

Poetic Rituality in Contemporary Hungarian Theatre. An Overview

ENIKŐ SEPSI

Abstract: In order to describe the different connections between the poetic text and the ritual executed on stage, in addition to the remarks and insights of the well-known authors (Richard Schechner, Erika Fischer-Lichte), the present study uses the relevant points of the Bielefeld-based researchers, Wolfgang Braungart and Saskia Fischer, who have both worked on formulating the concept of poetic rituality. The concept of poetic rituality refined in my previous works¹ is a useful guide because it makes contemporary performances accessible. Among the Hungarian writers, poets, and directors we highlight some works of Attila Jász, Sándor Halmosi, János Pilinszky, Ottó Tolnai, János Térey, András Visky, and Attila Vidnyánszky, stating that the number of chapters on the history of Hungarian theatre dealing with the interaction of theatre and poetry is meager in the Hungarian reception.

Poetry and ritual

The interrelation of poetry and theatre lead to diverse actualizations: poetry itself has its theatricality, if we think of T. S. Eliot, Mallarmé or Yves Bonnefoy (the latter of whom also called one of his poetic cycles *Théâtre in Du mouvement et de l'immobilité de Douve*). These poems, or poems in general, can also be a starting point for a performance which definitively becomes, by its materiality, a poetic theatre. At a third level, one can dif-

¹ Enikő SEPSI, *Poetic images, Presence and the Theatre of Kenotic Rituals* (London – New York: Routledge, 2021); Johanna DOMOKOS – Enikő SEPSI, eds., *Poetic Rituality in Theatre and Literature* (Budapest – Paris: L'Harmattan – Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, 2020).

ferentiate a theatre where metaphors and their metonymic nature become the directing principle of the direction, rather than causal and temporal relations.

Rites and associated festivities evoke the most defining events in the history of a given community, and from the perspective of the impact on the participants, based on the summary of Erika Fischer-Lichte, they can be described through the concepts of liminality, periodicity, regularity, and transgression.²

The ritual is an action, and the significance of this action is drawn from its esthetic presentivity. This also applies to literature. The aspect of literature that generates esthetic significance is usually defined as “form” (inherent to rituals, as well as to literature). The Bielefeld school of rituality (directed by Wolfgang Braungart) underlines the ritual aspects of literature. Because understanding ritual is connected with esthetic explicitness, this school examines the ritual forms of literature. Ritual being a social act, rituality in literature implies a community: the writer and the reader take part in a symbolic community, even though the reader remains an independent individual. “Establishing a community by remaining an individual is the ritual secret of literature”, states Braungart.³ Our international research group “Rite, Theatre, and Literature”⁴ extended this original concept of “po-

² Erika FISCHER-LICHTE, „Színház és rítus”, trans. by Gabriella KISS, *Theatron* 6, Nos. 1–2. (2007): 3–12, 5.

³ Wolfgang BRAUNGART, „Ritual and Aesthetic Presentivity”, in SEPSI – DOMOKOS, eds., *Poetic Rituality* 13–27, 17.

⁴ More information about the research group: <http://www.kre.hu/portal/index.php/ritus->

etic rituality" to embodied ritual on stage, which I take as a conceptual frame.

On poetic rituality

In order to describe the different connections between the poetic text and the ritual executed on stage, in addition to the remarks and insights of the well-known authors, I shall use the relevant points of the Bielefeld-based researchers Wolfgang Braungart and Saskia Fischer, who have both worked on formulating the concept of poetic rituality. According to Braungart and Fischer, poetic rituality sheds light on the liminal characteristics of poetic as well as dramatic forms, and refers to ritual practices, forms, and structures which are set in motion in a way that allows new esthetic characteristics and semantic aspects to arise.⁵ Theatre becomes poetic (*poiesis*) due to their form and the manner of their construction, which broadens the possibilities of poetry. In reformulating Antonin Artaud, I would add that poetry, within the confines of a space – that is, the theatre –, uses the language of theatre as we experience it in our dreams, substituting ordinary meanings for others which form the basis of a metaphor. As theorist, director, and playwright Richard Schechner emphasizes in his essay "From ritual to theatre and back: the efficacy-entertainment braid", "so-called 'real events' are revealed as metaphors."⁶ Poetry (i.e. metaphorical signification and universal acts in a timeless construct) broadens the potentials of social ritu-

szinhaz-es-irodalom-cimu-kutatasi-projekt.html

⁵ Saskia FISCHER, „Poetic Rituality and Transculturality. Bertolt Brecht's Didactic Play *Die Maßnahme* (The Measures Taken)", in SEPSI – DOMOKOS, eds., *Poetic Rituality...*, 29–55, 23–25.

⁶ Richard SCHECHNER, "From ritual to theatre and back: the efficacy-entertainment braid," in *Performance Theory* 112–169 (London – New York: Routledge, 1988 [1977]), 128.

als toward the theatre, and represents the main characteristics of the so-called poetic theatres. In other words, poetry may appear as an organizational and temporal logic in ritual on stage, and, on the other hand, poetic (literary) texts can have ritualistic elements, such as repetition, performativity, etc.

"That means: poetic rituality describes a specific literary and dramatic adaptation of ritual patterns, types, genres, symbols, ways of speaking and phrases."⁷ The "poetic ritual" of art goes further, to become self-reflexive, self-questioning. The spectator approaches this self-enclosing object anamorphically, when it is a matter of ritual. In other words, it is only in being immersed in the rite that certain meanings become visible. To resume, we go beyond the anthropological (Schechner, Turner, etc.) approach of the subject by valuing the terms of "poetic" rituality. That perspective opens the interest towards the subject known thus far almost exclusively in the German-language-speaking area.

*The extensibility of poetic rituality
in terms of the afterlife of
János Pilinszky's theatrical vision*

In several writings and conversations, I have dealt with the theatrical vision of the Hungarian poet János Pilinszky, who was the most eminent figure of interrelating poetry and theatre to ritual in the 20th century. He summed up Grotowski's work in several essays, as well as Robert Wilson's first European performance, *Deafman Glance* in poems and in "a novel of a dialogue" which we can consider a highly sophisticated book of essays on theatre (*Conversations with Sheryl Sutton*). I have analyzed in detail the nature of poetic rituality in his encounter with Robert Wilson's work.⁸ Pilinszky's impact on Hun-

⁷ FISCHER, „Poetic Rituality...", 36–37.

⁸ Enikő SEPSI, „On Bearing Witness to a Poetic Ritual: Robert Wilson's *Deafman Glance* as seen by János Pilinszky", in *Poetic Images, Presence and the Theatre of Kenotic Rituals*,

garian poetry and the ritual approach to theatre has been recently examined.⁹

The concept of poetic ritual is a very useful guide because it makes contemporary performances approachable, such as Péter Dóczy's *I Think (Azt hiszem)*, compiled from poems, diary excerpts and prose of János Pilinszky, or the Magyarkanizsa performance of *Nighttime (Éjjel)* recently seen at MITEM,¹⁰ directed by Kinga Mezei (not her first time directing Pilinszky). The latter performance was framed by the Pilinszky poem *Apocrypha*, and a comprehensive artwork (*Gesamtkunstwerk*) performance was created with poems, music, dance, graphics, puppets, and masks to help depersonalize the play. I consider the creative process that the director-actor himself reported on to be remarkable from the perspective of the subject of our present study, namely that during the work on the performance, which otherwise worked with a lot of text, more and more texts were transformed into images, and texts disappeared or were simplified during the transformation into images. Even during the rehearsals, texts disappeared this way. Natural materials that appear in the scenography (wood, white linen sheets, mirrors on the back

103–114 (Routledge, London – New York, 2021); „On Bearing Witness to a Poetic Ritual: Robert Wilson's *Deafman Glance* as seen by János Pilinszky”, in *Text and Presentation 2017*, ed. by Jay MALARCHER, 167–179 (Jefferson: McFarland, 2018); SEPSI – DOMOKOS, eds., *Poetic Rituality...*, 135–148.

⁹ See SEPSI Enikő – MACZÁK Ibolya (eds.), *Pilinszky János színházi és filmes víziója ma* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, Károli Books, 2022). PRONTVAI Vera: *Költészet és ritualitás a kortárs magyar színházban. Vidnyánszky Attila rendezései és Visky András színpadra állított drámái*, PhD thesis with my supervision (Budapest: Pázmány Péter Catholic University, 2022). The thesis will be published in Károli Books by the end of 2023.

¹⁰ June 2019, Magyarkanizsa; September 2021, Budapest.

of the plate) are, without exception, stage materializations of materials that occur in Pilinszky texts. In other words, the presence of poetic ritual is evident not only in the plays written by Pilinszky immediately after the Wilson experience and in the poems born from the experience of the performance, but as an inherent part of the Pilinszky oeuvre as a whole.

The concept of poetic ritual also provides an opportunity to examine poetic oeuvres touched by Pilinszky's poetic and theatrical vision; for instance, Otto Tolnai's, especially the Pilinszky poetry cycle, for example the poem *Pilinszky kiskanala (Pilinszky's coffee spoon)*, which evokes Pilinszky's figure in action, tied to objects and rituals (small spoon, black coffee). The cognitive metaphor of the poem, which evokes the Pilinszky ritual of self-mockery (“Yugoslavs”), built around the color black and a small spoon, is the “stenciled” spoon, which circles the cup surrounding the cooled coffee. It is an image of mundaneness slowing down to freezing, a perfect and close-to-person ritualization of Pilinszky's motionless poetics.

Among the younger writers, we can highlight the poetry of Attila Jász, for example, the poem *Four-Handed with the Angel*, which evokes the *Four-Strings* of János Pilinszky.

iv, four-handed with the angel

Our selves shake the vacuum foliage of
our years,
cold light signals in a pack,
you left the fish alive in the tub,
forgive me for all my transgressions.
(Attila Jász: *Instead of resurrection*.
P/versions)

Attila Jász turns *Fabula* by János Pilinszky¹¹ into a children's tale in *The Wolf Man's Tale*

¹¹ „He stood all through the night, with wide eyes / and on into the morning when he was beaten to death.” János PILINSZKY, *The Desert of Love*, selected poems translated by János

(*Farkasember meséje*), where the wolf is not killed at the end. From Sándor Halmosi's latest volume of poems, *Neretva*, which has an apocalyptic tone, here are also a line or two having reminiscences of Pilinszky's poems: "How could we not live / with the grace of suffering? To put such an animal face on this angelic/frame, how dare we?" (*We couldn't*);¹² "A scandal that is never finite" (*Mountain of Skulls*).¹³ The method of questioning, the short montages, the oxymoron-based editing method, the alliteration-based tuning of the source, the enumeration of actions, and the prompts are the main features of these performative texts.

In my previous writings, I compared János Pilinszky's theatrical idea, which includes poetic elements, with Mallarmé's works, in that theatre is a place of "Thought" that reveals a succession of mental images and includes not only plays, but also a kind of poetic writing style, as well as reading as a mental staging.¹⁴ Under the influence of the action that takes place during the theatrical performance, philosophical thoughts appear as a result of the play. János Pilinszky's broadly construed 'theatre' includes not only lyrical and dramatic plays, but also poetic writing as an imaginary theatre in the Mallarméan sense, as well as reading as a stage.¹⁵

The phenomenon of poetic ritual in the afterlife, draws attention, in my view, to the fact that we have come across the fundamental characteristic and structure of the Pilinszky oeuvre as a whole, which also pro-

CSOKITS and Ted HUGHES (London: Anvil Press, 1989), 50.

¹² *Nem tudtunk*.

¹³ *Koponyák hegye*.

¹⁴ Enikő SEPSI, *Le théâtre de János Pilinszky lu dans l'optique de Mallarmé, Simone Weil et Robert Wilson* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2014), 35–36.

¹⁵ SEPSI Enikő, *Pilinszky János mozdulatlan színháza Mallarmé, Simone Weil és Robert Wilson műveinek tükrében* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2015), 27–30.

vides a key to why he tried to integrate the film and theatrical genres into the poem.¹⁶

*Poetic ritual in contemporary
Hungarian theatre: Ottó Tolnai,
Szilárd Borbély, and Attila Vidnyánszky*

Ottó Tolnai, Hungarian poet and dramaturg from Palics (Palić, Serbia), who was a considerable inspiration for the metaphors in Josef Nadj's performances, can also be considered as a significantly inspiring source of poetic and ritualistic theatre, where metaphors in space (Artaud) are the key elements of theatrical performances. *Roses*, for instance, directed by András Urbán in 2010 in Subotica, based on *Rose of Chişinău* [*Kisinyovi rózsa*], a poem by Ottó Tolnai, was an almost wordless performance.

Some of Vidnyánszky's directions and part of András Visky's dramas have their roots in mystery plays, miracula or passion plays, originating from much before the socialist realist era of forty years, as well as from the creative theatrical vision of János Pilinszky in the 20th century.¹⁷

Funeral Pomp (*Pompa funebris*) is the stage-writing and pictorial representation of Szilárd Borbély's poems. It focuses on the problem of the human body experiencing violence. The performance is based on the tragedy of Szilárd Borbély's parents and the volumes of the Debrecen poet *Death Splendor, Sidelines of a Murder*, and *While the Jesus of Our Hearts Sleeps* (*Halotti pompa, Egy gyilkosság mellékszálai, Míg alszik szívünk Jézuskája*). The textual recitation of the montage-like poems depicted in the stage picture is only one element in addition to gestures and movements, as well as an intense musical

¹⁶ See SEPSI Enikő, „Pilinszky színházi és filmes víziójának továbbélése versben, papírszínházban és színpadon”, in *Pilinszky János színházi és filmes víziója ma*, 11–25.

¹⁷ SZÉKELY György, „Misztériumok a Nemzeti Színházban 1924–1942”, *Irodalomtörténet* 86, No. 3. (2005): 297–308.

background, a chorus of actors and intense sound effects. *Funeral Pomp* is a spatial description of Borbély's poems and poem fragments enriched with tribunal reports, which, according to the creators of the performance, "become concrete situations on stage, while also being very metaphorical."¹⁸

In the center of the ceremonial space organized and directed by Attila Vidnyánszky, murderous acts, death cries, depictions, and body separations take place. The first stage image is a giant puppet lying in a horizontal position, from which death is recognized. Then his head is set on fire, it is dismembered, and his body parts are dissected, while the mourning ceremony, arranged for the stage, begins. The dissection table set up on the stage is a place with metaphorical meaning, a space of the sacrifice: an altar where the mutilation of human bodies takes place. After that, with the murder of the elderly parents (Anna Ráckevei and Sándor Csikos), the presentation of various versions of violent death in stage pictures begins. Parents, waiting for their son to arrive home at Christmas, are killed by actors turned from nativity characters into murderers, the faces of the elderly man and woman sticking to the window glass, which becomes bloody the moment the violent act is committed. The spiritual paralysis caused by the murder is reinforced in the work by sequence VII, played in the voice of Szilárd Borbély, which is a textual repetition of the meaningless concept of redemption: "He does not move, he listens, he does not forgive, / and he is never resurrected again."¹⁹ The meaning of sacrifice is called into question, as well as redemption.

After the scandal of Auschwitz, the idea of the gospel message becoming weightless is

¹⁸ "Térbeli költészet. Debreceni Csokonai Színház: *Halotti pompa*. Vidnyánszky Attila rendezővel és Rideg Zsófia dramaturggal Molnár Klára beszélget", *A Vörös Postakocsi*, Summer (2009): 9.

¹⁹ BORBÉLY Szilárd, *Halotti pompa* (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2014), 36.

one of the defining questions in Borbély's oeuvre. The inertia against vulnerability and the suggestion of the meaninglessness of life – as defining experiences of existence – accompany the performance, and in light of the anticipation of the closing scene, each situation bears traces of an absent presence. The central scene of *Funeral Pomp* is not the murder of the parents, but the reference to redemption, the stage image, and the cross that appears against the backdrop of the Jews heading to Auschwitz. Under the influence of the metaphor's workings (every human body that has suffered violence can be identified with the body of the dead Christ), the characters on the stage portray their self-imposed resolution of their captivity as images of Christ.

The simultaneous display of Christian and Hassidic traditions in *Funeral Pomp*, with the already *here* and the *not yet-to-come*, maintains a metaphorical discourse of the absence of Christ.²⁰ The sign system of the theatrical performance is based on clues that come from the only dead one, Christ, who is not present, marked by different corps or bodies. The cross behind the backs of the Jews in the wagon on stage flashes the reading that the evil that has happened in the world can only be conceived in the consciousness of redemption. Although the main figure is not present on stage, he is replaced by various body events, metamorphoses and mutilations, hinting that in every death his death is repeated again (*imitation Christi*); to quote Borbély: "The Newborn has blood flowing / every day into streams".²¹

Funeral Pomp carries the mourning of the human lives that have been extinguished or intended to be extinguished, mourning the extinction of every human life that ends with a violent death, where the nativity scenes

²⁰ See PRONTVAI Vera, „A sebzetség esztétikuma: a hiátus szerepe a *Halotti pompa* színrevitelében”, *Alföld* 70, No. 7. (2019): 78–84, 82.

²¹ BORBÉLY, *Halotti pompa*, 71.

turn from one scene to the next into murder scenes. The nativity play turns into a dance of death, and then into a mourning ceremony.

András Visky

Szcenárium, a journal created by the creative workshop organized around the National Theatre in Budapest,²² regularly analyzes the works of director Attila Vidnyánszky, and deals with some studies published in other forums, including the volume entitled *The Poetic Theatre (A költői színház)*²³, the writings of István Bessenyei-Gedő, Edina Sin, Gábor Turi, and Balázs Urbán,²⁴ and the intertwining of poetry and ritual in the performances he organizes has not yet been thoroughly investigated. Being a creator who is also engaged in theatre studies, Visky writes about the characteristics of what he calls *poetic theatre*, and the appearances of ritual

²² The artistic journal of the National Theatre is edited by Ágnes Pálfi and Zsolt Szász.

²³ KORNIA István (ed.), *A költői színház. Hét évad a Csokonai Színházban – 2006–2013* (Debrecen: Csokonai Színház, 2013).

²⁴ BESSENYEI GEDŐ István, „»Halál! Hol a te fullánkod?« Dedramatizáló törekvések Vidnyánszky Attila rendezéseiben (1. rész)”, *Szcenárium* 1, No. 2. (2013): 5–19; BESSENYEI GEDŐ István „»Halál! Hol a te fullánkod?« Dedramatizáló törekvések Vidnyánszky Attila rendezéseiben (2. rész)”, *Szcenárium* 1, No. 3. (2013): 24–42; PRONTVAI Vera, „Megérinteni vagy meghaladni Istent? A metafizikai színház jellemzőinek vizsgálata a *Mesés férfiak* című színelőadásban”, in ZILA Gábor, ed., *Uram, hogy lássak*, 251–261 (Budapest: Doktoranduszok Országos Szövetsége, 2016); SIN Edina, „Vázlat a Vidnyánszky Attila-féle költői színházról”, *Studia Litteraria* 53, Nos. 1–2. (2014): 88–100; TURI Gábor, „Költészet a színpadon (A Vidnyánszky-korszak mérlege)”, *Hitel* 28, No. 8. (2015): 110–121; URBÁN Balázs, „Líra és epika Vidnyánszky Attila színházában”, *Színház* 51, No. 4 (2018): 19–22.

theatrical forms.²⁵ The author who lives in Cluj-Napoca, is analyzed in three volumes (*As One Sees the Voice*,²⁶ *Memories of the Body*²⁷, and *Side Hustle*²⁸) but his staged dramas have not been presented from the perspective of poetry and rhythmic aspects of poetry.

In Visky's poetic theatre, cognitive metaphors (Johnsson and Lakoff), and various manifestations that permeate the entirety of the stage language, drive the workings of the composition of the performances. The theatre, in Visky's words, becomes a communal event “in which all of us, spectators and actors, participate with similar intensity as in an Easter ceremony, and just like there, the one we killed ends up confronting us.”²⁹ Metaphor in the Schechnerian sense becomes a real event, the viewer's involvement is expected, and the reception is anamorphic.

The number of ten characters staged in *Born for never (Visszaszületés)* also refers to one form of punishment, decimation (the condemnation of one in ten people to death), and is also a recurring rite in Visky's works. The tithes, that appear in the Old Testament law, are due to the God of all things. Interpreted from this point of view, the existence of the Nameless, that is, the tenth man, is inherently resistant to unbelief.³⁰ In *Disciples*,

²⁵ András VISKY, *Mire való a színház? Útban a theatrum theologicum felé* (Budapest: KRE – L'Harmattan, 2020).

²⁶ *Mint aki látja a hangot. Visky Andrásal beszélget Sipos Márta* (Budapest: Harmat, 2009).

²⁷ Jozefina KOMPORALY, ed., *Andrew Visky's Barrack Dramaturg: Memories of the Body* (Bristol, UK – Chicago, USA: Intellect, 2017).

²⁸ SEPSI Enikő – TÓTH Sára, eds., *Mellézkörej, Írások Visky András 60. születésnapjára* (Budapest: KRE – L'Harmattan, 2017).

²⁹ VISKY András, “A kudarc”, in SEPSI – MACZÁK (eds.) *Pilinszky János színházi és filmes víziója ma*, 38.

³⁰ “Without fail you should give a tenth of all the produce of your seed, that which comes forth of the field year by year. And before

the recollections of John and Thomas bring the decimation to life:

“JOHN VLADIMIR: There are two possible cases: when calculating, either you have to say the ten or I have to do it.

THOMAS ESTRAGON: So far stimmt.

JOHN VLADIMIR: If I had to tell you, I'll cut in front of you, step out of line, and shout ten. It's a matter of concentration. This is a classic concentration exercise. There was an example of it.”³¹

Fischer-Lichte, in his book *The Aesthetics of Performativity*, analyzes the performative process and the transformation associated with the rite at length. Although we have attempted to measure empathetic inclusion ourselves,³² the instrumental measurement of the degree of involvement is difficult, due to several factors. In the words of András Visky: “A work of art extracts itself from the order of measurable things. For it is not the intelligible, but the incomprehensible; not the measurable, but the immeasurable that

Jehovah, in the place that he will choose to have his name reside there, you must eat the tenth part of your grain, your new wine, your oil and the firstborn ones of your herd and of your flock; in order that you may learn to fear Jehovah your God always.” *Deuteronomy*, 14, 22-23 (New World Translation, 1984).

³¹ VISKY, *A szökés. Három dráma* (Kolozsvár: Koinónia, 2006), 112.

³² SEPSI Enikő, „A művészetbefogadás pszichofiziológiai vizsgálatának lehetőségei (irodalom, színház, film)”, in LÁZÁR Imre, ed., *A társas-lelki és művészeti folyamatok pszichofiziológiája* (Budapest: L'Harmattan – Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, 2019), 293–299; SEPSI Enikő – KASEK Roland – LÁZÁR Imre, „Művészeti befogadás pszichofiziológiai vizsgálata Noldus Facereader segítségével”, in LÁZÁR Imre, ed., *Érzelmek élettana járvány idején* (Budapest, L'Harmattan – Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, 2022), 212–227.

is the world of art.”³³ In the case of theatrical performance, “the most valuable sign of the real impact of the performance is the returning spectator.”³⁴

Visky, in his chair lecture at the Széchenyi Academy of Literature and Art, described the *circle of transformation* he envisioned, which he considers to be key when analyzing contemporary ritual theatrical performances. In describing the transformation process, Visky captures the process that takes place in the present time of the theatrical performance and also affects the people gathered in that space.³⁵ The center of *the circle of transformation*, he sees, is the theatrical realization of the *founding event*, the trinity of form and meaning, which carries the possibility of transitioning into a transcendent reality in a theatrical medium, where stage presence depends on the nature of allusions (one of János Pilinszky's ideas³⁶). Making the invisible visible is also articulated by Brook when he writes in *The Empty Space* that *holy theatre* not only presents the invisible, but also offers conditions (silence) that make its perception possible. *The circle of transformation* also makes the invisible perceptible in Visky's reading, placing the fragmentariness of man in the mirror of timelessness.

The poetic and theatrical worlds of Térey, Visky, and Tolnai are characterized by the omission of traditional drama texts, the marginalization of psychologizing theatrical attitudes, the lack of traditional plot direction and conflict, and the marginalization of

³³ VISKY, *Mire való a színház?*, 234.

³⁴ Ibid. 70.

³⁵ It was delivered in the Small Hall of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences on March 2, 2016 with the title *What is a playwright? The Creative Freedom Inherent in Anonymity*. An outline of the lecture can also be found online: https://mta.hu/data/dokumentumok/szima/szekfoglalok/Visky_Andras_Mi_a_dramaturg.pdf Accessed October 5, 2022.

³⁶ PILINSZKY János, *Publicisztikai írások* (Budapest: Osiris, 1999), 535.

the unraveling of causal relationships. In the theatrical performances associated with their name, the creation of tension constructed by associations, the montage-like alternation of the stage image, the elaboration of moods and states, the expanded moments, the perception of timelessness, and the musicality and the rhythmicity of the performance play a decisive role.

In the works of both Vidnyánszky and Visky, the boundary between the events taking place in the present and the past disappears by entering the central cognitive metaphor(s), the performance based on metaphors becomes metonymic, showing the part-whole relationship. The metaphor written in the stage space becomes part of real life in the human body. In Lehmann's words, "in the metonymic relation or contingent, the stage space, the main definition of which is not that it symbolically represents another fictional world, but that it is highlighted and filled as a real part or continuation of the theatrical space, can be called metonymic."³⁷

János Térey

The playwright Térey performs his lifeless, soulless puppet characters in *Table Music* (*Asztalizene*) at the White Cube restaurant in Buda. The empty, bloodless immobility of the characters, reflected in computer games, is greatly heightened by the character of the text's speech opera, as well as by the in-depth dialogue of the text with the dramaturgy of the musical score from Ernst Jandl to Thomas Bernhard: the dramaturgy (*allegro, andante, presto*), articulated into musical movements, reaches the emotional state of the actor from the intonation, and not from the psychological path, following the path of Meyerhold, and not that of Stanislavsky.

³⁷ Hans-Thies LEHMANN, *Posztdramatikus színház*, trans. by BEREZ ZSUZSA, KRISZTÓF BEATRIX, SCHEIN GÁBOR (Budapest, Balassi, 2009), 178.

The theatrical world premiere of *Table Music* in the Radnóti Theatre³⁸, which was worthy of considerable theatrical success, was not followed by further presentations, although both the theatrical and literary receptions celebrated Térey's dramatic poem unreservedly. It is as if the presentation and professional success achieved by the sometimes distinctly parading cast and inspired directorial work have failed these works at the same time, dooming them to the fate of a "book drama" that can only be interpreted in a very problematic way in the sense of theatrical history. We can agree with András Visky who states: "What, therefore, in our view, resists the theatrical birth of dramatic poems or poetic dramas in general, is psychological realist dominance, as well as the tyrannical documentary fetish..."³⁹

Instead of a Conclusion

Erika Fischer-Lichte emphasizes the transformative role of the rite when examining its theatrical occurrence; the transition between self-states. This really connects the social and artistic rites, but at the same time, the optionality of participation in the theatre is striking. As a conclusion, it can certainly be argued that in the outlined cases of poetic ritual, the viewer has a way of participating or keeping a distance, but certain meanings do not appear without involvement. We could say, as a conclusion drawn from our previous researches, that empathy plays a greater role in embracing the arts than previously thought,⁴⁰ and even more in these shortly analyzed cases, where the realist theatrical tradition does not help the reception. The absence of self-awareness differentiates dramatic identification from empathy, because someone striving for empathetic understanding "only surrenders the bounda-

³⁸ Date of premiere: 19.10.2007.

³⁹ VISKY, *Mire való a színház*, 58.

⁴⁰ SEPSI – KASEK – LÁZÁR, „Művészeti befogadás...”

ries of his ego occasionally, for some instants,⁴¹ while in the course of identification, his ego retires completely to the background. Identification pushed to the point of loss of self as the utmost form of involvement is, however, a highly contested idea in current affect theories in the psychology of Art (seeking self-reflective emotional responses to Art). Scholarly literature often differentiates empathy from sympathy as affective and cognitive empathy, and shows some similarity with mentalization (attributing a certain state to others or ourselves). It remains to be investigated whether anamorphism might also function as an analytical principle, according to which an author's intended or hidden meaning only reveals itself from a certain interpretive perspective. Empathy, as Béla Buda defined it in relation to the arts, may assist the interpreter in discovering the proper interpretive perspective.

Peter Brook points out that with *the poetic theatre* that once lived an active life (which he mentions in parallel with the concept of "sacred theatre") neither theatrical creators nor the spectators can now do anything about it, and poetic drama is also treated with reservation, since "it is halfway between prose and opera, neither spoken nor sung, although it is performed in a more elevated tone than prose, and its content is also more elevated, its moral value is also somehow higher"⁴². Brook's insight indicates that while the interweaving of poetry and theatre broadens the frames of theatre, this theatrical form language is difficult to define and grasp. Strong arguments in favor of *poetic theatre* could not be made by the reception in Hungary either⁴³, and the frequency of chapters

on the history of Hungarian theatre dealing with the interaction of theatre and poetry is negligible in the Hungarian reception. According to Edina Sin, "Examining the classical Hungarian theatrical history and theoretical works, it can be seen that there is no strong outline of the poetic theatre forming among the Hungarian dramaturgical traditions."⁴⁴ The works of our research group are one of the first tentatives.

Bibliography

- „Térbeli költészet. Debreceni Csokonai Színház: *Halotti pompa*. Vidnyánszky Attila rendezővel és Rideg Zsófia dramaturggal Molnár Klára beszélget". *A Vörös Postakocsi*, Summer (2009): 6–12.
- BÉCSY Tamás. „Ami megnyilatkozik, és ami rejtve marad". *Színház* 20, No. 7. (1987): 27–32.
- BESSENYEI GEDŐ István. „»Halál! Hol a te fulánkod?« Dedramatizáló törekvések Vidnyánszky Attila rendezéseiben (1. rész)". *Szcenárium* 1, No. 2. (2013): 5–19.
- BESSENYEI GEDŐ István. „»Halál! Hol a te fulánkod?« Dedramatizáló törekvések Vidnyánszky Attila rendezéseiben (2. rész)". *Szcenárium* 1, No. 3. (2013): 24–42.
- BORBÉLY Szilárd. *Halotti pompa*. Pozsony: Kalligram, 2014.
- BRAUNGART, Wolfgang. „Ritual and Aesthetic Presentivity". In *Poetic Rituality in Theatre and Literature*. Edited by Enikő SEPSI and Johanna DOMOKOS, 13–27. Budapest:

the innermost level of drama in the play is not able to manifest itself, what manifests itself from the work, is the issue of love relationships, which, now viewed from here, is more than just who was the lover of whom and how she reconciled." Tamás BÉCSY: "Ami megnyilatkozik, és ami rejtve marad", *Színház* 20, No. 7. (1987): 27–32, 29.

⁴⁴ SIN Edina, "Vázlat a Vidnyánszky Attila-féle költői színházról", *Studia Litteraria* 53, Nos. 1–2. (2014): 88–100, 92.

⁴¹ BUDA Béla, *Empátia. A beleélés lélektana* (Budapest: L'Harmattan – Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, 2012), 312–324.

⁴² PETER Brook, *Az üres tér*, trans. by Anna KOÓS (Budapest, Európa, 1972), 57.

⁴³ Tamás Bécsy also gets into trouble with the premiere of T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party* in the Castle Theatre in Budapest: "Since

- L'Harmattan – Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, 2020.
<https://doi.org/10.56037/978-2-343-21928-8>
- BROOK, Peter. *Az üres tér*. Translated by KOÓS Anna. Budapest: Európa Kiadó, 1972.
- BUDA Béla. *Empátia. A beleélés lélektana*. Budapest: L'Harmattan – Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, 2012.
- DOMOKOS Johanna – SEPSI Enikő. *Poetic Rituality in Theatre and Literature*. Budapest – Paris: L'Harmattan – Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, 2020.
<https://doi.org/10.56037/978-2-343-21928-8>
- FISCHER, Saskia. „Poetic Rituality and Transculturality. Bertolt Brecht's Didactic Play *Die Maßnahme* (The Measures Taken)”. In *Poetic Rituality in Theatre and Literature*. Edited by Enikő SEPSI and Johanna DOMOKOS, 29–55. Budapest: L'Harmattan – Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.56037/978-2-343-21928-8>
- FISCHER-LICHTE, Erika. „Színház és rítus”. Translated by KISS Gabriella, *Theatron* 6, Nos. 1–2. (2007): 3–12.
- KOMPORALY, Jozefina, ed. *Andrew Visky's Barack Dramaturgy: Memories of the Body*. Bristol, UK – Chicago, USA: Intellect, 2017.
- KORNIA István, ed. *A költői színház. Hét évad a Csokonai Színházban. 2006–2013*. Debrecen: Csokonai Színház, 2013.
- LEHMANN, Hans-Thies. *Posztdramatikus színház*. Translated by BERECS Zsuzsa, KRICSFALUSI Beatrix, SCHEIN Gábor, Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2009.
- PILINSZKY János. *Publicisztikai írások*. Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 1999.
- PILINSZKY János. *The Desert of Love*. Translated by CSOKITS János and Ted HUGHES. London: Anvil Press, 1989.
- PRONTVAI Vera. *Költészet és ritualitás a kortárs magyar színházban. Vidnyánszky Attila rendezései és Visky András színpadra állított drámái*. PhD thesis, Budapest: Pázmány Péter Catholic University, 2022.
- PRONTVAI Vera. „A sebzettség esztétikuma: a hiátus szerepe a *Halotti pompa* színrevitelében”. *Alföld* 40, No. 7, (2019): 78–84.
- PRONTVAI Vera. „Megérinteni vagy meghaladni Istent? A metafizikai színház jellemzőinek vizsgálata a *Mesés férfiak* című színelőadásban”. In „*Uram, hogy lássak*”. Edited by ZILA Gábor, 251–261. Budapest: Doktoranduszok Országos Szövetsége, 2016.
- SCHECHNER, Richard. *Performance Theory*. London – New York: Routledge, 1988 [1977].
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203361887>
- SEPSI Enikő – MACZÁK Ibolya, eds. *Pilinszky János színházi és filmes víziója ma*. Budapest: L'Harmattan – Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, 2022.
- SEPSI Enikő – KASEK Roland – LÁZÁR Imre. „Művészeti befogadás pszichofiziológiai vizsgálata Noldus Facereader segítségével”. In *Érzelmek élettana járvány idején*. Edited by LÁZÁR Imre, 212–227. Budapest: L'Harmattan – Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, 2022.
- SEPSI Enikő. „A művészetbefogadás pszichofiziológiai vizsgálatának lehetőségei (irodalom, színház, film)”. In *A társas-lelki és művészeti folyamatok pszichofiziológiája*. Edited by LÁZÁR Imre, 293–299. Budapest: L'Harmattan – Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, 2019.
- SEPSI Enikő. „On Bearing Witness to a Poetic Ritual: Robert Wilson's *Deafman Glance* as seen by János Pilinszky”. In *Text and Presentation 2017*. Edited by Jay MALARCHER, 167–179, Jefferson: McFarland, 2018.
- SEPSI Enikő. *Le théâtre de János Pilinszky lu dans l'optique de Mallarmé, Simone Weil et Robert Wilson*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2014.
- SEPSI Enikő. *Pilinszky János mozdulatlan színháza Mallarmé, Simone Weil és Robert Wilson műveinek tükrében*. Budapest: L'Harmattan – Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, 2015.
- SEPSI Enikő. *Poetic images, Presence, and the Theatre of Kenotic Rituals*. London – New York: Routledge, 2021.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003163930>

- SIN Edina. „Vázlat a Vidnyánszky Attila-féle költői színházról”. *Studia Litteraria* 53, Nos. 1–2. (2014): 88–100.
<https://doi.org/10.37415/studia/2014/53/4030>
- SIPOS Márta. *Mint aki látja a hangot. Visky Andrással beszélget Sipos Márta*. Budapest: Harmat, 2009.
- SZÉKELY György. „Misztériumok a Nemzeti Színházban 1924–1942”. *Irodalomtörténet* 86, No. 3. (2005): 297–308.
- TURI Gábor. „Költészet a színpadon (A Vidnyánszky-korszak mérlege)”. *Hitel* 28, No. 8. (2015): 110–121.
<https://doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/14115>
- URBÁN Balázs. „Líra és epika Vidnyánszky Attila színházában”. *Színház* 51, No. 4. (2018): 19–22.
- VISKY András. „A kudarc”. In *Pilinszky János színházi és filmes víziója ma*. Edited by SEPSI Enikő and MACZÁK Ibolya, Budapest: L’Harmattan – Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, 2022.
- VISKY András. *Mi a dramaturg? A névtelen-ségben rejlő alkotói szabadság*. Akadémiai székfoglaló előadás kivonata, accessed: 2022. 10. 05,
https://mta.hu/data/dokumentumok/szima/szekfoglalok/Visky_Andras_Mi_a_dramaturg.pdf.
- VISKY András. *Mire való a színház? Útban a theatrum theologicum felé*. Budapest: L’Harmattan – Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, 2020.
- VISKY, András. *A szökés. Három drama*. Kolozsvár: Koinónia, 2006.