PUPPET THEATRE ADAPTATION OF THE YOUTH NOVEL NOTHING BY JANNE TELLER



16. Nothing, Budapest Puppet Theatre (photo: Vera Éder)

Whereas the puppet art theatre addressing adults has considerable traditions in Hungary,¹⁰⁴ reaching the audience of upper primary school and secondary school age by puppet performances is a relative new, but strategically most important endeavour. Currently, there is still no continuity between the performances meant for children and for adults, respectively: the spectator visiting the puppet theatre in childhood does not automatically become an adult puppet theatre goer. This gap could be bridged by performances targeting specifically the age group of the youth aged 13-18.

The general experience is that it is not easy to effectively address the adolescents who had just grown out of childhood by the means of the live theatre either. Puppet theatre meets with even more resistance: it is not enough to find topics of

(104) Cf. Géza Balogh: *A bábjáték Magyarországon* (Puppetry in Hungary). Budapest Bábszínház - Vince Kiadó, 2010, 16., 73., pp. 99-125.

interest to this generation and create good performances, their inherently negative attitude to this genre associated with childhood must be overcome as well. Simply put: it is to be demonstrated to the adolescents that puppet theatre could also be something “cool”.

In my opinion, a good youth puppet show (whether the adaptation of some item on their reading lists or a contemporary work of art) must meet two basic criteria:

1. It should be based on some reference material that affects the targeted age group, that speaks of their problems and concerns, of life situations familiar to them;
2. It should use the puppet in a progressive way and thus, indirectly, bring the aesthetics of contemporary puppet theatre closer to the youth.

We started out from these two basic assumptions with director Károly Hoffer when we chose the youth novel *Nothing* by Janne Teller as the basis of a performance meant for the 13-18 year-old.¹⁰⁵

1. The reference work: “Lord of the Flies of the 21st century”

The youth novel of Danish writer Janne Teller was published in 2000, and its cruel topic, the hard questions it tackles have divided the reading public right away. So much so that it had actually been banned for a short while in some Danish schools. In the year after its publication, however, it was granted the Best Children’s Book Prize of the Danish Ministry of Culture: the scandalous book was included in the reading lists, translated to many languages (it was awarded also the esteemed Le Prix Libbylit for the best novel for children published in all of the French-speaking world) and it is currently referred to by the critics as the “Lord of the Flies of the 21st century”.¹⁰⁶

Nothing matters.
I have known that for a long time.
So nothing is worth doing.
I just realized that.”¹⁰⁷

These are the sentences starting the novel that has given hundred thousands of adolescents a revelatory reading experience globally. In the story, a boy in eighth grade, Pierre Anthon, suddenly stands up in class on the first day of teaching in

(105) Janne Teller- Dóra Gimesi: *Semmi* (Nothing). Director: Károly Hoffer. Budapest Bábszínház, 2013. Review of the performance: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=110sGSBcNYM> (Last download: 25.04.2017) The recording of the entire performance is attached to the thesis as DVD annex.

(106) Cf. Betti Varga: *Mitől válnak kegyetlenné a gyerekek?* (What makes children turn cruel?) <http://kotvefuzve.reblog.hu/mitol-valnak-kegyetlenne-a-gyerekek> (Last download: 24.04. 2017)

(107) Teller, Janne: *Nothing* (translation: Martin Aitken), Atheneum, 2010.

September, then simply exists the classroom and society by uttering the above sentences. He climbs a plum tree and from that time on he keeps proclaiming his unwanted, nihilistic wisdom from there. His classmates are forced to pass under the tree every morning, and Pierre Anthon advocates the ultimate irrelevance of ever new values and important things day by day. Why be adults if the world of adults is actually repulsive, frightening and full of lies? Why you obey the rules? Why go to school? What will happen to you if it turns out that your dreams cannot be fulfilled? Pierre Anthon asks valid questions, of interest to every adolescent, and answers them one after the other in his own categorically distressing negative way. The schoolmates – being deeply affected by the boy’s statements – become fed up with the situation and decide to prove him wrong, i.e. to show Pierre Anthon that life does indeed have a meaning. They set out to collect “important things” at a deserted old sawmill: first they collect family photos, old toys, dried flowers, objects “of children long since departed to adulthood” that used to be important. But they soon realise that this way the whole thing has no stakes, so they introduce a new rule: the person who brings something will tell who the next person making a sacrifice should be and what he or she should bring. The Heap of Important Things keeps increasing, and really important things are put there: the brand new green sandals of Agnes that she had been longing for for a long time, the diary of Lady William, the golden hamster of Gerda. A mechanism fed by personal vendettas and ad hoc alliances is activated in the class, and the game unstoppably proceeds towards ever higher stakes. Rikke-Ursula’s coloured braids are cut by force. Hussain submits his prayer-rug and gets beaten up hard for that by his father, Holy Kaj is to bring a cross from the church. Sofie loses her virginity (her innocence, as they say). Beautiful Rosa has to behead a dog. The last victim of the game is the talented guitar player Jan-Johan, whose index finger is cut. When the school and the police learn about the Heap, they close down the sawmill and, apparently, the story cannot escalate any more. However, the sleepy Danish small town is then invaded by the media that takes up the story in an instant. The Heap of Important Things soon becomes a protected and debated work of art, and the news bring more and more people to the town: journalists, artists, tourists. The children in eighth grade suddenly become famous, they give interviews and for a few weeks the world revolves around them and they feel that their sacrifices really had a meaning. And when an American museum announces that it would purchase the Heap of Important Things for hundred thousands of dollars, the children feel their actions justified and even Pierre Anthon himself climbs down the plum tree to take a look at the famous heap, but after inspecting everything, he only asks:

“If your pile of garbage meant the slightest little thing, then there’d be nothing I’d rather do But it doesn’t, or else you wouldn’t have sold it, would you? If that is the meaning of life, how could they sell it?”¹⁰⁸

(108) Op. cit., p. 83.

The novel leaves the subsequent events in obscurity. It is not known who hits first, how long Pierre Anthon is being kicked and whether he is still alive when – by accident or intentionally – the sawmill is set on fire. Fire destroys everything: the Heap of Important Things as well as the boy because of whom it was accumulated in the first place. The classmates collect and take away the ashes in matchboxes, to remind them years later, as adults, of the events.

Part of the reviews mention as a virtue the lean and objective language of the novel, the simplicity of the plot, the easily understandable and identifiable characters. The less enthusiastic ones deplore the knocking sentences, the characters without personality, the un-lifelike initial situation in the first place. But everyone admits that the writing of Janne Teller points a most accurate finger at the main problems of the 13-18 year-old.

2. Loss of identity

Nothing is a thesis novel. Its protagonists (like the folk tale heroes) are defined by their function, their role in the community and the story instead of their personality. They are type figures who behave true to type: the talented and nice guitarist boy, the beautiful girl aiming at perfection in everything, the soft-spoken religious boy, the tough blue-haired girl, the strong man, the outcast of the class. With some exceptions, they are essentially two-dimensional characters.

Pierre Anthon, who triggers the plot, is the least specified character (or the one surrounded by most secrets): we hardly know anything about him. While reading the novel, we have the same feeling as with the opponents in the fairy tale: it is not important why he does what he does, it is not relevant what he himself actually feels, only the act itself, his exit from the classroom is important. He has no personality, he is only the catalyst of the events: the essential thing is *what he says*, not why he says it.

Both the conflict triggering the action and the response given to it seem artificial: the declarations made by Pierre Anthon on the plum tree, the system of arguments and counter-arguments, the often superficial and endless debate and the story, put in a new context with the appearance of the media and becoming even more of a parable that apparently does not cry out for dramatic adaptation. But where is the drama in the parable, the dramatic hero in the papier-mâché characters anyway?

The key is the closed system of the class community, the type-characters playing specific roles there. This is how the problem of archetype and personality, discussed above, is expressed in this story:

Who am I and what makes me what I am?

What is important: what I seem to be or what I really am?

Is my identity determined by my objects, my outside appearance, my faith, dreams, the image made of me?

What remains of me if I sacrifice all that?

Everyone has his place and function in the community, and it may have serious consequences if someone stops acting in line with his function under the effect of some tragic event. When Rikke-Ursula loses her blue braids, she is no longer identical with herself: "She became different. Ordinary. A nobody." Jan-Johan, previously one of the leaders of the group, a "hero" based on both his temperament and his utterances suddenly becomes unworthy of his role when they cut his finger:

"No, it was worse than pathetic, because Jon-Johan was the class leader and could play guitar and sing Beatles songs, but all of a sudden he'd become a howling little baby you just wanted to kick. One Jon-Johan had become another Jon-Johan, and we didn't care for this one. (...) and suddenly I got shivers down my spine thinking about how many different people one and the same person can be. Strong and feeble. Noble and mean. Brave and cowardly.

There was no fathoming it."¹⁰⁹

This is what Tibor B arany writes in the epilogue of the novel:

"The student protagonists of *Nothing* lose their identity in two senses. On the one hand, each of them personally gives up or denies something that is essentially his/hers. On the other hand, their decision is not a personal one: the classmates find out each other's weaknesses, and there is no subterfuge from the resolution of the community."¹¹⁰

Identity and losing it are thus key issues in the novel, the same as the problem of growing up. "We were going to amount to something, be someone."¹¹¹ What expectations are to be met, what should one be like as an adult? Are the adults people worth resembling?

Pierre Anthon flees adult life when he climbs the plum tree. The adult world, as he sees it, is nothing but empty phrases and commonplaces, pseudo-life where appearance is much more important than reality. A world not worth integrating into. While the others prepare for adult life, for "being someone" at school and in the family, Pierre Anthon questions the meaning of such preparation. The others, on the other hand, give up and submit themselves, their own identity to the Heap by way of proof: they become cynic, cruel, calculating and vindictive. No better than the adults.

The real tragedy, what is at stake in the story, is not the death of Pierre Anthon or questioning the meaning of life, but growing up. Paradoxically, what the protagonists lose during the story to grow into adults finally is exactly their identity as defined relative to the adults.

(109) Teller op. cit., 59-60.

(110) Tibor B arany: *Nincs. Semmi. Se.* (There is. Nothing. At All.) Ut sz  Janne Teller *Semmi* cím  reg ny hez (Epilogue to J. Teller's novel *Nothing*). in: Teller, Janne: *Semmi* (Nothing). Scolar, 2011. 174

(111) Teller op. cit. 9.

3. Lost innocence - the childhood self represented as puppet



17. Nothing, Budapest Puppet Theatre (photo: Vera Éder)

Narrators and characters

Agnes as narrator of the novel tells the story of Pierre Anthon and the others from a distance of eight years, without emotions, limiting herself strictly to the facts. The dispassionate tone is in an exciting contrast with the intense, often brutal, emotionally disturbing events but, even more importantly, in the novel it is an adult who looks back on a part of her childhood when something had definitely changed. Our main concern with director Károly Hoffer was the specification of this change, this fault line: Where does the child end and where does the adult begin? How can you grasp with the means of the theatre the fundamental experience of the adolescent in between childhood and adulthood?

Finally, we decided to represent the two life phases, the two planes simultaneously: in the performance, the adult actors are present throughout behind the back of their child-size Bunraku puppets. These two levels of styling are complemented by a third one, that of live music played by the actors, also of dramaturgical importance.

Adhering to the structure and spirit of the novel, we have retained the narration, so the actors have a chance to look out from behind their puppets and comment on the events at certain points. Whereas in Teller's work Agnes is the only narrator and we get to know the others from her point of view, in the performance, every member of the class takes part in the recollections, enhancing thereby the idea that every actor of the stage version is equal.

The time management of the drama is more complicated than that of the novel, the latter having an essentially linear structure. In the opening scene, we get acquainted with the characters who do not have their puppets any more, but are still before the tragic denouement: at the climax of media interest, when the class proudly poses in the crossfire of flashing cameras. They begin to tell the story of the events of the previous months in this happy, intense state: they take up their puppets and the actual plot begins.

The world's press. Flashlights, and the members of the class give interviews.

AGNES	We have won.
ELISE	We have become someone.
JAN-JOHAN	And being someone, that's something.
NAGY HANS	So many people cannot be wrong.
KAJ	Many.
HENRIK	More.
SOFIE	Right.

*Recollection starts: the actors take up their puppets. Classroom. First day at school.*¹¹²

In the classroom scene, the speech of the puppet and of the mover behind it are sharply distinguished. Interactions always take place at the level of the children, that is, strictly with the puppets: Huge Hans tries the new bike of Kaj, Agnes and Sofie whisper about the latter's summer affair with Jan-Johan, Huge Henrik buries himself in a book. We learn about power relations in the class, the system of relationships of the characters and their main characteristics at the level of the puppets. In this colourful and loud crowd Pierre Anthon is sitting silently, contemplative – he is such an insignificant character that he almost goes unnoticed. When Prof Eskildsen arrives, this means that a live character enters the puppet class: with her commonplace welcome speech she is the epitome of the adult, someone you would really not want to resemble under any circumstance. Her kindness is just silky words, her warnings concerning the future are empty catchphrases. The turn occurs when Pierre Anthon (the puppet and its mover together) suddenly stands up and walks out of the room. From that time on, he up position on the lighting bridge and speaks to his classmates staying down from there.

The exit of Pierre Anthon changes something in the class: this is the first time the actors look out from behind their puppets and start to comment on the events as narrators. If you want to use grand words, this is the first moment of awakening to adult life, that's when the process that proves to be irreversible starts.

(112) Excerpt from the Hungarian performance text.

The class

In the novel of Janne Teller, the narrator Agnes, Sofie and Jan-Johan have well-defined personalities, the others are characterised by a few traits only. We learn little of the inner relationship system of the large-size class: the writer sketches the archetypes, but little more is revealed, except for their position in the hierarchy of the class. This is acceptable in a thesis novel, but the stage version is inconceivable without characters and their interrelationships. As writer of the adaptation, I decided to unfold the relations of the classmates – and let the puppets emphatically incorporate the archetypes (Huge Henrik being fat and bespectacled, Sofie lean and beautiful, Jan-Johan tough, Hans bald and large), the situations and the text tend to emphasise more the idiosyncratic features, the complexity of the characters.

I omitted many of the figures of the novel and merged others, to arrive at an eight-strong class with sophisticated internal relations:

Sofie,

is top of her class and also beautiful. She is an adopted child (I borrowed this motif from Anna-Li in the novel), raised in love and harmony by her foster parents. All the boys, Huge Hans included, are in love with her, but she goes out with Jan-Johan. She has very definite goals in life, she wants a career and a family, and she has everything to realise what she wants. Her best friend is the much more ordinary Agnes.

Jan-Johan,

is the guitarist boy, loved and maybe also envied by all. He is a talented musician, keeps writing songs and dreams of becoming a world-famous rock star one day. He is in love with Sofie who returns his love. He is a sensitive, intelligent boy, basically all right in every respect, his classmates respect him and listen to what he says. His best friend is Huge Hans.

Holy Kaj,

the “choir-boy”. Son of a minister, he has lots of siblings and he is raised by strict principles. Hard-working and industrious, he is the only one in the class who knows what working for something means. He delivers newspapers in the morning throughout a winter season to be able to buy his yellow dream bike. I merged his character with the other deeply religious character in the novel, Hussain.

Huge Hans

is the strong man in the class. He lives in the shadow of his brutal father, his aggression is partly defensive. He is a passionate boxer (another attempt to meet his father’s expectations), but he is not agile enough and never makes it to the county championship. The scary appearance conceals a highly vulnerable and sensitive boy. He feels unrequited love for Sofie. The extreme right ideals are not far from

him. His figure embodies also Ole in the novel and - with the motif of the rude father - also Hussain.

Elise

is the girl with the coloured hair. She wears black from head to toe, and dies her hair in colours - she is the girl rebelling against her parents, the school and the adult world by her appearance. They had moved to the boring small town from Copenhagen, because her young brother fell ill, but finally not even the healthy rural air could cure him. The deceased younger brother occupies every thought of the parents. No one cares for Elise - perhaps this is the reason why she tries to draw attention to herself in the most extreme ways possible. Her character received her coloured braids from the novel's Rikke-Ursula.

Fat Henrik

is the son of the class teacher Ms Eskildsen who raises him alone. His status in the class is multiply disadvantaged: his fatness would in itself be sufficient to make him the target of the others, but as son of the class teacher he really has no chance to win the love of his classmates. Initially, he is not even included in the game, but his brave move soon makes him the gang leader and power makes him merciless. He has no friends, he is attached only to a dog, Cinderella, who had joined him at the cemetery. He is the one who covers the longest emotional way during the play.

Agnes

is the average plump girl. Her parents divorced, so nobody really pays attention to her either at home or at school. She is not a very excellent student, not very beautiful, perhaps this is the reason why the words of Pierre Anthon have the biggest impact on her. She is the inventor of the Heap of Important Things and she induces the tragic dénouement.

Pierre Anthon

is the catalyst. We know least about him in the novel, and it is no different in the play. His figure is the only one where no personality unfolds of the archetype: he has a function, not a character.

Beside the class members, the only adult character is the form mistress, Ms Eskildsen who - as the mother of Henrik - represents also the parents. The actress who plays her is also the over of the stray dog from the cemetery, Cinderella, appearing as marionette.

Puppets and movers

After sketching the personality and interrelationships of the characters, the next step was the specification of the structure of the play. The scenes adhere basically to the plot of the novel: Pierre Anthon's declarations target the most sensitive point of each person (giving a good opportunity for the playwright to hide information in the text), so Agnes invents the Heap. After the sacrifice of objects of the past, we come to the next turning point: the game turns serious, and the relations of the puppets and the movers also become more complex.

Let's take a closer look at the scene concerned.

Playground. Agnes is sitting on the monkey-bars, lost in thought.

AGNES	This has no meaning like that.
JAN-JOHAN	OK, but what then?
AGNES	I don't know. You should give up something really important. That counts. That is a sacrifice.
ELISE	Such as?
AGNES	Such as... no idea. ¹¹³

Agnes is sitting on the monkey-bars in the playground unit and starts dangling her legs. This is executed not by her main mover but, since this concerns the movement of her feet, the actress playing Sofie, helping as Unterman. Sofie's adult self thus dangles the feet of the puppet-Agnes, while looking at the adult self of Elise, indicating that she has an idea. And the actress playing Elise also looks at the feet of Agnes then asks by the puppet:

ELISE	Have I told you that your sandals are cool?
AGNES	Mother did not want to buy them first they were too expensive but then luckily they were on sale and they had a No 36. ... What then?
ELISE	Nothing.
JAN-JOHAN	These sandals are important to you, Agnes, aren't they?

Everyone is looking at Agnes who gradually understands what is happening.¹¹⁴

(113) Excerpt from the Hungarian performance text

(114) Excerpt from the Hungarian performance text

The idea of sacrificing the sandals thus originates from a puppet arrangement, namely that the feet are moved not by the main mover, but generally by an *Unter-man*. Sofie's idea is not expressly evil, this is simply a spontaneous situation: however, this is the first break in the friendship of Sofie and Agnes. Then when Huge Hans takes the sandals by force, the idea of vengeance comes to Agnes's mind, and this starts the avalanche and a new rule is instituted: the person giving up something can say who the next one to make a sacrifice will be. Of course, Agnes names Huge Hans and indicates his boxing gloves received from his father – and Hans in turn points to his best friend Jan-Johan who did not take his side. The vortex drags the whole class in an instant, and people keep demanding bigger and bigger sacrifices from the next person. Jan-Johan must give up his secret diary, Kaj his yellow bike and Sofie her adoption certificate, to be put on the Heap.

In the case of the sandals of Agnes, only the feet of the puppet were moved by someone else: when it comes to cutting Elise's hair, the next, more brutal, step is taken also in the puppet sign system. Sofie (who demands the hair of Elise) takes the puppet from the actress playing Elise by a trick, then throws it to Jan-Johan. The mover of Huge Hans holds the mover of Elise who thus cannot get in the proximity of her puppet. Jan-Johan and the mover of Sofie play with the Elise puppet as if it were a powerless rag doll: they "take her to the hairdresser" and cut her hair by the lock. In the meantime, the mover of Elise writhes helplessly in the hands of Huge Hans, and when she is given her puppet back, that is no longer its old self: it is almost bald, ugly, there is nothing unique in her. In this scene, Elise loses her adolescent identity together with her former appearance.

When everyone (including Fat Henrik who had joined them in the meantime) had submitted something, the class looks up proudly and hopefully at Pierre Anthon, but in vain: they fail to impress him. Fat Henrik then has a brilliant idea: let's start the game again, let's have another round. This is probably the most significant change in the adaptation compared to the novel – whereas there is only one round with 30 characters there, in the play there are two rounds with seven children. We could have opted for casting several roles on each actor, but we decided instead in favour of having fewer, but more complex, characters and two rounds. Since the puppetry convention realised in the performance strongly relies on having one puppet and one live alter ego by character, introducing more characters would have led to confusion. The "new round" gave an opportunity for escalation, for the further diversification of the character of the protagonists from a dramaturgical as well as puppetry point of view, and for presenting the process whereby children become adults under our eyes.

Human sacrifice



18. Nothing, Budapest Puppet Theatre (photo: Vera Éder)

The first to be challenged in the new round is Elise who is to sacrifice her dead brother to the Heap. After the children dig up the corpse in an adventurous night mission, the mover of Elise delivers his eulogy. However, during the monologue, she does not only put the coffin on the Heap, but also her puppet, the child Elise. The girl, deprived of her hair and thus also of her style, her uniqueness, that is, her self-identity, says farewell in this scene not only to her brother, but also to her old self. Her new self can bear the pain, she does not want to meet anyone's expectations anymore and she has no tears.

Elise asks the next sacrifice from Huge Hans who is to bring the national flag from the front yard. The big-mouthed boy protests by every possible means, but Jan-Johan does not stand up by him this time either, so he finally has no choice. In the life of Huge Hans the flag is not just the symbol of patriotic love, but also a pillar of his personality: respect for this object connects him to his father. The flag manifests everything Huge Hans believes in: security and belonging. In the play, this is not only told by the text but also portrayed visually - without any illustration. While the girls sing the Danish national anthem, the mover of Huge Hans takes the hooded pullover off his puppet and pulls a zipper on its body. He pulls a roll of bandage and a big red textile piece from the hole: the other movers take over the objects and together they form a Danish flag. After the bizarre, ceremonial hoisting of the flag, they warp the bandage around the head of the mover of Huge Hans who then lets the puppet go: the figure collapses, since it had been filled and held by the material of the flag. The "gutted" puppet is put on the Heap as a dead hero, and Huge Hans, brutally beaten by his father, is played from that time on by his bandaged-headed mover alone.

When it is his turn, Huge Hans, present thereafter as live human, asks for the innocence of Sofie who is still a puppet: the girl is even more fragile, more vulnerable this way. The event takes place this time at another level of stylisation, that of music: the song of Sofie is suppressed gradually by the drum solo of Huge Hans, while Jan-Johan plays the guitar, his head turned away, so he is definitely betray-

ing her. Together with her virginity Sofie loses her perfectly orderly life, her control over her body and her future, her self-disposal. She experiences total exposition, but when she puts down her puppet, her gaze hardens. This hard, emotionless Sofie had been present in her before, but now she definitely discards the illusions of her childhood and she disposes of her vulnerability together with her puppet.

Sofie asks Holy Kaj to take the cross from the church. Loud protest is to no avail, group pressure overcomes Kaj's conviction and the deeply religious boy executes the task. His way from the church to the sawmill is a real cross-road: he not only carries the cross, consisting of several elements, on his back, but also his own puppet that is therefore put on the Heap in the position of Christ. By giving over the cross, something definitively breaks in Kaj: his suppressed aggression, his previously well-concealed cruelty come to the surface. He demands the head of Cinderella the dog from Huge Henrik.

Henrik has been accompanied since the cemetery scene by a marionette dog moved by the actress playing also Ms Eskildsen: Gyöngyi Blasek. This merger of roles mirrors the relationship of these two persons, there is no need for further explanation or excuse: what does not work in the mother/son relation may be created in that of the dog and her chosen master. Cinderella is the only creature on Earth to whom Huge Henrik is attached, whom he really loves. The play lets us trace the phases of this attachment, which makes what the fat boy has to do particularly tragic (he cannot say no, since the second round was his idea and the basis of his newly-acquired appreciation). The mover of Henrik puts his puppet on the Heap to be able to take over the dog marionette. He tries to tear its strings, but cannot: the dog keeps wriggling and howling in his hands. Finally Sofie comes to help, taking the dog over, cutting its strings with scissors and putting it on the Heap.

When Henrik returns home, already without his puppet, his mother does not even notice how big a trouble he is in. She feels that something is wrong, but prefers not to ask about it and continues correcting the tests.

Sofie drops the dog. Silence. Henrik - without puppet - goes home to Ms Eskildsen who is correcting papers, does not even look up. Henrik embraces her.

ESKILDSEN	Now leave, my boy, I am correcting term papers. Your pastry is in the fridge.
HENRIK	OK.
ESKILDSEN	<i>(Looking at Henrik for the first time. Catching sight of the mover's face for the first time.)</i> Henrik Eskildsen, what do you look like? Are you ill? Has anything happened?
HENRIK	Nothing. ¹¹⁵

(115) Excerpt from the Hungarian performance text.

Huge Henrik asks for the next, the index finger of Jan-Johan, sacrifice for the sake of Sofie, not his own. The guitarist boy plays a last number, but that does not move the others, standing above him, impassive, like a firing squad. The puppet Jan-Johan has no chance against his already human-sized classmates. He would like to flee, but they catch him, and his screaming recalls the hysterical reaction of a very young child. He suddenly seems pitiful and weak. When Sofie cuts the finger laying on the guitar, the puppet of Jan-Johan sinks on the Heap, and its mover is given the bandage unwrapped from the head of Huge Hans - and life goes on.

By that time Agnes alone had not taken part in the second round, but when they all look at her she decides otherwise, and flees the sawmill with her puppet, and soon the police arrive to the place.

“This is not my class”

Ms Eskildsen paces the barren space of the initial classroom setting. The giant matchboxes that used to indicate the benches have all been put, together with the puppets and the accessories, on the Heap, so the teacher stares at the already irreversibly changed class in an empty space. They are not puppets, not children, not innocent any more.

The next turn in the novel is the appearance of the media: the class members become famous, everyone is speaking about them, everyone wants to see the Heap of Things. In the play, this is where we re-connect to the present tense of the performance: we see camera flashes, the actors without their puppets already, proudly posing, planning what to buy from the money offered by Guggenheim Museum. We have almost forgotten Pierre Anthon, although he has been present throughout, watching silently from the lighting bridge. Now he climbs down and inspects the Heap. He prods the matchboxes, the sacrificed objects, the this puppets lying lifelessly one by one. If this here is the meaning of life “you wouldn’t have sold it, would you?”, he asks, as he does in the novel.

That’s when Agnes puts her puppet on the Heap among the others, then steps to Pierre Anthon and takes his from his hands. She throws it to Huge Hans who passes it on to Jan-Johan. Pierre Anthon desperately runs after his puppet, but he is held down. The figure is being thrown about for some time, then it gets to Agnes again, who firmly throws it on the floor of the sawmill. The puppet of Pierre Anthon remains there, unmoving, its mover steps by its side and he does not move again either.

SOFIE	The sawmill burnt down that night.
HENRIK	We collected the ashes in matchboxes.
JAN-JOHAN	We have won.
ELISE	We became someone.
NAGY HANS	And being someone, that’s something.

KAJ So many people cannot be wrong.
 AGNES True, Pierre Anthon? True

*Agnes shakes the matchbox in her and but it gives no sound any more. Darkness.*¹¹⁶

The performance that had started with a narrative ends with almost the same sentences, but in a radically different context: we are facing seven broken adults until the lights are dimmed.

4. Death of the puppet



19. *Nothing*, Budapest Puppet Theatre (photo: Vera Éder)

Whereas the others live on as adults having left their puppets behind, both figures of Pierre Anthon remain motionless at the end of the play. His puppet, thrown on the floor of the sawmill, is lying in a twisted position, dead. The others are also dead: Huge Hans, covered by a flag, Sofie, stripped naked, Elise lying by the side of his young brother. Bodies deprived of their movers, left alone, lifeless dolls. The whole Heap with the once-important things, the matchboxes indicating the various sites, the previous life of the characters is no more than a heap of no longer needed toys.

In a puppet theatre, when the actor puts down the puppet, it becomes an object, it stops living. Contrary to live theatre, where death always remains part of the performance, indicating/signalling something, a puppet deprived of its mover actually dies, but - if it is taken up again or replaced by another puppet by its mover - it can also be born again. Given the fact that in the performance entitled *Nothing* the puppet and the mover represent the character together, when the puppet is lost, part of the personality is lost as well, the same as adults gradually

(116) Excerpt from the Hungarian performance text.

forget to be children - the irreversibility, the tragedy of which is sensed by every (almost) adult spectator, by the "children departing to adulthood".

The action mechanism of *Nothing* relies on the special receiver attitude that - however good the actors and maybe the better they are, the more - the spectator tends to identify with the puppets as the story proceeds, even though their black-and-white, sightless figures, the story interrupted by narration, the alienating effects keep suggesting that all that is but a game, abstraction. The spectator is fully aware of that, yet hides her eyes behind his hands when Sofie cuts the strings of the marionette dog with her scissors.

Brechtian alienation is the mother tongue of the puppet theatre: with lifeless characters playing live ones the spectator starts from a distance and is then surprised to notice that he is breathing together with the characters. This effect is particularly strong in adolescents who go to a puppet show with certain reservations anyway.

Summary

The literary top lists and the experience of Hungarian language teachers both show that bombastic stories like *Nothing* are sometimes more able to express the state of mind of adolescents than the great classical works of world literature. These works - perhaps less interesting for the adult reader/spectator - often depict archetypical characters, extreme conflicts, emotional or even sentimental solutions. Puppet theatre abstraction may be a good counterpoint to that, and a consistent puppetry concept can put even the simplest story into a new light while also bringing the genre itself closer to the adolescent audience.

EPILOGUE

A variety of stories can be used as the basis of puppet theatre adaptations: folk or literary tales, short stories and novels addressing children, adolescents or adults - or performances conveying different messages to different age groups. Whether the contemporary puppet play is born of tale motifs or a specific work of literature, it is always primarily a performance text, a "score" conveying at some level - in a more restrictive or permissive form - also instructions concerning the form of execution.

Puppet art is undergoing dynamic change: the traditional techniques and the new forms keep mingling, new trends emerge and fall into oblivion. Dramaturgical tenets change the same way: what used to be revolutionary and novel in the mid-20th century is mostly considered outdated today. The boundaries between plays addressing children and puppet art theatre for adults have become blurred; the appearance of the visible mover has raised new dramaturgical problems and possibilities, and the live theatre has also started to integrate puppetry to a growing extent.

In my thesis I attempted to cover the most frequently used dramaturgical solutions applied in contemporary Hungarian puppet theatre adaptations, based strictly on my personal (spectator, author, co-author) experience. I did not mean to put the scientific discourse on puppet dramaturgy on new bases (all the less since today's relevant international literature cannot even agree on what to call puppet theatre), or to find new terminologies or put the main trends in contemporary puppet dramaturgy into a historical context. My paper is simply the impression of the almost ten years I have spent in the puppet theatre, a summary of my working methods, and a record of the main criteria that help me write my puppet theatre adaptations.

Given the inseparability of the theory and practice of puppet theatre writing, I included in the annex of the thesis two scripts, analysed in detail above: those of *The Princess Who Saw Everything* and *Amalia*. One is the adaptation of a folk tale, the other of a literary tale tackling the questions raised in the introduction from different aspects. The first is less closely bound to the puppet theatre forms (it could even be performed in a live theatre, if the director found an adequately stylised way to represent the animals). The text of *Amalia* is more closely bound to the joint presence of the puppet and the mover, but it does not impose (one or several) puppet techniques to be used. In *Nothing* (not included in the annex, but discussed in detail above), thinking in terms of puppetry is inseparably intertwined with the text: each motion, role or even Unterman replacement has its meaning and relevance. The instructions concerning the movements ("the score") are as important as the text itself and its omission would make the story lose one of its layers of meaning.

As emphasised by Henryk Jurkowski, contemporary puppet theatre as a “third genre” positioned between live theatre and contemporary puppet theatre resists strict classification. It is a comprehensive form of art where each artist may use or not use a puppet, object or mask, rely on the relationship of the puppet and the mover or disregard it at his discretion. The writers, designers, directors and actors input into their collective work their personality, technical knowledge and nervous system to endow their heroes with a certain style, a shape, a characteristic movement. The only criterion is to find the most suitable form for telling the tale you have in mind.

Similarly to the story-teller moulding the story being transmitted to his own image every time, the puppet theatre author filters the story through himself. The personality behind the archetype is revealed, the adapted story starts to behave as a work on its own right. The writer of a puppet theatre performance is in charge not only of the words: together with the other artists, they create a world where the heroes made of lifeless matter spring to life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The tale hero (heroine) cannot succeed without helpers: sages, fairies, witches assist him with their advice, directions or by giving a hiding place where he can be safe from his own anxieties. I am most fortunate: my way has been paved by many. My thanks, therefore, go to my teachers, masters, co-authors, fairies and witches.

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ANNEX: THE PRINCESS WHO SAW EVERYTHING

Adapted from a Hungarian folk-tale by Dóra Gimesi

Characters

Rézi,	the princess
Aladár,	the youngest son (later: Rabbit)
King,	Henrik XIII (the Wimp) (later: Eagle)
Queen	Begonia, wife of Henrik XIII (the Wimp) (later: Fish)

Scene 1

Rézi

Dawn, the sun is rising.

The princess is walking up the stairs of her tower, looking out of every window.

Song.

RÉZI: First storey - Are you ready? Here I come!
 Second storey - I'll soon be done!
 Third storey - your palms will sting
 Fourth storey -your heart I'll wring
 Fifth storey - no courage, I'll be bound
 Sixth storey - better not make a sound!
 Seventh storey - You really think you'll win?

Nighth storey – I'll make your eyeballs spin!
Ninth storey – your brains will turn to mush
Tenth storey – your body into dust
He's in the gutter beneath the eaves under last year's moss!

Scene 2

King, Queen

The suitor's head rolls away. The Queen snuggles into the King's arms, who signals that she can look now

QUEEN: Ninety-nine.

KING: Ninety-nine. I won.

QUEEN: And this one seemed quite smart.

KING: Begonia dearest, you though ninety-eight quite smart as well.

QUEEN: But the gutter, Henrik, the gutter?
I expected more from this young man.
He is the grandson of the Russian tsar, after all.

KING: Was.

QUEEN: I'll never make a bet with you again!
(With a huge sigh she hands over the crown to the King)
This can't go on. Soon there won't be a single
able-bodied young man left in the kingdom.

KING: Hm.

QUEEN: Or outside it.

KING: Hm, hm.

QUEEN: Henrik, you are her father after all.
You tell her.

Scene 3

King, Queen, Rézi

The princess storms in

RÉZI: The first was witless, the second insipid, the third irresolute, the seventh all swagger, the tenth stood gaping, the twentieth had bats in the belfry, the fiftieth was an asinine, canine-faced dimwit, the eightieth was a blundering idiot, the ninety-eighth a thick-headed truant: isn't there a single intelligent man left in all the world? As for this one, the minute I called his name, he stuck his head out of the gutter, nincompoop that he was, stared at me, gaping, you could have knocked him down with a feather, good thing the executioner was there, to knock off his head...

KING: Rézi, dearest girl, I must talk to you...

RÉZI: Your Majesty, most royal father, I may be mistaken, but it seems to me you're hiding a box of snuff in the inside pocket of your robes.

QUEEN: Henrik! You're still taking snuff?! Don't try to deny it, the child sees everything.

RÉZI: By the way, Your Majesty, most royal Mother, the hazelnut pralines will melt if you keep them in your underwear drawer among your royal lingerie.

QUEEN: Dearest daughter, I don't...

KING: Begonia dearest, the child sees everything.

QUEEN: Henrik! It's time!

KING: Rézi, dearest child, this can't go on.

RÉZI: I'm glad you think so too, Papa.

- QUEEN: We must put a stop to this.
- RÉZI: I quite agree, mama.
- KING: Given that all the neighbouring princes, dukes, barons....
- QUEEN: And the ambassador of Burgundy, the Tartar khan and the Arabian sheik...
- KING: And all orders and degrees of wayfarers, travellers, indomitable commanders of the world...
- QUEEN: ...and privateers!
- KING: Ninety-nine of them, counting the one today...
- RÉZI: Exactly ninety-nine, Papa.
- KING: There is to be no more cutting off of heads. No more hanging. No more impaling. I'm telling you now, that's the end of it. Enough. I've had enough. I'm not paying for any more executioners, for more sharpening of axes, for building more gallows!
- RÉZI: You're right, Papa. I'm not going to marry.
- KING: What?
- RÉZI: Your Majesty, most royal Father, I'm telling you straight. I'm not going to have a child with a half-witted simpleton. Only a crazy person would want dim, dumb, gormless offspring!
- KING: But, dearest daughter, the kingdom...
- RÉZI: I can see every nook and cranny of the kingdom, if I want! From the twelve windows of my tower I watch over your subjects, I can see who cheats at cards, who has strayed into the forest, I can see if the cook's apron is

spattered with stew. I can tell if the enemy is preparing for battle even before their troops have lined up. What do I need a husband for, he'd only be a pain in the neck!

QUEEN: Rézi, my darling girl, you can't stay a spinster.

RÉZI: I shall only marry someone who is smarter than me. Who can hide so I'll never find him, never see him from the twelve windows of my tower. I've said it once, I'll say it no more. That's the way it is going to be.

KING: Rézi, dearest, it appears there is no suitor to fit the bill.

RÉZI: Then it looks like I'm going to stay with you forever! (*exits*)

Scene 4

King, Queen

QUEEN: Henrik!

KING: Begonia!

QUEEN: Your daughter! Your pigheadedness!

KING: Your hysterical nature!

QUEEN: I can't bear it a moment longer! My nerves won't stand it! I get migraines just thinking about it! And nightmares!

KING: Whoever comes next, we'll marry her off to him. Even if he's dull and slow as a crocodile, and as ugly as an orang-outan. Even better! I wish the person who comes next were half-witted, boorish, vulgar and uncouth, I wish he were a giant or a wrinkly-skinned, disgusting, ugly goblin, I will

marry this harpy to the first male creature who walks in through this door.

Scene 5

King, Queen, Aladár

And Aladár, the swineherd's son, enters and self-consciously stops in a corner, clears his throat and greets them.

ALADÁR: Good day to you.

QUEEN: *(faints)*

KING: Good day to you, son. What brings you here?

ALADÁR: Well... ummm...

KING: Have a seat, son. What's your name?

ALADÁR: Aladár.

KING: A good name, a noble-sounding name.

QUEEN: Henrik, you can't be serious.

KING: Can't I? I've never been more serious about anything in my life!

QUEEN: But he's the swineherd's son!

KING: Well, of course he's the swineherd's son. How is your father, Aladár?

ALADÁR: Well....

QUEEN: He herds pigs out in the fields!

KING: Are the pigs doing well, Aladár?

ALADÁR: Well.

- KING: You pick your words carefully, that is commendable. Let's get to the point. Do you like my daughter?
- ALADÁR: We-e-ell....
- QUEEN: Henrik!
- KING: Would you marry her?
- ALADÁR: We-e-ell... I'm not going to fall for that, I'm no fool you know, I'm fond of my head and I'm not having it chopped off!
- KING: There is no question of that, no question at all. No one is getting their head chopped off.
- ALADÁR: Well, I'm not so sure about that, I just saw what looked like a prince's head come flying straight onto the muck-heap.
- QUEEN: See, he doesn't want to marry her.
- ALADÁR: On the other hand, it must be said that the princess is really pretty.
- KING: See, he does want to marry her.
- QUEEN: Well, he might want to marry her, but he'll never manage to hide from her.
- KING: He will manage to hide from her. You'll see, Begonia, he will manage to hide.
- ALADÁR: Hide where?
- KING: Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Let's do a trial run. I'd like you to show us how good you are at hiding.
- ALADÁR: Here? Now?
- QUEEN: Told you he didn't want to do it.

ALADÁR: We-e-ell....I can hide, if you want me to.

KING: Come, Begonia, let's leave the boy, let him prove how creative he is.

Scene 6

Aladár, Rézi

Aladár is trying. He is trying to squeeze himself into awkward and unsuitable places, finally strikes up an impossible pose, and stays that way. This is the moment when the princess enters.

RÉZI: Well, look who's here, the little swineherd has got himself in a twist! Is this how my royal father is punishing his boorish subjects for the putrid stink of the muck-heap?

ALADÁR: It really suits you, when you wrinkle your nose like that, miss.

RÉZI: Are you speaking to me?

ALADÁR: If you turn up your nose like that, the rain will fall in.

RÉZI: Did you practise saying sweet nothings like that to the pigs?

ALADÁR: Truth be told, there is a strong likeness, it would be an easy mistake to make.

RÉZI: And you, it seems to me you've mistaken your way. The back door is that way.

ALADÁR: I must have missed it, 'cos your arse was in the way.

RÉZI: I never want to see you again, get lost!

ALADÁR: So you're going to marry me.

- RÉZI: How did you come to that conclusion?
- ALADÁR: They say you're only going to marry the person you can't see.
- RÉZI: You wouldn't dare put yourself forward. You'll only end up getting your head chopped off.
- ALADÁR: I wouldn't dare, huh? I already have!
- RÉZI: That's a lie! His Majesty, my royal father would never allow it!

Scene 7

King, Queen, Rézi, Aladár

- KING: Ready or not, here we come! Rézi, dear child, what are you doing here? How come you're not peeping, prying, spying? Have you grown bored of meddling in other people's lives?
- RÉZI: Your Majesty, most royal Father, this...this subject is saying that...
- KING: You remember Aladár, right? He's a very smart young man, animal husbandry is his profession..
- RÉZI: Your Majesty! Most Royal Mother!
- QUEEN: He is a fine, handsome young man.
- KING: You could marry him.
- RÉZI: But...
- QUEEN: He's not afraid of a challenge.
- KING: He is ready to be put through his paces.

QUEEN: He'll have hidden himself away by tomorrow morning.

KING: He will keep all the rules.

RÉZI: I keep all the rules too!

QUEEN: If you find him, he is ready for his fate.

KING: If you can't find him, you will marry him.

RÉZI: See you tomorrow at dawn, swineherd!

ALADÁR: That's if you can find me, miss.

RÉZI: I'll find him! I always find them all. (exits)

Scene 8

King, Queen, Aladár

KING: She won't find you. You'll choose an excellent hiding-place.

QUEEN: Your father shall be given a title.

KING: And we'll have a wedding-feast the likes of which the world has never seen!

QUEEN: And I can wear my red tulle skirt!

KING: And I shall have a grandchild! An heir to the throne.

QUEEN: An heiress to the throne.

KING: A boy.

QUEEN: A girl.

KING: Do you want to bet?

- QUEEN: No. You always win.
- ALADÁR: So where do I hide?
- QUEEN: Not in the gutter beneath the eaves.
- KING: Not in the haystack. Not by any means.
- QUEEN: Your feet would stick out of the slop-pail.
- KING: She'll see your shadow if you hide behind the sheets hung out to dry.
- QUEEN: Beneath the catapult?
- KING: No, someone's already tried that. What about behind the tin-soldier casting house?
- QUEEN: Someone's tried that as well. At the top of the star-gazing tower?
- KING: The wind would blow him off.
- QUEEN: True. It would blow him off the weather-vane too.
- KING: Number 42, he was ingenious. She only caught sight of him from the last but one window.
- QUEEN: In my most royal husband's snuff-box.
- KING: (*embarrassed*) It was the sneezing that gave him away.
- RÉZI: (*Looks out of the window*) Your Majesties, most royal parents, if I'm not mistaken, you are weighing down the candidate with these supposedly helpful tips.
- KING: You are mistaken, dearest Rézi, we were just wishing him good luck.

QUEEN: Just bidding him a tearful farewell!

KING: We're off!

Scene 9

Queen, Aladár

Aladár is walking up and down, barging around, trying to find somewhere to hide. The princess is also walking up and down, but they do not run into each other.

ALADÁR: What an idiotic thing to do, taking on this challenge. She's found ninety-nine already, why would she not find me? Ninety-nine select princes, dukes, barons, privateers, all of them too big for their boots, then they fell flat on their faces, and lost their heads, every last one of them.

QUEEN: *(she approaches Aladár from behind, but Aladár does not notice her. Then she changes into a goldfish - that is, takes out her puppet - and begins to thrash around. Song) Aladár!*

Ninety-nine chanced their luck
 Ninety-nine tried to hide
 Ninety-nine heads rolled
 Ninety-nine had to be buried

My daughter's whim
 Is putting you in danger
 I will help you, poor lad
 Never fear!

Ninety-nine times I have seen them fail
 Ninety-nine heroic princes
 Ninety-nine in the graveyard
 Ninety-nine deep beneath the ground

A feast for the maggots
 You will not become
 Lad, never fear
 No, never fear.

- QUEEN: *(thrashing, floundering)* Aladár!
- ALADÁR: Did someone speak? *(He looks around)*
No one. There is no one who can to help me.
- QUEEN: Aladár!
- ALADÁR: A goldfish!
- QUEEN: Finally.
- ALADÁR: How on earth did you get here?
- QUEEN: *(coughs)* Aladár, help me!
- ALADÁR: D'you want me to throw you back into the
sea?
- QUEEN: I'll grant you a wish.
- ALADÁR: Just the one? Aren't you supposed to grant
me three?
- QUEEN: *(Jumps out of his hand, in a huff)*
- ALADÁR: I was joking. I can't think of a single thing
to wish for, let alone three. They're going to
cut off my head tomorrow.
- QUEEN: You helped me, so I'll help you.
- ALADÁR: There is no place to hide where the princess
can't find me.

Magical music. The goldfish jumps up and we see the sea. She swims ahead of Aladár, showing him the way to the secret hiding-place.

Scene 10*Rézi, Aladár**Dawn. The princess is walking around in the tower, looking out of every window.*

RÉZI: First storey - Are you ready? Here I come!
 Second storey - I'll soon be done!
 Third storey - your palms will sting
 Fourth storey - your heart I'll wring
 Fifth storey - wish I didn't have to tell:
 I see you! You're at the bottom of the sea inside a shell.

The sea disappears. Aladár is standing in the middle of the room.

RÉZI: Eeeny-meeny-miny-moe-axe-or-gallows-what
 a joke! Which shall it be? Hanging or
 beheading? Hang him or behead him, hang
 him or behead him...

ALADÁR: You think too much, miss, too much thinking
 might do you harm.

RÉZI: Aren't you afraid of getting your throat
 slashed?

ALADÁR: Aren't you afraid your tongue's too sharp?

RÉZI: *(Sticks her tongue out at him)* Beee!

ALADÁR: Wow, sharp as a knife! You can tell you
 keep it sharpened regularly.

RÉZI: As the executioner keeps his axe sharpened.

ALADÁR: At least he only uses it once and then it's
 done.

RÉZI: Using it once is quite enough.

ALADÁR: If I married you, you'd whet your tongue on
 me. I much prefer the axe.

- RÉZI: You can't have the axe! Not even if you ask for it!
- ALADÁR: So you're going to have me hanged.
- RÉZI: No!
- ALADÁR: Hung, drawn and quartered? Impaled?
- RÉZI: No! No! No! I've decided to let you live. Just because! Because you are the hundredth miserable, pathetic, stupid wretch. I'm going to let you have another go at finding a hiding place.
- ALADÁR: Your Highness, most royal princess, I cannot accept this favour from your ruthless hand.
- RÉZI: I will bestow the same favour on the two hundredth candidate! I'll find you tomorrow morning at dawn, swineherd!

Scene 11

King, Aladár

Aladár is walking up and down, racking his brains. The princess is doing the same. The King turns into an eagle - puts on the mask/takes up the eagle puppet - and listens to Aladár's monologue; as he lists his ideas, he tries to attract his attention in increasingly conspicuous ways. Finally, feigning a broken wing, he falls before Aladár's feet.

- ALADÁR: I'll show her. This time, I'm really going to show her. She's not going to use her sharp tongue on me, I'll outfox her for sure. I'll hide up the chimney. It'll be so dark in there, she'll never see me. Oh but she will. She sees everything. I'll jump in the well, pull the bucket over my head. No, that's no good. Water's no good. I'll crawl into the hollow of the old oak tree.

No, not a good idea, the squirrels will give me away. Much better to...

KING: *(Song)*
One hid in a bucket, another behind a mirror
The third inside a young steer
To no avail, to no avail, his legs stuck out
And he was condemned to death
Do not hide in a bucket, nor behind a mirror
Certainly not inside a young steer
Don't gaze up a chimney,
I'll help you hide
Just look at what's right in front of you,
Aladár!

ALADÁR: A bird!

KING: An eagle.

ALADÁR: I beg your pardon. Have you broken your wing?

KING: I think so.

ALADÁR: *(grabs hold of the wing, moves it around, twists it, this hurts the King's hand)* Does this hurt?

KING: Ooowww!

ALADÁR: I'll put a splint on it, shall I?

KING: No! No need! It'll be fine! Thank you for saving me, let me help you now!

ALADÁR: It may be just a sprain. I'll try and put it back into place.

KING: I told you, it'll be fine. It doesn't even hurt any more. Look, I can even fly! Now tell me your wish.

ALADÁR: I need a good hiding place. I thought perhaps the chimney...

KING: Stop right there. It so happens that I know of an excellent nest. Follow me!

Scene 12

Rézi

Dawn, the tower

RÉZI: First storey - Are you ready? Here I come!
 Second storey - I'll soon be done!
 Thirds storey - your palms will sting
 Fourth storey - your heart I'll wring
 Fifth storey - no courage, I'll be bound
 Sixth storey - better not make a sound
 Seventh storey - you really think you'll win?
 Eighth storey - I'll make your eyeballs spin!
 Ninth storey - your brains will turn to mush...
 I see you! You're in the eagle's eyrie among the eggs!

Scene 13

Rézi, Aladár, King, Queen

During their altercation, Rézi and Aladár move closer and closer to each other, until the parents come charging in

RÉZI: Eeny-meeny-miny-moe, axe-or-gallows-what a joke!

ALADÁR: Don't you know any other nursery rhymes?

RÉZI: I'll break you on the wheel, impale you on a stake, I'll drag you and pull you and break you, tooth and nail, with glee!

ALADÁR: It would be premature to gloat over another's misfortune, presumptuous to take spiteful pleasure in another's pain. I am not broken-hearted. But I shall break you in.

RÉZI: First he compares me to a pig, now he wants to break me in like a horse. Fantabulous.

ALADÁR: All attributes are too flattering if they refer to you.

RÉZI: Cow-eyes! Hamster-face! Turtle-nosed horse-skunk!

ALADÁR: Zoo guide?

RÉZI: Tinder fungus! Common weed!

ALADÁR: Before you weed me out, give me your hand.

RÉZI: Have you thought about making a bouquet out of the flowers of rhetoric?

ALADÁR: A bouquet for a wedding?

RÉZI: For a funeral.

At this moment the King and Queen enter.

KING: Rézi! That's enough now!

RÉZI: Your Majesty, most royal father, you appear unsettled. What happened to your hand?

KING: Nothing! What happened here?

RÉZI: Nothing. I was just about to call the executioner. The execution is about to begin.

QUEEN: Dearest child! Don't do it! Don't say it!

RÉZI: Your Majesty, most royal mother, sit down, you look about to faint.

KING: This poor lad, it's not his fault...

QUEEN: Rézi, my dear, if you have a heart, you'll let him go.

- KING: Think of your grandfather. Imagine looking down on you through his celestial telescope.
- QUEEN: For the first time in your life, he would be proud of you, Teréz.
- RÉZI: I couldn't care less! Let him go? Whatever next! I certainly will not! Third time lucky!
- KING: What do you mean?
- RÉZI: He's tried to hide twice, let him try a third time. That's the new rule. From now on, every hundredth candidate can have three tries. And that's the end of it. We can call the executioner tomorrow.

Scene 14

Aladár, King, Queen

- KING: There is no hope now, Aladár, you haven't an earthly chance.
- QUEEN: Take to your heels.
- KING: Make yourself scarce.
- QUEEN: Save yourself.
- KING: There isn't a hiding-place in all the kingdom..
- QUEEN: No corner, nook, or cranny...
- ALADÁR: *(says nothing)*
- KING: Poor boy. He's lost his mind.
- ALADÁR: *(says nothing)*

QUEEN: Your daughter has driven him mad.

KING: She's your daughter!

QUEEN: Your pigheadedness!

KING: Your hysterical nature!

Aladár is left alone. Song.

ALADÁR: Cow-eyed, turtle-nosed,
Horse-skunk and tinder-fungus
Hamster-faced - such pretty curses
Such a pretty mouth, as she utters them
As she blushes, as she rails and fumes
The way she looks down her nose
Finding me is no big deal, but
Getting to know me is something else.
To recognise me, pretty miss
One or two windows will not be enough
You will know me only
When we are man and wife.

Aladár turns into a rabbit: he slips his hand into the rabbit puppet. They play a game with Rézi, Aladár running his rabbit-puppet hand over Rézi's hand, then her shoulder.

Scene 16

Rézi, Aladár, King, Queen

The king and queen anxiously watch the sun rising.

KING: Rézi, dearest daughter.

QUEEN: The day is breaking, dawn is dawning.

KING: It's time you started looking out of your windows, peering and prying, staring into the distance...

QUEEN: Like you usually do.

- RÉZI: *(obliviously playing with the hamster)*
In a minute.
- KING: Rules are rules.
- QUEEN: Customs are made to be kept.
- KING: The whole empire is waiting, with bated breath, to see whether there'll be a hanging today.
- QUEEN: Or a beheading.

The sun rises, music for climbing the stairs of the tower begins. Rézi starts up the stairs reluctantly. Behind her plait we see Aladár's hand, encased in the rabbit puppet.

- RÉZI: First storey - Are you ready? Here I come!
Second storey - I'll soon be done
Third storey - your palms will sting
Fourth storey - your heart I'll wring
Fifth storey - no courage, I'll be bound
Sixth storey - rumours all around
- KING: She's going to find him. She's s going to shout it from the rooftops. You want to bet?
- QUEEN: I'm not going to make a bet with you. You always win.
- KING: How about if we bet on the same outcome?
- QUEEN: That she's going to find him? That she's going to shout it from the rooftops?
- KING: That she's going to do exactly that.
- QUEEN: Then I'll make the bet.
- RÉZI: Seventh storey - You really think you'll win?
Eighth storey - I'll make your eyeballs spin!
Ninth storey - your brains will turn to mush
Tenth storey - I'll say it if I must
Eleventh storey - not fair to hide this way!

Twelfth storey -
I can't find him! I can't find him!
I don't know where he is....

QUEEN: *(With her hands over her eyes and ears, like at the beginning)*
Is it over yet?

KING: No, no...Begonia darling!

RÉZI: I don't know where he is! I can't see him!
I can't see him from any of my windows!
Hey, swineherd! Subject! Stinking swineherd!
Come out, you rascal, you villainous jailbird!
Aladár! I can't see you! I don't know where
you've hidden! Aladár! There'll be no
execution! No gallows, no axe, no stake!

KING: Teréz! That was not the agreement...

RÉZI: Aladár! Come out! D'you hear me? You don't
have to die... vAnd actually... You know...

QUEEN: Know what, darling girl?

RÉZI: I'm going to marry him.

KING: Maybe if you said it a bit louder...?

QUEEN: Because I don't think he heard you.

RÉZI: I'll marry you! I will not whet my sharp
tongue, I will not whinge and whine, I will not
bicker...I will not peer and pry, I will not
stand and stare, I will not stick my nose into
other people's business, I will not tell tales,
I will not spy on people ever again! I don't
want to see everything anymore! Aladár, when
I see you, I don't want to see everything!

The windows of the tower crack and shatter. Aladár slowly pulls the puppet off his hand, and embraces Rézi from behind.

- ALADÁR: Don't shout, don't wail, or your husband will go deaf.
- RÉZI: Aladár! How did you do that?
- ALADÁR: I'll tell you one day, if you want me to.
- RÉZI: Have I told you how much I hate you?
- ALADÁR: Have I told you how pretty I find you even when you're behaving like this?
- RÉZI: You win, I submit, here's my hand.
- ALADÁR: Not your heart?
- RÉZI: You're getting the entire kingdom! What do you want with my heart?
- ALADÁR: I never asked for your kingdom.
- RÉZI: I don't understand. You're not acting like a king, you're not giving out commands, not bickering? Not waving arrogantly at your subjects when there's a public execution?
- ALADÁR: Of course not. Will you marry me?
- RÉZI: All right, but I get to say when we go to sleep, when we get up, who we hate, who we love, who we play cards with of an evening, whose brother we'll banish, what flavour ice-cream we choose, how many degrees centigrade its is, what we buy at the bazaar, which costume we'll wear at the fancy-dress ball, I get to say how many bedtime stories you can read, and if anyone loses anything, I'll tell them where to find it...

Aladár does not let her continue, he silences her with a kiss

RÉZI: Hamster-face, ruffian, hooligan, deceitful
trickster, rotten, foul-faced, loathsome
crook...

ALADÁR: Well suited to an all-seeing, sharp-tongued,
peering prying squealing extraordinarily
beautiful princess.

QUEEN: Hey Henrik. So who won?

The king takes the crown, the perpetual prize of the bet, off his head. He places it on Aladár's head. Rézi takes it off and puts it on her own head. This is repeated several times.

FINALE

ALADÁR: I see you, I see you, I see everything
All your dreams in your eyes
Every secret, every plan
I see, when I embrace you.

RÉZI: I see you, I see you, I see everything
The whole wide world in your eyes
My image in you heart
I am poking my tongue at you

TOGETHER: Tell me, where should I hide from you
Your little toe is my compass
I bet I shall win
Your palm is my map

Your voice is there in my ear
Your eyes reflect me
You recite my words
My hiding place is in your arms

KING, QUEEN: I see you, I see you, I see everything
Pralinés and snuff
Lots and lots of grandchildren
Boys and girls both

TOGETHER: Tell, me where would I hide from you
 Your little toe is my compass
 If you win, I win too
 Your palm is my map.

 Your voice is there in my ear
 Your eyes reflect me
 You recite my words
 My hiding place is in your arms.

ANNEX: AMALIA

Based on the stories of Ildikó Boldizsár by Dóra Gimesi

Characters

Amalia (Angéla Badacsonyi)
Prince (András Veres)
Princess (Zsuzsanna Kovács)

Designed by Katalin Sipos, Péter Sisak
Music: Balázs Alpár
Director: Gábor Tengely

Mesebolt (Storyshop) Puppet Theatre, Szombathely, 2009

Scene 1

It is raining. A drizzle at first, then a heavy downpour, then a drizzle again. As the members of the audience take their seats, the music begins to play. What we hear is the song of the rain: a polyphonic, rhythmical, simple song that reminds one of the patter of raindrops, and the murmur of the sea. The stage is in darkness. The light slowly flows down across the auditorium, it is just a vague glimmer on the stage. You can barely make out the raindrops.

THE RAIN: (song)

Drip! Drop! Plip! Plop!
Taps on the door

Beats on the windows
Splashes into the well
Drums in your ears
Plops onto the ground
From your tiny palm
Chases dreams
From your sleepy eyes.
Drip! Drop! Plip! Plop!
I am waiting for you in the field, to whirl in the wind
I am waiting for us to giggle together
I am waiting for you to shelter beneath the willows
I am waiting for you to come fly around the woods
To watch the widening circles in the lake
To watch your eyes light up with happiness
Look outside, your windows are spattered
Look outside, at all the rain, all the storms waiting
Look outside, see how the shower of rain is
a many-hued curtain
Look outside, because it is raining just for you.
Tapping on the door
Rat-tat-tat!
Beating on windows
Pitter-pat!
Splashing into the well
Plip! Plop!
Drumming in your ears
Dub-a-dub!
I'm waiting I'm waiting
I'm waiting I'm waiting
Plops onto the ground to whirl in the wind
From your tiny palm giggle together
Chases dreams shelter beneath
From your sleepy eyes fly around
Look outside, your windows are spattered
Look outside, at all the rain, all the storms waiting
Look outside, see how the shower of rain is
a many-hued curtain.
Look outside, because it is raining just for you.

AMALIA: *(whimpering, half-asleep, we only hear her voice)*

I'm not going anywhere...I most certainly am not...stop that now, stop drumming in my ears, I can hear you, I'm not going!

My face is all crumpled...My eyes are still gummy,
 I can't open them, I don't even want to! I had a bad dream,
 I'm in a bad mood, I'm having a bad day' Let me sleep!
 Don't you understand?
 I do not feel like jumping into puddles bare-footed,
 I do not feel like counting raindrops, or dancing in a downpour,
 I don't want to! And I'm cold.
 I'm not going to open my eyes whatever you do.
 I am going to stick my fingers in my ears, so I can't hear you!
 You can drum and patter and sing all you like,
 I'm not going to hear it! I'm sleeping!

The rain slowly begins to ease off. There is silence.

Did you hear me, rain? I'm sleeping! It's no good you calling me!
 Pattering! Singing! (there is no answer) Rain! What happened?
 Where did you go? Why aren't you calling? Pattering? Singing?

We see Amalia coming out of the house, crumpled, tousled - she's just woken up.

I've woken up now, is that what you wanted?
 I jumped out of bed, chased sleep from my eyes,
 is that what you wanted? Here I am! (*There is no answer*)
 Hey, rain friend, storm chum, are you playing hide
 and seek with me? Do you want me to find you? Where are you?
 Are you hiding behind my chimney, inside a black cloud?
 Or are you hiding in my pot? In my cauldron? In my leaky pail?
 Have you hidden in the woods, in the field, in the lake?
 Hey, rain, come out! We can play if you want!
 Don't you want to play? You're not speaking, not singing,
 not answering me? You're not answering me either,
 not even you?

Scene 2

Amalia goes back inside the house. It is simply furnished: a table, a chair. And a kitchen dresser, packed full of spotted mugs.

AMALIA: Oh, dear. The rain's not answering. (*speaks to one of the mugs*)
 What do you say to that, Hugo? Even the rain's not answering...
 Ignores me, doesn't take the blindest bit of notice!
 It's gone, it's left me...It took offence.

It's never going to play with me again.
 No one wants to play with me, no one in the whole wide world.
 I know, I know, it's all my fault. I was lazy, I was whining,
 I sent it away. I didn't mean to send it away.
 Do you know that that's what women do, that's what they're like.
 Well, of course you know, you know best of all.
 Anyone comes knocking, they send them away.
 But those who never come to call? For those, they bake pies
 with fresh berries from the woods, just in case they drop in.
 And then they eat up every last morsel all by themselves,
 just because they're so sad that the visitors never came.
 The only ones who come are like Hugo
*(she starts taking down the mugs off the shelves one by one,
 dusting them, wiping them)*
 and Huba and Herbert... Casimir, Clement... Philip, Frederick,
 Florian... And of course Louie... They come,
 wearing gilded breastplates and silver suits of armour,
 on griffins, on sailing boats, on magic steeds...
 Wearing the pictures of princesses above their hearts...
 But tell me, what kind of prince is he who can be lead
 astray by the first yellow primrose, the first soft-spoken,
 kind word? Who forgets the princess he set out to woo
 as soon as he catches sight of me? Oh, I wish the road did not
 turn this way, I wish they would not knock on my door
 for a mug of tea, I wish I did not bewitch them all,
 without exception! Do you understand?
 Do you understand, Hugo?

(Song)

**I hate to drink tea by myself in the morning
 I hate putting out my clothes at night
 I hate getting drenched in every downpour
 I hate leading princes astray
 I hate making up beastly magic potions
 I hate both my eyes for being so bright
 I hate confusing other people's hearts
 I hate being a witch so much!**

Did I ask for this? Do I want to be a witch with bewitching eyes,
 and an enchanting voice, who leads princes astray,
 captivates their hearts, beguiles their dreams? No I do not!
 Did I ask for magic powers? No I did not! Magic is a nuisance!

She tries to light the fire with a match. She does not succeed. After several unsuccessful attempts she snaps her fingers - and the fire flares up.

Alright, it is GENERALLY a nuisance. In most cases.
 I can count on one hand how often I found it useful.
 I understand animals, I speak their language, alright,
 that's one use. I know where the Grass-munching
 Miracle of the Woods lives, that's two.
 I can slip inside the winter dreams of bears, that's three.
 I once taught a fish to fly, that's four. I can turn into anything
 I like, that's five. And then I know all the plants, flowers,
 roots that are good for making herbal infusions.
 And I can brew tea. Alright, alright, that's seven already.
 But the bewitching of knights, princes, journeymen?
 You think that's funny? Well, it's not funny at all!
 I wish someone would come who could resist my charms,
 someone who cannot be bewitched!
 Someone who does not want to shower me with treasures,
 all the bounties of heaven and earth, who does not want
 to pave Cross-eye Street with real pearls!
 Alright, alright, I'll stop whining, I'll make some tea.
(Sniffs her herbs, one after the other)
 Rose-hips? No. Lime-blossom? Maybe... No, not lime-blossom.
 When I'm in a really bad mood, lime-blossom is not a good idea.
 Chamomile? No way. Nettle tea?
 No, I'm not that desperate. Thyme, perhaps...

She puts a spoonful of thyme into hot water, the scent fills the auditorium. The wooden spoon stirs the tea by itself. Every now and then Amalia clicks her tongue and the spoon begins to stir counter-clockwise. As she speaks, she keeps on performing magic, without really noticing she's doing it.

Confounded witchery! Good-for-nothing magic!
 Tell me, Hugo, is there a prince in all the world who does
 not need to be bewitched, who will just... simply... you know...
 stay with me, with no magic involved?
 Oh, don't turn away from me, you know I didn't mean it like that!
 Hugo! Casimir! Louie! Of course I'm glad that you're
 here with me. I just... I sometimes dream of a prince
 who set out on a journey to look for me, who wants me.
 With whom I could travel the world, on foot if needs be, but,
 if we wanted to, we could fly over the oceans together.
 Whose voice is like a caress, soft as a breeze,

whose smile is like sunshine and whose eyes are so blue you can see the constellations in them at night...
 Who does not arrive on the back of a camel, or a magic steed,
 who does not arrive with a flourish of trumpets,
 who is not accompanied by a whole travelling circus...
 who just arrives, unannounced, walks in the door noiselessly,
 wipes his glasses on my spotted dishcloth, and says...

By the time Amalia comes to the end of her monologue, the Prince is standing there before her, exactly as she described him.

Scene 3

The Prince is standing in the doorway, looking embarrassed. Amalia is possibly even more embarrassed. Like the Prince - a role played by an actor but also represented by a puppet - Amalia assumes the same dual presence. The puppets see each other and talk to each other, while the actors speak the "asides", and communicate thoughts and internal reactions.

PRINCE: Good day to you!

AMALIA: I... I just... Good day!

PRINCE: I've been walking all night, I thought I was lost, then I caught sight of this cottage.

AMALIA: Well that's...That's great.
 That's...actually...wonderful. Fantastic.
 Quite extraordinary.

PRINCE: What is?

AMALIA: What is what?

PRINCE: What is great. And wonderful.

AMALIA: Oh, nothing. Nothing worth mentioning.
 Would you like some tea?

PRINCE: Thank you.

AMALIA: And... what brings you here...
 to the middle of nowhere?

Amalia begins to tidy the house, chucking things here and there, closing the doors of the kitchen dresser, shutting away the mugs. She calls the prince inside.

PRINCE: I set out from a far-off land...I have been wandering for a long, long time....I have to find someone.
(he steps closer)

AMALIA: Really?

PRINCE: I'm sure you could help me...
(he comes closer)

AMALIA: I'd be glad to help...

PRINCE: Could you tell me... *(even closer)*

AMALIA: Yes...

PRINCE: ...the way to the castle of the most beautiful princess in the world?

AMALIA: Princess?

PRINCE: Whose golden hair shines like the rays of the rising sun, whose eyes sparkle like the waters of the purest lake, whose laughter is like the tinkling of a hundred tiny bells....

AMALIA: Tea?

PRINCE: Yes, please. Just a little, as I'm in a hurry. Where was I? Her hair, golden like the rising sun, her eyes, like the purest lake, her laughter... This tea is really good.

AMALIA: It's thyme tea. I gathered a lot of thyme this year. It's drying now, up in the attic.

PRINCE: I didn't know that witches dried their herbs in the attic.

AMALIA: Why, what did you think? That we hid ghosts up there?

Or made flying broomsticks?
Or bred black cats?

Finally, the Prince bursts out laughing.

AMALIA: Of course there are many kinds of witches. I, for one, count blades of grass in the clearing every morning. I tuck up the animals sleeping their winter-sleep. And I tell stories to wanderers.

PRINCE: What kind of stories?

AMALIA: Every person has their own story, that is only theirs and no one else's. But I really don't want to keep you.

PRINCE: You're not.

AMALIA: I thought you were in a hurry.

PRINCE: Yes, I suppose I am, actually.

The Prince stands up, ready to go.

I am in a great hurry! I have no time to dawdle!

AMALIA: There you are, you see. I don't have time to dawdle either. I have blades of grass to count.

PRINCE: I wouldn't want to take up any more of your time.

AMALIA: Right. Nor I yours.

PRINCE: Good.

AMALIA: Just leave your mug on the table, if you've finished your tea.

PRINCE: You're not even going to wait for me to...

AMALIA: I've got a lot of things to do.

- PRINCE: Yes. I understand. Of course.
- AMALIA: I've got to pick cherries...
- PRINCE: Right.
- AMALIA: Of course if you weren't in such a hurry, I'd tell you the story of the Stargazing Boy.
- PRINCE: But you haven't got the time...
- AMALIA: I could spare a little time....
- PRINCE: Well, I'm not in that much of a hurry...

The Prince sits back down.

- AMALIA: The Stargazing Boy made a star fall from the sky every single night. When dusk was setting in, the Stargazing Boy went up to the highest hill, lay down in the grass on his back, looked up at the sky and chose the one star that he wished to call down to him. From that moment on none of the other stars existed for him. He just kept staring at that one chosen star, constantly, his pupils encircled by shiny rings. Every night, the Boy's eyes won, every night, the Boy proved stronger, that was how he was able to call down the beautiful stars, one by one. The star would sparkle for one last time as it reached the earth, before it burnt itself out, and from that moment on, no one saw a trace of it ever again. This made the Boy very unhappy, and he began to search passionately for the fallen stars all over the Earth; he searched for them among the mountains, in river-beds, beneath the grass, beneath the moss, but he never found them. During his twilight search for fallen stars he once came upon a red-haired girl with extraordinary eyes. The girl was sitting by a river and when she looked at the Boy, her eyes entranced him, like the stars of the night. He could not take his eyes off her, but though he called her and called her, trying to charm her, the girl just kept sitting by the river, beneath the dense-limbed weeping willows. At last the Stargazing Boy set out towards her, and got closer,

and closer, and the next day even closer, but never close enough.
 When the sun began to set and dusk began to fall,
 the Stargazing Boy turned his back on the girl,
 ran up to the top of his hill,
 and chose the most beautiful star of all.

The Prince has fallen asleep in the armchair. Amalia covers him with a blanket, caresses his head. The Prince wakes up.

PRINCE: What's the time?

AMALIA: What do you mean, what's the time?

PRINCE: I'm going to be late! I'm already late!
 What's the time?

AMALIA: I don't know, let me just ask the cuckoo...

PRINCE: There's no time for that! I'm already late!
 I fell asleep! I must dash! I've got to find
 the most beautiful princess in all the world,
 who... who... *(he recites the words, as
 if it were a lesson he had learned off by
 heart)* whose hair is golden like the rays of
 the rising sun, whose eyes sparkle like the
 waters of the purest lake, whose laughter is
 like the tinkling of a hundred tiny bells...

Amalia laughs

PRINCE: Did I say something funny?

AMALIA: Come on, do you seriously think that that
 princess has been waiting for you since the
 beginning of time? She doesn't even know
 what colour your eyes are, she doesn't
 know the sound of your voice, she has
 never dreamt of you! Surely she belongs to
 someone else now, and has been his for a
 long, long time!

PRINCE: What nonsense are you saying, you
 grubby-faced little witch? You take that back!

AMALIA: Why don't you stay here with me instead?
(she tries to bewitch him) Come, taste my cherries, wash yourself in the waters of my well, take a rest beside my stove!

PRINCE: I've no time for all of that! I have to find the most beautiful princess in the whole world, whose...

AMALIA: Well, if you really want it that badly!

Amalia changes into a golden-haired, willowy princess, slender as a reed. In her hand she is holding what will later be the Princess puppet, speaking in a mincing, high-pitched voice.

What would you like me to do? Shall I laugh for you? Did you like that? Shall I dance for you? Did you like that? Shall I bend and sway in the wind, like a reed? Did you like that? Shall I preen and prance with a diamond crown on my head? Shall I giggle and titter with my ladies? Read fashion magazines?

PRINCE: Scheming little witch! You don't imagine I'm going to believe a word you say after this?

AMALIA: But whyyyy...?

PRINCE: Everything about you is fake! Your hair is fake, your laugh is fake, even your story is fake, every word you speak is fake! Go on, up you get on that cherry tree, put your apron on, hang cherries from your ears, muss up your hair, or else!

Amalia changes back, takes up her own puppet. She begins to plead.

AMALIA: Please stay a little longer...

PRINCE: I've no intention of staying! How do I know you're not going to change me into a toad, or a pail? I'm not staying here a moment longer!

AMALIA: But I... I'd make you pie, filled with sweet berries from the woods... and fragrant herb teas... I promise I won't do any more magic, if you don't want me to... I'll do anything you ask... just stay!

PRINCE: I don't want to see you ever again!

The Prince turns and leaves.

Scene 4

Amalia is alone. She has put down the puppet. She is crying. Her tears turn into white pebbles as they fall, rolling everywhere. Amalia creates a path out of the pebbles, builds a castle. Then she cries herself to sleep.

AMALIA: (song)

**Snow-white mist at the end of the world
Far above the snow-white fields
From the top of the snow-white mountain
Snow-white pebbles tumble and roll.**

**On the peak of the snow-white mountain
Lives a woman who weeps for the world
Snow-white comes up to your knees
In her cottage at the end of the world**

**Wanderer, who strays her way
Will never find his way home**

**The weeping woman is asleep
Her dreams cannot be sweet
From her weeping, pretty eyes
Snow-white pebbles tumble and fall.**

As Amalia slowly rises, a star-shaped flower emerges from the ground. Amalia holds it in her palm and suddenly sits up; they begin to talk. We do not hear the flower's words.

Well, and who might you be? How did you get here?
 What's your name? I beg your pardon?
 Oh, you don't have to start crying...look,
 you've turned my palms yellow!
 You're not dyer's chamomile? Then you must be...
 Corn Chamomile? Do you like it?
 Or do you prefer Mayweed? You want to change it?
 Pardon? Oh that's alright then!

Scene 5

Amalia jumps up with the giggling flower, they start to dance, but as the pebbles roll hither and thither beneath their feet, they slip and one of the spotted mugs breaks.

AMALIA: I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm so sorry! Are you alright, Hugo? I'll help you, just a minute....! Corn Chamomile! Don't go anywhere!

Amalia puts the flower down in a corner and tries to put the pieces of the broken mug back together again. She doesn't succeed, so she resorts to magic.

I think we can safely say that this day began really, really badly. Another grey, quiet, rainless Thursday. A typical nettle-tea day.

Amalia "plays puppets" with the mugs, she makes them speak.

"Oh, no, no, Amalia, you can't mean that! Seriously?" "I hate nettle tea!" "I hate it too, I hate it too!" "If you pour nettle tea into me, I'm going to jump off the dresser!" "Me too, me too!" Oh come on, Hugo! Casimir! Louie! Take it or leave it, like it or lump it! Nettle tea for a broken heart. For dark-grey sadness, purple sorrow, sulphur-yellow bitterness, nettle tea is the best. It's no good trying to get away, Louie, you're getting some too.

As she prepares to pour the tea, she notices a slip of paper inside the Louie mug.

What's this? A telegram? A witch-telegram! It says: "To be delivered into Amalia's own hands, Moon field, Cross-eye Street 3. (She reads and reflects) "Prince unhappy, STOP." What do they mean, unhappy? "Find a way to help him, STOP. But take care, magic spells will be of no use in this instance, STOP." No use? What do they mean, no use? And what do they mean, unhappy? He's found his golden-haired princess, and they're living beyond the Three Waterfalls, happily ever after.

She slowly sips her nettle tea. Taps her feet angrily. A long silence.

What shall I wear? Don't laugh, Hugo, this is important! I can't help anyone wearing mustard yellow or ivy green!

She is changing the colours of her dress - by projecting colours onto it.

Purple makes me look old... brown is boring... gentian blue doesn't suit me, unfortunately... Fiery flaming red? Does that suit me? Hugo? Casimir? What do you think? What do you mean, it's too conspicuous? I can't go there wearing camouflage! How about cyclamen? Ok, ok, that was a joke. Something with a pattern then. But not checks, I hate checks. Stripes? What do you mean, stripes make me look fat! Louie! That was unexpected, coming from you! And flowery makes me look like my grandmother's wall-hangings... Spots are the best after all... Alright, ready to go. Louie, Corn Chamomile, you're coming with me. I hate travelling alone.

She plants Corn Chamomile into the Louie mug, and they set off.

Scene 6

The scene changes, we are in the castle. There is an infinite, melancholy silence. The Princess and the Prince stare straight before them, unsmiling: porcelain dolls among porcelain figurines. No breathing, no movement, no sound.

AMALIA: Pst! Quiet as you can! Careful! Louie, get ready for the famous tinkling laughter of the most beautiful princess in the world. Hello! Is there anyone there? Hello! It seems there's no one in.

The Prince makes a slight movement.

There he is! It's him! We're in the right place after all. What do you think, Louie, do you think he's still angry with me? Is he even going to recognize me? He might not even recognize me... He's been living happily with his princess and has long forgotten everything... He probably doesn't remember the story of the Stargazing Boy either... What if he isn't pleased to see me? How sad his eyes are...

Amalia steps closer to the Prince, but the Prince turns away from her. This happens a couple of times. He doesn't see her, because he's under a curse.

Good day to you! What a coincidence! I was on my way to pick some wild pears, as I'd run out of wild pear jam, and I was so busy looking for wild pear trees that I did not notice I'd wandered beyond the Three Waterfalls! At first I thought I was lost, but then I saw you and that set my mind at rest, I thought perhaps you might remember me... No? You don't recognize me? Never mind. Can you tell me which road leads towards Moon Field? No? Have you gone deaf? I'm sorry, I meant no offence. You're obviously still angry with me because of what I said about the princess. It's really quite ill-mannered of you, you know, to

ignore me like this, to refuse to even look at me! Or are you blind perhaps? Can't see a thing? Or is it just me you can't see? He can't see me. Why can't he see me? Just looks straight through me. Ignores me, takes no notice of me.

Amalia turns herself into a ladybird, with the help of a puppet. They still can't talk, but at least he can feel her touch. We can hear Amalia's words, but the prince can't.

PRINCE: A ladybird!

AMALIA: Finally.

PRINCE: *(to the Princess)* Look, dearest, a real seven-spotted ladybird! Come outside, have a look at it! Please!

AMALIA: Hey, don't start showing me off! It's you I want to help, not her!

PRINCE: See, ladybird, I found my princess, her golden hair shines like the rays of the rising sun...

AMALIA: I'm not going to help you either. You're not unhappy, at all.

PRINCE: Her eyes are like the waters of the purest lake, but I can't see anything in them except myself! And she does not speak, she does not laugh, she doesn't do anything...

AMALIA: She doesn't laugh? Is it my fault that she doesn't laugh? No it's not. Nothing to do with me. You should have stayed with me.

PRINCE: Don't go yet, ladybird! Do you know, your spotted wings remind me of someone...

AMALIA: Reminds him, reminds him, well of course it does!

PRINCE: I wish I could hear her voice just one more time!

Amalia turns herself into a nightingale (change of puppet), and begins to sing. The ladybird stays with the prince.

PRINCE: Dearest! Listen! Come outside and listen to the birdsong!

AMALIA: It's no good you calling her, she won't hear. I'm singing for you, not her!

PRINCE: It's no good my calling her, she doesn't hear me. And yet I have roamed the whole wide world for her, braved every peril, endured every hardship, and dreamed the most wonderful dreams about her. I did not stray off the path, I did not tarry a single moment...

AMALIA: Except when you stopped at my cottage for a cup of tea...

PRINCE: Except when I stopped at her cottage for a cup of tea...

Amalia turns herself into a cat (change of puppet), rubs her head against him, purrs.

PRINCE: Here, puss! And who are you? Come here, don't be afraid! ... Would you like a biscuit?

AMALIA: I hate biscuits.

PRINCE: These are my favourite kind.

AMALIA: As you can clearly tell from the size of your belly...

PRINCE: Luckily I never get fat, I can eat as much as I like.

AMALIA: You must be really bored.

PRINCE: The truth is, I am really bored here.

AMALIA: You wouldn't be bored with me. You could help me count blades of grass, look after sleeping animals, make wild pear jam.

PRINCE: Even counting blades of grass would be more fun than sitting here in the palace.

AMALIA: You don't have to keep sitting here.

PRINCE: Actually, I don't have to keep sitting here.

AMALIA: You could learn to make wild pear jam.

PRINCE: I could ask the princess whether she fancied making wild pear jam.

AMALIA: You could plant flowers.

PRINCE: Somebody could plant flowers here. Or something...

AMALIA: You could try making her laugh.

PRINCE: What I wouldn't give to make her laugh, just once!

AMALIA: Why don't you try taking the cat inside?

PRINCE: Maybe I'll try taking the cat inside.

The Prince goes inside, taking the cat puppet with him. The Princess screams and begins to sneeze, the cat comes flying out of the palace.

Scene 7

Amalia is left alone.

AMALIA: (song)

**I can fly among clouds in the sunshine
 I can paint with the petals of a flower
 I can fall to the ground like a shower
 I can tell a story from the middle
 I can land on your hand like a bird
 I know a hundred magic spells by heart
 What I don't know, my sad prince
 Is how to help you without magic?
 I can make infusions out of herbs
 Every spot on every spotted mug is my friend
 I can lie in the grass for hours
 And I've got spiders living behind my dresser
 I can make jokes in squirrel language
 I know exactly how many blades of grass grow in the field
 What I don't know, my sad prince
 Is how to help you without magic?**

Amalia looks around, begins to take various things out of her bag. She pulls out flowers, shrubs, saplings. Dusk is falling. First she lights a match, but it burns her fingers. She rummages around for a candle, a tea-light from her bag, but she doesn't manage to light them with the match. She is about to use magic to light them, but then remembers she isn't allowed. She takes out a spoon, and makes a call.

Hello, this is Amalia. Could you send a couple of fireflies to the Princess' castle? What do you mean, what candle- power? I don't know, twenty, say? What business is it of yours, what I'm doing? I'm planting flowers. Thank you. Typical.

The fireflies arrive.

Come on, Louie. First we'll find the best place for the saplings. We'll put the cherry tree in the middle, ok? Now for the flowers. Their petals are all furled up, but you'll see, come the morning, they'll all be blooming.

As she plants the flowers one by one, she names them.

The barberry goes here. And we'll find a place for the globe flower... and look, Louie! The sun is rising! The field eryngo is flowering!

Scene 8

Holding a mug of coffee, the Prince comes out into the garden. We see Amalia in puppet form again, but she has changed out of all recognition. Her face is pale, her hair has turned grey, her back is bent.

PRINCE: Dearest! Come outside! Hurry!

AMALIA: The sedum here... beside the wild ginger...

Amalia takes Corn Chamomile out of her pocket. In the meanwhile, the Princess has come out into the garden.

AMALIA: And you're staying here as well, dear Corn Chamomile... Will this be a good place for you, here beside the marsh marigold?

PRINCE: Do you see?

PRINCESS: Corn chamomile?

The Princess begins to laugh, dancing around the plants.

Corn chamomile! Corn chamomile!

AMALIA: See, Louie, no magic needed. Come, let's go. Let's be on our way.

PRINCESS: Corn chamomile! Corn chamomile! Oh! Where are you going? You're going already? You're going to leave them all here? Like it or not, you're staying here for a cup of tea, and that's that. Do you like tea?

PRINCE: Tea.

AMALIA: I like tea.

PRINCESS: And what kind of tea would you like?

AMALIA: Thyme tea.

PRINCE: *(in chorus with Amalia)* Thyme tea.

PRINCESS: You both said it at the same time!
(she giggles)
I'll bring the tea!

Scene 9

(both ill at ease)

PRINCE: *(to Amalia, embarrassedly)*
A... witch used to live at No.3,
Cross-eye Street. I had thyme tea at her
cottage once.

AMALIA: *(Talking about the plants and flowers all the while.)*
These need to be taken inside in winter.

PRINCE: She was the prettiest of all witches.
Her thick red hair was teased by the
wind, she sang when the sun shone
down on her, and when she rode her
broomstick, even the clouds turned to
stare after her.

AMALIA: You might get a couple of cherries on
the cherry tree in its second year.

PRINCE: She used to count the blades of grass
every single morning, and she used to
tuck up all the animals
sleeping their winter-sleep.

- AMALIA: You don't need to worry about the evergreens, they're all winter hardy.
- PRINCE: One time, a prince dropped by her cottage, and the witch told him a story about the Stargazing Boy, but the prince did not wait to hear the end of the story, he was in such a hurry to find the most beautiful princess in the world.
- AAMALIA: All the flowerbeds must be weeded one day before full moon.
- PRINCE: The prince braved every peril, endured every hardship, and finally won the princess' hand. But he cannot be happy until he finds out the end of the story...
- AMALIA: *(to the prince)* Sometimes not even the storyteller knows the end of the story. *(back to the flowers)* You must take care with the primroses, they cannot stand even the slightest bit of frost.
- PRINCE: Do you know the story of the Stargazing Boy?
- AMALIA: *(looks the prince in the eye)* Maybe.
- PRINCE: Stargazing Boy called down a star from the sky every single night. He would keep staring at the chosen star, with bright circles of light around his pupils.
- AMALIA: The fallen star would sparkle for one last time before it burnt itself out, and no one was ever able to find it again.
- PRINCE: But one time, at dusk, on his star-searching travels, the Boy came upon a red-haired girl with extraordinary eyes.

- AMALIA: She lived in a cottage in the left-hand corner of the woods.
- PRINCE: She collected herbs to brew for tea, and dried them up in her attic.
- AMALIA: And she had been waiting since the beginning of time for the Boy to call upon her unexpectedly.
- PRINCE: How does the story end?
- AMALIA: How should I know?
- PRINCESS: *(Just her voice, from inside the palace.)*
Tea's almost ready!
Does anyone want sugar?
- AMALIA: When the sun went down and the sky began to turn grey, Stargazing boy turned his back on the girl, ran up to the top of his hill, and chose the most beautiful star, which resembled the girl as much as she resembled it. He trembled, more than ever before, and kept calling the star, not silently, as he usually did, but aloud, calling it, pleading with it, but the star remained unmoving up in the sky all night long. Around him, the lights were fading, the crescent of the moon was beginning to fray when the autumn star could hold out no longer and began to plummet from the sky. Stargazing Boy had never seen such a dive! With its sparkling arc and silver light it seemed as if it were dancing across the sky... The Boy just stared and stared, and did not notice that the woods, the trees, the shrubs around him had all become covered in stardust, and his eyes had filled with stardust too. He fell into a deep sleep, and woke only when the sun

had long gone down again. He remembered the star, and thinking of the star reminded him of the girl's eyes, and he ran to the river, across the mountains, but when he reached the river there was no one there beneath the willows, just the soft earth permeated with stardust, and in the place where the girl had been, in the grass, he found a star-shaped, tiny flower.

PRINCE: It couldn't have ended any other way,
could it?

*Amalia shakes her head and hands him the corn chamomile.
A star-shaped, small flower.*

That witch from the left-hand corner of the woods... Do you know her? Tell her I said hello, if you should come across her... I would be so happy if she paid me a visit sometime...

AMALIA: I don't think she'll have the time, you know how busy she is. Counting blades of grass, collecting drops of dew, making wild pear jam... It takes a lot of time...

PRINCE: Yes... of course... that's understandable...

AMALIA: And she very rarely leaves her cottage... You never know when someone might drop in, needing a story...

Throughout the scene the puppeteers slowly lower their puppets, communicating with each other rather than through the puppets. At the end, Amalia kisses the Prince's forehead, takes up her old woman-puppet, and leaves.

PRINCESS: (comes in with a tray) Here's the tea!
Has she gone? Where did she go?
I even brought biscuits...

Scene 10

Amalia is at home, alone. Without a puppet, worn out and heartbroken. Her hair is grey, her back is bent. She looks around for her mugs. They have disappeared. There is only Louie left, who accompanied her on her journey, whom she is holding in her hand.

AMALIA: Hugo, Casimir, we're back! Where are you? Philip! Herbert! Clement! Have you hidden somewhere? I know, I know, you're angry with me for being away for so long... Come on, stop sulking! I'm going to put the kettle on for tea, then we'll take the cobwebs down together, and do a proper spring clean. We might even whitewash the walls, and paint coloured spots everywhere. What do you say? *(no answer)* You're not going to say anything? Alright, I'll clean the place by myself, then. I've nothing else to do, after all. I'm all alone in the whole wide world, and even you won't talk to me, and the rain is avoiding me too. I'm going to have to cry me a bucketful of water, so I can have a wash.

A pattering sound, tentative at first, then growing stronger. It begins to rain, like in the beginning, but the raindrops are coloured. During the rain song Amalia sheds her dusty, tattered cloak, she splashes about happily in the rain.

RAIN: *(song)*

Drip! Drop! Plip! Plop!
Taps on the door
Beats on the windows
Splashes into the well
Drums in your ears
Plops onto the ground
From your tiny palm
Chases dreams
From your sleepy eyes
Drip! Drop! Plip! Plop!
I am waiting for you in the field to whirl in the wind

I am waiting for us to giggle together
I am waiting for you to take shelter
beneath the willow trees
I am waiting for us to fly around the woods
To watch the widening circles in the lake
To watch your eyes light up with happiness
Look outside, your windows are spattered
Look outside, all the rain, all the storms
are waiting out there
Look outside, see how the shower of rain is
a many- hued curtain
Look outside, for it is raining just for you.

AMALIA: What is this? Welcome, rain!
 I've been waiting for you for so long!
 From now on, I'm going to play with you
 whenever you come, I promise. I will not
 sulk, I will not whine, I will not laze
 around! I will be on my feet at dawn,
 planting colourful flowers in people's
 gardens.

Flowers shoot up everywhere. Amalia splashes around in the rain, the grey is being washed out of her hair, she no longer has the puppet: she is growing younger.

I will plant roses beneath the windows of
 those suffering from unrequited love,
 chestnut trees in playgrounds. Marigolds in
 the gardens of hospitals, bluebells on the
 balconies of grannies waiting for their
 grandchildren, forget-me-nots on every
 grave... And after the rain, when greens are
 greener, yellows are yellower, and reds
 are redder, when blue blends into purple,
 orange into pink, colours-that-never-existed
 will be born of their union.

(Song, to the music of the rain-song)

I sometimes like to drink afternoon tea
Collect secrets into spotted mugs
Get drenched in coloured showers

**Cool wild pear cordial with ice
I like to go visiting dreams
I like to know exactly how many blades of
grass in the field
But best of all I like waiting for visitors
And if they come, to tell them a tale.**

**I like to laugh loudly at old jokes
Try on clothes in front of an audience
Curl up in tatty old armchairs
Call the rain to come and dance in the
morning
Find a lost ladder
Think up a name for a new flower
But best of all I like waiting for visitors
Come, and I'll tell you a tale.**

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