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# THE POWER OF DARKNESS

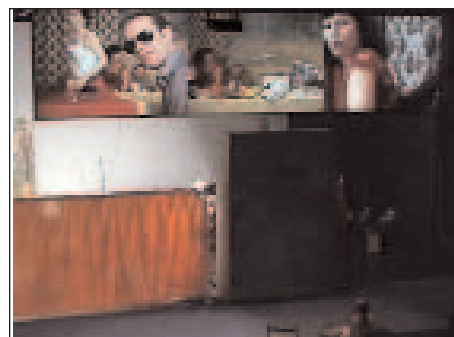
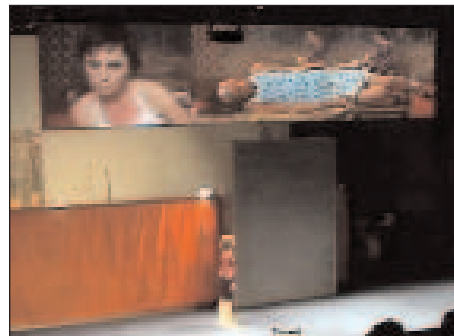
## A sötétség hatalma

after the play by Leo Tolstoy,  
adapted and directed by Jay Scheib

munkabemutatója Lev Nyikolajevics Tolsztoj: A sötétség hatalma— A magyar szöveget Németh László fordításának és Jay Scheib szövegátalakításának felhasználásával írta Merényi Anna—Hungarian translation by Anna Merényi, Video Design Leah Gelpe, Stage and Lighting design Jeremy Morris, Original Score Markos Albert, Dramaturgy Szucs Aniko and Merényi Anna, Costumes Sinkovics Judith, assistant director Kenneth Roraback, Featuring: Vicei Zsolt, Isabelle Lê, Keszég László, Pereszlenyi Erika, Vajna Balázs, Pogány Judit, Scherer Péter, Urbanovits Krisztina and Antal Marta

In the Golden Age of Coca-Cola, Anisya rat-poisons her terminally ill husband for the Love of Nikita, who sleeps with Everyone, and gets Everyone pregnant, including his step-daughter Akulina—but when the conniving mother-in-law steps in to set things right—a whole wave of disasters result... This multimedia re-visioning of Tolstoy's classic naturalistic drama *The Power of Darkness* was developed at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in collaboration with MIT Music and Theater Arts, MIT Dramashop in Cambridge and Pont Muehly in Budapest. Rehearsed in august of 2004 and presented in the Studio of MU Szinhaz in Budapest. Premier May 13 at the TRAF0 House of Contemporary Arts in Budapest. Subsequent performances at TRAF0 in the 05/06 season.

Premier: MAY 13-17, 2005  
TRAF0 HOUSE OF CONTEMPORARY ART, BUDAPEST







**NOTES ON VIDEO IN *THE POWER OF DARKNESS***

In America there is a growing disparity between what is real and what is perceived as real. The old critical models no longer speak to experience. Even reality has lost its tongue. In recent years I have come to believe that the task of the theater is the task of contesting Reality with Fiction and vice versa. How Reality is set in motion, created, modeled, delivered from the space of fiction (representation) to a whole world of experience (life) represents the degree zero of my thinking about *The Power of Darkness*—how the social situations which drive this tragedy are ignited by the integration of media, characterizes my approach. My research on the integration of media in live performance has come, since 2003, to focus entirely on visual and aural delivery systems as a means of handling (or mishandling) perceptions of reality.

Arguably our perception of what is Real in armed-conflict has been shaped significantly by the existence of embedded journalists. Cameras have played enormous roles in all phases of the occupation in Iraq (for example). We have been exposed to death, torture, destruction of human values, shows of force, humiliation etc. Images, sound, and moving images are delivered to us in real time, in real stereo and in more-or-less true-to-life colour directly to our homes.

Historiography has had to redefine itself in the face of this seemingly perfect historical record. Historiography has had to show that the image does not contain the horizon any longer. They have had to show that there might be more to the picture. The theater has a very similar challenge at hand.

HOW, IN LIGHT OF CURRENT TELEVISION AND CINEMATIC PRACTICES, IS IT POSSIBLE TO ADEQUATELY DELIVER A REPRESENTATION OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE TO THE STAGE? Can we ignore available models? No. In sports, the camera gives us the perspective of the player—the sweat and the grimace, virtuosity at close quarters—and the rush of adrenaline increases with the transparency of the media. The game / war / love story is happening in your living room. We don't see the hand of the camera operator, we empathize, we gasp in joy, fear, terror, hope...

These *cool distances* threshold the experiences they so brutally represent—for Euripides it was a matter of putting the disaster in an adjacent room and its description flowed from the mouth of an eye witness directly into your imagination. Euripides found a way in through language, through word-pictures. Seneca cut the gap and put the event itself before our eyes—he wanted in through the flesh. Did Seneca's Medea kill real children? Were they just stage directions?!

Our cinema has much in common with Seneca, but the too near perfect verisimilitude, will no longer entirely suffice. Its surfaces are too clear—and the medium now too diversified. Is it fiction? is it news? it is documentary! no? Is it reality? no? There is an oceanic expanse between things and their representation, between movement image and experience—this tension is what interests me on the stage.

I see the theatre, with its ability to embed other modes of representation—cinema, live and sampled music, dance, conceptual art, science etc—as the most viable platform for the final showdown between Fiction and Reality. My work over the past five years has been dedicated to this particular contest.

With *The Power of Darkness*, I am concerned with modifying basic television technologies and low impact video processing for the theatre. Video, for me, is a means of seeing around corners, peering through the darkness, or seeing from afar. My project is concerned with limiting this tool exclusively to its utilitarian function. I propose a use of video in the theater which is as fundamentally unquestionable as the stage itself. Media, in this paradigm, is neither Content nor Form. The content may be questioned, but the form aims to be beyond question. Everyone questions the content of television—no one questions the validity of the television set.

*The Power of Darkness* deploys basic television technology to the task of amplifying REAL LIFE. The themes which drive the play are best expressed in the overlapping of representational fields. In the mixture of mediated spaces and real spaces, in positing the artificiality of artificial realities. The representation of reality—the act itself—becomes the subject about which I speak. Suspension of disbelief as the final acknowledgement of what we all know to be fake. While I am not interested in political theater per se, I stubbornly consider this impoverished act—calling to the floor illusion and crushing it under foot, to be radically, if consistently, political.

My own artistic process, leading downward, into the possibility of shaping an environment whose sole function would be to reflect life! has, for now, been commanded by an obsession with Naturalism. *The Power of Darkness* was the meteor of Naturalism in the theater. This play changed all the rules. In it we watch how one bad decision caves in upon the next in a terrible spiral WHOSE FINAL CONVULSIONS INCLUDE PARALYSIS, MADNESS, APATHY, FUNDAMENTALISM, CATASTROPHE, DESTRUCTION, POVERTY AND finally, death. Irrevocable. and utterly Unjustifiable.

— Jay Scheib, Budapest, 2005

