

Our fault

- I am not running away from life to the theatre. I create theatre to better understand life. To find out what's inside of me. What kind of guilt? Religion told us about the original sin. The XX century dispelled our illusions of a man being good and innocent – says Krzysztof Warlikowski during the conversation with Joanna Derkaczew.

Joanna Derkaczew: Was *(A)pollonia* meant to be a therapy? Between Warsaw and Avignon the reactions were so enthusiastic that one could fear it's been too easy. Didn't we agree too quickly to having someone else facing the guilt on the stage, absolving us, making us feel better?

Krzysztof Warlikowski: I don't claim that our nation needs a therapy. I don't like using "clinical" terms while talking about the theatre. I prefer using "catharsis". I prefer talking about crossing boundaries of the theatre, about taking up topics that has been considered as un-theatrical. We may be forcing the door that has already been forced but each production creates something unique, extreme - perhaps a dialogue or passing to the other side of the impossible. *(A)pollonia* was a critical production. For me personally it was like a heart attack, similar to *Dybuk* once. It was followed by "Krum" in which I was trying to recover. The present production is less connected to current affairs and less supported by facts that so easily affect us.

Is it a personal production?

- A man who travels through the theatre sees reality in a particular way. He makes reality conditional on some internal intuitions. This relation cannot be entirely sensible. Is using Kafka, Koltes and Coetzee personal or isn't it? The reasons to create *(A)pollonia* were concrete. I'm wondering however if one always needs clear reasons to delve into his own anxieties, to get trapped by his guilt or responsibility... I didn't know what to produce after *(A)pollonia*. I laid my hands on a recently discovered film script entitled *Nickel Stuff* written by Bernard-Maria Koltes, the author, I did before and one I didn't plan to go back to, thinking I got what was the most important from there. It was the first text that intrigued me. Then came *The Trail* I used during workshops for students in Israel. Then came *Elisabeth Costello* by Coetzee, I discovered during *(A)pollonia*. These texts began to combine, by me and apart from me. I didn't know why they were appealing to me then.

Perhaps *The Trial* works well in a situation when we need redefining or crisis in order to overturn existing order?

- Concerning Kafka we remember the best several biographical details. The story of his engagements he would endlessly announce and call off. We know how he used those compulsive cycles to wind himself up and get down to writing. We know about his tuberculosis he used as an alibi and excuse to enter real life commitments and we know about his relationships with his father.

The Trial was interpreted in a different ways according to the age. Orson Welles left us with a great film version. In a totalitarian reality, in the times of communism devoid of hope, the book of Kafka was a cry of the millions of people waiting for a death in anonymous, the same looking blocks. They were waiting for the death that would be useless, cold and animal like, devoid of heroism and meaning. For me Kafka remains however the first who made “coming out” of guilt. Joseph K. might seem an innocent hero who struggles with the degraded world but he joins the game, he accepts the fact of “being arrested”, he gets involved in “the trial”, he assumes “there is something he is responsible for”.

Kafka showed that we are all guilty and it's our duty to find out what we are guilty of. He frightened us for good. His books we are struggling with today were “the children born after his death”. He didn't want them, didn't recognize them, treated them as bastards and forbid their being published.

Getting involved in the theatre instead of life - does it also make one feeling guilty?

- I am not running away from life to the theatre. I create theatre to better understand life. To find out what's inside of me. What kind of guilt? Religion told us about the original sin. The XX century dispelled our illusions of a man being good and innocent.

Nowadays entire societies begin to research flow of guilt between family members. They are trying to learn who brought up who in a wrong way, where the feelings of helplessness, pain, despair and frustration come from. The Americans pay millions for psychotherapy while trying to struggle with burdens imprinted in their psyches by their parents. They participate in Bert Hollinger's settings in order to discover their place in society and a chain of responsibility.

Does it make sense? Does the answer to a question “who harmed us” change anything?

- Those are the ways of facing ourselves. Is it important to learn suddenly what we have been running from our entire life? It might be something that happened during the first years of our life or even before we were born. And what if you find a guilt that hasn't been defined by codes and paragraphs? There are some kinds of guilt that should be punished with death but still aren't prosecuted by the law like harming somebody in some un-obvious way or like to think “It would be better if you were dead”.

For me Kafka is an attempt to take a journey within myself. Coetzee comes to me with a scene in which an old woman accuses a writer, Elisabeth Costello of a lack of passion in life. It reminds me of a death which in case of this author always appears to be cold, old, useless and turns out to be a senseless cold shock of an organism. Koltes brings Tony – a supermarket worker who doesn't have to search for his guilt or face sudden accusations but becomes pushed in, manipulated into a crime that supposed to change his life. Earlier he saw a chance for that in dancing that allowed him to get out of the physical world, to raise above mediocrity and to feel free. Three plans for life.

What about your earlier productions? Are they a part of a plan or a story?

- There is some way that started from me in the theatre with... *Dybuk*, perhaps? Hamlet's father? A child that had to be resurrected on the stage? An angel suffering from AIDS? Through my productions I keep repeating these statements "I am a Jew", "I am a homosexual", "I am guilty". These mark out the route for my search. They bring me closer to passing to the other side.

There, where there's nothing? Even guilt?

We're having a mysterious conversation...

Joanna Derkaczew
Gazeta Wyborcza