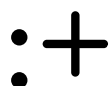


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The Dispossessed Spectator: Subversive Games with Viewer Passivity in the Theatre of Krzysztof Garbaczewski

A certain perplexing paradox lies in the public reception of director Krzysztof Garbaczewski's productions. On one hand, he is incredibly sympathetic to the issue of reception, devoting considerable attention to it within the scope of his work and building projects with convincing openness to intellectual montage and individual sensitivity. Nevertheless, the reception of Garbaczewski's productions is loaded with controversy and even explicit rejection. In certain cases, such rejection is less than puzzling, anticipated by the director or provoked outright – as with his production the Juliusz Słowacki classic *Balladyna* (Polski Theatre, Poznań 2013). In that production's second half, a light installation by Hubert Czerepok appears, with the inscription from the Polski Theatre's façade, 'Nation to Itself', stylized to resemble the motto above the gates at Auschwitz.

That provocation, remarkably unequivocal for Garbaczewski's theatrical style, was aimed both at local Poznań and at the national communities, and carried at once the force of a direct attack and a retaliation. However, I am interested here in the origins and more ambiguous reasons behind the ongoing conflict between Garbaczewski's productions and his audience, in which the case of *Balladyna* is a significant exception to the rule.

The director's productions, rather than causing outrage over their worldview or political message, have been criticized most frequently for incomprehensibility and their avant-garde nature, for cognitive barriers set against the audience – which culminated with the reception of *The Sexual Life of the Savages*, inspired by anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski's work and staged at Nowy Theatre in Warsaw in 2011 – for tediousness, pretentiousness, poor time management, as well as chaos and gibberish on stage (*The Odyssey*, Jan Kochanowski Theatre, Opole 2009). Such accusations have been accompanied by receptive confusion associated with the director's use of a variety of electronic devices and media in his film strategies, which in cases has threatened to overwhelm the production's literary source (*The Odyssey*; *The Death Star*, Jerzy Szaniawski Theatre, Wałbrzych 2010; *Gallery of Polish Kings*, Stary Theatre, Kraków 2013). Other sources of confusion include the awkward mixture of performance modes within a given production, challenging the established status of the work's authorship and sharing creative space with other artists, mainly from the field of visual arts (all Garbaczewski productions except *The Odyssey*).

On the other hand, Garbaczewski's oeuvre cannot be considered to fall within the framework of critical art either – the exception being *Balladyna* – or, indeed, of engaged art. The 'progressive' audience at that time cheered rather more keenly the explicitly political and social commentary of the director-writer team of Monika Strzępka and Paweł Demirski. This lack of a clear political and social angle in Garbaczewski's theatre pieces has exposed him to one further accusation – namely, that he indulges in affected 'art for art's sake'. Reviews often mention 'confusion', 'consternation' and 'helplessness' – and these are precisely the states that interest me the most.

Why Gombrowicz?

In this essay, I shall focus on the three Garbaczewski productions that were inspired by works of Witold Gombrowicz: *The Possessed* (graduation production, Jerzy Szaniawski Theatre, Wałbrzych 2008), *Ivona, Princess of Burgundia* (Jan Kochanowski Theatre, Opole 2012) and *Kronos* (Polski Theatre, Wrocław 2013). I have chosen the productions based on Gombrowicz's texts primarily because of authorial qualities which we would perhaps call 'performative' today, which are enhanced in Garbaczewski's productions. I mean here first of all Gombrowicz's concept of human co-existence as theatre (a constant existence in relation to an audience), a kind of continuously self-perpetuating 'interhuman church' along with the subjects operating within it. The attention devoted to people's self-fashioning in regards to others, to exposition, theatricality of behaviour patterns, relationality and peculiar performance games created by subjects led to Gombrowicz's concepts becoming crucial references for Nicolas Bourriaud in his *Relational Aesthetics*, where that author strives to capture new types of correlation between the work and its recipient in social circulation.¹

The idea of relationality of identity and situation is of particular importance here, as it is in reading Gombrowicz as proposed by Garbaczewski. Identity and representations of everyday life come into existence here only within bilateral relationship (between stage and audience), and the presence of the other constitutes the sine qua non condition of identity. Of equally importance to the foundational concept of the 'interhuman church' is Gombrowicz's almost obsessive interest in 'cracks in the socius' (as termed by Bourriaud) within those interpersonal performances: confusion, consternation and the affective power of shame. In Gombrowicz's works, entry points through these cracks are located in discursive spaces of carnality, animality, failure and stupidity.

Garbaczewski consistently returns to Gombrowicz; what is significant and interesting, however, is that he chooses 'rejected' works – ones that were in some way negatively received, questioned by the author or published without Gombrowicz's involvement. The novel *Possessed* was written as a serialized thriller (so-called 'literature for housewives') appearing in 1939 on the pages of *Good Evening – Daily Courier* and *The Morning Express* under the pseudonym Zdisław Niewieski. Gombrowicz officially acknowledged having written it only in 1969, and the novel was not published in its entirety until 1990. The writer didn't value *Ivona, Princess of Burgundia* (as expressed in his *Diary*), considering it

¹ See Nicolas Bourriaud, *Estetyka relacyjna*, trans. Łukasz Białkowski (Kraków: MOCAR, 2012), pp. 49–52.

a conventional theatre play, and *Kronos* was published by decision of the author's widow and literary executor, Rita Gombrowicz. Gombrowicz never intended the draft of the latter for publication, nor, most probably, did he wish it to function in public circulation.

Thus, Garbaczewski chooses works positioned by their author as secondary, characterized by shadowy or uncertain authorship – was *Kronos* truly written by Gombrowicz? – or unsigned at the embarrassing margins of literature.

The Dispossessed Spectator

The 'dispossessed spectator' of this essay's title is inspired by ideas of two authors, Jacques Rancière and Bojana Kunst, the latter a Slovenian philosopher of culture. In one respect, my analysis is accompanied by the concept of Rancière's² *The Emancipated Spectator*, in particular his aspiration to erase, cancel or even abolish the traditional opposition inherent in the spectator-spectacle relationship, i.e. the usual contradistinction between action on stage (drama) and viewer passivity (theatron). According to Rancière, the 'passive' position of the spectator is a position that is active while activating operations on the other side, and the traditional division is unclear, false and not particularly fertile cognitively. Equally important in this analysis is the point from which Rancière derives his idea of the 'emancipated spectator': his earlier reflections in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*. The idea of the ignorant teacher is based on the reversal and negation of the most obvious relationship between a pupil and his pedagogue, wherein the teacher appears in the role of a master knowing more/better than the student. His philosophical and pedagogical postulate is to deprive the discourse and authority of power, to side with ignorance, negativity. The paradoxical question posed by Rancière, particularly important in analysing Garbaczewski's productions, is: 'can one who is ignorant teach another one who is ignorant something that they themselves don't know?'

My title also refers to Bojana Kunst's reflections from her essay 'How Time Can Dispossess: On Duration and Movement in Contemporary Performance'.³ Kunst examines selected contemporary performance art from the point of view of 'duration', with the aim of her research to capture and disclose the cultural and social potential of subversive states of non-functioning, lack of efficiency, lack of 'things happening' and non-activity.

These two concepts referring to attributes and possibilities inherent in the 'negative', as well as tools derived from the texts of Kunst and Rancière, shall be instrumental in my search for possible critical potential in 'dispossessing' the spectator, subjecting him or her to passivity and indicating his or her loss of power within Garbaczewski's theatre. The territory of this analysis will in turn be constituted by the four traditional theatrical categories: time, place, action and character.

2 Jacques Rancière, 'Widz wyemancypowany', trans. Adam Ostolski, in *Wakacje z prawicą*, *Krytyka Polityczna* 2007, 13, pp. 310–319.

3 Bojana Kunst, 'How Time Can Dispossess: On Duration and Movement in Contemporary Performance', trans. Joanna Jopek, *Didaskalia* 2013, 115–116, pp. 62–72.

Dispossessed of Time

Kunst places the category of 'duration' in a significant context that emphasises its subversive power. The context here is Western society, in which working conditions (and, therefore, everyday social functioning) are regulated by post-Fordism and the condition of labour as described in Italian *Operaismo* (worker-ism). It is a work mode (and social conditions) in which a clear division between work and leisure doesn't exist anymore, and values and attributes which once used to belong to the individual's own time (private sphere) have now been drawn into the working system. Within such system, values like 'creativity', the human factor, communication (along with the entire sphere of 'public relations') and 'virtuosity' (or creative endeavours in place of obeying commands) are particularly significant. The consequences of such a transfer of emphases include a change of time system into project mode, as well as mobility required by the multiplicity and diversity of tasks at hand, leading to widespread nomadism of individuals and lack of set location (an example is the case of freelancers). The predominant category is a 'project', regulating and determining the temporal dimension of individual life: 'The subject continues to regard its time as a project: to achieve the effect and reach the projected goals. It directly accelerates its time'.⁴

Kunst contrasts 'projecting time', understood in such a way, with the category of 'duration', which she then places in one further context: a philosophical one. She refers to Michel Foucault's reflections on the category of 'devices' (*dispositifs*) regulating social functioning of the apparently free subject. Within a framework in which that regulation is so common as to be invisible, it is precisely 'duration' and not happening or functioning (which seemingly enslaves the subject, not allowing the subject to function, to be 'mobile', in motion) that has the power to disclose and arrest those 'devices': 'Duration directly sabotages social protocols of adaptation and mobility'.

Kronos by Witold Gombrowicz – by Rita Gombrowicz? by a team of editors led by Prof. Jerzy Jarzębski? – appears to stir Garbaczewski's interest for two (interrelated) reasons. The first is time, or rather the relationship between 'intimate' time and public time, the content of time in journal writing (how much life is there in a recorded 'life'?). The second reason is the media atmosphere in Poland that had surrounded the publication plans for *Kronos* long before it reached print. *Kronos* was announced as Gombrowicz's secret, intimate journal, written concurrently with the 'official' *Diary* published in Paris-based journal *Kultura*. The announcement sparked curiosity and awoke reader expectations, which backfired on the publishers: they were widely accused of inflating media attention and fabricating 'humbug'.⁵ Garbaczewski seems to be interested in this disappointment, accompanied by a frequently repeated charge that Gombrowicz's notes resemble those of an accountant. This was due to the impersonal character of his monthly lists of bodily ailments, sexual encounters and financial-state tabulations. What is interesting and significant is that the tediousness of those calculations wasn't compatible, according to readers and commentators, with the intimate character of

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ See Jerzy Franczak, 'Kronos Gombrowicza – humbug!', *Tygodnik Powszechny* online, 14 May 2013 [accessed: 1 September 2014].

the 'secret journal' that had been anticipated. Paradoxically, therefore, intimacy was expected to have a more defined aspect of literary creation.

Garbaczewski's production, even in its planning phase, was carried out in the 'anti-theatre' mode, and it levelled its aim precisely at this disappointment: the anticlimax which accompanied publication of the long-awaited work. Staging strategies enhanced the dissatisfaction and transferred it into theatrical space: the actors didn't use lines from *Kronos*, which appeared only as a running strip on an on-stage screen, resembling 'breaking news' on TV. Instead of the great author's recently published 'intimate journal', the literary material comprised the actors' 'kronoses' which, of course, in the atmosphere of expectation of a 'cultural event' that the staging of *Kronos* was supposed to be,⁶ provoked further disappointment and receptive confusion. A confusion that had been foreseen, anticipated and staged into the production.

It is clearly evidenced by three moments or scenes (the performance lacks any clear division into segments) in which Garbaczewski transfers his 'anti-theatre' directly, not merely conceptually, onto a game with the audience, by taking advantage of the power of 'duration'. This is particularly disturbing in the show's finale: the production was supposed to last a hundred and ten minutes, but the last scene stretches far beyond the scheduled, 'projected' time of the performance. The production's finale is a long passage in which actor Wojciech Ziemiański prolongs a tirade of detail from his memory into infinity (last names of acquaintances unknown to the audience; details of show tours from the 1970s) in an attempt to give his own 'kronos' a shape. The prolongation of the show can be clearly read within the contexts of Kunst's 'duration' – the tediousness that is anticipated (by the actor, as well) in reaction to this tirade, and to the intentional drawing out of it in time, leads towards the moment in which audience impatience makes itself clearly known. On one hand, it is a play on viewers' bourgeoisie politeness – they, despite the deliberate toying with their patience, will not walk out of the auditorium (which points emphatically to the framework, the device and at the same time the 'project' of seeing a performance from beginning to end that arrests the spectators in this situation). On the other hand, it is plays on the impatience appearing at the point in which additional details cease to contribute to the narration (lack of 'things happening'): the plot doesn't advance; the production cannot reach its finale.

As a spectator, I felt this sabotage of 'social protocols of adaptation and mobility' (as Kunst terms 'duration') enacted by Garbaczewski in the finale of *Kronos* with particularly poignance, and I experienced irritation associated with a sense of 'imprisonment' in the production. My projected schedule assumed a hundred-and-ten-minute performance, a twenty-minute walk to the Wrocław train station followed by a train journey from Wrocław to Kraków. It was a modest project – however, in view of the show's extended duration, it could not be carried out. My irritation was associated with a sense of imprisonment in duration, the

6 The production was officially advertised thus: 'The most anticipated book of 2013, *Kronos* by Witold Gombrowicz, for the first time on the stage in Poland. The author of *Ferdysdurke* and *Diary* debuts as a chronicler of his own everyday life. In his notes he attempts to arrest time by ritualizing it: he lists his earnings, people he met, his lovers, books he read, illnesses that plague him. How to respond to that in theatre? By one's own Chronos – Kronos, by arrested evanescence, caught red-handed?' www.teatrpolski.wroc.pl/przedstawienia/kronos [accessed: 1 September 2014].

impossibility of carrying out my 'project' and the impatience resulting from the lack of 'things happening' – these properties of being dispossessed of time, as listed by Kunst, are particularly acute precisely because one falls out of the framework of partitioned, invisible, projecting time consumed by small tasks. The overflowing river of time exposes the subject to a particular kind of uncertainty.

The fact that the time-dispossession strategy is both intended and consistently carried out is also evidenced by the very beginning of the production, in which the dramaturgy of duration provides the tone (and a paradoxical framework) to the *Kronos* event. Right at the outset, on the vast screen created by a metal curtain, the words 'show cancelled' appear. This device meets with the audience's full understanding (of the avant-garde nature of the show) and recognition. However, the game begins only when the director starts toying in a more overt fashion with this attention and recognition (both that the written announcement is false and that the concept was easy to swallow). Management of the audience's passivity, their impatience and need for 'happening' takes place by projections being switched on and off. When, after long minutes of the 'show cancelled' announcement, a black-and-white film appears on the screen for a short while, casual comments in the audience immediately subside, to watch the film in silence, which then breaks off moments later, with the 'show cancelled' announcement reappearing in its place. This game, indicating the framework of passivity and dispossession of the audience, can be compared to John Cage's 'silent' composition 4' 33". It points to social conditioning and perception 'devices' governing the reception of a seemingly free subject.

This indicated passivity and the provocation related to dispossession are enhanced all the more by the fact that both director and actors block and disarm with irony any possibility of a direct critical intervention, or any response on the part of the audience that amounts to disappointment. In one scene, the actors refer to well-known events that had taken place in the Stary Theatre in Kraków in November 2013, before *Kronos* opened: a performance of *To Damascus* directed by Jan Klata was interrupted in scandalous fashion by an organized group in the audience hostile to the theatre's management, who started to shout: 'for shame!' in the middle of a performance. In *Kronos* (premiered in the month after that event), the performers walked across the stage shouting 'for shame, for shame!', and one of them, in screened 'rehearsal' material, offers words of criticism regarding the nonsense, gibberish and formlessness of the show now being performed. If such passivity management cannot find release in the critical involvement of the dispossessed audience, what cognitive or social potential lies in affective play with 'duration' so persistently carried out?

The critical potential is located elsewhere by Garbaczewski – perhaps deeper, or two steps from the possibility of direct critical mobilization or a political interpretation. The director is more interested in the conditions imposed on the subject in the range of social 'devices'. The potential seems hidden in the actual breaking of projecting time and of the life-within-a-project (the necessity of mobility, staying in motion, rapid updating of views, skills, profession, identity), which is usually enforced on 'free' subjects by the invisible dictate of mobility and activity. Here lies the first potential advantage of passivity and dispossession of the spectator. As Bojana Kunst asserts:

Culturally, duration can be deeply subversive; but not because it contrasts the experience of slowness with the experience of speed (after all, slow movement is a privilege of the rich, and inevitable for the hungry). Duration irritates us because it reveals how deeply our most intimate perception of time (i.e. the feeling that we are active beings, constantly on the move) is socially constructed and economically conditioned. The time we suddenly have on our hands needs to dispossess us in order for us to be able to last. In contemporary life, the subject needs to be constantly actualised; however, duration does not enable actualisation. It throws us into pure potentiality, into what could happen.⁷

Garbaczewski's *Kronos*, with the help of the imposed, self-conscious passivity of the audience, shifts the perspective, as in 4' 33", the Cage piece mentioned above, towards the spectators, their projecting time and their kronos-life conditioned by devices, as a set of uncomfortable – thus also critical – infinite possibilities.

Dispossession of Action

On different front, Garbaczewski had already dispossessed the spectator in his graduation production, *The Possessed* (2008). In retrospect, it is clear that *The Possessed* set a creative course for the director (who has consistently returned to Gombrowicz) and announced its further directions. Even more, external circumstances – the fact that it was a graduation production – had also played a certain role. If one views *The Possessed* as a production granting the customary professional pass to an already mature, developing director, it is a significant response to the requirements of 'adulthood'.

Although Garbaczewski chose an author fully approved in the Polish theatrical tradition, *The Possessed* was the most radically untraditional choice possible within Gombrowicz's oeuvre. In his production, Garbaczewski follows the entire kitsch supporting cast of the crime-fiction genre – in *The Possessed*, we have psychic sessions, a haunted castle and terrifying towels (Gombrowicz in his *Diary*, probably referring to *Possessed*, mentions a consciously 'bad' novel that he failed to go through with in the end). Garbaczewski treats this material, this 'divine idiosyncy' of a bad novel, most seriously: behind the materialized metaphors and incredible novelistic concepts he discloses dark, uncertain places, obscure reaches in the plot and the story, as if looking for the 'dark current' of the subconscious – about which the literary critic Michał Paweł Markowski has written in reference to Gombrowicz.

As part of staging circumstances set in such a way, the audience was assigned a specific and particularly awkward place – as revealed in the finale, to which I shall return. On one hand, the production was expertly staged: the Wałbrzych actors entered the game fully professionally, constructing fully fleshed-out parts, as if in spite of the material, while the visual conception already anticipated the director's future aesthetically refined, mysterious theatrical spaces, with the action unfolding rapidly, at a remarkably speedy tempo and very precise rhythms (in the choreography and scene changes). The problem was that, despite aroused expectations regarding the criminal intrigue in *The Possessed*, the audience was doomed in advance to cognitive failure or constant pursuit of the plot,

7 Kunst.

which was devoid of closure or impossible to understand (not without reason, the production was accompanied in its musical layer by Tatu's *Nas nie dogoniat*). Garbaczewski mixed various versions of the story into the action (which had arisen due to the initial publication's serialization), at the same time utilizing and fully staging Gombrowicz's errors (resulting from the writer's lack of attention in writing his 'bad novel' or, again, from the episodic mode of publication). Those mistakes, failures and unexpected changes in a novel that was clearly created in a make-shift manner, have their direct consequences on stage. The vain hope of grasping the plot or seeing sense behind the story (aroused both by the genre and by staging expectations) condemns the spectator to wandering in the murk and chaos of cognitive darkness.

The consciously created impossibility of grasping the plot becomes here a practice of directing (receptive) ignorance. At the same time, the figure of the director, his discursive power and his stage-crafting or intellectual skills are all challenged. At this point, we may return to the question posed by Rancière in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*: 'Can one who is ignorant teach another who is ignorant something they themselves don't know?' And we may answer it the same way Judith Halberstam did in *The Queer Art of Failure* while referring to Rancière's conundrum.

Exposing the spectator to the territory of stupidity, nonsense, the impossibility of understanding or idiocy in the face of constantly provoked attempts at grasping sense becomes a practice of negativity, a practice of 'failure' or ignorance. It indicates performative and perhaps also affective cognitive limitations – after all, it is all about direct irritation of the spectator, experienced here and now – such as forgetfulness, failure, foolishness and errors. These are the locus of alternatives to the triumphant discourse of knowledge-power, and to the success of understanding (which clips the cognitive framework considerably). By such means – by mis-tuning the secure cognitive framework and transferring reception to the side of chaos – Garbaczewski appears to be preparing the ground for the simple question posed at the end of the performance, directed straight at the audience: 'Who are you?' The entire strange investigation and the wandering seems to gravitate towards that question, posed to the previously unaddressed protagonists of the show, while cognitive failures create emotional grounds upon which it resounds.

Dispossession of Place

Space/territory/location is one of the most important categories in Garbaczewski's theatre. His productions usually play out in a strictly theatrical space, even when – as in the case of his Malinowski-derived production at Nowy Theatre in Warsaw – the space of said theatre is in the form of a large studio hall. A notable exception here is *The Death Star* (inspired by *Star Wars*), which took place throughout the entire Zorza Cinema building in Wałbrzych while the spectators watched the action transmitted onto a cinema screen. I mention *The Death Star*, because *Ivona, Princess of Burgundia* (2012) seems to owe much to the Wałbrzych experience, as regards the use of screening. *Ivona*, which the spectators also see mostly on screen, is unlike *The Death Star* insofar as it is played out on a tightly enclosed black-box stage, and its deep entrenchment in institutionalised theatre is the most important aspect of the production. Perhaps it is a contrary response to Gombrowicz's accusations that *Ivona* is a *pièce bien faite*. Equally important, however, is the fact that a

confrontation between ‘pure negativity’ – as the title character Ivona was termed by Michał Paweł Markowski⁸ – and the extremely conventionalized court, which is the driving force behind the play’s dramaturgy, is played out in such tightly institutionalised territory.

Meanwhile, the use of a screen within the framework of a black-box stage appears to result from the source intuition associated with theatre – theatron as ‘the place of viewing’. *Ivona* not only plays out on a box stage with a starkly lit fore stage, but the director also consistently uses a revolving stage. At the front of the stage stand paper-screen doors, in turn, as if to form a huge curtain hiding the entire space of action from the audience – action which happens in the inner labyrinth created by the screen doors and is transmitted simultaneously onto the big screen.

In this theatre, theatron, the audience only see the screened film until the finale, edited in a makeshift manner using conventions of American horror cinema. This barrier – a literal one perceptively, with the screen doors, yet at the same time created by the familiar ‘curtain’ of film genres – causes the audience to be unable to judge what exactly takes place in the labyrinth behind the screens. What cannot be seen? Those cracks in action behind the screen doors are heavily masked, but sometimes the impossibility of penetrating the space behind the ‘curtain’ is distressing. For instance, when editing actively hides an element of action that seems crucial: in one passage, we see the meeting of Ivona with the king, a smooth transition follows, then the king leaves the room with his trousers off. The affective power of the unknown (unease, implicit rape, a kind of shame) is triggered by Garbaczewski, thanks to the imposed passivity of the spectator.

A certain imposed awareness of the lack of any illusion that a utopian place could be found beyond the performance is of particular importance for such performativity (disturbing holes; cracks in a tightly institutionalized environment). Both Gombrowicz’s play as well as Garbaczewski’s production stand clearly on the side of the recognition that theatricality and performativity constitute the dominant mode of viewing and of reality. Spaces, characters and events are produced by the power of the overwhelming spectacle. However, as much as a space free of staging does not exist, a crack within the show can be staged: a place that cannot be penetrated by sight – a temporary dispossession of place from the power of theatre. Bojana Kunst cites Marc Auge’s category of a non-place in the context of such a space: it is no-man’s land because, for a moment, it is performatively dispossessed from the power of viewing, the necessity of functioning and of ‘things happening’.

Dispossessed of Subjectivity

All these dispossession motifs in Garbaczewski’s theatre focus around one subject: identity, and especially the spectator’s identity. The question of subjectivity of the one ‘who is speaking’ is taken up in all of his productions, on various fronts. In *The Possessed*, analysed above, he asks it outright in the finale, but indirect references to fundamental identity problems have appeared frequently, as well. For example, Paweł Smagała, who frequently plays lead roles in Garbaczewski’s productions, performs the function – regardless of who he’s playing – of the

⁸ See Michał Paweł Markowski, *Czarny nurt: Gombrowicz, świat, literatura* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2004), pp. 165–175.

director's phantom 'alter-ego'. The complexity and multidimensionality of the characters always poses problems and receptive confusion. However, the most subversive potential of dispossessed subjectivity – the spectator's, most of all – is revealed in the character of Ivona from the Opole production.

Ivona, Princess of Burgundia – as I have mentioned – is a play with large performative potential or, rather, it is located in a worldview and with an epistemological horizon in which performativity is the dominant factor of reality. Events happen here ad hoc, in a way, subject to the changeability of uttered phrases and announcements consistently carried out. A significant example is a line delivered by one of the characters, which could function as a textbook example of Butler's theory or Austin's early considerations on the performative power of language. Cyprian says: 'We are young, we are men. We are young men. Let us *be* young men [...]'. Also the above-mentioned use of theatricality (of the court, convention, social forms) constitutes a picture of the represented world governed by institutions and social 'devices'.

The character of Ivona, who will almost not speak and will not act when faced with a world constructed in such a way, appears as 'pure negativity' (Markowski), a disturbing empty space, a crack, affective sloth, pure object (and abject, at the same time), pure passivity. Ivona may not speak nor act – but she gazes, and that's why 'she's got everyone within her gaze' (which is a source of great anxiety for the court). Under her gaze internalized shame and complexes within the court are revealed. Ivona reminds all the other characters of the play about the sphere that should be evicted from any conventional world: about carnality, animality, defects and physiology.

What is particularly significant, in Garbaczewski's production, is that the character comes – quite literally – from among the audience. She is the camera operator and she becomes mysteriously split in two (played by an actor and an actress). Her passivity is clearly dangerous; it is a kind of an impersonal negativity drive, as if not of a crystalized protagonist, but of the force of the gaze itself. In one of the scenes Prince Philip tries to kill Ivona and, as it turns out (again, with editing masking the events themselves) he ends up killing himself. Ivona is a mirror in which the characters are reflected, and a negative reason for which they exist.

Ivona can be seen as a model figure of a theatre viewer. Her power is negative (it only consists in encompassing things in her gaze), her action is based on passivity, yet she is a paradoxically causative subject. In her character the dichotomies Rancière opposed are erased and negated: mainly the opposition between acting and (passive) viewing. Ivona, as a model passive/dispossessed spectator, also possesses a critical power which, however, cannot be recognized in terms of direct intervention or participation. Through the character of Ivona, Garbaczewski indicates also a clear equilibration (at the very least) of his own position, of creators and viewers, creating a kind of a 'conversation among equals', which was postulated by Rancière in the figure of the 'emancipated spectator'.

What subversive power lies therefore in this consistent pulling to the forefront of the theatre spectator's passivity? Its potential certainly does not reside in activation or participative strategies, but in turn in 'dispossession' of the viewer as described by Bojana Kunst. First of all, it resides in removing the viewer out of his projecting time (socially and economically regulated). Secondly, in indicating (with the help of

unleashing cognitive chaos and straying onto the territory of stupidity and ignorance) other possibilities of narrating about the self, and also in pointing out to the limitations of 'knowledge-power'. Finally, dispossession and taking advantage of passivity serves for posing questions (within the framework of direct receptive experience) about post-modern identity and subjectivity in the face of numerous social devices managing our time, location, events that happen to us and characters/people we meet. It is possible thanks to the established (and absolutely not breached) theatrical contract of passivity on the part of the audience, with its 'consternation' and 'confusion' managed by Garbaczewski. There is no place here for anything beyond the show (no utopian freedom), but there are gaps and cracks appearing in places of dispossession, like announcements of other opportunities and untapped potential.

Translated by Karolina Sofulak

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ABSTRACT

Joanna Jopek

**The Dispossessed Spectator: Subversive Games with Viewer
Passivity in the Theatre of Krzysztof Garbaczewski**

The author searches for the answer to the question of the strategies of reception designed and provoked by Krzysztof Garbaczewski by analysing the director's productions of texts by Witold Gombrowicz, referring to the relational aesthetics of Nicolas Bourriaud as well as Jacques Rancière's conception of the emancipated spectator and Bojana Kunst's 'dispossession'. The objective of her analysis is to point to the possible critical potential in 'dispossessing' the spectator, subjecting him or her to passivity and indicating his/her loss of power within Garbaczewski's theatre. This potential entails exploiting the theatrical contract to 'dispossess' spectators in order to show them a possibility different from the dominant way of building a narrative about oneself, and at the same time to encourage the question about identity in a world of postmodern systems for managing oneself.