

Jiayang Qin | Sichuān Dàxué (Sichuan University, P.R. of China), francesca@163.com

Possibilities

On Lukács' Theory of Genres*

Let us start with a contemporary Chinese advertisement. »Anything is possible« is the slogan of the worldwide famous Chinese sport brand Li Ning. Many people remember this advertisement precisely because of this absolute statement, and they can even see their favorite sport stars wearing uniforms of this brand at the Olympic games. But whether people, as they are watching sports games or exercising, think about the possibility of the realization of the ›Olympic spirit‹, is unknown. They never consider the essentiality and importance of the spirit behind every type of sports game.

A study of the possibility of a spirit or a phenomenon requires deep research into its background, prerequisites, form and audience. Only if a possibility is generally confirmed or stated, can the existence of an object become qualified and legitimated. Moreover, the purpose of studying ›possibility‹ is not only to collect static information about the background of certain processes at

›Possibility‹ is the prerequisite for the existence of an object. The study of ›possibility‹ is a consideration of its historical-philosophical background, cultural context and subjective issues. In his studies (especially in his works prior to 1918), Lukács discussed the ›possibility‹ of aesthetics and different genres of art, concerning the relationship between people, society, artworks and the lost totality. This article starts from ›possibility‹ in the works of Lukács, concentrates on the context of the development of different genres, and primarily draws on the example of drama in order to interpret and explain the role genres played in offering the solution to the break-up of the totality.

* With the Support of the Key Project of China Social Science Fund: »Bibliography and Research on Eastern European Marxist Aesthetics« (15ZDB022).

a given time in history, but also to anticipate prospective futures, regardless of whether these futures will be realized or gradually vanish over the course of time. Lukács mentions ›Möglichkeit‹ (›possibility‹) at the beginning of his *History of the Modern Drama*,¹ in *Soul and Form (Die Seele und die Formen)* and even in *History and Class Consciousness (Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein)*, in order to propose a resolution to the alienation of modern life and inquire into the truth of the historical-philosophical origin of everything. In other words, this is a study of ›possibility‹ or of possible prerequisites for the existence of genres and the legitimacy of ideas that Lukács worked on. In the discussion of young Lukács, there are two types of ›possibilities‹. Although Lukács did not clearly define them, his discussions on ›possibility‹ developed in accordance with metaphysical and historical-philosophical methodologies in his early works. One of them is the socio-historical ›possibility‹, which concentrates on the social-historical background of form, and the other is the internal ›possibility‹ of a specific artwork or a genre, which is also considered as content opposite to form. These two spheres are connected to each other but respectively characterized by their origin and function in the context of modern aesthetics.

1. What Makes ›Possibility‹ Possible?

To begin with, ›possibility‹ plays the role of indication for people who have the willingness, curiosity or even doubts about a phenomenon or an object. It already exists but is not mature and stable enough or else nobody would ever discuss the legitimacy of indicating possibilities. As we know, the more vivid and stronger an object is, the more criticism it is likely to receive because it is a much more conspicuous target than others. From this perspective, the study of ›possibility‹ is a symbol of the vitality of an object and also evidence of the controversies it faces. However, according to the Marxist view of contradiction, controversy or contradiction is actually considered to be the driving force of completion and perfection. In this way, we can conclude that ›possibility‹ proposed by Lukács allows access to his perfect aesthetics, or by extension, his theory of totality. ›Possibility‹ here includes existing situations in the social-historical background and those in the theory of artistic genres. In addition to that, of vital importance to

1 First publication in Hungarian 1911; Germ. translation: *Entwicklungsgeschichte des modernen Dramas* (1981). Since the text still has not been translated into English, in the following text I quote from the German edition.

his studies are the conditions in which ›possibility‹ can exist because the existence of ›possibility‹ can change with the conditions of its background.

Although the young Lukács did not convert to Marxism completely, his ideas shared much of same logic of historical materialism. Lukács did not clearly use terms such as social-historical background, but his thinking about the inner quality of art, genre, and also aesthetics, basically depends on historical materialism. Ever since his preoccupation with drama in his early years, Lukács' scholarship drew upon social events, issues and everyday life. Maybe he did not intend to perform a Marxist analysis, but his Marxist-like sociology has been an important part of his enduring influence.

Later Lukács began thinking about the world people lived in by resorting to another genre in order to try to find another vehicle for the people's wish for life, future as well as an exit out of traditional life. This genre was the essay.² Compared to drama and the epic, the essay is a more fragmented system of meaning. Lukács situates it in the context of its historical development. In the heyday of the essay, the world was facing modernity – a new order coming into being. One half of modernity consists of art and the other half of the eternal and immovable. Under such circumstances, the essay is lighter in form and looser in content, which is not only the reflection of the temporary nature of the world but also a means of everyday stress release for people who can enjoy a world of freedom, beauty and imagination in this manner.

Needless to say, Lukács' critique of the form of the novel has a more specific background – World War I. Lukács hated this war and suffered mentally from it. He wrote *The Theory of the Novel* (*Die Theorie des Romans*, 1916), tracing the development of the novel back to ancient Greece and dreaming of the twinkling stars in the azure sky. He wanted a new order for this world, which he set forth in the book. The novel is a symbol of disordered life and fiction is an important quality and characteristic of the novel as well: »But fiction has enabled us not merely to imagine things, but to do so collectively.«³ The meaning and social value of the novel consist in arousing the people's imagination and steering it towards a wish for a new world. It is another way of shaping life, which also works on broadening the people's imagination of their life and world. If real life depresses people, they lose all opportunity to change it when they lose their imagination. This is the most significant purpose of the novel.

2 See Lukács: *Soul and Form*.

3 Harari: *Sapiens*, p. 27.

If we can see that Lukács is a man with a very conscientious heart, caring and thinking a lot about everyday life, historical materialism is obviously present in his thought. Some scholars attribute more importance to the social, cultural and even political value of his aesthetics and art theory, consequently neglecting his theory of art as a theory in its own right. His basic study of genres of art is a great contribution to the field of aesthetics and offers clarification and interpretations of the prerequisites for social, historical and political studies. Because of Lukács' fame, there is no lack of focus on his theories of genres of art, especially his theory of the essay and the novel. But the purpose of this focus is never art itself. More often than not, his work is used to situate genres in their respective socio-historical reality.

It is well known that Lukács started the study of drama with a strong theoretical and practical foundation dating back to his high-school years, when he wrote comments on drama and set up a small avant-garde theater group called the Thalia Society, always considered to have been his most brilliant time for drama studies and practice.⁴ Although he did not agree with the motto ›Art for art's sake‹, this is a good explanation for his early art theory and aesthetics.

These works reveal the inner characteristics and value of his early theory. Before focusing on his work on drama, taking essay and novel into consideration could be a good start. *Soul and Form* (1911) was published several years prior to *The Theory of the Novel* (1916), but it already concentrates on the gap between the human psychological sphere and the real world; a common issue during and after World War I.⁵ There was no form in real life. People could only appeal to art and artworks in order to summon a solid totality and the realization of their dreams. Hence, art took on the responsibility of shaping life. The forms of art can be seen as forms of everyday life, which is also what Lukács considered necessary for an escape out of the world of alienation. In so doing, Lukács wrote nine works and made an additional attempt of putting forward another genre – that of the essay. He wanted to examine whether the essay – a genre between the epic and the novel – could exist as a vehicle for implicit possibilities of totality, and what the prerequisite for its existence could be.⁶ Moreover, he also wanted to find out whether or not the essay was a viable alternative to the novel and whether it was more appropriate for the needs of the historical moment:

4 Kadarkay: *Georg Lukács*.

5 Harrison: 1910.

6 The essay has characteristics similar to those of the epic and the novel, but there are also differences. Lukács tried to clarify the general characteristics and specialities of essay and examine whether the essay is capable of forming a totality of everyday life for people.

It was of this possibility of the essay that I wanted to speak to you here, of the nature and form of these ›intellectual poems‹ [...]. The point at issue was only the possibility, only the question of whether the road upon which this book attempts to travel is really a road.⁷

Lukács admired ancient Greece because he approved of the sequence and laws in its artworks: »[P]oetry has laws, prose has none.«⁸ But he also made a compromise that provided evidence of what he did not approve of. The essay as a form is a compromise between the epic and the novel, and also a compromise between people and their world.

The essay represents a particular period of time with its unique ideology. There is no reason for the denial of its emergence: »Facts are always there and everything is always contained in facts, but every epoch needs its own Greece, its own Middle Ages and its own Renaissance.«⁹ The emergence of the essay as a form is a fact, but only people at the time of its emergence could understand its meaning. That is why essay is not highly praised but just valued as a kind of incomplete transition from the epic to the novel. And because people pursued everyday life, and simultaneously objected to its constraints, they hoped for a path to another type of life, which was presented in essays on art. Platonism is quite free but lacking in real material foundation. The poem is also considered homeless, but it actually depends upon real life, which is not the same as what exists today and what is truly ideal. From this perspective, Lukács seems to dismiss the essay and the novel in order to emphasize the importance of poetry. Yet, he sees in each of them their significance for their epoch. It is not the genre's fault. It is because of their time and the social-historical background.

After illustrating the relationship between these genres and their background, the study on drama is logically easier to present. Although the study *Entwicklungsgeschichte des modernen Dramas* has been well received, it is still relatively unfamiliar in anglophone and Chinese literatures because there are only German and Hungarian versions.¹⁰ It has not yet been fully translated into English or Chinese. Hence, more investigations and interpretations of this work are necessary that are accessible to Chinese readers.

7 Lukács: *Soul and Form*, p. 18 (»Nur von dieser Möglichkeit des Essays wollte ich hier zu Dir sprechen, vom Wesen und von der Form dieser ›intellektuellen Gedichte‹ [...]. Nur von Möglichkeit war hier die Rede, nur von der Frage, ob der Weg, den dieses Buch zu gehen versucht, wirklich ein Weg ist [...].«, *Die Seele und die Formen*, p. 44).

8 Ibid., p. 20 (»[D]ie Poesie hat Gesetze, die Prosa keine.«, *Die Seele und die Formen*, p. 47).

9 Ibid., p. 13 (»Tatsachen sind immer da und immer ist alles in ihnen enthalten, doch jedes Zeitalter bedarf anderer Griechen, eines anderen Mittelalters und einer anderen Renaissance.«, *Die Seele und die Formen*, p. 37).

10 See Hartley: *Georg Lukács*.

A deeper understanding of this book is urgent in the understanding of the aesthetic system of young Lukács.

Lukács' drama theory is more valid in the field of pure art theory. Art is comparatively more emotional than other categories of scientific fields. That is to say, art theory contains more concepts related to feelings, thoughts, emotions and also ideology. These elements seem unseen and abstract but they are powerful in influencing the audience. It is not rational to summarize or to abstract some rules or orders which are predominant in drama because the best way, or more precisely, the only way to receive drama is from the general meaning of the plot, through the sense of group or collective experience; to experience the whole structure on a basis dating back to the period when people felt like they belonged to a totality defined by a shared religious feeling:

Die inhaltliche Ursache dieser Forderung ist, daß in der Masse ein gewisser Ausgleich zwischen den einzelnen Menschen zustande kommt (solange das Massengefühl andauert) und nachdem das abstrakte Denken am meisten und deshalb zutiefst isoliert individuell in allen ist, kann es am wenigsten eine Rolle spielen.¹¹

This portrait guarantees a different but complete world of drama because every attempt to acquire reasons or abstractions from drama is actually a protection of drama. And:

ergänzen wir das noch damit, daß in allen starken Massengefühlen in kleinerem oder größerem Maße die Elemente des religiösen Gefühls vorhanden sind: der Mystizismus, das Überwiegen der Gefühlselemente, die Gleichgültigkeit gegenüber logischen Argumenten, die Ungeduld, der Fanatismus der Anbetung und des Hasses usw.¹²

This, too, provides evidence of the religious origin of artworks, especially drama. That is to say, it is because nobody could totally understand drama through rational-logical generalization that the truth of drama would be preserved as these attempts finally fail in vain. Only an emotional reception could lead to an aesthetic recognition and appreciation. And it is also because of the emotional method that aesthetics and art are easily manipulated by subjectivity.

Furthermore, Lukács claims that the world of drama is a closed system, which is different from other genres. The end of a drama leads us back into the world of the drama itself. The development of drama and its atmosphere is similar to a snake biting its own tail. This is the shape of the most obvious form of drama. The end of the plot is supposed to lead all its logic

11 Lukács: *Entwicklungsgeschichte des modernen Dramas*, p. 18.

12 Ibid.

and sensation back into the story, similar to a loop. Drama is not permitted to develop its system further because its own task is to form a circle and to meet the beckoning of destiny. As drama is received through emotional understanding and aesthetic reception, this closed system is filled with untouched and unseen content. The shell distinguishing drama from the outside world is its form. On the one hand, this form realizes the existence of drama because it is its form that makes drama different from other genres and everyday life. On the other hand, form protects the totality and solidity of the world conjured in drama because the truth and meaning of drama cannot go anywhere except to the origin of its own narration.

Not to forget that the material of a drama is basically taken from everyday life. This is one of the prerequisites for its stylization. A successful drama demonstrates qualities of a group or the masses and arouses the people's consciousness and the collective unconscious. Stylization shows substantial characteristics that are intrinsic. Forms of fetishism cover the appearance of these characteristics and are intended to stop them from being discovered. From this point of view, it is obvious that the function of stylization is not only to reveal the truth and essence of an object but also to function as a weapon against alienation and fetishism. To clarify this further: »Es ist allgemein bekannt, daß das Drama die Dichtkunst des Willens ist, daß ein Mensch und sein Schicksal nur durch die Anspannung seines Willens dramatisch werden kann.«¹³ Since drama is a genre between narrative literature and performative art, it has the feature of both literature and sculpture but is neither in essence. The differences and different impacts are fully interpreted in Lessing's *Laocoon*. However, as it is not the primary issue in the function of drama according to Lukács, no further interpretation is needed. The closeness and stylization that defend against alienation are one of the most significant functions here.

2. The Essence of ›Possibility‹

›Essence‹ is the essential substance which determines the existence of something recognizable or noticeable. ›Possibility‹ guarantees the legitimacy of existence. Essence should on the one hand protect the quality of an object by stopping the interior portraits from being influenced and even changed by exterior power or force, and on the other hand render the object unique

13 Ibid., p. 21.

and distinct. Form, in Lukács' theory, undertakes this responsibility and stands out in his research and interpretation of ›possibility‹.

Lukács tackled the idea of form many times in his different works. In his analysis of the possibility of different genres, he primarily notes the function of totality of forms of artworks. He keeps inquiring whether the existence of different art and aesthetic forms is possible. If so, how could it happen and to what extent could it be possible? And what is ›possibility‹, and would it change with the transformation of the world or the present situation? In the beginning of *Soul and Form*, Lukács poses the question: »whether such works can give rise to a new unity, a book [...], whether there is something in them that makes them a new literary form of its own, and whether the principle that makes them such is the same in each other«. ¹⁴ The essay is a genre that arises in a fragmented world striving for a solid totality. Although it faces more problems and crises, it does exist for social-historical reasons.

From the historical-philosophical perspective, the essay originates from the context of everyday life. However, »[i]t is the question whether such a unity is possible«. ¹⁵ Whether the essay is possible or legitimate as a form or a unity needs more investigation, as does the question of the essay's role in the development of history and change of temporal life. As Lukács considers the novel a new form of the epic, compared with poetry, it is a more realistic representation of everyday life despite its fictional character. Lukács was always chasing the possibility of unity arising from the essay and the novel instead of the epic. With this conception and target in mind, *Soul and Form* is not only a study with the purpose of representing his early theoretical research of aesthetics, art, life and the ideal but also an obvious reflection of his choice of life and his purpose in all that he was doing in his early twenties and what he insisted on doing from this point forward. To put it shortly, Lukács survived but wanted to transform life by looking for or creating and forming a world of totality.

Lukács was influenced by Søren Kierkegaard, both by his philosophy and his lifestyle, and they even made the same decision when their ideal was blocked by true love and a close relationship. Both of them chose to give their personal life up and continue chasing their dreams and ideal worlds. Kierkegaard even purposefully described himself as a seducer who might think of showing his ambiguity or just calmly letting out the truth. His so-

14 Lukács: *Soul and Form*: p. 1 (»[...] kann aus ihnen eine neue Einheit, ein Buch entstehen? [...] ob etwas in ihnen ist, wodurch sie zu einer neuen, eigenen Form werden und ob dieses Prinzip in jedem das gleiche ist«, *Die Seele und die Formen*, p. 23).

15 Ibid. (»eine wichtigere, allgemeinere Frage steht vor uns: die der Möglichkeit einer solchen Einheit«, *Die Seele und die Formen*, p. 23).

called ideal was mostly considered a mask for his ›evil‹ heart, so that his actual soul could hardly be reached from behind the created ambiguity. It was not known that it was just purposely used to hide his real intentions; that this was a method by which his ideal would come true. And the reason why Lukács also chose this path was not only necessity but the non-consciousness of people and society in his historical period.

Before giving an exact definition of ›possibility‹, we should first mention other studies on form. Only when the issue of form is solved properly is it possible to interpret ›possibility‹ correctly. Because form is the manifestation of shaping life, for Lukács, it acquires ontological theoretical value and leads his studies from concrete theory to general recognitions. This form is different from the idea and definition of form in Russian Formalism but Lukács learned from its theoretical logic and this allowed him to discover the value of form. Form is not his final purpose but an inevitable process in the pursuit of his ideal. He concentrated on form only because he was eager for more insights into soul. It was as if he wanted to form a unity on the basis of his studies of different genres. And he also hoped this unity could help people and the world obtain an ideal totality. He was trying and testing whether this was at all possible. Form is important because it is a shell to protect the soul and also the only path towards soul. It is not wise to compare the importance of soul and form. It is better to consider them as an integrated system.

Form is not solid. It changes or probably finally disappears with the changes to the conditions of content, or in a word, soul. It is well known that, according to Lukács, content is changeable but restricted by the social-historical situation.¹⁶ By contrast, form comes into being transcendently, which is what guarantees the people's understanding and reception. However, its realization changes with the external situation. This is a dialectical and mutual relationship between form and soul and this relationship is inevitable for the existence of form. Form is inherently and essentially different from its content, so if the intrinsic function of the form dissolves, it no longer exists. In this way, it is not soul but form which is independent, albeit it relies closely on soul. Those who think of form as value or a symbol, which unconditionally distinguishes itself from anything else, adhere to a rigid formalism.

After the history of development of form and content is clearly explained, it is easier to reach the essence of possibility – form. Form is a symbol which names its content. Every artwork has a trademark that dis-

16 See Markus: *The Soul and Life*.

tinguishes it from others or there would be no differentiation of categories or genres. Form also draws a line between its content and everyday life, from which it is derived. This trademark comes from real life as well and restricts itself to a sealed system. As it has to stay clear from everyday life on the one hand and contain the elements of everyday life on the other, form becomes highly abstract. It is a representation of everyday life and it is also a symbol of something different from everyday life.

Lukács shaped life, so all his wishes were injected in form. ›Possibility‹ is nothing but form. And the realization of form is complicated but basically depends on the historical-philosophical background. Although he had not yet converted to Marxism, what Lukács was meditating on is very well within the method and ideology of Marxism. He spared no effort to research the conditions of the existence of form.

3. ›Possibility‹ of Totality

Bourgeois life in the eighteenth century was greatly influenced by the idea of controlling the world. Although the people in this period have influenced the subsequent development of society, their values and the characteristics of their actions are cancelled out because of their unconsciousness and lack of subjectivity. It seems as if the people as a whole were split between their actions and society. It would not be appropriate to state that the bourgeois society did not make any effort to regain totality in life, and just enjoyed a life of fragmentation instead but their works actually lead them to a paradox. They were in fact acting as an object. They considered nature as an absolute opposition and tried to use the rules of nature to fulfill their wishes. However, they used to their advantage only a small part of the rules of nature or the rules they made up. They still had to follow the rules of nature. Moreover, they were unable to make any differences in nature, but were influenced by it. To put it shortly, the bourgeois society wanted to take advantage of the rules of nature but also to be controlled by those rules. They initially thought of changing the world but in the end they only changed themselves.

The life of the bourgeois society became complicated and troublesome. The totality at that time was not the characteristic of life but just a dream. As drama developed with a historical background and a unique system of expression, standing for a group of people and their collective wishes, it became one of the most representative genres in the inquiring of the lost totality: »Die Totalität und den Reichtum des Lebens kann das Drama nur

rein formal ausdrücken.«¹⁷ Lukács made it clear that form preserved the dramatic world and led to totality. Plots and characters in a drama are not the real world at all and neither are they the total world. Everything in a drama is just abstracted content, which comes from everyday life, and is sorted out and processed by the author according to his emotion, sensation and his intention. The plot of a drama has to follow the rules of portraying nobility, especially in tragedies. This structure of dramatic content is formative. There is no change in the conception, design and the development of the story. Because of its structural uniqueness, the content of drama also has an ontological value. And content with a solid structure can also be seen as a steady form, which is an intrinsic feature of drama. Hence, drama portrays a complete system and sticks to totality by its unique form, both externally and internally.

In drama, it is impossible to reach every aspect of life and show it to audiences and readers. So, a good solution is to repeatedly emphasize similar elements. These elements should have a lot in common and possess values of the same category and can therefore form a shared significance. This should be the most important skill for developing a successful drama. Moreover, the form of drama should be complete, safe and locked, in order to store and protect these elements and sustain a complete dramatic world. When audiences enter this world, they will become temporarily disconnected from the external existence of their reception. And it is form which sunders the world in drama and everyday life, keeping the story only within the dramatic system. This stops the imagination of the audience and readers from leaving the dramatic system and returning to their real life on the basis of observing their everyday life experiences. Drama is by no means different from everyday life. Further development or an open ending are possible for a dramatic system and totality. An audience does not need to relate the dramatic story to the real world because there may not be any real connections between them. All they are supposed to do is to follow the author's hint and reach his original intention according to the dramatic logic. They just need to walk from the so-called beginning of the whole story and make a circle to the so-called ending, which is actually the beginning from which they started. The purpose of this structure is to prevent the audience from continuing to think and imagine after they had finished watching the play and returned to their everyday life.

The reception of drama is possible because its form is part of the ›Weltanschauung‹, which gives the people their shared cultural outlook

17 Lukács: *Entwicklungsgeschichte des modernen Dramas*, p. 29.

or ideology. However, stylization also comes from the ›Weltanschauung‹. Form helps to construct drama and it seems as if drama was an existence completely separate from life, in which form plays a role of a safeguard or a feature distinguishing it from life. If form is a kind of ›equipment‹, which leads drama to universality and totality, stylization connects internal elements into homogeneous qualities or values. The influence of ›Weltanschauung‹ is stealthy and undetectable. It takes root in the people's minds throughout their growing up, results in their ideological outlook and reflects their social-historical knowledge, which comes through in their attitude and thinking. However, stylization in the end proves to be a phase of individualization. Although this process reveals and manifests values that are absent from modern life, these concentrations on the contrary lead to more specific and concrete attention. From the perspective of drama, stylization simplifies the classification of drama from different styles, the quantification in the reception of drama is harmful in the sense of aesthetics. And these dispersive points aggravate fragmentation.

Now, the paradox of form is revealed. On the one hand, form is repeatedly demonstrated as a closed shell, which is hard and hermetically sealed. On the other hand, if form was totally isolated or secluded in order to guard its characteristics, it would no longer exist. Although Lukács claims its high value, form is not always the only solution. Lukács also did not appeal to form. In *Soul and Form*, he puts forward the concept of gesture, which has attracted a substantial degree of attention in this field: »A gesture is nothing more than a movement which clearly expresses something unambiguous.«¹⁸ It seems that gesture is a conservative concept. But »form is the only way of expressing the absolute in life; a gesture is the only thing which is perfect within itself, the only reality which is more than mere possibility.«¹⁹ The Chinese translation highlights its particularity and richness of meaning but not the dynamic implications. Lukács used this word to criticize Kierkegaard's attitude towards his choice of lifestyle. Gesture is a complete, developing and dynamic system but lacking in enough enduring substance for its real existence.

Lukács points out that modern drama is not the same as classical drama, which is derived from religion. Modern drama is a drama of the bourgeois

18 Lukács: *Soul and Form*, p. 28 (»Die Geste ist nur jene Bewegung, die das Eindeutige klar ausdrückt [...].«, *Die Seele und die Formen*, p. 56).

19 Ibid. (»die Form [ist] der einzige Weg des Absoluten im Leben; die Geste ist das einzige, was in sich selbst vollendet ist, ein Wirkliches und mehr als bloße Möglichkeit«, *Die Seele und die Formen*, p. 56).

and eventually leads to religion.²⁰ This statement represents his argument about modern life but is unable to explain modern drama as a genre. When going back to the very beginning of the discussion of the possibility of its existence, the certainty and necessity of its existence are powerful evidence that the author can express himself only through modern drama and the audience can only see a complete and perfect world through modern drama. This can be interpreted as Lukács being religion-oriented because modern drama is not only drama, but also a belief or home for the people's lost soul. This relation resembles more what religion was to people in earlier times. But more accurately, this is just because drama has the function of arousing public awareness. Since drama does not need to pursue beautiful expression and literary grace, it is more straightforward in expressing the content it is supposed to show. Hence, this is one of the reasons for its popularity as a genre in the modern times.

When comparing modern to the pre-modern life, fragmentation is one of the primary impressions of modernity. Under this condition, »it appears that drama is in danger of ending in modernity.«²¹ Because

for modern bourgeois society there could be no more of damning judgement than this: implicitly, the lesson of this history of the disintegration of dramatic form is that the only chance for the rebirth of a theatrical culture lies in the historical transformation of this society.²²

No change can happen spontaneously. Any seemingly separate change definitely has a cause and an effect. On the way to acquiring totality, little theater came into being. In comparison to normal theater, little theater was first known for its small size. When most dramas chased fashion, advertising and commercial effect, little theater followed its own path to form a total theater world, although in small scale. However, the success of little theater did not last long. Because of the restrictions in the number of audience and its scale, the totality little theater could acquire was limited. It seemed to construe a new form of totality in dramatic world which greatly influenced the misdirected drama, but gradually went in a wrong direction as well. The more developed little theater was, the more individual the group became. And as a result, little theater actually helped the fragmentation of modern times in a different way, albeit unwillingly.

After the attempts of the epic and drama all faced crisis, Lukács considered other genres. The essay and the novel do not have this function because

20 See Lukács: *Entwicklungsgeschichte des modernen Dramas*, p. 54.

21 Rigby: *Transgressions of the Feminine*, p. 19.

22 Ibid.

these two genres are not received only through emotion but additionally by narration, stories and sometimes social innuendo. The additional functions make these genres more charismatic but also more dispersed in content and reception. The essay and novel can also lead to totality, but in an indirect way. The efforts drama has made and the influences in the transformation of modern drama help the proceeding of modernity. It seems as if the world is going forward, but actually, it is also the same as with the key feature – a snake is biting its tail. People are all going back but in the opposite direction.

4. Three Related Considerations in Drama – ›Weltanschauung‹, Stylization and Culture

Russian Formalism developed the concept of literariness, which notably represents their standpoint on form. It has to be admitted that literariness opens a door for literary theory and theory of form but its absoluteness and one-sidedness make this statement controversial. Form is not the quality or essence, which makes something what it is. Form is, more precisely, a constraint, a solid foundation and a remarkable symbol. Stylization is the first step in the process of developing the structure or narration in drama. In this step, form plays the role of the bottom line. This is the main idea of formalism. For Lukács, form alone is not significant. It contains both form and content.

Form is derived from the ideology of the people and exists immanently; it can be timeless and unlimited by space. People from different periods and regions have the ability to understand an artwork not because of the content but the comparatively immanent existence. Content can change, and form changes further. Content is by all means influenced or restricted by its social-historical background, so when times change, people in different time periods or regions with different cultures have difficulty in catching the idea of it. It is the same with ›Weltanschauung‹. ›Weltanschauung‹ is now normally considered to be formed by the social-historical background, but Lukács considered it unchangeable.²³ Although some scholars consider the idea of Lukács to be that of subjective idealism because of his inheritance of transcendental theory, the totality in everyday life cannot be reached without these ideas. That is to say, something eternal should exist to serve as a junction of every fragment separated from the development of modernity.

23 Lukács: *Entwicklungsgeschichte des modernen Dramas*, p. 29.

However, ›Weltanschauung‹ alone is not functional enough to make up for the rupture. Culture should be put forward not only to declare its function but also to state its sphere, which is bigger than that of ›Weltanschauung‹. If ›Weltanschauung‹ is a junction like a dot, culture knots the fragments and forms the face of totality. Style contains a general sense of value shared by most people or it shows characteristics with regularities that people all consider in the same way. It means reaching the people's common sense and providing opportunities to dispel the tendencies of individualism. The same emotion or thought would link people again and form a total world because of their similarities in ideology. Moreover, the key connection of the possibility of stylization lies in culture. In this sense, culture, ›Weltanschauung‹ and stylization are closely related to each other and function on the basis of each other. These three elements together form a solid triangle and help bring about totality. The ›Weltanschauung‹ is permanent and immanent, which is comparatively absolutely unchangeable and stable. It appears as form. Culture is the basis of stylization. The beginning and ending of stylization all come from similar culture or cultural customs.

In drama, dialogue plays the role of context in which people experience these three elements to the fullest. However, as dialogue is also a secret and personal aspect in the expression of drama, it also faces some individual self-modifications, which may somehow influence the totality in drama. That is to say, actors may modify the dialogue on the stage impromptu and audiences would understand the dialogue due to their own experience and knowledge. For the audience, there are two ways to receive an artwork. They can either imagine themselves as different characters in the story and receive it from the perspective of an insider or they stand outside of the whole narration and observe the story as an outsider. Different stand-points decide their diverse attitudes and psychological experiences, and this is the same with authors when they are creating dramas. Drama points to itself and whatever is received by the audience arises from its interior world. This characteristic of course realizes drama structurally but brings about some content-related problems. If dialogue is controlled to some extent by the actors on the stage, the performance of the actors and the actresses is not totally under the characters' control. They can intentionally or unintentionally slightly alter some of the expressions, thus changing the total meaning. This phenomenon improves to some degree after the separation of drama and theater through the appearance of book drama. But the readers' interpretation is also biased sometimes because of indirect contact. If people are unable to watch a drama personally in a theater, their psychological involvement is less than that which is acquired directly from

the stage performance. They can only add their imagination or everyday experiences to complete the whole scene of the story. In this way, although people can still accept the drama, the closed system is probably gradually destroyed because the sealed system is no longer locked but compromised by the reader's everyday life.

Modern drama faced an even greater crisis. Since it is bourgeois, modern drama is more easily manipulated by its social-historical background. And as theater or stage gradually disappear, interpretations become even more subjective. With the developments and changes to the form of drama, it is even harder for drama to exist as a genre. It may be replaced by literature or architecture. Furthermore, with the increasingly clearer class differentiation, drama has to meet the wishes and favors of different class audiences. Drama then faces a split in itself. That is to say, drama is materialized. It is not an independent genre, which was used to overcome the material world any longer. It is at last judged and circumscribed by this world. In other words, it loses its own battle and even faces the danger of dying out.

The experience of the development of drama influenced Lukács in his studies of art theory and aesthetics. He attached great importance to drama and valued the influence of its social-historical background. It is people and their ideology that count. Art is actually a field of human beings. Unlike science, art is mostly shaped by the people's ideology and their psychological condition. It is also closely connected to the moment when an artwork or a study starts and the time period during which the object of the study is in gestation. In modern times, in bourgeois life, change and breakage are common phenomena. So, the crisis of drama is nothing special but rather follows the main trend and basic definition of modernity: alienation and reification. The closer drama is, the faster it becomes separated. Just like Lukács says in the preface of his *The Theory of the Novel*: »The better, the worse.«²⁴ The completeness and closeness of drama make drama successful, but it is also because of this quality that drama goes into its terminal phase.

Lukács is the kind of philosopher who lived in his own philosophical system and spared no effort in realizing his philosophy. He was very familiar with form, so form here is not just an object he was studying. It is also his method. He discusses form for the sake of soul. He wrote *Entwicklungsgeschichte des modernen Dramas* but his purpose is not drama at all but the literary form of drama and the nature of modernity. And also, he seemed to concentrate on genres and worked just for a pure art theory but he actually wanted to find the totality, which was lacking but dramatically needed.

24 Lukács: *The Theory of the Novel*, p. 10 (»Je besser, desto schlimmer.«, *Die Theorie des Romans*, p. 5).

Lukács provided a hint by saying »ob es ein modernes Drama gibt«. ²⁵ He posed the question of its existence or maybe denied it. He hoped there would be a modern drama but he also did not really care about the existence of this genre. He had an even greater mind, to have a deeper understanding of the world, with a critical eye.

References

- Harari, Yuval Noah: *Sapiens. A Brief History of Humankind*. Taipei: published in agreement with The Deborah Harris Agency, Jerusalem and The Grayhawk Agency 2012.
- Harrison, Thomas: *1910: The Emancipation of Dissonance*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press 1996.
- Hartley, Catherine: *Georg Lukács and the Disintegration of Dramatic Form: The Tragedy of Modernity*. »Thesis Eleven« 24 (1989), pp. 112–131.
- Kadarkay, Arpad: *Georg Lukács. Life, Thought, and Politics*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell Inc 1911.
- Lukács, Georg: *History and Class Consciousness. Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press 1972.
- Lukács, Georg: *Soul and Form*. Trans. Anna Bostock. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press 1974 (*Die Seele und die Formen. Essays*. Bielefeld: Aisthesis 2011).
- Lukács, Georg: *Entwicklungsgeschichte des modernen Dramas*. Darmstadt, Neuwied: Luchterhand 1981.
- Lukács, Georg: *The Theory of the Novel*. Trans. Anna Bostock. London: The Merlin Press 1971 (*Die Theorie des Romans. Ein geschichtsphilosophischer Versuch über die Formen der großen Epik*. Darmstadt, Neuwied: Luchterhand 1984).
- Markus, Georg: *The Soul and Life: The Young Lukács and the Problem of Culture*. »Telos« 24 (1989), pp. 95–115.
- Rigby, Catherine E.: *Transgressions of the Feminine*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag 1996.

25 Lukács: *Entwicklungsgeschichte des modernen Dramas*, p. 9.