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MĄDZIK'S THEATRE – A TYPE OF IMAGE

All the elements of the material, set into motion by the artist in his performances, that is space, light, matter, human figures, masks, mannequins, acting, objects, rhythm, movement, sound and music, have been connected into an original theatre phenomenon, not built in such a form by anyone else. It is the form of an image-actor figure that was recalled many times before. Obviously, the name is not precise – but mostly in its first part: theatrical happening of Mądzik's works is essentially different from the image. The actor figures have been, after all, puppets, marionettes and other stage dolls, used in the theatre for ages, or animated theatrical phantoms. Some time ago, Elżbieta Wolicka talked about a mobile image-event, but the image as the actor figure appears not only as an event; sometimes it is a state, the effect of an action, a developed game with objects or an artistic location of a fragment of a space, that is, a designation of a place. The mobile, vivified image is characterized by individual features developed to such extent that we tend to treat it as a theatrical figure, striving for something or representing something that is not entirely obvious to us, although on the stage – as a theatrical entity – it appears realistic. It reminds us a bit of *ex machinae* figures which have had their own right to be on the stage in a dramatic theatre since the Greek times when it was not surprising that gods flew down from the sky at the end of a tragedy and appeared throughout the history, through Shakespearian prophetesses in *Macbeth*, up to romantic apparitions tormenting Kordian in front of the tsar's bedchamber, or the luckless Senator: figures from a spiritual or magical world and from spheres of dreams. It also reminds us of the phenomena which, in sublime moments that take place in social or national life, are considered as significant and notable as they induce respect and emotion – without asking questions about their reality and taking into a perceptual parenthesis their quasi-theatrical representation...

In modern civilizations, the theatre is not considered to be an absolutely serious thing, but we are culturally so used to symbols, representing many values or ideologies or their substitutes of similar character, that we tend to treat them on the stage as something alive that gains its own life by the mere appearance in an

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artistic scene. We also tend not to treat it as pure amusement or a decoration that makes everyday life more pleasant if the context in which it appears is serious. The aura of Mądzik's performances quite rapidly puts the audience into moods distant from casual entertainment; thus we watch carefully obscure events and phenomena that are hard to read – we live through them and try to discover their sense as we presume that they have some.

In the spectacles of the theatre of artistic narration that preceded Mądzik's performances and which were them, at least in part, but contained sequences or scenes that carried a great meaning to the entirety of the performances – that is mostly in the works of Józef Szajna and Tadeusz Kantor – the images-figures had a completely different character. The final scene from Szajna's *Dante*, with Dante, Beatrice and Charon, spinning around on starry planets, the scene with quixotic ladders from *Cervantes*, or the funeral of a revolutionist in *Majakowski* by the same author, the parades of the cheder students, repeated like a chorus to the rhythm of François' waltz in the *Dead Class*, or the defilade of the dead with a leader on a horse's skeleton from Tadeusz Kantor's revue, *Let the Artists Die* - they were always based on the interaction between actors and objects and the artistic matter. The co-acting of a marionette-like actor with an ordinary object that was animated or artistically altered, built the narration in their spectacles. In Mądzik's theatre, a new artistic-theatrical phenomenon most frequently appeared without an animated actor becoming known; it seemed like something independent and spontaneous although it also happened as a result of its visualized action. They were seldom one-time events, closures for a given image, shown as the results of the previous, specific artistic actions on the stage; they usually became a whole sequence – a series of actions developing in time and making the audience feel as if they are experiencing a phenomenon that is not entirely recognizable. Often the figures-images are co-created by the light, colour, the qualities of a matter that is not fully defined. Less often Mądzik uses transformed objects, some assemblages with surrealistic roots or things similar to Kantor's bio-objects. Seen in the distance or with a scarce amount of the light, these phenomena often appear to be abstract paintings, although they are created through an arrangement of specific objects or elements made from a particular matter. Sometimes they appear in a spectacle once only, even though they are the most easily remembered. In other performances, the artist introduces them several times and, then, they assume the character of a chorus: they become a repetitive, second, dramatically opposing plot of a metaphorical significance.

The first image-figure appeared in *Supper*. From the beginning, the Wanderer was led through the changing space by a white light, sometimes pulsing, which changes into a heavily blinding ray, finally red. In *Fibres*, being a certain kind of a laboratory of artificial theatrical materials, a limestone trickle, the rolling of the new-borns, the actions of the Survivor with a symbol-mask and a cloth, or the raise of the Babel Tower repeated several times, appeared as seeds for the form of the image-figure, but they did not develop fully. However, it was fully realized in

Icarus, thanks to marionettes set into motion. Their fast and aggressive spinning covered the stage in red, exposing, at the same time, the aliveness of the changing texture. At a certain moment the same marionettes unveiled their golden insides, blinding the audience. In that spectacle, the first image-figure revealed itself as a new phenomenon, the following one as an event. It was the final abrupt invasion of the artificial audience onto the real one and its, equally sudden, disintegration. An analogical situation took place in *Stigma*: the diversity of the light, matt-milky at first, glittering and crawling on the floor of the game-place, sparkling, streaming, wobbling, and sometimes creating light lines and, then, hitting right in the eyes, finally coming out of the coffin unexpectedly, made the impression of a permanent presence of an undefined being, revealing itself as the light in different forms. The rapid disassembly of the stage architecture, with a simultaneous transportation of the whole audience across the already empty room, was also a surprising event, raising questions about an unknown perpetrator. In *Herbarium* – apart from the figure of a man seen only in the frames immobilized by a stroboscope in different spatial points and the contrasting play of the whiteness of the stage-box and rainbow colours, which was rather an aesthetic experience and not a creation of the type of image that we are talking about. The epilogue became a figurative event: a sudden fall of objects from the ceiling, red as the anthropomorphic human remains. There were plenty of such images- artistic events in *Moisture*: wandering little spaces in the vast space of the stage, unusual dancing living coats, a curtain brought to life by moisture and wind, revealing prosthetic legs, an illuminated clumsy human body hanging on a rope, from which water drops were dripping down. However, the most intriguing phenomenon was the whole space of a tunnel, suddenly revealing itself to the audience - dark, dripping with moisture and glittering with the light, changing with every sequence. Mądzik built *Wandering* in a similar way. Apart from a mobile image of growing grain, a box with a stirrer appearing at the beginning and at the end of the spectacle, a tri-dimensional pilgrimaging icon of the Christ and the wandering of a crowd of puppets, animated many-a-time with the sound, it was the space where everything was happening that was intriguing. It gained an individual character to such extent that it began to be treated as a place that was a figure itself. In that spectacle, the artist also placed one of the first sequences that seemed abstract despite its concrete nature. Making scraps of a light material fall out of a vertically placed box, which takes place in a sparingly dispensed light, and then the rise up of this airy content, suggested the creation of an unknown, new phenomenon. The whole *Edge* was built from similar events. A specific autonomy characterized rosary beads which moved, all by themselves, in the darkness and the rising up, glowing fibre, surrounding the audience from all sides, who were discovering their inner connection with it to even larger extent.

In the three aforementioned spectacles - together with the tunnel in *Moisture* – the states and textures of the matter were also changed into the first forms of stage figures. In *Binding*, the dominant role was played by animated objects that

possessed their own lights, rising up phallic forms interacted with the ecstatic movements of a woman; the puppet of an old man was brought to life by the grain he was scattering about. The phenomenon that forced its mysterious atmosphere on the audience was the final image in the spectacle: the leaving of sarcophagi-chests, covered from above with grain or a sand rain in a lunar, dim landscape. However, it is difficult to talk about it as of an image-theatrical figure that can gain individuality and distinctiveness. In this spectacle, as in many others, an abstract phenomenon, not fully explainable, also appeared: a glowing tent falling down, which was transformed into a line of light. Such sequences became part of Mądzik's spectacles for good. In *Gateway*, the visualized disassembling of a grand block of matter had a similar character. Seen from a great distance, the acting of actors playing with wheels of an abnormal shape, but with a proper rack, and, then, the explosion of a green, quite airy mass, which was in reality the visualization of the actors' actions leading to the taking off of the material covering this rack - they became an image of an enlarged emotional and contextual value. On the other hand, in *Getaway*, fully animated was a rolling block of matter that can be described as the first image-figure in this spectacle. The second new phenomenon brought to life was a rapid creation of the landscape of a canyon - by lifting up the edges of the already outstretched sheet that was previously surrounding the block, expanded by pulling wet ropes forward which resembled snakes, and the uncovering of the second trough with water. In this vivid, and just created, landscape of a road, one of the most touching scenes in Mądzik's theatre, being a meaningful metaphor of the human species existence, took place.

In *Breath*, as well as in the two following spectacles by the Artistic Stage, the space itself became equally as important a protagonist as the man and, to a different extent, personified forces which caused the event. The images-actor figures of the constructed spaces, present in the three following spectacles, designated specific phenomena, different from each other, but having much in common. They were largely defined earlier with the analysis of the space, light and matter so I will now pay attention predominantly to their differences. The infinite and endlessly distant space in *Breath*, sinking in the darkness and faintly illuminated by the dim, beaming spotlights, transformed itself into a warm matter enveloping everything after an explosion of a stream of blinding whiteness and under the influence of an air turmoil. In the epilogue of *Crack*, a cold and bluish space of a remote tunnel, shown at a certain moment from a distant perspective, began to shake from the fundamentals, totter and fall apart - all that remained from it were the ruins, and a motionless figure, which earlier pushed human bodies into an abyss, blended into its demolished remains. In *Pall*, the whole space became even more materialized than in *Breath*. The magnitude of the occupied space was sensed, but it unexpectedly came alive in many places: for a moment it became inexplicably dense and dark. Constant transformations of this space lasted until the end of the events - they determined its state. Frequent changes of impenetrable and slightly brightening up

fragments allowed us to see another image, lasting and repeated in different variants, this time composed of a group of people, firstly visible independently, then united, and finally retreating and alternatively approaching each other like parts of a folding fan. This second image of *Pall* contrasted with the figure of space. Similarly, in *Crack*, a cold landscape, appearing at the end, remained in opposition to the previous violent and synthetically depicted scene of a scuffle among the living bodies, reflecting in a dark mirror.

In *Shroud*, Mądzik created an image-figure also from materially concretized space, but in a different scale. Therefore, in this case, it would be better to talk even about a singled space. Such places were cocoons, rotating around their own axes, later differentiating in shape, acquiring colour, sparkling with them and, in certain moments, unexpectedly illuminated which revealed parts of human bodies placed inside them. The packages of the human bodies also became figures – a major part of the spectacle took place in the actions around them. Moreover, the canvas got transformed into an image-figure, animated by the its mare folding in a properly conducted light. That sequence lasted long enough for us to be able to describe it in dissimilarity to the previously presented one, behind the matter curtains of an illuminated fibre.

In *She Departs*, another performance by the Stage, the artist was still interested in exposing the textures and quality of the fibre matter – therefore, the first sequence of the spectacle was dedicated to this. However, it was not so elaborate, that it could be described in such a way. In *She Departs*, the scene with a treadmill was repeated several times, but it could very well be placed in the category of a human working with an object. It seems that, in this sequence, Mądzik was interested in the artistic elaboration of a quite realistic representation of human toil. However, the qualities of a full animation were easily observed in the sequence of a rapid emergence of matzevas from under the surface of the earth and, then, their sudden disappearance. The phenomenon underwent animation, became an image-theatrical figure and was presented even more expressively than the falling down from the ceiling of the fake, abstractly presented female remains, similar in significance, in *Herbarium*.

In the case of this review, *Furrow* must be omitted completely as it uses fine arts to create actions and images only to a small extent. The strength of the performance was revealed acting.

In *Transition*, apart from the main elements, Mądzik was still interested in the textures of the matter and in the extraction of its basic qualities from the darkness. No longer in an undefined, vast space, but in a specific place, like in *Shroud* ten years ago, the whole space became limited just to it. In *Transition*, the artist chose a three-level tomb for the place of his artistic penetration. In the beginning, a vivid light mass appeared on top of it and fell down quite rapidly; then, on the next level, a pair of protagonists immersed in an unusual, rustling and shining ground which underwent animation in the largest extent as if it was assuming a particularly

individual character. The whole process was done solely through visible human actions, without any important, but unrevealed artistic procedures. In the spectacle, that function was carried out by a dim light; it served the image without becoming a figure itself. The animation of an object by a human was visually perceptible which, straight away, gave her a different status than that with an animation by an author who remained in hiding...

It is difficult to distinguish an image-phenomenon or an image-figure in this spectacle unless we accept it to be the animated ground, filling up the space of the central part of the graves, but the whole quasi-plot of *Transition* was built by nothing else but fine arts: an artistic cooperation of the actors with the object and their dynamic actions, conducted differently than usually in Mądzik's theatre and going beyond the convention of acting. It was in this field that the artist tried to achieve something new.

The dramaturgy of *Transition*, sketching a humorous and clear artistic quasi-plot about life after death, pointed out, in a different scope than before, that the possibilities of an artistic way of expression may be used not only to present the essential matter which refers to the human existence in general, but also to less serious ways of presenting different subjects.

Images-figures are the most artistically mature forms of presentation in Mądzik's theatre, but among the means responsible for the creation of an artistic narration are also transformed objects incorporated into the action, indicating, in a synthetic way, new meanings, as well as human actions with less refined objects, leading to their animation.

Since the premiere of *Shroud*, Mądzik's spectacles did not mark one clear development line for the artistic-theatrical substance and the problems connected to their activity. The artist still solved them, but each of the spectacles was devoted to different workshop matters, not connected directly with the ones undertaken previously. Mądzik also enriched his previous solutions by using them in new contexts. He sometimes went back to things that seemed already solved out or even rejected.

In the last decade the artist successfully realized over a dozen spectacles in a professional, puppet and actor theatre. He had several fully auteur achievements as the author of a script, of a stage design and a director, on the same scale as he had had at KUL for the whole time. He thought, to a greater extent than before, about theatrical art from the perspective of a professional stage designer who can use the ready-made theatre machinery or the obvious, albeit traditional means, to treat the artistic layer as an element assisting the action dependent on the text. He thought more and more about a script as a director preparing a drama with the help of professional actors. Inevitably, the professional emotionality of acting was approached in different way, that is the psychological substance or a more visible object present on the stage. These two connected moments became the reason why the commonness of the realism of behaviour and of presenting things were brought closer.