

Eötvös Loránd University
Faculty of Humanities

PHD SUMMARY

HARGITAI, HENRIK

CHANGES IN THE TYPOGRAPHY
OF THE HUNGARIAN NATIONAL DAILY NEWSPAPERS
BETWEEN 1989–2009

Doctoral School of Philosophy
Kelemen, János, Doctor of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences,
professor, head of the Doctoral School

Doctoral Programme in Aesthetics
Radnóti, Sándor DSc, professor, head of the Doctoral Programme

Members of the Doctoral Council
Dr. Radnóti, Sándor, DSc, professor, president of the Council
Dr. György, Péter, DSc, professor, opponent
Dr. Szentpéteri, Márton, PhD, opponent
Dr. Gács, Anna, PhD, secretary of the Council
Dr. Máthé, Andrea, PhD, Dr. Hirsch Tibor, PhD, members of the Council
Dr. Hammer, Ferenc, PhD, Dr. Müllner, András, PhD, vice members of the Council

Advisor:
Dr. habil. Buzinkay, Géza CSc.

Budapest, 2010

1. Subject and objectives

Letters record our thoughts. One of the fundamental subjects of typographic analysis is an explanation to the existence of the variety of typefaces. Why don't we use just one kind of typeface, why don't we record *only data (text only)* by writing, why do we "ornament" letters, codes of data? A neutral use of writing as a medium would be to use only one form for each character: thus it would be optimally legible by frequent use, and forms would not be able to modify data content. In practice, however, we use typefaces in a consistently variable way, which makes it possible to add further code layers to the mere data content (the text itself). These codes are not forming particular unique shapes, but they make a difference by the (re)realization of the *idealized* shapes of letters (which I call "typographemes") or by the modification of these realized shapes. Thus, any visually realized text is more than the same text in its state "before" its visual existence and each and every new typographic realization of the same text have different codes "hidden" in typography. Since these surplus codes are basically of aesthetic nature, the fundamental question of typography mentioned above may be answered using an aesthetic approach. In my dissertation I investigate typographic codes; and the theoretical and practical opportunities of typography in daily newspapers, which contains a unique system of typographic codes.

The goal of this dissertation is to analyse the typography of Hungarian national daily newspapers after the change of the socialist system; to search for relations between content and form, and to investigate why their typographic style has become to what is observable: who and how their layout was designed. The years between 1989-2009 has brought several considerable changes in the evolution of the typography of printed dailies: on the one hand, technological changes (change from hot type to cold type / DTP), on the other hand, visual-typographic changes (induced by the appearance of internet and specifically in Hungary, the introduction of free press including tabloid papers). Changes comparable to this had been the change from traditional letterpress to offset printing technologies: this change therefore is also analysed. It is also a major question of this work whether it is possible to define a particular Hungarian typographic style (considering newspaper typography) or at least to outline some unique paths in the development of Hungarian newspaper typography.

The main topic of this work is the analysis of the dailies' typographic layout. After reviewing the literature I found out that typographic analysis methods are not developed in detail. Hungarian publications have been published for practitioners in the printing industry and are textbook like, American books have a different approach to newspaper typography than Hungarians since American newspaper typography is different from European and Hungarian one; and these books contain mostly guidelines for newspaper typographers by newspaper typographers.

All these have made it necessary that I develop the basis of typographic analysis and then apply them for the topic of my work.

2. Structure

This work has two units.

1. The first unit contains the main text presenting a general analysis of the subject. I define the discipline of typography and I investigate the typographic opportunities for independent, autonomous expression of thoughts, either through texts or by the layout alone, and using the results I differentiate typography as art and typography as applied art. One of my methods is to investigate whether a typographic work can be faked or not, and if yes, in what form, and in the conclusion I present the nature of the core of typographic work. I present possible analytical approaches of a typographic works, using methods of art history and literary theory.

I analyse in detail what a letter is, and I present possible interpretations of the peritext and various typographic tools, i.e. the possible messages of typographic elements. Using the

reprint problematics I present the particular relations between the text and its layout, and the changes of this induced by the change of the visual environment. I deal with the typographer's person the aesthetic and artistic opportunities of a typographic work in a separate chapter. Since it is related to the aesthetic layer of typography, I deal with the aesthetic interpretation of daily newspapers in this same chapter.

In the following chapters I deal with the newspaper as a cultural phenomenon.

In the last, third chapter the previously introduced topics – typography and newspapers – are connected: this is the chapter of newspaper typography, in which analysis is more practical than theoretical. I show the process and theoretical questions of newspaper design and redesign, and I present my analytical methods in which it is possible to classify newspaper layout from several approaches. I also investigate how typographic elements are built into the general identity of a newspaper. In this topic I focus on front page colours and images.

In the final unit I analyse the actual data on newspapers published between 1989 and 2009. First I summarize the typographic developments prior to 1989 and then I analyse papers published afterwards. Then I answer the original question: is there a Hungarian style in newspaper typography? To be able to answer this, first I review regional newspaper typographic style from all over the Globe. The following question is: is it the age or the place what influences typographic style the most? Finally I attempt to present the characteristics of Hungarian newspaper typographic style.

In the last chapter I summarize present day predictions for the future of newspaper typography and typography in general.

2. The second unit is the Appendices. It contains the case studies for all newspapers discussed, presenting the history of redesigns of these papers. These texts should be considered as resources for future investigations and databanks. These information on press history, however, are necessary for the understanding of typographic changes, since these are closely related (i.e. change of owners, publishers). In this part I included some daily newspapers published in Transylvania. These case studies have been made in several cases using the memoirs of one or two journalists or typographers working at a particular newspaper, therefore these can be considered as partial and subjective. I also include several hundreds of illustrations (thumbnails of newspaper front pages) which can be viewed in full resolution colour only in the digital edition (CD copy).

The other unit of the appendices presents the analysis of the technical background of the typographic changes, including the detailed description of various professions related to newspaper typography.

Since it is a somewhat separate, but still a connected topic, I analyse newspaper photography, newspaper infographics; online newsportal typography; tabloid typography and typography of extra issues in the chapters of the appendices.

A glossary and who is who is also included.

My comments are shown as footnotes, the references to primary (the newspapers themselves) and secondary (papers and books on typography) literature are shown as numbered endnotes.

3. Methods

The basis of this work are several personal interviews with journalists and typographers which have been made between 2005 and 2010. Texts published in the newspapers and in typography related Hungarian and foreign journals are also used as source materials. Naturally a major source for the analysis is the newspapers themselves revealing their typography. Images of the newspapers are partly from my own private archive, I obtained additional material from journalists, typographers and of course from major libraries.

Considering tabloid newspapers, nor the sample nor the analysis is full scale: these are rather samples showing their considerable difference from quality papers. Analysis details have been developed in 2009-2010.

I deal with present and near past phenomena. Newspaper typography is a marginal if nonexistent element of current general knowledge which is reflected by the fact that there are very limited resources in critical texts, reflections, or the reception on this topic. In my experience, the typographers of the particular newspapers are not, and have not been in connection with other newspapers' typographers, nor their predecessors. The same typographic ideas can be used differently from paper to paper. Some terms are in use only in one or a few editorial rooms.

I am not dealing with sports dailies because it requires a special typographic approach; the free Metro newspaper is also left out from the analysis because it imports the international design of the Metro newspaper family.

I have conducted two „micro-research” for this work. In one of them I have studied the young's typographic knowledge, looking for the typical („neutral”) typographic style according to them. In the other, I looked for how an „Australian aborigine” could interpret typographic elements. The objective of the study was to reveal the „hidden codes” of typographic elements. This test was answered by children of the age 6..8 years, who are intelligent enough but can not read – understanding the textual messages could have distorted their answers.

4. Key findings

What is the essence of a typographic work? I have concluded that the most artistic layer of any newspaper typographic work is the not materializing description of the typographic style element, the style sheet. The layers of the typographic work are the setting, the design and the layout of the particular page.

How can the aesthetic category of beauty be applied to a newspaper? It is possible that a newspaper be beautiful for a typographer yet disliked by the readers. Using specific case studies I conclude that typographic beauty should match both the expectations of the readers and the needs of the textual content.

What gives identity to a newspaper and what is the role of design to it? I conclude that the identity is given by the current editorial staff, but for tabloids it is more the title of the paper and its main regular topics.

What defines the specific design of a newspaper? I conclude that typographic visual style is primarily determined by the era (fashion/spirit of the age/zeitgeist), secondarily by the location (culture) and only thirdly the typographer artist's personality. Several of the typographic elements are born because of technical constrains, not from artistic conception.

How can a daily newspaper's typography be analysed? Generally: using methods of art history and literary theory. Specifically: by differentiating amongst the whole newspaper, one page and one story. For the determination of the typographic class of one particular page, I separate visual-driven and text-driven types; considering content, I separate self-contained, referential and third party content. Structurally, I define linear and nonlinear; open and closed pages. I differentiate between static and dynamic layout considering a page as part of a series of the same pages (created from day to day). I lay down the relationship between the method of writing a story to a specific textbox of which the character number is known in advance for the journalist; and the typographic image of the page.

How can a visual layout be verbalized? How do journalists, editors „feel” the layout? For this, I use those articles as indicators in which editors introduce a newly redesigned paper to its readers. The main topics arisen are structure, legibility, and only last the aesthetic beauty. A second set of arguments also appear: the editors feel a necessity to apologize to their

readers, because „the paper will be a little unusual now”; and an other topos is that „against all technical novelties the paper will be the same as the readers are used to”: this is the verbal pattern of the conservative editor.

What is the essence of tabloidization? I conclude that „tabloidization” is in fact determined by current zeitgeist, and appears in all aspects related to journalism; and its elements are used in tabloid, quality and economic printed and online papers; and its elements have been present for the last hundred years in the press emphasized more or less.

What is the history of newspaper typography in the 2nd half of the 20th Century? This topic has not been investigated until now. Workers in the field have always been anonymous and uncredited, in both technical and conceptual-designer fields. In addition, most of the newspapers have been „non-designed”. I conclude that in the 1950s a major setback can be observed in both printing press technology and typographic design. I successfully found out personally who had designed the major daily newspapers in the 1970-80s and what influence them (Lengyel Gyula, Soproni Béla, Vémi József, Fehér Kálmán, Ritter Aladár etc. and expert advisory groups). After the privatization design of dailies have been changed by foreign typographers brought by the new publishers (Robert Woodlock, Jean-Jacques Hauwuy), but after their job was done, new, Hungarian typographers continued their work, discontinuing the „foreign” styles. In the right-wing political papers, characteristically Hungarian typographers have designed the layouts, from whom Molnár István’s work can be considered as outstanding; but several of the new newspapers are still „non-designed”.

What are the characteristics of the specifically Hungarian newspaper typographic style (if any)? Hungarian newspaper typography constantly lags behind western typographic currents. It is not because of less pages, smaller sizes and smaller advertising market, and not at all because of cultural differences, but the reason might be a combination of the following aspects: publishers think of typography as something less important; this results in the fact that they do not offer typographers a competitive job, several of the typographic professions are discontinued at the editorial rooms (designer, art director, news designer), in most cases they hire one person to work in several professions, editors and journalists have too much freedom and too little control which make accurate pre-planning of the layout impossible; visual and content planning are done independently; journalists do not or barely think visually, and the editors refrain from using novel, uncommon (or: „too” creative) visuals. The newspapers that are in the international currents or are outstanding works are either franchise papers or isolated works by Hungarian typographers which usually live only months since no art editor is paid to keep to the original design: they fall apart very soon.

Bibliography

- ASBÓTHNÉ ALVINCZY Katalin – Bardóczy Irén: *Magyasnyomóformakészítés IV. (Tipográfia)*. A nyomdaipari szakközépiskolák IV. osztálya számára. Műszaki, 1977.
- EVANS, Harold: *Editing and Design – Book 5: Newspaper Design*. Heinemann, London, 1973. 2nd ed. 1976.
- GARCIA, Mario R.: *Contemporary Newspaper Design. A Structural Approach*. 2nd ed. Prentice Hall, 1987.
- GARCIA, Mario R.: *Newspaperevolutions*. The Poynter Institute for Media Studies, 1997.
- HAIMAN György: *Tipográfia és könyvművészet*. Benne 10 oldalnyi fejezet: Az újság és a folyóirat tipográfiája. (Jegyzet a Felsőfokú Könyvüipari Technikus nyomdaipari tagozata számára, 1967)
- Interpressgrafik* 7, 1971. (tematikus szám)
- MOLNÁR István: *A kiadványtervezés alapjai*. Dialóg Campus, 2007.
- RADICS Vilmos, Ritter Aladár: *Laptervezés, tipográfia*. MUOSZ, é.n. 1976?
- RADICS Vilmos: *Képszerkesztés, sajtófotó*. MÚOSZ, é.n. 1984?
- RÓKA Jolán: *Az újságzsövegek szerkesztési és stílustipológiája*. Akadémiai, 1986.