

REVIEW „THE OPPOSITE OF THINGS“ by Anja Radaljac in *Delo*, 1. April 2019
(translation from Slovene in to English)

The Opposite of things is a fascist piece, conceived from the point of view of a fascist who asks questions, such as how does a fascist feel, and what does an avant-garde fascist do. The key difference thus already emerges in the address; if the cause for the (too) frequent powerlessness of political theatre is in “convincing the convinced”, *The Opposite* establishes itself through challenging cognitive (and emotional) inertia, which the left uses to deal with the contemporary fascistoid politics. The text of the performance, in its final incarnation formulated together with the team, centres around five monologues, interrupted by short group (music) scenes with a “connective” function: through the group activity, individuals are connected into a group. This usage effectively contextualises popular music, which has historically also had this function. On the level of contents in the group scenes, we see the confirmation, solidification and radicalisation of the common convictions of individuals (fascists). In these scenes, lines like, “Yes, this compulsory equality, it really makes no sense,” “Let women be women,” “Anal is for assholes,” “It is about the children,” “Yes, all those unemployed are just plain lazy. Yuck,” appear. These could be the spots of ironisation, caricature and overreacting, but in a society which bases itself in precisely such discourse, humour somehow eschews them - they are turning into the building blocks of a weird (over)blown phantasmatic reality in which we learn to accept the increasingly more significant deviations into the absurd and the morbid; the alt-right appropriation of nihilism opens a free path to possibility as a vehicle of change. The awareness of the connective function also provides a ritual function to the group scenes - it’s not about the content, it’s about belonging. Through the monologues, acted with a refined sense for movement between the “actual” and the “fictional”, the performance, through the insights into intimate worlds of “some fascists”, researches the triggers for the emergence of neofascism, and it surpasses the horizons of expectations; in Blaž Šef’s monologue it deals with the question of possibility as the key point of recognition that the set order of things is not the only possible one, and also with the question of the loss of overview, and uncontrollability as the possibilities multiply. How far is it thus from here to the recognition that the alternative [...] is only possible if something explodes? Primož Bezjak’s monologue researches the relationship between the general anger (“the whole world has transformed into one huge supermarket of anger”) and the (un)acceptance of vulnerability: what does facing one’s own vulnerability mean, if not facing mortality, what does it mean to conquer fear, if not being ready “to die together”? Ivan Peternelj’s monologue cuts in to these two monologues in the area between the satire and tragedy: “Comedy is a simulation of fear.” If satirical moments are a matter of reality, they can become terrifying - comedy requires comic relief, while the reality constructing itself as a

satire anticipates none. But it does anticipate a crisis, a zone of “nothingness” where there are no rules and no laws, as Stane Tomazin’s monologue implies. The goal becomes to climb out of this nothingness regardless of victims; the enemy, onto whom we shift responsibility must be “excluded from the system” - killed, eaten, shat out. In the second part of the performance, the final monologue joins the constellation of these four; touchingly interpreted by Janja Majzelj it reaches the deepest into the intimacy of the individual/fascist: it addresses the feelings of being silenced, powerless and afraid and at the same time realises that “And that, my friends, is depression, this state of utter inefficiency. And that is not something CLINICAL! It is something POLITICAL!” and: “But perhaps the undercomplexity of fascism, with its destructive, gut-driven emotionality, remains the only strategy against the ruthless, cold rationality of global capitalism that we still have left.” *The Opposite* in its monologues incessantly moves through the zones of emotions and distress, released from the political choice which we recognise in different existential experiences, the performance individualises the “enemy” (fascist), which enables empathy with neofascists, and thus with wonderful preciseness sheds a light on two things: that the left perhaps doesn’t solve problems because it detects them wrongly, and just like the alt-right homogenises and dehumanises the adversary, and at the same time shows that we don’t need “brutal emotions” but rather supportive (rational) empathy and compassion, the ability to listen; otherwise the polarisation of groups increases, and at the same time, the “explosion” becomes an increasingly more serious threat. Here now a distinction must obviously occur; the anger must not deteriorate into hate and killing, marching into death “protects” no one (and solves nothing), but - and this is the key moment of the warning to the left - first we have to have an interest in the protection and solution of the conflict and not in the “elimination of the enemy” from the system. Along with the enthralling conceptual realisation and acting, the performance has an exceptional dramatic arch, which brings the audience from a relaxed fun to the reflection of their own political position and a powerful emotional experience. A performance that would require a research approach; it’s not possible to analyse everything that it includes in a short review. An exceptionally thoughtful and refined, simply brilliant work of art.

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