

Herta Schmid

Gombrowicz's plays as a trilogy

Witold Gombrowicz wrote only three plays - Iwona, księżniczka Furgunda in 1938, Ślub in 1947 and Operetka in 1961-63. The dates correspond to the fictional time of the plays - Iwona takes place in the royalistic ~~era~~^{era}, Ślub during the second world war, and Operetka comprises the royalistic time, ~~the Nazi-regime and the communist movement likewise.~~ Gombrowicz's plays have been interpreted as historical dramas, wherein the author comments on the great events in Europe from a specifically Polish view-point.¹ One might add, that Gombrowicz's plays are also and at the same time extra-historical dramas, where the eternal problems of the human individual are reformulated in the modern, existentialistic way, that breaks the narrow national view. But apart from this, there exists a third level, on which the plays should be understood. In writing just three plays, the author built up his personal theatrical 'language', which he used to make just three coherent statements on our historical time, on the conditions of human existence, and on the possibility of survival of mankind. Therefore, the plays can and should also be looked upon as a trilogy, that is as three relatively autonomous parts of one artistic entity with one comprehensive meaning. This paper attempts ^{at} ~~of~~ laying bare the trilogical character of Gombrowicz's plays.

The trilogical character is not evident on the surface of the plays just as their individual and common meaning is not evident. The plays, although endowed with a clear narrative structure, are difficult to understand - everyone feels that the actional level does not simply mean itself, but is a metaphor for something else, lying behind it, yet the way ^{how} ~~on which~~ to reach ^{it} ~~this something else~~ is strangely blocked. Gombrowicz himself felt this, and in order to give his reader a helping hand he defined his comprehension of modern drama (and thereby of his own drama) in opposition to the traditional one: "Jeśli by w sztuce Shakespeara, ktoś krzyknął na ojca 'świnio' dramat polegałby na tym, iż syn obraża ojca; gdyż jednak to zdarza się w sztuce niniejszej, dramat dzieje się między tym kto krzyczy, a własnym jego krzykiem... gdyż krzyk ten może zabrzmieć dobrze lub źle, przyczynić się do wywyższenia swego twórcy lub też, przeciwnie, wtrącić go w przepaść wstydu i hańby."

The quotation tells us, that in modern drama the interpersonal norms that once attributed human actions their positive or negative meaning are no longer valuable and that the individual decides autonomously, what his deeds are going to mean to himself, the opinion of others being no longer essential for him. The meaning of action and of the whole existence depends therefore only on the individual, on the ^{kind of} sense that he is able to create out of himself. This explains the existentialist position, Gombrowicz holds in his dramas. At the same time, the problem of existence is linked with form, as we see from the following quotation of Gombrowicz: "Tu nie idzie, jak w innych sztukach, o znalezienie najważniejszej formy na oddanie jakiegoś konfliktu idei lub osob, ale o odtworzenie wieczystego konfliktu naszego z samą formą." / Instead of living through conflicts with others, the characters in modern drama live through conflicts within themselves, that is with the immanent formgiving forces, whereby Gombrowicz's term of form has to be understood ~~as something essential for the human being, and not as an outer appearance for~~ ^{as something essential for the human being, and not as an outer appearance for} ~~an inner contents.~~ ^{an inner contents.} In his fight with and struggle for form, the human individual actually fights for his life, not necessarily in the biological sense of the word, but in the cultural one. The existentialist concept of form has to be seen in connection with Gombrowicz's artistic concept of form, on which he declares: "Jest to więc deformacją wzajemną - nieustanne zmaganie się dwu sił, wewnętrznej i zewnętrznej, które nawzajem się ograniczają. Takiej podwójnej deformacji poddany jest wszelki akt artystycznego tworzenia (...)" ⁽¹⁹⁶³⁾ If one interpretes these words in the light of the structuralist theory of the literary process, according to ~~that~~ ^{which} every individual artistic effort has to find a synthesis between the pressure of older, inherited forms and inherent in the creative personality new ones, and if we understand artistic ~~creativity~~ ^{creativity} as akin to the existentialist creation of the self, than we win a deeper insight into what "our eternal conflict with form itself" means for Gombrowicz: for him, the individual is exposed to two forces, one coming from outside, from society and its inherited norms and values the other one coming from inside the individual~~s~~, trying to formulate a new, unique way of living against and with the society at the same time. In his theoretical statement, Gombrowicz evaluates the confrontation between the inner (individual) and the outer (social) force as a mutual deformation. In his trilogy we shall see, that there exists also the possibility for a positive solution of

conflict, by which the individual and the society are determined a new, anarchic way.

genre of drama is ^{therefore} a medium for Gombrowicz, by which reflects on the problems of history, existence, and society. In doing so, he fights against the traditional dramatical 'language' builds up his own, specific 'language', that he uses only thrice a threefold questioning and answering. What is the core of this 'language' and why is it used only thrice?

According to Gombrowicz, the structure of the dramatic nucleus, consisting of three elements (the son=protagonist, the father=antagonist, the insult=action), has undergone a transformation in his plays. The relation between ^{the two} poles (antagonist, protagonist) within the kernel structure, that once consisted of a dynamic chain of action and reaction with a preestablished (by the interpersonal norms) meaning (the action was an attack against social norms, the reaction their defense), loses its semantic stability and its dominant role in the composition of the play likewise. The attention of the spectator shifts from the actional level to the level of the antinomic poles and from there back to the relation between them in order to find the individual, subjective meaning which the dramatic characters, representing the poles, attribute to their relation. Gombrowicz uses the dramatic kernel structure thrice in a different way: the first play stresses the pole of the protagonist, the second play the relation, and the third play the pole of the antagonist. He thus establishes a grammatical paradigm, that is valuable only for his own dramatic 'language'. We shall now try to discover the paradigm behind the level of contents in the plays.

In Iwona, księżniczka Burgunda, Filip, the young prince of Burgund, meets Iwona, a young lady from the lower classes in his state. Filip is awaiting something extraordinary to happen this day, since he read in his horoscope that an event, "enlarging his personality" should take place. Iwona attracts Filip's attention by her unusual outer appearance - she is ugly, phlegmatic, timid, she has, as her aunts reproach her, no "sex-appeal". Filip wants to explore the strange creature and gets engaged with her. After having known her, he gets tired of her and plans to kill her. The act of killing ~~xxxx~~ turns into a collective murder, since Iwona ^{has} provoked meanwhile all members of the court by her unusual behaviour, that breaks all the established behavioral rules of the community. During a

a public dinner, Iwona is purposely given a fish with difficult bones, which suffocates her.

The kernel structure is represented by Filip, Iwona, and the relation between them. Filip, the protagonist, is given more stress than Iwona, the antagonist, who is treated ^{more} like an object than like a living human subject. In ^{her} ~~the~~ relation with Filip, Iwona is passive and resistant; first she resists his attempts at gaining her confidence, then she resists his efforts in getting rid of her, because she became ^{attached} ~~used~~ to him. Her objectlike status is underlined by her outer appearance (slow, awkward movements, extreme ugliness), and her nearly muteness. Filip, on the other hand, is active in the relation: he enters the relation already in a mood of expectance, he overwhelms Iwona's reluctance, introduces her to the court, and only at the end his activity is taken over by his father and the other members of the court, who want to destroy the provoking intruder Iwona. Filip is also the one, who creates the meaning of the relation - his expectance in the beginning is directed on an "enlargement of his personality", which means, that he is searching for something outside the usual boundaries of the court, something that enriches his self in an unknown way. Iwona's strange lookings and behaviour promise him the desired "enlargement", and indeed he feels in the course of their interrelationship, that Iwona creates within herself an image of his, whereby he lives within her. But Filip is not strong enough to live with the new image of his within Iwona. Therefore he decides to kill her.

Seen from Filip's perspective, the whole play reveals itself as a parable on old and new forms. The new forms stem from the norm-breaking Iwona as a representative of ~~a~~ ^{the} young generation from the lower class. Filip, a representative of the ruling class and of the young generation at the same time, lives in an inner conflict with ~~the~~ surrounding forms ~~xxxxxx~~, stemming from his parents, and yearns for something else, that he hopes to find in Iwona. His hopes come true indeed, but, belonging by his birth and his education to the ruling class and their forms, he cannot endure the challenge that comes from Iwona. His attempt at her murder is not incidentally realized by a public dinner, which can be understood as a symbol for the ritualized concept of forms at the court - in agreeing with this way of murder, Filip falls back into the chains of the old forms and destroys with their means his own hopes for new forms. Combrowicz's first parable on the conflict between old and new ^{forms} ~~elements~~ introduces some of the semantical key-elements of his

concept of form. The key-elements can be expressed in terms of oppositions: old ^{of the} vs new

(old generation)	vs	(young generation)
powerful	vs	powerless
(kingdom) speaking	vs	(almost) not speaking
beautiful body	vs	ugly body, ugly dresses
and dresses		
mobile	vs	(almost) immobile - dead
male		female

The semantic elements 'old' and 'new', 'old' and 'young', 'powerful' and 'powerless' are ^{stable} ~~essential~~ ones, being repeated in each of the plays, the other elements are variable and serve mainly to create theatrically impressive pictures. So, for example, Iwona's ugliness is particularly stressed by a ridiculous hat that she is constantly wearing, the detail here pointing out at the ~~the~~ repulsive impression of the whole. Her muteness is on one side a theatrical trick in order to attract the attention of the spect^{ator}, on the other side it is ^{with a pictorial} a pictorial expression for her norm-breaking behaviour, because ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~refusal to speak~~ her refusal to speak is a refusal to acknowledge the rules of the human interrelations at the court. Her immobility, due to her ^{her} phlegmatic nature, finds a kind of ~~na-~~ ^{na-} ~~tural~~ gradation in her final death. Her feminity underlines ~~her~~ ^{her} ~~the~~ rule-breaking capacity ~~of her~~ in combination with her ugliness, since according to the ruling norm a woman 'has to be beautiful' and 'has to have sex-appeal'.

If I said, that within the kernel structure the pole of the protagonist Filip is stressed, this means, that the semantic interpretation of the whole structure is possible only from the view-point of Filip. ~~xxxxxxx~~ ^{the} ~~the~~ theatrical experience offers not only a semantic access, but also a sensual one. The spectator not only understands ~~in~~ ^{the} theater, but ^{also} sees and hears, and these activities make up for the specificity of the ^{the} ~~the~~atrical art. From the view-point of these perceptive activities, the ^{main} ~~point~~ of attraction is not represented by Filip, but by Iwona; Iwona is theatrically more interesting than Filip, although she can be understood only from Filip's ^{his} perspective. Yet the fact of her strange attractiveness (due namely to the variable elements of the semantic key) ^{it} ~~for~~ tells, that the semantic potentiality of the antagonistic pole within ~~the~~ kernel structure is not fully exhausted by the semantic interpretation that Filip is able to give it. In his first play, Gombrowicz explores the semantic ~~(questioning and answering)~~ capacities of the protagonistic pole. The antagonistic pole and the relation between both poles are still to be explored.

Scen 6

n The Marriage, the soldier Henryk, who is lying at the battle-front in Belgium during the world war, dreams of his home in Poland. He imagines his father, his mother and his fiancée Mania under changed conditions: The house has turned into an inn, the father and the mother are inn-keepers, Mania has become a servant and the whore of the guests of the inn. The dreaming Henryk is doubled by his friend and fellow-soldier Władzio, who looks at the dream from the same position as Henryk. Henryk tries to reestablish his parents' dignity ^{by declaring} ~~in making~~ his father king; Mania's dignity is to be regained by the ^{wedding} ~~marriage~~-ceremony, that the father-king tries to realize. The ceremony is interrupted by a drunkard, who attacks the father. At a first strike, Henryk defends his father successfully. At a second strike, he underlies the temptation of dethronizing his father and declaring himself king. He lets his people ^{also} declare him priest and begins to prepare his wedding with Mania according to a new ceremony, invented by him in his position as a priest. Once again, the drunkard tries to interrupt. Henryk overwins in presenting the dead body of his friend Władzio, who, convinced by a verbal play between him and Henryk, committed suicide in order to acknowledge ^{by} this the power of Henryk's word as a king. Henryk, being established in his rights as a king and a priest by Władzio's sacrifice, renounces on the wedding. Instead of the wedding ceremony, it is the ceremony for Władzio's funeral that marks the finale of the play.

The protagonistic pole in the kernel structure of the play is held by the dreaming Henryk. On the opposite side, we do not find one character, as in Iwona, but several successively: the father, Henryk himself, and Władzio, ^{as} ~~then~~ a corpse. The relation between the poles is realized by a 'naked finger', which first belongs to the drunkard (pointed out at the father-king), then to Henryk (dethronizing thus the father), ^{then to the drunkard, then to Henryk} ~~and finally again to~~ ^{can} this time directed towards the dead Władzio. The 'naked finger', which is also ^{be} 'ugly', is endowed with the capacity of unmasking people; destroying with the mask also the social position of them: the finger of the drunkard threatens the father-king with the loss of his royal position and likewise Henryk, after he has taken his father's throne. The element of the mask is linked with the concept of ritual form (expressed by the wedding ceremony) and ^{with} the concept of social power: the one, who 'is regarded' as the king, has the capacity of creating ritual forms. The 'naked finger', deprived of all masking forms, is 'ugly', that means merely destructive, when belonging to the

drunkard) and it is then always successful. When belonging to Henryk, it is no longer ugly, and it is successful (against his father). At the same time, it is a defence against destruction (threatening from the drunkard), when pointing out at the dead Władzio. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ The successfulness of the drunkard's finger symbolizes the incapacity of the latter to create new forms, whereas the success of Henryk's finger symbolizes his capacity of creating forms (he invents a new wedding ceremony), which are not merely forms, but decide over life and death (as testifies Władzio's suicide, committed under the ^{suggestion} ~~impact~~ of Henryk's 'verbal play'). Because of the existential impact of Henryk's forms, the 'naked finger' loses its unmasking and destructive power.

Once again, Gombrowicz offers with Slub a play, whose fictional contents has to be interpreted as a parable on the conflict of old and new forms. The ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ concept of form, underlined as in Iwona by the ritual (the wedding in Slub, the dinner in Iwona), is ^{impressively} ~~split~~ in an old form (represented by the wedding ceremony of the father) and a new one (Henryk's ceremony), but not only this, it is ~~only~~ also enlarged in its semantic associations. Form in Slub is not only associated with the concept of social power (expressed in the king's position), but also with the hierarchy of the family (father and mother), the power of the woman over the man (by means of the mythical virginity), and the power of the priest. This indicates, that all traditional values such as kingdom, family, marriage and religion are now reduced on the common denominator of form, which ~~that~~ establishes these values by a convention ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~. That convention can be threatened (by the 'naked finger' of the drunkard), ~~is~~ destroyed (by Henryk's finger) and reestablished (also by Henryk's finger). Laying thus bare the conventional basis of all traditional values, this play marks not ~~also~~ ^{out} a further developmental step in Gombrowicz's understanding of form, but gives also a reflection of the historical events ~~XXXX~~ of the time - the second world war, hinted at in the beginning of the play, is interpreted by Gombrowicz as either the result ^{of} or the reason for an inner changing of the individual, which becomes aware, that none of the seemingly so stable social institutions are given by nature, but all by convention, and that it is up to him to maintain or to abolish them.

Gombrowicz's choice of the dream-motif has three reasons: 1. the consciousness of a dreamer is less dominated by taboos, so that the radical view of traditional values, ~~that the play offers~~, finds ^{offered in the play}

psychological motivation. 2. The dream itself with its structural entity between the dreamer and the objects of his dreams is an additional expression for an important insight into the essence of these values - inherited from society and thus being given to the individual from outside; like objects that he is confronted with, the social values are at the same dependent on the individual, because they exist, as conventions, only insofar as they are acknowledged by him. Therefore, existing as well outside as inside the individual, he can shape and reshape these values, ~~xxxxxx~~ conserve their old forms (as Henryk does, when he declares his father king) and create new ones. 3. The motif of the dream allows Gombrowicz ^{to introduce} a new element into the concept of form, that on the fictional level is incorporated in Henryk's friend Władzio. Władzio is a double of Henryk himself, that is of the pole of the protagonist. He lives through the dream from the same position as Henryk and underlines by this the validity of Henryk's view. This is expressed in a constant dialogue between Henryk and Władzio, wherein Władzio affirms, that he sees the same things as Henryk, and that he stands on his side in the troubles that Henryk meets. The level ~~xxxxxx~~ of dialogue, ~~xxxxxx~~ ^{lying} outside the actional level and ^{being} freed from the concept of power and dominance, stands for a new ~~xxxxxx~~ model of social interrelation, where both partners of the relation are equal and identical instead of unequal and different. When Henryk in order to maintain his royal position against the attack of the 'naked finger' reintroduces the element of dominance and difference into the dialogic level, this means, that the new model and the hopes, incarnated by it, are destroyed. That explains, why, at the end, Henryk arranges a funeral ceremony instead of a wedding ceremony - having lost with Władzio the only one, who, being on equal terms with him, acknowledged him voluntarily, the acknowledgement of his marriage; gained by power, is no longer valuable for Henryk.

As to the key-elements of the semantical structure of the concept of form, we find in Gombrowicz's second play the following changes:

old	<u>vs</u>	new
old generation	vs	young generation
powerful	vs	powerless
(kingdom, family, marriage, religion)		
monologue	vs	dialogue
beautiful (part of the) body, naked	vs	ugly (part of the) body, naked

mobile vs immobile-dead

male vs female

With regard to this table, there has to be made an explication. Just as in the case of the first play, where the dramatic characters could not statically be attributed to one block of the semantic oppositions, but dynamically (Filip belongs to the young generation and enters into contact with new forms, but then falls back under the influence of the old forms), and where not all values within one block belonged automatically to one and the same character (Filip shares with Iwona the values 'new', 'young', but not the rest of the block), in Slub the distribution of the semantic oppositions among the dramatic characters is also dynamic (Henryk is young and powerless, but becomes powerful and is then linked with new forms), he first represents the value of dialogue, but abandons it then for the value of power, and ~~xxxxxxx~~ the values within one block belong not automatically all to one character (the ~~xxxxxxx~~ ^{opposition} ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ 'ugly naked finger', ^{not ugly} 'beautiful naked finger' characterize only Henryk with relation to the drunkard, 'monologue', 'dialogue' characterizes Henryk with regard to Wladzio 'dynamically', and the same holds for the opposition 'mobile', 'immobile, dead'.

The opposition 'male', 'female', unlike its use in Iwona, does not characterize dramatic characters with respect to one another, but is rather used as an example for the principle of dialogue. This becomes evident from an utterance of Henryk, which remains dark, if not put into relation with this principle: "Ktoż wie jednak czy mężczyzna... czy mężczyzna w ogóle może zakochać się w kobiecie bez współdziałania, bez pośrednictwa, że tak wyrażę się, innego mężczyzny. Być może mężczyzna w ogóle nie odczuwa kobiety inaczej, jak tylko poprzez innego mężczyznę. A może to jakaś nowa forma miłości. Dawniej było we dwoje, a dziś jest w troje?" (p. 129). "Whereas 'in former times' (dawniej) the man, tied to a preexisting system of intersubjective values, knew out of himself how to evaluate a woman, it needs "today" (dziś) a second man, with whom to convene about the value of the woman. The example demonstrates, that even so 'natural' reactions as love-emotions are not really natural, but conventional and that man have become aware of that conventionality.

Within the kernel structure stress lies this time on the relation between the two antagonistic poles, and even from both aspects, the semantic and the theatrical one. Semantically, this stress is realized by the fact, that it is the finger which determines the true

value of the opposite pole for the ~~pole of the~~ antagonist. Actually, in this ^{play} it is more convenient not to speak about ~~antagonist-protagonist~~, but rather of subject-object, because the problem of the relation is, how to look at someone (as if he were a king or an inn-keeper, a king and priest or a normal man, a virgin or a whore - in the case of Mania). The view of the subject (protagonist) ^{determines} does here not determine the pole of the object, but conditions only the ^{force of} the finger - ~~if~~ ^{whether} the subject is merely destructive or also constructive with regard to old and new forms, ~~because~~ is decisive for the determination of the object by the finger. Theatrically, the 'naked finger' wins attractivity by its two opposite appearances (ugly, ^{beautiful} and by its nakedness. Being ~~and~~ of all dresses, that is of all conventional forms, the finger becomes ^{a thing} outside the usual semiotic construction of things on the stage, where every thing means either itself or stands for something else, according to its outer looking. Ugliness (non-ugliness) makes the thing sensually attractive, but does not contribute to its semiotic ^{value} function. Therefore, the finger is semiotically empty, but aesthetically attractive. In addition to this, ^{it} lays bare the semiotic nature of all the other elements on the stage, since it is only by its mediation that the object-pole within the kernel structure attains its true semantic value and thereby its stable semiotic status. According to the mobile semiotic relation of the kernel structure, all ~~other~~ semiotic ~~relations~~ become (potentially at least) mobilized. So, in the construction of this play a little thing becomes the real ~~hero~~ 'hero' in the sense, that ~~it~~ ^{it} attracts the main attention of the spectator instead of the dramatic characters.

In Operetka, the Parisian designer of clothes, Fior (an allusion to Dior), has lost his gift of inventing new forms. Therefore, the monarchy and the ruling forces are threatened by loss of their power, since it is only the ~~know~~ ^{know}ledge of the latest style in mode that distinguishes them from the lower classes and thereby entitles them to their government. So, the monarchs arrange a ball of masks, where the members of the ruling class ^{are} ~~is~~ to appear in historical dresses, whereas the ^{up}coming classes, represented by the false graf Hufnagiel, a preses, a marquise, and a general are to appear in ^{sacks} that veil the style of the coming times. During the ball, two representatives of the ruling class, baron Firulet and graf Charme, who compete for Albertynka, a young lady from the lower classes, loose power over their dog-like servants. These disturb the ball, and in a general panic the people in the sacks appear in their new clothes

the general wears the uniform of a Nazi-officer, the marquise that of a guard of the concentration camps, the preses wears a gas-mask, and graf Hufnagiel reveals his real ~~lookings~~ as a revolutionary guide. He is riding the professor, who formerly introduced him to the court, fulfilling thus the ^{servile} function of the intellectual towards the revolutionary ^{classes} forces. After Hufnagiel has installed his power, some members of the royal court appear disguised as a lamp and a table, escaping by this their trial. The marquise however, still dressed as a guard of the concentration camps, is sentenced to death by a revolutionary court with Hufnagiel in the position of the supreme judge. Before the trial is finished, the dog-like servants, dressed up like grave-diggers, interrupt, carrying with them an empty coffin. All persons present lay ~~down~~ their goods, grieves and hopes, and even their dresses, the revolutionary Hufnagiel included. Finally Fior, renouncing on designing for ever, lays down nakedness. At that point Albertynka emerges from within the coffin, naked and laughing. All praise her nakedness, beauty and youth.

Once again, such as in Slub, the concept of power is enlarged in this play, this time not by social and cultural institutions, but by historical variants of government: kingdom, nationalistic dictatorship, revolutionary dictatorship. At the same time, in the whole dramatic field of competing forces, a change has taken place: the representatives of the royalistic society, who in the two preceding plays were still strong and finally victorious, are shown in a weakened condition from the very beginning of this ^{and last} third play. They have lost the capacity of creating new forms and use ~~for this purpose~~ the creative intelligence of a member of the lower classes (Fior), but even this remedy to their incapacity does no longer help, because their servant has not (as Henryk in the position of king and priest) the power of creating existential forms, which decide over life and death. In congruity to the loss of power on one side, there appears a new force on the other side. It is incarnated in the animal-like servants of the decadent graf and baron, who fulfill three successive actions: first they serve their masters in the competition for Albertynka's love, then they set free the historical forces, that wipe out royalty and bring afore two variants of dictatorship, and finally they carry on their showlders a utopian phase of eternal youth, happiness and equality among men, which, in the metaphorical language of the stage is expressed in the image of the rebirth of life after death (Albertynka emerging from the coffin).

In the ~~xxxxxx~~ ^{semantic} structure of the ~~play~~ ^{concept of form} the basic opposition between old and new forms reappears, expressed by the metaphorical opposition between ^{the} old and new style of clothing. But in the development of the play, it is ~~reformulated by the opposition of form vs. non-form~~, metaphorically expressed by clothing vs nakedness. By this, the stable elements of the semantic structure are connected with the variable ones, and as a result the ~~xxxxxx~~ structural whole is reorganized:

	<u>form</u>	<u>form!</u>	<u>non-form</u>
	clothed ^{old}	vs	naked ^{new}
old generation		vs	young generation
powerful		vs	powerless
(kingdom, nationalist/ revolutionary dictatorship)			(anarchy)
speaking		vs	(almost) not speaking
not beautiful body		vs	beautiful body
immobile (sleeping)		vs	mobile
male		vs	female

The reorganisation within the semantic structure does not only concern the element of outer form (clothing vs nakedness), but also the concept of power, linked with form. In this final play, the dynamic distribution of the stable elements among the dramatic characters, that has been seen in the two preceding plays, has stopped: the young and powerless ones (the doglike servants, Albertynka), who represent also non-form and nakedness (the servants touch Albertynka with their naked hands and thereby awake her desire for nakedness), remain powerless, because they are incapable of using power. The servants only get rid of the ties, that bound them to their former masters (graf and baron); and behave according to their animal-like nature, but they do not intentionally destroy the old rule nor do they help to destroy in the course of the historical events to destroy the two variants of dictatorship. They overwhelm their old masters, because these lost by themselves their strength, and ~~xxxxxxx~~ they install Albertynka's rule, because dictatorship also lost its persuasive power. Albertynka, on the other hand, wins the rule not by the use of power, but by dreaming: after the touch of the doglike servants she falls half asleep, becomes almost immobile and speechless except for the call for nakedness. So it is once again the dream, caused this time like in Club by a sensual experience instead of a historical event: 'the touch of the naked hands', that

brings up a new model of relationship among people. This model wears upon it the mark of its initiative touch: in it, the element of nakedness, that has to be read as a metaphor for non-form in the sense of anarchy, is dominant. The dream becomes reality in the fictive action of the play, after ^{historical} all variants of the concept of power (kingdom, dictatorships) have died away. If, on the metaphorical level of the play, it is namely the designer of cloths, Fior, who pays in the end tribute to nakedness, this expresses, that the concept of power and form (dresses) has lost all its validity just ^{like} ~~the same as~~ a worn out dress.

Within the kernel structure, stress lies in Gombrowicz's last play on the third element, the antagonistic objective pole, taken by Albertynka. Like in Slub, the objective pole is twice underlined, semantically and theatrically. From the semantic viewpoint, the objective pole finally reveals its semantic potentialities, that in Iwona could only be guessed. It consists in the counterpoint to the concept of power, consisting in anarchy. Anarchy dissolves the opposition 'powerful-powerless', between which the heroes of the two preceding plays migrated, as well as the basic opposition 'old form-new form', ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ linked with the first opposition. At the same time, the elements of the variable part of the semantic structure such as 'not speaking-speaking' (respectively dialogue vs monologue), beautiful body-not beautiful body', 'mobile-immobile' and 'female-male' receive now a final determination of their sense: Under the condition of anarchy, language (be it dialogical or monological) is (almost) abolished and replaced by music (see the ~~XXXXXXXX~~ song of praise, that marks the end of the play), may-be because language itself is linked with the concept of dominance. The 'body', in Iwona shown in the state of ugliness on the side of the antagonistic pole, because seen from the perspective of the ^{representatives of the} 'old form', 'power' and 'speech', appears now in its true beauty, after it shook off all 'clothes', be they 'old' or 'new'. Femininity, that in Iwona could be understood as a hint at (historically) sleeping forces with a revolutionary potentiality, that could not be set free in the play, is now metaphorically linked with sleep and awakening and with a revolutionary principle, that is rooted in animality (the doglike servants) and uncultivated sensuality (the naked hands of these servants). Thus, the last play delivers the ultimate key to the semantic code of all of Gombrowicz's plays, resuming and solving the problems, proposed by them

From the theatrical viewpoint, Albertynka, taking the objective pole, is given the main perceptive attractivity by ^{an} constructive principle, that echoes the construction of Iwona in the first play. There, immobility, lack of speech and ugliness culminated in the final state of death under repulsive circumstances (suffocation), so that Iwona could be considered as an incarnation of the aesthetic category of the repulsive grotesque. Albertynka takes up Iwona's qualities (immobility, lack of speech, death), except one: instead of extreme ugliness, she incarnates extreme beauty, culminated in the play by final nakedness. Since Iwona and Albertynka share also youth and femininity, it is only life and beauty, by which Albertynka differs from her otherwise identical counterimage Iwona. But the two differing features turn the whole into the incarnation of the aesthetic category of the beautiful, so that Albertynka is to be understood as the theatrical metamorphosis of Iwona.

Viewing the three plays together, one notices, that Gombrowicz ~~used~~ ^{explores} each element of the kernel structure as to its semantic possibilities, but underlined from the first play onwards the theatrical and aesthetical dominance of the third element, that is the pole of the object (antagonist). Looking back from what we learned about Operetka, we discover, that Gombrowicz's device of constructing theatrically attractive 'objects' on the stage (more exactly: living persons, who are turned into 'immobile', 'speechless' 'things') ~~that structurally take the position of the object with regard to the subject protagonist~~ serves as a hint at the solution of a semantic problem. The problem regards the possibility of existence of the individual and the survival of mankind. In the first play, Iwona, the problem is viewed from out the individual that, surrounded by still intact structures of social values and organisation, yearns for something else, but is too weak to ~~xxxxxxxx~~ accept the possibilities of a new self-definition, offered to him by the anarchic principle (embodied, yet still veiled in Iwona). In Flub, the problem of the individual is already linked with the problem of existence of mankind, since the starting point of the dramatic action is the second world war. The anarchic principle is here on one side ~~xxxxxxxx~~ ^{reminded of}, insofar as the ~~xxxxxxxx~~ ugly finger of the drunkard is merely destructive, but the possibly positive solution is not seen in anarchy but rather in the principle of dialogue and equality. Speaking in terms of the semantic kernel, the solution is looked for not on the pole of the

antagonist, but on the one of the protagonist (the subject), the antagonistic pole being ^{was} extremely weakened also due to the fact, that by the logic of the dream the subject (dreamer) and his objects are identical. According to the veiling of the semantic possibilities of the objective pole, the theatrically attractive thing is in this play not an object-like person, but a real thing (finger), that within the kernel structure takes the position of the relation. So, the play in the middle of the trilogy, is a deviation from the hint at a possible solution of the main problem as it was already given by Iwona. Operetka, then, shows the total decline of the subjective pole of the kernel structure, which expresses the ruin of all historically leading concepts ^{and} as power, social and political organisations and even of the individual itself, since the victorious anarchy is ~~realized~~ ^{given birth} by animal-like creatures, that means by men beneath the level of the individual. The positive solution that Gombrowicz offers to the main problems, posed ^{in the} in the genre of drama, is therefore the destruction of the concept of the individual, which historically was always linked with dominance, power and war, and its dissolution into an anarchic principle, where all differences between men, ^{caused by} ~~social~~ social ranks (and may-be preserved in our historical language), are abolished. Structurally, the positive concept of anarchy is expressed in the weakening of the subjective pole and the strengthening of the objective pole. Semantically, the attraction of anarchy is symbolized in the overwinning of the concept of form by non-form (nakedness), and aesthetically, the finally reached category of the beautiful, ^x symbolizes the utopian quality of the solution to the problems of the individual, of existence and of the survival of mankind in history, proposed by Gombrowicz.

* linked with eternal youth

Literature

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