

In the World of Potentiality: Gombrowicz, Pinter, Beckett, and Różewicz

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This article attempts to analyze Witold Gombrowicz's, Harold Pinter's, Samuel Beckett's, and Tadeusz Różewicz's works by using methods that are associated with performative literary studies. The author refers to concepts of quantum physics and introduces a new aesthetic category, "entangled arts". Among these arts are, for example, drama and theater, which are seen from an anti-binary perspective. This approach eliminates the traditional division of arts into the art of literature and performing arts, thus leading us to look on literature as a performing art. Therefore, the idea of "entangled arts" is not about "the synthesis of arts", but about their unresolvedness and an act of reading which requires one to simultaneously exist and be active in two (or more, potentiality) different realities, for example, in a digital and imagined world, or in film and on stage.

KEYWORDS: potentiality, performative literary studies, quantum entanglement, entangled arts, anti-binary aesthetics

Gombrowicz's *The Marriage* – indefinite world in a performative manner

Witold Gombrowicz wrote *The Marriage* in 1947. But let us start with Tadeusz Kantor's *Ślub w manierze konstruktywistycznej i surrealistycznej* [Marriage in a Constructivist and Surrealist Manner]. According to scholars, this cricotage, created in 1986 in Milan as a study piece, was meant to demonstrate how the principles of constructivist theater could be applied to a naturalistic wedding ceremony staged by Kantor's students. Kantor chose the topic of the workshop and placed his construction-machine for acting in the theater space. The students came up with the idea of staging a wedding ceremony. Everything that took place next was defined by the title of the emerging play. Kantor, as most critics argue, wanted to demonstrate how constructivism could help create modern theater, how constructivism could provide it with a foundation and sources.

Paweł Stangret points out that Kantor's "classes could be described as lectures on the history of art" and as such the artist "confronted his students with the problem of knowledge." He delivered a lecture on constructivism

and urged his students to rebel. As Stangret writes, the artist urged his students, for example, to write manifestos which would criticize surrealism or constructivism. “Constructivism, in its proper form, could be used to criticize the mannerisms of Italian actors. While the director accepted the stereotype of the ceremony, he did not want to show typical wedding traditions. He did not want acting to be mimetic or naturalistic, as he put it. The spectacle was real in a unique way; it was real because workers acted out the nuptials. The actors were family members of the bride and the groom, but they also had to position themselves in relation to the machine for acting/stage design and the objects that defined them.”¹

It seems that we can interpret *Ślub w manierze konstruktywistycznej i surrealistycznej* in a different perspective still. In the title, the emphasis is on the word *maniera* [manner], which drives an interpretative and semantic wedge between the ceremony and the adopted poetics, that is the poetics of constructivism. The word manner undermines both the notion of a wedding (a wedding should not be “manneristic”) and the meaning of constructivism (mannerism in art refers to a sense of decline, reverberation, echo, an unnatural and degenerated convention). If the title read *Ślub w stylu konstruktywistycznym* [Marriage in a Constructivist Style], everything would be “fine.” Mannerism implies distance, reserve; it is ironic. The word manner undermines the “seriousness” of the wedding, its significance. It interrupts, similarly to a parabasis, similarly to some unfinished half-thought, the metonymic connection between the object and the style in and through which it is expressed. We do not trust mannerism. Mannerism is suspicious. And consequently, the wedding turns out to be somewhat strange, and constructivism turns out to be somewhat suspicious.

The Marriage has over the years given rise to different readings, different interpretations. We can speak of a psychoanalytical marriage (Jan Błoński), a philosophical marriage (Janusz Margański), a phenomenological marriage (Miłoslawa Bukowska-Schiemann), marriage in the world of games (Jerzy Jarzębski), a doomsday marriage (Michał Paweł Markowski), and a nihilistic marriage (Michał Januszkiewicz) ... Indeed, so many marriages ... In 1996, I proposed a theatrical and epistemological interpretation of *The Marriage* as a tragedy of being unable to leave the stage. At that time, I wrote: “The theater has captured the characters and the audience, arrested them in a spherical trap. The obscure church is almost an illusion, a hallucination, but it is also part of the stage design, and its conventional walls were designed by the scenographer.” I focused in my interpretation, among other things, on the metaphor of the “veil” – from two perspectives –

¹ P. Stangret, *Zarażanie* [Infecting], “Teatr” 2010, no. 4, p. 68.

as seen in the phenomenological revealing of the world and as a front curtain which, rising and falling, marks the epistemological horizon of a man who is trapped on the stage, stuck in-between the scenes performed in a theater without the world.² Today, referring to my earlier findings, I would like to argue that a performative interpretation of *The Marriage* allows us to better explain and define these theatrical intuitions and interpretations.

Indeed, the phenomenological notion of a reality that emerges in and through our inquiry resembles the performative creation of a world in and through our words, actions, gestures, and images. The relationship between phenomenology and performativity should be explored in greater detail in a separate article. Reality does not exist as a clearly defined stage that is external to us, as reflected and experienced in the “theater of representation”; in deed, this ever-changing real unreality is being performed – with our participation – in a million different ways. We have created a world / We have questioned a world. Gombrowicz said that *The Marriage* is a play about anxiety, not in psychological terms but as defined by Søren Kierkegaard in *The Concept of Anxiety*. “Innocence is ignorance. (...) Spirit is dreaming in the human being. (...) In this state there is peace and repose, but at the same time there is something else, something that is not dissension and strife, for there is nothing against which to strive. What, then, is it? Nothing. But what effect does nothing have? It begets anxiety. This is the profound secret of innocence, that at the same time it is anxiety. Dreaming, spirit projects its own actuality, yet this actuality is nothing, but innocence always sees this nothing outside itself. (...) Awake, the difference between myself and my other [*mit Andet*] is posited; sleeping, it is suspended; dreaming, it is nothing hinted at. Spirit’s actuality appears constantly as a form that tempts its possibility but disappears as soon as it reaches out for it, and is a nothing that can only bring unease.”³ We can clearly see how Kierkegaard’s reflections inform the interpretation of Gombrowicz’s *The Marriage*. In the play, in a strange half-dream, Henryk is standing on the empty stage where reality appears to him, as Kierkegaard puts it, “constantly as a form that tempts its possibility but disappears as soon as [he] reaches out for it, and is a nothing that can only bring unease.” Gombrowicz repeats – re-writes – Kierkegaard’s anxiety.

Gombrowicz’s play provokes new interpretations. It is not stable, fixed; it eludes description, as its status is complicated by the history of theatrical weddings, especially Wyspiański’s *Wedding*, as well as the almost canonical staging of *The Marriage* directed by Jerzy Jarocki, and, above all, by philo-

² A. Krajewska, *Dramat i teatr absurdu w Polsce* [Drama and the Theatre of the Absurd in Poland], Poznań 1996, pp. 158–178.

³ S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, trans. A. Hannay, New York 1996, pp. 50–51.

sophical references, especially considering the new face of the humanities after the performative turn.

Interpreting Witold Gombrowicz's play today through the prism of performance studies seems so obvious that it is probably not even worth the effort. Therefore, to draw on Jon McKenzie's principle "perform or else,"⁴ we can ask ourselves whether we are still discovering a new interpretation or using an approach that is no longer innovative?

If we assume that Henryk performatively creates the world by means of words, then the performative understood in this way, reminiscent of Austin's "how to do things with words," does not help us interpret Gombrowicz's play. Calling one's father "a pig," "tapping one's fingers," and "a face-pulling duel" point to the performative creation of social reality. In this approach, performance studies at best opens the door to perhaps "refreshed" yet old conclusions and anachronistic interpretations, explaining how the interpersonal is created through the play of forms. We still cling to the interpretative stereotype of interactivity as a play of forms which encloses us in artificial social theatricalization. And this form of theatricalization, it should be pointed out, is somewhat reminiscent of Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, where the point of reference is the naturalistic theater with the stage, a clear division into the frontstage and the backstage, the concept of the actor as the one who plays a predetermined role, creates a predetermined character, etc.

In my opinion, however, this observation does not end the discussion but opens a theatrical Pandora's box. In *The Marriage*, Gombrowicz simultaneously uses as many as three different perspectives. From the perspective of the audience member, the play is the *topos* of the theater as the world (reality – the world – is shown on the stage). From Henryk's point of view, this is a dramatic struggle between man and the resistant, difficult, untamed matter of reality, which is created in and through Henryk's actions (he brings it to life); alas, it also tries to shape Henryk in return (it brings the protagonist to life). The third perspective is offered by the author's introductory note, in which he explained the idea behind the play, briefly described the plot, and offered his acting and directing tips. This perspective is associated with the world of literature, the reader, and, at the same time, the playwright. It reveals that Gombrowicz is playing with the expectations of the reader, who does not expect to find the author's comments in the play, nor does he see the need to be told what the play is about (akin to the libretto in the opera). The reader also does not want to follow the director's

⁴ J. McKenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance*, London and New York 2001.

instructions listed after the “characters” page. Thus, the third perspective is associated with writing, with the reader; it only appears to exist outside the drama. Thus, we are talking about not two but three theaters.

The traditional “theater of representation” (defined both as a theatrical performance and as a question of representation) falls apart before our eyes. Henryk cannot leave the stage; caught up in artificiality, decoration, delusion, he dramatically plays out this epistemological tragedy in search of the truth. However, it can also be said that in order to challenge the theater as a synonym of artifice and play, Henryk, in search of authenticity, resorts to performance (he tries to create what he is also watching). After all, this self-reflexive act of Henryk, who is creating and re-creating things, may be read as a loop which binds his life to the lives of other characters. However, Henryk still does not leave the stage. The reality that is being transformed by him is not real. It is only the product of the performance machine placed on the stage by Gombrowicz. Henryk’s actions are at the same time tragic and manneristic, real and artificial.

Gombrowicz creates the world performatively time and again; theatricality and performativity, as antinomies, regard one another distrustfully. Henryk “tests” the shape of the world in a theatrical and in a performative manner, because, in my opinion, both may be found in the play: sometimes Henryk is theatrical (he strikes artificial, theatrical poses; he makes exaggerated, dramatic gestures; he assigns roles and reveals his directorial tendencies), and at other times, he performs, as if feeling that there is no outside that could extend before him or lurk behind him. So, he puts himself to the test. As a performer, struggling to define the ontological status of the world and his own identity, he is not afraid to reveal his vulnerability. That is why he interacts with Others (even if he suspects that he has created them, insofar as they are the products of his imagination). Through such actions, Henryk changes the status of reality – he renders it indefinite, problematic, and ambiguous.

The audience is thus presented with the play in a performative manner – it demonstrates how in and through performance (alas still on the theater stage) Henryk cannot reach the truth. Is there a way out of this loop?

It seems that Gombrowicz not only wrote a play about an epistemological trap but also caught us in it. He offered us false leads (they are real only in a given world, the internal world of the theater stage). Henryk, searching for reality and truth, did not define the situation in which he found himself, he did not acquire knowledge, he did not create a clear image of the world, and ultimately failed to define himself. Henryk stopped before the orchestra pit, got caught up in the fabric of the front curtain, did not come out of his internal world into the expected authentic, external, real world.

He cannot leave the theater without the world. He is stuck in the manner of performance – he acts in order to reach the truth but, in fact, he only acts. He never leaves the stage.

Thus, the topos of the theater as the world falls apart and Henryk's performance is but a mannerism. Gombrowicz further played with *The Marriage* by introducing the third perspective. He showed a world created performatively.

I agree with Michał Paweł Markowski when, trying to apply theatrical terminology to the notion of Gombrowicz's deformed world, he writes that: "Social interaction is possible when actors appear on the stage – as performers, they know who they are even before they start acting. With Gombrowicz, it is the other way around. Nobody knows who they are, not only at the beginning but also at the end."⁵ Markowski stops halfway before he reaches the horizon of performativity. Paradoxically, precisely when he refers to theatrical terms. He writes: "texts also expose us to the incomprehensibility of life." Markowski insightfully comments on the term "the staged world" in his book. Unfortunately, the primary meaning of the term, that is, the meaning of "staged" as in shown/performed on the stage, is not explored. Thus, to return to Markowski's observation, man can be "exposed to the incomprehensible spectacle of the world," but also the world itself, as I once wrote, can be theatrical, that is, staged like a play, like a drama, artificial like an old element of stage design, shifting like *tableaux vivants*, and even unstable, unreal as drawn by Witkacy. It is a world staged for a man who brings it to life again and again in the performative act of (re)creation.

The traditional stage is the world of appearances; it primarily creates and develops the characters' internal struggles. Like Henryk, they stubbornly want to ontologically pin down the world that eludes them, the world that constantly sets epistemological traps. That is why Henryk so often distances himself from his own statements; he wants to examine them from a distance, from a different perspective, from a different angle. The world that appears to him, however, cannot be seen from the outside; Henryk, entrapped in this world, cannot distance himself from it; he cannot process it in and through a metalanguage. His comments are always internal; they are never uttered offstage. Also, his behavior no longer "disarms" the oppositions he creates. Henryk's actions (for example, the famous scene with the flower, which Henryk unexpectedly uses to connect Mania and Władzio) are performative – the gestures and the entire situation established a relationship between Mania and Władzio which was otherwise non-existent.

⁵ M.P. Markowski, *Czarny nurt. Gombrowicz, świat, literatura* [Black Waters: Gombrowicz, World, Literature], Kraków 2004, p. 334.

It seems that Gombrowicz, like Kantor, placed a performative machine for acting on the stage of his literature and ordered his characters to use it. Consequently, his readers/viewers were told to use it in the creation of their spectacle of interpretation. The characters stand between the author and the audience. The characters, like Kantor's students who experimented with constructivist and surrealist mannerisms, want to build the world performatively. Or, in fact, in a performative manner. Gombrowicz's world does not end with the characters' actions; our souls and not theirs are at stake. The trap set for the characters, insofar as they construct the spectacle of the represented world in and through performance, I argue, is but a performative manner. It is produced by the very real yet invisible machine which creates the world in the work of literature. That is why everything in this world is so artificial, unnatural, twisted – it is mannered. Gombrowicz first set the performative machine in motion, and then made us see it and forced us to learn how it operates (and even forced us to distance ourselves from it) – the world was to be tamed, seemingly from the outside, in and through metalinguistic reflection, the “theater-within-the theater” trick, and metadrama.

In fact, Gombrowicz constructed in *The Marriage*, and this is why I believe that it is his best play, a multi-level frame of reference, and it is this frame of reference that truly activates the principles of performativity.

It begins to work only when we begin to consider *The Marriage* in the context of the crisis of metadrama.⁶

Almost all interpretations of *The Marriage* focus on the dual status of the author's note, which both is and is not part of the play. Why did Gombrowicz summarize the play? He developed and explained his idea in the note, so why did he write the play? Or maybe he wished to emphasize his superior position; alas, he also failed to do so. There is no authoritative voice in the play itself (it is simply not an accepted convention). Gombrowicz must have known that. So why did he choose drama as a means of expression? He knew why *The Marriage* should be a play – a play with a note. Reacting to the crisis of metadrama, Gombrowicz did not tell but dramatically demonstrated (his own) ambivalence and ignorance. He entangled himself in the network of art in order to demonstrate how performativity works – not from the perspective of the performative machine but as a tragedy of epistemology (not an epistemological tragedy, but a tragedy of epistemology). It is a tragifarce of a new negative epistemology in which the truth, certainty and knowledge are replaced by undecidability, anti-binarism and

⁶ I discuss the crisis of metadrama in greater detail in my article *Pinter performatywny* [Performative Pinter], “Polonistyka” 2010, no. 7.

secret. Gombrowicz pauses in a non-place, in a passage, in a theater foyer, in order to witness the trap of his art's secret, which returns to him unfinished and incomplete, as a possibility.

Gombrowicz set up two performative machines – one was on the stage, while the other worked in lieu of drama, in and through literature. And thus drama and theater were united in performativity. Gombrowicz seems to refer to Jacques Derrida's reflections on the center, the parergon, and the margin, that is, concepts that call into question the possibility of using metalanguage. Metalanguage may only develop if we understand the opposition between the inside and the outside, believe in certain fundamental truths, and trust in what we know. In *Dramat i teatr absurdu w Polsce* [Drama and the Theatre of the Absurd in Poland], I wrote that "Henryk brings the world out of the inside" and, it should be added, it returns to the inside. At the time, I was inspired by Thomas Merton's idea of the book. Merton writes: "Let this be the end of the book, but not the end of the search."⁷ Henryk's tragedy is that he cannot leave the theater, observing his efforts to see "clearly in rapture." The epistemological trap into which Henryk falls means that *The Marriage* eludes epistemological readings, as proposed, for example, by Michał Januszkiewicz, who reads *The Marriage* as a play about nihilism. "The oppositions revealed in *The Marriage* are aporias; the chiasm governs how they operate: oppositions become entangled, they come together in a tangle or rather in a knot that cannot be undone. Henryk's metaphysical struggles are motivated by obscurity and ambiguity, both of being and of values."⁸

Thus, if we describe two seemingly extreme models – the theatrical and epistemological model (based on traditional epistemology which works with the category of truth) and the performative model (which assumes the ambiguity of fiction/truth) – it transpires that we are not transcending epistemology. Just like in the case of negative metaphysics, we create a kind of negative epistemology. If we accept that philosophy is not only, as Gilles Deleuze says, the art of creating concepts in a plane of immanence,⁹ but also, as Michel Foucault argues, "theatre,"¹⁰ we will be able to see how it is actually played out on the stage.

⁷ T. Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, San Diego 1990, p. 462.

⁸ M. Januszkiewicz, *Horyzonty nihilizmu. Gombrowicz. Borowski. Różewicz* [The Horizons of Nihilism: Gombrowicz. Borowski. Różewicz], Poznań 2009, p. 127.

⁹ Cf. B. Banasiak, *Bez Różnicy* [No Difference], [in:] G. Deleuze, *Różnica i powtórzenie* [Difference and Repetition], transl. B. Banasiak and K. Matuszewski, Warszawa 1997, p. 18.

¹⁰ M. Foucault, *Theatrum Philosophicum*, [in:] *idem, Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, Ithaca 1980, pp. 165–197.

To begin with, I must say (very simplistically and briefly) that the theatrical and epistemological model of interpreting *The Marriage*, which advances the theory that the trap of the stage cannot be avoided, that the world cannot be reached, cannot be understood (and thus the self cannot be understood either), was based on the traditional model of epistemology (based on the category of truth), the traditional model of the theater (based on the category of play), and the traditional model of philosophy (defined as a set of statements about the world). Such epistemological considerations also refer to the notion of the Book; however, as Merton argues, there is a difference between the truth of the Book and the search which continues after the Book ends. *The Marriage* can therefore be read as a longing for the truth, as a tragedy of the theater, as I once pointed out, “without the world.” The category of longing can be the basis for reading *The Marriage* in the wider context of the tradition (and Gombrowicz was ahead of his times in this regard) of the drama/theater of the absurd (there is so much suffering, disillusionment, and despair in the works of Beckett and Ionesco because the essence of things cannot be reached). The category of longing does not allow us to easily give up the hope for knowledge and understanding. All this starts in drama from within; plays evolve from the inside only to crash in the empty space towards which they advance. This interiorizing perspective makes us hostages of the subjective, of the inside.

Respectively, this model of negative epistemology, performativity and philosophy as theater (but as theater that abolishes dialectical thinking, seen by Deleuze in opposition to the “theater of representation” as “the theater of repetition,”¹¹ or as seen by Derrida, as theater that is closer to performance, as seen in the works of Antonin Artaud¹²) points to the concept of the secret instead of the truth.

Gombrowicz, to draw on Georges Didi-Huberman,¹³ performatively established knowledge as non-knowledge and, let us add, in the light of posthumanism, he staged the human in relation to the non-human/more-than-human. Both of these problems were pointed out by contemporary critics.¹⁴ For example, in his book, Markowski made us see Gombrowicz in a completely different light – not as a confident director but as an insecure writer, who would put on different literary “masks” in order to experiment

¹¹ G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. P. Patton, New York 2004, pp. 11–12.

¹² J. Derrida, *The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation*, [in:] *idem, Writing and Difference*, trans. A. Bass, Chicago 2004, pp. 176–177.

¹³ G. Didi-Huberman, *Confronting Images: Questioning the Ends of a Certain History of Art*, trans. J. Goodman, Philadelphia 2005.

¹⁴ Cf. the discussion in “Tygodnik Powszechny”, May 9, 2004 (with Jerzy Jarzębski, Janusz Margański and Michał Paweł Markowski).

with non-knowledge. This is a brilliant observation, but it should be discussed in greater detail.

Markowski is right to identify Gombrowicz's aporia – the clash between the desire to be indistinct, bland, helpless, and lost in real life and the desire to exist on paper as great, funny, triumphant, purified – as an eccentric staging. I believe, however, that Gombrowicz did not fully exploit the poetics of non-knowledge, doubt, and uncertainty. Tadeusz Różewicz did. In Różewicz's works, the discourse of identity is entangled with the discourse of creation. If a true post-Cartesian drama exists, it takes place on Różewicz's stage. If the dramaturgy of uncertainty exists, it was perfected by Różewicz with his signature deletions and corrections. If performative writing exists, Różewicz excelled in it. Both Gombrowicz and Różewicz at first unify contradictions, eliminate binary oppositions, present apparent antinomies, stage things, and, ultimately, they both construct identity performatively. Gombrowicz is slowly moving towards such a theater (he tends to write about it and brings it to life only in *The Marriage*), while Różewicz fully achieves it (he entangles discourses and thus he also entangles the arts).

Kantor placed a constructivist machine for acting on the stage and asked his students to play with it, to experiment. Similarly, Gombrowicz placed a performative machine on the stage to force his characters (?), us (?), to play with it. In *The Marriage*, Gombrowicz showed how drama works in and through performance when the rules of metatheater are abolished. The trajectory of his art was as follows: first, he distanced himself and his art from the rules of performance seen as a manner(ism) only to realize the role of performativity in negative epistemology, and even in ontology and epistemology as entangled categories, insofar as the concept of the secret replaced the truth.

The Marriage takes place in the world of indefiniteness, in the world which is to be established, which is to be measured. The world is presented not only in and through the interactions between ready-made objects but also, to draw on Karen Barad,¹⁵ in the intra-actions of incomplete, potential, indefinite matter which give rise to the shape of things.

The world is incomplete. And drama, be it as literature (Gombrowicz's commentary falls apart) or as theater (everything appears and disappears, becomes present and disintegrates), is also incomplete. Gombrowicz's *The Marriage* shows the world, literature, theater, and art as potentiality. It plays not so much with the remains, but with the indefinite. Literature as an overture? Literature as a preview? Literature as a possibility.

¹⁵ K. Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, London 2007.

Pinter's *Slight Ache*, or "You look different in darkness"

Gombrowicz wrote *The Marriage* in 1947. Conceptually, the play engages in a dialogue with the works of Harold Pinter, who in the 1950s explored the "angry young men" poetics, which was connected with the theater of the absurd. Pinter also explored the principles of creating what was seemingly only a theatrical but, in fact, a performative, indefinite world. Ignorance, uncertainty, indecision gave rise to post-Cartesian dramaturgy. It was Pinter who drew us into the reality of the performative drama, which questioned unequivocal answers.

Pinter creates a world which is at the same time realistic and grotesque, real and fictional. We cannot make any definite judgments about reality. We no longer trust our opinions and judgments; instead, we embrace undecidability and ambiguity. I shall call such an approach performative. It also means that the world of Pinter's plays is created in and through words, gestures, suggestions, as one of the possibilities in a game in which epistemology is at stake (or rather, epistemology is taken hostage). While the "Cartesian" theater was governed by conventions, which meant that the nature of the characters and the depicted world were predictable (in a classical tragedy, we do not ask what the characters eat; in a comedy, we do not ask why the husband does not meet his wife at the ball; in a farce, we do not expect didacticism), "post-Cartesian" drama shows that the image of the world may constantly change. At any given moment, we focus on only one possible frame, and we also create negative concepts – an empty space, absence, silence. We try to see the silence and define the stillness.

Faced with the ontological ambiguity of the world, which may be seen in the choices made and the acts of creation, we often dream of silence. Pinter's plays were associated from the beginning with the so-called Theater of Silence – this name was used to describe the works of Anton Chekhov and the works of the Polish playwright Jerzy Szaniawski. Martin Esslin, in the book *Pinter The Playwright*,¹⁶ devoted a separate chapter to this topic, juxtaposing scenes from Chekhov's dramas with Pinter's plays. Esslin mainly focused on communication and the creation of meaning in a linguistic context. It seems that silence is always associated with words, absence of words, their excess, disruption, double meanings, etc. ("The speech we hear is an indication of that which we don't hear. It is a necessary avoidance, a violent, sly, anguished or mocking smoke screen which

¹⁶ M. Esslin, *Pinter the Playwright*, London 1992 (the first edition was entitled *The People Wound: The Plays of Harold Pinter* and it was published in 1970).

keeps the other in its place. When true silence falls, we are still left with echo [...]”¹⁷). Today, we could “read” silence as an artistic form and as a tool used to construct the text. Following in the footsteps of Cézanne, who, as quoted by Jacques Derrida in *Truth in Painting*, once said “I will tell you the truth in painting,” Pinter could make a similar promise – “I will tell you the truth in/of silence.” And he achieves it in his plays in and through words (by means of which he expresses silence) and in and through dramatic gaps and cracks, in which silence dwells. He uses pauses, ellipses, dashes, but also silent gestures, expressions, and actions which suggest a sound but remain silent (like violet petals falling on the keys of the piano in Norwid’s poem *Jak... [How...]*). Silence no longer appears in opposition to words but in the spaces between them; its presence is suggested through absence. Pinter performatively constructs a scene in and through which silence is invoked in action. The opposition between speech and silence disappears. The two co-exist, both at once, in a palimpsestous manner. We can see that in the imaginative terms-metaphors, such as “heavy silence,” “stony silence,” “surrounded by silence,” “break silence,” etc. You can either choose to speak or you can remain silent. To break, to interrupt, to surround (oneself with), etc. – such verbs suggest an action that organizes, makes visible, and, as a result, points to absence. If you want words, you will notice an apt metaphor. Should you want to, you will notice an empty space, a gap, a crack in which silence dwells. This process resembles creating the reality of the play as the potentiality of existence. Pinter’s *Slight Ache* is an example of both – it invokes silence and ontologically ambiguous reality. The mute matchseller makes us ask questions which, if left unanswered, as if allow us to echo the (anticipated yet) unspoken words. The drama turns into the spoken monologue. The mute interlocutor acts as a catalyst for the image of reality, blurring or intensifying its presence. It can change not so much through words but through silence. The play of light brings out the colors and the shapes (“Edward: [...] [Pause] The garden, too, was sharp, lucid, in the rain, in the sun. [Pause]” (p. 179)), but it also changes, blurs, and erases them (“You look different in darkness” (p. 178)).

The comedy of menace, on the other hand, made us realize that drama moves towards abolishing the oppositions between the inside and the outside. In some plays, menace may be found in the characters which “enter” from the outside, such as the matchseller in *Slight Ache*. Sometimes, it is the hostile environment that is a threat, for example, the space outside the room in *The Room*, which may in fact be compared with an inner paralysis.

¹⁷ H. Pinter, interview in “The Sunday Times”, March 4, 1962.

The subjective experience of reality creates reality. Epistemological doubt is uniquely represented in the comedy of menace.

In *The Birthday Party*, we are truly terrified only at the end of the play, when Stanley's body begins to tremble, and his speech breaks down into inarticulate "Uh-gug... uh-gug..." and "Caahh... caahh" (p. 179). In Pinter's plays, loose, repetitive (sometimes contradictory) sequences and images do not explain anything. The world after the birthday is created anew.

No critical discovery is made (in *Poetics*, in the chapters devoted to tragedy, Aristotle calls such a critical moment *anagnorisis*), only uncertainty and fear remain. There can be no catharsis (pity and fear, which, according to Aristotle, viewers of ancient tragedies were to experience), there is only the trembling body and the trembling mind (it evokes associations with the title of Søren Kierkegaard's philosophical treatise *Fear and Trembling*, especially as regards the four scenes of Abraham sacrificing Isaac). On the one hand, there is the Aristotelian category of catharsis, expressed as "pity and fear," and on the other, Søren Kierkegaard's existentialist "fear and trembling." In Pinter's plays, the old category of tragedy is displaced by its reflection; mercy is replaced by coldness, and fear turns into trembling, a modern *mysterium tremendum*. We are outside representation and can only see "tragedy's reflection."

In order to understand Harold Pinter's plays, we should first of all refer to what Søren Kierkegaard called "tragedy's reflection." The very category of reflection proves to be important in the interpretation of Pinter's works insofar as it draws attention to the fact that we use concepts mediated by repetition. Pinter defines silence through speech, truth through fiction, interpersonal relationships through play. Reflection, therefore, is an echo, a veil, fog, anxiety, uncertainty. Reflection refers to a look that cannot see because the reflected light makes it impossible to see. The world is but an illusion. But can we still talk about the relationship between truth and illusion if such an opposition no longer matters, no longer exists? In his definition of the absurd, Adorno argues that darkness is a category that does not shroud but absorbs; it demands to be "interpreted, not replaced by the clarity of meaning" (p. 27). Menace, too, is not only fear but trembling. Indeed, darkness and trembling as metaphors which describe the ontologically unstable and indefinite reality and our reaction to it define Pinter's plays. Neither language, nor knowledge, nor making the human world a point of reference for reality (whatever it may be) bring certainty. Descartes' exultant declaration "cogito ergo sum" fails. Perhaps all that is left is to refer to the category of perception and repeat after Berkeley that "esse est percipi (aut percipere)." The focus on looking and being perceived means we no longer have to define the object; instead, we focus on the pro-

cess of creating a world in and through observation, in and through subjective perception that is not free from hesitation and doubt.

Science, especially mathematics and physics (Einstein's theory of relativity, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, Mandelbrot's chaos theory and fractals, quantum physics), and psychology (Freud's concept of the subconscious) continue to challenge all unambiguous answers to the questions about the nature of reality, the universe, and man. The epistemological metaphor of illumination can no longer exist in language. We accept the fact that we cannot see the epistemological stage in bright light (and we accept that knowledge is the domain of uncertainty) and thus it transforms into a theatrical space with no frame and no ramp, lit by dim lamps.

The uncertainty of observation instead of the certainty of reason. The undefined and poorly lit theatrical space (fogginess) instead of the brightly lit stage (illumination).

All that is left is to play and to watch ourselves as players. Who we are? We cannot leave because there is nothing outside. There will be no other theater. There is no opposition between light and darkness; there is no boundary between the backstage and the frontstage. We do not reflect the world in representation; we only witness transformations and changes. Such divisions may only be abolished through movement, action, process. Things play out in a fluid game of undecidability, in which their contours are blurred.

In *A Slight Ache*, the world is constantly being re-established. The very beginning of the play confuses the viewer. Characters cannot "agree" on the framework of reality – they constantly ask questions, wishing to establish who and where they are. Edward does not know the names of different flowers, but he still tries to find out which flower is in bloom. "Edward: Did you say that the convolvulus was in flower? Flora: Yes. Edward: But good God, you just denied there was any. Flora: I was talking about the honeysuckle. Edward: About the what? Flora [calmly]: Edward – you know that shrub outside the toolshed ... Edward: Yes, yes. Flora: That's convolvulus. Edward: That? Flora: Yes. Edward: Oh. [Pause] I thought it was japonica" (p. 235). Characters are constantly looking for each other ("Flora [off]: Edward, where are you? Edward? Where are you, Edward?") and then surprised "Flora: Where have you been? Edward: Here" (p. 235)). For Flora to be real is to see and to be perceived ("Flora: You must have seen me in the garden. You can see through this window. Edward: Only part of the garden" (p. 235)). In Pinter's 1996 play *Ashes to Ashes*, we come face to face with ambiguous places and facts which can at the same time point to their opposites. Bolesław Taborski thus comments on them in the

introduction to the Polish edition of the play, quoting from Pinter's Nobel lecture: "*Ashes to Ashes*, on the other hand, seems to me to be taking place under water. A drowning woman, her hand reaching up through the waves, dropping down out of sight, reaching for others, but finding nobody there, either above or under the water, finding only shadows, reflections, floating (...)" (p. 39). The boundary, the surface of the water, disappears, because it is shown in motion as an unstable, moving, and ever-changing veil. The motif of ashes, something almost ephemeral and yet still material, as a gray trace, as a product of destructive fire, can be found in Beckett's *Embers* and in Derrida's polylogical work *Cinders*.

We are entangled in the drama of uncertainty.

An excellent example of such an ambiguous space, which I call performative space, may be found in Harold Pinter's *The Collection*. The space in this play is the space of betrayal. Pinter's play seems to suggest: "I promise I will tell you the truth about betrayal." We do not know which character is telling the truth. According to Stella, Bill broke into her hotel room and forced her to betray her husband. Bill at first claims that nothing happened and then changes his mind, saying that Stella provoked him, and they only kissed for a few minutes (and that was it). Harry says that Stella told him that she made it all up. Bill, ultimately, changes his mind one more time, claiming that he and Stella were just talking about what they would do if they went up to her room. Passion that consumes Stella when she is trying to provoke Harry is an act of betrayal without words (however, the question arises about the nature of the misgiving; Harry is a homosexual man – in turn, he may, after all, wish to "test" Stella to see if she is a faithful wife). The answer that James expects (and he suspects that his wife was unfaithful to him) does not matter. What matters is the uncertainty, the very possibility. The ethical space does not matter. What matters is the epistemological space. Dialogue, which has lost its persuasive and rhetorical power, invokes reality in a performative way (insofar as it blurs the line between the truth and a lie). Also, in literature. In literature which tries to establish the world.

Beckett's *Quad* squared, or at the center of the stage and in the "node of avoidance"

Constant changes take place on the performative stage. It is the stage of permanent anxiety, constant creation, shifting and breaking frames, happening, unfolding events, creating worlds and abolishing oppositions. At the

same time, the “stage” provokes a discussion about theater and “the closure of representation” from the perspective of the actor and representation.¹⁸

Something extremely important has taken place in art, and especially in theater: the center became a point of reference again; not so much as an object of discourse but as a place which generates the energy of destruction. Volumes could be written about the relationship between the center and the process of its destruction on the theatrical stage and we still would not exhaust the topic. Therefore, in my essay, I would like to suggest only one of the processes that makes us transcend the limits of our own culture and the limits of the theater focused on the viewer’s knowledge of imaginary or learned conventions. Thus, we can realize that the notions of the center and the margins are not always defined in the same way. They are not binary opposites and they do not create an “in-between” space. The center and the margins performatively create a new kind of space – it is at the same time central and peripheral, primary and secondary, our own and someone else’s, physical and spiritual, familiar and foreign.

Are Samuel Beckett’s plays “old”? “Old” because they operate, for example, within the enclosed space of the stage? If we were to answer yes, we would be assigning a well-known theatrical convention to a new play, without really considering how it “works” and what it “does” to seemingly conventional theatrical solutions. The “old” invalidates the old interpretation and reveals a new, different one. The “old” also provokes reflection of a more general nature, making us reflect on how we think and see. In a word, it makes us see that possible new re-interpretations result from adopting different perspectives. A new perspective changes how we perceive the world.

Conventional theater spaces, which often rely on, for example, geometric figures (especially those considered perfect, such as circles or squares), often raise questions about the essence of reduction, purification, emptiness, lack, non-existence, and inexpressibility. We consider their ambiguous nature and realize how difficult it is to define what they are and what they do. Indeed, they are “transitive;” they can signify depending on the user and the purpose for which they were invoked. Silence, emptiness, the sublime, etc. are, to use Mieke Bal’s term, “travelling concepts.”¹⁹ Their meaning is not stable: they are redefined by different scientific disciplines and artistic contexts.

Empty space in the Noh theater, defined only by a back wall with a painting of a green pine tree, a side bamboo wall, and a narrow bridge opposite it with a curtain (in four colors) at the end, can be transformed

¹⁸ Cf. J. Derrida’s classic essay, J. Derrida, *op. cit.*, pp. 176–177 and further discussions on this topic, e.g., P. Lacoue-Labarthe, *The scene is primal*, [in:] *idem*, *The Subject of Philosophy*, trans. T. Trezise, Minneapolis and London 1993, pp. 99–115.

¹⁹ M. Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*, Toronto 2014.

into different spaces during the performance, be it realistic and/or shamanic. Similarly, empty space in Peter Brook's theater or Jerzy Grotowski's theater (inspired by Noh), seemingly isolated and limited, can be reshaped, remolded, and reconfigured. Even a conventional space can be destroyed, annihilated, transformed (or, to draw on deconstruction theory – wounded, cut, torn).

In 1996, in my book devoted to the theater of the absurd, I argued that the Polish theater of the absurd began in Konrad's cell in the third part of Adam Mickiewicz's *Dziady* [Forefathers' Eve]. At that time, I emphasized the metaphysical and existential dimensions of these two theaters.²⁰

In a 2016 interview, the director Michał Zadara interpreted the prison scene in which Konrad delivers the Great Improvisation through the lens of Samuel Beckett's plays (Zadara directed the third part of *Dziady*, which premiered on February 20, 2016 at Teatr Polski in Wrocław).²¹ Zadara went even further in drawing an analogy between the two seemingly incomparable artists, emphasizing the physical dimension of the Great Improvisation scene. He emphasized the role of not only words but also matter. Konrad's classic white shirt is soiled; the prison cell becomes a "non-place" (Marc Augé's term), an impersonal space which cannot hide all that relates to the body, to the physical. Or perhaps the prison cell is a kind of "heterotopia" (Michel Foucault's term), a place which connects different spaces that exist "somewhere" and "nowhere;" alas, they are not utopias – they present ways in which different spaces and locations may come together in one place.²² Drawing on Zadara's comments about the Beckettian and the bodily, today I would not even hesitate to say that Konrad's prison cell also makes us think about Beckett's characters, who are stuck in staging buckets, immobilized in mounds of earth, arrested in windowless rooms or in the spotlight (spiritual imprisonment is also bodily imprisonment; the two are forever interconnected). Silence and stillness no longer point to the grand style. They no longer inspire reflections on the nature of language. They do not point to "pure" transcendence but become sticky and physical. They are saturated with the secretions, sweat, and dirt of the imprisoned body, a body that is helplessly pacing to and fro in the prison cell. The body does not refer to signs – it only signifies itself, life. The absence of meaning reminds us of the ambiguous meaning of the tree in *Waiting for Godot* or the existential angst and despair of the characters from *Endgame* (who

²⁰ A. Krajewska, *Dramat i teatr...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 28–29.

²¹ *Kebab z Mickiewiczem* [Kebab with Mickiewicz], interview with Michał Zadara, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 2016, no. 41.

²² This is how W.B. Worthen writes about heterotopia in drama, drawing on Foucault. W.B. Worthen, *Drama: Between Poetry and Performance*, Chichester 2010, pp. 195–196.

wonder if they are beginning to “mean something”). Konrad’s scream echoes off the walls of the prison cell and returns back to the body, dying off inside, as if it could never get out, as if it had never penetrated the walls of the prison cell, as if it had never been uttered but was stuck in Konrad’s throat, as if it had never left the body of the degraded prisoner dreaming of freedom. God is silent because his nature is different to ours, alien to us. He cannot hear us; he does not understand the despair of the human world and its physicality – the body that is controlled by matter, the body whose consciousness is filled with doubt. Konrad is as helpless as Beckett’s characters are abandoned. The Romantic hero cannot openly say that there is no God (even blasphemy presupposes the possibility of existence). Konrad’s tragedy is that he can no longer relate or refer to the center. There is no center. God, even if he exists, is outside the human experience of the world. We cannot contact Him using our means of communication. In order to get closer to him, we would have to deny our nature. The center of Konrad’s prison cell is thus in the margins (somewhere far away in the topography of the prison). He is a man who wanted to be in the center, but God’s silence destroyed his pride (of being in the foreground, be it as the leader or the leading actor). He realizes his own insignificance, arbitrariness, existential helplessness. As in Michał Zadara’s staging, the focus is on the body, imprisonment, and physiology. Konrad (be it in a clean white shirt, an undershirt, or a T-shirt) will not break free from his prison cell with its boarded-up window.

The final and, at the same time, most important instance of “playing (with) the center” on the Polish stage takes place, in my opinion, in the third part of Adam Mickiewicz’s *Dziady*, specifically in the Great Improvisation scene. In the West, it probably began with Shakespeare but flourished in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*. Konrad’s prison cell and the space around the tree in *Waiting for Godot*, and also the empty room (*Endgame*), mounds of earth (*Happy Days*), and other enclosed spaces (buckets) show the process of “claiming” and “judging” within the limits of existence. The theater of the absurd was born when Konrad was born. The absurd asks about the possibility of the center. The absurd points to it and at the same time denies it. The absurd tells us about it and at the same time shows that it is impossible to agree on it. You always stand alone at the center of the stage; neither the voices from the right nor the voices from the left, neither the devil nor the choirs of angels can push Konrad to the margins of the stage. Standing at the center is a sign of both strength and defeat; it is a hopeless attempt to validate the meaning (of Life? Existence? Consciousness? God?). The end of logocentrism begins “from the inside” (from the inside that is the center), when it begins to generate the energy of destruction.

It would seem that the center, which signifies stability, has been established once and for all; it cannot be decomposed or changed. And yet, we cannot agree on whether the center can refer to nothingness, emptiness, absence... Or perhaps the center, by its very nature, is nothingness, emptiness, absence... The center therefore defines not what is but what is not. The center points to the potentiality of something occupying it. It perversely attracts everything that cannot be seen. The visible in some temporarily designated “center” is only a point of reference, making us notice what is different from the designated, the seen, the revealed. The visible brings the hidden to life; the visible refers to the invisible. Michał Zadara consciously combines oppositions when he talks about his play (for example, Konrad as a singer gains access to the experience of life; the ritual of Forefathers’ Eve takes place between the comprehensible and incomprehensible, the serious and the ridiculous, the historical and the real (yet undefined) world which exists beyond the stage). Zadara’s interpretation of the third part of *Dziady* brings to mind Beckett’s reflections. Alas, Beckett opens his plays with negation (his findings are closer to those of Camus than to those of Pascal) – he asks what will happen if Godot does not show up? What if there is no God? The nature of tragedy does not lie in (to draw on Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe) the tension between the finite human existence and the infinity of God but in the very fact of dramatizing the possibility of non-existence, the possibility of death, which cannot be internalized, which is pure theatricalization.²³ That is probably why Beckett does not (literally) show death; although everything points to it, it exists only in speech and in gestures. It exists in theatricalization.

The question of the center was raised in one of Samuel Beckett’s most puzzling plays, *Quad*, written in 1981. It was described and discussed in detail primarily by Enoch Brater,²⁴ and it has been interpreted ever since (e.g., Antoni Libera²⁵ in his translation of Samuel Beckett’s plays suggests a psychoanalytic interpretation but also points to the cultural expectations associated with walking clockwise or anti-clockwise, for example, in the journey through the afterlife described by Dante; Herta Schmid²⁶ reads *Quad*

²³ Cf. P. Lacoue-Labarthe, “Theatrum analyticum”, [in:] *Mimesis, Masochism, & Mime: The Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought*, ed. T. Murray, Ann Arbor 1997, pp. 190–191.

²⁴ E. Brater, *Beyond Minimalism. Beckett’s Late Style in the Theater*, New York and Oxford 1987.

²⁵ A. Libera, *Translator’s footnotes and comments*, [in:] *Samuel Beckett. Dzieła dramatyczne* [Samuel Beckett: Plays], trans. A. Libera, with an introduction and notes by the translator, Warszawa 1988, pp. 752–753.

²⁶ H. Schmid, *Samuel Beckett’s Play, “Quad”: An Abstract Synthesis of the Theater*, “Canadian-American Slavic Studies” 1988, vol. 22, no. 1–4, pp. 263–287.

through Wassily Kandinsky's theory of painting; Enoch Brater points in his interpretation to the consequences of presenting the world in/through the media, focusing on the notion of the television studio and the camera, and how they affect our perception of the world; for W.B. Worthen *Quad* exemplifies Euclidean dramaturgies – the critic discusses how space is created in Beckett's play: “an empty set is just a set, gaining its performative force only as it is used. [...] Like the absent square of Beckett's *Quad*, and even like the visible square of *Quadrat I*, the place of play can be pointed by the drama, but gains its significance as place, a place that emerges, is played, and then left behind, in the process of the playing itself”²⁷). Beckett's television plays attracted my attention years ago²⁸ as masterpieces which, to draw on Eastern philosophies, may be read as minimalist Zen stone gardens. Read through the lens of Western imagination, mysticism, theater and art, they point to mystical emptiness, the non-existent set design of the theater as the world (and the world as the theater), a crisis of representation.

The undecided (as Brater writes) Beckett, who staged the work himself, was open to, and allowed for, different interpretations (indeed, the first German production was titled *Quadrat I+II*). Beckett's indecisiveness, as suggested by Brater, does not lie in his inability to make a decision but in the fact that the very structure of the play makes it possible (compels one?) to explore all possibilities (all combinations of lights, movements, colors, sounds, etc.). Exhaustion through the repetition of all variants and combinations ... *Quad* therefore refers to mathematics, to the probability calculus ... In Beckett's play, the probability of all possibilities always equals 1. Does certainty equal E? Is that the trajectory of increasing entropy? Followed by the hypothetical return to the familiar by reversing the processes of destruction?

I cannot possibly describe all intricacies of Beckett's television play in the present article. Brater analyzes it insightfully in his book. In order to imagine the ever-changing project titled *Quad*, one should study both the published editions of the text and different film, television, and theatrical stagings (many were recorded and uploaded onto YouTube; Worthen writes about them in his book in one of the footnotes²⁹). Four actors enter the stage, one by one, and walk across it. When they are about to reach the center, they dodge and turn. They walk around and across the square stage with the center in the middle. The dancers (?), actors (?), performers (?) move in sync in fixed patterns. Different color sequences are also employed in

²⁷ W.B. Worthen, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

²⁸ Cf. A. Krajewska, *Poezja i ośnienie. O sztukach telewizyjnych Samuela Becketta* [Poetry and Illumination: Samuel Beckett's Television Plays], “Teksty Drugie” 1991, no. 4.

²⁹ W.B. Worthen, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

fixed patterns. So are the sounds (drum, gong, triangle, wood block), the colors of the costumes, and even the sound of footsteps. Beckett calls the center, marked in the drawing as E, the “danger zone.” All precisely defined elements, such as the trajectories which the actors follow, the lights, the colors of the robes, the sound of footsteps, the sound of drums, must appear in all possible combinations until they are exhausted. However, there is also the first (?) or the last (?) version, that is, the black and white version, which is, one would like to say, devoid of all characteristic features or, in fact, basic. Even though we have exhausted all the possibilities, we still do not understand the nature of the world. We live close to the “danger zone,” close to, as Worthen puts it, the “node of avoidance.” We do not enter the central space designated by the letter E (although, paradoxically, we define it in and through our existence, movement, body – in a gesture, in a turn, in the sudden change of direction). Just as in the heterotopic prison cell, the center is an illusion we produce. If we want to reach the “true” E, or rather if want to see if it really exists, we will have to get rid of all these roles, combinations, and features that determine human life. The final combination is the total reduction, emptying, denial of the self, i.e., we leave the space of oppositions, repetitions, either-or choices (which point to, as Søren Kierkegaard puts it, “sickness unto death”).

Following the train of thought that connects distant cultures, I would like to look at Beckett’s *Quad* through the lenses of the Japanese Noh theater.³⁰ Paul Foster discussed Beckett’s relationship with Zen in *Beckett and Zen*³¹; however, he focused exclusively on Beckett’s prose. The stage, in my opinion, opens up new perspectives on the relationship between Zen and Western theater. It is obvious that it is impossible to fully discuss such a complex question in such a short essay, but I can comment briefly on how other cultures open up new interpretations. After all, one can understand how one looks at the world only by studying it in a different cultural context.

At first glance, the Noh stage resembles the stage in Beckett’s *Quad*. Noh actors move in a specific way, as if with their feet sliding on the smooth surface of the stage made of cedar wood. They flow rather than walk. It is not a form of dance but rather an indirect movement – they move across the space deliberately (at times faster and at times slower). Perhaps this is how Beckett’s actors could move, walking around and across the square, only to suddenly turn around just before they reach the center and con-

³⁰ The description is based on original performances by the Kyoto theater and recordings of Noh plays at the Noh theater in Kyoto, as well as commentaries: *This is Noh* (Japanese and English version). Kyoto Branch Theatre Association.

³¹ P. Foster, *Beckett and Zen: A Study of Dilemma in the Novels of Samuel Beckett*, London 1989.

tinue walking in a fixed pattern. Beckett did not want his actors to be dancers, although the play was performed by students at a ballet school. The dance performed by the Noh actor, especially at the beginning of the performance, very often involves moving across the main (square) stage along the diagonal lines, heading towards the four main pillars (the *shite* pillar, at which the main protagonist stops; the *waki* pillar, at which the supporting actor stops; the flute pillar; and the most important “gazing” pillar). Indeed, some productions of *Quad* referred to *butoh* (see, for example, Beckett *butoh* notation).

In Noh and in Beckett’s *Quad*, music plays a very important and carefully defined role (in Noh four musicians play the flute, the (small) shoulder drum held on the right shoulder, the (big) hip drum held on the left hip and the large stick drum;³² and in Beckett’s play we can hear a drum, a gong, a triangle, and a wood block). Music is not just a soundtrack. Music puts emphasis on what is taking place on the stage. Music helps concentrate and connect the different realities in which the main Noh actor (*shite*) immerses himself – he is sometimes a woman, sometimes a man, sometimes he appears to be a man, sometimes he appears to be a ghost. And in Beckett’s play, it seems, music helps one understand different realities determined by different physical and geometrical systems (Euclid’s, Einstein’s, quantum physics), and perhaps also by different media (film, television, and theater), which employ different means of expression to comment on reality. For example, in *Ghost Trio*, different objects are projected onto a large screen. It is also amazing that in Beckett’s *Quad* characters are not defined by gender, as if this category was meaningless (you can be either this person or that person; you can be either here or there...³³).

If we assume that in *Waiting for Godot* the tree marks the center, creating the illusion that the center exists, it also creates the effect of meaninglessness, which leads to the process of disintegration of the Cartesian drama. Berkeley’s “esse est percipi” triumphs. Seeing is an important part of knowing, be it for Romantics, Absurdist, or Noh actors. In Noh theater, the division into the worlds of the actor, the spectator, the stage, the story, the myth, and the ritual no longer applies. *The shite* has to look at himself through the eyes of the viewers, and so he must also literally see himself from all angles, also from behind (he may use mirrors arranged in a special way or observe a different actor who recreates his performance; still, the Noh actor has to combine technique with meditation³⁴).

³² Description by P.G. O’Neill, *A guide to nō*, Tokyo and Kyoto, 1954, p. 8.

³³ Cf. A. Krajewska, *Poezja i olśnienie...*, *op. cit.*

³⁴ Cf. R. Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics*, Cambridge 2012.

The difference between seeing (from behind the mask) and seeing holistically (imagining how one is perceived) points to fundamental questions about the meaning of the whole and the meaning of darkness.

The *shite*, as he enters the stage from the bridge, sees the stage through the eye holes in the mask as a clear, circular field, surrounded by darkness (the spotlight creates a similar effect in the Western theater – the circle of bright light helps the viewer focus). Indeed, Beckett often plays with light and shadow (for example, in ... *but the clouds* ... characters enter and leave this bright luminous space by moving upwards (north), downwards (south), to the right (east) and to the left (west); all four “basic” directions are thus employed, pointing to the four corners of the world). We want to control the whole by seeing the part (or maybe we need to abolish the seemingly obvious opposition between the whole and the part in order to achieve understanding?).

In the Noh theater, as Estera Żeromska writes, “the symbolic unity of the real world and the unreal world is expressed in the colors of the *agemaku*. The curtain is often made of five vertical stripes in green, yellow, red, white, and purple. They can be interpreted in different ways: as four seasons, the four corners of the world, the five phases, the five emotions, etc. [...] The symbolic dimension of the *agemaku* therefore builds on the entire universe, the seasons, the four corners of the world, the entire range of human emotions”³⁵ and also, we might add, the four elements. Or maybe because of this comparison we connect with Beckett’s *Quad*, insofar as the colors of the characters’ robes and the lights can be interpreted in a similar way?

Finally, instead of summarizing, we can perversely ask whether these three theaters – Mickiewicz’s *Dziady*, Beckett’s *Quad*, and the Japanese Noh Theater – have something unique in common. Of course, the answer is not straightforward (despite the existing interpretations that allow us to compare Mickiewicz with Beckett and Beckett with Noh theater; I also think that comparing *Dziady* with Noh theater is possible). Despite the differences in time and aesthetics, I would say that all these “three theaters” have something to say about the disintegration of the center, whose energy defies the conventional. The characters paradoxically stubbornly walk around a circle or a square but in fact they constantly move towards other dimensions of reality “along the radii” (almost literally along the “sunrays” in *Dziady*, along the diagonal lines in Beckett’s *Quad*, along the “gazing” lines in the Noh theater). The center seems to “push” the figures out, pre-

³⁵ E. Żeromska, *Maska na japońskiej scenie. Od pradziejów do powstania teatru nō. Historia japońskiej maski i związanej z nią tradycji widowiskowej* [Mask on the Japanese Stage: From Prehistory to the Creation of the Noh Theatre. The History of the Japanese Mask and The Performance Tradition Associated with It], Warszawa 2003, p. 175.

venting them from entering. The characters are thus suspended between realities in the performative space, creating real dimensions which perhaps do not exist. In all three theaters, the comprehensible is combined with the incomprehensible, the light with the dark, the veiled with the visible, the spectral with the living, death with life. The constant experience of transformation and the constant desire to achieve the goal (ultimate knowledge, illumination, liberation, salvation...) is an important theme. Regardless of our interpretation of such processes (in the ethical perspective – as “crime and punishment” in *Dziady*; as clockwise, positive, ascending, “blessed” trajectory or the anti-clockwise, negative, descending, “cursed” trajectory in Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and *Quad*; or in the metaphysical and the political perspective, in relation to the freedom of a nation, the freedom of an individual, identity struggles, community building), we will always find the opposite, which will point to a different reality. Thus, in the worlds of these theaters there are no stable binary divisions. They appeal, each in its own way, to the feeling that we can be everything and at the same time melt into nothingness; they teach us that we should not become attached to those forms of being that we deem proper. Everything is an illusion – both the world and being in the world. So, the *shite* can practice seeing himself through the eyes of the audience, Konrad and Gustaw can be one, and the characters from Beckett’s plays, *Quad*, *Ohio Impromptu*, *Ghost Trio*, and ... *but the clouds* ..., can see themselves as others. It would be very interesting to analyze the role of children as characters suspended in an undefined space between different realities, between existence and illusion, combining those different dimensions through the power of potentiality. In *Dziady*, children are suspended in the void; they cannot experience life, which for them is but an artificial gesture pointing to the artificiality of (a theatrical) play. It is almost as if, as the existentialists argued, life as existence was not enough – in other words, only life created experience. In Noh theater, children can act only after turning 15. Thus, they have to go through a sort of initiation ritual (of becoming adults). The theater thus combines acting with reaching an important milestone in life. In Beckett’s plays (*Waiting for Godot*, *Ghost Trio*), respectively, we find a boy, an outsider, who bridges the gap between the inner world of the theater and a different dimension – announced, awaited, but perhaps never witnessed Thus, the world of binary oppositions is finally destroyed³⁶ (importantly, we can find pairs everywhere: *shite/waki*, Konrad/Gustaw, Didi/Gogo, moving clockwise/anti-clockwise, etc.). It does not withstand the pressure of the center. It undergoes transformation because binarism is temporary; knowing is looking at oneself

³⁶ Cf. P. Foster, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

through the eyes of the other/the opposite. Binarism, symmetry, and order exist so that we can break ourselves of the habit of looking through the eyes of the self, so that we can realize how “irrelevant,” changeable, and fragile forms (including human forms) are. Entities which depend on one another, which transform and interact with each other, can undergo transformation.

Let us return for a moment to the moment in which the *shite* puts on his mask. It takes place in the mirror room behind the stage. The actor is focused on the mask. Once he puts it on, his face is the shadow of the mask and not the other way round. The viewer never sees the mask from the inside. The actor does not see either the outside or the inside, and thus merges with what he has just contemplated as the outside.³⁷ The other and the I become one when the mask is chosen. The other enters the I. The other becomes the I and the I becomes the other when the actor begins to act. The mask is therefore at once something alien and artificial, as well as natural and intimate, just like acting in Western culture, which is always (regardless of the accepted definition) a play of identification and distance.

All these “three theaters” function in the performative space, creating worlds suspended in the void, subject to change, open to other dimensions of being. Their power does not lie in the answers they give but in asking fundamental questions. What is a shadow? Does the mask cast a shadow on the face or is our face just the shadow of the mask? A Zen master would surely answer with another question: “What is a mask?”

Różewicz’s different *Kartotekas* [Card Indexes]. Scattered or anamorphic drama, or the entangled arts

When we talk about “the arts,” we usually refer to the visual arts, dance, or music, or we immediately turn our attention to theatrical and dramatic texts, to plays. The notion of the arts eliminates the need to define the complicated relationship between drama and theater, and even more broadly between literature and theater, if one maintains the increasingly anachronistic division into literature as the art of the word and theater as the performative arts. Drama, despite repeated attempts to relegate it to the periphery of the arts, which would render it inferior and incomplete (as demonstrated by “the theatrical theory of drama” or “writing for the theater”), has turned out to be the most creative and progressive genre, embodying the essence of the performing arts. The divisions into “staged” plays and “written” plays is obsolete. The relationship between theater and drama,

³⁷ E. Żeromska, *op. cit.*

interpreted historically in the context of the development of mimetic art, could be called the entangled arts (some productions were based on spoken instructions; respectively, at times dramatic texts were recorded long after the performance took place). So, is Aristotle's theory of tragedy and comedy (lost) the poetics of literature or the stage? The complicated relationship between drama and theater effectively binds these arts together. They cannot be separated. It seems that these two realities anamorphically coexist; these two images become entangled in one look. In order to understand the entanglement of the dramatic and the theatrical matter, we must accept the possibility of simultaneously defining things by means of completely different categories. We have power as audience members; we define, if for a moment, what we (want to) see in a work of art. In this sense, the act of viewing is tantamount to the act of creating. Różewicz creates, for example, *Kartoteka rozrzucona* [The Scattered Card Index] in and through words. Alas, he works with the scattered ready-made text, which he reads years later, so that art can live again, if only for a moment, in a different order. He probably realized that it would eventually be written down again and exist in a yet different form. Such "from stage to literature" sequences can be endlessly repeated. They defy the principle of linearity and replace it with the principle of coexistence and interchangeability. Literature takes over the space once occupied by drama/theater, seen as the fluid form of the entangled arts.

However, in this essay I will not talk about the liberal arts, which function in a historically defined tradition, nor about the correspondence of arts, nor about the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, nor about the so-called pictorial turn. Respectively, I do not refer to Wagner's synthesis of the arts, avant-garde montage or collage, or other such experiments. The difference between utopian totality and aesthetic disintegration is smaller than it seems, although, of course, the stages leading from the synthesis of the arts to the entangled arts would have to be carefully traced and described. After all, in the nineteenth century, the theater was nothing short of an interface – it played a similar role to that played by the new media today. In this essay, I am interested in performativity, understood not only as agency but also as undecidability, anti-binarism, new aesthetic possibilities (and not failures) which can be found in dispersion, disruption, coexistence, as they define communication in the twenty-first century.

Literature is no longer the art of the word. It combines different languages and materials (words become part of a drawing; an image provokes a verbal reaction), different media, and different interactive acts of reception/creation (the printed word coexists with the digital word; when you read, you effectively choose a path, understood metaphorically as the path

of life but sometimes also literally as the surface on which one walks, which is suggested by some liberatic works, and/or as the soundtrack to a movie). Reading calls for technology: the computer, the camera, the smartphone, the QR code scanner, etc. Technology is an extension of our senses. As a tool, it allows us to experience and enjoy art. We live in more and more parallel worlds. Literature is a performative art in at least two ways. For one, as pointed out by J. Hillis Miller, because it is able to create imaginary worlds that do and do not co-exist (they can have a counterpart in reality, they can be purely imaginary, or they can exist in a latent form “waiting to be turned into words”).³⁸ Respectively, as performative writing, literature breaks down the boundaries of various arts, blurring the differences between the process of creation and the length of one’s life (transgression turns into transversity). In other words, the ontological status of literature has changed (it emphasizes its own intermediality, it acts, it is spectacularly eventful, it is (playfully) referential, it is complex) and at the same time it is performative (insofar as it engages with the anti-binary entanglement, which constantly develops under the influence of science, especially quantum physics). Logically, we cannot imagine that two states (e.g., light and other material particles, such as electrons) can exist simultaneously in a wave-particle form. Nor can we accept that Schrödinger’s cat is alive and dead at the same time. When we observe, we always select, specify, decide what we see.

The category of entanglement, which I borrow from quantum physics, thus becomes an aesthetic category. What I once wrote about the concept of performative history of literature could be applied to Różewicz’s works: “Entangled particles form a relational whole; even when separated, at a great distance from each other, they are still interdependent – the state of one still depends on the state of the other. If we determine the parameters of one, we are able to capture both of them as an entangled whole. So how do particles interact? What is reality and does the world exist outside of the self? What is the nature of time and space? What is the essence of matter, mind, consciousness? We have been forever asking those questions ...”³⁹

Indeed, not certainty and not knowledge but uncertainty and undecidability develop consciousness. Paradoxically, if we were to draw parallels between quantum physics and literature, we could say that there is no genre scene without anamorphosis, no epithet without an oxymoron, no naturalistic description without synesthesia. Hence, the term “the entangled arts” refers not so much to “interconnected media” (“like, for exam-

³⁸ J.H. Miller, *On Literature*, London and New York 2002, p. 45.

³⁹ A. Krajewska, *Splątanie literackie* [Entanglement in Literature], “Przestrzenie Teorii” 2012, no. 17, p. 8.

ple, a vinyl record with the original movie soundtrack”⁴⁰) but, above all, to performative literary ontology, which brings entangled genres to life, including photo-epigram, theater-film, drama-theater, video-performance, photo-novel (movie-novel), cinemagraph, movie-to-book adaptations (and their variants – “non-genres,” such as non-theater, impossible art, etc.), and to epistemology (which is, however, defined not as a search for truth, but as a performative invocation of a secret, a mystery, the space of the unresolved). Performativity thus challenges and changes our definitions of ontology and epistemology, and the two become entangled (since our consciousness creates the material world).

The concept of art returns today also in the context of its redefinitions. The traditional anachronistic approach to art as a thing, an artifact, an object of high art, which differs from the applied (low) arts, clashes with the modern performative vision of art as a process, an event, and a series of constant recontextualizations, remediations, remixability and reconstructions. Such art abolishes binary high/low, elite/popular, important/unimportant, main/secondary oppositions and it transcends the means of expression associated with only one medium (theater/film, print/cyberspace, photography/film). Such art becomes an active network, similar to the Internet. Thus, literature turns out to be a performative art also in this respect. The possibility of constant change of the object of art defies the need for the so-called invariant, stable foundation – a fixed image of a work of art. Theater scholars often accuse literary scholars of not understanding the living art of the theater, insofar as they reduce everything to the concept of text. Text in literary studies is often identified with the outdated (and no longer valid) paradigm of structural-semiotic text. Of course, I have a different model in mind. Performative literary studies build on deconstruction and study the text in motion and in flux, in potentiality and in absence, in constant recontextualizations and rewritings, in intermedial transformations, and in dramatic entanglement.

If we interpret the concept of the text performatively, we cannot define its so-called canonical form. The text that is subject to constant recontextualizations exists in thousands of different ways; it is present in and as a network and not in and as a linear system. Therefore, it cannot be defined against something; it lacks a point of reference, a fixed center. Considering the above and the emerging new ontology of the entangled arts, we can no longer speak of binary oppositions. The concept of literature is no longer focused on “great books,” and, as Faulstich writes, since the new media

⁴⁰ W. Faulstich, R. Strobel, “*Uksiążkowanie*” jako problem estetyczno-medialny. Obcy – ósmy pasażer Nostromo – *studium przypadku* [“Novelization” as an Aesthetic and Media Issue: *Alien* – A Case Study], trans. M. Kasprzyk, ed. K. Kozłowski, “Przestrzenie Teorii” 2014, no. 21.

work with transformed fragments and constantly create compilations, the direction of the media transfer is reversed. “It is no longer the case that a (‘good’) novel has been (poorly) ‘adapted into a film’ [lit. ‘filmed’]. Nowadays, a movie can be ‘novelized.’ Or should we say ‘literatured?’”⁴¹ Works are “scattered;” they appear in various forms and versions, such as the photo novella, the novel, the comic book, the movie-to-book conversions. By the way, I wonder how Faulstich would classify Różewicz’s *Kartoteka rozrzucana*. Is it a “book-to-theater conversion” or a “theater-to-book conversion”? Or maybe a “book-to-book conversion”? Indeed, the concept of adaptation no longer makes sense because we no longer have anything to adapt into something else. Adaptation *per se* does not take place. We do not adapt one play into another. We do not turn an original into a translation. We do not transform a manuscript into a published book. Adaptation no longer makes sense as a sequence, an intersemiotic translation, and even as an interpretative approach. We observe and engage with works of art from different points of view, and we cannot determine the existence or the non-existence of the true form of a given work or its canonical interpretation. We can only constantly root our perspectives in the process of displacements, transformations, transitions that shape art performatively. In art, we can (co)exist in parallel words. Not only thanks to the new media (Faulstich) but also thanks to the good old imagination (Miller).

A similar process is at play when it comes to the study of historical documents – scholars no longer believe that they discover the only true vision of the past. Being aware of the fact that the collected source material may (and should) be interpreted in a modern context restores, as Hayden White writes, the value of studying the past in order to understand the present, or, as Freddie Rokem writes, it “seeks to overcome both the separation and the exclusion.”⁴² Pierre Nora calls this way of thinking about the dynamic and changeable object of study post-memory,⁴³ and Arthur C. Danto calls it post-historical art.⁴⁴ The art historian Georges Didi-Huberman, in turn, writes about “memory spots.”⁴⁵ And although these concepts are not syn-

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² Cf. M. Leyko, *Teatr w przestrzeni historii* [Theater in the Space of History], “Dialog” 2013, no. 4, p. 5.

⁴³ P. Nora, *Czas pamięci* [Time of Memory], trans. W. Dłuski, “ResPublica Nowa” 2001, no. 7.

⁴⁴ A.C. Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*, Princeton 1997.

⁴⁵ G. Didi-Huberman’s lecture “The Place in Spite of Oneself, in Spite of Itself” devoted to the art of Mirosław Bałka, delivered on June 16, 2011, at 6:00 p.m. at the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw. The text is based on the recording found on the website of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw www.artmuseum.pl.

onyms, they all seem to be important in how Tadeusz Różewicz perceives history. The poet's gaze is performative. He brings the past to life (to use Huberman's term) as "memory spots." "Memory spots" are not diegetic. We could add to Didi-Huberman's argument and say that they operate *in performance*. Looking is the source of performative *episteme*.

Art is a network-like, entangled space. Post-historical art (Danto) also implies the possibility of changing the past. Artists may do almost anything (they can destroy someone's work, for example, Robert Rauschenberg erased a drawing by Willem de Kooning; they can destroy their own work, for example, Anselm Kiefer set his paintings on fire and Banksy shredded *Girl with balloon* when it was auctioned off; they can introduce changes and they can create parodies, for example, add a mustache to Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, change the frame or distort the recording (The Wooster Group's *HAMLET*), or "update" an older work of art, that is, turn historical black-and-white photos into a movie in color (as in the movie *Miasto 44* about the Warsaw Uprising, which raised questions about the role of color in abolishing the opposition between truth and fiction) or organize hologram concerts of deceased musical stars (such as Michael Jackson) which are considered a live performance). We thus create a past that never existed. Różewicz and postmemory – this question should be addressed in greater detail in a separate essay. *Kartoteka rozrzucona* is therefore not an adaptation of *Kartoteka* [The Card Index] but its post-memory version. It is at the same time a form of deconstruction, anti-binary entangled art, post-memory, performative writing, etc. How many more such *Kartotekas* will we be able to see? How many more such *Kartotekas* will we be able to create? ... Without Różewicz ... And maybe one day with his hologram...

The work of art, the act of creation, and the act of reception become entangled. Rhizomes and palimpsests, metamorphosis and anamorphosis, dispersion and disturbance, past and present constantly redefine the notion of art. We could even say that probably for the first time theory is able to break out of the vicious circle of interpreting art in relation to either the author, the work itself, or the viewer. The raw material of art is entangled matter; it is a performative space and not an object (an artifact).

Thus, performativity can be transposed outside of art, as an entanglement of "real" reality and "artistic" reality. Or, and this is perhaps more complex and interesting, we can focus on the performative network based on the opposition between truth and fiction, thus introducing ontological doubt and demolishing the Cartesian model of art in favor of "esse est percipi," etc. In the first case, we will witness the power of performance and in the second case, we will witness the power of the performative entanglement of literature and the media.

Różewicz's art/play is performative in two ways. For one, it is biopoetic – art turns into life and transforms it. Our bodies and minds are interconnected, they condition one another, which Różewicz often shows, drawing attention to the physical. He translates his actions from thoughts into movements, from movements into thoughts. The experience of the stage is the experience of the mind (“everything is clear in my mind,” “there is no theater on paper”). The second meaning of performativity refers to drawing the viewer into the play; the abolition of metalanguage should lead to the abolition of the single frame. As such, as Raoul Eshelman writes,⁴⁶ we do not only witness “double framing” at work but also the endless and complex process of re-framings. The spectator, the reader, and the writer play a game in which they create different frames in order to understand themselves and in order to observe how this process affects their consciousness, which is, in turn, transformed by the work of art.

The concept of art is thus undefinable. No one can say once and for all what art is and what art is not. Art is defined by our choices, decisions, (re)framings, and erasures.

For Różewicz, entanglement is a way of writing/reading, that is, the essence of life in art. It is – as the Author himself could ironically say, distancing himself from fashionable discourse – a “project,” “a work in progress.” And this “text in progress” does indeed create the poet's biography: a biography woven from words, images, photographs, traces of Różewicz's readings of the works of other artists. Różewicz's art is non-complete, non-closed, constantly in motion, in flux, changeable, redefinable. Różewicz's successive literary works do not so much complement one another as operate as hubs in an invisible and infinite network. Różewicz's works, as an interactive and intermedial network of influences and dependencies, transcend the boundaries of all arts. It is, in my opinion, the best example of the entangled arts in Polish literature from the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century.

When he was working with directors, when he finally entered the stage in *Kartoteka rozrzucona*, and, later, when he wrote *Ostatnia kartoteka* [The Last Card Index] (also called *Trzecia rozrzucona* [The Third Scattered Card Index]), Tadeusz Różewicz always focused on the image first. This is the first entanglement that is immediately visible – the image present in a quote, in ekphrasis, in a reminder. Różewicz's texts become entangled in/with print, manuscripts, drawings, telegrams, monograms, drawings, highlighted sections from school textbooks and self-learning books, dedications, autographs,

⁴⁶ R. Eshelman, *Performatyzm albo koniec postmodernizmu* (American Beauty) [Performatism, or the End of Postmodernism (*American Beauty*)], trans. K. Hoffmann, “Przestrzenie Teorii” 2012, no. 17.

and photographs. Różewicz adds comments, writes prefaces, and then adds comments he uttered but did not record himself (such as comments from *To i owo* [This and That] collected and recorded by Jan Stolarczyk). The most important thing, however, is that most of the comments come from unwritten books, unpublished texts, unfinished works, or poems that were conceived and then abandoned, ideas jotted in the margins. What else does the writer entangle?

In Różewicz's works, entanglement is usually "activated" in the process of re-writing.

Różewicz re-wrote not only *Kartoteka* but also his other works, for example, the poem "to się złożyć nie może" [It cannot come together]. He also re-wrote his biography. He re-wrote his texts in dialogue with his critics. He re-wrote his notes from a sheet of paper (from scattered sheets of paper), also from those which were literally scattered on the stage. The sheets, the notes from Różewicz's *Kartoteka* were filmed, photographed, and scattered during theatrical performances.

How can we classify *Kartoteka rozrzucona*? Is it a published book, a video, a rehearsal, a filmed rehearsal, a photograph, a drawing, a performance, an invitation to dance (Różewicz clearly makes such a suggestion)? Apart from the above, we should also mention Różewicz's re-writing of literature, paintings, philosophical treatises in dialogue with other writers, painters, and critics (e.g., Miłosz/Różewicz on Swedenborg, Różewicz/Bacon on Velázquez).

Różewicz envisioned *Kartoteka po raz trzeci rozrzucona* as a square – as a blueprint of the ceiling with a black dot in the center (or perhaps a fly that landed on the ceiling) – which could be compared with Samuel Beckett's *Quad*. In Beckett's play, nameless monks designate the center of the square by "dancing" around it, thus pointing to the absorbing center of the Universe. In Różewicz's play, a fly is sitting on the ceiling; it marks a point, a dot, an end. The act of re-writing may give rise to anamorphosis. It is what you think it is (once we want to see a fly, once we want to see a dot). "Tragedy's reflection" has its counterpart in "comedy's reflection."

Incidentally, I do not agree with W.B. Worthen, who in *Drama: Between Poetry and Performance*⁴⁷ (Worthen unfortunately still distinguishes between literary studies and performance studies) reads Beckett's *Quad* through Euclidean geometry. Adopting such a perspective does not limit the question of space, but opens it up. The characters who walk along increasingly crooked lines are, in my opinion, re-writing Euclidean geometry into Einsteinian geometry. Hence, in Beckett's play, walking is "dancing,"

⁴⁷ W.B. Worthen, *op. cit.*, pp. 192–204.

and the center, which the actors omit, like the black hole in physics, is so powerful that it even forces them to change their trajectory. Beckett does not create space. Beckett re-writes geometry, changes dimensions, bends time and space, and probably draws on quantum physics, showing possible worlds, potential places, or the void (as, according to Plato, “the state before all ontology,” but we could also say, as “the state after all ontology,” as “texts with no purpose,” when “there is nothing left to say,” when crumbling ontology points to the void).

So, what are we looking at? Or, as Różewicz would say, “what do we focus/ our attention on?” First, we stand in front of the image. Perhaps literature is abstract like the world in Kazimir Malevich’s paintings? The painter argued that he did not depict an “empty square” but rather an impression of an object. Or maybe *Trzecia rozrzucona* could be read as a Japanese haiku?⁴⁸ Were it not for the fact that *Trzecia rozrzucona* is not a poem ... nor is it a drama, a painting, a screenshot, a scene, a happening, a play; it is dramatology. The dramatographic haiku in Różewicz’s play therefore perversely and humorously (!) evokes the image of nature (the fly) and inspires metaphysical reflection (the black dot), pointing to the center, concentration. It also refers to meditation and classic Japanese artistic conventions – the empty white space (the white ceiling). *Trzecia rozrzucona* was written as drama, using metaphorical ink obtained from the first iconic *Kartoteka*, which in turn can no longer be read in isolation from the two subsequent *Kartotekas*. Transforming, changing one particle leads to the entanglement of the other. It may even lead to the entanglement of yet another, and “trigger” further entanglements. Different versions of *Kartoteka*, unique as they may be, maintain their identity. It is clear that they were all written “as” the same drama. They are connected by the same person – his sense of sight, hearing, touch, speech. He is constantly lying in bed and at the same time he is living, he is active (as an embryo, a teenager, a hard-working and rebellious adult, and an old man who is blankly staring at the ceiling). The ironic “scattering” and “mixing” of pages, index cards, notes, acts, and scenes points to the end, to the full stop – be it of life or the sentence. It projects the path of life determined by the dramatic typography of expressing the end in art, or perhaps the end of art. Or perhaps we have only reached the end of a certain understanding of art and literature?

As in Vermeer’s *The Lacemaker*, the mimetic line turns into a ragged, blurred shape, a blot of paint. Creation is a secret which, to draw on Di-

⁴⁸ More on the art of haiku in Polish poetry cf. B. Śniecikowska, *Haiku po polsku. Genologia w perspektywie transkulturowej* [Haiku in Polish: Genology in a Transcultural Perspective], Toruń 2016.

di-Huberman, we discover by reflecting on the aporia of detail. After all, literature still surprises us. It is endless possibilities.

Translated by Małgorzata Olsza

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