

# Juliusz Osterwa's Manuscripts: Problems of Heritage

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The article discusses problems related to the handwritten legacy of Juliusz Osterwa (1885–1947), the founder of the Reduta theatre. This legacy poses several challenges for researchers, including ethical ones. Firstly, on his deathbed Osterwa requested that his notes be burned (a wish the family did not fulfil). Secondly, the legacy is dispersed, partly lost, or still hidden as a result of the wartime events of 1939–1945. Thirdly, the diversity of the material makes it difficult to distinguish coherent thematic units suitable for scholarly editing and publication, and, finally, Osterwa's handwriting itself poses a considerable challenge to decipherment. Nevertheless, the legacy of documenting Osterwa's theatrical ideas, personal life, and the broader contexts of his artistic activity is of such importance and value that since the 1970s scholars (Józef Szczublewski, Zbigniew Osiński, Ireneusz Guszpit, Dariusz Kosiński, Andrzej Kruczyński, and the present author among them) have undertaken the study and publication of selected parts of the archive. Initiated in 2019 by the Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute, the publishing series 'Reducie na stulecie' [For Reduta's Centennial] aims to disseminate and popularize the heritage of the Reduta, including the publication of source materials. The recently published fourth volume of the series – Juliusz Osterwa's *Dziennik 1934–1935* [Diary], whose original has unfortunately not survived – serves here as a case study.

KEYWORDS: archive, manuscript, diary, Reduta, Juliusz Osterwa, legacy

## 14,000 pages

Juliusz Osterwa (1885–1947) – an actor, director, theatre manager, and the founder of the Reduta theatre<sup>1</sup> – kept written records throughout his entire artistic life. He noted his theatrical ideas and maintained diaries (he also wrote letters, some of which have survived; however, Osterwa's correspondence is not the subject of this article). A large portion of this legacy survived the Second World War; it is now held in public institutions and is accessible to researchers. Nevertheless, Osterwa's archive still conceals a myriad of mysteries and secrets, as a considerable part of it was lost during wartime. When Osterwa's apartment and the Reduta premises in Warsaw were bombed in September 1939, the hidden collections were burned or further dispersed during the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. Part of the archive was

<sup>1</sup> Reduta was the first Polish theatre laboratory developing a modern model of ensemble work, innovative acting techniques, and conducting pedagogical and social activities. Its twenty-year activity can be divided into three periods: Warsaw (1919–1924), Vilnius (1925–1929), and the second Warsaw (1931–1939). It simultaneously housed a drama school (the Reduta Institute), a school theatre (for children and youth), a radio studio, and operated touring activities, literary matinees, lectures, an archive and a library.

transported to Kraków, where Osterwa spent the occupation together with his family. As an unemployed artist (he refused to perform in theatres officially sanctioned by Nazis), he devoted himself to writing. The largest portion of the surviving legacy dates precisely from the period of the occupation.

In 1997, on the fiftieth anniversary of Osterwa's death, his daughter Maria Osterwa-Czekaj donated a substantial part of her father's domestic archive to the Theatre Museum in Warsaw. It consists mainly of notebooks written during the war (covering the years 1938–1947). The collection comprises 134 inventory units: notebooks of varying thickness (mostly A5 size), diaries, memo pads, envelopes, and folders containing loose notes (Fig. 1). Ireneusz Guszpit, a researcher and editor of Osterwa's writings, estimates the collection at approximately 14,000 pages of manuscripts. Guszpit divided the surviving notebooks into two categories by their content and method of notation: diaries and notebooks [*raptularze*].<sup>2</sup> In the systematically kept diaries, Osterwa wrote his entries daily. He recorded



**Fig. 1.** Juliusz Osterwa's home archive donated by his daughter to the Theatre Museum in 1997, photography Krzysztof Sabak (Osterwa 2020: 7)

(summer 1938) and *Powrót Przełęckiego* [The Return of Przełęcki] by Jerzy Zawieyski (summer 1939)<sup>3</sup> (Fig. 2).

ongoing events from both private and public life (meetings, journeys, friends' visits, impressions from books read, wartime communications, difficulties with supplies, information about the weather, and his own health and mood). The diaries kept in the Theatre Museum cover the period of the occupation and the immediate post-war years: from 31 August 1939 to 12 April 1947, one month before his death (Osterwa died on 10 May 1947). These also includes travel diaries: from a tourist cruise to Ceuta on the transatlantic liner *MS Piłsudski* in April 1939 and from two pre-war Reduta tours with performances of *Uciekła mi przepióreczka* [My Little Quail Has Fleed] by Stefan Żeromski

<sup>2</sup> Guszpit 1992: 9.

<sup>3</sup> Reduta touring activity lasted from 1924 till the outbreak of the Second World War. Every summer holidays (and sometimes autumn and winter) the company travelled with performances throughout Poland. The greatest tours were in 1926 and 1927 with an open-air performance of *The Constant Prince* by Calderon de la Barca. Osterwa considered touring a mandatory professional apprenticeship for Reduta Institute students.

Osterwa's notebooks are of a different character: they are notes devoted to specific issues, sometimes indicated by a title on the cover or title page. They rarely contain a date of composition and are arranged thematically rather than chronologically. In them, Osterwa addressed artistic matters (the post-war theatre reform, theatre education, planned theatrical associations such as Dal

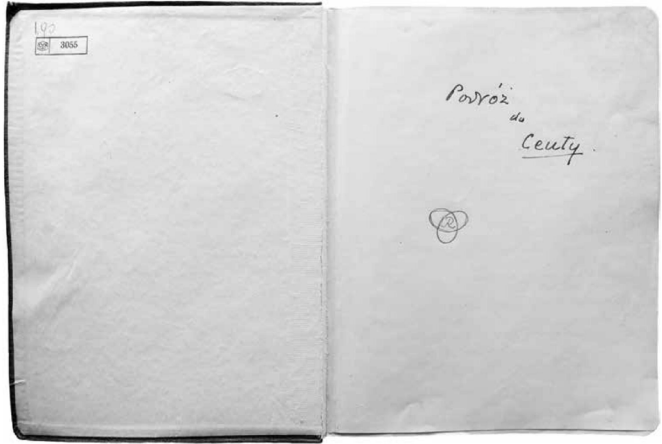


Fig. 2. Title page of the Ceuta Travel Journal, 1939 (Osterwa 2020: 30–31)

and Genezja, and even questions of theatre architecture), linguistic issues (dictionaries of neologisms, projects aimed at purifying the Polish language of foreign expressions, remarks on phonetics), religious reflections (prayers, notes on the Mass and liturgy, meditations on faith and God), and social questions (political systems, legislation, local government, education). In these notebooks Osterwa wrote his own paraphrases of such dramas as Sophocles' *Antigone*, William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and a mystery play about Tobias. He drafted repertory plans, made notes on plays and his reading, prepared adaptations, sketched stage and architectural designs, wrote drafts of letters, poems, aphorisms, and recorded memories of the pre-war reality. The diversity and breadth of the subjects that occupied Osterwa are striking and render researchers somewhat helpless. Guszpit described these notes as a '*silva rerum*, a forest of things, a veritable thicket of problems, themes, observations, and remarks [...] – a peculiar set of books preserving the author's states of consciousness.'<sup>4</sup> We are thus dealing with a highly diverse and extensive body of material – generic and thematic in its variety, sometimes unfinished or left in the form of loose notes.

In September 1939, Osterwa began writing an autobiographical novel *Powieść o Witusiu* [The Story of Wituś] in notebooks. It covers the years of his childhood and youth but ends at the beginning of his artistic career: the 1905/1906 season at the Municipal Theatre in Kraków and his activity in the Zielony Balonik [The Green Balloon] cabaret, when Osterwa was twenty years old. In December 1939, he discontinued these fictionalised memoirs (probably after a conflict with his wife, who had to cope with the difficult wartime reality on her own). The novel fills two notebooks of one hundred pages each. Further six pages from a third notebook,

<sup>4</sup> '*silva rerum*, las rzeczy, prawdziwy gąszcz problemów, tematów, spostrzeżeń i uwag [...] – to swoiste książki utrwalające stany świadomości autora' (Guszpit 1992: 10).

begun and never completed, were torn out. No continuation of the autobiography written in Osterwa's hand exists.

This passion for writing was undoubtedly shaped by the realities of the Second World War and forced inactivity. Osterwa made plans for the future, 'reformed' the future Polish theatre on paper, and summed up his life in the face of constant danger. There was undoubtedly an element of escapism: an escape from a cruel reality, the struggle for survival, reports from the front, and news of the deaths of his friends. Writing may also have served as a form of self-therapy: Osterwa examined his emotions, analysed himself and his psychological states, returned in his notes to his childhood years, and organised the past.

However, Osterwa had been keeping notes much earlier, from the very beginning of his artistic career. Evidence of their existence appears in his later notes (when he mentions consulting earlier notebooks, searching for information in them, verifying facts, and so forth). Only a small part of the pre-war notebooks has survived. Some of them were probably destroyed by Osterwa himself, or remain in private hands and still await discovery (the discovery of a copy of a diary from the 1930s is discussed in the final part of this article).



Fig. 3. The front cover of Osterwa's *Raptularz kijowski*, kept at the Theatre Museum

Among Osterwa's pre-war manuscript legacy preserved in the Theatre Museum is *Raptularz kijowski* [The Kiev Notebook], a large-format notebook (34.7 × 22.3 cm) containing notes from the period of the first Warsaw Reduta (written between 1919 and 1924), so named because Osterwa wrote in a notebook brought from Kiev where he had stayed during the First World War (Fig. 3). Another notebook from the period of exile in Russia is one of the oldest surviving manuscripts: *Zeszyt samarski* [The Samara Notebook], written in Samara in 1915–1916. It contains Osterwa's poems and melancholic poetic impressions composed abroad, written in a Russian notebook bearing the printed inscription *obschchaya tetrad'*, i.e., a common notebook (Fig. 4).

The recent discovery of a copy of the diary from 1934–1935 confirms that Osterwa kept notes throughout his life (at least since 1905, as suggested by his biographer Józef Szczublewski<sup>5</sup>)

5 Szczublewski 1973: 35.

and that his pre-war notebooks must exist somewhere. The key question is: where?

### Problems with Osterwa's Archive

The fundamental problem of the surviving legacy lies in the fact that, on his deathbed, Osterwa requested that his notes be burned. The recollection of his last will was recorded by his mother-in-law, Matylda Sapieżyna née Windisch-Graetz:

I arrived in Warsaw on 4 May [1947], already to a dying man. [...] We went straight to the clinic and they led me to him. He recognized me immediately and whispered three wishes: that he be buried in Kraków at Salwator Cemetery, 'where the Catholic poet [Karol Hubert] Rostworowski rests, the Catholic architect [Franciszek] Mączyński will rest, so there will also be a Catholic actor'; that everything he owned should go to Tilka [his wife, Matylda Osterwina]; and finally, that all his notes and writings be destroyed. At this last point I could not refrain from asking: would that not be a pity? But he replied: 'no, no.'<sup>6</sup>

Osterwa's wife and his daughter from his first marriage, Elżbieta, decided not to burn the notes. This decision may appear controversial and contrary to the wishes of the deceased. Matylda Sapieżyna Osterwina (1906–1983) was a journalist, a foreign correspondent of *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, and an assistant at the National Museum in Kraków. She assisted her husband in the work of the Reduta (for example, by participating in touring activities) and, during his lifetime, organised his archive by typing selected manuscripts, sorting and describing them. She understood the importance of the archive and sought counsel from several people regarding her difficult decision: politicians, artists, priests, and scholars. She also discussed the matter with her stepdaughter, who, like her father, was an actress and knew many artists from



Fig. 4. The front cover of Osterwa's 'Zeszyt samarski', kept at the Theatre Museum

<sup>6</sup> 'Przyjechałam do Warszawy 4 maja [1947], już do umierającego. [...] Zajęchałyśmy wprost do lecznicy i wprowadziły mnie do niego. Poznał mnie od razu i wyszeptał trzy życzenia: pochowanie go w Krakowie na Salwatorze, "gdzie spoczywają poeta katolicki [Karol Hubert] Rostworowski, katolicki architekt [Franciszek] Mączyński, będzie więc i katolicki aktor", że wszystko, co posiada, ma być dla Tilki [żony, Matyldy Osterwiny], wreszcie, że chce, aby wszystkie jego notatki i pisma zostały zniszczone. Przy tym ostatnim punkcie nie mogłam się wstrzymać od uwagi: czy to nie szkoda? Lecz on odrzekł: "nie, nie"' (Sapieżyna 2003: 707).

his milieu. After her husband's death, Matylda cared for the domestic archive and made it available to researchers (including Józef Szczublewski and Ireneusz Guszpit). Years later, her daughter Maria Osterwa-Czekaj (1942–2024) stated: 'I admire my mother for having had enough strength and faith to place the common good above the last will of the man she loved.'<sup>7</sup> She upheld her mother's decision and, as mentioned above, eventually donated the domestic archive to a public institution, where it remains accessible today.

The women of Osterwa's family understood the value of this archive and regarded the study, dissemination, and promotion of his legacy as their mission. They willingly cooperated with scholars and shared their knowledge (Elżbieta Osterwianka participated in the edition of her father's letters, while Maria Osterwa-Czekaj supported scholarly projects and activities, for example, by participating in conferences devoted to the Reduta and in meetings with students). They believed that the legacy should be studied and published and supported publishing initiatives in a benevolent spirit. Personal memorabilia, documents, letters, photographs, and books – items important to the family – remained in the domestic archive in Kraków. Some of these materials have already been studied and published; others remain accessible. Osterwa's grandchildren have likewise treated researchers with goodwill and supported scholarly initiatives.

From the 1960s onwards, Osterwa's manuscripts began to be used for academic purposes. They were consulted by his biographer Józef Szczublewski, who published the monograph *Pierwsza Reduta Osterwy* [The First Reduta of Osterwa] (1965) and *Żywot Osterwy* [The Life of Osterwa] (1971), extensively quoting selected manuscripts; he also published shorter selections and fragments of the diaries in periodicals (*Pamiętnik Teatralny* 1965, 1967). Zbigniew Osiński subsequently worked on the legacy of Osterwa and Mieczysław Limanowski<sup>8</sup> (publishing, among other works, their *Listy* [Letters] in 1987). Since the late 1970s, Ireneusz Guszpit has been engaged with the archive; he published a selection from the notebooks, *Z zapisków* [From the Notes] (1992), and, together with Dariusz Kosiński, prepared inventories of the notebooks and diaries within a research grant carried out at the University of Wrocław (2007–2009). They also co-edited another selection from the notebooks, *Przez teatr – poza teatr* [Through Theatre – Beyond Theatre] (2004) and the collection of paraphrases *'Antygona', 'Hamlet', 'Tobiasz' dla Teatru Społecznego* ['Antigone', 'Hamlet', 'Tobias' for the Social Theatre] (2007). In 2010, *Raptularz kijowski* was published in Guszpit's edition, followed by the small 'Zeszyt samarski'

7 'Podziwiam Mamę, że miała w sobie dość siły i wiary, by postawić dobro społeczne nad ostatnią wolą kochanego człowieka' (Świątkowska 2023: 55).

8 Mieczysław Limanowski (1876–1948), a co-founder of the Reduta, was a geologist by training and a professor of geography at Stefan Batory University in Vilnius. At the Reduta, he headed the ensemble and was responsible for the analytical rehearsal, as well as internal and laboratory work.

(2011) [Samara Notebook], made available together with scans of the manuscript in the online scholarly journal *Performer*.

In 2019, the centenary of the founding of the Reduta prompted the Theatre Institute named after Zbigniew Raszewski to launch the publishing series 'Reducie na stulecie' [For Reduta's Centennial], aimed at disseminating and popularising the Reduta's heritage, including the publication of source materials. The second volume of the series, *Dzienniki wypraw 1938–1939* [2020; Travel Diaries 1938–1939], edited by the author of this article together with Andrzej Kruczyński, comprises four units: the diary from the journey to Ceuta, the touring diary from 1938 (*Uciekła mi przepióreczka*), the touring diary from 1939 (*Powrót Przelęckiego*), and *Przygotowania Redutowe* [Reduta Preparations] – fragments of a notebook concerning the organisation of tours. The fourth volume of the series, the long-lost *Dziennik 1934–1935*, was published in 2025 and is discussed below.

Considering the 14,000 pages of manuscripts, this is still a modest output, although the work of several generations of scholars has been ongoing for over fifty years. What are the reasons behind it?

The task is not an easy one. The difficulty lies not only in Osterwa's small handwriting but also in the organisation of the material and the selection of autonomous units suitable for editing and publication. Many of Osterwa's notes remain hermetic and obscure – sometimes fragmentary, unfinished, or internally contradictory. Guszpit observes that Osterwa characteristically jumps from topic to topic without completing earlier thoughts and repeatedly returns to the issues already described. 'In the structure of Osterwa's notebooks one can see not only the principle of *varietas* but also openness (the arrangement of literary units does not aim at any planned totality).'<sup>9</sup> Dariusz Kosiński notes that reading the notebooks 'inevitably evokes associations with contemporary concepts of performative writing, the creation of the self through writing, and the use of writing as a form of self-therapy.'<sup>10</sup> Less sympathetic scholars have accused Osterwa of graphomania. Szczublewski wrote in his biography that Osterwa 'loses self-control and falls into a mania of "legislative" writing'.<sup>11</sup> In his wartime notes, Osterwa frequently used his own neologisms, connected with his idea of purifying the Polish language of foreign influences. This does not facilitate reading and, according to some, even ridicules the author.

Osterwa's writings were subject to various interventions: censored or withheld from publication. During the communist period, publications openly professing a Catholic worldview were poorly received (many of Osterwa's notes are religious in

9 'W strukturze Osterwowych raptularzy widać nie tylko zasadę *varietas*, lecz również otwartość (uszeregowanie jednostek literackich nie zmierza ku jakiejś zaplanowanej całości)' (Guszpit 1992: 11).

10 'nasuwa nieodparte skojarzenie ze współczesnymi koncepcjami pisania performatywnego, z kreowaniem siebie poprzez pisanie, a także z wykorzystaniem pisarstwa jako formy autoterapii' (Kosiński 2004: 5).

11 'traci samokontrolę, wpada w manię "ustawodawczego" pisania' (Szczublewski 1973: 487).

character and express his deep Catholicism: he even planned to establish confraternities of religious actors). An example of such a censored document is Osterwa's letter-message to his friend and actor Stefan Jaracz; only the third published version is complete. When publishing it in 2008, editor Dariusz Kosiński marked the fragments omitted by earlier editors.<sup>12</sup> Written during the war (1943–1944), this text constitutes a kind of artistic testament, and the removed passages concern religion, the Catholic Church, and Osterwa's vision of the future Polish theatre, which he imagined as salvific and institutionally connected with the Church. Faith and religion were a crucial element of Osterwa's wartime concepts and an inseparable context of his earlier activities and creative achievements. Zbigniew Osiński emphasised that omission of this aspect produces a distorted image and is 'not only tantamount to methodological reductionism, but, above all, an evasion of the fundamental and essential issues at stake here'.<sup>13</sup>

However, this is not the only reason why some theatre historians have depreciated or even rejected the significance of Osterwa's manuscript legacy. In the early 1980s, reviewers prevented the publication of the first selection from the notebooks prepared by Ireneusz Guszpit. The volume received negative reviews and was not approved for publication. One reviewer argued that Osterwa 'wrote with difficulty and heaviness; even when he wrote a great deal, he had no literary imagination or talent', and that the surviving notes were merely 'eccentricities and the ramblings of an old man'. 'There are no revealed truths here – these are embarrassing notes that ridicule both their author and editor', the reviewer wrote in 1983.<sup>14</sup>

By contrast, Zbigniew Osiński wrote emphatically: 'his private letters and diary notes are a far more important source than his published articles and interviews, in which he usually proclaimed only a "tenth part" of what he truly had to say'.<sup>15</sup>

Osterwa's legacy requires diverse competences, methods, and knowledge. For example, the linguistic notebooks have attracted the attention of the linguist Ewa Dulna-Rak, who has published numerous articles on Osterwa's language reform, neologisms, and Reduta nomenclature, including *Słownik leksyki teatralnej* [Dictionary of Theatrical Lexicon] (2016).

The archive contains material that is relevant not only for theatre historians but also for literary scholars, researchers of the interwar period and the occupation, theologians, historians, cultural scholars, sociologists, biographers, linguists, as well as

<sup>12</sup> Osterwa 2008: 107–131.

<sup>13</sup> 'nie tylko równoznaczne z metodologicznym redukcjonizmem, lecz oznaczałoby przede wszystkim ucieczkę od problematyki zupełnie tutaj podstawowej i esencjonalnej' (Osiński 2002: 224).

<sup>14</sup> '[Osterwa] pisał z trudem, ciężko, nawet gdy pisał wiele, nie miał wyobraźni pisarskiej, talentu'; 'dziwactwa i bajdurzenia dziadka'; 'Tu nie ma prawd objawionych, to zapiski żenujące, ośmieszające pomysłodawcę i wydawcę' (Kraśiński 1983: 7, 3, 15).

<sup>15</sup> 'znacznie ważniejszym źródłem niż jego [Osterwy] opublikowane artykuły i wywiady, w których ogłaszał przeważnie ową "dziesiątą część" tego, co naprawdę miał do powiedzenia, są jego prywatne listy oraz zapiski w dziennikach' (Osiński 2002: 224).

comparatists and translation scholars (for instance, Osterwa's work on the tragedies of Shakespeare<sup>16</sup> and Sophocles).

An important question therefore arises: is everything suitable for publication? The scale and diversity of Osterwa's legacy reveal numerous ethical, technical, and methodological problems concerning selection, arrangement, scope, and the need to publish these notes in their entirety. The issue of responsibility is also significant. As Dariusz Kosiński observed:

Successive editors and commentators have created an image of Osterwa that seemed best from their perspective, emphasising what they themselves considered the most vital, interesting, and productive. Sometimes, in good faith, they 'enhanced' Osterwa to make him sound more 'modern'; at other times they erased from his texts what they regarded as particularly incomprehensible and strange (and this concerns not only his new word-formation ideas). [...] In the case of his written legacy, and especially the notebooks, the necessity of editing often requires interpretative decisions with far-reaching consequences.<sup>17</sup>

### *Dziennik 1934–1935*

In 2023 (thus seventy-six years after Osterwa's death), together with my doctoral student Ksenia Lebedzińska, I came upon a new and previously unknown document from his life: a diary from the years 1934–1935. It proved to be a photocopy preserved on microfilm in the National Library in Warsaw. The document has an extraordinary history. In 1948 it was found in the ruins of bombed Warsaw (together with *Raptularz kijowski*) and handed over to Arnold Szyfman, director of the Polish Theatre in Warsaw. Szyfman had known Osterwa (who had already died by then), knew his family, and – crucially – was familiar with his handwriting (they had worked together and corresponded). He knew to whom the recovered documents belonged, yet he did not return them to the family. Instead, he kept them in a safe for fourteen years, until 1962, when he decided to sell them.

In January 1962, Szyfman sold *Raptularz kijowski* to the archive of the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences for 10,000 złoty, and the 1934–1935 diary to the National Library for 20,000 złoty. When the transactions became known to the heirs, they brought a lawsuit against Szyfman for unlawful disposal of the manuscripts. In the afterword to the published volume, I reconstruct the details

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Świątkowska 2009.

<sup>17</sup> 'kolejni edytorzy i komentatorzy tworzyli taki obraz Osterwy, jaki wydawał im się najlepszy z ich punktu widzenia, akcentując to, co sami uznawali za najwyższe, najciekawsze, najbardziej płodne. Niekiedy w dobrej wierze "podrasowywali" Osterwę, by brzmiał "nowocześniejszy"; niekiedy wymazywali z jego tekstów to, co uznawali za wyjątkowo niezrozumiałe i dziwaczne (a dotyczy to nie tylko nowych pomysłów słowotwórczych). [...] w przypadku jego spuścizny piśmienniczej, a zwłaszcza zapisów raptularzowych, konieczność redagowania wymaga często decyzji interpretacyjnych o dalekosiężnych skutkach' (Osterwa 2008: 109).

of the case on the basis of preserved documents;<sup>18</sup> here I will summarise them briefly. In 1963, the heirs (the widow and two daughters) won the case and recovered both notebooks. Szyfman's conduct was condemned in artistic circles; a scandal erupted, and his obfuscation in the matter did him no favours. The manuscripts returned to the family and were divided: his daughter Elżbieta took *Raptularz kijowski*, which she soon sold to the Theatre Museum in Warsaw (where it remains today), while Matylda deposited the *Dziennik 1934–1935* with the Kraków archdiocesan curia, where it... disappeared.

Most likely (according to testimonies of Osterwa's daughter Maria and of Ireneusz Guszpit), she entrusted it to Karol Wojtyła, a friend of the family and the archbishop of Kraków at the time. Official inventories and catalogues of the curial archive do not record such a gift or deposit. In October 1978, Wojtyła was elected pope and left for the Vatican. Searches in church archives in Kraków and Rome have yielded no results: the diary is not there, nor is it in the domestic archive in Kraków.

A few people had known this document. Osterwa's biographer Józef Szczublewski and the director of the Theatre Museum, Eugeniusz Szwankowski (who prepared an

incomplete transcript), most likely consulted it in 1962–1963 during the court proceedings, when the notebook was held in judicial deposit at the Theatre Museum.

How, then, was it possible to publish it? Owing to the rediscovered copy in the National Library, which – before returning the document to Szyfman (for the purposes of the lawsuit) – made a photocopy (the microfilm bears the date 15 October 1962) and retained it in its holdings (Fig. 5).

The widow's decision to 'hide' the diary in the curia becomes more comprehensible once one reads its contents. *Dziennik 1934–1935* is an intimate diary describing Osterwa's love for the singer, cabaret performer, and pre-war stage star Hanka Ordonówna (1902–1950).

It records their relationship, infidelities, and turbulent separation. Ordonówna had been married since 1931. Osterwa, at that time a widower, was seventeen years her senior. Their relationship lasted from March 1933 to June 1935. It was the subject of gossip and malice; most witnesses referred to it as a 'romance'. Osterwa's diary, however, makes plain how important the relationship was to him and how seriously

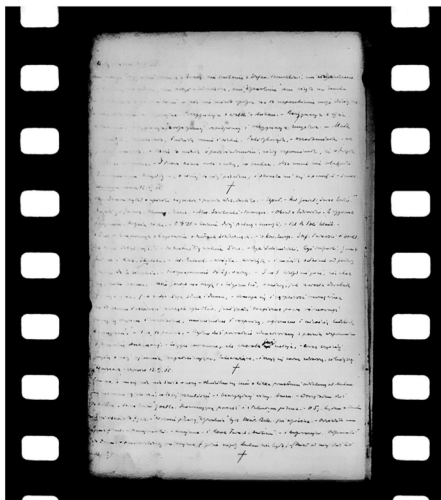


Fig. 5. A page from Osterwa's *Dziennik 1934–1935*, a microfilm, p. 94 v. (Osterwa 2025: 620)

18 Świątkowska 2025: 599–619.

he treated it (perhaps in contrast to *Ordonówna*). He paid for the break-up with illness and depression (he underwent treatment in a sanatorium in Baden bei Wien in the summer). It is a difficult reading experience, since in these notes Osterwa is exhibitionistic (and not in an erotic sense): he exposes his pain, despair, and also his naivety. The entries yield the portrait of a desperately unhappy man in love, trying somehow to cope with the feeling. It is, without doubt, an Osterwa we have not known before.

Alongside this love story, the diary contains numerous facts and observations that are also significant from the perspective of theatre history. At the time Osterwa served as director of the Juliusz Słowacki Municipal Theatre in Kraków (1932–1935), supervised the work of the Warsaw Reduta, performed as a guest artist, acted and directed, organised a school theatre, collaborated with the Polish Theatre in Warsaw, and attended performances in Vienna. The diary offers important evidence on his professional activity and working methods during that period, as well as on the acting milieu and his contacts with the municipal authorities and officials. It also includes numerous details concerning the political realities of the Second Polish Republic: during this time Marshal Józef Piłsudski died, an assassination was carried out against the Minister of the Interior Bronisław Pieracki, and Joseph Goebbels visited Poland. The author describes the realities of Kraków in the 1930s, reporting on everyday life, entertainment, and the era's customs. Osterwa moved within circles of artists, aristocrats, politicians, and military officers; he mentions and describes many well-known figures directly. He devotes much space to his family (his daughter Elżbieta, his sister-in-law Stanisława, cousins, and others) and to private relationships. The diary is an invaluable testimony to his personal and professional life – daily routines, relationships – as well as to his psyche and personality.

At the same time, as an editor I was aware that I was entering a highly intimate sphere of his private life. Therefore, the consent of the heir, Maria Osterwa-Czekaj, was decisive for the publication (an interview with her is included in the volume). In her view, private legacies should also be made accessible, because 'letters or diaries build a personality and reconstruct certain circumstances of action, the realities of everyday life – which are, after all, important'.<sup>19</sup>

The case of the diary demonstrates that editorial and publishing decisions entail a significant responsibility. The disclosure of these notes sheds new light on Osterwa's life; the people he wrote about are no longer alive, so there is no longer any risk of violating personal rights or reputation. As readers, we have the opportunity to get to become more familiar with him, to learn about his complex personality, and to understand his relationships and professional decisions. At the same time,

<sup>19</sup> 'Listy czy pamiętniki budują osobowość i budują pewne okoliczności działania, realia życia codziennego, które są przecież istotne' (Osterwa 2025: 27).

the discovery of a copy of the diary after so many years gives hope that Osterwa's other texts have also survived and may be found one day.

## Conclusions

Although rich, diverse, and invaluable, the archive of Juliusz Osterwa remains incomplete. The most comprehensive collection is the wartime set of notebooks preserved in the Theatre Museum discussed above; yet this constitutes only a part of his handwritten legacy. The earlier archive had been stored in Warsaw, a city destroyed in 1939 and again in 1944. Osterwa's apartment was bombed, as was the Reduta headquarters on Kopernika Street. What survived was kept in private hands, for example, by Reduta actors, friends, and family members. Some of these preserved materials were further destroyed and dispersed during the Warsaw Uprising, when the apartments in which they were stored burned down. There is, however, a possibility that parts of this legacy has survived among the descendants of the Reduta members.

Two extant testimonies illustrate the detective work still required. The custodian of Reduta property, Bolesław Michajło, who transported the collections of the Reduta and Osterwa to private apartments, prepared an inventory of these items. Reportedly, he placed the list of objects and their hiding places between the lining and the bottom of one of Osterwa's suitcases.<sup>20</sup> Did this suitcase survive the war? Where might it be today? A second testimony recounts that some materials were buried or even walled up in the Reduta headquarters (under the stairs and inside the columns of the building). What should be done with such information: should the building, which was renovated after the war, be dismantled?

After the war, some individuals were known to possess Osterwa's and the Reduta's property, yet it was never returned to the rightful owners: the Reduta could not be reactivated, and Osterwa died in 1947. Many of those involved in hiding the archive are no longer alive. Bolesław Michajło, who knew the most, was killed in 1944.

In order to conduct comprehensive scholarly research, it is necessary not only to examine and critically edit Osterwa's surviving archive, but above all to locate, reunite, and recover the archive lost during the war.

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<sup>20</sup> O zespole Reduty 1970: 385–386.

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## Juliuszo Osterwos rankraščiai: paveldo problemos

### Santrauka

Straipsnyje aptariamos problemos, susijusios su „Reduta“ teatro įkūrėjo Juliuszo Osterwos (1885–1947) rašytiniu palikimu, keliančiu tyrėjams nemažai iššūkių, tarp jų ir etinių. Visų pirma būdamas mirties patale J. Osterwa prašė sudeginti jo užrašus (šeima noro neišpildė). Antra, minimas palikimas yra išsklaidytas, iš dalies prarastas arba vis dar nerastas dėl 1939–1945 m. karo įvykių. Trečia, medžiagos įvairovė apsunkina nuoseklių temų, tinkamų moksliniam redagavimui ir publikavimui, išskyrimą. Galiausiai, nemenkas iššūkis yra ir J. Osterwos rašysenos iššifravimas. Vis dėlto šis palikimas, dokumentuojantis J. Osterwos teatrinės idėjas, asmeninį gyvenimą ir platesnius jo meninės veiklos kontekstus, yra toks svarbus ir vertingas, kad nuo XX a. 8-ojo dešimtmečio mokslininkai (tarp jų Józefas Szczublewski, Zbigniewas Osiński, Ireneusz Guszpitas, Dariuszas Kosiński, Andrzejus Kruczyński ir šio straipsnio autorė) ėmėsi tirti ir publikuoti pasirinktas archyvo dalis. Leidinių serija „Redutos šimtmečiui“ („Reducie na stulecie“), kurią 2019 m. inicijavo Zbigniewo Raszewskio teatro institutas, siekia skleisti ir populiarinti „Reduta“ teatro paveldą, taip pat publikuoti su juo susijusią šaltinių medžiagą. Neseniai išleistas ketvirtasis serijos tomas – „Juliusz Osterwa: Dziennik 1934–1935“ (dienoraščio originalas, deja, neišliko) čia naudojamas kaip atvejo analizė.

REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: archyvas, rankraštis, dienoraštis, „Reduta“, Juliusz Osterwa, palikimas