

<b>Institution: University of Warwick</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 28 Modern Languages and Linguistics</b>
<b>Title of case study: The Spirit of Film: Expanding Public Understanding of Film Heritage</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Carter's research into the life and work of the Hungarian film theorist Béla Balázs (1884-1949), and her collaboration with Rodney Livingstone (Professor Emeritus, Southampton) on the first English translation of his early works, provided the inspiration for a travelling exhibition, film screenings and website that showcased Balázs's early writing, and explored the connections between his film theory and contemporary film practice. Artist Zsuzsanna Ardó approached Carter to collaborate following the publication of an article on Balázs (<i>Screen</i> 2007), and worked with her to mount an exhibition at BAFTA and three Everyman Cinemas in London, accompanied by public talks and film screenings.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>During her period at Warwick from 1995 to 2011, Carter's research focused, among other topics, on the history of film theory, a field explored first in her monograph on Third Reich film (2004), latterly in an edited translation of the early works of the Hungarian film theorist Béla Balázs. Balázs had long been familiar to Anglophone readers from Edith Bone's 1952 translation of his <i>Theory of the Film</i>. But his German-language writings on early cinema, though influential in the German-speaking countries, were largely unknown. By the turn of the twenty-first century, there were compelling reasons to plug this scholarly gap. The advent of new digital media, and the dispersal of the film experience across multiple sites and viewing platforms, has led in recent years to an increased film studies interest in writings from the early years of the film medium. The early twentieth-century emergence of film as a new art form led contemporary commentators from Hugo Münsterberg and Jean Epstein, to Walter Benjamin, and Balázs himself, to explore in their writings the effect of the new medium on popular aesthetics, subjectivity and cultural experience. As Balázs wrote in his 1930 <i>The Spirit of Film</i>, '[t]he substrate [of this new medium] is the subject, the human subject, man in his social being' (Carter &amp; Livingstone 2010: 96).</p> <p>A similar interest in the human consequences of media-aesthetic developments animates the renewed focus on the 'film experience' in twenty-first century film studies (Casetti, 2008), and has also generated a new archaeology of film theory focusing on early writings in Britain (Marcus 2008), the US (Higgins 2011), France (Abel 1993), Germany (Hake 1993) and elsewhere. A chapter on Balázs in Hake's <i>The Cinema's Third Machine</i> tantalized non German-speaking readers in 1993 with extensive references to two then untranslated early Balázs volumes, <i>Visible Man</i> (1924), and <i>The Spirit of Film</i> (1930). The time seemed ripe for a revisiting of these two early works; Carter thus embarked in 2005 on a collaboration on Balázs with translator Rodney Livingstone (Emeritus, Southampton). Grant funding was raised from the Kraszna-Krausz Foundation, the AHRC, Warwick University, and the film journal <i>Screen</i>, and the outcome was the first full English-language translation of <i>Visible Man</i> and <i>The Spirit of Film</i>.</p> <p>Carter's extensive introduction to the translation embeds Balázs's film writing in its intellectual and cultural-historical context, and explores the key theoretical tenets elaborated in the two early texts. While <i>Visible Man</i>, she suggests, celebrates the film medium's intimate representation of the human body and face, <i>The Spirit of Film</i> offers a first attempt at a coherent poetics, as well as a formal 'grammar' of the medium of film. Focussing in particular on Balázs's phenomenological understanding of the filmic body, the close up and montage, Carter further shows how his work resists the formalism of some contemporary phenomenological film theory through its historical</p>

## Impact case study (REF3b)

embedding in the film writings and practice of the Central European avant-garde, as well as in the revolutionary activities in which Balázs was engaged throughout his early career.

**3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

Carter, Erica, and Rodney Livingstone, 'Béla Balázs, Visible Man, or the Culture of Film' (1924), *Screen*, 48:1 (Spring, 2007), 91-108.

*Béla Balázs: Early Film Theory. Visible Man and The Spirit of Film*, edited by Erica Carter and translated by Rodney Livingstone. Berghahn Books, 2010.

## Evidence of Research Quality:

Published by Oxford Journals, *Screen* is peer-reviewed and is the leading international academic journal in film and TV studies. Berghahn's *Film Europa* series is internationally recognized for its critical interventions into German film studies; it has published work by many key contemporary German film scholars, including Tim Bergfelder, Sabine Hake, S.S.Prawer, Gerd Gemünden, Barbara Kosta, and Malte Hagener.

## Reviews:

The book has also been positively reviewed in both the specialist and non-specialist film and cultural press: *Screening the Past* (4.2011) considered *Early Film Theory* 'a very good introduction to Balázs's film philosophy and a long overdue entry into the English-speaking world of film literature.' *Bright Lights Film Journal* 76 (May 2012) underlines the book's wider relevance in a review that states, 'this book will benefit any student encountering film theory in.....any context where deepening our understanding or love for film is the goal. These two books by Balázs are not to be sequestered for the purposes of film history alone.'

([http://brightlightsfilm.com/76/76booksbalazs\\_metivier.php#.Uf-g3CdEGSo](http://brightlightsfilm.com/76/76booksbalazs_metivier.php#.Uf-g3CdEGSo)). A *New Yorker* review exploring the recent mainstream interest in silent cinema (*viz.* the Oscar-winning *The Artist*, 2011, and Martin Scorsese's *Hugo*, 2011) also quotes extensively from the Carter/Livingstone volume; David Denby, 'A Critic at Large; The Artists,' *New Yorker*, 27 February 2012.

A translation of Carter's introduction to *Béla Balázs* was published in the Hungarian online film journal *apertura*, Winter 2009 (<http://apertura.hu/2009/osz/carter>).

## Grants:

AHRC Research Leave, 2008-09, £25,481

Funding to support the publication of the translation was secured from:

*Screen*/The University of Glasgow, 2007, £500; *Screen*, 2010, £250; Kraszna-Krausz Foundation, £3,934;

Warwick's German Studies department, 2008, £100; Warwick's Humanities Research Centre, 2008, £750.

Warwick Institute of Advanced Study Impact Award: £2500

**4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

Carter was committed from the outset to the widest possible dissemination of her research on Balázs. Her fundraising efforts to this end with various bodies including *Screen* and the Kraszna-Krausz foundation culminated in a symposium for academic and public audiences, which was co-funded and co-organised with *Screen*, with further support in kind and financially from the University of Warwick and the University of London/School of Advanced Study Institute for Germanic and Romance Studies. The symposium inspired an exhibition and related public outputs

## Impact case study (REF3b)

that refigured Balázs's writings in the more widely accessible media of photographic collage, public talks, a project website, and screenings of classical popular film. The impact is thus two-fold: on the artist who was inspired by Carter's research to collaborate on the exhibition; and on the audiences who viewed the exhibition, attended a related book launch and film screenings, visited the websites associated with the project, and read online and magazine reviews (see 'References' above) that situated the volume in relation to developments in contemporary film.

The impact began in May 2009, when Carter co-organised with Annette Kuhn (QMUL/*Screen*), and delivered a paper at a symposium on Balázs at the Institute for Germanic and Romance Studies (IGRS), London. The symposium was one of a series of events celebrating *Screen's* 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary; *Screen* had co-funded the Balázs translation, and joined with the IGRS, Warwick and Berghahn books in staging an event that drew participants from outside academia including European film practitioners, and the artist and curator Zsuzsanna Ardó. Ardó had long been interested in Balázs's work, and Carter's paper as well as the publication of the *Screen* extract from Livingstone's translation prompted an approach to Carter to work together on an exhibition and related public events. Carter applied to, and won from the Warwick Institute of Advanced Study an Impact Award of £2500 to support the project; modest further funding was supplied by the Department of German and Berghahn books. With Carter as academic advisor, Ardó developed a collage-based exhibition which placed Balázs's texts in juxtaposition and dialogue with stills and photographs from the films he discusses in *Visible Man* and *The Spirit of Film*. Mounted initially in the members' lounge at the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA), 195 Piccadilly, *The Spirit of Film: the Road to Casablanca via Béla Balázs* grew out of meetings from September 2009 on, when Carter worked collaboratively with Ardó, discussing the selection of texts and images, liaising with BAFTA staff to organise a book and exhibition launch and screening, and producing copy for the publicity material and website. BAFTA was fully involved as a project partner: BAFTA's graphic designer assisted with the artwork under the direction of Ardó, and the communications manager included the launch in the BAFTA official programme, advertised in the BAFTA newsletter to over 6,500 members. Further partners were Berghahn, who contributed funds for a wine reception; and the BFI and the Lukács Archivum, Budapest, both of whom provided images and related material, the latter on the basis of previous contact with Carter relating to picture research for her introduction to the Berghahn volume.

The BAFTA exhibition opened on 8 June 2010 in the BAFTA members' lounge with a private view and book launch for over 100 invited guests, funders, and BAFTA members. The launch culminated in a screening in the BAFTA cinema of Michael Curtiz's *Casablanca* (1942), a film that Carter presented in a brief introductory talk on the wider history of Central European exile to which the film alludes and that also marked the personal life stories of both Curtiz and Balázs. Amongst the distinguished guests at the screening and launch were representatives from the Krasznai-Krausz Foundation, the Oxford Hungarian Society, and the BAFTA founding member, BAFTA Fellow and first British Film Commissioner, Sir Sydney Samuelson. Carter has maintained contact with Sir Sydney since that event; an interview with him on his early activities as a cameraman for the Colonial Film Unit will feature in her forthcoming research and publications on German-Jewish exile in the British Empire after 1933; she co-organised a panel with him at a London Screen Studies postgraduate research training conference in November 2012, and further impact activities are envisaged including film talks and screenings around her future research.

*The Spirit of Film: the Road to Casablanca* remained on display at BAFTA from June to October 2010, where it was open to members only. A parallel exhibition then toured to Everyman Cinema locations in London. It was on display in the lobbies of Everyman Hampstead from June to August 2010, Everyman Belsize Park in September, and Everyman Baker St. in October and November

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

2010, reaching audiences via this route for one of the oldest and most established independent cinema chains in the capital. The exhibition continued to feature on the BAFTA website throughout 2010; it has gained longevity via the Warwick Balázs website, which features a slide show from the exhibition, photographs from the book launch, and supporting text on the project and on Carter's work on Balázs. The exhibition's continuing online presence is further assured by its profiling on Ardó's own website. Her page on the exhibition features visitor statements and comments from BAFTA collaborators noting how her show captures 'incredibly well the ideas that Balázs was trying to communicate,' and observing further that '[t]he exhibition looks fabulous *in situ* both for its immediate visual impact and for piquing people's interest so that they take a closer look to get each image's meaning....A pioneering project in many ways. Balázs would be proud!'

The reach of the impact is evidenced by the estimated over 30,000 members of the public who had access to the exhibition (estimates are based on Everyman Cinema ticket sales: Hampstead 13,603; Belsize Park 4,167; Baker St 13,224), as well as guests at the launch, and the BAFTA members who used the lounge (figures for the latter are not available). Further evidence is provided by sales of the book: 353 (pbk/hbk) in the US generating revenue of \$16830.72 and 133 (pbk/hbk) in the EU, generating revenue of £3573.79. The Balázs webpages on the German Department website have received 5228 hits (average 95% external).

Having re-interpreted the history of Balázs's early film theory for non-academic audiences in the form of an English translation and a public symposium, Carter's research, in sum, inspired and supported an exhibition that has in turn - as the BAFTA website stated in its comments on the project - supported 'BAFTA's charitable remit to educate and inspire both the public and film, television and video games industry practitioners about the moving image. Its content will educate our membership and visiting members of the public about Balázs's little-known work as a film theorist and practitioner.'

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. BAFTA Exhibition webpage, <http://www.bafta.org/print/whats-on/the-spirit-of-film-the-road-tocasablanca-via-bela-balazs,1134,BA.html>; and posters.
2. Testimonials relating to the Béla Balázs exhibition from artist's website <http://www.zsu.f2s.com/dr/content/curating>.
3. Ticket sales from Everyman Cinema.
4. Statements from BAFTA Graphic Designer [by email and in funding application].
5. Statement from BAFTA Communications Manager [by email].
6. Sales of *Béla Balázs: Early Film Theory* provided by Berghahn Books.
7. Project website: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/german/balazs/>