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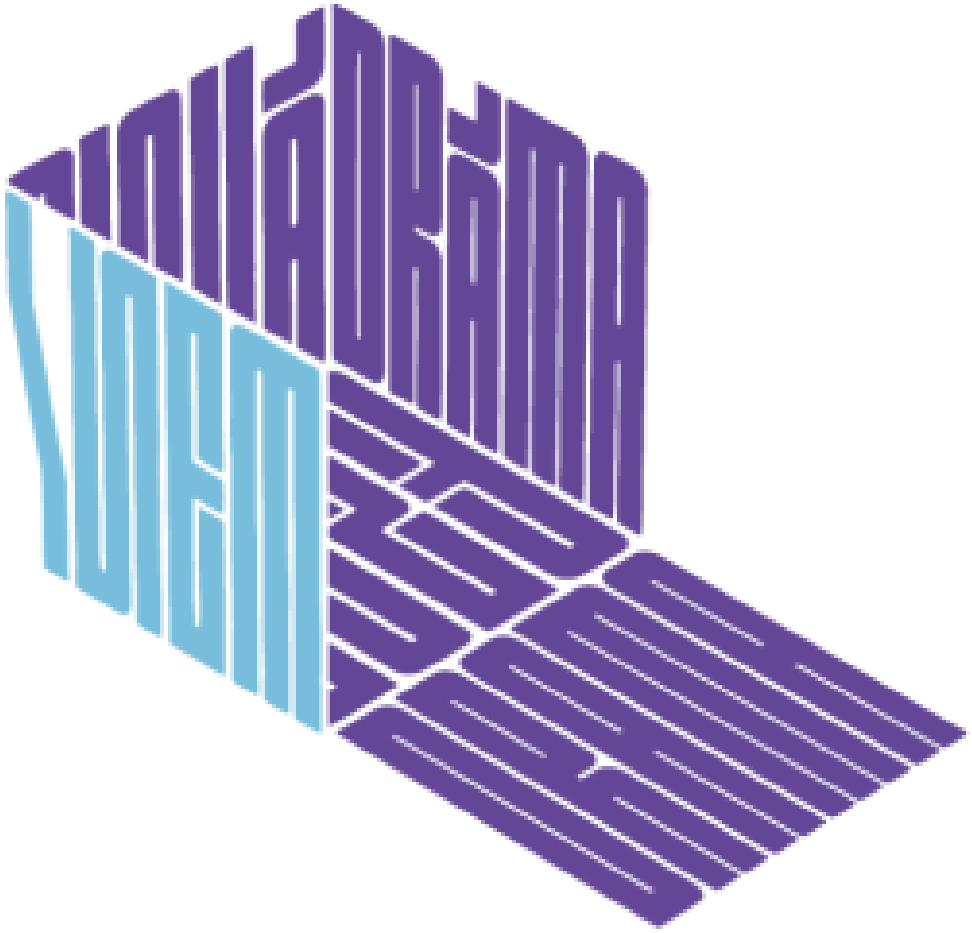
THEATRE IN EXILE

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE



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Tasos Angelopoulos, Lasha Chkhartishvili, Nadežda Lindovská, Darko Lukić, Sasho Ognenovski, Patrice Pavis, Richard Pettifer, Iryna Serebriakova, Mischa Twitchin, Stephen Elliot Wilmer

Introduction by Vladislava Fekete

Edited by Dária Fojtíková Fehérová

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DIVADELNÝ ÚSTAV
BRATISLAVA
THE THEATRE INSTITUTE

SCAICT
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NOVÁ DRÁMA
NEW DRAMA

Collective of authors

THEATRE IN EXILE

Contributions from the international conference
held on the Nová dráma/New Drama Festival 2023
18 – 19 May 2023

Edited by Dária F. Fehérová

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Exile is not Asylum

Introduction

Over the recent period, we successfully – or less successfully – managed to survive the global COVID-19 pandemic. We came to realise how fragile and manipulative is the space in which we found ourselves. Hoax became yet another globally mighty topic that flew out of the pandemic vortex. We are still unable to contain this phenomenon that insidiously and cynically plays into the hands of anti-democratic forces that exist in relation to the war in Ukraine and everywhere where dictatorships reign. All these phenomena came into consideration when the Theatre Institute in Bratislava (www.theatre.sk/en) planned the 2023 edition of the Nová dráma/New Drama Festival. It addressed the theme of exile within the framework of the international theatre conference – THEATRE IN EXILE.

The established international conference has been part of the Bratislava-based theatre festival Nová dráma/New Drama (www.novadrama.sk/en) since its onset in 2005. Over time, the themes of the conference have become somewhat of the festival's unofficial leitmotif. The aim of the festival is to present the crème de la crème of Slovak performative methods and concrete stage works. The festival also aims to reflect on them and examine the current status of culture and creative industries, to reflect on the extent to which they engage in a professional dialogue with a given social milieu and political contenders, and whether culture still has the power to move our conscience.

Brief peek into the history of the conference topics of the Nová dráma/New Drama illustrates the image of ourselves we wish to leave for posterity. It also shows to whom and how we lend a helping hand. *Theatre in Conflict Zones; Ecological Questions and Environmental Issues in Theatre and Performance; Contemporary Freedom and the New Crisis of Theatre Between Ideological Extremism and the 'Cancel Culture'; Recycling in Performing Arts: From Creativity to Commerce; Quo Vadis Theatre Critique and Theatre Journals; Balance – work with audience; Contemporary Drama and Performative Space: From Playwriting to Immersive Theatre*. These are just some of the topics that drew dozens of specialists from abroad to Bratislava. They helped us realise that our endeavour is not in vain and that performing arts are able to generate a pow-

erful movement, internally and externally, towards an open society. Over the period of nearly twenty years, we have hosted in Bratislava some five hundred internationally distinguished theatre scholars and authors. Their interdisciplinary collaboration enhances reflections on theatre. (The list of specialists includes, *inter alia*, Hans Thies-Lehmann, Aleks Sierz, Patrice Pavis, Dragan Klaić, Erika Fischer-Lichte, Jarosław Fret**,** John Elsom, Carl Lavery, Ian Herbert, Clare Duffy, Joshua Sobol, Natalia Vorozhbyt, Nina Rapi, Goran Stefanovski, Gianina Cărbunariu, Jon Fosse, Roland Schimmelpfennig, Dea Loher, Falk Richter, Ivan Vyrypayev.) Moreover, we have a long-lasting close cooperation with worldwide networks, such as the International Theatre Institute (ITI) or the International Association of Theatre Critics (AICT). We are therefore capable of offering and indeed ensuring the unrestricted circulation of ideas, references, and conclusions.

We are also aware, however, that there are situations when our societies close themselves off from us. We talk about the possibilities of escaping such a society: we talk about exile. Voluntary or controlled, involuntary. In both cases, authors are isolated with far-reaching consequences for their mental or physical health. Yet, the same applies to the mental condition of society as a whole.

We were thus not surprised when dozens of specialists from all over the world responded to our conference call. We understood that the theme was crucial in every individual era and that, unfortunately, it recognizes no boundaries (internal or external).With the theme, we did not just react to the struggle with a political regime, the loss of one‘s own context and setting, the necessity to adjust to new living conditions, and other challenges that inflict trauma on emigrants and compel them to confront a challenging life, along with new artistic and professional choices. Within the context of theatre and art, at times of globalisation and multiculturalism, the word exile also assumes new meanings. The possibility of voluntary exile, whether internal or external, may mean an opportunity for artists to discover, connect, negate, or transform the artistic traditions of their home country with their country of exile. Voluntary exile and global migration can be understood as some of the phenomena that affect the current shape of theatre. At the local level, we understand exile as an opportunity to break free and distance oneself from the established artistic forms and currents, as a transfer of theatre from the centre to the periphery, or as a transfer from traditional theatres to various industrial and non-theatre spaces.

The international conference aimed to open a discussion and map the historical and current context of theatre and drama work in exile and to deepen and define the current state of theatre in a globalised world. We were primarily interested in contributions addressing (either theoretically or drawing from artistic practice) significant theatre leaders, theatre makers, and groups that worked or work in exile; the influence of theatre makers on the country of exile and vice versa; voluntary and involuntary artistic exile; intercultural influences; traditions within a new cultural context; own experience with creative work in exile; cooperation with authors in exile; and theatres on the periphery.

The voice of theatre creators and theatre advocates resonates (even) in the matter of displacement, a crucial voice, a compassionate message that can transform the world into a different, more vibrant, and improved environment for everyone, without any limitations. We are thrilled that the conference proceedings be published. While they are by no means a universal remedy, they provide specialized viewpoints that will become a recollection. As expressed by the poet Ovid – and emphasized by one of the conference attendees: "Only the mind cannot be sent into exile."

Assoc. Prof. Vladislava Fekete, ArtD., professional patron of the international conference, director of the Theatre Institute and the New Drama Festival

Migration Narratives as a Pedagogical Theatrical Device

STEPHEN ELLIOT WILMER

Abstract: The theatre has long been concerned with the theme of migration. From Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* to Shakespeare's *King Lear*, from Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage* to Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, homelessness and dispossession have been recurring features of dramatic texts. There are many ways that one might approach the topic of migration in performance. This article will concentrate on the refugee as a symbol of migration, and it will consider the refugee in performance as a theme, a character, and an actor.

With resistance growing to the influx of refugees, theatre activists have provided an important voice for hospitality in Europe, and so it is important to reflect on the pedagogical role of the theatre in informing the public about the needs of refugees and the responsibilities of society for their care. There is an increasing literature on theatre and migration. Some of the prominent books on this topic in English are *Theatre and Migration* (2014) and *Performing Non-Citizenship* (2015) by Emma Cox, *Refugees, Theatre and Crisis* (2013) by Alison Jeffers, *Refugee Performance* (2013) edited by Michael Balfour, *Migration and Performance in Contemporary Ireland* (2016) by Charlotte McIvor, *Performance, Space and Utopia* (2013) by Silvia Jestrović, *The Figure of the Migrant* (2015) by Thomas Nail, *Performing Statelessness in Europe* (2018) by S. E. Wilmer, *Performing Migrancy and Mobility in Africa* (2015) edited by Mark Fleishman, *State of the Arts* (2023) by Jonas Tinius, and the *Palgrave Handbook of Theatre and Migration* (Palgrave Macmillan 2023), co-edited by Yana Meerzon and S. E. Wilmer. These books have focused on migrants in many parts of the world, including Australia, Europe, Africa, the United States, and Latin America.

One of the reasons for the interest in this topic is the ever-increasing number of refugees because of wars, poverty, climate change, and authoritarian and unstable governments, with the number of forcibly displaced persons more than doubling in the last ten years to over a hundred million by 2022 (UNHCR), including eight million Ukrainian refugees and five million internally displaced Ukrainians. Moreover, there is no indication that this number is peaking, with projections of 440 million Africans entering the labour market in the next decade with slim

possibilities of work (Pelz). Another reason for the concern about the topic is the alarming rise of far-right parties in Western democracies that reached a climax following the sudden increase of migration from the Middle East and Africa to Europe in 2015 and resulted in the closure of many national borders. It has also led to an increasing reluctance of the European Union to assist refugees stranded in the Mediterranean Sea, and European states finding new ways of avoiding their responsibilities to deal with asylum claims under the UN convention for refugees. For example, despite the UN convention to prevent refoulement, many countries have recently initiated legislation to allow them to push back refugees across their borders or to deport them to third countries for assessment of their asylum claims, such as British plans to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda for processing.

In the last two decades, numerous theatre companies and activists in Europe have addressed the precarious position of the refugee in such important productions as *Le Dernier Caravansérail (Odyssées)* (The Last Caravan Stop (Odysseys)) by the Théâtre du Soleil in Paris in 2003, *Illegale Helfer* by Maxi Obexer in Potsdam in 2015, *Lampedusa* by Anders Lustgarten in Valetta in 2016, *Winterreise* (Winter Journey) at the Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin in 2017, and *The Walk* across Europe of the giant puppet 'Little Amal' by the Good Chance Theatre and Handspring Puppet Company in 2021.

The question that interests me is how theatrical performance, despite its limitations as an art form, can help to transform public opinion to a more hospitable approach. In this article, I want to consider two strategies for doing this: documentary theatre and performances of subversive affirmation.[1]

Documentary theatre has been a powerful method for depicting the conditions of displaced people and asylum seekers in the twenty-first century. Its main function is to persuade the audience that refugees deserve compassion, assistance, and better treatment. In order to do this, documentary theatre tends to rely on the notion of authenticity: that the stories they tell and the scenes they portray are not only credible but also verifiable.

There are several different types of documentary theatre: verbatim theatre, tribunal theatre, courtroom drama, docudrama, etc. Verbatim theatre uses the actual words of historical or contemporary people. When watching verbatim theatre, we

1 This article is an expanded version of "Theatrical Strategies for Addressing Migration", in *The Routledge Companion to Contemporary European Theatre and Performance,* edited by Ralf Remshardt and Aneta Mancewicz, (Routledge: Abingdon, Oxon., 2024), pp.425 – 430.

can assume that everything that is said on stage was originally spoken or written by a living or dead person who is represented or quoted in the drama. Tribunal plays and courtroom drama use this form, where the people on stage are represented as if in a courtroom or are portrayed in a tribunal situation where evidence is introduced, and witnesses are interrogated using the actual words that they would have used in a trial situation or in public discourse or private correspondence. Very often, what we see on the stage is a set design to look like a courtroom or a tribunal, with actors impersonating real people who were involved in a trial, or who use testimony that was delivered by real people during a historic event. Of course, this material is edited for dramatic effect so that rather than presenting the whole trial, which might have lasted for weeks or months, only a couple of hours of the most dramatic parts of the trial might be presented. Verbatim theatre can also use recorded interviews to recreate past stories of refugees. For example, the Ice and Fire Company in England (https://iceandfire.co.uk/) employs verbatim interviews with refugees who have recounted their experiences of fleeing their home country. Actors present these refugee stories as monologues on the stage, such as in their show *Asylum Monologues* (2008). Famous actors of the calibre of Simon Callow and Juliet Stephenson have appeared in Ice and Fire's performances, and spectators have been attracted to such events to catch a glimpse of such celebrity actors as much as for an interest in the material that they are presenting.

In some documentary theatre, professional actors tend to minimize their histrionic power to increase the credibility of their message. As Derek Paget (228) points out, actors in documentary theatre exhibit a 'presentational' rather than a 'representational' style of acting, or what he calls acting in '2-D' rather than '3-D'. For example, Actors for Human Rights, who present verbatim stories of refugees, are expected to minimize their delivery. When Christine Bacon, the artistic director, is asked by actors how to deliver their lines, she tells them, as cited by Paget, "What you're doing is, you're bearing witness for somebody who cannot be there themselves. […] You're there to get the words across in a compelling way". She adds, "We're using actors for a reason – they can do that very well!" (183). However, by placing actors on stage to tell a story about refugees, the truthfulness of the story is compromised by the dramatic mode of presentation. As Stephen Bottoms, cited by Carlson, remarks, "placed within the frame of art, the "real" is always already representational, and the "self" always already a characterization" (17). This is especially true when the actor is a celebrity. Marvin

Carlson (43) writes that celebrity status "is more or less a conscious construct, partly by the audience, partly by the actor, partly by the producing organization, and in more modern times, in significant measure by the media". "Celebrity, despite its continual truth claims […] exists for its own sake, or for the sake of influencing how the audience values the theatre experience" (44).

In some cases, theatre companies present actual refugees on stage, acting out their own stories. Like a famous actor on stage, refugees can also have a kind of celebrity status that marks the refugee actor as distinct from the part they are playing and creates a sense of double consciousness on the part of the audience. While it helps to employ actual refugees as actors in performances to create a sense of authenticity, this does not solve the problem of credibility. Actors impersonating refugees on stage already seem somewhat fraudulent, but the problem of refugees acting as themselves creates a similar dilemma. When refugees perform on stage, they create a tension between the real and the theatrical. Theatre is a place of artifice, and putting refugees on the stage automatically creates an artificial location for them.

An interesting example of this dilemma was a production of *Dear Home Office* (2016) by Phosphorus Theatre Company in London. The play was compiled by British directors who worked with Afghani unaccompanied minors to tell their stories. It focused on what it was like for the young Afghani actors to be subject to the whim of the Home Office. When they turned 18, they would have to present their case to the Home Office as to why they should be allowed to remain in Britain. When they first showed the play in London, the directors of the show held a question-and-answer session after the performance. Members of the audience advised the directors not to polish and perfect the acting skills of the young Afghani actors, suggesting that their performances should remain raw and therefore more convincing. The spectators argued that the authenticity and strength of their performance came from knowing that the refugees had never acted before. However, the directors of the show rejected this advice because they wanted the refugees to succeed as actors, especially as they were planning to take the show to the Edinburgh Theatre Festival.

Employing refugees in a theatrical performance may also provoke ethical questions, such as whether the actors are being treated as commodities by the theatre company rather than as individual people. This issue also raises the question of whether the spectator, in viewing the refugee (as a celebrity actor) on stage, becomes a voyeur of these celebrity actors rather than a witness to their story, i.e., someone who might want to take some responsible action.

In addition to verbatim theatre, docudrama has been a potent form of documentary theatre. By comparison with verbatim theatre, docudrama allows more dramatic license. Docudrama might include actual statements made by real people but it will also include fictional scenes and dialogue that never occurred, for example, between historical characters. There are, of course, theatre productions that use a combination of verbatim dialogue and invented dialogue, and so it is sometimes difficult for the audience to know what was actually said by the characters that are represented or what was invented.

In any case, as I have indicated, documentary theatre usually happens on a stage, which is a fictional space that is made to represent another actual location. Thus, the audience is asked to imagine that the actors are not simply actors on a stage but are representing real people in their original locations, for example in a refugee camp or in detention or at their new home. Similar to questions regarding the authenticity and artifice of the performer in documentary theatre, the selection of material and the crafting of stories into dramatic narratives are also artificial processes that are disguised to look authentic. As Carol Martin argues, "creating performances from edited archival material can both foreground and problematize the nonfictional even as it uses actors, memorized dialogue, condensed time, precise staging, stage sets, lighting, costumes, and the overall aesthetic structuring of theatrical performance. The process is not always transparent. Documentary theatre creates its own aesthetic imaginaries while claiming a special factual legitimacy" (10).

Thus, we can recognize that theatre documentaries are not neutral or objective. The writer, dramaturg, or theatre director normally has an agenda and intends to put forward a particular point of view, but at the same time wants to convey the impression that their work is objective precisely to persuade the audience more effectively. This lack of verisimilitude can work against the notion that the problems being staged are actual and so the uncertainty about authenticity might make the problem seem less urgent to members of the audience.

A good example of mixing documentary theatre with fiction is Théâtre du Soleil's *Le Dernier Caravansérail* (*Odyssées*) (2003), a six-hour French play that showed the conditions of refugees in a variety of countries. The title emphasizes the theme of mobility and the need for refuge that is expressed throughout the play. The performance was partly based on interviews and partly on moments that were recounted by refugees and recreated as stories for the performance as if they are happening live for the audience. The director, Ariane Mnouchkine, and other members of the troupe visited refugee camps in Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, and France and interviewed many of the inhabitants, especially those at the Sangatte centre near Calais (that functioned as a 'transit camp', providing accommodation for mostly Iraqi Kurds, Afghans, and Iranians on their way to Britain and was later closed by the government, leading to the inhospitable conditions of the Calais 'jungle'). Mnouchkine, Hélène Cixous (the famous feminist writer who worked as her resident playwright), and the company devised an episodic play from recorded testimony that they had collected from migrants, and from which the actors improvised scenes along various lines of narrative. The performance lasted for six hours and was divided into two acts. At the beginning of each act, the characters attempt thrilling journeys in dangerous conditions over turbulent rivers and seas represented by billowing silk fabric. In the second of these, which represents a harrowing sea journey from Asia to Australia, the Australian military arrive by helicopter, in what seems like a last-minute rescue, only to announce: "Go back where you came from! Australia will not accept you" (Théâtre du Soleil).

Despite its inordinate length, the pace of the production was fast-moving, with short scenes in chaotic order emphasizing the tumultuous lives of refugees in different countries enduring oppressive conditions and striving to escape and reach new destinations. As Brian Singleton points out, "it depicts in broad and sweeping performative brush strokes the causes and more specifically the effects of conflict migration and the human trafficking, dislocation, and suffering that ensues from that migration" (26). *Le Dernier Caravansérail* portrays refugees fleeing from many different countries in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, including Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, Bulgaria, Bosnia, making their way to Western Europe as well as to Australia and New Zealand. Numerous escape scenes take place in which the characters try to cross bridges, climb fences, invade tunnels, or otherwise transgress borders. Their migration originates from a variety

of causes, with scenes portraying economic migrants, people fleeing war zones, Eastern European women trafficked for sexual exploitation, and members of the Taliban passing themselves off as refugees. The play displays a wide variety of transport, from bicycles and motorcycles to boats, trains, airplanes, helicopters, and on foot. To convey their constant mobility and vulnerability, actors are wheeled on and off stage on mobile platforms by others in the cast. This novel feature elicited numerous comments from critics trying to interpret their use metaphorically. John Lahr described the production in New York as "a dramatic inquiry into desolation, a way of making the audience imagine an unmoored life. To this end dollies, skillfully manipulated by the crew, transport the characters into view and out of sight. Like surreal figments in a dream, the refugees constantly scuttle across the vast expanse of the empty stage, propelled as if their feet never touched the ground. Glide replaces drift. The swift movement takes naturalism out of the narrative and gives the people and their stories a sort of mythic metabolism".

Michael Kustow, seeing the performance in Paris, also commented on the effect of this fluid movement of actors and stagehands: "No one makes a normal theatrical entrance or exit. Each actor is rolled on and off stage standing on skateboard-like platforms, then pushed and twirled into place by stagehands or other actors. The locations themselves - a house in Kabul, railway sidings in Teheran - are also wheeled on in little trucks. This fluid staging becomes a metaphor for an existence in endless transit: the frozen figures on rolling platforms are in limbo".

Winterreise

Another type of documentary theatre was *Winterreise*. In 2016, the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin created an 'exile ensemble' of actors to avoid treating migrants like a passing fad and instead to provide them with some form of ongoing empowerment. *Winterreise* (2016), directed by Yael Ronen, was their first major production and featured immigrant actors who had recently arrived in Berlin from the Middle East. For *Winterreise*, Ronen used her usual technique of taking actors on a field trip as preparation for devising a new play. They took a bus trip to theatres in ten different cities that would act as partners on the production. Actors kept personal diaries during the journey, and the company filmed aspects of the trip to include as a visual backdrop for the dialogue. The resulting play was based on the actors' reactions to their new environment in German-speaking

countries and their personal memories of their earlier lives in the Middle East. As is usual in Ronen's other work, the play is highly autobiographical and the actors use their own names and evidently wrote many of their own lines, re-jigging details from their personal experiences or inventing some of the stories. Unlike the normal German tourist visit to the Middle East, *Winterreise* provided the reverse experience for the audience, who see their own country through the critical eyes of foreigners.

The play shows the experiences of the exile ensemble as they travel through the countryside. The first stop is the historic city of Dresden. Niels, who is one of the German actors of the Gorki ensemble, acts as their German guide and says he wants to show them 'historic and romantic Germany'. However, as they approach Dresden, he informs them that the anti-immigration right-wing group Pegida (with thousands of right-wing agitators who were marching every week in Dresden) might be demonstrating outside their hotel. Fearing that the Pegida demonstration might turn against them, the actors remained in their hotel rooms. The bus then brings the actors to the historic city of Weimar, but rather than entering the city, it goes to Buchenwald. The actors react with disappointment and anger at being brought to a death camp since some of them feel that they have just escaped from one in Syria. The narrative becomes as much about memories of home in the Middle East as about their reactions to German society and customs, with each of the actors revealing many personal details about their past and their fears for the future. Although it is difficult to know the extent to which the actors have invented aspects of their past, their monologues come across as plausible. The play not only reveals cultural differences but also the loneliness and homesickness of exile. Ultimately, it confronts the central problem of migration – that of longing for a sense of home in a new society.

Variations of documentary theatre about refugees have been important and useful as means to bring awareness about the problems of asylum seekers and the conditions that they endure, and to engage audiences in political, social, and humanitarian issues. They might even inform the audience about subverting government restrictions on refugees, as in the case of *Illegal Helpers* (2017) by Maxi Obexer that showed ways in which the ordinary citizen could make 'illegal migrants' invisible to the authorities. As it is often accompanied by a post-show discussion, documentary theatre can provide a forum for debate about refugee issues and can mobilize support or active engagement, as I witnessed in a per-

formance of *Die Schutzbefohlenen* in Hamburg in 2014. It can also serve as a form of self-empowerment for refugees who are given the space to tell their own stories as in *Winterreise*.

Despite problems with contradictory considerations concerning authenticity and celebrity, and the irony of the refugee actor being both a refugee and a fiction on stage, the impact of documentary theatre on the audience lies in the recognition that what they are seeing is evidence of something that really did happen in some form. This simulation of actuality enables the voices and experiences of refugees to be heard and provides a vehicle for persuading an audience that refugees are not just statistics but have legitimate rights that need to be upheld.

Subversive Affirmation Performances

Now I want to turn from documentary theatre to subversive affirmation. Unlike documentary theatre, subversive affirmation creates sympathy for refugees that does not necessarily rely on authenticity. Instead, it uses more devious means to get across its message, such as irony or over identification. It might present a provocative or humorous event that exposes and subverts the position of those with whom they disagree such as the Centre for Political Beauty's proposal on behalf of the Austrian government for the construction of the *Jean Monnet Bridge* from Tunisia to Italy.

In the autumn of 2015, the Centre for Political Beauty announced via the internet a proposal on behalf of the Austrian government for the construction of the Jean Monnet Bridge from Tunisia to Italy. The proposal was in marked contrast to the anti-immigration policies of the right-wing Austrian government. The Austrian government for many years had been pursuing an anti-immigration agenda, and, for example, in June 2016 Sebastian Kurz, the foreign minister, who later became the Prime Minister, proposed that the EU should copy Australian government practices and establish a prison colony for refugees on the Greek island of Lesbos ("Refugees Should be Kept in Island Camps"). As a subversive ploy, the Centre for Political Beauty's proposal (CPB, "The Jean Monnet Bridge") claimed to represent the humanitarian attitude of the Austrian government to refugees, stating that the bridge would serve as "a lifeline between two continents" and "the decisive instrument in the fight against people smugglers". In their elaborate promotional video for the project, Christian Konrad introduces himself as the new

"refugee coordinator of the Republic of Austria", saying, "I would like to pro[ve] that our Alpine Republic can look beyond its own borders and provide great service for the vision of an open and charitable Europe" (CPB, "Die Brücke").

Named after Jean Monnet, the founding father of the European Union, the bridge would provide safe transportation for refugees from Africa to Europe, thereby avoiding the dangerous boat crossings that had resulted in the drowning of thousands of people. At a cost of 230 billion euro, the construction project was to begin in 2017 and be completed by 2030 as "a landmark achievement of humanity" and "a lifeline between two continents and the largest economic stimulus package in the history of the European Union" (CPB, "The Jean Monnet Bridge").

In addition to the construction of the bridge, the proposal included provision for the immediate construction of 1,000 floating rescue platforms in the Mediterranean. The Centre for Political Beauty launched the first such platform on behalf of the Austrian government in October 2015. Calling the platform *Aylan 1* (in remembrance of the three-year-old Syrian boy whose body was found washed up on a Turkish beach), the Centre for Political Beauty encouraged other EU states to further this project by constructing additional platforms. Christian Konrad concludes in the promotional video, "Austria might be a small state with limited resources. But our most important resource is: humanity […] Let us turn Fortress Europe into an open house" (CPB, "Die Brücke").

The style of the film was very professional and it purported to be a PR film by the Austrian government to show how they were planning to help refugees. However, the film was completely bogus. There was never any intention by the Austrian government to develop such a bridge. By producing a film that seemed to be coming from the Austrian government, the Centre for Political Beauty, which is based in Berlin, was misrepresenting the government's policies to embarrass them.

One of the most significant examples of subversive affirmation was *Bitte liebt Österreich* (Please Love Austria) by Christoph Schlingensief. Schlingensief, a German theatre activist, used a technique of over-identifying with the opposition to subvert the position of an anti-immigration party in Austria in 2000. He created a scandalous event in the main square outside the opera house for the Vienna Festival Week to focus attention on the policies of the newly established coalition government, which included Jörg Haider's FPÖ party. He placed twelve asylum-seekers in an industrial container on the main square and asked the public

to decide who should be deported and who should be allowed to win prize money, marry an Austrian, and gain the right to remain in the country. Slogans associated with Haider's right-wing party were affixed to the outside of the container such as Ausländer raus! (Foreigners Out), while the activities of detainees inside the container were transmitted via the Internet that participants could watch live via video streaming (Schlingensief).

Schlingensief's satirical event was modelled on a popular Big Brother reality TV show, during which contestants lived with each other in a confined environment called 'the container'. The TV show emphasized that the public could interact with the programme by voting whether the contestants should leave or remain in the container, and news programmes made daily announcements as to who was forced to leave the show. In the case of the Vienna performance event, Schlingensief raised the stakes by using contestants who claimed to be highly qualified political exiles from various parts of the world and who supposedly faced danger if they returned to their home country. He asked the public to decide which of the contestants should be deported and which should remain. Luc Bondy, the director of the Vienna festival, wanted to reveal that it was only a performance with actors, but Schlingensief resisted this, insisting on maintaining the illusion that it was a reality show with real consequences. The audience could not be sure if the contestants were actual refugees or simply actors playing such characters, especially because contact between the refugees within the container and the public outside was controlled by the organisers. However, it seems that many spectators believed that the people inside the container were actual refugees and that the event would have real consequences, but nevertheless they willingly engaged in the act of deciding to deport them**.**

Schlingensief himself stood on top of the container using a megaphone claiming to represent Haider's party, spouting his party slogans, and achieving considerable publicity and drawing public outrage. Since it raised uncomfortable associations with the Austrian support for Hitler during the Third Reich as well as with the recent success of Jörg Haider's far-right party, Schlingensief's event caused a heated discussion in the press. The Austrian government seemed uncertain as to whether to shut down the event and risk accusations of censorship, or to allow it to continue despite all the attendant bad publicity. In the end, it ran for the full week of the festival, attracting considerable newspaper and television coverage. Schlingensief claimed that the programme was extremely popular and

that over 70,000 people contacted the website, which kept crashing because of the level of popular interest both in Vienna and elsewhere.

His deployment of an industrial container as a symbol of detainment was an inspired choice, calling to mind not only the inhumane detention centres for asylum-seekers but also the numerous tragedies that have occurred in container lorries as immigrants tried to cross borders illegally. Such a performance as Schlingensief's *Bitte Liebt Östereich* is what Jacques Rancière might call a political dissensus. Explaining this notion, Rancière calls a dissensus "a division put in the 'common sense', a dispute about what is given, about the frame within which we see something as given" (69). By contrast with asylum-seekers being sequestered away in detention centres, invisible from public scrutiny until decisions are made about their status, Schlingensief placed them in detention in a very public place on a main square of Vienna.

The last example of subversive affirmation that I want to discuss briefly is Robert Schneider's *Dirt*. It uses a specific form of over-identification in which the protagonist, who is a refugee from Iraq, agrees with and accepts the racist comments by his German hosts. Robert Schneider, a successful Austrian novelist, first staged his play *Dirt* (*Dreck*) at the Thalia Theater in Hamburg in 1993. It confronts the racist attitudes in German-speaking countries against foreign workers and illegal immigrants. The play was so successful that it spawned numerous productions interpreted by various actors, toured German-speaking countries for many years as a one-man show, and continues to be performed in German and other languages.

Dirt portrays an Iraqi illegal immigrant named Sad who lives in a city, selling flowers on the streets and in restaurants and who is clearly subjected to racist abuse. Schneider, who had lived with an Iraqi flower seller named Salih on whom the play is based, portrays Sad as effectively stateless because he has no rights to be in the country. In his hour-long monologue, Sad (who says his real name is Achmed) recalls his life as a university student of philosophy and German culture in Basra before he deserted from the Iraqi army. Rather than standing up to the racial abuse that he receives in his new environment, Sad accepts the criticism of the citizens around him and disingenuously legitimizes the attitudes of German nationalists who want to get rid of foreigners. He agrees that he and his fellow Arabs will damage German culture, and he encourages the audience to take action against him and those like him. In conveying an overly enthusiastic endorse-

ment of German society and dismissing the values of Arab people and culture, he echoes German nationalist attitudes in a provocatively naive manner.

Sad's monologue not only endorses German feelings of superiority but also subtly hints at the difficulties in the asylum process for someone who is illegally in the country and wants to avoid deportation. As the play progresses, Sad seems to become disoriented and starts to identify with German nationalists, adopting their rhetoric as if he is a German nationalist himself, denying his racism as a German, while at the same time expressing it.

Although the stage directions imply that he is speaking to "an imaginary mirror" in his poorly furnished room where he and his fellow Arab flatmate cannot afford to pay for the electricity, the actuality of the stage space means that he is speaking directly to the audience and confronting them with the rhetoric of German nationalists with whom he cross-identifies. This convention becomes especially explicit at the end of the play, as Sad returns to his abject self-effacing persona and urges the audience to take action to get rid of all the foreigners like himself. As Sad continues to shout, the (German) national anthem and the noises in the subway drown out the sound of his voice.

Schneider employs cross-identification as an artistic tactic for calling attention to the polarity between the citizen and the outsider in society. He makes this cross-identification disconcerting for the audience because the refugee protagonist in the play uses the rhetoric of the nationalist citizen to condemn himself. Sad confuses the spectators, on the one hand, by assuming that they are racist and, on the other hand, by endorsing and legitimizing their racist assumptions. Sad identifies with the audience and cross-identifies with their racist attitudes. This concatenation of opposing values makes nationalist norms seem strange and thereby uncomfortable.

In conclusion, documentary theatre relies on authenticity to convince its audience that something is wrong in society and needs to be fixed as in Mnouchkine's *Le Dernier Caravanserail* or Obexer's *The Illegal Helpers*. Subversive affirmative performances use various pedagogical devices, such as over-identifying with another's ideological prejudices (as in Schlingensief's *Bitte liebt Österreich* or in Schneider's *Dirt*), to unmask accepted social norms as something ugly and enable spectators to comprehend social and political issues from new perspectives. They encourage the audience to see the world differently from the way it has been promoted by those in power. In addition to creating sympathy for refugees,

as in various forms of documentary theatre, they seek novel ways to discredit those who oppose immigration. The advantage of documentary forms of performance is that they can give refugees a voice or at least present their experiences to an audience. The advantage of subversive performances is that they can be provocative or ironic, create scandals that attract attention, or expose more clearly the position of those who oppose immigration.

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The Fall of a Person and the Rise of the Ethics: The Exile Plays by Ivana Sajko

DARKO LUKIĆ

Abstract: Besides the involuntary migrations of immigrants and asylum seekers from war zones or authoritarian regimes, we should also consider EU citizens' legally permitted, even politically encouraged, artistic mobility as a kind of voluntary migration. Even if such optional exile is chosen, there is still the question of to what extent can the legal framework of inclusion bypass the exclusion mechanisms rooted in culture, identity, and language. The paper responds to the themes of the theatre personality active in exile, the influence of artists on the exile country and vice versa, and the intercultural influences. The topics are discussed on the example of the Croatian-German playwright Ivana Sajko and her two most recent immigrant plays on the topic of asylum: *The Song of the City (Not for You)* and *The Songplay (One Second for the Weasels)* in the context of "postmigrant theatre" (Sharifi 2017). This paper will explore how the authors' reflections and experiences of the inner and outer exiles influence the plays within the triad of "movement – identity – and community" (Meerzon 2011). The paper will address the following questions: What is the impact of such "migratory aesthetics" (Bal 2007) on German audiences? What is the contribution of these plays to contemporary Croatian drama and theatre?

"The fall of a person is greater than art." (Ivana Sajko)

Introduction: The Playwright and the Play in Exile

Besides the involuntary migrations of immigrants and asylum seekers from war zones or authoritarian regimes, we should also consider EU citizens' legally permitted, even politically encouraged, professional mobility as a kind of voluntary migration, chosen, optional exile. In her analysis, Ema Cox argues that the migrants "may move by choice or by compulsion", living in a new home, with more homes or homeless, or even eschewing "geographical fixity altogether", being welcomed or shunned in the new countries of residence (Cox 7). In Western countries, such difference between voluntary and involuntary migration is often precisely differed by names "immigrant" or "expat". That slight linguistic distin-

ction usually denotes a dichotomy between two different worlds. Most artists belong to the group of expats, their migration is voluntary, and their position is often defined as an inner exile, meaning chosen removal to the new country. The same cannot be said for the immigrants running away from war, pauperism, natural disasters, and political prosecution or for artists escaping political oppression and banishment. When juxtaposed against such circumstances, an immigrant artist searching for a new cultural environment could seem privileged and their burden easier. However, here we recognise a completely different set of belonging traumatic experiences which produce other social dynamics and impacts.

The fact is that artists, especially writers and theatre makers, are deeply rooted in their language and, through that language, attached to their audiences (Banu). In the case of immigrant artists, that fact raises the question of to what extent can the legal framework of inclusion policies bypass the exclusion mechanisms rooted in culture, identity, and language. The tension between previous creative experiences and the new environment inevitably demands navigating through the "minefield" (Sajko, "Prema ludilu") of identity challenges. When brought into the artistic realm, such conflictual zones of the immigrants' transition, by all means, provoke a "cultural transformation" in the European theatre landscape (Sharifi 322), bringing the peripheral influence to the artistic mainstream. These transformations might be defined in relation to changes provoked in aesthetics, changes in audience participation, changes in the author's poetics, and changes in social dynamics. Such a cultural landscape exists as a new one, transformed by immigrants rather than a "separable immigrant" cultural space and can always be understood through the level and mode of positioning migrant artists "within the sociocultural and political ecologies of host societies" (Musca 5). As opposed to the conventional concept of theatrical participation within the familiar and well-known realm, an immigrant theatre sets both authors and audience outside their comfort zone and counts on mutual misunderstandings as the constituent of the experience. In her analysis of immigrant theatre, Yana Meerzon proposes a broad spectrum of possible immigrant positions, from forced banishment to desire for nomadism, and a wide scope of themes, means, and forms. She also recognises the common elements defining the encounter of theatre artists' original cultural knowledge and the culture of a new society. Those elements are language, social status, class, and heritage as potential sources of humiliation and also the motivation for self-expression. However stimulating or frustrating

and however different depending on the host country and adopted cultures' attitude toward immigrants such experience could be, one of the most challenging questions about the immigrant theatre is its ethics. Being one of the essential elements in immigrant artistic practices and the social and cultural framework around them, the ethical responsibility of both sides defines the very character of their intercrossing (Musca).

Personal Emigrant Experience

Speaking of the theatre in exile, besides the theoretical discourse about the similarity, one must also observe huge differences between various personal experiences and practices. They are not defined only by the type or condition of exile, labelled as voluntary or involuntary, external or internal (Meerzon), but most of all by each immigrant artist's artistic individuality and personality. Therefore the term exile should be used conditionally and only within this particular context. This paper focuses on the migrant experience of Croatian-German author Ivana Sajko and her two contemporary plays *Pjesma grada (nije za tebe)* (*The Song of the City (Not for You)* [English translation]; *Das Lied der Stadt (nicht für dich)* [German translation]), written in 2018 and published in 2023, and *Songplay: jedna sekunda za lasice* (Songplay: One Second for the Weasels [English translation]; Songplay (Eine Sekunde für die Wiesel [German translation]), written in 2022. Both plays were initially written in Croatian, translated into German by Alida Bremer and then presented to German audiences. The first one had its German opening in the Staatstheater Braunschweig in 2022, and the second one as the radio broadcasting on Deutschlandfunk in 2023.

From a comparative perspective, these two plays show many similarities to previous pre-emigrant plays of Ivana Sajko but also differ from them according to specific exile influences recognised in the triad of movement, identity, and community (Meerzon).

Addressing issues such as exile, war, and immigration, both plays reflect the author's personal experiences of all these topics. As a recognised and distinguished playwright and novelist active in exile, Ivana Sajko presents one possible example of transcultural discourse complexity, especially concerning ethical responsibility.

In *The Song of the City (Not for You)* the play revolves around a bridge telling a story about a man standing on it and falling from it, offering insights into the hopes, life, and art of an immigrant. On the other hand, *Songplay: One Second for Weasels* delves into the topics of war, migration, helplessness and empathy. Both plays were written in Germany as a part of the author's latest immigrant writing.

Ivana Sajko (born in 1975) gained a reputation as one of the most important Croatian playwrights at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. She received several prestigious awards for her plays, unique in their deep research in dramatic form and distanced from any common dramatic, and even postdramatic, standard dramaturgical models. Her plays were staged in Croatia and Germany with almost unanimous acclamation from the critics. She also published several novels and one book on drama theory. Since 2016, she has lived in Berlin, where, with her translator Alida Bremer, she won the International Award for Literature (Internationaler Literaturpreis) in 2018 for the best literature translated into German. Her *Love Novel* has been shortlisted for the Dublin Literary Award 2023 among the best world novels. In her professional and private migration experience, we might identify all the elements of so-called voluntary, inner exile. Although far from the involuntary migration forced by war or political escape, far away from the social margin, her migration profoundly marks her writing and rises as the central topic she often speaks about in her interviews and literature. Her novel *The Small Deaths* (*Jeder Aufbruch ist ein kleiner Tod*) compares each migrating departure with a "small death". In such a metaphor, one can hardly miss the reflection of Edward Said's picture of an exilic journey as the crossing of the River Styx (Said, "Reflections" 174), which portrays emigration as a dying. The strong connection between death and migration stays present in the fiction and playwriting of Ivana Sajko as one of their most constant and profound elements. After the "small deaths" of departing, there is usually a "long death" of arrival and, finally, the real one, a "big" death.

"Slow thoughts about the suicide which bring him the dignity…better days." (Sajko, "Pjesma grada" 3)

Discussing the slow and progressive process of migration, she stressed the gradual nature of such transformation, beginning long before the departure and continuing long after the arrival, with the often possibility of staying partly in both

places or somewhere in between. "Migrations are a big topic, but everyone goes differently…I, for example, have written just about the departure, not about arrival. And that is a completely different process," she said, speaking about the novel in one of her interviews (Marušić). Here death enters the discourse of migration again because, according to Sajko, departure is a profound change, internal concussion, "a small death" (Marušić; Miošić Mandić). Furthermore, such symbolic death deprives a person of speaking. So, "the man who departs arrives almost mute. His very own name sounds different to him" (Marušić). Ivana Sajko's concept of "mute" attributed to the immigrants deprived of their language reminds us of the concept of "illiterate", how precisely Ágota Kristóf titled her immigrant autobiographical novel. The loss of a native language as a harrowing traumatic experience will be consequently elaborated in the plays of Ivana Sajko. Her idea about the immigrant's position is precise and clear through the plays analysed here. "You were the story starting from nothing" (Sajko, "Songplay" 18). Deprived of the native language, the immigrants are not only deprived of the tool for communication and self-expression but also of their own identity. They are "left without suitcases, without water, without air, without the language in which they can pronounce their name, left, therefore, without the name"[1] (Sajko "Pjesma grada" 20).

That question of language and the ability to express and communicate will be strongly addressed in both plays presented here, as well as the topic of dying and death, whether symbolic, metaphoric, or real. The trauma of migration often intertwines with the trauma of war, creating an intersection of various traumatic experiences.

That's why our children are silent.
They don't trust the language.
They don't trust the world.
We neither. (Sajko, "Songplay" 19)
The misunderstanding, however, persists beyond the level of the language.

1 The English translations of the plays cited here are working translations. They inform the reader and should not be concerned as professional literary translations or quoted anywhere else in this form.

The impossibility of understanding lies deeper in the broad context of social, cultural, class, and perspective differences. In *Song of the City*, Ivana Sajko delves into the profound misunderstandings between immigrants and people in host countries, between "us" and "them", and between "our city" and the newcomers, presenting four different optics and perspectives of the same city. The first is a position of hope and expectation of the newcomer, the second is a position of domestic citizens, the third is a position of the immigrant's mother somewhere in the old country, and finally, there is something as a writer's metatextual comment on her own story.

The immigrant's situation appears hopeless, as the mother's character describes her son's migration:

> And they will never return
> they will never return
> they will never return
> they will never return
> just as you will not, my son,
> and if ever reach as far, 'cause most of them will not,
> They will fall as the leaves, like it's autumn,
> they will die walking and fall on the ground,
> On their way to, let's say, Sweden,
> I've seen it all on television. (Sajko, "Pjesma grada" 21)

At the same time, the departure and arrival are irreversible; there is no way back because:

> His return became impossible, completely impossible,
> especially after he spent the savings,
> And then lost his hat, his teeth his face. (Sajko, "Pjesma grada" 17)

From the immigrant's point of view, there is a hope of great expectations in the beginning:

> The man has a list of the wrong concepts
> on life, on the city, on dust,
> about everything which is not as it supposed to be (Sajko, "Pjesma grada" 4)

And he is ready to wait for improvement patiently:

> The first day is forever, but you think it will pass; once it will,
> that feeling there was a mistake and you disembarked in the wrong city.
> (Sajko, "Pjesma grada" 18)

He is ready to wait for his moment:

> We didn't need you,
> not yet, you thought, not yet.
> Wrong." (Sajko, "Pjesma grada" 19)

Nevertheless, the city is brutally clear through his citizens who declare:

> Our contempt toward everything which is not us,
> our contempt toward everything which is us,
> our paradoxes." (Sajko, "Pjesma grada" 19)

In the overlap of different voices, Sajko comments on her character's illusions:

> Mother told you right
> the city is not the song
> but loneliness for the tired passenger
> an underwater ridge, the Bermuda triangle, an unfulfilled promise."
> (Sajko, "Pjesma grada" 20)

Gradually, the character situates himself in the reality of the immigrants "where nobody needs them, as nobody needs you, where nobody loves them, as nobody loves you" (Sajko, "Pjesma grada" 21), aware that "in the city also live happier people. That is a heavy thought" (Sajko, "Pjesma grada" 24). In *The Song of the City*, one can recognise the reflection of the illustrative moment from the *Songplay*, the direct, bold and crucial question:

> What is the fate of the weak and powerless?
> Why doesn't anyone help them?
> Why doesn't anyone help us?
> How much time has passed?
> A second. But it goes on and on and on. (Sajko, "Songplay" 19)

Using multiple perspectives to approach issues in the immigrant position, deeply dependent on context (or, as Meerzon described it, a movement, identity, and community interference), Sajko argues that "The fall of a person is greater than art", more extensive than any artistic format or metaphor (Sajko, "Songplay" 32). This brings us to the ethics of the immigrant performance emphasised in her playwriting.

Models, Strategies, Procedures

While searching for a way to briefly describe the models, procedures, and strategies Ivana Sajko uses in these particular plays, I want to consider their development in her previous works. Since the beginning of her playwriting (1995), she prioritises the post-dramatic implementations of fragmented narrative strategies, interdiscursivity, and auto-referential discourse in her texts. Sajko blends various resources from science, media, and literature with a subjective approach to the story and the characters, deliberately insisting on constant changes in the position of the subject and narrative focus. Critics and scholars recognised her plays as marginally dramatic (Rafolt, "Priučen na tumačenje"), anti-poetic (Jug and Novak), or classified in the category of plays that are not dramatic any more (Poschmann). In her subversion of dramatic form, the stage directions are always entirely independent (Gospić) and equal literary material, as a kind of author's dialogical interference in monologues (Jug and Novak 15). These strategies,

however, risk additionally demanding communication with the audiences, but the international reception of the plays proves it successful.

Embracing this dramaturgical fluidity and hybridity, Sajko achieves imposing performativity of the language (or languages) used in her plays, which are probably the most closely labelled as the lyric monodrama (Rafolt, "Odbrojavanje"). The specific function of the language will continue and even take a more important place in her exile playwriting. That is why I will separately address and highlight her use of language as the dramaturgical strategy.

Developing and expanding the methods in the two plays discussed here, Sajko noticeably further enforces her self-referentiality and self-reflexivity. Author's intrusion in characters established as interlocutors opens the space for her unconcealed interventions in a direct dialogue with the characters and the audience. Such a level of activism is inevitably related to her very intimate personal immigrant experience. Declaring repeatedly her belief that "the theatre is the most radical form of the artistic event" (Sajko, "Prema ludilu" 33), Ivana Sajko uses her plays as an argument in her personal rebellion and her very engaged endeavour for ethics in art. In this case, her narratives and strategies resonate with Yana Meerzon's envisions of exilic theatre connected to the theatre of memory or meta-performative constructs and personal performance, emphasising cultural and linguistic challenges. In the context of the memory theatre, however, Ivana Sajko uses personal recollections less immediate and more referential than is usual in testimony theatre. At this point, we may first turn to linguistic challenges observing the confrontations of the languages in the original Croatian versions of two "German" plays. Commenting on the dramaturgy of migration engaged author on immigration and art Azadeh Sharifi described multilinguality as "a prominent dramaturgical strategy" in the performances (Meerzon and Pewny 74).

To describe the function of cross-lingual expression in immigrant theatre I mobilise here the concepts of "muteness" and "namelessness" imported directly from Ivana Sajko's play. Thinking through her descriptions of mother tongue deprivation as a traumatic experience of identity loss helps me to diversify Sharifi's concept of multilingualism as a dramaturgical strategy. I also employ the term cross-lingual rather than multilingual to describe correlations between cultural interactions and communication complexity in the mutual encounter of the immigrants and the hosts. That dynamics will be considered later in this text.

In *Songplay*, for instance, Ivana Sajko introduces the parts in English (Sajko, "Songplay 7ff.) and German (9). In *Song of the City*, we can also find English (Sajko "Pjesma grada" 8) and German (34). In German translations, however, the whole Croatian text will disappear, the German interpolation will become invisible, and only the English parts will remain as the voice of the Otherness. Technically, these are still the same plays. However, from the cultural point of view, they precisely reflect the immigrant linguistic transition and re-inventing of communication tools and identity. Returning to Sharifi, this level of cross-linguality is much more complex and much more sophisticated than multilinguality used to dramatically confront two cultures at the point of their (mis)understanding.

Sajko also engages broader cross-cultural references, which may be best illustrated by the example of Laurie Anderson's song about the weasel in *Songplay* (Sajko, "Songplay" 8), pointing directly to the ethical dimension of art. The example of the author's personal performance (Meerzon) can certainly be seen in the sentences such as:

> I will touch what you expect the least,
> what you have hidden buried got over forgot,
> that's the purpose of this performance,
> tho throw you into your own abyss. (Sajko, "Pjesma grada" 7)

Although the main dramaturgical, poetical, and performative strategies remained constant, Ivana Sajko's new "German" plays consist of new qualities compared to those written before her migration. Some typical features of exile plays are visible, and most are deliberately developed, primarily because of the new dimension of the author's ethical engagement.

Intercultural Dialogue, New Aesthetics, and Ethics

Such ethical engagement in this particular case is rooted in the very foundations of Ivana Sajko's whole work. It could be, in a nutshell, recognised as an awareness of the responsibility of the performance instead of just the usual artistic responsibility for the performance. A more nuanced approach will inevitably discover layers of the empathy and solidarity embedded in her plays and novels. Her solidarity with the most unprivileged immigrants comes naturally in such a

literary fabric. Even though considered a European expat, she knows well what war and precarity mean. With her Croatian background, she can clearly notice the burden of the stereotypes and colonial gaze that non-European immigrants face in Western Europe. Therefore, her activist intervention in the German theatre landscape with two plays presented here challenges the concept of immigrants as part of the social peripheries, which is disturbing, if not even dangerous (Sharifi 324). Central to this approach is decentring the point of view in the polycentric focus and different equally represented voices. One of the most notable examples is the voice of the hosts, a democratic liberal West in *Songplay*:

> When we say defend, we mean theoretically. Theoretically and timid.
> (…)
> We are the third generation of European peace and we refuse to bear arms.
> But we can send it to you in a ratio that does not guarantee victory.
> You will pay when you have. (Sajko, "Songplay" 7)

To avoid any ambiguity here, Sajko directly quotes Ukrainian president Zelenskyy: "The war. What is more opposite of music?" (Sajko, "Songplay" 6). But in the same play, she refers to the war in Syria (Sajko, "Songplay" 20), as well as to Hiroshima (Sajko, "Songplay" 14), to strengthen the idea that "in war, we have no name nor address or face. Just the side". Among the ruins, there are always "hundreds and hundreds of unburied silences", and about that silences, we do not know anything except that they always were "at the side of the weak and powerless and that they probably did not start first" (Sajko, "Songplay" 15).

This focus on the hypocrisy of the silent peacemakers and humanitarian helpers underpins the bitter vision of the destiny of the victim designated for the weaker. They are all one entity, unprivileged others, forced to escape the war to survive, and then endlessly visit different offices and again and again answer the same set of bureaucratic questions (Sajko, "Songplay" 17). But even more unprivileged is that which did not escape. They can only look:

> into the distance, through loopholes and cracks in the barricades, towards that bus ship the last plane that went into the unknown and took the children. They saw them aging rapidly, hunched over and sitting on the seat that grabbed them like an eagle on a weasel, so there was no end to that cursed metaphor, just as there was no end to that cursed journey. (Sajko, "Songplay" 16)

Despite the bitterness of these dark visions, there is an apparent ethical rebellion against such order and activism, defining the play as an act of responsibility. Acting within the triad of movement, identity, and community (Meerzon), Sajko takes over the role of the most underrepresented immigrant's spokesperson, drawing authenticity from her own immigrant position. To do so, however, the playwright needs to be represented, and the plays need to be performed. Responsible performance must be effective in engaging the wider society.

From his long and successful experience, Horacio Czertok casts a critical aspect of immigrant theatre involving host audiences and raising awareness of their problems. According to him, immigrant theatre must not accept any marginal position of performing in exile but create ways to target privileged communities and mainstream audiences (Czertok 5).

Dealing with its own dreams and utopias, immigrant theatre thus transits from the theatre in exile toward theatre as an exile (Czertok xvi). From the position of the distinguished and well-known writer, Ivana Sajko does precisely such a thing through German theatre and media. Just as she wrote her novel *Small Deaths* in a male voice to experience speaking from the position of privilege (Marušić), in plays, Sajko interchanges her point of view from privileged host society through the most unprivileged immigrants up to the forgotten victims who could not even escape the disasters. To reach the global perspective, she also incorporates metatextual materials, the sentences of different authors from different cultures and different languages (Sajko, "Songplay" 1ff.). Interventions such as these are not just a part of the usual and common multilingual practices recognised in immigrant theatre as an author's "performative mechanism of constructing and reflecting their new audiences" (Meerzon and Pewny 2) but rather an expression of the playwright's multiple identities constructed in the process of migration. Her communication with the audience is a peculiar exchange of identities and rethinking the positions of the centre and margin.

Try to understand how it actually works
this, when I am showing something and you are watching something
while being certain you are watching me,
when you are actually watching yourself
when you are collapsing into your abyss,
while believing that is me who falls,
you pity me pitting yourself
you despise me despising yourself
and so on… (Sajko, "Pjesma grada" 9)

Once deprived of her language and its speaker's audiences and in a constant state of cultural negotiating (Meerzon 2011), Sajko, an immigrant artist, invents new means of communication and expression and reinvents her language, counting on multilingual audiences. "When one goes," said Sajko, "especially when one goes to another language, one is necessarily changed. We are not the same in each language. We enter other worlds, adapt to them, and become other people through other languages. We think differently in other languages, feel different, and are strange to ourselves, and it takes time to reinvent us in our own eyes." (Sandić)

For the unique opportunity of intellectuals and artists in exile to create a new self, Edward Said argues that such a marginal position also brings a kind of privilege (Said, "Intellectual Exile"). I would add that a particular challenge, privilege, and opportunity is the impact of immigrant artists on the exiled country and vice versa within the mutual intercultural influences. Ivana Sajko understands such opportunity as an ethical responsibility and insists on using her recognised voice to speak for the voiceless immigrants. Her participation in the German theatre realm contributes to the "culture transformed by migration" in its mainstream, warning about the isolated, separable, and marginal immigrant narratives. The critical importance of her writing is the engagement and advocacy for large groups of unprivileged immigrants who cannot reinvent themselves in another language. Consequently, they cannot participate in the new culture and not even speak for themselves. That weak and helpless, the weasels from her *Songplay* find in her theatrical creativity and intellectual activism an emphatic helper who understands the experience of losing her language very well.

Yana Meerzon explores the poetics of exile through the process of remaking identity deeply dependent on the artist's social, economic, and personal exilic conditions. Such conditions vary from survival breakout from war, disasters, or political oppression to personal choice of a new place for work, retirement, or even individual tourism. It is clear that there are significant differences between the gravity of different conditions. However, they all share a sudden and sharp clash between two different languages, cultures and social environments. Each one of those adaptation experiences is hard and traumatic, and a vast number of them are unsuccessful. Some of such failures end tragically. Ivana Sajko points to them in the *Song of the City*. Her immigrant is an artist and "man without enough credit to call mother on the day of his own death, and to tell her something short, beautiful, and inaccurate" (Sajko, "Pjesma grada" 32) divided between his impossibility to return and impossibility to stay and go further, stuck in the permanent moment of his helplessness:

> and you look into the city, into night, into yourself,
> into the broader perspective of your own failure,
> and you firmly decide you will return after all
> and you firmly decide you will not return after all.
> (Sajko, "Pjesma grada" 25-26)

The complexity of the immigrant's identity representation through "post-immigrant theatre", as mentioned by Azadeh Sharifi on particular examples in Germany, needs accordingly complex interpretation and appropriate terminology (Sharifi 326-327). In other words, here, we should distinguish the levels of inclusion of Ivana Sajko and her immigrant characters and apply different criteria for the analysis of her exilic writing and her chosen examples of coping with traumas. Regardless of such differences, the emphasis is placed here on her ethical writing rooted in solidarity and recognition. Ivana Sajko belongs to something other than the category of exile artists speaking for her diasporic audience and community. Neither does she insist on creating a specific minority narrative through multilingual and intercultural encounters. Intercultural, in this formation, refers to the variety of dynamics between the Croatian author and her German audience fostered by migration and contextualised in the broader global cultural environment.

She is a self-aware author addressing the globalised audience in her new homeland with excellent translations in their first language. However, her chosen topics speak about her complex and extended process of successfully reinventing her work in a new language and new culture. Furthermore, she uses extreme and radical examples of unsuccessful transitions of the weak and helpless to generate "dynamic empathy" (Czertok 7) or even "radical empathy" (Carneiro 36), already described as the decisive intervention of the immigrant performances. Such an approach adds impressiveness, credibility, authenticity, and efficiency to her plays. Aside from such ethical engagement, her German plays witness the author's personal transition toward hybridity and exilic identity. Her plays contribute to more subtle diversifying the conversation on what we call immigrant or exile theatre in post-immigrant and PostHeimat (Tinius and Totah) German cultural landscape.

Emma Cox summed up the audience's reaction to the immigrant theatre in the question: "Is it by/about them or is it by/about us?" meaning that "an audience may mostly comprise people for whom the representation of migration is a story of others or otherness, or it may mostly comprise people who perceive the work as about their own community" (Cox 27). For such straightforwardness, Sajko offers the new possibility – both options together. Her concept of interconnections and interdependencies in the world and humanity is always about us. Moreover, nothing better induces the perception of us than a reflection on others. Writing about the immigrants in Europe, she is writing about European society and culture. The way of integration for Ivana Sajko is not adapting to the new culture, becoming "quiet, invisible, and odourless" and "not disrupting the status quo" (Carneiro 33) of the host culture. On the contrary, she performs loudly and visibly, disturbing the host culture with her questions as she used to do in Croatia. The brief consideration of her previous work emphasises the role of ethics. I use the term ethics to describe Sajko's dramaturgical strategy of asking questions, which brings engagement and responsibility into focus. Not uncommonly for her plays, such questioning is also intrinsically philosophical. Writing about the "dramaturgies of exile", Freddie Rokem reminds of Aristotle's understanding of "the ontological instability" of the artwork as the capacity crucial for the "inherent ethical authority of artistic practices" (Rokem 6, emphasis added). Precisely that way, the scope of Sajko's questions in her German playwriting discussed here includes the questioning of migration, identity, humanity, art, marginality,

victimisation, oppression… and leads to the conclusion, and even to statement, that "the fall of a person is greater than art" (Sajko, "Pjesma grada" 32). As the answer to Sajko's questions on the reach of the art in society and human lives, the character in *The Song of the City* declares: "Compared to any art I am a giant" (Sajko, "Pjesma grada" 33).

The purpose of focusing in this article on the significant metaphor of "the fall of a person" is, first of all, to describe the mode in which Sajko's playwright ethics acts. The second aspect concerns her philosophical discourse, while the double immigrant context (of the author and of the characters) underlines her social engagement. In this particular instance, she prioritises basic humanity over art, pointing to the deployment of the author's ethical reflections in new circumstances. The context of exile, with its already discussed aspects of reinventing the identity through the transition from a previous to a new language, culture, and self, offers new possibilities for reading and understanding Sajko's playwriting. Sajko steadily uses the metaphor of death for departures and exodus. In *Song of the City*, the picture of the fall from the bridge elevates such a metaphor to the point of canonisation of the failed immigrants' attempts to cross the bridge between the previous and new. That failure of the person, moreover the artist, outgrows the performance itself, opening at the same time the possibility for the rise of the art as the ethical intervention. In Sajko's words:

> I take with me all that has made man a bridge,
> To stand and stand and stand and bleed,
> I take with me all that has made man a performance
> to act he is lesser than his own tragedy,
> because today I am immense,
> today I am inimitable,
> today I collapse for the last time. Like a bridge. (Sajko, "Pjesma grada" 33)

Conclusion: The Impacts

This article discusses the new features noticeable in the plays of Ivana Sajko written during her emigration. Such an approach may breed intriguing new questions about the plays. For example, what is the impact of her ethical interventions on the German theatrical landscape, and what are these plays' contributions to Croatian contemporary drama and theatre? Therefore, the analysis of the further reception both in Germany and Croatia should be essential and recommended.

This article mainly relies on the broadly unquestioned concepts of "post-immigrant theatre" (Sharifi) and "migratory aesthetics" (Bal). In both cases, the impacts and influences of the theatre in exile act from the periphery to the mainstream or "from the edges to the centre" (Lehmann 33). According to Sharifi, "post-immigrant" denotes a transnational perspective in societies transformed by migration and representation of the underrepresented narratives (Sharifi 396) in German culture, which already self-defines itself through its PostHeimat concept. The influence of Ivana Sajko's plays presented here goes both ways toward her immediate environment and the broader context. I argue here that they contribute to the contemporary German theatre not only as part of immigrant or post-immigrant literature but as the authentic voice of the new German literature. Targeting the German audience through its ethical engagement, these plays contribute to the social and cultural shaping of German society. Especially in the case of immigrant artists, such a strong accent on ethical intervention in society inevitably presents a kind of political act. At the same time, one cannot neglect the possible impacts of these plays on diasporic audiences of migrants in Germany and abroad. It is reasonable to suppose also an impact on the Croatian audience. Such an opportunity to influence the audiences beyond linguistic and cultural borders, which Yana Meerzon recognises as the unique opportunity of the exilic artist, I understand here as the ability to operate through the broader cultural conventions. A growing emphasis in recent research on hybridised European societies transformed by migrations pays more and more attention to the aesthetic aspects of such changes. I note that Ivana Sajko's German plays contribute to such new aesthetics through their ethical questions and answers in this global discussion. Responses such as these represent the authentic impact and influence on the adopted country's culture and the global reshaping of art affected by transnationality. The new features of these plays, induced by the specific position of the immigrant

artist, function here both as the medium for the author's self-reimagining in the new environment and for re-affirming the adopted community.

To conclude, *The Song of the City* and *Songplay* by Ivana Sajko represent the shift in her playwriting shaped by her immigrant position, which opens notably more expansive space for her ethical engagement through the performing art.

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The Space Between

MISCHA TWITCHIN

Abstract: The question of exile is especially complex when one is still "in one's own country", especially if claims of national identity do not align with recognition of citizenship. Regarding the cultural space between Russia and Estonia, this becomes ever more acute with the war of aggression against Ukraine. In two of her plays, *My Estonian Grandmother* and *F*** the War* [Х** войне]. *Ukraine. Letters from the Front*, the Russian-Estonian theatre maker, Julia Aug, both reflects on and intervenes in the dynamics of cultural and legal narrative characterising the fraught personal and political entanglements of inner and external exile. Resisting the demands and expectations of external borders, Aug's work evokes a field of tension where exile is explored publicly through the medium of theatre, broaching the possibilities of an "interspace" (François Jullien) that challenges claims to "identity" in European cultural politics. In thinking about "epistemic injustice" (Karen Fricker), my paper will discuss how Aug's plays bring to light multidirectional questions of cultural memory, giving voice to those exiled in the histories through which they are still to be heard.

"Airplane, airplane, take me away." (Julia Aug, *My Estonian Grandmother*)

Please imagine making a paper airplane for yourself and then keep it before your mind's eye while reading the following discussion of a play, *My Estonian Grandmother*, by the contemporary Russian-Estonian theatre maker Julia Aug.[1]

Although we do not need passports to travel between the past and the present, this does not mean there are no borders between them – even if that modern pharmakon, the internet, makes everything appear simultaneously accessible in the virtual possibility of the digital. As we have known since the *Odyssey*, while we may return to a place of departure, we cannot return to its time; one arrives too late to meet oneself again as one was, let alone to meet others with whom one has not aged together. The experience of exile belongs as much to time as it does to space. Indeed, the importance of this shared experience of embodied time – with

1 I am grateful to Märt Meos, managing director of the Estonian theatre project, Vaba Lava, for making the script of this as yet unpublished work available to me; and to Liise Abel, at the Estonian Theatre Agency, for giving me a copy of the English translation by Peeter Tammisto that was used when I saw a performance of the play at the annual Estonian Theatre Festival in Tartu in 2019.

its sense of "belonging" – is evidenced in the formulae that we have for highlighting the anomaly of meeting someone again who "does not look a day older", who "has not aged a bit"; or with whom one picks up the thread of a conversation "as if it was only yesterday", even if, in fact, years have passed. As Marc Augé observes: "It is in seeing the face again of someone we have long 'lost sight of' that we sometimes become aware of having aged"; that is, the relation to our own bodies through time is also mediated by relations with others. It is in the image I see of myself reflected in others that I can affirm that "I have aged, therefore I am" (Augé 67-69).

This relation between different times marks questions of identity and has been historically written into forms of state violence when enacted at national borders where the question of one's age is attested by the passport that is demanded. Here the personal and the historical are often out of joint. During the Soviet era, for instance, the Baltic states were annexed into the post-war Russian empire, and the past affirmation of independent nations, promulgated in the Versailles Treaty, was transformed into an unofficial history of the region. A border – with the famous Iron Curtain – was inscribed between past and present, public and private, official and unofficial, affecting lives as literally as the restriction on passports to travel between "East" and "West".

In Soviet times also, there were special passports that offered only one-way border crossings – an exit with no right of return. Indeed, in these circumstances, the departure was conditional upon foregoing any expectation of coming home. In this case, the remembered past was sometimes the only possession that someone could take with them into exile; a past no longer in continuity with the life of friends and family, where "then" and "there" was cut off from "here" and "now" – or even, in the claim of the state, from the future. At the heart of this external exile in both time and place was an internal exile in the form of trauma.

There is a sense, however, in which art – including theatre – provides a kind of passport between the past and its own future in the present. The fictional crossing of such borders occurs, not least, by means of translation. But this is an ambiguous consolation for those forced into exile from their home and their mother tongue – as when this language is often not passed on to children or grandchildren and new "national" identities form in a diaspora. This loss is returned to several times in Aug's play, as the question is posed by different people of what it means

to be an Estonian without speaking Estonian.[2] The recognition of difference in the affirmation of identity, however, makes complex the claims of language in naming borders between past and present, history and memory. The usual story of exile – of arriving in a new country ("to start one's life again"), becoming an immigrant, a refugee, a "bloody foreigner" (in the eloquence of English); always in danger of being told to "go back to your own country" by those who have never needed to leave their own and who often have little sense of the political violence involved – is turned inside out in Aug's testimony to her own experience of "belonging" despite (at least, at the time of her play) being refused the recognition of an Estonian passport.

Aug's play poses a question of the very relation between the three terms in its title that, taken together, appears to offer its own answer. For this title does not simply constitute a description but implicitly addresses the relation between personal history and that of the nation state. Being spoken for by both family members and state institutions (whether at school or at borders) becomes a form of testimony that is challenged by speaking for oneself and, indeed, for one's family – in contrast to speaking for the state in whose name a passport is issued. Here the question is implied as to who is recognised – and by whom? – as Estonian between "me" and "my grandmother"? How is this formalised in the question of "my Estonian passport" or "my Estonian citizenship", as this describes an experience of exile within one's own country – or, at least, within the country with which one identifies? *My Estonian Grandmother* refers, after all, to the grand-daughter – to Julia Aug herself – and her experience of being denied the recognition accorded by an Estonian passport. If the grandmother is Estonian, why should the grand-daughter not be? According to the post-Soviet constitution (in the restoration of pre-Soviet sovereignty), Aug would be recognised as Estonian in virtue of being a direct descendent of a citizen of the interwar republic. In this law, the erstwhile border between the pre- and post-Soviet Republic is annulled – emblematised in the entitlement to a passport that then enacts a new historical border between the Soviet period and the restoration of independence.

Despite being Swedish by birth, or "nationality", Aug's grandmother was an Estonian citizen from being legally resident, in 1918, in a country (or national state) that had not previously existed – having been a province of the Swedish and then the Russian empires. As Neil Taylor notes, concerning the constitution that

2 In Estonia, the 14th March is national "mother tongue day", as this was inaugurated in 1995 (Taylor 13).

came into effect on 21st December 1920, "[e]very citizen had the right to choose their own nationality; in addition, the Russian, Swedish, and German languages could be used in any dealings with national government" (Taylor 44). Just as my own Estonian grandmother did not become any less Estonian in virtue of her subsequent British passport – being obliged to adopt this while herself in exile from a country that, after the war, again no longer officially existed (having been annexed as a Soviet Republic) – so Aug's grandmother remained Estonian, even as the whole country was, in a sense, in exile from itself during the Soviet occupation. Regarding this violence too, Aug reminds us that Russians were already victims of the Stalinist terror, the ambiguities of which she does not shy away from, presenting the story of her grandfather as an agent of the terror in Russia to which he himself then fell victim, being arrested and murdered in Leningrad in 1938.

Aug's play may be read alongside such analyses of the narrative forms of national cultural memory elaborated, for example, in the work of Peeter Tulviste and James Wertsch (*Journal of Narrative and Life History* 4(4), 1994); or, as here, by Marek Tamm, who begins one such discussion: "The question I want to address in this essay is quite a simple one, if not simplistic: what do Estonians remember of their past?" (Tamm 499) In a way, the question has already presupposed what is to be explained. After all, who are the Estonians already doing the remembering, such that they might identify themselves as belonging to this past as their own? Tamm does not suppose, however, that this is a past simply to be remembered. Rather, it is constructed in and by the very work of that remembering – citing, for instance, Homi Bhabha in recognising that "the nation is, indeed, 'a narrative strategy'" (Bhabha, 1990: 292; Tamm 511).

Remembering is selective, of course, and it tends to be forgotten that the constitution that provides post-Soviet Estonia with its legitimacy – as, indeed, a return from national exile with the restoration of the 1918 independence – did not confound citizenship and nationality. When Aug presents the story of the non-recognition of her right to a passport, in her experience with Estonian border guards, we see a curious inversion of the former Soviet era exile. By refusing to honour Aug's right – owing to her grandmother's Russian rather than West European exile during the Soviet era (Scene 1) – the state imposes a border between the identifications of citizenship and nationality (or so-called "ethnicity"). That the Estonian grandmother's exile was compounded by her having been subjected

to forced resettlement in Belarus during the Stalin era again suggests how complex questions of borders and belonging are. The grandmother could only return to Estonia under the aegis of post-Stalin "rehabilitation" – albeit thanks to Estonia being again part of a Russian empire – which further exposes the complexity of questions concerning this history's victims. While the "space between" one period of Estonian belonging and another is expanded for those whose grandparents returned from exile in the West, it is restricted for those whose mother tongue is Russian. National narratives of "identity" cut across individual stories, historically realigning the borders that enact forms of inclusion and exclusion (indeed, of life and death) in the recognition of citizenship that is inscribed in such exile.

Crucially, the question of belonging, of being recognised as Estonian, is not just a case of Aug's persona in the play expressing her personal feeling of identification with a "homeland" – and finding herself exiled from it in so far as her constitutional right to a passport (through her grandmother) is refused**.** The law, after all, is never simply what one might want it to be, as if it were a matter of wish-fulfilment. We hope that the law will be a protection against violence; but it is, in principle, a medium of and for the violence of law itself – enacted, for instance, through such legalised force as defined the relations between public and private in Soviet times (especially under Stalin). Regardless of her own feeling – concerning both nationality and justice – the issue that underlies Aug's play is her constitutional right to Estonian citizenship. In the refusal of this recognition, she becomes, in a sense, an exile in the country that she, nonetheless, calls her own.

Far from being simply a documentary drama, or a theatricalised autobiography, Aug's play interweaves the poetic with the actual, the historical with the contemporary, in a form of "dramaturgical innovation" that is characteristic of what Carol Martin has called a "theatre of the real". Introducing this term, Martin proposes: "Theatre of the real, also known as documentary theatre as well as docudrama, verbatim theatre, reality-based theatre, theatre of witness, tribunal theatre, nonfiction theatre, and theatre of fact, has long been important for the subjects it presents. More recent dramaturgical innovations in the ways texts are created and productions are staged sheds light on the ways theatre can form and be formed by contemporary cultural discourses about the real both on stage and off" (Martin 1).

As is suggested here by the plurality of theatrical forms cited by Martin (theatre of witness, verbatim theatre, etc.), such a contextualisation ("theatre of the real") does not mean reducing Aug's play to being simply an example of a genre. The play offers an assemblage of attitudes and narrative possibilities – Aug composes her text with diary entries, interviews, historical statements, and even a family recipe, as well as numbered scenes – through which the audience's assumptions about the legal and historical relationship between Estonian citizenship and exile are exposed, not only in terms of rights but of prejudices. This is not, of course, to deny the terrible impact of Soviet policies in terms of both political repression and cultural Russification. But, in what I would call a "theatre of testimony" (or, with Miranda Fricker [O.U.P., 2007], a theatre of "testimonial justice"), Aug presents us with questions of "belonging" that offer a contemporary counterpoint, in their specific time and place, to those of historical exile.

Aug has not invented the story of her Estonian grandmother, nor of her relation to the law that this family history represents. The play is factual not fictional – although it remains, of course, artificial in the sense that it is, precisely, artistic or theatrical distinct from being a journalistic report or a legal brief (examples of both are part of the play's material). Given that a successful performance makes a play appear coherent in the terms of its production, it is worth being reminded of the artificiality (or, precisely, the dramaturgy) of "real world" theatre, generating the appearance of, or identification with, its "authenticity". Even in "auto-theatre", as Patrice Pavis notes: "Stage performance and mise en scène, insofar as they are the spatio-temporal organisation of an action, shift and change the real elements, make them not just fictional (invented, or at least modified and unverifiable) but also staged, ludic, artistic…" (Pavis 22).

In one sense, I have been preparing for this reading *with* – as much as *of* – Aug's play all my life; even if it is only in the last decade or so that I have come to understand the constellation of circumstances that might lead me to say so. But in another sense, it is – or it will be – the future, rather than the past, that will have been preparing me for such a reading of *My Estonian Grandmother*. In its real significance, after all, the past has yet to have happened – its meaning belongs to the future anterior, to what will have been, rather than simply what was. When concerns such as questions of exile are not comprehended in and by the present (or even by the past-present), they remain open to being learnt from – and not only about – in the future-past. This touches on not simply my own past but, in-

deed, that of "my Estonian grandmother" – her past and my future, as a question of citizenship admitting a free movement between "nationalities". Distinct from exile, then, this could be a citizenship in and of what François Jullien calls "the space between" or "interspace".

Jullien advocates a sense that: "culture, by its nature, mutates and transforms… a culture that no longer transforms is dead… transformation lies at the root of culture, which is why we cannot establish cultural characteristics or speak of a culture's identity" (34). Rather than the familiar dynamic of identity and difference, Jullien argues for what he calls the "divide". It is "[i]n the *interspace* that [such transformation] opens – the active, inventive *interspace* – [where] the divide prompts work because the two terms that stand apart in it, and that it holds face to face, will ceaselessly inquire into themselves in the resulting gulf. Each remains concerned with the other and does not close itself off. Perhaps this, and not a withdrawal into 'differences', would better serve a relation between cultures" (31). In this case, however, the "divide" is a form of conceptual ideal – albeit informed by, for example, the practice of translation – rather than a historical description of forms of border and their concomitant experiences of exile.

The ostensible concern with the "relation between cultures" is not simply between nations but also within them, just as the relation between history and memory concerns a mutual entailment. Regarding questions of language – of identification in and with languages – this necessarily concerns translation and translatability, a porosity of borders that is not defined by the demand for a passport. Aug's work, discussed here in English, is written in Russian and performed in Estonian. The subject of exile in this theatre of history and memory is played out "in that interspace where the translator can open one language by means of another, pull it from its conformity, call forth its capacities" (Jullien 42). As a matter of the "space between", this is signalled by the hyphen in "Russian-Estonian". Not one or the other – still less the exile of the one from (or even within) the other – but a relation *between* memory and history, civil society (theatre), and state (borders).

I had originally thought that this discussion would be accompanied by photographs of my grandmother's passports and my own; that is, both of our Estonian and British ones, from before the war and from after Brexit. But while writing, I came to think that exploring those images will be for a future occasion. For now, then, I have taken an example from Aug's play itself – to give at least one impres-

sion of its theatricalization of metaphor, beyond simply discursive paraphrase of the play's narrative. This image – which you were invited to keep in front of your mind's eye in the opening paragraph above – implies the limits of verbalisation, offering a translation of words into gesture. After all, this paper airplane will now be the bearer of your own memory of a play that you have not yet seen.

The gesture of making a paper airplane first appears in the play in a recollection of the grandmother's (Diary 4), from when she was a child, and is expressive of her awareness of her vulnerability in the world:

> **GRANDMOTHER:** I was seven or eight years old. My parents went to the fair in Vaivara and stayed there until dark. I was kind of scared and for something to do, I started folding paper airplanes. I was wearing a long linen nightgown. It was dim in the house. The nanny had gone to meet someone, and I made airplanes. Just like how my father taught me. Then I got up on a chair and launched an airplane into the air. It flew, did a loop the loop, and then disappeared into the darkness. I liked that a lot. I made airplanes and sang: '*airplane, airplane, take me flying*'. Such a song doesn't exist. I made up the tune myself. And then when I was scared, I repeated: '*airplane, airplane, take me flying*'.

In the play's final scene (Scene 11), this memory is itself recalled – but now signifying the testimonial structure of the play itself – as it is repeated by the grand-daughter (the "guest" in the script), where any affirmative recognition of the "space between" is eclipsed by the vulnerabilities of a "darkness" that is now produced by the state. Speaking to her lawyer, she asks:

> **GUEST:** Do you have a white sheet of paper?
> *The LAWYER makes a gesture to indicate that he doesn't have any. The GUEST takes a white sheet of paper from the suitcase and brings it to the LAWYER.*
> **LAWYER:** A white sheet of paper?
> **GUEST:** Yes.
> **LAWYER:** Sure. Here you go.
> *The LAWYER hands the sheet of paper to the GUEST.*
> **GUEST:** Thanks.

> *The GUEST carefully folds an airplane. She doesn't hurry. She smooths out all the folds properly. She stands up on a chair. She launches the paper plane into the theatre hall.*
> **GUEST:** Airplane, airplane, take me flying!

The question of "respect for the human person and the rule of law", as it is declared in the Charter of Paris (promulgated in November 1990, marking the end of the Cold War in Europe),[3] remains, of course, ambiguous for any "minority" in Europe today. Even in a Schengen Europe, transformed by the "freedom of movement", the experience of borders between being an exile and an emigrant, a refugee and an "undocumented" person, are powerful instances of state violence in defining who does – or does not – "belong".

The figure of flight in the paper airplane offers, perhaps, an image of hope, defying the gravity of a sense of hopelessness. In the refrain of the grandmother – "airplane, airplane, take me away" – the "me" refers to my fears, my anxieties, as much as my hopes. This sense of the wished-for contrasts with the conditions of exile – in their manifold forms – which underlie the relations between the three terms in the play's title, "my Estonian grandmother". If, with Carol Martin, we are considering a "theatre of the real", this is indeed to reflect on the space between real world implications and theatrical ones. It is also to rehearse future possibilities of the past in the present – indeed, in the presence of an audience. And so, I thank you (and especially the translators!) for your patience with my English, broaching a "space between" such different appeals of and to the (non-) identity of exile with this theatrical example of Aug's play.

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War and Era in Cities. Living with War

LASHA CHKHARTISHVILI

Abstract: Severe political and social problems of the 20th century received a response by the Georgian Theatre with a slight delay, however still in the 90-ies. It turned out that at the end of the second decade of the 21st century the problems that have been important in the 90-ies of the last century are still unresolved. In the art of new generation stage directors who emerged right in the period when Georgia was overwhelmed with wars and decomposed state institutions, distanced themselves from time and reflected important themes anew. These themes have not yet lost their importance now.

Georgia and the Georgian people have never been unfamiliar with war. The history of the Georgian nation is accompanied by the history of wars too. Georgians were either at war or engaged in agriculture for centuries. That is the reason why one of the symbols of Georgia is the monumental statue of "Mother of Kartli" (erected on Sololaki mountain in Tbilisi, 1500 years after the foundation of the capital, author: Elguja Amashukeli, 1966), who holds a sword in one hand (in order to attack the enemy) and a chalice of wine in the other (to meet guests). This monument, which has become a symbol of Tbilisi, accurately expresses the history and character of the Georgian nation.

Theatre reflects life, but wars prevented the theatre from functioning. In 1795, the Georgian King Erekle II was defeated by the Iranian Shah Agha-Mohammed-Khan in the battle of Krtsanisi. On the front line at war, there were Georgian theatre figures who encouraged the warriors and fought too. Almost all the actors died in this war, that's why it took half a century to restore the Georgian theatre. Today, in the old district of Tbilisi, there is a memorial to the Georgian actors who died in the Krtsanisi War (1795). Since then, Georgia has gone through many wars, and the theme of war and emigration has been a leitmotif in the repertoire of the Georgian theatre because it has become a part of the Georgian people's life.

Even today, in the 21st century, the war does not lose its relevance and the Georgian people have lived with it since the day of gaining independence. Today, 20 per cent of Georgia's territory is occupied by Russia; the war of August 2008 deprived Georgia of dozens of villages and turned its citizens into IDPs in their own country. Even today, the ghost of the war lives near the occupation line: the

war has not gone anywhere, and people live in anticipation of stirring up the quietened embers. The directors of the new generation, who were born in the period of wars, social hardships, and general stress, have experienced everything that they later reflected in their plays not only as a childhood nightmare, as a ghost of the past, but as modernity, the real situation of today.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the directors born in independent Georgia (after 1991) show us the inheritance of the previous century on stage and analyse the results that they themselves experienced. The war, the era they inherited, and the city that greeted them became a personal trauma for them and for the entire generation.

War, era, and city became the main concerns of the new generation of directors. To talk about acute problems, they turn to documentary sources, search and find people who have survived the war, and a new original theatre text is created based on their story.

In the latest Georgian theatre, for the directors of the new generation, verbatim has become the most convenient and successful way to communicate with the audience in order to convey the problem with more intensity, drama and realism.

Post-war traumatic experiences were reflected in Data Tavadze's play *Women of Troy*, performed at the Royal District Theatre in 2013. Three years later (in 2016), the same creative group at the same theatre presented the audience *Prometheus-25 Years of Independence* which depicts the era from Georgia's independence (1991) to the present day. In 2018, Davit Khorbaladze and Mikheil Charkviani performed *Dead Cities* which describes the life of cities devoid of life. In 2022, a few days after the start of the war in Ukraine, Data Tavadze's premiere *Mother War* was held at the Ozurgeti Theatre, which was staged by the young director Saba Aslamazishvili. In February 2022, the Sandro Akhmeteli Theatre in Tbilisi offered the audience the play *Bad Roads* by Irakli Gogia, written by a contemporary Ukrainian playwright Natalia Vorozhbit based on the script *Bad Roads*. All the listed performances are according to the plays of modern playwrights and staged by young directors both at the capital and regional theatres.

Women of Troy by Data Tavadze and Dato Gabunia is not only the best-recognized work but also one of the best productions performed in the latest Georgian theatre, which has been in the active repertoire of the Royal District Theatre for many years. David Gabunia worked on the collage text of the play, and it is

not only a new edition of Euripides's *The Trojan Women*, only its one fragment is used in it. The group of authors of the play created a completely new text for the play based on documentary sources and memories of women who went to war. At the same time, the playwright used fragments of texts by Kawabata, Wilde, and Bond.

In the play, only women speak about the war and the mourning caused by the war, and they are portrayed as spiritually strong, with great inner strength. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, war has become a way of life, which we often forget, and therefore we do not know "how to talk about mourning?". This question is asked repeatedly in the play, but they still tell about mourning – with pain and feeling.

In the play *Women of Troy*, three main lines were highlighted - war, mourning, and women. Like Euripides's characters, the real characters brought to life by the actresses in the play *Women of Troy* became heroines because they lost everyone and everything. "I am not proud of myself, but I am the heroine. And my mother is too. My mother and I are heroines – as we have endured, as we have not broken down, as we have survived and saved the children as well. This is why we are heroines," says the character of actress Salome Maisashvili. Data Tavadze found a new way and language to talk about the war. His actors distanced themselves from the real characters. The new text (even in terms of structure) brought a new form. Regarding this issue, director Data Tavadze concludes in a conversation with us: "On the one hand, there is something rational that we want to focus on, what we want to talk about, and then we start thinking about how we want to talk about it, how to express it. It depends on how angry we are about what we want to talk about. For example, when we were standing, we knew that it should be very close to the audience because you can't shout these texts, I don't want these texts to sound so that the audience on the tiers can hear what these people are talking about. Because this text cannot have a loud expression. This text must have an intimate form, otherwise, you will not understand. If there is no whispering space, nothing will be said".

In 2016, on the 25th anniversary of Georgia's independence, the same group premiered a new play, *Prometheus-25 years of Independence*. Data Tavadze and Dato Gabunia's joint play-research is based on fragments, memories, and associations of the 25-year history of Georgia's independence. The performance becomes a single chain of documentary material and literary texts and acquires the

form of a destructive "play", moreover, that of a theatrical text. As in *Women of Troy*, the creative team offered us a mix of documentary and artistic text (the play uses not only fragments of Aeschylus's tragedies but also texts by Howard Barker, Augusto Boal, and Franz Kafka).

The "play" is based on the actors' real stories and narration. The characters and the gained independence of Georgia are peers. Their biography is the history of independent Georgia. The young actors of the Royal District Theatre tell important details of their biographies and those of their generation which are closely intertwined. As the Georgian critic Tamar Bokuchava wrote, "the performance is a kind of civil manifesto of the young troupe, which appreciates 25 years of experience. At the same time, it is a reflection on the nature and essence of life, theatre, culture, man, youth, the chain of discoveries and disappointments that accompanies the process of growing up". The play revealed the vision of the independent Georgian generation on the era, their attitude towards the history of independence. The reality, which became an artistic fiction in the play, is mutilated, as well as their life, imagination about the homeland, the era...

The generation born in the year of the declaration of independence of Georgia is looking for its own independence with its peer homeland, remembers and forgets the experience.

Based on the history of people, the play also shows the history of a country that gained its independence but has hardly learned anything. It seems we slowly and painfully reflexively get out of a difficult situation and go back to the dark and bad past. Prometheus and independent Georgia have one most important thing in common – a painful fate. Patches of history gradually enter the play, old and familiar, seemingly insignificant stories, turning into an epic story that describes the Georgian story of national movement, displacement, civil war, blackmail, hunger, and violence.

Together with the characters of the play, the audience also remembers the rebirth of their own and their homeland, the era, pain, joy, almost all sensations and feelings come alive into the minds of the audience and onto the stage. The sign of equality between the country and the generation becomes more intense; the suffering of the generation equals the suffering of the country. It seems that these two phrases: "Remember!" and "Forget!" follow the whole play as a refrain. Regarding this, we asked the director, "If I have to remember, why should I forget?" To which the director answers: "Because one of the ways not to be free

is to forget, the form of liberation is one of the ways. Philosophically, it is to face reality, face it, acknowledge reality, and then continue to exist. Societies, that recognized the past became liberated societies, turned their eyes to it. And we never acknowledge our past, we always forget it. Therefore, we make the same mistake and forget about it. This attitude can be seen in everything". Just like Prometheus goes against freedom, he wants to be punished, our society is also motivated to forget forever, that is, it does not want freedom.

The play *Dead Cities*, staged by Mikheil Charkviani at the Poti Drama Theatre in 2018, tells about the tragic fate of dead and half-empty cities; the play was created by the young playwright and director Davit Khorbaladze based on the stories of the actors and residents of the town of Poti. The problems posed in the play are generalized and gain a global scale. The authors tell the story of abandoned, ruined, lifeless cities, which were handed down from the older generation to the younger one during the period of independence.

Young artists have created a play on a specific, local problem, which completely goes beyond one particular location and acquires a global scale. The inhabitants of the small town, the characters of this dramatic work, ask for help. The abandoned town, no more, no less reminds us of the Chernobyl tragedy, and this parallel is not accidental in the dramaturgical text. Here once again director Mikheil Charkviani's aspiration to shock the audience and, most importantly, the authorities with his presentation-performance was revealed. Its purpose is to expose and publicize the problem and demand its elimination.

The director talks to us about the problems of dead cities and awakens a dormant sense of civic activity in us. The spectrum of problems also includes the inert civil society, which is called to talk about problems. The director tries to find a way out, and with this deeply social play, he concludes through research that talking always makes sense, even if you think you cannot change anything just by talking.

Dead Cities is not a traditional, classical dramaturgy in its structure, though, obviously, this text evokes emotion when heard from the stage and takes an artistic form. Davit Khorbaladze's text *Dead Cities* also contains musical elements. Repetition of certain phrases not only enhances the emotion (what you want to say) but also acquires a kind of musicality. The author of the music is Davit Khorbaladze.

Director Misha Charkviani came up with an original (in the universal sense of the word) scenic solution to the original text, which brought the message and the form of its delivery into a synthesis and gave the audience a real catharsis. He placed the audience in a vicious circle, in which the actors as citizens became individuals and locked in this circle. The circle rotates, the characters of the performance change places, but the public (the audience) remains in one place, just like the artists return to the original location. It is a vicious and unbreakable circle, a kind of wheel of fate that travels through space and time and brings everyone back to the starting point.

Actor, director, and playwright Data Tavadze started working (thinking) on the play *Mother War* in August 2008 during the Russia-Georgia war while he was on holiday in Tserovani and very close to the front line. Traces of the author's feelings and experiences were also reflected in the play. *Mother War* is the winner of the 2013 Austrian-Georgian project Conversation without Borders and New Georgian Play. In 2013, a theatrical reading of *Mother War* was organized in Kyiv as part of the British-Ukrainian-Georgian project New Writing just when Russia annexed Crimea and declared a hybrid war on Ukraine. The world premiere of the play took place in 2015 in the German city of Zittau and was in the theater's active repertoire for two years.

The first stage interpretation of *Mother War* in Georgia was performed by the director Saba Aslamazishvili at the Ozurgeti Aleksandre Tsutsunava Professional Drama Theatre. With this performance, the experimental space of the Ozurgeti Theatre was opened. The premiere of the play was set against the backdrop of the ongoing war in Ukraine. Not only did this fact revive the wound of the war but made it even more acute; proximity to it, direct or indirect influence and, unfortunately, a reminder to the audience of its severity and relevance as an eternal theme (war as a global or local event).

Data Tavadze and Saba Aslamazishvili sometimes tell the story of war and people at war with humour and irony, especially in Zina (Tamar Mdinaradze) and Manana's (Shorena Gvetadze) dialogues. The severity of the war is softened by their slightly absurd dialogues. Data Tavadze generalizes the problem from local, almost documentary, concrete facts and gives it a global context. The director tries not to go beyond the local tragedy and to preserve the authenticity of the story, however, in the finale, he still cannot avoid mentioning the world wars, which Tamar Mdinaradze (Zina) reads in a declamatory manner, first in a gallant

tone, and then in an lethargic tone. In the play, we can see the metamorphosis of people against the backdrop of war, their degradation, their complete nakedness, and the awakening of dormant complexes. People hate, betray and detest each other, but they are still together because the war forces them to unite, and that's why they get used to and even love each other (Zina and Tina's kiss and dialogue episode) ... In Saba Aslamazishvili's play, we come across different generations, war veterans and war debutants. Kindness disappears completely in people of war, and only the instinct of self-survival, selfishness dominates. "People turn into beasts, like dragonflies into locusts" – Data Tavadze's really outstanding metaphor is logically and emotionally played out in the play. The scientific story of this transformation of dragonflies into locusts unfolds parallel to the events of the play. In the finale, the artistic metaphor and the process of turning people into beasts intersect.

The world created by scenographers Tamar Okhikian and Saba Aslamazishvili seems to be in contrast with war, it is not resolved in grey or blood colour, but in motley, brighter than dark. The steep ascent which Tina (Tsitsi Butkhrikidze) climbs despite many unsuccessful attempts, has a symbolic and metaphorical load in the scenography. The viewer is exposed to the physical suffering of a young woman who is obsessed with climbing this hill because this path is the only way to survive physically. At the edge of the stage space, as if imperceptibly switched on, the television stands as a symbol of the only means of connecting with the outside world, but it has lost its function, is out of order, the connection with the world is cut off, the broadcast is turned off... One original musical theme by composer Vakhtang Gvakharia is the leitmotif of the individual episodes of the performance. The composer's music of club sound is the music of war, which expresses the tempo-rhythm of war and echoes the chaos of war. It is on this musical theme that Shorena Gvetadze (Manana) offers us a free dance, which is more like improvised one. It's that moment of desperation when you force yourself to still dance, still move, still live...

From the stage of the Tbilisi Akhmeteli Drama Theatre, they tell us true stories from a few years ago, which relate to the most urgent and acute problem for today's world - war. This is a topic that, unfortunately, is relevant now and at this moment, when the war is raging in our neighbouring and friendly country Ukraine, which affects us directly and indirectly. The artistic director of the Akhmeteli Theatre, Irakli Gogia, performed the works consisting of several short stories by

modern Ukrainian author Natalya Vorozhbit at the Georgian Theatre shortly after the start of the new war in Ukraine; the actors of the Akhmeteli Theatre, who brought the chronicle of the war with its reality to the audience through documentary methods. In the course of the play, the audience is speechless, saddened, and with great attention and interest watches the stage on which the heroes of the war live in the war. It seems that the actors are not playing anything, they skilfully revive Natalya Vorozhbit's characters on stage, so that they manage to involve the audience in the course of the performance until the end.

Irakli Gogia's play combines several of Natalia Vorozhbit's short stories, whose stage and screen versions existed before its staging in Tbilisi. The version of the Akhmeteli Theatre is radically different from them in terms of mood, form, and atmosphere. At the edges of the stage of the Akhmeteli Theatre, there are several windows, and in its depth, there are iron barrels in which the fire is burning. Here we can see a dilapidated and damaged bus stop, a waiting room for passengers. The scenography is in dark tones, although it is implied that the environment in which the citizens of Donbas lived before the war was bright and colourful, but the war here, together with the people, changed everything. The creators of this atmosphere are artists Irakli Biliseishvili and Ana Kobulashvili who meticulously and accurately conveyed the visual side of the war and, most importantly, the mood, which is logically combined with the tunes of the composer Mehran Mirmiri's original music. Irakli Gogia portrays, on the one hand, the people who were finally corrupted by the war, deprived their sense of dignity, lost self-respect and integrity, but, on the other hand, he shows people who care for each other, who still have the strength and ability to save themselves, restore their dignity, to satisfy self-esteem. This is how the new generation sees the worst problems of the last century in the Georgian theatre. The directors of the new generation create a new Georgian theatre, both in terms of form and content, which is based on a new deconstructed theatre text. The new generation is hurt and worried by both the past and the present. The problems created by the past era do not lose their intensity and relevance even today. The wars, the era in which they were born, grew up and live in, turned out to be the most degrading in this generation; and a city that was virtually empty of young people. They deal with these topics with spiritual and physical suffering, speak loudly and courageously, offer ways to solve them, but the problem, unfortunately, remains a problem.

In the Creative Siege: Ukrainian Dramaturgy in Exile

SASHO OGNENOVSKI

Abstract: The ancient poet Ovid said: "Only the mind cannot be sent into exile!" The Ukrainian war opened tragic streams in the modern world. One of them is the human rights devastation and the declining of the art. In this year's edition of The International Theater Festival in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, five Ukrainian playwrights: Natalia Vorozjbit, Tetiana Kitsenko, Natalia Blok, Andriy Bondarenko, and Neda Nezhdana opened the wounds of the Ukrainian war in their plays. Being in exile is not a matter of political expulsion. It is a sort of "dream of the glorious return", as Salman Rushdi said. The reading of the Ukrainian playwrights in this festival and the discussions of leaving the devastated homeland was very inspirational, mostly because of the playwright styles inspired by the experiences of the people down under the siege. But the theater is a weapon, as Augusto Boal said, and it is worth fighting for changing the reality. This paper researches the themes and approaches to the spiritual and physical suffering in Ukraine, being in the exile in their own country and being in exile in other countries.

Introduction or Exile as a New Inspiration

Exile is a very powerful expression of repression, autocracy, and, more recently, war. This existential expression, woven into the work of authors who left their country to give their literature a better life, is very specific and very complex, mostly because it offers another angle of seeing the events that political circumstances forced the artist, who took a critical stance, out of its borders. In the last century, a large number of authors wrote a part of their work outside their countries under spiritual and physical coercion: Bertolt Brecht, Theodor W. Adorno, Thomas Mann, Stefan Zweig, Robert Musil, Peter Weiss, etc., and more recently, Belarusian authors Alhierd Bacharevic and Julia Cimafiejeva. As an illustration, we can also mention the legendary poet and playwright Joseph Brodsky, who was expected to attend the world event "Struga Evenings Poetry" in my country until the last moment, but due to his status as a refugee, unfortunately, he could not appear. Some of the listed authors are also playwrights. Dramatic art, with its synthetic nature, enables the greatest reception of the critical aspect of the author himself towards autocracy and repression. What inspires me to write this text is

the gruesome repetition of war, which even in the twenty-first century throws artists out of their territories. Bertolt Brecht, in exile, fleeing from the invasion of Nazism in Scandinavia and the USA, wrote some of his essential plays (*Mr Puntila and His Man Matti*, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, *The Good Person of Szechwan*), Peter Weiss after exile, wrote the extraordinary play of 1000 pages, *The Aesthetics of Resistance*, and in the contemporary military invasion and political repressions, one of the most vocal Belarusian poets and prose writers, Alhierd Bacharevich, leaves Belarus, where the revolutionary dramatization of his novel *Dogs of Europe* took the Belarusian Free Theatre into exile. The play also had a huge success at many international theatre festivals.

How much inspiration is exile? Do playwrights writing in exile have a different reception of events and situations in their homelands? Here, I will quote the great poet and dramatist Joseph Brodsky who said, "If there is anything good in exile, it is that it teaches one humility. It accelerates one's thrift into isolation, an absolute perspective. Into the condition at which all one is left with is oneself and one's own language, with nobody or nothing in between. Exile brings you overnight where it would normally take a lifetime to go". Of course, exile brings a great deal of indignation to playwrights, and those motives are very recognizable in their works created during that period. But the inspiring range of these works also has a perfectly resigning aspect that is somehow mixed with pacifism as a message that is unfortunately redundant even in the twenty-first century. When we compare the exile of playwrights during the Second World War and that of Ukrainian authors during the still ongoing war, we can see the thematic diversity. Namely, Brecht wrote about the war with a diametrically different aesthetic from today's Ukrainian authors. His critical attitude towards repression and military interventions has an ironic convergence, as Ukrainian dramatists deal with war here and now. This war in their works is directly metabolised in all their motive aspects, in all their lines and characters, and also in the stylistic and formal design. Ukrainian author Lyuba Yakimchuk says, "During the war, the short forms are best because we live on the run and in fragments. There is no time for the reading of novels. There is no relief in the literature; the relief is in the news: the Russian arsenals are being destroyed, and weapons are supplied to Ukraine. But memes, songs, and poems – all of these still work. These texts form a collective narrative" (Zabrisky). This indicates a direct indicative of the war and spiritual life of the dramatists, but it also indicates a perceptiveness that is aimed at the

future actions. Playwrights also write in their countries during the war. Exile does not mean only spatial separation from someone's country. Some of the Ukrainian playwrights oscillate between the countries where they immigrated and their own country which is part of their spiritual matrix. Those inspiring exchanges are integrated into their plays that do not have the distance of rationalizing the war nightmare because, unfortunately, the war is not yet over.

There is a big difference in the critical aspects of the playwrights whose exile was inspired by the political situation in the country and the aspects of the playwrights who fled from the direct danger of a military conflict where, in addition to their creative world, their lives are also in danger. Looking at the life courses and creative fluctuations of the authors who went into exile, not agreeing with the regime of the country that is their homeland, and of the playwrights from Ukraine whose escape speaks of a fleeing from a direct military invasion, we will be faced with a thematic reshaping of their works. The critical attitude of the Ukrainian authors melts into the motivational determination that leads to their human rights and direct military repression. On one hand, these motives are about restorative justice, which aims to restore the rule of law and peace, which refers to the "right to have rights" and the right to social peace and historical truth. (Saada) On the other hand, we can consider exile as an escape from the devastated state without it being spatially abandoned. The writer Iya Kiva says about writing under siege, "Can I write? Yes and no. On the one hand, I prefer that my story and the stories of my loved ones are not told by others, like the Russian authors who started writing poems during the first weeks of the invasion. But I have been forcing myself to write rather than feeling an inner need; even short diary notes are incredibly tiring. I have also noticed that all my poems are about the inability to speak. This is true both on the thematic and architectonic levels, including pauses and a rather restricted range of ideas. The way I write now feels like a score of silence" (Zabrisky).

The Ukrainian Drama During the Time of Exile

The theatre festival of the National Theatre in Cluj-Napoca in Romania established a section of Ukrainian dramaturgy during the Russian invasion. Staged readings of the plays were performed: *Wartime Theater*, an omnibus composed of the plays by Natalya Vorozhbyt, Tetyana Kitsenko and Natalia Blok was directed by Yonut Karas, *Survivor Syndrome* written by Andriy Bondarenko, Neda Nezhdana, Tetyana Kitsenko, and Natalia Blok was directed by Stefania Pop Chursheu and *Maidan Inferno* based on the text of Neda Nezhdana was directed by Todor Lucianu.

The omnibus *Wartime Theatre* was composed of the plays where the opening play is the most cruelly direct and the most documentary in its way of thinking. A saxophonist who turns out to be a Ukrainian refugee based in Cluj-Napoca sets the stage by producing an ambulance alarm – or maybe it was a bomb threat warning – on his instrument as the audience enters the theatre's Studio Euphorion located in the western part of the National Theatre Cluj-Napoca (Rufolo). The stage represents naked or bandaged body parts hanging from wings. The actress is sitting in a barbed wire cage with a wooden frame; there is a photo of three small children in the corner. It is the woman's three sons, now grown-up, who are trapped in or near the city of Kyiv and with whom she gradually loses contact as the bombing worsens (Rufolo). The mother's monologue describes how her husband was offered a chance to escape the country by car with his three sons before the bombing began, but at the last minute something went wrong – she does not know what – and the four of them remained in Kyiv. Playwright Natalia Blok informed us that the work is autobiographical and now her sons are safe and she herself lives in Switzerland (Rufolo). In this omnibus, Natalya Vorozhbyt's play *Take out the Rubbish, Sasha* is particularly interesting. The drama centres on the vivid, mixed happy memories of Sasha's late husband/stepfather with the ongoing extremely affectionate relationship between mother and daughter. It begins with the preparation of the funeral table for the soldier Sasha and continues until the two women greet their resurrected Sasha who has been called back to battle. The psychological aspect of the play, which includes the inability to accept the physical disappearance of a loved one, is combined with the symbolic image of the eternal Ukrainian soldier fighting to defend his homeland. This gives the work a special surrealist perspective (Rufolo).

The play *Survivor's Syndrome* by young playwright Andriy Bondarenko was read in a stage symbolist constellation in which two actors played with large wooden blocks. The names of the destroyed Ukrainian cities are inscribed on the elongated blocks that are being built into a structure that eventually collapses (Rufolo). This is a poetic text, a stream of consciousness that begins with lines like: "We went to the cinema, drank beer and ate nuts [...] Our life is now a tomb of all the plans we had before." However, further on, the inner monologue becomes increasingly self-questioning: "The body doesn't need to know everything. Let him think he is alive." And "Fear makes us slaves. But we have lost our fear. They want to turn us into zombies, but our nation seems to understand that we must preserve our identity and treat it as a treasure, because being human is not being a zombie" (Rufolo).

Survivor Syndrome is the work of young Andriy Bondarenko who, in the discussion that followed, said it was the result of starting to describe in words exactly what he felt during the bombing of his city when he was alone and hiding. The former building blocks are shaped as a narrator and character, with the narrator telling the story while the character moves in a confined space, or sometimes lies down, wearing a neutral silver mask that supports the effect of the horror of war (Rufolo).

Maidan Inferno by Neda Nezhdana speaks about two young people separated by the Bloody Saturday and is referent to the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, although in reverse - a modern girl is looking for her sweetheart lost between life and death. This dramatic text takes place in several levels – real and virtual. The first one is about the heroes of the Maidan: a philology student, a mountaineer, a musician, a security guard, a journalist, a nurse and a priest. The second one reflects the inner reality of the main characters, and the third one is a theatrical Facebook. This play is an attempt to perceive the events in Ukraine, because Maidan is not only a revolution – it is an indicator of changes in the consciousness of the whole world ("Maidan Inferno").

And finally, Tetyana Kitsenko's text *Call Them by their Names*, a kind of surrealist text in which the author talks about the importance of calling everything – streets, phenomena, and even food – by their real name.

All these texts represent an intersection of different sub-thematic determinations and different literary genres that passed through the thoughts of these playwrights during the invasion. Speaking about the exile, we mean that spiritual

exile is a state of mind that creates a perfect dramatic distance and asserts itself as true dramatic engagement. All these playwrights try to compare the time before and after the Russian invasion, and their departure from Ukraine to different countries, including Romania, where their plays were presented, determines the aspect of the research on the real causes of this merciless war. Realism in all these plays is present in a large percentage but, what is most important, the different approaches to the events treated in their plays speak of a contemplativeness that should open their universality. Along with her plays, Tetiana Kitsenko also kept a diary about the first days of the war, about the first bombings, about the effort to accept the new life, about the terrifying uncertainty that war brings:

February 26, 6am, air raid alert. I desperately want to sleep, even if the house is bombed now. No explosions are heard – and we continue to sleep. The national anthem is playing on TV: Tatiana's daughter-in-law started the day with news. As soon as something starts, the Ukrainian immediately turns on the national anthem and so on every hour. I'm writing to a journalist I know: maybe their news portal needs volunteer journalists? I am offered to translate articles into English. I agree. But it is so little.

Opening my laptop for the first time since I moved. I supplement my "Shponka" with an excerpt from Putin's last speech. I wrote this libretto in the summer – but it's just as relevant: ugly green men fly into Ukraine and shout in pure Russian: "OUR MEADOW!"

Headache all the time. Tanya's sister-in-law advises some super painkiller, but the pharmacy doesn't have it, not even ordinary citramon."

Including the surrealist contexts and the comparative aspect with myths and legends in the plays of these playwrights, we have an impression of a suffering whose form has an irreversible symbolic system. The new war and its destructive poetics are no different from the previous ones regardless of the progress of technology. It speaks of a civilizational decadence that destroys all logic and imposes the past on man as the present. Exile is only a displacement of the artist together with his homeland within him, but the one he desires, not the one he lives or is forced to live.

Exile as Fear and as Healing

A large number of German authors left Germany even before the beginning of the Second World War, coinciding with the rise of Nazism to power. Authors like Bacharevic are fleeing the Lukashenko regime even though there is no war there. Repression has many faces, war being the most terrifying. But exile in both cases is not the same. Exile from the flames of war takes the form of a shelter, while exile from a regime is a kind of a creative life in another environment, another social formation. The spiritual homeland that those artists carry within themselves is the only common denominator. Ukrainian playwrights point to the universality of war and to what is very far from all of us: peace. Each of these six names went to some other country, but some of them returned. What does that mean? Inspiration has two faces: intimate and universal. And they always carry with them the hint of experiences from the countries they went to, as the universality of their messages was always complemented by their intimate suffering. These playwrights, through their occasional oscillations towards their country, struggle with their own expectations and the aforementioned uncertainty. In all these cases, exile can also be a remedy for what is meant by horror and nothingness as a consequence of war. The great ancient dramatist Aeschylus says in one of his verses, "I know how men in exile feed on dreams of hope", while the Austrian writer and playwright Stefan Zweig mentions that, "Only the misfortune of exile can provide the in-depth understanding and the overview into the realities of the world".

The plays of new Ukrainian playwrights, inspired by the invasion of their country, prove that myths, surrealism, comedy, and absurdity are all part of the creative space that no weapon can destroy.

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Memory as a Pillar of Identity vs. Memory as a Source of Trauma in Ukrainian Documentary Theatre

IRYNA SEREBRIAKOVA

Abstract: The paper focuses on memory and identity in Ukrainian documentary theatre plays, drawing on the analysis of several dozen Ukrainian texts for theatre created after February 2022. The study aims to identify trends in these plays, particularly those that emerged as an immediate response to the invasion. Documentary plays were selected as the primary data for analysis due to their prevalence and relevance during this period. Many of these texts are autobiographical, centering on the events, the authors' reactions, and their identity in the context of the war. When discussing the events, some plays provide detailed descriptions of the war's consequences and the actions taken by people. Certain authors narrate their experiences of evacuation, their current places of residence, and other related details. (Beschetnova; Gonchar; Halas). Another recurring theme is the emotional response of the authors. Here, not facts matter, but the reaction. The emotions are described. It is not very much about inspiring the emotions in the audience, but about a very open and direct description of the author's emotions (Halas; Harets).

The crucial theme for contemporary Ukrainian playwrights is identity, which is often constructed through negation and opposition. Stating their identity as Ukrainian has become particularly significant for these authors. One of the most present strategies in constructing this identity is an opposition to Russian identity, Russian traditions, and Russian literature. The notion of being Ukrainian is constructed as not being Russian. Two examples illustrate this concept.

The first example is a project of the Theatre of Playwrights: a collection of short texts for theatre entitled *Without Them.* By "them", the authors mean Russians, so this collection of texts could alternatively be titled Without Russians. The collection features nine texts, predominantly documentary monologues, with only one male voice among them. The question of identity is vitally important for Ukrainians at present, but when asked what it means to be Ukrainian, many authors often respond that being Ukrainian means, first of all, not being Russian. The titles of plays from the collection *Without Them* (2022) are *The Last Russian* by Kateryna Penkova, *Text about Russians* by Olena Gapeeva, and *How not to Become Katsap* (a pejorative term meaning "Russian") by Oksana Hrytsenko.

Numerous Ukrainian authors share their personal experiences of close interaction with Russians, and these encounters can sometimes be accompanied by painful memories. For instance, in *How not to Become Katsap*, the author talks about her Russian husband and the conflict of being married to a Russian during the war with Russians (Hrytsenko). In *Text about Russians*, Olena Gapeeva reveals that the first Russian she met in her life was her father: "My dad is Russian. In my family, relations with people from the Russian Federation have always been tense" (Gapeeva, the quote translated to English by I. Serebriakova).

These new texts appeared over the last year. Before that, international family connections and personal contacts had not been in the focus of our attention. In other words, having a Russian father, Russian husband, Russian grandparents, or colleagues was so common that it was not often considered as something to write a play about. Now, because of the war with Russia, many authors feel it necessary to look at their background and family ties, seeking additional meanings therein. For example, in the already mentioned *Text about Russians*, Olena Gapeeva describes her childhood with her Russian father, depicting him as violent, abusive, and struggling with alcohol issues. He mistreats all members of his family. For the author, now, during the war, his attitude becomes logical: he is abusive and violent because he is Russian. He is just like the Russian soldiers in Bucha because they are all the same: "It's hard for me to get surprised at the cruelty of the Russian invaders because, since my childhood, I have seen my father running around with an axe" (Gapeeva 2022, the quote translated to English by I. Serebriakova).

There is one detail to be explored here. In a larger context, the problem of a violent drinking father is present not only in Russia, of course. It exists in Ukraine and in many countries. However, the author projects the problems of her father to the whole population of Russia. The violence in the documentary text was real, and the Russian father was an abuser, but this trauma is projected on the whole Russian society. In his work *Depth Psychology and New Ethics*, Erich Neumann describes in detail the concept of shadow. Neumann develops the ideas of Carl Gustav Jung, and one of the ideas is the projection of the shadow. He was analysing it on the level of society: the "scapegoat psychology" can be described as the projection of the shadow, and this phenomenon plays a significant role in wars as conflicts between collectives. The war can take place only if the enemy is perceived as a carrier of a shadow projection (Neumann). These observations can

be applied to the Ukrainian society now. We used to have many problems that are common with Russia: violence, lack of equal possibilities for women, problems with alcohol. These problems are present in many other countries. However, now, in the art recently created in Ukraine, all these problems are projected on Russian society. Symbolically, Russia is pure evil, and it is convenient to give it a name and a geographical location, to associate all evil to a particular nationality.

To summarize this section, the notion of being Russian is something that Ukrainian authors are trying to distance from. In other words: they state openly that Ukrainians are not Russians. So, if we ask a question, what it means to be a Ukrainian, the simplest answer for many Ukrainian authors would be: Ukrainian means not Russian.

Another example of this distancing from Russia is another collection of texts for theatre entitled *The Non-Cherry Orchard* (spring 2022). It is a project of the Theater of Playwrights. The title is a reference to Chekhov's *Cherry Orchard* as one of the pillars of Russian theatre.

The Non-Cherry Orchard comprises fifteen personal stories from Ukrainian authors. Again, this is a documentary autobiographical writing, and once more, this is largely a feminine experience: out of fifteen authors, there are only three male voices ("Non-Cherry Orchard"). The concept is one story – one plant. Among the plants, there is a beech. In Ukrainian, in Russian, and in many other Slavic languages, the name of this tree is "buk". However, the war changes the meaning of the words: there is a missile system which has an official name "Buk". It is quite a common type of weapon, which is used in the current war in Ukraine by both sides. So, for the author, just like for many Ukrainians, the innocent word "buk" is not a tree anymore but something that means danger. Each text in this project is about a certain type of military equipment or weapon, which bears the same name as an innocent plant. There are missiles, submarines, etc., and the authors show how the war provokes the change of the word meaning, and what kind of an "orchard" the Russian Federation brings to Ukraine. The Ukrainian authors reconsider it and try to show that the Russian culture is not any *Cherry Orchard* for them anymore, but again, this description of a new reality is made through negation: the Russian reference is deconstructed, but it remains a starting point of reflection.

Another strategy of building identity in current artistic practices is the reappropriation of reality. Several texts can be provided here as examples: *My Tara* by Luda Tymoshenko, *My European Love* and *My Digital State* by Iryna Serebriakova, *The Cat Peed on My Flag: Chronicles of Donbas* by Lena Laguszonkowa. These texts are very different, but they have a possessive pronoun "my" in the title.

The war gave an additional meaning to our search for identity in modern Ukrainian drama. In this search for identity, one of the strategies is reappropriation, which is reflected on all levels, starting from the title and going deeper into the texts. It can be illustrated by one example. *My Tara* by Luda Tymoshenko is a documentary monologue. The starting point is the book *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell. The author describes how she was reading this book as a child. In the novel, Tara is a family estate of the main character. A large part of the novel is set there. It is also important that *Gone with the Wind* covers the war between Southern and Northern States of America. When the author is reading this novel as a child, she imagines herself as Scarlett O'Hara. She also imagines that her Tara, her estate, is a house in a village where she lives with her grandmother. She calls this place Tara, and then, many years later, the war comes there, just like in the novel (Tymoshenko).

In our search for identity, we, as Ukrainian authors, reconsider the elements of classical art, pop culture, everyday objects. Very often, these objects are not authentically Ukrainian, but through interaction with them, through writing about them, we add them into our world. It is "my Russia as I see it", "my Europe as I see it", "my Antigone as I see it". Many Ukrainian authors lost property, homes, loved ones. This position of uncertainty is very fragile and vulnerable and in this situation it is especially important to us to capture something and to add it to our world. It is an expansion of self in an artistic dimension.

To summarize, current Ukrainian drama texts are largely documentary autobiographies. Memory exists there in several dimensions:

- childhood memories;
- memories of the invasion;
- memories of the life before the war;
- memories about the authors' background and family life.

These memories are edited and reconsidered. For example, many Ukrainian artists lived, worked, and studied in Russia. When they talk about this experience now, this experience is described as negative.

It is not even statistically possible that 100 per cent of time their ideas were rejected, they were not treated as equal, and so on. During the years of personal contacts with Russians, there must have been rewarding moments. However, nowadays, it is hard to imagine a Ukrainian author writing a play about her good experience of living in Russia, or good experience of communication with Russians before the war. Partly, it is self-censorship because such texts would not be totally accepted by the Ukrainian audience and colleagues. Partly, it is a sincere change of perspective when the author makes the memories fit the new reality. Another point is that in modern Ukrainian drama Ukrainian identity often means "non-Russian". It is a symptom of a deep trauma which we are now experiencing. The trauma is even bigger because many authors describe in detail that they are not completely detached from Russia and Russians. We are close, that is why it hurts so much. In the texts for the theatre, the authors describe how they lived, studied, and worked in Russia, how they were influenced by Russian culture. Often, their Russian relatives and friends currently live in Russia and support the war, which for the Ukrainian authors is a betrayal on a personal level. However, the construction of Ukrainian identity in the opposition to Russian brings additional questions: we can write a play stating that we are not Russians, but the questions who we are still remains.

Closing the abstract, there are several more problems that should be mentioned. One of them is a question about who is legitimate to talk. We are already having this discussion inside the Ukrainian community. Is it morally right to create a play about Bucha if the authors personally were not in Bucha? Is it ethical to create a play about Ukraine if the author left Ukraine because of the war? Is it ethical for Ukrainians to talk about Ukraine and its problems if they live abroad? These questions remain open. Also, some perspective and challenges are present. In modern Ukrainian drama, there are many female voices. It influences the content of the plays because war creates a gender-specific experience. Ukrainian men are very often not allowed to cross the border and leave the country. So, a woman can write a text about living abroad, about being guilty for having left, about her choice to come back or to never come back, about her integration into a new society. In short, it can be a text about the life of a refugee, an immigrant.

Currently, most men cannot write such text just because they cannot leave Ukraine, and it is just one example of gender-specific experience that is reflected in our drama. Taking into consideration the fact that many voices now are female and many working authors are women, we can explain the fact that the war in its most concrete form is not covered in our drama. We have plays about the life of civilians during the war, about evacuation, about immigration, but we do not have many plays about the army, about what is happening on the frontline.

Some of the male artists in Ukraine are currently serving. When they come back from the war, there can emerge new texts covering this aspect of male experience. Also, among men who are serving now, there are people who do not have any background in theatre, who do not write anything at all, but after the war, they can start writing as therapy. It can be compared to the veterans' prose in the USA after the Second World War and the war in Vietnam: men were coming back and telling their stories. In Ukraine, with time, it can happen as well: there can be texts about the specific experience of being in the army, being in the battle, and trying to fit again into a peaceful life.

Ukrainian modern documentary drama has many open perspectives which require exploration. The arrival of new texts is largely determined by the situation unfolding in real life, as the war is ongoing.

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A Displaced Theatre and Its Discontents

RICHARD PETTIFER
With Ksenia Yanko and Tetiana Krekhno

Abstract: Despite recent trends towards site-specific theatres, digital theatres, and cultural inclusiveness, theatre may find itself an unsuitable platform for exiled cultures and people – with its tendency for cultivating culturally-narrow expressions of power even operating directly against the openness that a situation of sudden exile often necessitates. Using two case studies from author´s practice, the limitations of theatre as a medium for expression of exile will be discussed, as well as exile's specific threat on established theatre convention. How does exile expose theatre's lack of ability to really address that which exists outside its own logic – a set of parameters defined by a specific relationship between stage and audience? What other theatrical possibilities may exist for the creation of community, which might re-conceive the stage as a flexible, mobile site that reflects the needs of the exiled, and that generates a new set of (more pragmatic) expectations from audiences?

Introduction

The formation of community is a long-standing bastion of theatre practice, one that connects directly with near-universal principles of assembly, communion, and gathering. Such community-formation practices often respond to a given social need, one that would otherwise remain unfulfilled by other informal or formal social practices or institutions. For the individual inside the collective, a sense of belonging no doubt precipitates meaningful participation in theatre. Yet, fostering this sense of belonging in a western theatre context can depend heavily on the flexibility of institutions, which remain infused, in some cases, with narrow definitions of cultural power while controlling a majority of the resources. Far from being an inconvenience, the figure of the "refugee" as an outsider to these structures may be a meaningful and powerful agent for threatening and destabilising them in a profound way, at the same time pointing to some specific shortcomings inherent to those structures, and to the grounds for their increasingly limited scope within contemporary cultural life.

Part 1 of this analysis examines the concept of "exile" through the accounts of two displaced cultural workers, Tetiana Krekhno, a scholar of the National University of Kharkiv's Philology department, and Ksenia Yanko, a human rights activist and photographer from Poltava, with a focus on their emotional relationships with homeland and effect on their conception of identity, specifically "Ukrainian". Part 2 examines the structural issues at play in the theatre institution's cultivation of a specific brand of cultural power, and how the "refugee" may meaningfully threaten this power whilst pressuring it to reconfigure itself into a more relevant formation. Finally, Part 3 examines a case study of Cultural Workers Studio, Flutgraben, where both Krekhno and Yanko are community participants[1] , proposing this as a new flexible, mobile model of theatrical situation.

Part 1: Emotion and Identity in 'The Ukrainian Exiled'

The present context for displaced persons is rendered more difficult by fluctuations in the media environment, social media, and generally unreliable information sources.[2] This unstable ground creates a variety of responses to identity and emotion. Tetiana Krekhno states: "The identity of a refugee is not a fixed entity, it is a plane of active reflections against the background of dramatic and tragic events."[3] In the case of Ukraine, the invasion of 2022 marks a major point of transition when entire cultures become threatened with not only subjugation but complete erasure of their past, as Krekhno provocatively puts it: "there are also no former personalities that Ukrainians were until now. There are absolutely no Ukrainians like before […] everything that was organically formed in the former native harmonious world, underwent a break, transformation, regrouping".[4] The entrance of an oppressive new reality brings with it conditions of instability, which themselves induce a particular type of individual and generalized identity crisis, indicating a time of transformation and change. "The boundaries that previously defined the concepts of good, evil, humanity, empathy, cruelty, and others have been transformed: they have expanded, narrowed, or been erased… the reference units of human existence in the optics of the refugee are refracted in

1 The analyst is also a member, making this analysis at least partly biographical.
2 See, for example, Jeffers (108).
3 Pettifer, Richard 2023. Email Interview with Subjects: Ksenia Yanko and Tetiana Krekhno.
4 Ibid.

a specific way."[5] As well as examining this statement in relation to destabilizing intentions in Ukraine from a foreign power, Yanko writes of a "need to adapt to a new context and the separation from one's own, in themselves, cause transformations in the identity of the artist in exile […] take place against the backdrop of decolonization, i.e., a change in the tradition of self-determination in Ukraine itself".[6]

We might consider what these new identity components are, as they contain what both Krekhno and Yanko identify as two key components normally considered hugely negative: "guilt" and "hatred". In relation to the emotional state of being displaced Ukrainian in this moment, Yanko summarizes some of its qualities as: "Stress disorders, nervous exhaustion, anxiety alternating with apathy, depression, guilt towards those who stayed in Ukraine, inability to feel joy or self-punishment for the positive moments that one experiences, longing for the lost home, pain due to the death of relatives or friends".[7] Both Krekhno and Yanko write of what Krekhno calls the "betrayal complex", which she formulates as a choice of safety over risk: "I refused to be in solidarity with my people in a tragic time", as an option, at least, "I refused to be in solidarity with my parents/husband/relatives. And this too becomes part of your new essence", and Yanko similarly writes of a "hierarchy of guilt between artists" that exists among the exiled. Guilt, here, functions as a protective device between the individual and community, a process of collective responsibility-sharing that finds its opposite mirror in deference of responsibility that is a consequence of the generalised mobilisation of invading forces. As Hannah Arendt states of the German population during World War 2: "Just as there is no political solution within human capacity for the crime of administrative mass murder, so the human need for justice can find no satisfactory reply to the total mobilization of a people for that purpose.

Where all are guilty, nobody in the last analysis can be judged" The experience of displacement is the opposite: an emotional distribution – and not deference – of responsibility, where individual judgement is magnified without the inherent existence of responsibility. Krekhno also observes the manifestation of hatred as a new component of Ukrainian identity. "The hatred is radical, affective, frenzied, blind to everything associated with Russian – it does not matter whether

5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.

it deserves such hatred or not."[8] Krekhno notes this as a negative thing, stating: "however motivated hatred may be, it is the component that cannot be constructive for the individual. On the contrary, radical hatred has destructive potential. It is difficult to predict how this intolerance, which seems to have firmly embedded itself in the essence of the Ukrainian, will destroy us".[9] Yet hatred here may yet – and perhaps must – have a constructive potential. If hatred is a necessary part of a collective identity, then the question becomes not how to repress it inside cultures, but how it might be effectively deployed as a functional tool of resistance? This raises a series of provocative questions which might help to re-assess also some fundamental assumptions about the psychology of identity: that it should reinforce positive elements and de-amplify negative ones – which may only be possible if you have the luxury of affording it. The sort of guiding question, also for Krekhno, is "what do I do with my hate?", connected to the current Ukrainian context, as its authentic engagement is likely to resonate and define Ukrainian cultures and identities for some time.

Part 2: Theatre's Failure in Conditions of Displacement

In addition to historical role of unilateral 'integration' of refugees into a culture that theatre may provide, the production of hatred and guilt leads to questions about theatre's potential role in addressing the production of these negative emotions, and calls attention to what tools are available to address these, particularly inside institutional contexts. Yanko proposes that "if horizontal communication between the local community and the artist in exile – the audience and the actor, the actor and the director – is impossible in this space, it is worth looking for other non-hierarchical spaces and formats".[10] Yet it is worth considering "theatre" here not as some proscenium-arch, brutalist building concept – the institution has today managed to spread its wings outside of its architectural bounds, into modes of commodification that includes decentralised structures: site-specific theatre, digital theatres, and trends towards cultural inclusivity are all double movements in and out of the institution, a type of simultaneous "opening-up/closing down" that flattens all resources across a relatively homogenous network of support-nodes. Re-considering Claire Bishop's dialogue with the collective Oda Projesi in

8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.

2008, their claim that aesthetics is a "dangerous word", coming from a position of anti-institutional community-based art, is met with her counter-demand: "If the aesthetic is dangerous, isn't that all the more reason it should be interrogated?" (181). If the process of aestheticisation and its resulting commodification of art is always an institutionally-controlled process, then in what ways might "Exile" comment and threaten this process – as well as illustrating its true objectives, which I propose as a culturally-narrow definition of power?

The interactions of non-Ukrainian institutions with Ukrainian artists since February 2022 has been a fraught one that reveals the commodifying tendencies of theatre as institution and the necessity of the exiled to fit into that pre-designed frame.[11] Often, Ukrainian artists, and before them Syrian artists, and before then perhaps Albanian or Bosnian artists or anything in-between, are invited into situations in which they have little control over the conditions in which their work is presented, their mere visibility on-stage equated with empowerment.[12] The insertion of new practices based on displacement into an established aesthetic of theatrical production, likewise, often produces a 'clean' image of concepts such as violence, reproducing a specific, often state-sanctioned aesthetic that erases deviation from a set of specific and permitted narratives. This, in turn, creates a condition in which – far from the frequently-staged performance in which the identity of the staged human can re-assert or re-invent itself – it is the State or Institution which inserts itself into the cognitive dissonance created by dislocation of the staged from their home environment. This, in turn, produces an emotional experience for the audience in which the artist-in-exile must play a pre-defined role – often "victim" – in order to fabricate the cathartic sympathy of the audience. As Yanko states, "the artist-in-exile is in a vulnerable position. In the actor-audience dynamic, one of the trends is the exoticization and victimization of Ukrainian art. The viewer refuses to accept the Ukrainian experience on an equal footing as part of the European experience, instead showing voyeurism and superior sympathy."

My objective here is to imagine what a theatre truly capable of incorporating the exiled into its system of relations might look like. How might a theatre be con-

11 See Jeffers (136): "The value of the work of refugee autoperformers lies in creating a level of political exposure on the audience's part because they cannot hide behind the idea that they are seeing a fiction. In being compelled to come face to face with the teller of the tale, they simultaneously have to face their own sense of responsibility as a citizen."
12 See Jeffers (74).

ceived that radically incorporates the flexibility, mobility, and communion that the situation of displacement demands? How could the process of presentation be one that demands the spectator address real questions of their own complicity with contemporary violence – how can it, in other words, generate the kind of solidarity and autonomy required that might fully support Ukrainian self-determination, among other political struggles? How might this solidarity undermine the alienation amplified by today's systems of hyper-commodification, which shut down empathy and smoothen human life into a stream of personal broadcasting? Is a particular type of community with performative elements – a type of 'refracted stage' – an answer to these questions, where the power of performance lies firmly inside its placement inside a carefully-built social situation of trust and exchange?

Part 3: Cultural Workers Studio: Celebration, Responsibility, Threat

Cultural Workers Studio is a shared studio project for and led by displaced people from Ukraine, housed in Flutgraben e.V., which is a former tram and truck factory located by Berlin's Kreuzberg district. The studio is a women-led, Ukrainian-led co-working space that produces public and private events aimed at advocating solidarity with Ukrainian self-determination in the wider community. The Studio has "five key-holding members", about other six or seven associated members, and a larger community of about 200 people, primarily displaced cultural workers or informal supporters based in Berlin. The Studio began out of activist meetings held at Flutgraben, starting in February 2022. These "Cultural Workers Cafes" acted as places for community-building and cultural organisation, they were child-friendly, multi-language and welcomed especially displaced cultural workers temporarily arriving from Ukraine. Out of these meetings, Cultural Workers Studio was formed by Ann and Natalie Krekhno together with Olena Vakhramieieva and Richard Pettifer as support, in a studio that was made especially available to us by Flutgraben's board. The first event of the studio was called *Charity Concert for Ukrainian Musicians* and occurred on 19 May, organised by the Krekhno sisters. Since then, the studio has hosted two film festivals, another charity concert, a series of ten Ukrainian classes, three exhibitions, shooting of three music videos, and a weekly Open Studio cooking and drinking event called "tusovka" named after the underground literary events in Ukraine during the late

80s and 90s. The studio has produced a short film, holds regular cinematography club meetings for cinematographers from Ukraine to shoot in the building, has presented the work *Living Canvas* as part of Theatertreffen Festival in Berlin, and as part of Project Space Festival Berlin.

How might such an innocent, decentralised cultural project intervene in the context of brutal invasion? Vladimir Putin's exclamations regarding cancel culture offer important indicators as the way in which cultural power is centralised in the contemporary context. In a press conference, he stated that "they're now engaging in the cancel culture, even removing Tchaikovsky, Shostakovich and Rachmaninov from posters. […] writers and books are now cancelled" and later compared the situation to J. K. Rowling's public transphobic attacks: "Recently they cancelled the children's writer Joanne Rowling because she – the author of books that have sold hundreds of millions of copies worldwide – fell out of favour with fans of so-called gender freedoms" (Sauer). We can see in the rhetoric a clear signalling of victimhood, but clearly attached to a malevolent global ideology that attempts to attack marginalisation through occupying its space. In this, agents of cancel culture find their most significant obstacles – that the same appeals to emotional protection may be equally deployed against them. Is not the repeated claim of the invaders during the invasion of Ukraine, "you need to acknowledge our narrative" a twisted perversion of the #metoo claim to victimhood? Even the language of acknowledgement seems drawn from Rosenberg's study of nonviolent communication!

Appropriations of the language of non-violence points to a severe perversion in the public sphere, one that creates significant difficulties for the production of social change through heavy manipulations in the emotionality of performance. What is the public sphere if it is not, after all, simply a set of negotiations conducted under pre-conceived conditions? If not cancellation, then how might this space be renegotiated, in an era of increased streamlining, efficiency gains, and exploitation in the global system of trade under capitalism? How does the public sphere continue to pretend itself as an "equal place" when its foundations are increasingly built on questionable ethical grounds?

These questions were presented by Jürgen Habermas:

> In the course of this development, society was forced to relinquish even the flimsiest pretence of being a sphere in which the influence of power was suspended. The liberal model (in truth one of an

> economy based on petty commodity exchange) had envisaged only horizontal exchange relationships among individual commodity owners. Under conditions of free competition and independent prices, then, no one was expected to be able to gain so much power as to attain a position that gave him complete control over someone else. Contrary to these expectations, however, under conditions of imperfect competition and dependent prices social power became concentrated in private hands. (144)

Cancel culture, therefore, can be seen as a particular type of perverse democratisation: the tools of persecution – previously confined to governments – are now in the hands of populations, who can build ideological arguments to decide whether an individual lives or dies.

This, then, is merely an extension of the shifting of responsibility from government to individual agents: in other words, of the neoliberal project where the individual is coerced to accept responsibility previously the realm of government, resulting in the ideological extreme of "individual sovereignty". Government will no longer accept the responsibility of murdering Socrates – that duty has shifted to the consumer, who, we might cynically add – helpfully guided in their thought by algorithms developed by Big Tech – build platforms for certain mislabelled "witch-hunts", "lynch-mobs" or other terms for hunting or trapping people. Today, a government would not act to silence Socrates through persecution, rather marginalising his annoying criticality: instead of a pause for thought, a stream without contemplation. A necessary component for cancel culture to function is the so-called "democratisation of media".

> One may speak of a refeudalization of the public sphere in yet another, more exact sense. For the kind of integration of mass entertainment with advertising, which in the form of public relations already assumes a "political" character, subjects even the state itself to its code. Because private enterprises evoke in their customers the idea that in their consumption decisions they act in their capacity as citizens, the state has to "address" its citizens like consumers. As a result, public authority too competes for publicity. (Habermas 195)

Yet the problem remains, and to turn here back to the stage, that these negotiations mostly occur in the purely symbolic space of representation, with their concrete effects as intervention depending on their capacity to "flow through" to the what Paul Gilroy in *Against Race* (2000) calls "convivial life" – a term for the everyday interactions that define and dictate everyday exchanges in the material world. Does theatre still have the same power to transform and intersect with that social space? Or was its convivial quality diluted by the intrusion of technology – through perceived necessity – into the theatre? Can we hope to re-construct this conviviality of good social relations and being-together, in a context which has become so anti-human and fundamentally misanthropic?

Conclusion

Cultural Workers Studio manifests on the surface as a normal, functional co-working space. Yet it has a specific convivial function that performs innocently, yet powerfully: what better way to threaten the ideology of Putinism – and specifically the atrocity and domination-based version of power articulated by Dimitry Peskov, Sergei Lavrov, and other instruments of state power – than inclusion; what better way to undermine this misanthropic drive for obliteration than the social celebration of each other; what better way to contest his attempts to erase Ukrainian cultures from history than to underline them through their offering as performance, both for a public and between each other, as a social action. Can we consider Cultural Workers Studio as a type of theatre situation – one that is somehow "more theatre than theatre"?

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Exile of the Artists? Or Exile of the Plays and Their Staging?

PATRICE PAVIS

Abstract: The paper broadens the notion of exile and transformation of a play regarding the use and combination of specific languages. It also deals with the audience perception, limits and will to accept major changes and a new cultural frame of the production.

We might have to broaden, or even question the notion of exile, not limiting it to the banal meaning of the term: "The banishment of a person from one's homeland, with a ban to reenter the country; the situation of an expelled person".[1] Because expelled can also be a work of art, a discourse, a meaning which is transferred into another country or in a cultural context, whether the "author" follows his or her work abroad.

Let me take as an example a recent (2022) theatre production of *Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard* (*The Game of Love and Chance*), a play by Marivaux, first performed in 1730 in Paris by the Comédiens Italiens.

Is this an almost three-century-old play still accessible, as far as its language and its themes are concerned? To a great extent, yes. But what happens when it is translated into the Creole language of La Réunion and performed in Creole by a group of crancophone and creolophone artists living in a French overseas department (La Réunion), first performed for a local Réunion audience, then "transported" and played for an audience at the Avignon Festival in 2022?

Has the production itself also been exiled, and even twice exiled, since the production produced in Réunion "returns" to metropolitan France shown to a French and francophone audience? Couldn't we say that the director (Lolita Tergémina) and the Réunion actors, and also their acting style, their understanding of the play and its issues are now in the position of an exile? And in what sense?

It is by no means usual to watch a performance of *Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard* in "*Kréol* réunionnais" under the title of: *Kan Lamour et Lo azar i zoué avek*, and it is even less usual to discover numerous, unexpected aspects of the

1 Le Robert Collège Dictionary.

play, thus becoming conscious of the amazing possibilities of its staging. This was, however, the case for me when the Réunion company SAKIDI brought the play to the Avignon Festival for a few days. Unfortunately, I could not be there and I had to make do with a TV recording of the local channel La 1ère, done in 2021 during a public performance for a Réunion audience understanding and speaking Creole.

The Use of Creole: Exile of Languages

To understand this effect of cultural transfer and exile, it might be useful to briefly outline the geographical and historical context of the Réunion Island. At the beginning of the 18th century, the first white colonists from France settled on the island. Slave trade provides them with a cheap labour force coming from East Africa, Madagascar, or India.

Since the 18th century, the Creole language was gradually shaped through the simplified and deformed use of different sabirs (pidgins): linguistic systems reduced to a few rules of combination and to a rather poor vocabulary, limited to daily needs. The sabir, however, becomes little by little a complex system and the language of a community. In the case of Réunion, the former slaves drew upon the French spoken by the masters. The Creole gradually grew richer in words and expressions coming from Malagasy, from African languages, from English, Hindi, and Chinese. Thus, on top of various mother tongues of the different people, a common, composite, mainly oral, language evolved, allowing everybody to communicate in Réunion Creole. Today's Réunion population, in its vast majority, understands and speaks this melodious and playful language. For other audiences, outside of Réunion, a translation and therefore subtitles seem necessary, even if many non-Réunion spectators maintain that they understand Creole better and better in the course of the performance! And indeed, the listener recognizes with pleasure old turns of phrases from 18th century French. One should, however, know the play if one wants to follow the plot, both simple and subtly muddled.

Translation/Adaptation/Transposition/Rewriting

These peculiar conditions of reception made it necessary to organize a translation in Creole Réunionnais which would convey the subtle and ambiguous nuances of the play. Marivaux's French is indeed clear and precise, but it also contains a

number of outdated expressions understanding of which depends on the help of a well-advised dictionary or an established linguist.

Lolita Tergémina, who is the translator but also the director and one of the actresses of the production, endeavoured to find the equivalent Creole terms or expressions for the archaic or obscure turns of phrase of Marivaux's text. While she remains close to the original, she must, however, leave out outdated expressions or choose an explanatory translation, which on one side erases the ambiguity of the French text but also makes the explanation heavy, slowing down the rhythm of the exchange.

A few examples: how to find an equivalent for the expression "L'amour est babillard" (I, 5) (Love is a "babillard")? The "babillard" is a person who talks nonsense or makes small talk. It also means, in classical French, the one who manages to make the other talk, who is like a "confessor".[2] The translation interprets this expression as "l'amour, i (at)taque la langue". Sometimes, it simplifies a traditional expression with a contemporary expression, as in: "Modère-toi un peu!"(Control yourself a bit!), which becomes when Mario addresses Dorante (disguised as a servant) with: "Calmos!" (III,2).

The translator and the director are easily tempted to simplify obscure terms, to go to the essential, so as to lead to an immediate and essential meaning of the play for a contemporary audience, while maintaining a quick tempo for a smooth unfolding of dialogues and stage actions. But what else can be done if one wants the message to be immediately understandable for a contemporary audience, particularly if some spectators do not completely understand the Creole translation? The translation-adaptation in Creole has sometimes difficulties in choosing a term which would be understandable and adapted to the context of the island. As the translator-director suggests, the translation should at least be able to "respect Marivaux's level of language and look in our language (Creole) the way of indicating the social level of servants and masters". For a non-creolophone listener, it is obviously difficult to judge the difference of levels, but one can at least notice that the acting(i.e. habitus and corporal attitudes, social conventions and rules of politeness) allows us to clearly distinguish between servants and masters, maybe too clearly, as the difference between them is often too marked and caricatured, which gives the spectators and the masters no chance to hesitate and to be mistaken about the social origin of the protagonists, in spite of their disguise. Any

2 *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, Le Robert, vol. 2, 1998, p. 284.

translation can choose to clarify terms which would otherwise remain obscure to a contemporary audience. An "explanatory" translation in Creole is also a means of giving the audience access to archaic and ambiguous expressions in the original text of Marivaux. In any case, the translation choices inform the identity and the meaning of the mise en scène.

Mise-en-scène

Mise en scène (staging) is the organization of all elements of the performance (its production). In the current meaning of the term, this notion only appears towards the end of the 19th century. But the idea of the performance as the system of all textual and/or scenic elements transcends all times. And yet, theatrical or performative traditions differ from one period or one cultural context to the next one. In the case of *Le jeu de l'amour ou du hasard*, the question is whether we should consider the acting traditions of the Comédiens Italiens or of the Comédiens Français, and beyond, considering also more experimental contemporary productions.

Gestures

The challenge of this translation and of its staging is to transpose "marivaudian" manner of speaking (sometimes obscure and tortuous) and then to look for equivalent meanings using Creole expressions, even if these expressions are sometimes far from the notions used by Marivaux. The challenge is also to find, for the voice and rhythm of the characters and now for their Réunion actors, an acting style, a rhythm of dialogues which is suitable for the acting techniques of the Réunion actors. Hence the difficulty for the actors to adapt the "Italian" acting style (of the 18th century) to the rapid, physical style of these Reunion actors: their style sometimes falls back into the codes of boulevard theatre or the comedies of a Feydeau or Labiche: rushing around, cavalcade and mistaken identities. What the actors acquire in expressivity and speed, they lose immediately in subtlety, unspoken, irony, reserve, in one word: "marivaudage". Their gestures would be perfect for a vaudeville, in particular in the case of Lisette: hopping, fists on her hips, swaying walk of a seducer in action. These very explicit and funny gestures easily lead to an easy public success, but they also eliminate all ambiguities and subtleties and indicate a simplification all ambiguous situations, leading to

ham-acting, in the best tradition of Parisian boulevard theatre. As an example: Lisette is particularly explicit when she warns Orgon that her suitor is about to reach his goal (II, 2).

The very expressive and physical acting style of the actors playing Arlequin or Lisette has nothing to do with the Comédie Italienne acting style, with the "impromptu" coming from Commedia dell'arte. The 'Comédiens-Italiens' would somehow draw the relief of their sentences and of their punctuation. Their acting was stylized, as if it was about drawing the rhythm of sentences, to link together the lines according to words and not to things. As Frédéric Deloffre would point out, "in the acting as impromptu as practiced in Commedia dell'arte, dialogue unfolds around a few […] key-words which appear at the end of a line; [...] In Marivaux, one answers on the word, and not on the thing".[3]

Lolita Tergémina's mise en scène proceeds in a very different way, as her actors do not seem to have been trained in Commedia dell'arte or corporeal mime. Their acting style is very physical and direct, mimetic and demonstrative. But it is not a stylized and codified acting style.

Comedy

Comedy, which radiates from this stage performance, draws from several sources. It is basically a comic of situation: mistaken identity, disguise, change of identity, misalliance, all kinds of comic features which actresses and actors perfectly master. All kinds of comic effects such as: puns, highly spiritual cues, allusions to events which the interlocutor cannot get and which make the spectators smile, as they know about all the different kinds of disguise.

In this production in Creole, the verbal virtuosity of masters, who know all codes of high society, seems to be reduplicated by the vitality of servants. Their art of the right expression is impressive, particularly within the fast and precise pace of all actors.[4] But this easiness and lightness of the servants can become heavy and disturbing

What seemed disturbing in the heavy use of farcical techniques in the production, in this frequent overacting or in this saucy boulevard-like technique some-

3 Introduction au *Théâtre complet de Marivaux,* Éditions Garnier, Tome premier, 1968, p. IV. Sur l'analyse dramaturgique de la pièce , voir dans mon édition de la pièce au Livre de poche (1985), pp. 99-107.

4 his virtuosity is also stressed by the rapid and joyful allegro of the Hungarian Dance No. 5 by Johannes Brahms between the acts.

times turns to its exact opposite: subtle exchanges of ideas or swift dialogues. This effect of ambivalent comedy results from the heroic-comic juxtaposition of refined linguistic expressions and farcical moments, in the adaptation in Creole and thanks to the performers.

But this "lightness" of the servants can become heavy and disturbing, because of the use of the techniques of farce, overstressed and redundant acting style or saucy boulevard theatre. At certain moments, in the case of masters as well as of servants, farce and grotesque acting turn to its exact opposite: subtle debates or lively verbal exchanges. This ambivalent comic effects results from the mock-heroic juxtaposition of refined linguistic expressions and farcical and saucy moments, induced by the translation in Creole and the actors.

Costumes

The costumes do not clearly refer to a given location or to a precise time: not set in the 18th century, not in France, nor in Réunion. The class of the masters is characterized by a discrete elegance: satin silk evening dress for Silvia/Lisette. Arlequin, disguised as a business man, is the only one who does not represent his character properly: cramped in his tight black suit, his trousers hardly hiding his yellow shoes, his hat hardly staying on his head, his red tie coming out his suit: a perfect outfit for a clown playing a master. All these elements of costume refer to a contemporary, globalized, neutralized time, with no allusions to an exotic culture or a distant past.

Cultural Appropriation?

In a not-so-distant era of intercultural theatre, critics were prompt to denounce the appropriation of extra-European cultures by certain European directors (such as Mnouchkine, Brook, Wilson, Lepage, or Barba). The directors were accused of being only in search of exotic forms which are cut off from their socio-cultural original roots. More recent criticism accuses Western artists (directors)of representing on stage ethnic groups, cultures, racial identities which these unscrupulous artists supposedly had appropriated in a postcolonial attitude.[5]

It would be unfair to reproach the director Lolita Tergémina and her group

5 See the recent debate about Kanata, a production of Robert Lepage.

Sakidi for appropriating Marivaux's play by translating it into Creole for a R**é**union audience. An interesting and moving aspect of this mise en scène is also that the play was written at a time when the colonization of the island had just begun with the arrival of slaves working on plantations for coffee and cane sugar (and this until abolition of slavery in 1848). However, Lolita Tergémina is wary of situating the characters within a slave society of that time. Lisette and Arlequin are not slaves; they are servants, almost confidants (in the case of Lisette). And yet, social segregation and class differences are real. From the point of view of masters, the evidence is clear, and the conclusion is final: there is a limit to love and misalliance. These limits are class limits, justified by the self-satisfaction of the dominants. As for the servants, they at least discover the charms of alterity: they imagine they could become masters by marrying "above their class". In contrast, Silvia and Dorante have difficulty imagining that they could get married below their social status, particularly Silvia who can't imagine marrying such a brutal and vulgar man as Arlequin.

By brilliantly approaching Marivaux's language, by looking for equivalent expressions in R**é**union Creole, by adapting the puns and jokes from the Parisian salons of the 18th century to the living contemporary Creole language and culture, Lolita Tergémina proves that the identity of individuals identity also depends on their language(s). If they also speak another language "as" or as well as their mother tongue, their linguistic and conceptual identity (their view of the world) as in the case of these Réunionnais citizens who are able to live and express themselves in two languages: standard, international French and R**é**union Creole. The situation of bilingualism, and particularly of diglossy (when a group speaks two related languages but gives them a different hierarchy, like French and Creole), has repercussions on the identity of the speakers. Every diglottic person is supposed to have a double identity or at least an identity which constitutes itself according to their knowledge and evaluation of these two languages. One's own identity might also depend on one's alterity, particularly linguistic alterity. The relationship and hierarchy of our different identities and alterities are a part of this identity-alterity of each of us, not only linguistic but also cognitive, social, psychologic, socio-cultural. The beauty and the force of this Creolized mise en scène is that it reproduces and explains the hierarchy of dominant language and daily affective language. But it does not do this in playing the French against the Creole, since the whole text in Creole. This difference and the hierarchy, con-

scious or unconscious, show in the representation of the two groups: the masters of language (Dorante, Silvia, Orgon, Mario) and the clumsy (Lisette) and ill-educated servant (Arlequin). By an effect of reverse appropriation, the dominant culture (i.e. of the French metropole) is not appropriating a work from a colonial, neo- or postcolonial culture of R**é**union, in order to reduce it according to its own needs. It is rather the opposite; Creole language and culture take over an iconic play from European high culture of the 18th century. This is clearly Tergemina's project: "I wanted to show our work in metropole France, I wanted to show that with our language, our imaginary, our culture, and our bodies we appropriate this play from the 18th century. Creole has the complete capacity of doing justice to this language of Marivaux, which is so beautiful"[6]. And indeed, through the Creole translation and the type of production, the play is adapted to the language and culture of R**é**union, as well as to the habits and acting techniques of actresses and actors trained and working in R**é**union and in metropolitan context. The use of this language and culture of R**é**union speaks for a search of identity, which one did not necessarily expect from the choice of a Marivaux play and from an exiled classical play.

The metropolitan audience is often surprised by this theatrical practice from Réunion. This is indeed all the more surprising as the staging did not try to reconstruct with the drawing-room of Orgon and Silvia a colonial situation of the 1730s as the colonization of the island had just started, with the exploitation of natural resources (coffee and sugar cane) had just begun. In this proto-colonial surrounding, one could have expected a dramatization of the future conflicts between colonizing land-owners and colonized slaves. However, this maybe too political and heavily didactic scenario did not appeal to the director. Her art of showing exchanges between the metropole and its ex-colony (now an overseas department) did not need the heavy artillery of a historization (Brechtian style) illustrating a class struggle between master and slave. Through the back and forth between the metropole and its former colonies, the colonial past of France and the still perceptible postcolonial relationships today keep returning in our history and our imagination. But as Gilles Bloetsch remarks, this approach "refers to the question of different heritages and polemics which turns around a colonial past necessarily shared; it reminds us that history cannot be easily shared with the 'Other'. It is a constitutive part of collective identity, as the news shows us daily.

6 Interview de L. Tergémina, *Vaucluse matin*, 10 juillet 2022.

The work of integrating the Other into history is probably one of the major historiographic challenges of the next years"[7]. The Réunion audience as well as the audience in the metropole enjoy a double meeting, somehow schizophrenic, but also rewarding: the pleasure to exile oneself towards the Other, towards the text of this Réunion Marivaux, but also towards the Creole adaptation confronted with a French acting tradition, as in the 18th century and as it has been staged until now. According to Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant (on the question of Creole in the Antilles), "in the very heart of the Creole text and this from the 18th century on, there is the beginning of the production mechanism of the French text [...] To speak and to write a good and beautiful French, more French than the French of the metropole, will not only be a sign of distinction but an irrefutable proof of accession to the rank of humanity"[8]. In this production of *Le Jeu*, the idea is not to judge, and even less to oppose the classical and normative language of the noble French masters and the working-class language of the former slaves. In any case, as this theatrical experience confirms, the Creole language is considered by linguists as a fully-fledged language in its own right, and not as a simple alteration of different European languages, often themselves dialectalized.

This production does not aim at appropriating the classical language of the masters, in order to appropriate the classical language of the masters, while having fun with the Creole language and its supposed popular and joyful vitality. No mutual appropriation here, only a search for their complementarity, which does not mean, however, a doubtful "cultural authenticity". This notion is, as Christopher Balme showed, a very problematic concept; "any attempt to freeze cultural forms within a matrix of authenticity results very quickly in the folklorization of cultural texts"[9]. One of the greatest merits of this mise en scène was to avoid different kinds of pitfalls: intercultural, folkloristic, syncretic, or postcolonial. And also, it did not attempt to amalgamate or inversely to radically oppose these two distinct cultural worlds: marivaudage and creolization. This memorable production delivered us the instruments to play with one or with the other and even maybe to understand better each one through the other.[10].

7 Gilles Boetsch. La *Culture coloniale en France.,* une culture en partage ? P ; Blanchard, S. Lemaire , N. Bancel: (Eds.). *Culture coloniale en France*, CNRS éditions, 2008, p. 9.
8 *Lettres créoles*. Gallimard, 1999, pp. 94–95.
9 Christoher Balme. *Decolonizing the Stage. Theatrical Syncretism and Post-Colonial Drama*. Clarendon Press Oxford, 1999, p. 274.
10 Distribution : Lolita Tergémina, actrice et metteuse en scène ; les comédien(ne)s : Agnès Bertille ; Alex Gador ; Daniel Léocadie ; Stéphane Payet ; David Erudel. .Scénographie Charley Collet - Costumes Isabelle

Post-scriptum

Coming back to the question of the exile of the artist, but also to the transfer of the theatrical performance to a foreign context or simply different, "Other", I would like to conclude with a few remarks in order to open up the debate rather than close it.

Yana Meerzon's book *Performing Exile, Performing Self* offers a good point of departure to summarize the task of studies on the exile of artists and writers: "By redefining the exilic paradigm as a creative opportunity for the liberation of self and as an occasion to celebrate the existential condition of being "other" this study aims not only to shift the perception of exile away from the archetype of suffering, disorientation, and displacement but also to explore the spiritual quest of the exilic artists who long to re-establish their creative environment and build an aesthetic shelter in a new land"[11]. This legitimate, albeit ambitious programme would need a great number of examples and scenarios if one wants to define the notions of "artistic exile" (p. 4) or of "exilic artist" (p. 24) which Yana Meerzon claims to use but which are very difficult to define in general. One has difficulty imagining what would be the typical psychology of an "artistic exiled" and also elaborating an aesthetic or a phenomenology of "exile art". On the other hand, the notion of "spiritual quest" that "builds an aesthetic shelter in a new land" would have all the more a chance to be built if this shelter is open to alterity, if it does not try to protect itself from exterior influences. As Myriam Revault d'Allones remarks, "human identity is both and indissolubly a question of permanence, continuity, and a vocation to metamorphosis and encounter"[12].

Let us finally return to our deliberate choice to consider not the life of the exiled artist but the meaning acquired by a work of art cut off from its original and carried away, displaced, exiled in a new country, another language, another cultural context, another type of audience. The moment the work of art is "exiled" in a new theatrical and cultural frame, it becomes, in the words of Kristeva, "stranger to ourselves" because "strangely, the stranger inhabits us: it is the hidden face of our identity, the space which ruins our home, the time where understanding

Gastellier - Lumière Alain Cadivel -Administration de production Anne-Marie Tendil - Production Compagnie Sakidi -Co-production : Centre Dramatique De L'Océan indien & Cité Des Arts De Saint-Denis.

11 Palgrave, 2012, p. 8.

12 Identité(s), *Les mots qui fâchent.* L'aube, 2022, p. 55.

and sympathy fall into the depths"[13].

But let us, for the last time, return to our dear *Jeu de l'amour et du hasard*. When read in Réunion, this play presents the same difficulties of understanding as in the metropole. What might differ is the understanding of the story by a reader or a director because of a rather different historical and economic context, particularly the evaluation of the two parties: masters and servants. It is probably at the level of the dominated (the servants) that the variation of the interpretation might be largest. Here the directing choices were necessary, decided by the directress, more or less validated by the spectators.

Let us, therefore, end with a salute to the audience, for it is always the audience who has the final word. And it is (often) the cultural level of spectators, their preferences, or their identification to the dominants or the dominated, which confirm or refuse (or sometimes negotiate!) the staging choices.

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Greek Political Refugees' Theatrical Activities in Eastern Europe (1949-1956): from ex-Yugoslavia to Tashkent, USSR.[1]

TASOS ANGELOPOULOS

Abstract: During and, especially after the Greek Civil War (1946-1949), thousands of ex-combats of the communist Democratic Army, defeated by the government's troops, along with their families and children, were forced to flee in exile at the then-socialist countries. Greek refugee communities were created in ex-Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Romania and, above all, in the USSR, where approx. 50.000 refugees were deported at the Tashkent in Kazakhstan. In this environment and under the strict authority of the Greek Communist Party, the refugees developed a mass theatrical activity for educational and propagandistic reasons. From the semi-professional group at the Bulkes, ex-Yugoslavia to the professional theatre troop of refugees in Tashkent, refugees managed through theatre to preserve the Greek language and identity, and, against the Communist Party's efforts, to strengthen their link with Greece, where most of them desired to return. From these theatrical activities, many names but also tendencies of the contemporary Greek theatre emerged.

Introduction

The issue of the approximately 60,000 Greek political refugees, who found themselves in the ex-socialist countries during the second half of the 20th century, has only during the last years started to undergo more comprehensive scientific research (Tsekou; Voutira et al.; Tsivos). Although it ceased to be considered as a taboo issue since 1974 (the year of the restoration of democracy in Greece), it used to constitute and, in many cases, is still presented as a confrontational narrative, in which political partisanship either for or against the Greek Communist Party (ΚΚΕ [Κομμουνιστικό Κόμμα Ελλάδας]). Attempts at personal and collective vindication emerge as more important than the objective truth. The mostly emotional approaches by ex-refugees, who used to write down their memories through a personal perspective according to their subsequent stance for or against the Greek Communist Party, and the constant lack of official data due to the KKE's

1 The announcement summarizes a four-year research project, partially conducted by the Department of Political Science at Banja Luka University. It presents the main outcomes, also published in two books by the author on the issue: Greek Political Refugees' Theatrical and Artistic Activities of in Eastern Europe 1945-1956 and The Theatre of the Left. From the Mountains of the Resistance and the Civil War to the Political Refugees' Communities in Exile.

distrust against researchers, which limited the access to its archives, could not trigger not only the investigation of the issue as a whole but also the deepening into major sub-subjects such as the refugees' conditions of housing or nutrition. In this context, it is not surprising that sub-issues considered as minor, such as the refugees' theatrical and cultural activities, have not earned, until today, the importance they probably deserved.

This article, based on a wide range of archival sources (e.g. newspapers, photos, official documents) and the relevant literature, provides an overview of these theatrical activities, which developed in most Eastern European countries where refugees were settled. I will focus on three major case studies including: Bulkes, in ex-Yugoslavia, and the semi-professional theatrical group there; Romania and the attempts for massive cultural and theatrical activities under the patronage of the Greek Communist Party; and I will conclude with Tashkent, Kazakhstan, in the then USSR, where a professional group of refugees functioned from 1951 to 1956. I will briefly present the origins and the nature of these activities, and I will support two major interpretative narratives, which, I believe, provide us with the opportunity to better re-contextualize these activities. On the one hand, I will argue that the professionalization of these activities follows the respective professionalization of KKE itself, which will be transformed, into a period of approximately ten years, from a popular resistance movement during the German Occupation (1941-1944) into a close hierarchical system during and after the Greek Civil War (1946-1949). Due to this transformation, the Party's survival and pursuits will be acknowledged as its ultimate political goal, along with the confirmation of its leading group's power on the refugees in exile. In this context, theatre and art will emerge as useful and appropriate propaganda means. On the other hand, I will not stay at the evident nature of these activities, which were developed mostly against the opposite political power back in Greece and the creation of a (socialist) realistic counter-right-wing theatre, but I will also provoke this Communist Party's official narrative, by tracing, especially in Romania, behind the lines, hints of political disobedience on behalf of the refugees against the Party's directives. This disobedience was focused on the deficient participation by the refugees' part into the Party's cultural and theatrical activities. I will conclude with a very short summary of some personalities, who returned to Greece and, somehow, shaped the contemporary Greek theatrical landscape.

From the Popular Theatre at the Resistance Mountains to the Theatre during the Civil War

To contextualize both the evolution of KKE's profile during the second half of the twentieth century and the development of theatrical activities by Greek refugees in exile during the same period, we should go back and examine the Party's position during the German Occupation (1941-1944) and the role of theatre in its resistance effort. After 1941, KKE was transformed into a massive popular movement of resistance against the Germans, both in the cities and in the countryside. Combining socialistic ideals with a strong identarian ideology and practice – where national independence and territorial integrity merged with social justice – KKE succeeded in mobilizing parts of the population, regardless of their social class, who were enlisted in its partisan army ELAS (ΕΛΑΣ [Ελληνικός Λαϊκός Απελευθερωτικός Στρατός/Greek People's Liberation Army]). Its military achievements in some rural areas led to the actual liberation of a wide territory, which functioned according to socialist patterns and served as both an exemplar and promise for the future social and political organization of the country.

There, in the mountainous territories of the "Free Greece", a popular theatre emerged as part of the military and political effort (Kotzioulas; Rotas; Kaggelari). The "Theatre at the Mountains", as it is known, was performed mostly by amateurs under the guidance of professionals who had fled the cities, and with very little or no means at all (e.g. a blanket instead of backdrop, with no seats, etc.). This amateur, committed theatre became a legend in collective memory, as it was the first time that the agricultural and mostly illiterate population of the mountainous villages watched a performance. Its dramaturgy focused on everyday issues in the liberated territories (e.g. the lack of supplies or the violence of the Greek collaborators of the Nazis), fostering the socialist realism form. Most importantly, the Theatre at the Mountains also operated as a propaganda tool for confirming KKE's and the partisans' goodwill in front of the wary local population, and as a call to villagers to join the ranks of ELAS.

Unfortunately (?), for the Party's pursuits, after the liberation by the Germans in 1944, the pre-occupational civil political forces were restored to power, with the help of the English troops returning from the Middle East, where they had fled after the Occupation by the Nazis. This "injustice", followed by the restoration of pre-occupational political institutions (e.g. in 1946, even the mostly discredited

royal family returned to Greece after a referendum) and, most importantly, the persecutions of the Party members who had fought in Greece against the Nazis and dreamed of at least a participating in the practice of political power, led to a bloody Civil War between the years 1946-1949. In the meantime, the profile of the KKE itself would change, imitating the Stalinist standards that were slowly imposed in eastern and central European countries after the war, abandoning the decentralized character of the partisan movement (both in the military and political field), and promoting the over-gathering of power in the hands of the Party's leading group.

But even before the "official" start of the Civil War in 1946, a major effect of the rivalry between the civil and communistic forces emerged: it was the start of a refugee wave of ex-partisans or Party members to the alleged friendly socialistic countries. Since 1945, the first units (men and women, along with some children) of the communist partisan army crossed the borders with the then Yugoslavia and Albania to avoid their disarmament by the government's forces. Approximately 6,000 persons were finally settled in Bulkes, a village in Vojvodina near Novi Sad (today named as Maglić). Bulkes was previously a settlement of German-speaking inhabitants who followed the Nazi troops during their withdrawal from Vojvodina. The Bulkes community, a Greek semi-independent "democracy" among the other Yugoslav democracies, functioned as a camp for training military officers, who would then return to Greece and be incorporated into the newly formed communist Democratic Army [Δημοκρατικός Στρατός]. In addition, there, KKE's power was free to be practiced; the Yugoslav authorities provided the refugees with supplies, but the (central) planning and implementation of everyday policies derived from the Greek Communist Party (Ristović).

The next massive refugee wave occurred after the defeat of the Democratic Army by the government's forces in 1949 when approximately 50 thousand people, including combatants with their families, but also residents of the mountainous territories controlled by the Democratic Army and who had little or no connection with the KKE, fled the country. Following these refugee waves, after 1949, approximately 60 thousand people found themselves in exile in the then socialistic countries, with Tashkent in faraway Kazakhstan hosting the most populous Greek community. From 1949, KKE's mechanisms, which had been prohibited and violently eliminated back in Greece, and whose Central Committee had been installed in Bucharest, Romania, were given by local governments the right

to control Greek political refugees. But, since not all Greek refugees were Party members, the most consistent of the KKE's policies was to establish control over the education of both children and adults, to instill communist ideals. By doing so, KKE achieved outstanding results in the fight against illiteracy (concerning both adults and children), while theatre and other artistic activities were deployed as significant tools for the implementation and completion of this communist educational propagandistic policy.

The Bulkes's Semi-Professional Theatre Group

In Bulkes, from the very beginning of the refugees' settlement in 1945, a small group of amateurs started performing choral songs and small sketches for the refugees (Iliadou). Gradually, this small group was provided with a theatre (and cinema) hall and, most importantly, with the right to avoid other, more demanding tasks, such as working in the fields, while it was recognized as an official theatrical and artistic group. It is worth mentioning that all Bulkes's temporary inhabitants were divided into professional "grupi" (in Serbo-Croatian) or "groups", according to a corporatist perception and under the administration and control of a committee appointed by KKE; the theatrical group was one such "grupa".

In 1946-1947, two professional actors, members of the Party and participatnts in the Resistance, fled Greece and joined refugees in Bulkes: Yannis Veakis [Γιάννης Βεάκης], son of Aimilios Veakis [Αιμίλιος Βεάκης], one of the most famous actors in Greece, and Antonis Giannidis [Αντώνης Γιαννίδης]. They both had a substantial career in Greek theatre before being integrated into the actors' "grupa" in Bulkes, where, along with newly emerged playwrights and the effort of all participants, they re-organized the theatre group according to more professional standards. The group had to perform every Sunday in front of the refugees for their recreation but also for celebrating festivals organized by the Party. Soon, the production rate became inversely proportional to the quality of the shows: Alexis Parnis [Αλέξης Πάρνης], one of the group's members, in a relatively recent interview[2*], revealed that he wrote approximately 200 "plays" (!) in Bulkes for the group's needs, adding that "of course, these were not actual plays at all", but also that this "was the best school [he] attended for [his] future career as a playwright". A small comic sketch on contemporary issues (inspired, probably,

2 The interview was given to the author in 2018, when Alexis Parnis (1924-2023) was already 94 years old.

by the "numbers" of the Greek "revue"), some songs, perhaps some poems' recital, or some traditional dances – that was the weekly program performed in Bulkes by its now semi-professional theatre group.

The theatre "grupa" also attempted to perform full-length, mostly Soviet, plays which had already been translated into Greek and performed in Greece right after the liberation from the Nazis. These politically committed plays, which promoted not only communist ideals but also the socialistic aesthetic agenda of realism, functioned as patterns for the development of a local dramaturgy in Greek. Unfortunately, no trace was saved of this local dramaturgy, and the influence of it on future plays (written and performed both in exile and in Greece) by the same or other refugees can only be imagined. We should also mention the actual jewel in the crown of the Bulkes's artistic activity, which was its children choir. under the guidance of the composer Lakis Hatzis, the choir acquired international reputation and continued performing even after the dissolution of the Bulkes settlement. The theatre group also toured around the socialist countries, having visited Prague in 1946, Romania in 1947 and 1948 (where KKE's Central Committee had moved, and a vibrant community of Greek refugees also lived), and Bulgaria in 1948, everywhere with great success. While in Bulgaria, after a proposal by Antonis Giannidis, the group decided to abandon Bulkes and instead return to Greece to perform for the Democratic Army troops in the mountains of the Civil War battles (Ravanis-Rentis). Few of its members stayed in Bulkes, under the guidance of Yannis Veakis, but they followed the rest of the refugees during the settlement's evacuation after the Tito-Stalin split in 1949, during which KKE aligned with Moscow. The refugees, along with the children's choir and the remaining actors of the "grupa", were directed and dispersed into the other socialist countries.

The Mass Amateur Theatrical Activity in Romania

In Romania, after 1949, Greek political refugees were not settled in separate villages, like in Bulkes but they were integrated into the Romanian urban tissue and almost immediately directed to the production chain (Patelakis). There, KKE's absolute power couldn't be challenged, although the Romanian Communist Party had decided and enforced the dissolution of the several local KKE's committees. An association with local branches replaced the Party's mechanisms, undertaking the task to promote Greek culture along with the communist one. Although this

may seem contradictory, we must not forget the specific nature of the Greek communist movement, which incorporated, during the Occupation, and, since then, was implementing policies promoting a special notion of communist national identity. We should also not ignore the direct or indirect pressure exercised by the refugees themselves to the Party's policies, as they were demanding not only the preservation of the link with Greece (through the preservation of Greek language and some customs) but also, sometimes dynamically, their return to their homeland.

In fact, the Greek Association achieved remarkable results concerning the refugees' literacy. Within a few years, the mostly illiterate ex-inhabitants of the rural areas evacuated after the defeat of the Democratic Army knew how to write and read, not to mention the children, who continued their studies either in separate Greek schools or in the Romanian ones, the curriculum of which was enriched with special classes on the Greek language and history. Of course, the Party's motives here were not so innocent: on the one hand, refugees should be integrated into the Romanian industrial and agricultural production, where some kind of functional literacy was demanded, while, on the other hand, with a mostly literate population, the work of the propaganda on behalf of the Party was becoming much easier.

For the Party's propagandistic effort, theatre and other artistic activities were considered valuable mechanisms. The Central Committee's calls, through the Party's official newspaper, to refugees to join local theatre "groups" or for just visit local Greek clubs after finishing their work were constant. KKE was trying to imitate the Romanian cultural centers, which were springing up like mushrooms throughout the country, especially during the first years of socialist governance (Sorin; Pretu). Nevertheless, these constant calls also reveal that the refugees' response was more than disappointing; the refugees seemed to deny not only participating in the theatre clubs but also just attending the prepared performances unless they had to. Even the performances conducted by a so-called Central Theatre Group, where we find, again, Yannis Veakis as director, and in which we can also trace some of the amateur actors from Bulkes, were far from popular, although the Group yearly toured around Romanian cities, and the local committees were pressing the refugees to attend its performances. Despite this pressure, the refugees' interests seemed to mostly come down to their return in Greece – the moment a more centrist Greek government would allow it – or their urgent

everyday issues in exile, indirectly rejecting the Party's propagandistic plans.

Nevertheless, theatrical and other artistic activities were multiplying in Romania compared to Bulkes. Their quality was also changed for the better. Assisted by professional poets and writers who were members of the Party and living in exile, the dramaturgy incorporated more sophisticated elements and the performances became more presentable, as local Romanian authorities provided the groups with materials and money. It must not be forgotten that, in some cases, during the 1950s, some members of theatre groups in Romania, who had also been actors in Bulkes, performed continuously for more than eight years, improving their acting. Therefore, these activities may be considered, although carried out by amateurs, as more "professional" than those in Bulkes, at least in terms of their productive part: the activities were decided by a central "artistic" direction (the Party's local committees), the producer (again the Party) provided the local groups with all necessary materials, and the same producer was responsible for advertising the artistic outcomes through the Party's newspapers. Of course, such a producer could not but control and oversee both the content and the form of every such activity.

The Professional Theatre Group in Tashkent and the Communist Party's Professionalization

Tashkent is the place where most of the refugees were directed by the Party's authorities. Refugees settled in separate "camps" near the city and were immediately integrated into the local industries as workers, while their children enrolled into the local educational system, where, especially for them, Greek language teaching replaced the Uzbek language courses in the Russophone school system (Karpozilos; Lampatos). Antonis Yannidis, our familiar actor from Bulkes, found himself in Tashkent and was quickly asked by the local committee to organize a theatre group. Again, the Party (and the local Soviet authorities) provided the group with materials and a place for rehearsals. The Party's officials oversaw all stages of this theatrical activity, from who was eligible to participate in the group to the choice of the play and the dates of performance; KKE was suffocatingly present during the whole procedure.The two most distinct differences from similar past or concurrent activities in Bulkes and Romania were the fixed periodicity of the given performances and the fact that some of the groups' members enrolled

at the local University of Drama and Theatre. The regular repetition of performances every Thursday night and the studentship of some participants provided the whole project with a professional character that we haven't met so far.

But the Greek Communist Party itself had also, until then, irreversibly been transformed: fully controlled by its General Secretary, Nikos Zachariades, and his leading group, KKE gradually turned into an authoritarian hierarchical mechanism, the only purpose of which was the confirmation of Zachariades's power (Marantzidis). The leading group and Zachariades himself also were avoiding the critique on their decisions, which had led to the defeat during the Civil War. The Party was meeting with a gradual but consistent professionalization, where a small group of bureaucrats was planning, deciding, and communicating policies, leaving no other way of interaction to its members but to follow and obey. And, in the absence of its natural "space", Greece, the Party could implement these policies only to Greek political refugees.

In this context, we are now in a position to parallel this Party's gradual professionalization with the professionalization of the theatrical and other artistic activities deriving from or been created for its sake, according to the following scheme:

a) Right after the Resistance and during the Civil War when Zachariades's power is still limited, and there is some hope for the prevalence of the KKE, in Bulkes, we meet with a motivated group of amateurs who make theatre with no means, but also with no exact directives by the Party on the content and the form they are about to deploy.

b) In Romania, it is the time when KKE, discredited by the defeat after the Civil War, searches for a way to restore its profile among the other socialist parties and to maintain its power on its members. That is why it is vital for the Party's interests to continuously present its capability for mobilizing the refugees for theatrical and cultural purposes, despite their unwillingness. It is also vital to demonstrate its adherence to the socialistic artistic patterns.

c) When the Party, during the 1950s, has regained its place at the top of the hierarchical structures concerning the refugees, and its leading group consists exclusively of bureaucrats with little or no connection with the partisan movement during the Occupation, KKE needs a more sophisticated, a more evolved, a more "professional" theatre, as the Tashkent Theatre Group, to confirm its role and power.

Conclusion

In this article, we explored the various forms the Greek political refugees' theatrical and artistic activities took in Eastern Europe during the first decade of the second half of the 20th century. We traced the professionalization of the Greek Communist Party according to the Stalinist patterns which led to the gradual professionalization of the theatrical and artistic activities derived from or created for it. From the Bulkes semi-professional group to the amateur activities in Romania and then to the professional theatre group in Tashkent, what is actually impressive is the insistence of the Party on making of theatre. Despite the lack of enthusiasm on behalf of most refuges, we always and everywhere meet a small group of artists dedicated to the Party's causes and willing to participate in its propagandistic theatrical and cultural efforts.

In this context, we must especially mention Yiorgos Sevastikoglou [Γιώργος Σεβαστίκογλου] and Alexis Parnis who returned in Greece and influenced through their plays, the form and content of contemporary Greek theatre, imparting the experience they had acquired during the exile. We must also mention Dimitris Spathis [Δημήτρης Σπάθης] who emerged as one the leading university professors of theatre, Manos Zacharias [Μάνος Ζαχαρίας], a leading film creator, and several others that returned and worked in Greece. But we must not forget Antonis Yiannidis who stayed and worked in the USSR, and especially Yannis Veakis who became a leading figure of Romanian post-war theatre.

Yannis Veakis, before his death in 2006, requested to be buried in Greece. Perhaps, this is one of the most important hints at the political refugees' perception. Even though theatre is a mirror of a created utopia, and socialist countries claimed they were creating such a utopia on earth, the true vision of the refugees, even of those involved in theatrical activity, was always identified with Greece itself. From this perspective, the theatre of Greek political refugees stands not only as a testimony of their craving for their homeland but also as an irrefutable witness to the communist Party's (extra) failure to inspire a competitive utopian dream and make it happen, even on the theatre stage.

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Fairy Tales as a Space of Inner Exile

(The story of Slovak theatre director Magda Husáková-Lokvencová as an example of a creative survival strategy in the totalitarian regime of the 1950s)

NADEŽDA LINDOVSKÁ

Abstract: The first Slovak theater director Magda Husáková-Lokvencová left her job and her promising career in the 1950s as a result of Stalinist repressions. As the wife of a politician, the defendant in a large fabricated trial with so-called bourgeois nationalists, she lost the opportunity to publicly present herself as an independent creative personality. Nevertheless, she tried to keep in touch with theater art in various ways. She found refuge from the harsh reality of contemporary life and its ideological limitations in addition to working in a museum, especially in the world of theatrical fairy tales. With her friend Oľga Lichardová, she created an author duo that enriched the repertoire of Slovak children's theater with several plays. The paper presents the contexts and results of a specific strategy of internal exile of a prominent Slovak theater director.

When the twists of fate drive theatre artists into exile, they may get a chance to go on with their artistic activities in a new country, outside their home. But how should actors, directors, or other artists presenting their work in physical encounters with audiences respond if they are excluded from public life in their home country, where they still reside?

Such situations usually occur for political reasons. They constitute common practice in authoritarian and totalitarian systems – such regimes exclude unwanted people from society and aim to destroy any opposition to maintain an illusionary unity of opinion in the country. Freethinking individuals are silenced by either physical, or at least civil, elimination which, as it has become well known, can often lead to the prohibition of doing one's job. It is not forced exile, but a different type of banishment and isolation – one is driven out of a cultural space (or another kind of public space, such as academic, scientific, political) and forbidden to present one's artistic endeavour to the public. This type of exile also involves attempts to erase an entire personality from historical memory. However, creativity will always try to find a way out, developing various survival strategies

to enable further growth. Following an involuntary departure from an external, public space, creative minds have to be content with smaller, more private places of existence. In much more narrow conditions, creative artists find their space in more intimate and distinctive areas of inner exile.

Banned writers and poets – people of the pen – can continue to write in seclusion and put their texts away in a "drawer," where their work has a chance to survive the bad times and speak to posterity years later. After all, as Mikhail Bulgakov used to say, manuscripts do not burn! On the contrary, they can survive for decades, like Bulgakov's own famous novel *The Master and Margarita*, which was not published until many years after his death. Despite censorship and bans, many Eastern European writers found their readership also thanks to the so-called *samizdat* – illegal transcriptions and distribution of texts. *Samizdat* publishing involved great risk but offered a refuge, indeed a symbolic exile for artists.

But theatre, an art that exists only in immediate contact with the audience in a specific time and space – "here and now" – cannot be put away in a closet or on a desk, or self-published in samizdat form. Where can theatremakers see through the bad times? Where can they take refuge from the adversity of the times, or find a space to maintain at least some contact with their profession?

In Slovakia, the theatre director Magda Husáková-Lokvencová (1916–1966) faced a similar dilemma in the totalitarian 1950s. She was the first woman in Slovakia to pursue a professional career in directing. She was educated, courageous, and exceptional. She changed the established idea that theatre directing was an exclusively male profession. Slovak theatre culture began to professionalize only after 1920, and it was she, a young left-wing intellectual of Czech origin, a law student at the University of Bratislava, who went on the historic mission of breaking gender stereotypes in Slovak theatre art.

Husáková-Lokvencová started working for the theatre in 1946. In 1947, she directed her first theatre production. Her repertory was quite varied – from fairy tales for children, through Bertolt Brecht, Molière, Agatha Christie, and Lillian Hellman, all the way to Maxim Gorky and contemporary Slovak and Soviet drama. Initially, she was trying to draw on the inter-war theatre avant-garde, with its playful theatricality, anti-illusionary character, and stylization. However, after the leftist coup in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, she succumbed to the ideological and aesthetic dictate of the so-called socialist realism.

It needs to be said that the life and work of director Magda Husáková-Lokvencová were fatefully influenced by her marriage to the prominent Slovak communist politician Gustáv Husák. All his political triumphs and downfalls marked her private life and work as well. After World War II, Husák rose to the fore in society, holding high party and state positions. Mr. and Mrs. Husák belonged to the so-called red aristocracy. It is very likely that Husák's influence played a supportive role in the lawyer's entry into the theatre; however, she won positive public and critical acclaim for her unquestioned talent and hard work.

The post-war Czechoslovak Republic found itself in the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union, and so a whirlwind of political violence began. It affected the Husák family and fundamentally changed their status. In 1951 Gustáv Husák was arrested and in 1954 also convicted in a sham political trial, narrowly escaping the death penalty. A close family friend, the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Vladimír Clementis, was executed on false charges in 1952. Husák lost his freedom but survived. A once democratic country turned into a prison where people lived in fear and pretence.

Magda Husáková-Lokvencová became persona non grata and had to interrupt her promising career and leave the theatre in 1952. She became a theatre outcast who was forced to abandon her beloved profession. As the wife of a so-called enemy of the people, she lost the opportunity to present herself publicly as an independent creative personality. In the first half of the 1950s, the mass media waged an aggressive campaign against so-called agents and traitors – as a result, many people turned away from Husáková-Lokvencová overnight. Together with her children, she lost her housing, was constantly threatened with eviction from Bratislava as well as with being transferred to industrial production, that is, forced to enter a blue-collar profession. In order to cope with her financial need, she started knitting sweaters in the evenings.

Luckily, she got a modest job at the Slovak National Museum, where she found a unique kind of asylum (1952–1955). It was an inspiring environment among exceptionally educated people, experts in history, archaeology, ethnology, visual art, literary history, and so on. In the museum, Husáková-Lokvencová founded a theatre collection which would later give rise to the Theatre Institute in Bratislava – the institution where the Theatre and Exile conference took place. Husáková-Lokvencová's activities aimed at documenting the history of Slovak theatre helped her to maintain personal contacts with some theatre artists. At the

same time, they led her to a deeper study of theatre art. Nevertheless, this could not compensate for live stage work. At that point, together with her close friend, the actress Olga Lichardová, Husáková-Lokvencová decided to write scripts for the theatre, signed with her maiden name. This is how the female author duo Oľga Lichardová and Magda Lokvencová came into being. Between 1952 and 1959, they wrote three fairy tale stage works for children: *Cinderella, The Mischievous Klinko*, and *The Switched Princess*. It was the genre of the fairy tale that offered the exiled artist, who had been expelled from the stage, a refuge and a chance to continue working for the theatre.

The artistic duo Lichardová–Lokvencová made use of the fairy tale world to find liberation from the reality of political repression, manipulated trials, and fear. While the two friends were working in seclusion from the theatre world of socialist realism, cultivating the fairy tale realm, the life around them gradually started to change.

After 1953, when the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin and the first Czechoslovak communist president Klement Gottwald died, the atmosphere in the society started to improve, gradually and very slowly. In addition to visible changes in the society, a political thaw occurred after Stalin's cult of personality was revealed and publicly criticized (1956). These events very likely saved Gustáv Husák's life, even though he was not released from prison until 1960. As a lawyer, Magda Husáková-Lokvencová perceived the mendacious political repression as an unprecedented breach of lawfulness and continued supporting the utopian ideals of the pre-war intellectual Left.

Paradoxically, her forced departure from the theatre partly protected her from the extremely aggressive intervention of ideology into the sphere of art. Unlike many other theatre artists, following the legacy of the inter-war avant-garde, she did not have to submit to public self-criticism and contritely negate her previous work and artistic views as politically flawed and incorrect. What is more, her immersion in the world of fairy tales and children's fantasy allowed her to break away from the aesthetic constraints of socialist realism, from its ideological pressure, agitational clichés, and outright bias.

For Husáková-Lokvencová – a mother of two sons – the role of a fairy tale author was only natural because it was related to and drew on her maternal experience. She did not consider writing for children to be secondary or less important. Today, the theatre tales she co-wrote with Oľga Lichardová are usually referred

to as family stories, that is, works that intergenerational audiences can relate to – not only children, but also parents and grandparents. The tales were ingeniously composed to contain several layers of meaning – the child layer comprising the basic story as well as the "adult" layer with ambiguous lines and meanings aimed at the adult audience. The authors made use of and modified well-known fairy tale motifs without trying to modernize or update them too much. The stories were situated in the fairy-tale time and space – in royal courts and palaces, rural homes, even in humorously depicted hellish spaces inhabited by little devils and demons. Lichardová and Lokvencová relied on traditional fairy tale conventions and situations, such as the triadic structure (triads of gradating situations, triads of riddles, three siblings, etc.), passing tests and trials, fighting battles, as well as the inevitable victory of good over evil and achieving the enforcement of higher moral values. The plays contained moral lessons but avoided outright didacticism. They were entertaining and witty, used modern language, and eschewed archaisms. They were influenced by the spirit of the present, stressing, for example, the value of the work and diligence of ordinary people, the equality between ordinary mortals and members of the royal court. While this was close to the rhetoric of the communist era, which glorified people's labour (especially manual labour), it did not contradict the utopian fairy-tale twists in which a clever peasant son could become a ruler thanks to his sharpness, and a poor half-orphan, humiliated by her stepmother, could be the beautiful bride of a young prince.

Among the fairy tale dramas written by the duo Lichardová–Lokvencová, the play that became the most popular with audiences was *Cinderella.* The two authors drew on several original stories to create their own version full of humour, playfulness, and charm. Its stage success was well-deserved. Out of the three fairy tales, however, Magda Lokvencová herself valued *The Mischievous Klinko* the most, claiming that dramaturgically it was the best text. It should be added, though, that in terms of composition, characterization, and situation development, *Cinderella* was as good, if not better, a play. It can be assumed that Lokvencová took a liking to *The Mischievous Klinko* mainly because it most strongly and relevantly responded to the time when it was written. One of the layers of this play was the political layer, which the authors skilfully disguised under the cover of traditional folklore motifs.

The story starts with three peasant sons who, following their parents' death, are to divide their inheritance. Two of the older brothers are regarded as wise, while the third, called Klinko, is thought to be a fool. In the end, however, it turns out that everything is the other way around. Although the greedy siblings ruthlessly rob the youngest brother of his fortune, it transpires that he is the wisest of them all. At the end of the tale, Klinko achieves justice and at the same time, thanks to his wit, wins a princess to be his wife and is crowned a king. And all because he firmly believed in the truth and went out into the world to search for it. The victory of good over evil and the happy ending were the result of his belief in truth.

The authors took advantage of a folklore theme to enter into a conversation with the times in which the government was systematically lying. Of course, it was assumed that this conversation would be understood mostly by adult members of the audience. In the dramatic fairy tale *The Mischievous Klinko*, which thematizes the search for truth and its confirmation, Lokvencová and Lichardová used the cover of a "fairy tale world" to hint at the absence of truth in people's lives, in the laws, in courts, highlighting the twisting and negating of truth – thus referring to the practice of Stalinist trials. At the same time, they brought hope and explicitly alluded to the catchphrase "Truth prevails!" that had decorated the flag of the Czechoslovak President since 1920. The end of the tale, when the old king promises that truth will find its way to be included in the royal insignia of his realm, alludes to the values once enforced by the head of the Czechoslovak state, values that ought to be restored.

On every page of *The Mischievous Klinko*, the characters talk about the truth, though not all of them understand what truth is. Many people lie, many people buy false truths, and the laws seem to be at odds with the truth. Klinko contributes to the origination of both hilarious and serious situations which allow the real truth to emerge and with it, real justice. The story's climax is the so-called judgement day at the king's castle. It is a day when once every year, quarrels between people are justly resolved. The authors introduced the judgement day motif in a parodic sense, ridiculing absurd laws, false testimonies, and bad verdicts. In line with the rules of the fairy tale genre, justice was eventually restored and lies were replaced by truth. Simultaneously, several objectives were met: the child audience was shown an ideal model of how the world can operate, the adults were reassured about how criminal the totalitarian court practice can be, and ev-

eryone was offered a little bit of joy and hope in difficult times. The two authors expressed their civil attitude to political injustice without facing punishment and, thanks to the fairy tale form of their work, they escaped the grip of censorship.

The connection of two talented theatre practitioners – a director and an actress – was projected into their approach to making theatre for children. They were inspired, consciously or not, by the tradition of mediaeval farces and morality plays. When dramatizing fairy tales, Lichardová and Lokvencová emphasized the importance of stage performance, layering of dramatic events, theatrical action, situational and verbal humour, suspense and gradation, playfulness, and the creation of rewarding acting opportunities and making room for improvisation. More important than the fairy tale charm and magic were real facts, such as human ingenuity, wisdom, resourcefulness, truth, and love. Looking back at the period of the 1950s, it can be assumed that the fairy tale dramas written by this female duo of authors have not become obsolete even 50 years after their creation; on the contrary, they are still suitable for staging.

Fairy tales and their worlds – which are the morphological bases of myths, realms where abstract terms of human existence are transformed through the individual characters – helped the director survive during hard times of her life, assisted her in the attempt to regain her mental balance, acquire a new perspective on the laws of existence, and just made her life nicer. During the demonization of Gustáv Husák[1] as an "enemy of the state" in the media, fairy tales became a vehicle transporting his wife Magda from the world of political repression to another, timeless reality, in which justice was bound to win. The world of fantasy and parable aided in the survival of not only the creators (Lokvencová and Lichardová), but also the recipients of their texts. It made it possible to establish contact with the age-old treasure trove of human wisdom. Magda Husáková-Lokvencová held on to the belief that fantasy in art can help uncover the truth and consequently enable a better life. The role of the storyteller is an archetypal role for women. Through stories, women storytellers pass on messages of human wisdom from the past to the future, interlinking generations in the process. According to psychotherapists, stories are like medicine. The messages encoded in them aid in

1 Czechoslovak communist politician Gustáv Husák (1913-1991) survived political repression and was rehabilitated in the early 1960s. The marriage of Magda and Gustáv Husák broke up, and in 1966 the director died unexpectedly. Gustáv Husák returned to political life. After the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968, he became the head of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia as the guarantor of Soviet policy. From 1975 to 1989, he held the post of Czechoslovak President.

the process of reconstructing one's personality, bringing back the wholeness one has lost. Stories, fairy tales, and myths open the gates to the world of the human unconscious. Similarly, for Husáková-Lokvencová, as a director forcefully disconnected from theatrical action, stories were a treatment and means of self-reconstruction. They had a positive impact on her future theatre work.

The directorial work of Magda Husáková-Lokvencová can be divided into two periods: before and after she was exiled from the theatre. Upon her return to theatrical life during the 1955–1956 season, she started to put more focus on the pattern style and timeless character of the theatrical work, including the archetypal staging of the dramatic characters and stories, as well as highlighting their philosophical dimension. This was brought about, to some extent, by her existing in the fairy tale worlds, a space that served as a temporary inner exile. She transformed a stalemate situation in her life – her forced exile from the theatre scene – into a positive artistic experience through creativity and with the support of a faithful friend.

The story of the Slovak theatre director Magda Husáková-Lokvencová is a representative example of many destinies of performing artists who got into a conflict with authoritarian or totalitarian regimes, who were forced to abandon the stage, give up their job, and find a refuge for their talent and creative passion elsewhere. In short, who had to find room for exile in their own home country. As the twenty-first century has shown – these stories are much more than tales from a distant past.

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