



Directed by Károly Makk Written by Péter Bacsó Based on the novel by Tibor Déry Original Music by András Mihály Cinematography by János Tóth Film Editing by György Sívó

Lili Darvas...Az öregasszony Mari Töröcsik...Luca Iván Darvas...János Erzsi Orsolya...Irén László Mensáros...Az orvos





Cannes Film Festival 1971: the film Won Jury Prize and Töröcsik won Best Actress

KÁROLY MAKK (22 December 1925, Berettyóújfalu, Hungary) directed 37 theatrical and TV films, among them *Hét* Pesten és Budán, Egy/A Long Weekend in Pest and Buda (2003), The Gambler/A Játékos (1997), Szeressük egymást, gyerekek! (1996), Magyar rekviem/Hungarian Requiem (1990), Lily in Love/ Játszani kell (1984), Die Jäger/Deadly Game (1982), Egymásra nézve/Another Way (1982), A Téglafal mögött/Behind



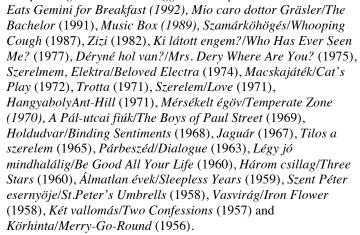
the Brick Wall (1980), Két történet a félmúltból (1980), Philemon és Baucis (1978), Drága kisfiam (1978), Egy Erkölcsös éjszaka/A Very Moral Night (1977), Macskajáték/Cat's Play (1972), Szerelem/Love (1971), Isten és ember elött/Before God and Man (1968), Elveszett paradicsom/Lost Paradise (1962), A Harminckilences dander/The 39th Brigade (1959), A 9-es kórterem/Hospital No. 9 (1955), A Képzett beteg (1952) and Gyarmat a föld alatt (1951).

TIBOR DÉRY (Deutsch, 18 October 1894, Budapest, Austria-Hungary—18 August 1977, Budapest). According to Wikipedia: "In his early years he was a supporter of communism, but after being dispelled from the ranks of the Hungarian Communist Party in 1953 he started writing satire on the communist regime in Hungary. Georg Lukács praised Déry as being 'the greatest depicter of human beings of our time'. In 1918, Déry became an active party member in the liberal republic under Mihály Károlyi. Less than a year later however, Béla Kun and his Communist Party rose to power, proclaiming the Hungarian Soviet Republic and exiling Déry. He only returned to Hungary in 1934, having lived in Austria, France and Germany in the meantime. Nevertheless, during the right wing Horthy regime he was imprisoned several times, once because he translated André Gide's Retour de L'U.R.S.S.. In this period, he wrote his greatest novel, The Unfinished Sentence, a 1200-page epic story about the life of the young aristocrat Lorinc Parcen-Nagy who gets into contact with the working classes in Budapest during a period of strike. In 1953, Déry was expelled from the Communist Party during a 'cleansing' of Hungarian literature. In 1956 he was a spokesman during the uprising, alongside Georg Lukács and Gyula Háy. In the same year, he wrote Niki: The Story of a Dog, a fable about the arbitrary restrictions on human life in Stalinist Hungary. Because of his part on the uprising, he was sentenced to prison for 9 years, but was released in 1960.

LILI DARVAS (10 April 1906, Budapest, Austria-Hungary—23 July 1974, NYC) had a distinguished career on the Budapest stage in the 1920s and 1930s. She and her husband, playwright and novelist Ferenc Molnár (1878-1952), came to the U.S. to escape the Nazis in 1936. She returned to acting in 1951, doing a lot of

American television. Her final role was in *Szerelem* (1971). She appeared in two European films before fleeing the Nazis, *Camille/The Fate of a Coquette* (1926) and *Tagebuch der Geliebten/Affairs of Maupassant* (1935). He next acting job was on "Cosmopolitan Theatre" in 1951. She also appeared on "Hallmark Hall of Fame," "Danger," "Armstrong Circle Theater, "Kraft Television Theater, "General Electric Theater," "Good Year Television Playhouse," "Westinghouse Studio One," "The Twilight Zone," "The Nurses," "The Man from U.N.C.L.E." and other series. She also appeared in *Cimarron* (1960) and *Meet Me in Las Vegas* (1956). Her husband's most popular play was *Liliom*, first staged in 1909, translated into English in 1921, and made into a musical—*Carousel*—by Rogers and Hammerstein in 1945.

MARI TÖRÖCSIK (23 November 1935, Pely, Hungary) has appeared in over 120 films and tv series, the most recent of which is *Le Valli della paura/The Valley of Fear* (2009, now filming). Some of the others are *Eszter hagyatéka* (2008), *Töredék* (2007), *Noé bárkája/Noah's Ark* (2007), *Egy Hét Pesten és Budán/A Long Weekend in Pest and Buda* (2003), *Sobri* (2002). *Sunshine/A Napfény íze* (1999), *Le Violon de Rothschild/Rothschild's Violin* (1996), *Hoppá/Whoops* (1993), *A Skorpió megeszi az ikreket reggelire/Scorpio*



Iván Darvas (14 June 1925, Behynce, Czechoslovakia—3 June 2007, Budapest, Hungary), much like the character he plays in *Szerelem*, spent time in prison and had to work as a laborer between 1959 and 1963. He has been in 85 theatrical and, since 1974, TV films and mini-series, among them, *Micimackó* (2005, tv), *A Hídember/The Bridgeman* (2002), *Jakob the Liar/ Jakob le menteur* (1999), *Napraforgó* (1974), *Derzhis za oblaka/Hold on to the Clouds* (1971), *Szerelem /Love* (1971), *Die Gefrorenen Blitze/Frozen Flashes* (1967), *Tanulmány a nökröl* (1967), *Kárpáthy Zoltán* (1966), *Hideg napok/Cold Days* (1966), *Tilos a szerelem* (1965), *Denevér/The Golden Head* (1965), *Igen/Yes* (1964), *Mese a 12 találatról* (1956), *Budapesti tavasz* (1955), *Gázolás* (1955), *Rokonok* (1954), *Erkel* (1952) and *Beszterce ostroma* (1948).

The Friday Circle, Hungarian Studies in London: Szerelem

Students and teaching staff watched Károly Makk's 1971 film *Szerelem*, winner of the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival that year, and arguably one of the greatest Central European films of all time. Two short stories by Tibor Déry (1896-1977) form the

basis of *Szerelem*, for which Déry also wrote the screenplay. 'Szerelem', written in 1956, follows the encounter between B. and his wife, upon B.'s release from prison after a seven-year stretch. The reader observes B.'s hesitant reactions to life outside, as well as his anxiety about re-uniting his wife, and seeing his son for the first time. 'Két asszony' portrays the tense but close relationship between Luca and her mother-in-law, an elderly lady of Austrian origin, now bedridden. Luca brings letters from János, her husband, and apparently a famous film director in the US, to the old lady who, while anticipating his return to Hungary, eagerly interweaves the details of her son's fantastic life with her own memories. It is only after she dies, and in the last sentence, that we discover János is in prison.

At the age of 62, Déry was imprisoned in 1957 for his activities prior to and during the 1956 Uprising, and was released in 1960 in the first post-1956 amnesty, when he wrote 'Két asszony', based on the letters Déry's wife wrote to his mother during his imprisonment. Like the old lady in *Szerelem*, Déry's mother was of Austrian origin, and after he was allowed to publish again in 1962, he published their correspondence under the title Liebe Mutter! Younger followers of writers who, like Déry, were deemed polgári or individualista, also found it difficult to publish in the 1950s, and essentially stayed on the margins until the 1970s.

Makk

In an interview on the Second Run DVD of *Szerelem*, Makk recalls that when he told Déry in the early 1960s of his plans to combine the two stories into one film, Déry replied, 'Te egy reménytelen csacsi fiú vagy, egy *young angry man!*' The film could only be made following the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, which Makk describes as a decisive turn, at least in terms of cultural policy in Hungary. He also expands on the prison subtext: it was only once permission was finally given 'from above' that the studio director, who had served time inside with 'culture dictator' György Aczél, could accept the film. In the two weeks following its first screening, the wives of high-ranking commanders complained to their husbands for sitting on *Szerelem* until then, for they too had undergone the same distress while their men had been in prison....

Makk gathered the unparalleled ensemble of Lili Darvas as the elderly lady, Mari Törőcsik as Luca, and Iván Darvas as János; and chose János Tóth as cinematographer. Tóth's method of blending past and present (in Makk's words, 'múlt és jelen külön is legyen, de együtt is szóljon') was to use flashbacks which, as our guest Dr Cesar Ballaster noted, was a popular technique throughout the Eastern Bloc in the 1970s. Flashbacks demystify collective memory by means of individual memory, and introduce uncertainty as a counter to the monologic narratives of the Partystate. Such an emphasis on subjectivity, and the juxtaposition of shots reminiscent of black and white photographs, create a dreamlike, timeless quality, which, as the old lady tires, becomes further and further removed from reality. Luca is fired from her teaching job because of her husband's incarceration, while the old lady dreams of her son's life in a French castle on the highest mountain in New York. After her death János, who has until now been present largely in his absence, is released from prison and returns to the flat, which his wife now shares with co-tenants.

When *Szerelem* was awarded the Cannes Jury Prize in 1971, one of the jurors apparently told Makk that although the film, and in particular the actors' virtuoso performances, had

greatly moved him, János's incarceration required explanation, for it was highly unlikely that such an individual would have committed a serious crime. It is precisely the pointlessness of the prison sentence which constitutes one of the major narratives of the film: János's release is never explained, neither to him, nor the viewer. In the taxi on his way home, the driver asks, 'Politikai?', a question János need not answer.

Discussion included the ways in which cinema placed broader historical concerns within ensemble dramas of individual lives, beginning with *Szerelem* and continuing throughout the 70s and 80s, and whether the viewer can pinpoint the era depicted in the film. Our conclusion was that, despite the use of terms such as kitelepítés (forced relocation, usually from cities to the countryside) and társbérlők (co-tenants), which would suggest the early 1950s, one cannot say for certain that *Szerelem* was not a contemporaneous document of Hungary in the late 1960s. Indeed, the trauma suffered by the characters could easily have taken place at any point in the interwar years. In any case, Makk and Tóth's deliberate transpositions of past and present undermine any attempts to tie the film to any specific point in time.

The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 (from Wikipedia):

The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 (Hungarian: 1956-os forradalom) was a spontaneous nationwide revolt against the Stalinist government of Hungary and its Soviet-imposed policies, lasting from 23 October until 10 November 1956. It began as a student demonstration which attracted thousands as it marched through central Budapest to the Parliament building. A student delegation entering the radio building in an attempt to broadcast its demands was detained. When the delegation's release was demanded by the demonstrators outside, they were fired upon by the State Security Police (ÁVH) from within the building. The news spread quickly and disorder and violence erupted throughout the capital.

The revolt spread quickly across Hungary, and the government fell. Thousands organized into militias, battling the State Security Police (ÁVH) and Soviet troops. Pro-Soviet communists and ÁVH members were often executed or imprisoned, as former prisoners were released and armed. Impromptu councils wrested municipal control from the Communist Party, and demanded political changes. The new government formally disbanded the ÁVH, declared its intention to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact and pledged to re-establish free elections. By the end of October, fighting had almost stopped and a sense of normality began to return.

After announcing a willingness to negotiate a withdrawal of Soviet forces, the Politburo changed its mind and moved to crush the revolution. On 4 November, a large Soviet force invaded Budapest and other regions of the country. Hungarian resistance continued until 10 November. An estimated 2,500 Hungarians died, and 200,000 more fled as refugees. Mass arrests and denunciations continued for months thereafter. By January 1957, the new Soviet-installed government had suppressed all public opposition. These Soviet actions alienated many Western Marxists, yet strengthened Soviet control over Central Europe, cultivating the perception that communism was both irreversible and monolithic.

Public discussion about this revolution was suppressed in Hungary for over 30 years, but since the thaw of the 1980s it has been a subject of intense study and debate. At the inauguration of the Third Hungarian Republic in 1989, 23 October was declared a national holiday.

from Hungarian Cinema From Coffee House to Multiplex. John Cunningham. Wallflower Press London & New York 2004.

It is no doubt a coincidence that 1896, the year of the first film screening in Hungary, was also the year of that nation's millennium celebration. The year 896 is commemorated as the year in which King Árpád, at the head of his seven tribes, marched into the Carpathian Basin and established the Magyar nation in their historic homeland. In fact is highly unlikely that this is an accurate date; however, this was a minor consideration as Hungarians celebrated their millennium in style, with the exhibitions, parades, displays and concerts so typical of the triumphant nation-states of Europe and North America around this time. At its centre, in Budapest, was the Millennium Exhibition, which included, among its many wonders and spectacles. Edison's fabulous new invention—the Kinetoscope.

By the late nineteenth century, Budapest had grown into a major European city, resplendent with its wide boulevards, fine buildings, museums, galleries and parks—the second jewel in the crown of the Dual Monarchy....

The 1970s and 1980s: The Transitional Years

If the 1960s had been a decade of triumph for Hungarian cinema, the following years, up to the 'system change' of 1989, were a period when uncertainty, experimentation, alternating bouts of entrenchment and openness all came together to produce a confusing transitional flux, out of which it is very difficult to define any overarching patterns. All the major names are still present: Makk, Máriássy and Fábri from the 'old guard'; Jancsó, Szabó, Bascó, Gaál and Mészáros form the 1960s. To this illustrious gallery came new emerging talents, fresh from the Film Academy or, as with Sándor Sára, making the move from cameraman to director.

The studios were once more re-organised, first in 1971 and then again, more comprehensively, in 1976. The four-studio system, which arose in the 1960s, was slimmed down to just twothe Budapest Film Studio (run by István Nemeskürty) and the Hunnia Feature Film Studio (under the auspices of János Soprani, then Miklós Köllö). This re-organisation entailed a higher degree of autonomy for filmmakers, including greater control over their choice of project and its financing, which meant, for example, that distribution networks could now be involved in finance. In 1976 this set-up was again re-jigged and two new studios were created— Dialog (whose head was Antál Bogács) and Objectiv (headed by József Marx). 'The work of the studio leaders was assisted by an Artistic Council' (Kovács 1994:203) and they became full members of the Mafilm management, the organisation which still continued to oversee and co-ordinate production. The four were soon joined by the Társulás Studio specialising in documentaries, headed first by István Darday and then István Schlett. Although these organisational steps meant that Hungarian studios approached the western model even more closely, the big difference remained that they were still state funded. The Béla Balázs Studio continued its work, maintaining its artistic independence.

The changes in studio organisation could be seen as the industry's response to the New Economic Mechanism (NEM, introduced on 1 January 1968), though to what extent the industry reacted directly to the new measures is a matter of debate. What we can be certain of is that the introduction of the NEM was a continuation of the various societal reforms and adjustments already introduced. Nigel Swain explains: "Central planning in quantitative units was abandoned entirely, enterprises were

instructed to maximize profits, and enterprise guidance was in the form of a complex system of indirect indicators, predominantly taxation and subsidisation, which performed a role akin to Smith's 'invisible hand', but with an explicit socialist intent."

The state would now play a more limited role in the economic life of the nation:...From 1972 on, the reformers came under increasing pressure from Moscow to re-centralise and in 1974 hard-liners took control of the Political Committee although this did not last. It is important to stress that these developments did not necessarily affect the Hungarian film industry in any major direct manner. By this time, the industry enjoyed a large degree of autonomy, and the continuing policy of government subsidy ensured an industry that was, to some extent immune from economic fluctuations. By this time there was also the consideration that Hungarian cinema, with its high international profile and reputation was, in some ways, a special case....

Overall, as the 1970s led into the 1980s, Hungarians became less and less sure about the society they lived in. The relative economic prosperity brought about by the various reforms, sometimes grouped together under the vague rubric of 'Goulash Socialism', started to be eroded and although the Party and the State were not as obtrusive as they were in some other Eastern Bloc countries, Hungary remained within the Soviet orbit: Soviet troops were still stationed within its borders and over time the freedoms which were granted seemed only to highlight the limit to which they could be taken. Most of all, Hungary was still a one-party state and no amount of concessions to small-scale individual enterprise could hide the fact that it was not a democracy in any meaningful sense of the word. Hungary may have been the 'happiest barracks in the world', to use the oftrepeated journalistic cliché, but to its people it was still chronically disadvantaged when compared to the West.

<u>Derek Malcolm, "Karoly Makk: Love" *The Guardian* 7 Sept 2000:</u>

Directors fighting seemingly insuperable odds often make their finest films. This was frequently true of the film-makers of eastern Europe, where the authorities took pride in supporting film but where there was also constant political censorship.

"It's dangerous," the great Polish director Andrzej Wajda once said, "but there are ways to get round political censorship. There are no ways to get round the censorship of money that you have in the west, which is much stronger."

Karoly Makk's *Love* did so with particular success. Makk had to wait five years before he could make *Love*, one of the most moving commentaries on life under political tyranny that I have ever seen.

The tyrant concerned was Rakosi, one of the last of the Russian puppets who ruled Hungary with a rod of iron and made political opponents disappear. One such prisoner is Janos, in jail on a trumped-up charge. His wife and sick mother await his return home.

His wife, in order to sustain the old lady, tells her that Janos is pursuing a career as a Hollywood director. She herself has lost her job because of her political beliefs. We never quite know whether the old lady believes her or not, or whether her tales of a glamorous childhood in Vienna are fantasy.

Finally, Janos is freed, and he travels home almost in dread of what he might find there.

Makk's haunting, atmospheric and beautifully performed film, brilliantly shot by Janos Toth, captures exactly the fear and uncertainty of the time. It is, above all, a treatise on how such times affect fidelity, faith, illusion, love. It deals specifically with Hungary but has an absolutely universal appeal.

Lily Darvas, in the role of the mother, is superb, and rightly won golden notices. But Mari Torocsik is also totally believable as the wife, as is Ivan Darvas as the sick and greying prisoner.

The film is tough as old boots and completely unsentimental, but catches precisely what its characters face and how they feel. But it is sometimes quite difficult to bear because of the nature of the truths it tells. During the prisoner's journey home, for instance, Makk and his actor express perfectly not just the joy of freedom but the fear of finding that those he loves have forgotten or somehow freed themselves from him.

Makk did not make such an outstanding film again, though he was never anything but a capable director. Perhaps it is true sometimes that a film-maker has one classic in him and no more than one, in which everything he wishes to say is said almost perfectly and in a way it is impossible to repeat.

3 x 3 @ AKAG

The two of us will present a series of three films by each of three directors on Thursday evenings next spring at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. We'll have one booklet for the whole series with notes on each director and film. Otherwise, we'll more or less follow the format we've established at the Market Arcade Tuesday screenings (which will also continue through Spring 2009).

JEAN RENOIR

February 5 GRAND ILLUSION 1938 February 12 LA BÊTE HUMAINE 1938 February 19 RULES OF THE GAME 1939

FEDERICO FELLINI

March 5 I VITELLONI 1953 March 19 8 ½ 1963 March 26 JULIET OF THE SPIRITS 1965

YASIJIRO OZU

April 9 LATE SPRING 1949 April 16 TOKYO STORY 1953 April 23 FLOATING WEEDS 1959

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for the series schedule, annotations, links and updates: http://buffalofilmseminars.com
to subscribe to the weekly email informational notes, send an email to addto-list@buffalofilmseminars.com
for cast and crew info on any film: http://imdb.com/

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