

## What is left of Jerzy Grotowski?

**“Grotowski – the attempt to retreat” directed by Tomasz Rodowicz in the Chorea Theatre, Łódź. Łukasz Drewniak writes in Dziennik Gazeta Prawna, Kultura.**

Maybe it's the most important play of the Polish off in the last several years. Tomasz Rodowicz, a fugitive from Gardzienice, and his young actors from Chorea from Łódź ask: what is left of Jerzy Grotowski?

Do you remember how little altar boys read the Gospel during a mass? How they let themselves flow with the melody of the text and unconsciously erase the old senses and discover the new ones? One of the boys reads a difficult biblical name syllable by syllable, the words flow down the other one like rain, the third one imitates solemn intonation of the parish priest.

While watching the latest Chorea play I was accompanied by a thought that the people of theatre who use Grotowski's ideas today and try to test his experiences are in a way as helpless as these poor altar boys. They collide with some wisdom that can't be rendered to contemporary realities. They discover very quickly that following Grotowski threatens with imitativeness and autism, it's disturbing rather than helpful. But Grotowski is important. One has to read his works and try to understand them. Tomasz Rodowicz, being aware of these dangers, decided not to teach his young actors whom Grotowski was. The Chorea leader assumed that his team would treat Grotowski's texts as literary material. Six people in their twenties from Łódź chose in their opinion the most intriguing fragments, Rodowicz added to the script the accounts of his meetings with “Grot”: among others, we listen to a shocking record of a night conversation with a doubting and weak prophet with a diagnosed serious disease. Rodowicz's memories and sentences discovered by the young actors were combined with physical actions typical for Chorea. The actors work as a group on the stage, they form gymnastic figures and constellations, dance and sing. Wearing white gowns, they try to cure themselves with Grotowski's recipes: some of them work and are clear for a moment, other remain incomprehensible. The most blasphemous operation is constituted by leveling “Grot's” manifests with personal confessions of the actors: they talk about alcoholism, discovering sexual identity, child molestation, problems with love and emotional balance. Seemingly, it's a different matter and language because Grotowski talks in a play about theatre, exercises, culture, mission and human religiosity, while they talk about childhood, shame and fear, but unexpectedly these two streams of texts meet in one point. The human body is this point, the only thing that a human can really possess. It doesn't matter if it's a sick body of Grotowski, sustained only by willpower, or the skin of one of Rodowicz's actresses, Małgorzata Lipińska, with an aggressive tattoo on her breast. I observed with jealousy how greatly organized Rodowicz's team is, how three girls and three boys complement each other, change their own vices into stage virtues (someone stutters, someone fights with shyness or try to control emotions). Each solo etude is a confession and a passed course of Grotowski's theory at the same time. When one reads his texts they are shockingly logical and block the reader because of the strange combination of philosophic hermeticism and the record of ritual practice. But when one listens to them on the stage, they gain unexpected poetic value. The most beautiful scene of the play is the one in which a girl (Julia Jakubowska) wanders in a labyrinth created of words and bodies of her peers. Everyone says a fragment of Grotowski's words and the girl's path doesn't end until the whole sentence is built, the sentence about searching for God, about love, respect and faith in people. In the end half-naked actors along with Rodowicz himself sing “Long live the ball”, supposedly favorite Grotowski's song, and jump from the theatrical scaffold to a symbolic rubbish dump. The theatre devours them, life torments them, but this jump is everything they have. Grotowski left the theatre so that others could have the strength to stay in it.

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