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Abstract

Polish director Jerzy Grotowski (1933–1999) is generally considered one of the most important representatives of the theatre avant-garde of the second half of the 20th century. Even if he, from a particular moment, opposed such a recognition, in his practice, he developed a whole net of strategies inspired by the historical avant-garde, both Polish and European. One set of this net's strings is connected strictly to the relation between the periphery and the centre. Being an heir of culture that considers itself peripheral (and tries reluctantly to oppose such a recognition), Grotowski developed a lifelong policy of periphery and centre. Consequently, choosing the former as his own "base", or maybe even a "home", he at the same time consciously haunted and invaded the latter, disturbing the conventional relations and hierarchies. The article presents an outline of the history of the strategies Grotowski developed from his decision to leave the central town of Kraków for the provincial Opole in 1959 until his performance of a "hidden hermitage" in Pontedera (Tuscany) in the 1990s.

Keywords: Jerzy Grotowski, centre-periphery relation, performing an image

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Performing a Hermitage: Jerzy Grotowski's Tactics of Periphery-Centre Policy

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In this article, I would like to share with the readers a part of my research on Jerzy Grotowski (1933–1999), Polish theatre director and performing arts creator, leader of the Laboratory Theatre and one of the most influential artists of the second half of the 20th century.[1] I have been researching Grotowski for about twenty years, publishing three books in Polish devoted exclusively to him. Still, the most relevant part of my research has been connected to the monumental Polish edition of his *Teksty zebrane (Collected Texts)*.

We can surely say that Grotowski's art, thoughts and career encapsulate and mirror some of the most important changes and challenges in theatre and performing arts of the second half of the 20th century. Simply speaking, as much as Grotowski was "unique", to quote the words of Peter Brook from his preface to the world-famous book *Towards a Poor Theatre* (11), in some respects, he was also typical. What seems crucial in the context of our meeting is that Grotowski was and still may be considered the epitome of certain important aspects of the Central-Eastern European theatre avant-garde. During the last few years, I have been leading the work of a group of international researchers that resulted in the publication of an extensive volume titled *Lexicon of the Central-Eastern European Interwar Theatre Avant-Garde* (2023). I am quite sure that if anyone tried to continue this work and create a *Lexicon of the Central-European Post-War Theatre Avant-Garde*, a large part of it would be devoted to Grotowski or related to him.

Of course, in some of the well-known texts by Grotowski or by his close collaborator and "personal critic" Ludwik Flaszen, published after 1968, one may find many declarations and expressions of a certain distance towards the avant-garde tradition. Maybe the clearest example is the final fragment of a seminal essay by Ludwik Flaszen, tellingly titled "After Avant-garde":

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> Our activity can be understood as an attempt to restore the theatre's archaic values. We are not "modern" – quite to the contrary, we are completely traditional. Jokingly, we are not the "avant-garde", but the "rearguard". Sometimes things from the past are the most surprising. The more impact they make as a novelty, the bigger and deeper is the well of time which distances us from them. (119)

Grotowski himself, while asked about the avant-garde on different occasions after becoming famous, generally answered similarly. Even in one of his latest and most famous speeches, "Performer", he gave a self-definition resembling the words of Flaszen: "I don't look to discover something new, but something forgotten" (376). Simply speaking, Grotowski, who was and still is considered a leading figure of the avant-garde theatre, opposed this recognition, creating an image of an old master, heir or revelator of ancient knowledge, *gnosis*. But I need to stress that this was a figure performed by him long after he became famous and left the theatre as the field of his research. Earlier, before 1968, young Grotowski referred to the avant-garde theatre many times in many different aspects, almost constantly linking his research with the avant-garde heritage. While the mature and old Grotowski claimed to continue the research of Stanislavsky, the young Grotowski underlined some inspirations he took from Meyerhold. But some less recognised avant-garde masters inspired the young Polish director: Emil Frantisek Burian in whose workshop Grotowski participated in 1958, Polish avant-garde writer, painter and thinker Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (Witkacy) or the very important Kraków avant-garde theatre Cricot (the first one, not the second one Tadeusz Kantor created and made famous after the war).

All these dense webs of relations, inspirations, developments and reinterpretations that link Grotowski to the historical, interwar theatre avant-garde are still to be studied in detail and in deep. This development needs more time, so in this article, I would rather follow just one thread – the centre and periphery dynamic relation and specific tactics Grotowski developed, aiming to adjust it to his needs both in terms of creative process and image or position in the art world. And here, my initial thesis on Grotowski as an epitome of the Central-European theatre avant-garde takes a more detailed formulation. I would say that Grotowski recognised and developed particular tactics of dealing with the dynamics between the periphery and the centre. I am using here the word "tactics", not strategies, following Michel de Certeau's recognition that strategies belong only to those who have the power to rule over a particular domain or social field.

In contrast, tactics are the ways in which those who are deprived of this power can cope with the established set of rules (see de Certeau). Grotowski, just like all the other artists from our region, had no power to change the existing relations between centres and peripheries. Still, being aware of these relations and their importance, he was playing with them, developing his own tactics that were able to interfere and partly influence the dynamics.

In this article, I am going to present some examples of these tactics taken from different periods of Grotowski's artistic career. But I need to start by referring quickly and shortly to the sources or roots that were so important for the Polish master that, in the late 1970s, he developed a special project called The Theatre of Sources. By this time, Grotowski very often referred to his war childhood spent in a very small village in the Eastern part of Poland, called Nienadówka. He even went there with an American film crew to perform a return to his childhood homeland. This return is very interesting and connected to many different aspects of Grotowski's life and art (see more in Kosiński, *Powrót*). From the perspective of the centre-periphery relation, the most important is the radically peripheral position of this homeland. Nienadówka lies in the remote Eastern part of Poland, far from any centre. The closest regional capital, the town of Rzeszów, where Grotowski would move with his mother and brother after the war, was and partly still is provincial. So, in the strictest sense of the word, Grotowski was a man of the periphery, raised far from any powerful centre. In his personal biography, we can easily recognise a pattern of behaviour quite typical to people born and raised in the periphery who are coming to a centre from outside, always as newcomers, with a mix of fears, shame and rebellion: outsiders, barbarians, sometimes conquerors.

But I need to observe and underline here that this Eastern part of Poland, where Grotowski was born, belongs to a very particular Polish sociocultural phenomenon connected strictly with the relation between centre and periphery – the phenomenon of the so-called Kresy, the Borderlands. This is the name given to the Eastern parts of the First Polish Republic of Two Nations that in the 16th and 17th centuries aspired to be a Central-European empire. After the union with Lithuania in 1569, this state ruled over the vast lands of today's Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, and partly also Romania, being a rival to the imperial ambitions of the Russian empire. The eastern part of this empire, with large unpopulated areas, wild steppes and traditional communities following their own local customs, created a myth quite similar to the one of the American Wild West. The Polish Borderlands – Kresy – were also considered to be a land of strong human beings and communities following their own rules and wills, susceptible to great feelings, brave and real. This myth is strictly a historical form of centre-periphery dynamics, with Kresy/Borderlands as a peripheral domain far from the official rules of the state, with its centre – the king's court and a parliament considered to be the domain of rotten politics and falsehood. For many years, Kresy were believed to be a peripheral land of transgression – of unruled violence and cruelty, but also of creative and spiritual growth. Some of the most important discoveries and revelations that shaped Polish culture came from this peripheral area, with two of the greatest Romantic poets: Adam Mickiewicz, born in

today's Belarus and raised in today's Lithuania, and Juliusz Słowacki, from today's Ukraine. These poets, considered the spiritual leaders of the nation, strongly and constantly opposed the central artistic scene, especially the one of Warsaw (and later St. Petersburg, Paris and Rome), presenting themselves as the representatives of true national roots: the traditions preserved and developed in the peripheries, where folk communities follow ancient ways, faithful to ancestral knowledge.

This specific Polish version of the centre-periphery dynamic has been working for many centuries and is still living in a common memory and subconscious, despite the fact that Poland not only lost a chance to become an empire but also lost almost all of these lands that geographically and culturally created the myth of Kresy. Grotowski, born in today's far eastern Polish town of Przemyśl, raised in the small village of Nienadówka and the provincial capital of Rzeszów, represented and reperformed a similar cultural pattern. Of course, he was far from a little naïve Romantic idealisation of folk culture. He was also too critical to adopt the Borderland's nostalgia that haunted and still haunts so many Poles who were born in Kresy or are descendants of families living there before World War II. But his almost instant and unquestionable recognition of peripheral cultures as ancient and related to "sources" and "roots" was strongly present in his research and shaped it. The most obvious example was his discovery of Haiti in the 1970s as the land of sources – a periphery where some ancient practices exiled from the centre survived.

The pattern of someone from the periphery coming to a centre as a revelator of ancient forgotten truths works also in the ways Grotowski performed himself, especially in the 1970s, in the new world centre: New York. Similar ways of self-performance, as well as of artistic research or even social action, may be traced in many concepts and practices of the avant-garde art. Let me recall as a clear example Ljubomir Micić's idea of "barbarogenius" (Mansbach 231–232) or the whole series of cultural images performed by Central and Eastern European artists active especially in Paris, starting from Diagiliev's *Les Ballets Russes*. Despite his ironic and critical mind, Grotowski partly followed this path that was also a part of his Polish cultural heritage.

To the Centre and Back

Soon before the end of WWII, Grotowski's family moved from the village of Nienadówka to the regional capital Rzeszów I have mentioned above. It was the first step the future artist made on his road from the periphery to the centre. A few years later, in 1950, he made another one, moving from Rzeszów to Kraków. In relation to the former capital of the Polish Kingdom and one of the most important cultural and intellectual centres of Poland, Rzeszów was a periphery. So, Grotowski advanced socially and culturally

as many Poles did in these postwar times, moving from villages and small towns to developing centres. And like many of these Polish inner-migrants, Grotowski might have felt like a newcomer, a provincial boy trying to enter a high-brow salon. It is especially important that he moved to Kraków, because this historical and university town has a special social atmosphere sometimes very harmful for newcomers. I suppose Grotowski felt it but somehow coped with it, especially after becoming a student of the prestigious and elitist Theatre Academy.

After graduating, he started a quite smooth career as a promising young director. He was lucky because one of his professors, Władysław Krzemiński, became the manager of the Old Theatre in Kraków and started the period of its growth. In a few years, the Old Theatre, despite its name, became one of the most significant modern stages in Poland, playing a vital role in the country's cultural life. Also, other Krakow theatres flourished and bloomed (for example, in 1955 Tadeusz Kantor and Maria Jarema opened the Cricot 2 Theatre). From the end of the 1950s, Kraków became a leading cultural and theatre centre in Poland. This was a place to be for a promising theatre director. But Grotowski left it suddenly, choosing a periphery. In 1959, he accepted an invitation from a cultural organisation running a very small theatre, called the Theatre of 13 Rows, located in Opole, a Silesian town in the southwestern part of Poland, and became its artistic director.

This decision should draw attention because it was far from being obvious. Usually in Grotowski's biographies and partly in his autobiographical commentaries, it was explained by his need to have his own company working in a focused way, far from the temptations of big towns with their buzzing cultural and social (especially night) life. This explanation was partly true: in relation to Kraków or Warsaw, Opole was a provincial town, but it was (and still is) an important regional centre, having its own repertoire drama theatre, galleries, radio station, high schools, newspapers and cultural magazines. In 1960, with its 63,500 inhabitants, it was not a small town as Grotowski and his colleagues sometimes presented it. But there was a key historical specificity working in Opole: before WWII, the town belonged to Germany, and after the war most of its inhabitants were forced to leave (in four days during January 1945, 58,000 people fled to the West), being replaced by the Polish repatriates from the former Eastern regions of Poland, so, from … Kresy. A real moving Borderland! Opole, abandoned by its German inhabitants, was to be socially, politically and culturally created anew, partly as a historical reconstruction of the medieval capital of the Piasts – the Slavic rulers of Silesia related to Polish kings – and partly as a new, socialist town of the future. So, it was the opposite pole to Kraków as a centre of traditional values and a stronghold of the Polish intellectual elite who did not trust such a self-confident avant-garde artist as Grotowski. But from the Opole perspective – Grotowski was an artist coming from the legendary Kraków itself – a director from the Old Theatre

who had staged Chekhov there and had some radical ideas and propositions. Simply speaking, while in Kraków, he embodied the periphery; in Opole, he was welcomed as a guest from the Big World, a representative of an artistic centre.

In the next few years, developing his experimental, laboratory work, Grotowski consciously played with this dual position. For the local public of Opole, he developed the image of a stranger working on something very sophisticated that might be fully understood only by chosen groups of people, especially outsiders. He and Ludwik Flaszen put considerable effort into convincing everyone that even if the experiments they were developing in Opole were not comprehended by locals, they gained recognition and respect from some key representatives of different centres, first national (Kraków, Warsaw), and later and more importantly, international. A special role in these efforts was performed by such exotic guests and collaborators of Grotowski as Eugenio Barba – a handsome and charming Italian who became the director's most important ally and his promoter on the European stage. Thanks not only to his successful actions but also to his very presence, it was far easier to convince the local authorities and public that they should be proud to have the Laboratory Theatre working in Opole, even if the work is not made for them. This position – officially never expressed but quite obviously performed – was very controversial by this time because, in the Polish People's Republic, there was an intense pressure on the socially engaged art that should work with and for the local public. Grotowski was ahead of his time and pioneered the tactics that were fully developed many years later when bigger and smaller towns started to accept and even attract avant-garde or experimental companies for promotional purposes. And he was very successful because, in 1965, he moved to the bigger town of Wrocław, also in the same western part of Poland that before WWII had belonged to Germany. Wrocław authorities developed a policy of attracting artists to promote the image of the town as the new cultural centre. By the strange irony of history, Opole, which invited Grotowski and where he created most of his theatre productions, lost him just before he became internationally famous. Wrocław, almost immediately after attracting Grotowski, consumed all glory and is still known to some theatre people of the world as the home of the Polish Laboratory Theatre.

Both in Opole and in Wrocław, Grotowski was playing with the centre-periphery dynamics, achieving a special status of being displaced, or rather, not localised. While working in Opole and Wrocław, he and his team constantly underlined the acts of recognition by the centres of the Big World lying outside, especially abroad. The real successes Laboratory Theatre achieved in Europe, especially in Paris, and later in the United States, were used locally as a decisive argument that even if the work itself is hard to understand, sometimes controversial or even blasphemous, it should be accepted because the true centres are supporting it. This tactic was very successful

because, thanks to it, in the 1970s, Grotowski received substantial support from the Polish government, which used avant-garde art to promote the socialist state as an important supporter of innovative culture experiments. Although Party comrades ruling the country did not understand Grotowski's art, they needed him to convince the world centres, mainly the Western ones, that the Polish People's Republic was the land of artistic freedom and creative development.

On the other pole of the dynamics, in the centres, Grotowski gradually developed a tactic of performing a stranger coming from a remote margin, an outsider who is presenting his work not to become a part of the mainstream, but to attract those who also feel strange, who are outsiders of a centre. The development of these tactics may be observed in the case of Grotowski's theatre in relation to the cultural environment of the Polish capital, Warsaw.

In April 1960, the Theatre of 13 Rows led by Grotowski organised its first guest performances in Warsaw with two first productions directed by him: *Orpheus* based on the play by Jean Cocteau and *Cain* based on the poetical drama by George Gordon Byron. These guest performances were disastrous. Warsaw's cultural elite treated the Theatre of 13 Rows the same way as many mainstream circles used to treat avant-garde experiments: the value of the productions was totally neglected, the experiments considered meaningless, and the company treated as a group of amateurs. A Warsaw cabaret led by popular professional actors staged a parody of Grotowski's performances as a satire on a false avant-garde, so the worst happened – they were not only criticised, but they were also laughed at.

After this terrible experience, Grotowski did not visit Warsaw with his theatre for many years, even after his company became internationally famous. The Warsaw elite did not trust his successes. Even after the Polish Laboratory Theatre became a world phenomenon, one of the influential Warsaw critics wrote and published a feuilleton titled: "If it is such a revelation, show it to us in Warsaw."

Grotowski finally appeared in the Polish capital two years after he created his last theatre production *Apocalypsis cum figuris*. The performance that officially premiered in July 1960 was presented earlier in London and New York achieving a great success, despite special tactics used by Grotowski to make open access for the public very difficult: they performed in a small venue, forced a special procedure for the spectators, for example, not allowing anyone who came late to enter the room (so some people who had bought the expensive tickets were not able to see the performance). In Warsaw, they applied a similar but even enhanced practice. The performance was also performed in a small venue. Yet, besides a few "normal" performances for people who were able to buy tickets, the majority of the presentations were addressed to special spectators – mainly young people who were found by Grotowski and his

colleagues in cafés, student clubs or simply on streets. As Grotowski explained, he was looking not for a normal, cultural public performing some kind of social duty but for young activists and rebels, far from the normal theatre and looking for some new forms of expression. While this tactic was partly successful – during these guest performances, Grotowski found some people who started to work with him, it made a great impression on the Warsaw elite, who were shocked and felt almost offended as a centre not admired by a newcomer from the outside.

A Moving Centre

Playing his games with both the periphery and the centre, Grotowski achieved a special paradoxical position: he was neither in the latter, nor in the former. He was in between, only appearing on one or the other pole of the world cultural milieu. This in-betweenness may be related to what Jon McKenzie (2001), many years later and in a different context, called "liminautic", a state of being not in a passage, thus not on any threshold, *limen* – but on a moving board – always in motion. This liminautic mode of action was accepted and developed by Grotowski in the 1970s when he was almost constantly travelling around the world, performing himself as a wandering centre of attention. If in the 1960s, Grotowski played centre against periphery and periphery against centre, in the 1970s, he developed an embodied performance of this dynamic, troubling and partly destroying the opposition between one and another. Many times, it was almost impossible to locate him – no one knew where he was. He only appeared somewhere and wherever he appeared, he became a centre on his own.

This liminautic era had its own culmination when Grotowski turned Wrocław into the world capital of the countercultural performing arts with the immense event called the Theatre of Nations University of Research. From 8 to 28 June 1975, Warsaw hosted another edition of one of the most prestigious theatre events in Europe of the time – the Festival of the Theatre of Nations, organised under the auspices of the International Theatre Institute (ITI). Almost simultaneously, from 14 June to 7 July 1975, Grotowski, in collaboration with Eugenio Barba (and, of course, members of the two befriended companies – Laboratorium and Odin theatres), organised the Theatre of Nations University of Research, conceived as a grand celebration of experimental theatre. The university's programme included, of course, presentations of live and filmed theatre productions. However, they constituted a minor and somewhat less important part of it. The most important were the meetings with invited eminent representatives of the theatre world (Peter Brook, Luca Ronconi, Joseph Chaikin, Eugenio Barba, André Gregory and Jean-Louis Barrault), workshops conducted by some of them (Brook, Barba, Gregory), and above all, the extremely numerous workshops and activities carried out by members of the Laboratory Institute. It was

an enormous enterprise, which one of the participants, the American director André Gregory, compared to Woodstock.

Later, Grotowski repeated similar events. In 1975, during the Biennale di Venezia, he organised the University of Research 2 – a kind of sequel to Wrocław. In 1980, in the frames of the Theatre of Sources project again in Wrocław, he organised a Seminar of the Theatre of Sources (3 V – 31 VIII 1980) – smaller, for about two hundred participants, but with the international group of practitioners including the whole voodooistic community of San Soley from Haiti. Again, these events may be seen as a part of avant-garde attempts to attract public attention by creating special events, festivals presenting practices developed and found by experimenting artists. Such festivals are also the tools of the partial and timely deconstruction of the relation between centre and periphery, transforming a chosen place into a world capital of art. This is what Grotowski did, especially in Wrocław.

But what is very interesting, at the same time, Grotowski started to create a kind of inner periphery. In 1972, the Laboratory Theatre bought an abandoned German farmhouse hidden in the forest, thirty-five kilometres outside of Wrocław, near the village of Brzezinka, and turned it into its "forest base". It was there that Grotowski and his closest team, hidden from the outside world, developed a new kind of performing arts that they called paratheater or an active culture. Among many reasons to move his practical work from the centre of Wrocław to Brzezinka were those connected to the need to be close to nature, to work in silence, far from modern technology, in direct relation to others. But it seems that also the dynamic of the periphery as the place of real work, and the centre, as the market where the results of the work are presented, returned here.

Finally, a Hermitage

This dualism of hidden, constant, experimental work taking part in remote peripheries and only from time to time presented (not very willingly) publicly on the central markets dominated the last period of Grotowski's creative life. In 1982, he emigrated from Poland because, after the declaration of martial law by the communist government, he could no longer work on the scale to which he had become accustomed. After some time, Grotowski found a base for his work, first in the University of California, Irvine, and finally, in Centro di Lavoro or the Workcenter, organised for him in Pontedera, Italy.

From 1985 until the end of his life, Grotowski performed as a hermit and a hidden master. For many years, also because of the serious health problems he suffered, he did not present his work publicly, and the number of his speeches, lectures and

conferences radically diminished. After many years of over-presence, Grotowski entered a period of over-absence, which was summed up in the title of an essay by Polish-American researcher Halina Filipowicz, "Where is Gurutowski?" (1997). In almost all relations and reports of people who had the luck to visit Pontedera, there was the same recurring motive: a journey to the periphery. After being a star in Paris, New York, Milan and Moscow, Grotowski found himself in a small industrial town in northern Tuscany. Even worse, he was working not in the town itself but in a small settlement, Valicelle, a few kilometres out of it, where the visitors needed to get to by themselves with no public transport available.

The image of the hermit and guru that dominated the reception of Grotowski's work in the late 1980s and the 1990s was based on several displacements and misleading communicates. First of all, Pontedera, while small and provincial, is far from being a remote hermitage. It is an industrial town, home to the Piaggio Motors factory, very well connected to both Pisa and Florence, and from here to the world. Grotowski's Workcenter was organised thanks to Carla Polastrelli and Roberto Bacci, who created and had been running for many years one of the most important centres of the Italian alternative theatre movement called the Terzio Teatro (Third Theatre), initiated by Eugenio Barba. From the end of the 1970s, this Centro di Sperimentazione Teatrale "Teatro Era" has been one of the most important theatre centres in Italy, regularly hosting such well-known foreign companies as Odin Teatret, Bread and Puppet and The Living Theatre, not to mention visits by Italian theatres, meetings with artists from Asia, numerous conferences, workshops and festivals. Also, Laboratory Theatre members were performing and working there regularly. Thus, Grotowski did not end up in a hermitage but instead built it, also for health reasons, around himself, and above all around his work in Valicelle, which he increasingly perceived as remaining outside the mainstream and interests of his contemporaries. It was he who wanted to perform himself as a hermit, living this time on the periphery. While in the 1970s, he was a moving centre, now in the 1990s, when the centres of attention moved away, he started to perform a kind of living periphery.

He appeared as such during his last great tour with Thomas Richards, and the Workcenter was renamed to include the name of Grotowski's future heir – The Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards. There is a centre in that name, but this centre is far from the centres of the world. It was a work, not a world, centre.

Summing up all these stories, I would say that the dynamic of centre-periphery played a vital role in Grotowski's performing arts, which also included the art of creating himself as a charismatic figure of a true artist and experimenter. Like many avant-gardists, Grotowski treated his own social image as an essential part of his creative work, deconstructing the border between art and life. In opposition to the

Romantic and Modernist concept of an artist as a "martyr" sacrificing oneself to the most radical experiments or a rebellious poet of life searching for Great Experiences, avant-garde artists invented and developed many alternative models and modes of self-performance adjusting them consciously both to changing historical, political and cultural circumstances and contexts, and to their own goals and projects. This performing art of image used to be treated as something different from the "real creation", "true work of art", and in many cases was interpreted as manipulation or illusion. The avant-garde deeply changed this attitude, proposing a concept of creative and performative process developed consciously, on many levels, fields and stages with different strategies and tactics applied to produce and test specific collective images.

In many cases, especially of the avant-garde theatre artists, the images created this way were stronger and more influential than any "real" work of art in a traditional sense of the word – think about such figures as Gordon Craig or Antonin Artaud. While this may not be the case for Grotowski as a director, who created a set of impressive theatre productions, or as a theorist, it is his case as a performer. Some people accuse Grotowski of proposing a very demanding acting method that he had never performed on his own. But this is not true – Grotowski performed himself almost constantly, creating his charismatic persona that seemed to be more influential and reached more people than any of his productions.

A detailed analysis of this performance needs more careful study that I plan to develop in the future. But I do hope that from what I have just said, it is obvious that playing with the dynamic opposition between centre and periphery was an essential part of it. Grotowski was aware of both the advantages and disadvantages of staying in the centre or moving to the periphery. Generally, in his artistic life, he preferred the latter to the former. He spent most of his life working on the periphery, distrusting the centre. But even then, he never forgot about the important aspects of a centre as a place of power, able not only to decide about the vital aspects of the work but also to enable the recognition so crucial for the periphery.

In his youth, Grotowski was a Marxist. Even later, he used the category of dialectics to describe some paradoxes of his work (let me just recall the famous dialectics of apotheosis and derision). Following this, I would propose to call the whole set of tactics I tried to describe above a dialectics of centre and periphery. And I also think that for the avant-garde seen as performance, this dialectic is one of the most significant factors shaping it.

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