THE THEATRE OF TADEUSZ RÓŻEWICZ

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Although Sławomir Mrożek is the best-known Polish dramatist in the West, it is Tadeusz Różewicz who has revolutionized post-war drama in Poland. Considered by many one of the outstanding avant-garde European poets and playwrights, Różewicz revolts in his plays against realistic psychology and storytelling of conventional, mimetic drama and uses the formal principles of construction found in modern poetry and art. He thus creates a fluid dramatic form--more open and loose than forms developed by causal and discursive dramaturgy--which is capable of reflecting his view of malleable human nature in a world of instability and endless flux.[1]

A Polish Jew, Różewicz was born in 1921. During World War II, he fought in the anti-Communist military underground, known as the Home Army (Armia Krajowa), only to see the Soviet-backed regime come to power in liberated Poland.[2] Since his first publications in the 1940s, he has been periodically attacked, ostracized, or placed on the pedestal of Polish literature, depending on current cultural policy. Różewicz's art has thus been shaped by the emotional and intellectual experience of one who has lived through the atrocities of the Nazi occupation, the government's vicious campaign against the Home Army during the Stalinist reign of terror in the early 1950s, the recurrent waves of Polish anti-Semitism, and the fluctuations in state control of the arts

From that experience, Różewicz has emerged with very few verities intact. Built on irony and grotesque, his works for the theatre reveal a mistrust of abstractions and ideologies, and they expose the absurdities of the Polish and European cultural heritage. Through the erosion of character and plot, they reflect the disintegration of post-war reality, which recognizes no fixed standards for absolutes and subjects everything to opportunistic calculation. Visually forceful and evocative, they deconstruct the dramatic tradition since the romantic period and reconstruct a unique ensemble of theatrical signs. In concrete images, Różewicz's plays brilliantly dramatize the richest variety of interests and break down traditional categories of thought about the nature of theatre. Any individual play by Różewicz may baffle the spectator when considered in isolation. If examined within the context of his other works, the nature and meaning of his images become clear.

It is generally assumed that Różewicz began to write for the stage in the late 1950s, as an accomplished poet whose startling, seemingly unemotional verse, stripped of the usual poetic effects, was a crucial influence on modern Polish poetry. Yet Różewicz was working on a play, eventually entitled Dead and Buried, as early as 1948, shortly after his famous collection of verse, Anxiety (Niepokój,1947), established him as a major new talent. Thematically related to his early, largely autobiographical short stories in the volume An Interrupted Examination (Przerwany egzamin, 1960), the play, however, was not completed until 1972.

Różewicz's dramatic and non-dramatic works have developed along parallel lines, nurturing one another both thematically and

structurally. Many of Różewicz's poems are, in his own words, "mini-dramas" written in preparation for the plays,[3] while such dramatic works as The Card Index or The Witnesses, or Our Little Stabilization have grown out of his poems and short stories dealing with the experience of a war survivor or with the post-war pursuit of a "little stabilization." These plays, moreover, are a vivid dramatization of Różewicz's theoretical essays, especially "Commentary" (Komentarz, 1958) and "The Theatre of Inconsistency" (Teatr niekonsekwencji, 1970), which reject the outworn conventions of the theatre of illusion in favor of looser dramatic forms.

For obvious political reasons, Różewicz's first completed play, the little known Exposure Ujawnienie, 1950), has never been published or produced. It deals with the dilemmas facing Home Army soldiers in 1945, when the Communists were stamping out political opposition. Some of the soldiers in the play reluctantly acknowledge the new regime, while others return to the woods and organize guerilla warfare against the Communists. Although written in the dreary period of enforced socialist realism, Exposure is a poetic parable of human fate, exploring individual and collective memory.

It was Różewicz's second play, The Card Index (Kartoteka 1960), that electrified Polish theatre by its radical concept of open dramaturgy, an approach which does not serve up slices of life but creates a self-contained reality on stage.[4] When the play was first produced in March 1960, critics and playgoers were not yet ready for its style and vision, and The Card Index closed down after only nine performances. Since then, owing largely to theatre experimenters of the 1970s, The Card Index has become Różewicz's most frequently performed

play, a classic of Polish drama and an approved alternate on the official high school reading list.[5]

A play about roles, identities, and the loss of self, The Card Index is a powerful theatrical exploration of an inner psychological state. Through a series of loosely connected, seemingly incomplete episodes with only slight dramatic action, Różewicz evokes the fragmented, self-contradictory nature of the human mind, and he embodies in the character of the Hero the plight of his generation. This weary everyman of the twentieth century, an anti-thesis of the romantic hero, has been scarred by the war and the post-war Stalinist era. He killed and compromised for such lofty abstractions as love of humanity, loyalty, and patriotic duty. Now, deceived and confused, he is on the verge of suicide. In a bitter yet cathartic reckoning with the past and present, the Hero is stripped of his lies, illusions, and obsessions, and he searches restlessly for a new beginning. New facets of his character are constantly revealed, while the possibility of synthesis, the mutual definition of self and society, continually recedes.

The action of the entire play occurs in the confined space of the Hero's windowless room, while the Hero stays for the most part in bed. As so often happens in Różewicz's plays, the theatrical metaphor shifts from the actor to the stage as a whole. The setting in The Card Index is a direct expression of the protagonist's inner reality. In precise scenic images that supersede words, the setting stresses the absence of any avenue of escape and thus captures the Hero's sense of entrapment, while the bed, with its connotations of privacy, intimacy, and rest, suggests his vulnerability and passivity. The room thus has a double identity as a physical space and the Hero's state of mind.

Although Różewicz undoubtedly feels deep sympathy for his protagonist, he views the Hero at least as ironically as the Hero views himself. The playwright undercuts overseriousness and distances raw emotions by dislocating any firm sense of reality. In a moment of flamboyant theatricality, he introduces three Elders, an ironic replica of the ancient Greek chorus. While the Hero painstakingly pieces together the card index of his biography, the impatient Elders strive to push the action forward and to preserve cliches of plot and character. Outraged by his violations of the dramaturgy of intrigue and fast-paced action, the Elders admonish the Hero:

> Do something, get going, think..
> There he lies while time flies
> He's finally asleep, the gods will rage!
> There can be no bread without flour.
> There must be action on the stage.
> Something should be happening at this hour!
> If you don't move, the theatre is defunct.[6]

The Hero eventually gets rid of the Elders. But in the theatricalized reality of the play, their death is just a stage convention, and the Elders are quickly resurrected.

Dispensing almost entirely with rational causation, sequential plot, and psychological verisimilitude, Różewicz gives The Card Index the fluid structure characteristic of dreams. As the Hero remains in bed, rapidly shifting images float by, merge, and dissolve, but each is bright and tangible while it lasts. In this half-waking dream, the Hero's bedroom is his parents' home, his office, a street, a coffee shop, and a Hungarian restaurant at the same time. The characters--real and imaginary, dead and living--appear and disappear in quick succession. The tone shifts from facetious to solemn, from cynical to sublime, from ironic to affectionate. The Hero is haunted by a memory

of his childhood transgressions and his execution-style killing of a fellow soldier in the Home Army who was suspected of pro-Communist sympathies. He confesses his malleability during the Stalinist era and his sexual infidelities. He evokes a refreshing vision of his uncle, a man of simple values and few doubts, and a nightmarish encounter with a waiter from Budapest, an allusion to a grotesque drawing by Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz (Witkacy),[7] whose radically non-realistic plays of the 1920s have served as an inspiration for Różewicz.

As in Witkacy's dramatic work, reality in The Card Index is entirely problematic, existing in a constant state of destruction and reconstruction. The dead and living intermingle. Death is only a theatrical trick. Past, present, and future blend as in a dream. The action of the play is a journey in time and space through a strange, haunting landscape that becomes the Hero's state of consciousness, in which the logic of cause and effect no longer applies. Events happen by dream-like association, the result of analogical thinking rather than reasoning, and tensions are not resolved but kept dynamic. The strength of the play lies in the dramatist's brilliant use of the techniques of discontinuity, juxtaposition, and shifting planes of reality. No conventional realistic drama could capture the loneliness and frustration felt by the Hero as profoundly as The Card Index does by exclusively anti-mimetic means.

Moreover, it would have been imaginatively simple-minded and self-deceptive if Różewicz had written an altogether conventional play about the character whose confidence in words, and subsequently in all social and moral conventions that depend on words, has collapsed. Instead, the language of The Card Index relies on a consistent grotesque mixing of

the most varied materials: poems by Jan Kochanowski, Adam Mickiewicz, and Różewicz himself; newspaper clippings; nursery rhymes; old letters; lists of alliterations; and nominal declensions. This method of building a drama out of details taken from his reading and his own works is characteristic of Różewicz's dramaturgy. The playwright combines these materials in striking new arrangements, often pushing them toward parody and self-parody and producing an added dramatic tension between abstract and concrete.[8] In The Card Index, for example, the Elders recite Mickiewicz's lofty "Ode to Youth," while the Hero, wary of the romantic ideal of heroic sacrifice, wallows in bed. This grotesque juxtaposition, one of many in the play, has a deflating effect which renders the romantic rhetoric obsolescent and hollow.

Fragmented and open-ended, The Card Index has no final conclusion. Conventional drama generally illumines the world by simulating real situations and people within a clearly defined time span, but for Różewicz this mimetic aspect of drama is of merely secondary importance His interest is in the possibilities of the dramatic medium, rather than in its conventional objects or themes, and he strives to present his vision in other, non-mimetic ways.

Różewicz continues the process of shedding shopworn dramatic conventions in The Laocoon Group (Grupa Laokoona, 1961), a vivid comedy ridiculing an outdated notion that beauty and harmony are a guarantee of universal happiness. Here again quotation and allusion, devices which have their counterparts in much twentieth-century art and music, become for Różewicz ways of structuring his drama. He not only plays with language and discredits antiquated concepts, but also makes plot obsolete by stretching the nature of the dramatic genre. In a grotesque

tour de force, Różewicz generates loosely connected scenes from famous passages and aphorisms by Kierkegaard, Lessing, Ortega y Gasset, Oskar Kokoschka, Juliusz Słowacki, and Cyprian Kamil Norwid. The quotations, traded by the characters as cliche tokens during their circular conversations on the importance of beauty and harmony, serve to underscore the staginess of the playwright's creation.

The deeper meanings of the play lie not in its scanty narrative, but in its ridicule of the intellectual sloth, pretentiousness, and inner falsity of artistic snobs and would-be artists. In fact, as in Różewicz's other plays, knowledge of the story tells very little about the work itself. In a grotesque travesty of the grim revelations found in Ibsenesque family drama, it is revealed that the Father has seen merely a plaster copy of the famous Laocoon Group during his recent visit to the Vatican Museum, that the Mother dabbles in painting, the Son cannot decide on his college major, and the Grandpa still likes gorgonzola cheese despite his loss of aesthetic criteria. Omitting foreshadowing, explanation, and all psychological and narrative interconnections, the play is not an imitation of action but rather a series of variations on the meaning of art and aesthetic values in modern society. Unexpected dissociations, unresolved tensions, and surprising relationships of character and ideas produce unusual theatrical excitement and lend dynamic thrust to this rich and original comedy.

An allusive and resonant work, The Witnesses (Świadkowie albo nasza mała stabilizacja, 1962) is the most complete treatment of Różewicz's theme of the post-war "little stabilization," or the sacrifice of moral sensibilities and bearings for acquisitiveness, self-seeking, and

careerism.[9] The play consists of three self-contained parts, which, not unlike the movements of a sonata, "together produce the total desired effect of variations on a basic theme."[10] Ostensibly simple and straightforward in its dramatic action, with one-way, linear progression, The Witnesses has an irresistible forward motion and unity. Of all Różewicz's plays, it is the most economical in its artistic means and effects. Its impact depends on the playwright's sparing use of such devices as abrupt discontinuities and startling juxtapositions.

In the poetic Part One, the theme of the little stabilization is introduced in two complementary monologues by a man and a woman. The monologues impart the way in which the stablization provides a false sense of security by supplying prefabricated possessions and concepts

> HE: the trousers and poetics
> SHE: the porcelain and aesthetics
> and the wineglasses and ethics ST, 101

In the two dramatic parts that follow, the same theme is exemplified by specific situations in which fundamental notions of morality become softened and blurred. In Part Two, a happy and loving couple calmly witness a boy's torturing of a kitten, as Rameau's idyllic music is playing softly. In Part Three, two men hold on to their comfortable chairs, visual symbols of their positions in life, while a wounded man or animal is dying just a few feet away.

The emotional tonalities of The Witnesses are deliberately restricted to black and white in order to portray a sickly world that is approaching death and decomposition, while it cherishes the illusion of stability. The movement of the play builds according to a regular pattern of mounting disaster, and the atmosphere of growing fear in the

face of an unknown threat owes something to Maeterlinck and Witkacy. Throughout the play, the characters feel that "Our little stabilization / maybe is just a dream" (ST, 102). Yet they ignore signs of impending danger until, in the final scene, the hustle and bustle of their existence suddenly collapses in a moment of mysterious apocalyptic silence.

The play, however, never falls into the trap of pervasive moralizing. Normal audience sympathies and expectations are undermined by sudden shifts in tone from somber to ironic and grotesque. Moreover, the playwright destroys any single illusion of the characters' identities. It is never clear whether they are real people or actors playing roles in a play-within-a-play, with the Stranger, or a stage manager, straightening up the set at the end of Part Two. The play offers the audience no reality except the one being constructed at each moment on the stage. Consequently, conventional dramatic action, understood as an illusion or imitation of reality, ceases to exist in the play.

In The Card Index, The Laocoon Group, and The Witnesses, Różewicz dismantles the machinery of the theatre of illusion, thereby liberating the plays from psychologically conceived characters and realistic storytelling. Yet these plays rely as much on the spoken text as on theatrical images. In the four works written between 1964 and 1971--The Interrupted Act, Birth Rate, The Old Woman Broods, and On All Fours--Różewicz creates a theatre where sound, shape, color, and movement supplant words, often conveying in purely theatrical terms the essence of an entire scene or even a whole drama.

In The Interrupted Act (Akt przerywany, 1964), a deliberately incomplete comedy inflating and puncturing dramatic conventions, Różewicz provides a scenario waiting to be expanded and honed by an imaginative acting company. Although it would be possible to unearth several stories buried beneath the surface of this domestic drama, seemingly structured around the Engineer's split with his daughter, the playwright refuses to develop any of these lines. Instead, he wreaks havoc with the realistic tradition in drama, consciously distorting and concealing the residual fragments of plot. Thus, in accord with his dramaturgical principle of rendering the abstract visually concrete, he demonstrates the premise, expressed in the stage directions, that "the theatre is not a dramatized reflection of 'real life'" (SI, 288).

In print, the stage directions constitute two-thirds of the entire play. These scenic indications include Różewicz's most trenchant comments on the inherent limitations of theatrical illusion. Well aware of conventions and techniques used by playwrights to create a logically believable world on stage, he rips these theatrical forms apart and exposes them as fraud. His method is first to consider possibilities offered by scenic realism with its preposterously causal explanations, and then to undermine systematically the credibility of such old-fashioned dramaturgy:

> An attractive, nicely built young woman holding a large suitcase walks across the room. She has just said goodbye to her father, a well known-engineer, and is leaving forever to go to America, to stay with the family of her late mother. Her father is not seeing her off because he is lying in his study . . . with his leg in a plaster cast. . . . Unfortunately, we cannot prove on the stage--through so-called theatrical means--that the young woman is leaving for North America. We are helpless. True we could have used a narrator, a telephone, or the Father's voice from the other room . . . . The young woman could have called for information about flights to Hamburg, Lisbon, and New York. But all this had already taken place

> before the curtain went up . . . . (Besides,) these scenes would have taken about forty-five minutes to perform, while the actual "drama" might have completed its course. . . . Unfortunately, we have no time to show in our theatre . . . the reasons which led to the young person's departure. (ST, 272-274)

Apart from their function as a deliberate and carefully controlled attack on scenic realism, the stage directions for Różewicz are also a means of furthering dramatic action by detailing how the The Interrupted Act is to be realized in the theatre. Różewicz suggests whole scenes in which not single word is spoken. The daughter, for example, trips against a chair, drops her suitcase, listens at the door to her father's study and clenches her fists. The Robust Woman finds a letter on a table and reads it silently, while mechanically picking up sugar cubes and putting them in her mouth. The Stranger comes in, sits at the table, pours himself a drink, lights a cigarette and exits. In such wordless scenes, Różewicz's favorite technique is reminiscent of Witkacy's "visual emphasis through pointed focus" which "directs the spectator's eye to a significant detail, character, or area of the stage and then holds his attention there for a prolonged moment, imprinting the scene on his consciousness."[11] Yet the details in Różewicz's close-ups-- a fly, a sugar bowl, a trouser cuff, or a hole in a sock--are intentionally incongruous and meaningless, and thus they serve to ridicule even further the style of painstakingly intimate realism.

Although at least one critic has argued that it would be impossible to "convince actors, directors, and designers to tackle (Różewicz's) idea," theatre artists have not been discouraged by the open, ostensibly incoherent structure of The Interrupted Act.[12] Helmut Kajzar's 1966 production at the Teatr Satyryków in Warsaw deliberately catered to

various preferences of the audience. In the production, Różewicz's scenario was performed twice, first as a cabaret with the stage directions spoken by the master of ceremonies, then as a conventional realistic drama with the scenic indications left out. When Bohdan Cybulski revived the play at Gorzów Wielkopolski's Osterwa Theatre in 1976, only certain scenes were repeated. The stage directions were delivered by the character of the Author, who, for no apparent reason, was swinging aloft in the auditorium.

No stage version of The Interrupted Act has yet surpassed the frothy humor and theatrical inventiveness of the 1970 production at Lublin's Osterwa Theatre, directed by Kazimierz Braun as theatre-within-the-theatre. Developed through improvisational techniques and collective creation, the production was built around a delightfully comic script-in-hand reading of The Interrupted Act, punctuated by discussions of the play and rehearsals of possible variations in the dramatic action. Braun added two new characters, the Director and the Author. Their spoken lines included the stage directions, large portions of an interview with Różewicz, and fragments of his poetry. While the Director and the Author argued dialectially about the concept of open dramaturgy and solicited comments from the audience, the other actors were improvising gags, passing out sweets, or pantomiming scenes from the Engineer's career. Thus the production itself became an open structure with a discontinuous rather than linear progression of events and images which varied from performance to performance.

Birth Rate: Biography of a Play (Przyrost naturalny: Biografia sztuki teatralnej, 1968) is a natural extension of The Interrupted Act. Written in the form of a writer's diary, the ten-page Birth Rate

describes Różewicz's work on a comedy that was never completed. A general outline and description of a few scenes in the diary are all that has been left. Inspired by popular and scholarly publications on the population explosion, the play was to portray "a living growing mass of mankind which due to a lack of space, destroys all forms and cannot be 'bottled up.'"[13] One scene, for example, would

> . . . take place (happen) in a conventionalized train compartment or streetcar which people keep crowding. . . . Now there is no more room on the seats. . . . People climb onto the racks intended for the baggage. They stand in the aisles. . . .The ones sitting inside have as their chief goal trying to shut the door. (BR, 271)

As the space shrinks, physical and psychological tensions build up:

> . . . the walls start to buckle. The living mass is so tightly packed that it begins to boil over. There are two or three explosions in close succession. Movement blends with shouting. Finally everything comes to a standstill. Out of the mass the (two) young people come forward in silence. (BR, 272)

In another scene, infants would "lie on tiered wagons arranged in rows like rolls in a bakery" (BR, 272-273). In still another scene, the action would be set in "a scientist's laboratory, vaulted like a cellar, where women-vessels stand in rows in the shape of amphoras, jugs" (BR, 273). Although the cellar is seemingly isolated from the external world, "there is a feeling of apprehension that behind the walls . . . another world is growing, bubbling, and multiplying" (BR, 273).

Although the original idea stood "pure and sharp" in Różewicz's mind, he never developed it into a full-scale play (BR, 275). In January 1980, in an interview following the world premier of Birth Rate at the Teatr Współczesny in Wrocław, Różewicz said: "Do you realize how hard I worked in order not to write Birth Rate?"[14] He thus implied that while it would have been relatively easy to write a conventional comedy

on biological proliferation, it took tremendous effort to devise a performance score "based soley on movement" (BR, 272). In this open dramatic structure, action and dialogue are replaced by "the growth of a living mass" and the "process of bursting, the crumbling of the walls" (BR, 272, 270). Used only sporadically, the spoken text must "have nothing to do with the action" (BR, 270).

From a strictly literary point of view, Birth Rate, is a rather negligible test. From a theatrical point of view, however, it offers fascinating material for for environmental theatre which can be fully experienced and comprehended only in live performance.[15] Ideally, Birth Rate should be developed through an active collaboration between the playwright and an acting company. But in 1966 and 1967, when Różewicz was writing Birth Rate, he did not have a theatre company to work with in the way that, for example, Jean-Claude Van Itallie had the Open Theatre to develop The Serpent (1968), a seminal production of the American avant-garde theatre. Annoyed by the inadequacy of writing a "full literary text of the play," time and again Różewicz records in Birth Rate his "overpowering need . . . . to improvise it all with a theatre group" rather than "describe what be easier to transmit in direct contact with living people" (BR, 270). It was not until 1979 that he participated in the rehearsals of Birth Rate at Kazimierz Braun's Teatr Wspoleczesny. A major event in post-war Polish theatre, the production directed by Braun radically reshaped the playwright's score, using it as a starting point for a stunning, full-scale environmental performance which also included fragments of Różewicz's plays and poems. Although carefully crafted and precisely executed, the production--like Różewicz's scenario--emphasized the process of creation

rather than the final product by encouraging unexpected events to occur and by involving the audience in the performance.

Unlike Birth Rate or The Interrupted Act, The Old Woman Broods (Stara kobieta wysiaduje, 1968) is more closely planned in conception by the playwright himself. Here Różewicz creates a compelling dramatic universe in which visual opulence carries the play's meaning. The setting, a steadily growing pile of refuse, suffused with blinding light, becomes a metaphor for the violent destiny of modern man and the fatal course of Western civilization. Rythmic acceleration, applied throughout the play, propels the drama forward in a mounting crescendo of insistent sights and sounds, and the frantic action explodes in a frightening vision of the decay and death of a society.

Scene one is set in a coffee shop. As the refuse is pouring in through an open window, the Waiter brushes plates, bottles, menus, and ashtrays off the tables. The Old Woman, wearing several layers of clothing, with jewelry and flowers dangling all over her, actually looks like a mound of debris herself. Yet she defiantly celebrates childbearing as the only life-affirming act in a world faced with extinction; thus she is placed in the middle of the continuum between life and death.

In Scene Two, the garbage dump has already swallowed the coffee shop. The landscape, in the form of a broad, flat expanse full of heaps of debris, seethes with motion as the characters crawl through the refuse or unload truckfuls of discarded objects, live people and life-size puppets, and books and encyclopedias--visual symbols of useless ideologies and obsolete abstractions. Behind the white-hot, agitated world lies the still, empty wasteland of madness and death. As in The

Witnesses, the dominating tone is one of ambiguity and menace. Różewicz achieves great intensity through a peculiar form of suspense: beyond a vague feeling of impending doom, no one knows what will happen. This fragile, temporary equilibrium is suddenly upset by the arrival of the Old Woman's son, radiant and innocent. In an ironic travesty of the myth of the Second Coming, tremendous aggressions are unleashed against the intruder, which catapult the drama into its final apocalypse. As the play closes, the Old Woman, the sole survivor of the sweeping cataclysm, frantically digs through the debris in search of her lost son.

What is truly original in The Old Woman Broods is not the central idea--that of the collapse of a society--but the playwright's theatrical presentation of that idea. In Różewicz's works, thought in general is indeed largely eclectic, serving not as an end in itself but as raw material for a powerful dramatic vision. In its handling of pictorial effects and dynamic tensions, The Old Woman Broods is a masterpiece, showing Różewicz's ability to discover a telling theatrical image and develop its multiple meanings for maximum effect.

Similarly, in On All Fours (Na czworakach, 1971), Różewicz draws on all his imaginative resources to create a visually rich and forceful piece, which represents a summation of his accomplishments as a playwright at the midpoint of his artistic career. Written between 1965 and 1971, On All Fours is a tragicomic version of the Faust legend, but the elements of the mythic plot and characters are used by the playwright for his own purposes of disintegration and subversion. In Różewicz's comic but nonetheless profound work on the position of the modern artist in society, one of the characters, a poet laureate,

becomes a cultural institution, honored and idolized, exhibited in his study turned in a museum, and kept alive with daily doses of nutritious soup. As organ music is playing, visitors to the shrine adulate the immortal Laurenty. Through the pressures of mass society, Różewicz's artist has thus been transformed from a talented individual into a impersonal genius, but in the process has lost his creative drive and become a broken puppet. Not even Laurenty's inevitable alliance with evil, represented here by a shabby and comical creature, can bring back his vitality and inspiration.

In On All Fours, Różewicz creates a self-contained universe which bears no direct connection to any outside reality and operates according to its own laws of fractured time and space. The complex structure of the play is built on an ever-shifting assemblage of dislocated fragments, and the normal probabilities of drama are undermined. In a grotesque replica of The Card Index, the action of On All Fours is confined to a single room which represents both a cultural milieu and Laurenty's psychic space. Like the Hero in the earlier play, Laurenty is visited by an assortment of picturesque characters such as the Poodle (Mephistopheles); a female graduate student, Małgorzata (Gretchen), doing research for her thesis on Laurenty; Father Hermaphrodite, one of Różewicz's incongruous strangers; and a guard from Różewicz's two-page dramatic scenario, "Security Guard" (Straż porzadkowa, 1966).

Overseen by the Guard, the entire machinery of scanty intrigue and creaking plot revolves around a mating game between sex-starved Laurenty, panting and salivating, and the attractive student, provocatively displaying her thighs and rubbing herself with perfume. Meanwhile, Pelasia, Laurenty's faithful housekeeper and supplier of

soup, wants to keep him for herself, Father Hermaphrodite seeks to protect Małgorzata's virginity, and the Poodle drives an easy bargain with Laurenty. Małgorzata finally becomes a guide in Laurenty's museum, while Pelasia turns into a demonic woman, brandishing her whip like a wild-animal trainer and driving the tormented, overwrought Laurenty to write. The play ends in Laurenty's spectacular exit. Big, sensational entrances and exits are, of course, part of the nineteenth century dramatic heritage, which Różewicz pushes to absurd extremes of physicalization and theatricalism. Here, Pelasia attaches feathers to Laurenty's arm, and his burned-out body is lifted high above the stage as a choir is singing Kochanowski's "Song XXIV," a poetic paraphrase of "Non usitate nec tenui," Horace's ode on the non omnis moriar theme.

The scenic action is carried by movement and gesture, while dialogue is used only rarely in a simple conversational function. More often not, the spoken lines are nonsensical but rhythmically perfect parodies of modern Polish gobbledygook, together with limitations of verse mannerisms of Stanisław Wyspiański, the leading playwright of the Young Poland movement at the turn of the century, who is usually considered the founder of modern Polish drama. A group of government officials, for example, opens an award ceremony with this little apostrophe to Laurenty's genius:

> Deeply moved we wish to express our grateful respectful for your us ours yours more or less means deeply steeply half a century of culture values profound astound laurels followers permanent press office brightness and shine your name is divine. (ST, 391)

In the same scene, Laurenty, the Poodle, and the Guard plunge into a grotesque imitation of Wyspiański's trochaic tetrameter which itself tended to degenerate into rocking-horse rhythm:

> LAURENTY: Soul my soul you wanted take it
> POODLE: Hell is gone and heaven's blasted
> Keep your soul and have it crusted
> GUARD: Go your job is done and basta. (ST, 394)

Throughout the play, the parodied models are juxtaposed in a startling fashion, revealing and intensifying the artificiality of the verbal constructions. The affected speech is not only a linguistic game; it typifies the entire theatricalized world of On All Fours.

The very composition of the scenic elements, including the intentionally absurd dialogue, produces dissociations strong enough to subvert the normal framework of dramatic causality and logic. But Różewicz goes even further. In keeping with his dramaturgical principle o rendering the figurative concrete, he undercuts the mythic grandeur of the Faust legend and degrades literary cults by having the characters move on all fours. He thus catches the audience unawares with a bizarre, theatrical surprise, reminiscent of devices used in Witkacy's as well as Witold Gombrowicz's plays and novels. Różewicz warns that the actors' position on all fours should not be taken as an allegorical "metamorphosis of man into dog, ape, pig, or some other 'beast,'" nor as a comment on the characters' moral stature.[16] (Różewicz's word of caution, however, has not prevented at least one critic from claiming in all seriousness that Laurenty walks on all fours because years of humble service to the regime have conditioned him to crawl.)[17] Rather, Różewicz strives for a daring dramatic effect, infused with humor and irony, which would provoke, attack, and arrest the attention of the spectators. More than simple mockery of the audience, the extravagant

theatricalization of movement points to the limitless possibilities of nonrealistic theatre and thus serves as Różewicz's ultimate shock tactic to demolish the conventions of the theatre of illusion.

In the mid- and late 1960s, during a period of intense creativity, Różewicz also wrote three minor works: The Funny Old Man (Śmieszny staruszek, 1964), Spaghetti and the Sword (Spaghetti i miecz, 1964), and Funeral Polish Style (Pogrzeb po polsku, 1972). The first of these is an unfocused monologue by a seventy-year old man who has undergone an uncanny metamorphosis into a mouse killer and now confesses in court his real or imaginary guilt. A study in obsession and loneliness, the plays offers material for a full-scale, overwhelmingly pictorial comedy. Both in the stage directions and in his essay. "The Theatre of Inconsistency," the playwright suggests how the play ought to be performed. The Old Man's confession "should be illustrated with tableaux vivants," evoking his fantasies and actual experience (ST, 125). Children, chiefly girls, are to romp on the stage and tease the Old Man, while the characters of the Judge and the Attorneys, represented by live actors and life-size puppets, look on. The plays has been very effective in the theatre, mainly owing to its excellent role for an actor, but it remains rambling and obscure, lacking in depth, intensity, and fullness of design.

In Spaghetti and the Sword and Funeral Polish Style, Różewicz dismantles traditional myths and symbols of Polish culture and national consciousness. But in these satirical farce-comedies, incongruity and absurdity do not always have their purpose or theatrical impact. Although the dramatist displays great linguistic virtuosity and literary erudition, both plays are fragmentary in development and incompletely

integrated. Despite the richness of invention shown in many details, the elements do not coalesce to form a valid dramatic universe. As Różewicz admits, some of his plays may first "seem like a hodgepode of images, ideas, and words, but in a fortunate moment it will all come together."[18] The occurrence of this "fortunate moment" depends largely on an intelligent and sensitive director who can bring unity to the diverse materials in Spaghetti and the Sword and Funeral Polish Style.

The dramatic action of Spaghetti and the Sword is composed of cultural and ethnic stereotypes, liberally interspersed with quotations from Dante, Mickiewicz, Slowacki, Norwid, Wyspiański, and Adam Asnyk. In Act One, Różewicz ridicules the Polish preoccupation with the past by turning a gathering of World War II veterans into a vaudeville act. In Act Two, he counterpoints popular national stereotypes of the typical Pole, suffering from delusions of grandeur and the worship of sham, and the typical Italian, pursuing with wild abandon the pleasures of life. While Wanda, a brooding Polish beauty, brings her culture to the ignorant Italian masses, Garofano, the archetypal unctuous Italian lover, conquers women so swiftly that Różewicz has him roller-skate in and out of the performance area. Overextended and repetitious, the play depends for its comic effect on coarse wit, simple verbal humor, horseplay, and exaggerated situations.

Funeral Polish Style centers on the process of writing a play about one Kowalski, an inglorious inventor of barbless barbwire and an opportunistic manager of a factory producing artificial guano. Two Guards watch over the plot development, but as soon as they fall asleep, the characters break the stage action apart. For example, Kowalski fatally chokes on a hard-boiled egg, but his funeral is postponed until

he and his life-long rival, Kitosz, reenact the closing scene from Zygmunt Krasinski's romantic drama, The Un-Divine Comedy (Nie Boska Komedia, 1835). Krasinski's play portrays the decline of European civilization precipitated by the crisis of old social structures and a revolution of the masses. A clash between the Christian, reactionary camp and the atheistic, radical forces brings only death. The only hope for a better order is suggested by the final climactic image: as a luminous vision of Christ appears above the smoldering battlefield, a dying revolutionary exclaims, "Galilaee, vicisti! (Galilean, you have won!)."[19]

Różewicz's tragicomic transposition of the famous scene from a major Polish romantic drama into the petty world of Kowalski and Kitosz is not a parody, evoking a certain ethical and dramatic tradition vis a vis modern sensibilities, as it was the case in The Card Index or The Laoocon Group. The extended quotation is simply a grotesquely extravagant link between the earlier episodes and the scene of Kowalski's funeral. If Christ has won, then Kowalski, although a good Communist, must be given a traditional Catholic burial. The church and the party, united for the ceremony, closely plan the route of the funeral procession. The mileposts of the route include statues of Henryk Tomaszewski, Józef Hałas, Jerzy Grotowski, Różewicz, and other controversial artists and writers living in Wroclaw. There are, of course, no such monuments, but the very suggestion of putting such iconoclasts as Grotowski or Różewicz on the pedestal produces a special comic twist for spectators who can appreciate this in-house joke.

Funeral Polish Style closes with a long monologue by Kitosz, denouncing Kowalski and directly addressing the audience: "Why

shouldn't we speak evil of the deceased? . . . Why should we . . . call a fool wise, an egoist unselfish, a lazy intriguer generous, an idiot indispensable?" (ST, 216). Thus the play, which begins as slapstick theatre-within-the-theatre, ends as a straight and solemn drama, imparting moral lessons and dispensing with Różewicz's characteristic ambivalence and ironic distance.

Completed approximately at the same time as Spaghetti and the Sword, He Left Home (Wyszedł z domu, 1964) is one of Różewicz's most coherent and unified compositions for the stage, althought it is built like a collage out of the collapsing ruins of old-fashioned family drama. Any attempt to explain the play in psychological or causal terms would lead one astray. Liberated from the constraints of a conventional plot, plausible psychology, and rational motivation, the play is structured less to make us wonder what is going to happen next than to raise ultimate questions about existential freedom and responsibility. The true dramatic action of the play lies not in its residual plot--a family in search of the missing husband and father--but in its philosophical concerns, integrated into the play's fragmented planes of reality.

In Act One, the protagonist Henryk mysteriously disappears, and his wife, Ewa, fears that she has been abandoned for a younger woman. In Act Two, Henryk is found and brought home, but he has lost his speech and memory as a result of an accident. Consequently, Ewa "reconstructs" Henryk (ST, 246), stuffing his "wrappings" (ST, 247) with a trivial mixture of recollections, hollow phrases, and disconnected bits of information: "the categorical imperative imitation imperialism / import rapport / impotence inscription insurrection intention / idiom" (ST,

254). Ewa's master plan to turn Henryk into a cog in the machinery of family life seems to work. Yet as the play closes, Henryk bandages his head and walks out.

Both acts are divided into two parts by wordless scenes which serve to illustrate Ewa's sexual fantasies and petty concerns. The first scene, gaudy and nightmarish, is a dynamic theatrical embodiment of pure male sexual desire, impersonal and anonymous. While Ewa is watching, "a herd" of suitors, animal-like freaks and monsters, performs an orgiastic mating ritual (ST, 225). In the other scene, the meticulous Ewa solves the mystery of a greasy stain on Henryk's trousers.

Różewicz separates the two acts with the Interlude, a grotesque and seemingly irrelevant replica of the graveyard scene in Hamlet. Featuring two gravediggers, the Interlude contains in embryo the seeds of all the ambiguous events in the play. The gravediggers who continue their work of both digging a grave and excavating a body, are the undertakers of Henryk's old self and the midwives of an emerging one. Despite Ewa's efforts to mold her husband from without, Henryk insists on assuming full responsibility for what he makes of himself, even if this existential awareness leads to the most intense anxiety and loneliness. In quest of existential freedom, Henryk escapes into real or pretended amnesia, theatricalized in the Interlude as a remote landscape beyond spatial and temporal categories.

In the four plays completed since 1972--Dead and Buried. White Marriage, Departure of a Hunger Artist, and The Trap-- Różewicz continues to experiment with dramatic form, but in a surprising new direction, writing in a predominantly conventional dramatic idiom. As he explains in a 1974 interview, he needs to be inconsistent in his art

in order to remain creative.[20] Moreover, Różewicz must have realized that by 1970 open dramaturgy was being absorbed into mainstream theatre. In his famous essay, titled "Writing on Stage" ("Pisać na scenie," 1969), leading Polish theatre critic Konstanty Puzyna pointed out the inadequacy of perceiving the written text as either the primary or the invariant component of theatre and hailed the open dramaturgy, based largely on improvisation and collective creation, as the instrument for the renewal of contemporary theatre.[21] This new approach to theatre and drama culminated in a number of crucial productions, such as Jerzy Grotowski's Apocalypsis cum figuris (1968) and Józef Szajna's Replika (1972), which stunned theatre artists and audiences throughout the world. At the same time, many other Polish directers were indulging in sometimes boring, sometimes awe-inspiring exercises in open dramaturgy, rewriting the classics and putting together their own scenarios in which striking visual effects substituted for thematic and philosophic concerns. With the sudden rush to "write on stage" came a discovery of Różewicz's seemingly incomplete, open-ended works for the theatre, which offered theatre companies effective material for their collective creations. After years of clashes with the censor and indifference from directors and playgoers alike, during the 1971/72 season Różewicz became the third most frequently produced playwright in Poland.[22] But he refused to be guru of the new theatre. Once again, he chose a path of his own.

Unlike the earlier plays, Dead and Buried, White Marriage, Departure of a Hunger Artist, and The Trap are developed with much more clarified story lines. The action moves chronologically through real time and space, holding an audience's attention by the progressive

unfolding of events. There are no longer jerky discontinuities, abrupt narrative jumps, or eliptical shifts. Dialogue is more conversational than in any of Różewicz's other plays. No longer devoid of psychological identity, the characters actually talk to one another, directly expressing their thoughts and emotions.

Completed in 1972 but not cleared by the censor's office until 1979, Dead and Buried (Do piachu...) deliberately defies the cult of the tragic heroism of the Home Army, which is firmly anchored in Polish collective awareness. Although Różewicz spent almost all of World War II in the Home Army, he bluntly rejects the national romantic mythology of the Polish military underground.

The action of the play, set during the fall of 1944 in a Home Army unit, is propelled by the pressure of the claustrophobic setting, a small clearing in the woods. The soldiers are in constant danger of being attacked by the Germans, yet they live a wholly unheroic life filled with such mundane tasks as dressing a hog and digging out a latrine. This existence on the borderline of fear and boredom eventually culminates in the execution of one of their own. A soldier named Waluś is charged with rape and robbery but is never put on trial. In the final scene, naturalistic and powerfully affective, three soldiers hastily take him outside the camp. The mumbling and weeping Waluś is unable to control his terror or his bowels. The soldiers fire upon him until they are splattered with blood and brain. They quickly bury Waluś in the sand and throw in a small bundle with his belongings. As the play ends, there is a sudden silence in the woods, broken only by the chirping of a bird.

A multidimensional composition, Dead and Buried contains a series of recurrent motifs, which weave their way through the play in a collage of striking connections, complex tensions, and mixed tonalities. Amid the soldiers' largely trivial preoccupations, the death of Waluś, a naive and inarticulate country boy who does not fully comprehend what is happening to him, comes as a brutal and shattering blow. The play reflects the helplessness of an individual faced with overwhelming odds, and it thus shares with anti-war literature a view of war experience as devastating for the victimizers as well as the victimized. But above all, by attacking an extremely sensitive issue in post-war Polish history--the idealized cult of the Home Army--Dead and Buried warns against the petrifying effect of the national mythology on collective self-awareness.

As a result of Rózewicz's refusal to pander to concepts of simple-minded patriotism and national idealism, Dead and Buried was banned by the censor for seven years. Another reason for the deferral of censorship approval was the play's anti-Communist sentiment. The action is set within the context of a power struggle in the Polish military underground, which is faced with a successful offensive by the Soviet and Communist-supported Polish armies. By fall 1944, those combined forces had already liberated southeastern parts of Poland, and the play's characters do not conceal their hostility toward the Communists.

Although Dead and Buried finally received the censor's stamp of approval (mainly owing to the prestige and influence of Tadeusz Lomnicki, who directed the premiere production at his Teatr Na Woli in Warsaw in March 1979), the play became a pretext for another high-powered campaign against Rózewicz. For example, in an article entitled

"Achtung! Banditen!", Stainsław Majewski presented Różewicz as one of the "banditen," who has violated all national sanctities. Majewski also took exception with the characters' use of obscenity and scatology, failing to recognize that Różewicz did not include these words to shock or titillate. They are an inextricable part of the soldiers' speech that the playwright neither patronizes nor exploits. Yet Majewski insisted that the speech of Home Army soldiers had never been laced with such foul language, and he recommended that Różewicz's play be buried and forgotten.[23] On national television, the prominent Polish critic Artur Sandauer attacked Różewicz as a writer with sick imagination, lacking in taste and maturity. "Różewicz has the sense of humor of a fourteen-year old boy," charged Sandauer. "He's dragging us into the dirt."[24] Small wonder that performances of Dead and Buried at the Na Woli Theatre were eventually restricted to only two a month and then cancelled altogether, with no hope for a new production at another theatre.

More immediately accessible than any of Różewicz's later works, White Marriage (Białe małżeństwo,1974) is a restatement of the endlessly fascinating story of a youth in revolt against family, society, culture, and religion. It has been an unusual box-office success in Poland, playing over a thousand times to sold-out houses in Warsaw and Wrocław. Although some critics[25] have expressed reservations about the play's frank treatment of sexuality, unheard of in Polish drama, audiences have felt at home with this comedy of manners, redolent of the fin de siecle and belle epoque. The play shows the flexibility of Różewicz's dramatic technique. In White Marriage, he has written a very successful drama entirely within the scope of realistic probabilities,

with a relatively conventional structure, psychologically conceived characters, and dialogue that follows standard patterns of interchange. Tightly contained in form, the play has an exciting story line and sequential plot with all the traditional elements of drama: exposition, complication, crisis, discovery, and reversal followed by denouement.

Set in a provincial backwater seemingly bypassed by history and drowsiny peacefully in its own intrigues and snobbery, White Marriage captures the leisurely atmosphere of a Polish country estate at the turn of the century. The action, placed in the framework of wedding preparations, soirées, and picnics, focuses on sexual imbroglios and initiations. Two adolescent girls, Bianka and Paulina, savor the forbidden and refuse to observe the proper forms of social decorum. The virile Father chases every milkmaid in sight. The Mother, forced into a loveless marriage of convenience, fantasizes about killing her oversexed husband. The impotent Grandfather trades candy for the girls' stockings and underpants. Beniamin, Bianka's fiancé, rehearses with Pauline a perversely provocative scene of St. Febronia's martyrdom. And the aunt, an aging femme fatale, seeks to seduce Beniamin. The plot culminates in the wedding of Bianka and Beniamin, but their marriage remains unconsummated. As the play ends, Bianka cuts off her hair, burns her clothes, and welcomes Beniamin with startling confession: "I... am... your brother...."[26]

Różewicz's portrayal of Bianka and Paulina's rebellion against traditional sexual politics and social moralizing has prompted some American critics to hail White Marriage as a feminist play attacking "the misoygynic, male-centered tradition of Polish society and

theatre."[27] Yet White Marriage not only defies but also amuses through its satirical mockery. The play has an obvious appeal to theatregoers who formerly had been baffled by Różewicz's work, but they may not realize that the dramatist, using the techniques and conventions of realistic theatre, is playng an elaborate literary trick. The titillating comedy about growing up is merely a disguise for a witty pastiche of several works by earlier Polish writers, including Piotr Skarga's Lives of Saints (Żywoty swiętych, 1579), Mickiewicz's Pan Tadeusz (1834), and Narcyza Żmichowska's The Heathen Woman (Poganka 1846), and of modernist literary experiments by the Young Poland movemen (represented here by Maria Komornicka, Stanislaw Korab-Brzozowski, and Jan Lemanski). Thus Różewicz almost imperceptibly succeeds in lifting White Marriage off the ground of realistic dramaturgy and predictable expectations into the realm of literary parody and pure theatricality.

Like White Marriage, Departure of a Hunger Artist (Odejście Głodomora, 1976) also has its genesis in a literary tradition. Based on Kafka's famous allegorical short story "Ein Hungerkünstler," the play reworks--using the less radical dramatic techniques--the central motif of The Laocoon Group and On All Fours, that is, the theme of the artist's precarious condition in the modern world. Easy to follow, without displacements of time or space, the play is structured around the conflict between the Hunger Artist, who cultivates only the existence of the soul, and society, which is motivated by earthly gratifications and the crassest pragmatism.

Displayed in a cage, Różewicz's Artist performs fasting feats, sacrificing himself to make his spectators more aware of their existential condition. But in the process, having renounced all earthly

nourishment, he divorces himself from reality. Unaffected by the Artist, the community conducts business as usual, and the space around the cage brims with everyday activities. The play draws to a rapid, unexpected close when the Artist goes away, having realized that his hunger feats no longer serve any purpose. Unlike his fellow artists, easygoing and accommodating, he refuses to serve society's whims.

In this rich and original work, which has little to do with imitative transpositions of fiction from the page to the stage, Różewicz contrasts the pettiness of contemporary existence with the ambivalence of the modern artist. The traditional functions of the artist as the spiritual leader of his people and the custodian of the national consciousness are set against challenges to their credibility in the modern age. Yet Różewicz does not wish to present a final conclusion. He ends the play abruptly, offering this ironic, double-edged critique in the stage directions: "Let's not be too cruel to the true Hunger Artist. Let's not be too cruel to the ever increasing numbers of false hunger artists. Es waren andere Zeiten! (Times have changed!)."[28] Rozewicz thus suggests that in the past faith in one's art sustained the artist no matter what the audience response might have been. In the more complex contemporary world, however, such single-minded and unalloyed devotion to the artistic principle and to self-sacrifice is hardly possible.

The Trap (Pulapka, 1982) too has grown out of Różewicz's fascination with Kafka's life and work. Based on Kafka's letters and diaries, The Trap is not, however, a conventional dramatization of a famous biography but rather a complex and suggestive drama exploring the nature of artistic imagination, the fundamentals of human creativity,

and the function of art in modern society. The Trap is also Różewicz's first work to deal with the Holocaust.

While Różewicz's early plays disconcerted audiences by their apparent incoherence and lack of motivation and causality, The Trap appears on the surface to be a realistic play in a conventional dramatic idiom. Różewicz tells a resonant story in masterly style, attentive to pedestrian detail and effortless in its complicated flashes back and forward. He develops a unified situation involving a tightly knit group of characters in a carefully delineated environment whose local color helps to shape the action. By painstakingly elaborating causal explanations for each occurrence and motives for every action, he ostensibly creates a logically believable world which is designed to hold the audience's attention and at the same time allows the posing of fundamental questions.

The cast of characters features a terminally ill writer named Franz, his parents, sisters, friends and confidants (modelled upon Max Brod, Feice Bauer, and Grete Bloch) in addition to Animula, a child witness of the dramatic action. The causal thread of events is simple. In his effort to create a self for himself, Franz struggles to escape victimization by his domineering father and to extricate himself from his uneasy relationships with women.

The unwary spectator of The Trap is first carried along by the intense interplay of human emotions, then is caught short in amazement as the established premises of the play are suddenly disavowed. While the realistic action continues downstage, among meticulously reconstructed period sets and properties, rapidly shifting images of the Holocaust appear upstage, by a black wall looming ominously. Yet these

nightmarish visions are not arbitrary interpolations: Kafka, it is true, did not survive to see death camps, but his sisters--Ottla, Valli,and Elli--survived to die in them.

In one of the simultaneous sequences, Franz is downstage, examining leaves and fruit in Ottla's garden, while upstage the black wall spits out several guards in black uniforms. The guards rush a crowd of naked people along the wall. Franz's sisters escape, but there is no one to help them. They put on some ragged clothes and white armbands with the star of David, and they gorge themselves on scraps and bones. The three women disappear as "the stage is gradually flooded with deadly, cold light. The colors fade out. Everything turns into smoke, fog. Ashes."[29] Both the naturalistic conventions and the dream worlds have been invoked, played off against each other, and dissolved. By creating a perpetual disequilibrium, the playwright demonstrates the uselessness of insisting on any one level of reality.

The last, entirely nonverbal scene takes place on a bare stage. The cast files out for what seems to be a usual curtain call. A large flower basket is brought in in appreciation toward the acting company. The black wall slowly slides open. The guards come out, round up the actors, push them into the crowded space behind the wall, and throw in the flower basket. The final scenic indications read as follows: "The wall is closed now. The Wall of Death. By the wall stands Animula, a skinny boy in old-fashioned swimming trunks. Speechless, he looks at the audience and exits following the last spectator."[30]

An intense play of dreamlike power, The Trap reworks a theme ubiquitous in Różewicz's work--that the entire European cultural tradition has been unable to prevent such atrocities as the

Holocaust.[31] Concurrently, the play is a striking reversal of the exegi monumentum theme which appears time and again in world literature, from Horace and Kochanowski to Pushkin and Mickiewicz. In The Trap, a play about the dying of an artist, there is no premonition of future greatness, and Animula, detached and indifferent, is hardly an heir. Rather, through the character of the boy, Różewicz creates the effect of estrangement from the narrative act and thus seems to suggest that an ironic distance between oneself and one's own creation is the only basis for mastery over an external reality which is intractable.

Daring in conception and inventive in execution, Różewicz's dramatic works display unusual theatrical power. The playwright mixes the most diverse sources of inspiration and draws on all his creative resources. He is a master of theatrical effect, capable of constructing a flamboyantly nonrealistic stage action, and an expert craftsman playing with the techniques and conventions of the theatre of illusion. Różewicz pushes timeworn patterns of mimetic theatre to absurd extremes, making them self-conscious and theatricalist. Liberated from cliches of plot and character, Rozewicz's plays may seem incoherent and unfocused. In fact, they are carefuly structured and artfully integrated, with form and content perfectly wedded. The supposed looseness of Różewicz's dramaturgy has a dramatic impact: it aptly reflects his major theme, the decomposition of post-war reality, and allows him to bring together a startling variety of materials, styles and tones.

Like the plays of Witkacy, Grombowicz, Beckett, and Ionesco, Różewicz's dramas are not exclusively literary: they can be fully experienced only in the theatre. Różewicz agrees with Witkacy that "the

literary side of the performance is only a small part of the play being presented on stage, where the author provides only a formal skeleton for the creative work of the director and actors."[32] Różewicz's dramatic works, like Witkacy's, require a different kind of acting, not the Stanislavskian "wallowing in stale emotional entrail-twisting," but the ability to improvise with one's body and voice.[33] Yet Różewicz strives to go even further than Witkacy. As he reflects in Birth Rate, "The new art of drama after Witkacy and Beckett--must start from the problem of a new technique for writing plays" (BR, 276-277). Thus his basic tools even in the plays written after On All Fours are images rather than words, and his primary artistic medium is carefully orchestrated movement within a special, arbitrarily constructed space. These spectacular effects--such as the simultaneous setting in The Card Index, the refuse dump in The Old Woman Broods. the image of biological proliferation in Birth Rate, or the ominous black wall in The Trap carry forward the plays' inward progressions and physically express the characters' psychic states. Różewicz uses these pictorial effects with great force and decision, creating an exciting theatrical reality which is inevitably more dependent upon the creative actor than simply upon the words of the playwright's text.

FOOTNOTES

1. Różewicz's poetry and drama are not unknown in the United States. Three volumes of his poems have been translated into English: by Adam Czerniawski, by Victor Contoski, and by Magnus J. Krynski and Robert A. Maguire. Plays such as The Card Index, White Marriage, The Funny Old Man, and The Old Woman Broods (translated by Czerniawski or Edward Czerwinski) have been produced by such theatre groups as the Yale Repertory Theatre and the La Mama Experimental Theatre Club. However, apart from Krynski and Maguire's excellent introduction to their volume of translations, Catherine Leach's "Remarks on the Poetry of Tadeusz Różewicz" in Polish Review (Spring 1967), Rochelle Stone's "The Use of Happenings in Tadeusz Różewicz's Drama" in Pacific Coast Philology (October 1976), and brief discussions of Różewicz's drama in Martin Esslin's The Theatre of the Absurd (1972), Oscar G. Brockett and Robert R. Findlay's Century of Innovation (1972), Daniel Gerould's Twentieth-Century Polish Avant-Garde Drama (1977), and Fiction and Drama in Eastern and Southeastern Europe edited by Henrik Birnbaum and Thomas Eekman (1980), there is no substantial body of criticism in English of Różewicz's work.

2. Różewicz was in the service from 1 January 1941 to 17 January 1945. His unit, Buk, was based in the woods between Częstochowa and his hometown, Radomsko. In the winter of 1943, the unit was forced to take cover, and Różewicz spent the period from December 1943 until March 1944 in a forest dugout. In early August 1944, the unit moved toward Warsaw as part of the Home Army reinforcements for the Warsaw Uprising, but it had to retreat because of insufficient ammunition. In November 1944,

Różewicz's older brother, Janusz, a Home Army officer, was arrested and shot by the Gestapo.

While in the Home Army, Różewicz edited a satirical newsletter, Military Action (Czyn Zbrojny), and published a mimeographed collection of his poetry and prose, Forest Echoes (Echa leśne, 1944), both under the pseudonym of Satyr. From 1945 to 1946, Różewicz was enrolled at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, where he took courses in art history, aesthetics, and philosophy. Among his professors were Roman Ingarden and Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, two foremost Polish scholars. Różewicz never completed his degree, for, in his own words, he was "too busy writing poetry." In an outburst of creative energy, he was publishing his works in major Polish periodicals such as Odrodzenie, Twórczość, Odra, and Szpilki. His first post-war volume of poems, In a Tablespoon of Water (W łyzce wody, 1946), went unnoticed, but the next one, Anxiety (Niepokój, 1947), earned him immediate recognition. He has since published some twenty collections of poetry and prose, fourteen full-length plays, and several scripts for film and television. Since moving to Wroclaw in 1968, he has lived the secluded life of a free-lance writer, consistently refusing to make public appearances, to grant interviews to reporters, or to rebut recurrent campaigns against his published work. In 1982, Różewicz was elected a member of the Bavarian Academy of the Arts.

3. Tadeusz Różewicz, "Poemat otwarty i dramaturgia otwarta." Odra, 15 (July-August 1975), 89.

4. With the exception of Exposure, the year given in parentheses refers to the first publication of a play.

5. In 1971, Różewicz published three additional scenes of The Card Index, dated 1958/59, which are not available in the English translation. See Tadeusz Różewicz, "Kartoteka: Fragmenty nie publikowane." Odra, 11 (November 1971), 67-65. My discussion of the play is based on the complete text of The Card Index.

6. Tadeusz Różewicz, Sztuki teatraine (Wrocław: Zaklad Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich, 1972), pp. 24-25. Unless noted otherwise, further reference to Różewicz's plays is to this edition, with the abbreviation of the title (ST) and page numbers given in the text in parentheses.

7. See Witkacy's charcoal composition titled "The Prince of Darkness Tempts Saint Theresa with the Aid of a Waiter from Budapest" (c. 1913).

8. For discussion of parody as the fundamental element of the grotesque, see Michal Głowiński, "The Grotesque in Contemporary Polish Literature," in Henrik Birnbaum and Thomas Eekman (eds.), Fiction and Drama in Eastern and Southeastern Europe (Columbus, OH: Slavica Publishers, Inc., 1980), pp. 177-189.

9. The play's subtitle, "Our Little Stabilization," has since become a proverbial expression in Poland.

10. Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 313.

11. Daniel Gerould, Witkacy: Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz as an Imaginative Writer (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1981), p. 56.

12. Jan Kłossowicz, Teatr stary i nowy (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1973), p. 85.

13. Tadeusz Różewicz, Birth Rate, trans. D. Gerould, in Daniel Gerould (ed.), Twentieth-Century Polish Avant-Garde Drama (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 270. Further reference to Birth Rate will be to this volume, with the abbreviation of the title (BR) and page numbers given in the text in parentheses.

14. Personal interview in Wrocław, 26 January 1980.

15. For discussion of environmental theatre, see especially Richard Schechner, "6 Axioms for Environmental Theatre." The Drama Review, 12 (Spring 1968), 41-64.

16. Tadeusz Różewicz, "Przemiany." Odra, 12 (April 1972), 101.

17. Witold Filler, "Pudel w zupie czyli klopoty z Różewiczem." Kultura, 10 (16 April 1972), 10.

18. Tadeusz Różewicz, "Komentarz," in Poezje zebrane (Wroclaw: Zaklad Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich, 1971), p. 419.

19. Zygmunt Krasinski, Nie-Boska Komedia (Wroclaw: Zaklad Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich, 1969), p. 147.

20. Konstanty Puzyna, "Koniec i początek [an interview with Tadeusz Różewicz.]" Dialog, 19 (June 1974), 116-123.

21. Konstanty Puzyna, "Pisać na scenie," in Burzliwa pogoda (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1971), pp. 32-38.

22. Kazimierz Andrzej Wysiński (ed.), Almanach sceny polskiej 1971/1972 (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1973), p. 195.

23. Stanisław Majewski, "Achtung! Banditen!" Stolica, 34 (6 May 1979), 15.

24. Pegaz, directed by Anna Wójcik. Aired on 24 January 1980 on Channel One, Polish Television, Warsaw.

25. See especially NN, "Love Story Tadeusza Różewicza." Teatr, 29

(1-15 May 1974), 7; Zofia Sieradzka, "Bilans osiągnięc." Teatr, 31 (8 February 1976), 4; Jaszcz, "Dwa a nawet trzy łözka." Perspektywy (15 April 1979), 29. Also, the American scholar Rochelle Stone has written about "obsessive sexual themes"of White Marriage "where bodily functions and sex are dramatized in a shocking manner." Rochelle Stone, "Romanticism and Postwar Polish Drama: Continuity and Deviation," in Fiction and Drama in Eastern and Southeastern Europe, pp. 399-340.

26. Tadeusz Różewicz, Biale małżeństwo. Dialog, 19 (February 1974), 33.

27. Rhonda Blair, "A Feminist Interpretation of White Marriage." A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages, Chicago (28 December 1982).

28. Tadeusz Różewicz, Odejście Głodomora. Dialog, 21 (September 1976), 6.

29. Tadeusz Różewicz, Pułapka, Dialog, 27 (June 1982), 25.

30. Ibid., p. 40.

31. See especially Anxiety and a prose collection entitled Preparations for a Meeting with Readers (Przygotowanie do wieczoru autorskiego, 1977).

32. Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, "'Wniebowstąpienie' J. M. Rytarda," in Bez kompromisu: Pisma krytyczne i publicystyczne (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1976), p. 141.

33. Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz, The Mother, in The Madman and the Nun and Other Plays, trans. and ed. Daniel C. Gerould and C. S. Durer (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1968), p. 161.