

The Screen Anniversary Béla Balázs Symposium, 1 May 2009

The symposium, organized by Annette Kuhn (*Screen* co-editor and Professor of Film Studies at Queen Mary, University of London) and Erica Carter (Professor of German Studies, University of Warwick) took place at the Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies in the School of Advanced Studies, University of London. Speakers were Sabine Hake (University of Texas at Austin), Hanno Loewy (Jewish Museum, Hohenems, Austria), Erica Carter, (University of Warwick), Andrew Webber (University of Cambridge).

The aim of the event was to develop film-critical awareness of the work of the Hungarian-born film critic and theorist, Béla Balázs, by situating him as one of the writers of the interwar period trying to think through the aesthetics of a then-new medium; and also to open up discussion of the relevance of Balázs's work to understanding contemporary media aesthetics.

As one of the events celebrating *Screen's* 50th anniversary, the symposium was set up in conjunction with the forthcoming publication (by Berghahn Books, and part-funded by *Screen*), of the first-ever English translation from the original German of Balázs's two early works of film theory, *Visible Man* (1924) and *The Spirit of Film* (1930):
<http://www.berghahnbooks.com/title.php?rowtag=balazsearly>.

The new translation, by Rodney Livingstone with an introduction by Erica Carter, will recuperate Balázs for Anglophone film studies by situating his work within the wider context of his early film theory. Translated extracts were published, with an introduction, in *Screen*, vol.48, no.1 (2007):
<http://screen.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/48/1/91>

The morning session, on Balázs's intellectual geography, opened with a talk by Sabine Hake on Balázs, film folklore, and the re-enchantment of the modern masses, in which she drew on the intersection of film and fairytale in Balázs's theoretical and literary writings to argue for the centrality of *reception* in his work, and in early film theory generally, illustrating her argument with extracts from *Der blaue Licht/The Blue Light*, a 1932 film co-directed by Balázs and Leni Riefenstahl. Hanno Loewy followed with a talk on Balázs's explorations into time, space and film, contextualizing Balázs's writings on film within the considerable range of his literary output, and exploring the relationship between his aesthetics and the experience of time and space in cinema.

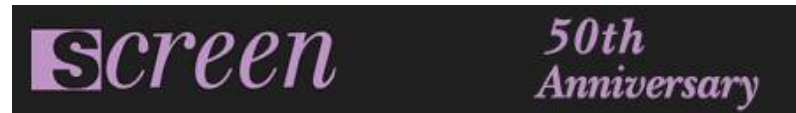
The afternoon session, on the body in contemporary film theory, opened with a screening of *Afgrunden/The Abyss* (Urban Gad, 1910), starring Asta Nielsen. Drawing in part on Balázs's writings on film acting in general and on Nielsen in particular, Erica Carter's talk on Balázs and the cosmopolitan body explored the contradictions surrounding Balázs's conception of the body on film, excavating from his early film theory an understanding of the body as a social entity and a vision of a poetic cosmopolitanism centred around the embodied experience of intersubjectivity on film. Andrew Webber followed with a talk on the cinematic body in film theory after Balázs, drawing on Balázs's theories on the cinematic body to consider the status of embodiments in current thinking about film.

The symposium concluded with a panel discussion, followed by a reception hosted by the Hungarian Cultural centre.

The organizers acknowledge the kind support of *Screen*; with the School of Languages, Linguistics and Film, Queen Mary, University of London; the Departments of German and Film and Television Studies and the Humanities Research Centre, University of Warwick; the Hungarian Cultural Centre; Berghahn Books; and the University of London Screen Studies Group.

Friday, 1 May 2009: *** [Registration now open](#) ***

The Screen Anniversary Béla Balázs Symposium



Venue:

Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies (IGRS), Stewart House, University of London

Speakers:

Sabine Hake, (University of Texas), Hanno Loewy, (Jewish Museum, Hohenems), Erica Carter, (University of Warwick), Andrew Webber (University of Cambridge)

The symposium's objective is to develop film-critical awareness of the work of the Hungarian-born film critic and theorist, Béla Balázs, by situating him as one of the writers of the interwar period trying to think through the aesthetics of the then-new medium; and also to open up discussion of the relevance of Balázs's work to understanding contemporary media aesthetics.

The Béla Balázs Symposium is one of a series of events celebrating the 50th anniversary of the journal *Screen*, and is scheduled to coincide with publication of the first-ever English translation from the original German (in Berghahn's *Film Europe* series, and part-funded by *Screen*) of Balázs's two early works of film theory, *Visible Man* (1924) and *The Spirit of Film* (1930). The new translation will recuperate Balázs for Anglophone film studies by situating his work within the wider context of his early film theory.

Conference Programme:

For the up-to-date conference programme please visit the [IGRS website](#), where you can also find information to the conference venue.

Registration Details:

Please see the [registration form in PDF format](#). Participants from outside the UK can e-mail the venue organiser at igrs@sas.ac.uk to request a credit card payment form.

Organised by Professor Annette Kuhn (School of Languages, Linguistics and Film, Queen Mary, University of London) and Professor Erica Carter (Department of German, University of Warwick). With the kind support of *Screen*, with Queen Mary, University of London, the University of Warwick and the University of London Screen Studies Group.

