

**Theatre Performance of “The Diary of a Madman” written by
Nicolai Gogol**

Kemal Istanbuluoglu

**Artistic Project Work
of Master in Performing Arts**

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ARTISTIC PROJECT WORK

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KEMAL ISTANBULLUOGLU

ABSTRACT

Kemal Istanbuluoglu, a student in the Performance Arts Master's Programme, has conducted a comprehensive analysis of Nikolay Vasilyevich Gogol's play "Diary of a Madman". This in-depth study delves into the theoretical explanation of the acting method employed on stage, providing evaluations of the play's text, overall structure, character analysis, dramaturgy study, application study, and a conclusive analysis. The study aims to meticulously analyze and present the process and results obtained during the application in detail in the following sections.

KEYWORDS: Theatre, Gogol, Diary, Madman

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INTRODUCTION

In this study, the staging process of Nikolay Vasilyevich Gogol's play "Diary of a Madman" will be discussed. This study, which is an examination based on the theory and practical applications of acting methods applied on stage, will include evaluations of the text of the play I have chosen, the general structure of the play, character analysis, dramaturgy work, including comments on the role, application work and results. The process and the results achieved during the practice will be examined in detail.

The project preparation period started with the play analysis and dramaturgy report. The dramaturgy report begins with questioning the life and period of the playwright. Afterwards, it requires examining the skeleton of the work, that is, its structural features. After reviewing the play text in all its dimensions, the character analysis process begins for the actor, and this character analysis process continues with the examination of the three-dimensional characteristics. After analysing the psychological, sociological and physical attributes of the character, the primary purpose is to synthesise the playwright's ideas and concerns with the feelings and ideas aroused in the performer, and the staging work begins.

Acting and staging methods and styles to be chosen while starting the staging work will be examined. This study is aimed to reflect on the confusion brought about by social status and being trapped in modern slavery. For this reason, it is desired that the images and cacophony in the head of Axanti Ivanovich Poprishchin, who goes to madness step by step and addresses the audience from the point of madness, will create the stage atmosphere and decor.

The play has a psychological realist style of the period in which it was written. But in our performance, the audience will be invited into the mind of the character who has reached the point of madness. For this reason, the aim is to spread the bipolar and multilingual field of madness throughout the performance by using realistic, surrealist and grotesque elements in both stage design and acting style.

After the dramaturgy report, character analysis and staging methods of the play are determined, the practical work process will begin. This process will study the memorisation of the text, emphasis, intonation, articulation, rhythm, emotions and physical attitudes of the character. The play character's posture, gait, and reactions to certain emotions will be created at this stage.

While the play's character and direction are being shaped, the design and construction of the decors and accessories that will support the play and the actor create the atmosphere.

1. DRAMATURGY REPORT

"Dramaturgy" can be defined as the techniques/theory governing the composition of the performance-as-text; it is the set of techniques/theories governing the composition of signs/expressive means/actions that are woven together to create the texture of the performance, the performance text (Marinis, 1984: p. 100).

With this definition, the first step of the process we call the staging process is the dramaturgical study. In line with this information, studying the life of Nikolay Vasilyevich Gogol, the period in which the play takes place, the subject of the play, the structural features of the play text and the playwright are listed under this main heading as they will form the main framework of the study and staging process of the play.

1.1. The Life of Nikolai Vasilyevich Gogol

Russian writer Nikolai Vasilyevich Gogol was born on 31 March 1809 in Poltava, Ukraine. He was born in the province of Poltava. Gogol, who started his primary education in Poltava province, entered the Nejin High School of Sciences in 1821. Gogol's understanding of art began in this boarding school, and he became interested in reading, writing and theatre. During his high school years, he wrote a few poems that have not survived to the present day: a tragedy called *Bandits*, a historical story called *Tverdoslavic Brothers*, and a satirical work called *A Few Words About Nejin* or *No Law is Written for Madmen*. After graduating high school in 1829, Gogol went to Petersburg to continue his literary studies and entered the civil service. A year later, he resigned from the civil service and devoted himself to his literary career. In 1830 and 1831, he published several articles in various publications. During this period, he met Zhukovsky, Pletnev, and Pushkin, who became part of the literary circle in Saint Petersburg.

Between 1831 and 1836 was Gogol's most productive period. In 1831, he published the first and, in 1832, the second part of *Dikanka Stories*, which aroused great admiration in the world of criticism and gave Gogol an excellent reputation in Russia and other Slavic countries. Gogol published *Arabeski*, a collection of his articles, essays and short stories, in a newspaper in 1835. This work included Gogol's famous Petersburg stories "Portrait", "Overcoat", "Nevski Street", and "Memoirs of a Madman". In these stories, low-ranking officials symbolise Gogol's poor, little man type. In the same year, "Taras Bulba", "The Story

Of How Ivan Ivanovich and Ivan Nikiforovich Quarrelled", "The Old Time Gentlemen", and "Mirgorod", which includes the stories "Viy", were published.

Gogol's interest in the theatre since childhood is evident in the works he produced between 1833 and 1836. "Order of Vladimir 3rd degree",

"A Marriage" and "The Inspector" are among the most well-known of the author's theatre works. Although critics praised it, Gogol's play *The Inspector*, the most popular and first realistic Russian comedy, was not successful. Gogol travelled to Switzerland in 1836 to alleviate this disappointment and began work on his masterpiece, *Dead Souls*. The following year, he was shocked by the news of the death of Pushkin, his best friend and mentor. However, he accepted *Dead Souls*, the plot given by Pushkin, as a will and continued to work on the novel. The main characters in the novel, the first volume of which he finished in 1840, are, in Gogol's words, a few ugly landowners. *Dead Souls* was planned for three volumes, but only the first volume was published. It deals with sin, punishment and salvation. Gogol, who was very nervous and tense, began to slowly become mentally ill while working on the second volume of *Dead Souls*. His work progressed slowly, and he often had psychotic episodes. A trip to Jerusalem in 1848 had a negative effect on the writer. On 24 February 1852, he burned the second volume of *Dead Souls* to torment himself. Ten days later, on 4 March 1852, he died in a semi-mad state.

Gogol's plays are realistic, romantic, psychological, satirical, and grotesque. However, their originality and uniqueness prevent them from being classified.

While critics regard Gogol as a naturalist mainly concerned with the little man and society, symbolists characterise him as a great writer with a vivid imagination who reflects the inner world rather than superficial reality. Psychological interpretations predominate in the author's late works. Gogol, the great Russian master of satire, created characters that are part of the Russian lexicon, depicting various types. His dialogues are unique in sarcasm and humour. In his art, he dealt with provincial and backward Russia.

1.2. The Play's Period

Russia's most important historical event in the 19th century was the Franco-Russian War of 1812. The invasion of Moscow by the French Emperor Napoleon, the liberation of the city by the Russians and the defeat of the French army led to radical changes in the Russian army, along with the military restructuring of the army in Russia, as in other backward regions of the

world. Russia's uprisings against the Petro reforms were implemented until the 18th century; Russia's 19th century witnessed attempts to resolve the deep-rooted social problems caused by the Franco-Russian War of 1812 and the suppression of the Dekabrist uprising that emerged afterwards (Ranade, 1980, p. 571).

The Decabrist uprising led Russian intellectuals, who had little contact with philosophy until then, to turn towards German philosophy. They started to learn and discuss Hegel's philosophy, which was very popular in Germany then. Towards the 1850s, Russian intellectuals became increasingly under the influence of Feuerbach, they became ardent supporters of him and thought of implementing the social projects of the imaginary socialist Fourier in Russia. At this time, Belinski created the intellectual infrastructure of Russia's transition to the Enlightenment period by revealing the effects of these philosophical currents in his works. Belinski, influenced by Fichte and Hegel's philosophy, successfully used the dialectical method he acquired from Hegel and Marx in his criticism (Lukacs, 1964).

1.3. The Play's Plot

The Diary of a Madman is one of Gogol's most beautiful short stories. The story centres on the life of a minor civil servant who lived in the oppressive era of Tsar Nicholas II. The story, written in diary format, tells the story of the protagonist Poprishchin's descent into madness. When his love for his manager's daughter is added to his dull and monotonous life, the vortex he is in grows even more significant. Aksentiv Ivanovich Poprishchin's efforts not to submit to the oppressive system and the psychological tides he experiences continue until he thinks he is the King of Spain and ends with his confinement in a mental hospital. For this reason, *The Diary of a Madman* is one of the earliest and most comprehensive descriptions of schizophrenia.

1.4. Structural Features of the Play

The Memoirs of a Madman was written by Gogol in 1835 in story form. It was later adapted to the stage by Sylvie Luneau - Roger Coggio with the same name (Gogol, 1960). The work was written in the first person in the form of a diary, thus allowing the reader to follow the play's central character closely. While adapted from a story to a theatre text, the work was faithfully adapted to a first-person diary format. The work, which is about the life of Poprishchin, a simple

pencil clerk, shows the monotonous life of the protagonist's monotonous life turning into an inextricable vortex and its ending in a mental hospital, and this process can be described as "tragedy" in general. Together with the tragedy and the comedy elements in the text, we can call the genre of the text "tragi-comic". In addition, the author stones the officials of Tsarist Russia through this story.

1.5. Character Analysis

In this chapter, the role of Aksentiv Ivanov Poprishchin, the character I played, is analysed in all its dimensions. For this reason, to explain the method I applied while staging the play in full detail, the main lines in the play were examined one by one according to the analysis of the character's sociological situation and the effect it had on his psychological state, and I tried to convey this information to you within the subheadings in this section.

Writing means more to Poprishchin than his work (albeit somewhat dangerous). Writing means more than just putting his mad thoughts down on paper. Most importantly, the ability to write correctly is a defining characteristic of a social class to which Poprishchin desperately wants to belong. Therefore, if Poprishchin is more frightened when he saw a dog can write than when he saw a dog can talk. Writing is reaching out to a territory owned explicitly by the elite class. According to Poprishchin's value judgement in his mind, only noble people can write correctly. The fact that he later finds Sophie's dog Meggy's spelling and punctuation faultless disproves this claim that only noble people can write. Therefore, for Poprishchin, the pen is a two-edged weapon, proportioning the height of the rich and powerful and keeping the lower classes where they should be.

Throughout the whole play, Poprishchin confronts us with an increasing mental instability. For him, rank or position is synonymous with dignity and value. Because their synonyms, dignity and value, are things that this poor, desolate middle class painfully lacks.

When he discovers he is Ferdinand, he suddenly begins reconciling the objective external world with the reality inside his head. For Poprishchin, this is a growing desire. At first, he does not want to be King Ferdinand intensively, but suddenly, he appears as King Ferdinand. Thus, his maid Mavra's escaping from home creates a terrible astonishment in him. Poprishchin's hospitalisation in a mental hospital and the speed of his arrival in Spain are analysed at the same time and within the same narrative. Thus, in every situation, Popryshchin begins to verify

the fantasies he invented in his head with the absolute reality he possesses. But this situation may only sometimes be as favourable as Poprishchin thinks.

At the first moment, when he fails to camouflage the ugliness of his absolute reality (all the negative things that happen to Poprishchin after he claims to be the King), he sees the punishment of being caned by the Prime Minister as deception. He responds negatively: "*But I restrained myself, remembering that this was a usual ceremony of old-time chivalry when one was inducted into a high position*" (Gogol, 1960, p. 28).

Poprishchin's scene with the dogs is simultaneously a scene of self-loathing and self-realisation. Therefore, when he enters the reality which he read in the letters of dogs, he sometimes leads a dog's life by proxy. In this world dogs are able to talk, write, observe people around them and criticize them with gossip. Considering all these similarities, Poprishchin's perception of himself as both a madman and a servant can be defined as a masochistic perception from a psychological point of view. He is mad because he invented the letters of the dogs. He is a servant because he is not worth as much as those dogs whose letters Poprishchin reads. Because even those dogs whose letters he reads are above Poprishchin regarding their social class. Walking in front of an apartment polluted by dogs is a part of Poprishchin's non-noble environment. While Gogol's hero realises his class oppression on the one hand, on the other hand, he arrogantly and aggressively argues that he is the opposite. Poprishchin's jealousy throughout the play, his looking down on those lower than himself, and his humiliating self-awareness are not signs of madness. On the other hand, for a person wholly infected with an inferiority complex, it is just as difficult to cope with madness. If he cannot eliminate all these class differences that society has within itself, it is only logical that he manifests himself as insane.

The sufferer can interiorise the high status he covets by inflating his self-image until it bursts the seams of reality and assumes the form of megalomania. That is madness, which is what happens to Poprishchin. Or, to describe the same progression in different terms: the relatively modest self-deception, which had earlier manifested itself in the illusion that he writes like an authentic "gentleman," now swells into the full-blown delusion that he is King of Spain (Gregg, 1999, p. 443).

Another way of putting it is that a modest state of self-deception could lead Poprishchin to the delusion that he was the king of Spain. The fact that Poprishchin previously thought that he was a simple penman is due to the emptiness of the brain in its most natural state, or, as

Poprishchin would say that the inside of the head is a brainless cavity. For this reason, he argues that the brain comes from a wind blowing from the Caspian Sea.

"People think that the human brain is in the head. That's not so; it is carried by the wind from the Caspian Sea" (Gogol, 1960, p. 22).

He orientates his brain according to the position he wants to reach. Thus, his brain realises the high position he does not hold. Poprishchin, who realises his high position in his kingdom, first steps on the daughter of the manager he is in love with, but he fails to achieve his goal and thereupon declares war on women, saying that women are in love with the devil. Then, he expands his hypothesis further and creates a larger world that includes men. The constant reality in the world he creates are the patriots who deceive everyone, hold positions, and are ambitious and mercenary. Because they exist both in real life and in the world Poprishchin has created. Poprishchin suffers from delirium at this very point, where he cannot compare imagination and reality. He reaches an irreversible point on that thin line between madness and normality and thus takes a step towards madness. This situation that Poprishchin falls into is the most prominent characteristic of megalomania delirium that goes towards worsening.

"When he says: *"Let us save the moon because the earth is going to sit on it"*, the world is a severe rapist, and the gentle and fragile moon is a victim, just like his own situation. That's why we need to save this poor satellite in danger. The moon represents innocence, purity, celestial beauty and unattainable ideas. Because of these characteristics, it greatly contrasts the imperfect Earth. Therefore, for an understandable reason, Poprishchin identifies himself with this ideal sphere, the Moon, as he is madly eager to escape from all the humiliations of the world.

When we come to the last part of the play, Poprishchin, devoid of hatred for those of lower social status than himself, stands before us in a miserable state and is extremely eager to escape from the situation he has reached in his ruined state. At this point, we do not hear any fabrication, ambition, etc., but the last sentence is when Poprishchin suddenly goes completely into irreversible madness. Although it makes us think that the play returns to that point of normality where it starts like a vicious circle, there is no characteristic difference between the point where Poprishchin starts the play and the point where he ends it. In this performance, the character starts in the madhouse and finishes there. From the first sentence until the last one, we contact the audience from the madness point of him. The audience saw his different emotional levels and his story, and at the end of the performance, he turned back his childish point of madness. But the character's process stands before our eyes with all its reality. And

this reality shows us with all its reality what kind of madness the character has reached. *"And did you know that the Bey of Algeria has a wart under his nose?"* (Gogol, 1960, p. 32).

This sentence is proof of the existence of the Algerian gentleman, who is flawed like Poprishchin himself. The Algerian gentleman is a nobleman; according to him, he should be flawless, but that massive mole under his nose, according to Poprishchin, makes him defective. Even if this sentence seems absurd in the play, what kind of logic does this character have, and what kind does Poprishchin have? This is the most striking sentence that shows us his peak of madness. This question is the same. It is also a typical example of Gogol's absurdist style, which he often used in his satire element.

1.5.1. Mental disorders in Poprishchin

In this section, the psychological disorders that Poprishchin had and their scientific definitions will be analysed.

This research aimed to conduct a psychological study of the main character in Nikolai Gogol's "Diary of a Madman". This short story depicts a simple clerk who gradually disconnects from reality and replaces it with his fantasies, exhibiting symptoms of schizophrenia such as delusions, hallucinations, disorganised speech, and disorganised behaviour. The madman displays symptoms of schizophrenia, including delusions, hallucinations, disorganised speech, and disorganised behaviour. He holds beliefs that are not true in reality (delusions) and perceives things that others cannot (hallucinations). His speech loses lucidity and becomes difficult to understand (disorganised speech), and his behaviour becomes abnormal (disorganised behaviour).

According to Sigmund Freud's theories, the madman's detachment from reality is attributed to his unconscious overpowering his ego, which operates under the reality principle. The narcissistic aspects of the schizophrenic madman were also discussed. Additionally, his disordered speech was analysed, as Freud believed that although schizophrenic speech may seem strange or meaningless, it holds significance and can be understood through psychoanalysis. In Jacques Lacan's Orders, it was noted that the madman is unable to enter the Symbolic Order, which is the reason for his psychosis. He exists in the Imaginary Order, unable to tolerate reality, and as a reaction, he creates an imaginary world in which he constructs false

images of himself.

The illusory world of the madman was a consequence of his psychosis (schizophrenia), which initially stemmed from his inability to cope with the real world. According to Freud and Lacan, dealing with reality and its laws is fundamental to becoming normal and civilised (Moosavinia, Bavarsad, 1999).

1.5.2. Layers of Poprishchin's Character

This chapter will separate these layers in Aksentiv Ivanov's character. In light of Richard F. Gustafson's scientific article in *The Slavic and East European Journal*, we will analyse the character's process and its logical and non-logical strings individually.

1.5.2.1. I'm a Nobleman

First, this story is more complex than a poor and insignificant civil servant driven mad by the humiliation and repression of a powerful bureaucracy's rigid hierarchy. Poprishchin keeps a diary to justify himself and take his revenge on this world. In his article, Gustafson explains Poprishchin's situation by considering its interaction with the story and comparing it with Gogol's other works:

"Popriscin dominates the story as no other Gogolian hero does. The whole meaning of the diary is intimately connected with the personality of its author. The "Diary of a Madman" is psychological, rather than social or moral, in focus, almost unique in Gogol's work" (Gustafson, 1965, p. 268).

Therefore, to understand the mind of this madman, we have to comprehend the story with the words produced by this mind. The story is analysed in two parts. Before and after, the madman declares himself King Ferdinand VIII. During this period, however, there were very few changes in the personality of this mad official. What changes is the projection between the surreal world he has constructed in his mind and the pure reality in which he lives? Let us now analyse this surreal world created by Poprishchin from the point of view of Gustafson's description of Poprishchin:

Popriscin is angry. The world, he thinks, has done him wrong. All are against him, existing only to insult and injure him. He sees himself as a victim, suffering from the torments of an

inhuman world. The chief of his section at the office does nothing but harass him; the cashier will not give him an advance on his salary out of sheer stinginess; even the lackeys treat him with disdain. The madman sees a menace in everyone, of high or low rank. And to all, he responds with anger(Gustafson, 1965, p. 268).

Throughout the play, our character's state often takes the form of an aggressive attack. Poprishchin is stuck in a vicious circle of paranoia. According to him, others are the cause of his delirium; therefore, there is a threat even where there is no threat.

For this reason, he wishes to be in a more critical and unique position than the headmaster to gain some authority. But the only thing he can do now is to fantasise. And the most important of these fantasies is his fantasy of the 'newspaper world'. Especially in the first part of the story, the references and comments made by our character are connected with the great kings and governments of Europe. He reads the news in the newspaper and reflects on his own life and the historical events of the day. In this scene, Poprishchin sows the seeds of the reality he wants to reach with the absolute reality he has. After reading about the empty throne of Spain in the newspaper, the way to reach the position he wants shortly flashes like lightning in his head, and after this scene, he transforms himself into the king of Spain. Thus, while solving political problems in the newspaper, he also solves his problems at some point. Gustafson explains this dual structure established by Poprishchin, that is, the world of pure reality and surrealism, as follows:

The political and erotic fantasies are both compensatory. Humiliated by the drab realities of his everyday existence, the clerk attempts to correct them by associating himself with a dignified world and, when that fails, by proving himself sexually, if only in fantasy. Throughout the story, the madman tends to alternate between these two fantasy worlds, assiduously avoiding reality (Gustafson, 1965, p. 270).

The reality in which Poprishchin lives is always there and never changes. But it insidiously transforms into the artificial world that Poprishchin creates in his head. The most important example of this is the letters of the dogs, which the madman copies into his diary and begins to read from there. The officer realizes that his manager, whom he always looked up to and addressed as His Excellency, is, in fact, no different from the other vile creatures of God. The manager is also ambitious. At this point, the authority figure idealized by Poprishchin collapses. For this reason, the virtuous, moral world he had built for people with high positions suddenly disappears in his eyes. For Poprishchin, the greatest sin is ambition; in this case, the principal's

Ambition stains his idol's image, and so Popryshchin compares the director's ambition to his own. Poprishchin is as ambitious as the General Manager, and in the second part of the story, his ambition costs him and the whole world.

So when he destroys the letters, he destroys part of his sanity. After the letters, Poprishchin begins to feel humiliated.

"All that's best in this world goes to noblemen or generals." (Gogol, 1960, p. 17).

Poprishchin was ignored by this hierarchical class world that excluded him. Because he lost Sofi to the palace officer. Of course, the things that Poprishchin can give to Sofi are limited; therefore, his opposition to this situation is the same as the cat calling the liver it can't reach dirty. After this point, our character is at the beginning of irreversible destruction. Afterwards, he forgets himself in the world he has created.

He no longer wants to be a general to win Sofi; revenge is his main goal. He wants to use his power skillfully on the people he thinks oppressed him, so he must be able to use it powerfully.

Poprishchin's interest in Sofi is not related to love for this reason. Poprishchin has been oppressed and humiliated throughout his life because of his position and class. The dogma that the system imposes on petty bourgeois like Poprishchin is that you should always work harder, earn more, and rise. Still, at the same time, you should have virtues like a moral and exemplary individual, which turns into a mountainous problem in the character's mind that he cannot overcome because, in reality, the concepts idealized by society do not coincide with his experiences. This situation causes the individual, whose mental health has already begun to deteriorate, to go mad and reach the inevitable end. Poprishchin is a victim of such a society and system. He is a victim because he is stuck between the dogmas imposed by his society and the idealised concepts of morality. He constantly wants to change himself, his position and class, but the system's structure does not allow this. Therefore, he cannot save himself from being crushed in the wheels of a rigid hierarchy whose borders are drawn with invisible lines. He is the victim because when he reaches the position he desires, he will not hesitate to use his power to crush those he considers inferior to him, just as he was crushed.

Poprishchin's desire for Sofi comes from the humiliation he experiences because of his position, which leads to his desire to prove himself to others. Sofi is his last chance to

prove himself as a man. But now he begins to lose the thin line between reality and his imaginary world. Poprishchin has lost the distinction between reality and imagination; he can no longer distinguish who he is. All the scenes after this point are based on Poprishchin's metamorphosis. When he hears that the throne of Spain is empty, his interest in Sofi and his sexual feelings are replaced by political ones. He spends a few days lying in bed, thinking about the Spanish problem.

Poprishchin's momentary neuroses and tantrums at the beginning of the play are the preliminary symptoms of the state of madness that our character will reach at the end. The character is already in a mental collapse due to his social class and what he experiences around him. The main issue is when this breakdown will become delirium in the play. At the end of the play, Poprishchin cannot return from the delirium he has reached, but the truth nudges him again in the last sentence of the play.

"And did you know that the Bey of Algeria has a wart under his nose?" (Gogol, 1960, p. 32).

The fact that he says this sentence typically after those tantrums and neuroses for a moment brings about the alienation of the situation in the audience. Because facts are things that are alienated as they are repeated, alienation is a situation that everyone can always encounter. For this reason, it is also effective.

1.5.2.2. That King Am I

Although he hides his identity when he first learns that he is the King (because he has no King's costume to wear), his first task is to complete the miracle of metamorphosis in a suitable disguise as the King of Spain. "Poprishchin, like other Gogol heroes, believes that clothing makes a man" (Gustafson, 1965, p. 272). He is now the king of Spain because he dresses like him. This situation of Poprishchin shows the comedy of delirious wishes. Therefore, in the play's second part, Poprishchin is confronted with many discoveries that madness offers him. The second part, thus, opens in a new light. This light must also be the light of the hospital for the insane. Although the location is the same, this slight alienation with light is used to tell the audience the difference between the normal situation at the beginning of the play and the abnormal situation that has been reached. His first discovery is his new identity. The once humiliated and oppressed pencil clerk is now the king of Spain; a whole new world has opened up to him; previously, he believed that he was living in a fog, but now everything has become

apparent.

Poprishchin no longer blames Sofi because now that he is the king, he knows the cause of everything. And according to him, the cause of all this is money, a commodity. Women are in love with the devil in their pockets. The devil is playing a game with money, colouring the eyes of women, and the problem of all these money men is to have money and position. Because money buys everything, Poprishchin, realising this as a king, now knows very well that money is the cause of everything, so he is realistic and sincere in his feelings here. Thus, the play evolves towards the next stage. This second stage means Poprishchin's complete detachment from reality. The distorted, dated titles emphasise the loss of his relationship with the concept of time. This discovery also underlines the loss of the relationship with space. The asylum is Spain; of course, Poprishchin never tells us he is in an asylum; we interpret his journey to Spain as a figment of his imagination, a travelling fantasy. But we know that Poprishchin's life, which he describes in the royal palace, is spent in a hospital for the insane.

When the carer calls him Ferdinand VIII, he doesn't answer. Because he is no longer king, according to Poprishchin, a king never submits to the prime minister, and the king can never be at fault. But the Prime Minister's treatment of Poprishchin drives the officer, who is completely insane, to madness. Because now the image of the perfect king in Poprishchin's imagination has been damaged. According to Poprishchin, there is no point in living in this world anymore. Ultimately, his pleas and shouts are directed at a single woman, his mother, who will never judge him. Because our hero realises that he has nowhere to go, in other words, the emotional state he comes to at the end is the result of that vicious circle in which our character is, and this vicious circle will never be broken. And so, in this madhouse, forever, the character will repeat himself and constantly return to the point where he started. Perhaps our protagonist repeats this story to himself as a ritual or a rite of passage in this asylum. And maybe we, the audience, are the lucky ones who have watched this ritual of his from beginning to end.

1.5.2.3. You Are A Zero

There are two Poprishchins in the play.

"There are two Poprishchins, the suffering clerk frustrated and humiliated by man's inhumanity to man, symbolised for him by the system of ranks, and the pretender who usurps a fantasy throne to make his dreams of power and glory come true. Poprishchin originates in traditional literary types: the insulted and injured clerk, the farcical braggart, and the pretender" (Gustafson, 1965, p. 279).

Using all this, Gogol has created his hero. Poprishchin, who has a monsterized, depersonalized, pathetic existence, is content with his life until he realizes his dreams. In this dream lies the desire to always be a person of high status. The pressure of life on him and his habitual routine are interrupted by his desire to prove himself. Poprishchin wants to find his place and establish his true identity. However, he is not aware of the ranking of humanity, which is symbolized only by social classes and positions. He lives within this system, but his attitudes and reactions do not correspond to the actual situation, the system. He is stuck in his self-centred world and is searching for his identity in a place that does not exist in reality so he cannot go against society's known morality and ethics. The endeavour to establish his identity is present from the beginning of the play, which is why the first sign of this madman's failure and ineptitude occurs sexually. The diary ends with destroying the protagonist's concept of concrete reality. Although the notion of time is gradually restored at the end of the play, Poprishchin drifts into a void, and there is nothing but nothingness.

2. INTERPRETATION METHOD AND STAGE PRACTICE

This section will first discuss the Role Study and Interpretation Method process. We will analyse my priorities while creating Aksentiv Ivanov Poprishchin's character. Under this title, I have included the director's comments on the play and my comments on Poprishchin, the character I have performed.

2.1. The Role Study and Interpretation Method

The text transcends the boundaries of the period in which it was written, references the present day in terms of the subject it deals with, and society and the system from a universal point of view. For this reason, the subject of the text is so clear that while putting the text on stage, we first started to interpret the text through the idea that the text defends. The text tells the story of a civil servant who is at the bottom of the hierarchical steps of the system and is excluded by the system. The inferiority complex that comes from the exclusion of this excluded person turns into anxiety over time, and eventually, the character disappears into an irreversible delirium. The play is written chronologically in the form of a diary, and as the character's madness increases, the breaks in time and space become visible. In this respect, the point where

we look at the play is where the character reaches madness. Rather than the chronological progression of the story, after the story is completed, the character's recollection of these memories from the point of madness and the repetition of these memories in his inner world is carried to the stage. In this context, the main starting point of our play and stage fiction has been the character's inner world.

While deciding on the style of the play and the methods to be followed, we discussed the structure, bipolarity and uncanny of madness. These analyses took us on a journey towards the Grotesque structure of madness. For this reason, before analyzing the preferred directorial and acting styles, I would like to touch upon the structure and factors of Grotesque.

2.2. Grotesque

The word grotesque has been used with different meanings and elements for centuries and has become an important artistic element. When we examine the birth and semantic development of the word grotesque, we see different definitional debates in every period. Strange, surprising, ugly, disgusting, disgusting, moving, multiform, multilingual, horrible, ridiculous, violating, excessive, foolish, mocking, burlesque, unnatural, distorted form, distorted figure, horrifying, carnivalized world, alienated... However, the theorists or artists who discussed the concept in almost no century could not agree on the content of the idea. For this reason, today, we cannot clearly define grotesque; we define it by giving examples from its semantic development process.

The grotesque, no matter in which genre of art it is used, needs the formation of a world of its own. This world in question is undoubtedly grotesque. The essential element for establishing the grotesque world is "alienation". Artists not only distort forms in grotesque works of art but also create a new world in which these distortions will be legal. But this new world is not a world created from scratch. It is a familiar but unrecognizable, uncanny, in other words, an "alienated world". Almost every element we encounter is fundamental. However, these elements are juxtaposed so that the whole is funny, strange, alienated and frightening. It resists the rules of logic. The force that unites all

These opposites are somehow felt but cannot be perceived ultimately. "Uncanny" (alm. unheimlich; ing. uncanny), a concept associated with the frightening aspect of the grotesque, was explained as "the source of fear" in Freud's 1919 article. Freud explains this concept as "the return of the repressed" and, at the same time, finds in the return of the "repressed" an unfamiliar, amorphous, alienated uncertainty that now creates fear and anxiety (Freud, 1997).

There are some essential elements for the establishment of the grotesque world. Let us try to analyse these elements under general headings:

2.2.1. Duality / Opposition

The most basic opposites in the grotesque universe are the ridiculous and the frightening. In other words, one of the essential elements that can be expressed for the grotesque world is that it is between the absurd and the terrifying. On the one hand, the familiar and the uncanny; on the other hand, the funny and the fearful are intertwined. The grotesque offers a meaningful integrated world in this complexity. Within this complexity, uneasy and disturbing aspects may emerge. Theorists working on the grotesque have reached a consensus that reducing the grotesque to a single aspect and trying to make sense of it is the greatest betrayal of the grotesque.

Another important double-edged element for the grotesque is the familiar and the uncanny. The "unheimlich" defined by Freud comes to life right here. What was once familiar becomes uncanny after its amorphous transformation. It is no longer familiar. It reminds itself from somewhere but without sharpness. Therefore, the spectator or the receiver has difficulty naming what they see.

Mikhail Bakhtin finds the tension created by the duality of the grotesque creative. **When** he considers his concept about the carnival, he thinks about the conflict between opposites, such as joy and fear, familiar and foreign, and life and death. He states that this conflict can lead to a creative process and create change. The carnival will bring **all** established values down to earth, first humiliated and then defeated. Bakhtin emphasises the laughing side of the grotesque, claiming that horror or fear is transformed into the ridiculous and amusing.

2.2.2. Multilingualism / Plural Language

The grotesque, which does not correspond to a single meaning, also points to unlimited change and transgression in language. Whatever its codes are in different eras, they always and everywhere have a strong literary and artistic meaning in showing the "other" side of reality. According to Yuri Lotman, the "boundary condition" is when the ambiguity and vagueness of a language is particularly emphasised in preparation for an "explosion" followed by a "leap" into a radically different system (Talvet, 1997). According to Bakhtin, the carnival also points to a state of being on the border. The language of carnival occupies an important place in the formation of grotesque language. According to Bakhtin, the carnival is the place and time where the masks of social languages are unmasked through the collision of multiple contexts in a single speech act and where dialogue occurs (Bakhtin, 2001: 237).

In literature, grotesque language emerges when the words of another field are transferred and used in a new field. Therefore, grotesque language is multilingual. The language, which has been removed from its context, constantly tries to disrupt the structure that is trying to be established with it. A language that has been detached from its context in this way thus leads to an uncanny ground and space. This is precisely what the grotesque does to language. It takes the audience, the text and the staging out of their context and puts them in the middle of an uncanny "life". Just like in minor literature, the concept of the grotesque takes images and signs out of their contexts and transfers them to its audience in an out-of-place manner.

The grotesque finds its unique vocabulary. It captures a ridiculous sound gesture independent of meaning. The chosen words are juxtaposed not semantically but sonically.

Meaningless words can be juxtaposed only to create a certain harmony. Pronunciation and acoustics come to the fore. In short, grotesque language is a hybridized language that emerges when there is no absolute reality and boundaries are crossed. It creates ambiguous, multi-associative and powerful images.

2.2.3. Violation / Inversion

One of the most prominent features of the grotesque is that it turns almost everything that is assumed to be established on its head upside down, disrupting the standards of reason. It disrupts the classical perception of organised reality, the accepted representation standards

and moral codes. Moreover, it opposes rationalism and any systematic use of thought. In their place, it relies on, in Bakhtin's words, "an internal logic", opposing the real domains of consensual logic, such as the principles of disagreement, identity and non-contradiction (Bakhtin 1984: 98). It has within itself a "logical structure" that constantly uses binary oppositions and violations to reveal the inadequacy of the conventional. The grotesque's ambiguous structure will violate the limits of almost every traditional and established conception.

The most blatant violation of the grotesque is the form, the order. The grotesque first attacks the form that almost every substance has. Every form resists innovation. Because every form considers itself complete and perfect. However, content develops differently from form. It is open to constant change and transformation. The content constantly transforms and tries to create new forms for itself. In this context, the grotesque shows the disintegration of form or the moment of transformation. There is a state of transition or metamorphosis. It is a multi-formed state. Therefore, it is formless.

2.2.4. Play/Childishness

One of the vital elements of the grotesque is the element of play. In the constructed world, the game's rules apply; each situation sets its own rules. The rules borrowed from the outside world are organised in a new context, the context of the work, with its own "game" laws. The grotesque is not only "play with terror", as defined by John Ruskin, or "play with the absurd", as insisted by W. Kayser, but also "play with the real uncertainty of existence" (Henning, 1981). Michael Steig, who studies the grotesque, states that the grotesque is "an imaginative play with the forbidden or the inexpressible" and that "what is forbidden cannot be expressed" (Steig, 1970). Whether it is the artist's play with reality, with the incongruous, with terror or with the unknown of existence, or whether it causes perceptual games in the mind of the viewer/reader, in both cases, play is an indispensable element of the grotesque.

2.3. The Role Study

The grotesque and absurd structure of madness was the main point in determining our play style and direction. The complexity and bipolarity of the schizophrenic individual's mind and

the "uncanny" that comes with it shaped our stage design and action plans.

To transform the emotional complexities and delusions of the person at the point of madness into stage materials and to make the audience feel this complexity, we avoided a realistic style in both stage design and acting style. We preferred a set design that reflects the inside of the character's head, where different materials will turn into various objects and where the perception of time and reality breaks can be underlined.

On the stage, there are three platforms, three metres long and one metre wide, suspended from the ceiling to the floor. These platforms consist of vertically positioned strip elastic fabrics that the actor can pass through and hide various limbs. They were used for space changes and projection screens.

Based on the character's pleasure in writing, reading and chipping his manager's pens and the fact that he spent most of his time doing this, we thought that littering the stage floor with pencil rubbish and pieces of newspaper would bring the audience closer to the confusion in the character's mind.

After the dramaturgy and character analysis of the play were completed and the style was decided, the role-creation process began. As the first step in role creation, I started by determining the main actions of the role. Thus, I revealed the character's emotions through the actions on the stage. The actions we perform on stage are concrete and accessible. However, emotions are abstract and difficult to control. For this reason, working on actions that will call the feelings and create a path for them, rather than preventing them, allowed the character's emotions to occur more naturally and spontaneously. While working with this technique, I analysed the questions recommended to be asked to the character in Melissa Bruder's book "A Practical Handbook For The Actor":

1. *What is the character doing? The key to answering this question is to be as literal as possible; do not interpret or embellish what is happening on the printed page. A character may say and do many things in a scene, some of them seemingly contradictory. Your task is to find out the one specific thing he is doing that encompasses every line. Phrase what the character is doing in a single, precise sentence, and do not omit any lines, no matter how incongruous a particular line or section might seem.*
2. *. What is the essential action of what the character is doing in this scene? Once you know what the character is literally doing, the next step is choosing the essential action, or essence, of what the character is doing in the scene.*
3. *What does this action mean to me? It's as if ... The third step in the process of scene analysis involves the*

use of the actor's imagination. As you will see, the "as-if" serves several crucial purposes and is the logical completion of the analysis process. It helps the actor gain a fuller understanding of the action he has chosen for a given scene. It also gives the actor a clear sense of the consequences of not completing his action- that is to say, it sets the stakes in the scene's playing. This is especially important in terms of staying true to the playwright's intentions. Finally, the as-if reinforces the actor's sense of play, which is vital to his work. The way to achieve the above-mentioned benefits is not by investing in an emotional state but by creating a tangible, personal stake in the action you have chosen. The means of bringing the action home to you is the as-if. It is a simple mnemonic device, a suggestion by means of which you remind yourself of what the action means to you in personal terms. It should be a simple, fun (and again, we do mean compelling) fantasy in which you use your imagination in a way you can readily accept. For example, creating an as-if in which you are infiltrating the Nazi forces that have abducted your family may be an interesting fantasy, but unless you have experience as an international spy, the as-if will not work because you have no idea what to actually physically do in that situation. In other words, it's not something you can act on (Bruder, 1989:pp23-28).

After determining our main actions, we improvised on the actions before working with the lines. Our improvisations started as neutralization trainings independent of any form and status. We first improvised on neutralisation, then on seeking and making sense. Our search and interpretation work in the centre of mental and physical distancing from social norms and "rebirth" led me to find creative metamorphoses in space, my body and the objects around me. The first bricks of the construction of the character were laid after the common and usable aspects of the idiosyncrasies of madness, the exclusion of social norms and the differences in the perception of reality were determined by the discoveries we made.

After the character's search, we used the method of animal personification to portray the character's transition to madness in the 13th of November scene. With this method, as a neutral actor independent of the character, we improvised step by step, evolving into a dog. In the ritualistic and performative work, after a certain search step was completed, the evolution of the neutral actor into a dog and the main actions of our character were combined with the director's directives. Then, the character's behaviour and lines were added to the discovered motion, and the transformation of the character was completed.

"Uncanny", the obvious and common point of grotesque madness, had an important place in character behaviour. We tried to evoke the feeling of uncanny in the audience with sudden spiritual changes and fluctuations in the rhythm of the play. The tragicomic aspect of the play text also helped us at this point. The character's natural and sincere behaviours were transformed into frightening attitudes at unexpected moments. For this reason, even

in funny and sympathetic places, a "strange" image was presented to the audience with irritating behaviours that the audience could not put themselves in the place of the actor.

CONCLUSION

The play tells the story of an individual stuck in a rigid hierarchical order with no room for movement, who wants to rise and progress but has no opportunity to do so, and how he is destroyed in the order he is in. In this performance, we worked on the story of a character who completely severed his ties with reality on his way to madness step by step and rebelled against the system in which he lived by positioning himself at the top in his self created world. In this case, the character's back and forth in two different realities and universes, the vicious circle and imbalance brought about by this, opened the doors of the absurd and grotesque to us.

When we analysed the structure of the grotesque, we associated the elements of uncanny, bipolarity, multiple languages, violence, and playfulness with our character's madness. These contexts determined our stage design, acting methods and styles, and the character's relations with the audience.

We examined our character's sociological situation and physiological characteristics in character analysis. We tried to diagnose the character's madness with scientific approaches and methods.

After obtaining all ~~the~~ data, we embarked on character creation and acting methods. At this stage, as actors, we made ritualistic discoveries, body uniforms, and existence in space to approach madness and move away from social norms. As we moved away from cultural codes and social norms, the attitudes we could add to the character began to emerge. We completed the role creation by adding the attitudes we obtained from our improvisation work to the character and combining them with the character's action schedule.

We invite our audience into this universe we have created, into Poprishchin's brain. A complex, uncanny, unknowable universe where he can sometimes touch the audience but still hides the dark points of his mind.

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