

Talking Taboos: The Personal Over the Political?
Contemporary Polish Playwriting

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Department of Medieval and Modern Languages

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Abstract

The focus of this thesis is contemporary Polish playwriting after Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004. From a broad reading of plays by many new writers, four playwrights were selected for study on the basis of prominence and artistic merit: Paweł Demirski, Dorota Masłowska, Małgorzata Sikorska-Miszczuk and Przemysław Wojcieszek. Their plays were studied as texts and in performance, and twelve main plays became the focus of closer analysis. The thesis identifies and examines three major concurrent themes in the works of these playwrights. Remembering versus forgetting the past is discussed through the lens of selected aspects of memory studies, including Nora's *lieux de mémoire*, Hirsch's postmemory and Assman's *mnemohistory*. The playwrights are shown to share an endorsement of the de-politicisation of collective memory and to advocate a cessation of the passing down of trauma to post-war generations. The human body is highlighted as another concurrent thematic concern and is illuminated by certain tenets of Catholic doctrine as well as Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. The playwrights' rejection of the tabooisation of the body is demonstrated and the shared notion of the body as both sentient and unifying is exemplified. Social marginalisation is examined as the final concern, with an emphasis on the notion of the 'other', particularly in relation to socio-economic status, sexuality, and religious beliefs. The plays are shown to support and promote a rejection of the myth of homogeneity in favour of openness to diversity. Major dramatic techniques are then closely examined. It is demonstrated that the plays share traits with Lehmann's theory of postdramatic theatre, including a rejection of Aristotelian unities. Key commonalities are evidenced, particularly comedy, bad language, intertextualities with the outside world, and an engagement with Polish social realities. The playwrights' approach to the spectator as a socio-political being is shown to be of paramount importance.

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Long abstract

In the lead up to this research project, I came across an anthology of new one-act plays by a Polish writer under the Scandinavian-sounding pseudonym Ingmar Villqist, entitled *Noc Helvera, Beztlenowce: Jednoaktówki* (*Helver's Night. The Anaerobes: One Act Plays*) (2001). The anthology was surprising for two reasons: firstly that it existed at all, in the sense that there were few other new Polish dramas in similar publications at the time, and secondly because it was markedly different from any other Polish drama I had read before that point. Villqist's naturalistic style, with hints of expressionism, stood out against the abstract, poetic dramas of his well-known post-war predecessors such as Gombrowicz, Mrozek and Różewicz. Villqist's plays also seemed different from many other Polish plays in that they claimed not to be set in Poland. However, a closer reading revealed that the Scandinavia of the plays was as pseudonymous as the author's name, concealing Polish concerns and revealing the desire to appeal to readers and audiences further afield. Intrigued by the chance discovery of Villqist's work, I set out to explore developments in contemporary Polish playwriting. I aimed to establish whether there was a new wave of naturalism, or any other common stylistic tendencies, and to find out about the work of other emerging playwrights. There was, and is, little academic research on Polish playwriting in the post-communist period, and I aimed to contribute to knowledge in that field. I set out to continue the documentation and analysis of Polish playwriting beyond the post-war playwrights and later writers such as Janusz Głowacki, Lidia Amejko and Tadeusz Słobodzianek. I perceived Polish post-communist theatre to be dominated by successful, internationally renowned director-auteurs such as Krystian Lupa, Grzegorz Jarzyna and

Krzysztof Warlikowski and I aimed to investigate the status and characteristics of playwriting as a practice. I identified important institutional factors in the development, dissemination and production of new Polish plays, such as publishing initiatives, playwriting competitions, prizes for productions of new plays, festivals of new drama such as the R@port (Report) festival in Gdynia and the Metafory Rzeczywistości (Metaphors of Reality) festival in Poznań, workshops, playwriting schools such as Tadeusz Słobodzianek's Laboratorium Dramatu (Drama Laboratory) and projects at major theatres such as the TR Warszawa (Teatr Rozmaitości, Variety Theatre, Warsaw). I continued to monitor these mechanisms throughout the course of the research. I also endeavoured to see as many stage productions as possible in order to examine the ways in which new drama was being treated in performance, and the demands and impact new writing make on acting style and stage language. I aimed to use Polish and English resources and a cross-cultural, multidisciplinary approach employing literary theory, language skills and theatre studies theory in order to bring new information about an area of cultural interest and artistic merit to an English-speaking audience. I hope that this project will, therefore, enable greater ease of access to information that will facilitate the inclusion of Polish contemporary new writing within the British understanding of European theatre. I also aimed towards the characterisation of work by selected contemporary Polish playwrights so that beyond this project their approaches could subsequently be compared with those of their predecessors and with their British counterparts.

I embarked upon a very broad reading of new plays, many of them published in the journal *Dialog* (Dialogue). Shortly into the research period I decided to focus not simply on post-1989 drama but on post-2004 drama, having discovered that in the period soon after 1989, theatres were mainly producing classics and foreign plays, and that there was a surge of activity after 2004 in terms of initiatives to support and encourage new playwriting. The focus of the study became dramas written in the period after Poland's accession to the

European Union, therefore in capitalist, European Poland. I determined to identify a small number of playwrights whose work I would analyse in detail. As well as reading plays published in *Dialog*, I consulted three major new anthologies of Polish drama early on in the research, as well as another anthology published towards the end of the study. I gathered information about festivals and competitions which prioritised the development and dissemination of new Polish plays. I found out which writers were being performed at major festivals and in theatre repertoires, who was being published, who was winning awards, and what the critical reception was to particular plays. I travelled to Poland several times to see plays in production, both in repertoire at theatres and at festivals of new writing. I developed a scoring system in order to assist in the process of narrowing down the choice of writers, and I prioritised those who had debuted in or after 2004 and who had written at least two plays by the commencement of the research in 2008. I allocated a point for each play published in *Dialog* and in each of the key anthologies, a point for each play in repertoire at key theatres and in the programmes of major festivals, and I took into account awards won by the playwright. I did not require writers to fit in to all the categories in the scoring system, for example plays by Paweł Demirski are not usually published in *Dialog* although he is a very prominent and prolific playwright. I found many plays and playwrights of merit, and concurrent themes quickly began to emerge. Through an investigation into form and content, combined with an awareness of the contemporary Polish social context, it became apparent that rather than focusing on the individual in a private context, the majority of the playwrights focused on the individual in a social context and that many used drama as a vehicle for engagement with contemporary social realities. I selected four writers to study closely: Paweł Demirski, Dorota Masłowska, Małgorzata Sikorska-Miszczuk and Przemysław Wojcieszek.

I researched the work of the selected playwrights in depth. Each had worked as a writer in another field prior to their debut as a playwright and I acquainted myself with as

many examples of their work as I could access. I prioritised seeing productions of their plays in Poland, both live on stage and on DVD recordings at the Instytut Teatralny (Theatre Institute) in Warsaw. My main objective in watching the plays in production was to engage with directorial interpretations of the plays' main themes and to see how these themes were accentuated in performance, as well as to develop awareness of contemporary Polish stage practices. I accessed play texts through theatre journals, online resources and anthologies, and I obtained several others directly from writers and translators. I made contacts with playwrights, directors, translators, critics, actors and academics. I conducted a scene study workshop with Polish actors in order to help unlock some challenging texts.

I decided to allow themes for further investigation to emerge from a collective reading of a large number of plays, rather than pre-selecting themes based on contemporary social issues and then fitting the texts into that framework. From the many concurrent themes and concerns among the plays and between the playwrights, I highlighted three that were to form the core of the study, along with an analysis of dramatic techniques. I also set out to provide an explanation of the socio-historical context of the plays' themes. It became clear early on that the playwrights all entered into discourse around the way Poles view and respond to their nation's history, and the intergenerational conflict intrinsic to this debate is evident in several plays. The prominence and social significance of remembering versus forgetting the past meant that this theme became the subject of Chapter 2. The human body emerged as another strong motif in many of the plays, which was emphasised in production, and this theme is the focus of Chapter 3. Social marginalisation emerged as a clear choice for the basis of Chapter 4, including marginalisation on economic, sexual and religious grounds. Analysis of dramatic technique is the focus of Chapter 5. Having selected the themes, I re-read the plays by the four main playwrights and selected twelve of their plays in total as the subject of close textual analysis. I then searched for theoretical frameworks that would best facilitate a deeper study

of the playwrights' concurrent concerns. I also kept a close eye on developments in academic and critical studies relevant to the work, including new publications in Polish and English, and throughout the research period I continued to find useful new secondary sources. For the theme of remembering versus forgetting, the broad field of memory studies clearly provided a very pertinent lens through which to view the plays. I read widely and discovered that within this broad field, Nora's lieux de mémoire, Assman's mnemohistory and Hirsch's postmemory correlated particularly closely with the playwrights' concerns, as I demonstrate in Chapter 2 through textual examples supported by illustrations from stage productions. I conclude that the plays convey a shared belief in the need for young generations of Poles to be allowed to break free from their nation's difficult past, while at the same time acknowledging all aspects of it, including Polish culpability in crimes such as the Jedwabne massacre. The playwrights clearly enter into public debate on how the past, especially World War II, should be remembered and commemorated, and they advocate a de-politicisation of memory and a cessation of the passing down of trauma to post-war generations. Read together, the plays convey a sense of optimism about Poland's present and future which points to ongoing cultural recovery. While the plays demonstrate the persistence of national ghosts, they also reveal an important social process, which could potentially impact on British attitudes to the ways in which World War II history is dealt with in contemporary society. For Chapter 3 on the human body I searched for a theory that chimed with the specific approaches taken by the playwrights, and I found this in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. I demonstrate that along with some basic tenets of Catholicism relating to the body, Merleau-Ponty's theory helps to illuminate philosophical approaches to the body as expressed in the texts. I highlight a common argument for the de-tabooisation of the body and its functions as well as a recognition of the body as a primary point of connection with the world. I provide many examples in which writers focus on the body in order to address traumatic events

without describing emotion or psychology, which has the effect of making painful topics such as World War II and sexual abuse watchable yet still emotive. I give many examples of characters representing the abused body, the dead body, the injured body and the part-human body. In Chapter 4, I use the notion of otherness to underpin the subthemes within the overall topic of social marginalisation, and the work of selected scholars provides socio-political context for the plays. I discovered an overwhelming prominence of protagonists representing the socially marginalised, and a common tendency for the writers to advocate for such characters and subsequently for the people they reference within society. The playwrights offer no resolution for the economic inequalities thematised. However, the outlook with regard to sexual and religious marginalisation is brighter in that the playwrights clearly support and advocate for diversity in favour of the perpetuation of the myth of homogeneity. For Chapter 5, I identified Hans-Thies Lehmann's theory of postdramatic theatre as being a fitting frame of reference for the texts and stage productions of the plays. I explain that there are clear concurrences in technical characteristics of the plays which correlate with Lehmann's theory. These include intertextualities with the outside world, the presence of the dramatist's voice, the acknowledgement of the spectator, the subordination of dialogue to other forms, the use of narration and direct address, unrealistic characters, and engagement with social concerns. I apply specific tenets of postdramatic theory to the plays and I provide illustrations in support of the assertion that the plays share some characteristics with the postdramatic. I explain that the main area in which the plays do not correlate with postdramatic theory is in the use of language. In postdramatic theory, language is of equal status with other elements of performance, whereas in the contemporary Polish plays studied there proves to be a prominence of language over other elements, even though language does not represent realistic communication in these plays. Abstract and poetic language are shown to be common, combined with verbatim extracts from real life, quotations from other works,

and prolific, creative use of obscenities and ‘substandard’ language which had been absent from the Polish stage in the communist period. Comedy is also shown to be an essential characteristic of all the plays in focus, especially irony and grotesque. I conclude that the texts cannot be labelled postdramatic in their entirety but that Lehmann’s theory helps to illuminate key characteristics of the plays collectively. The comparison with postdramatic theatre facilitates deeper investigation of the differences in technique between the four writers and it enables further direct comparison between contemporary Polish playwriting and practices in other countries. While there is no aim to or benefit in grouping together writers working independently, it is useful to highlight commonalities in themes and approach which are reflective of wider socio-cultural, literary and artistic processes.

The project has highlighted plays and playwrights of artistic merit, whose works document and respond to significant cultural processes in a country that is still reshaping its identity after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. In the thesis, major themes, techniques and processes are identified, documented and analysed. Additionally, throughout the research period I have written several new English translations of published and unpublished plays. Some of the plays have subsequently been published in English, but not always translated by a native speaker. There is scope for the publication of new English translations of selected contemporary Polish plays. I have also identified some plays that I would like to explore in English in performance, for an English-speaking audience, either with English actors or Polish actors speaking English. Some of the plays have universal themes and some touch on our shared European history of World War II.

The conclusion in response to the original thesis question is that the playwrights studied do not prioritise the personal over the political, but they stress the importance of the person within the political. The plays read together demonstrate the fact that the political system no longer dominates over the person. The playwrights studied portray the individual

as possessing political power and the ability to engage with and impact upon contemporary Polish social dynamics. While Aristotelian unities and Stanislavskian realism are absent, postmodern intertextualities abound in plays of eclectic genres. Social realities are centre stage, confronted by marginalised characters using truthful and often colourful language. Contemporary plays in European, capitalist Poland are as political as those of their communist counterparts.

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1 Introduction: Context and content

1.1 Aims

The aims of this thesis are to identify, document and analyse concurrent themes and concerns, predominant dramatic techniques, and attitudes towards contemporary social realities in key works in contemporary Polish playwriting. The primary sources are new Polish plays, with a focus on selected works by Paweł Demirski, Dorota Masłowska, Małgorzata Sikorska-Miszczuk and Przemysław Wojcieszek. The relationship between the plays' themes and Polish public debate is of particular importance in a country where in contemporary times uncensored artistic freedoms have only existed since 1989. However, Polish theatre artists have nevertheless historically engaged with politics, finding ways to evade the censor through allegorical stage languages. According to Ewa Wąchocka (2004: 1), 'post-war Polish theatre was wholly political'. After the fall of communism in 1989, Polish artists became free to do and say whatever they liked, in whichever ways they chose, but this was within a very complex cultural context. Initially, economic limitations affected creative decisions, and there was a surge in re-staging classics. British 'in-yer-face' writers and contemporary German theatre made an impact in Poland and several plays were staged by international writers. According to Ratajczakowa, "'Cool Britannia's'" works exposed the disintegration of human and family bonds, the collapse of values and the ruination of Christian ethics, where desire and the opportunity for love constantly reappear'. These plays were 'part of a shock therapy that Polish theatre badly needed' which led to a 'favourable environment for new Polish drama' (2005: 25-26). Eventually the need for new writing was identified, and playwrights were encouraged with significant institutional support by way of competitions, festivals and publishing initiatives. Many of these competitions stipulated that plays submitted should respond to everyday

reality. One of these projects, TR/PL¹ at the TR Warszawa² theatre took place shortly after Poland's landmark accession to the European Union in 2004. The theatre's artistic director, the internationally renowned theatre director Grzegorz Jarzyna, wanted writers to capture and document this 'ważny dla Polski moment'³ (Jarzyna 2005). This research project focuses on plays written after that important moment in 2004. In post-2004 Poland, playwrights had artistic freedom but were still operating within the framework of a society riddled with taboos, social stereotypes and national myths. Polish society has been traditionally based on a homogenous view of a white, Catholic, heterosexual Pole. Elwira M. Grossman (2002: 7) explains that during communism 'an artificial, monolithic vision of "Polishness"' was promoted. God, honour and the motherland have long been the supposed pillars of contemporary Polish society. Versions of history have been imposed and memorialisation of the past has been institutionalised. Any engagement by playwrights with contemporary Polish reality means engagement at some level with these fundamental tenets of Polish society. Early on in the research project it became clear that it was very common for playwrights not only to engage with politics and social realities but to challenge inherited modes of thinking and social stereotypes.

In the lead up to this research, I came across an anthology of new one-act plays by a Pole under the 'Scandinavian' pseudonym Ingmar Villqist (2001h). His intimate, psychological style is strikingly different from the abstract, absurdist plays of his ancestors, but while his plays claim to be set in Scandinavia they still seem to tackle issues relevant to Poland. This discovery triggered further investigations into approaches and techniques in new Polish playwriting more widely. It soon became clear that Villqist's work did not represent a new wave of psychological realism, and that in fact there was a discernible

¹ TR being the acronym for Teatr Rozmaitości, PL being the abbreviation for Poland.

² The TR Warszawa (TR Warsaw) was formerly called Teatr Rozmaitości (Variety Theatre), and is now commonly referred to as the TR.

³ 'this important moment for Poland'.

commonality demonstrating a re-engagement with politics. Instead of the personal *over* the political, it was more accurate to consider the person *within* the political. Not only were new playwrights ‘talking taboos’, they were tackling them. Within a broad overarching theme of engagement with social realities, several clear subthemes emerged which could then be identified in plays by a number of writers.

In 2010 in Gdynia at the R@port Festiwal Polskich Sztuch Współczesnych,⁴ I attended a lecture on contemporary Polish drama given by Dr Michał Lachman of the University of Łódź to a small group of international guests (2010). He underlined that theatre in Poland pre-1989 was political, providing a substitute for free speech and giving directors the means to discuss socio-political issues. Theatre provided moral guidance for people and reacted to political crises, but under the watchful eye of the censor it officially had to do so using coded speech, metaphor and allusion, although clandestine productions did take place. After 1989 there was what Lachman described as ‘a complete change of all paradigms in art and public life’, and ‘a shift from the public to the private’. Directors were ‘quicker in reacting to the change than playwrights’, and ‘wise youngsters’ such as Jarzyna, Warlikowski and Augustynowicz were not interested in politics but in individuals and psychological problems. Lachman confirmed that after the wave of classics came a brief interest in psychological dramas, followed by a new generation of playwrights and directors, to whom Lachman referred as the ‘new disappointed’, which included writers Przemysław Wojcieszek and Paweł Demirski. These writers belonged to a new consumerist generation, and their work saw a return to politics. Lachman concluded that in the new plays that emerged after 1989 as a result of substantial institutional support, history was still a major feature of the narrative, and there was a recognisable ‘obsession with history haunting everyone’. The focus was on the individual suffering from certain

⁴ R@port Festival of Polish Contemporary Plays. The name R@port is a play on the word ‘raport’, meaning report. In 2009 and 2010, Ingmar Villqist was director of the festival, having previously been a director and artistic director at theatres in Gdańsk and Gdynia.

dilemmas or problems, and on 'the other'. In Lachman's reading, characters are controlled by economics and history, and even faith and love are institutionalised and subjected to discourses of power.

Polish theatre has several strands, and the 'playwright's' theatre is relatively new. The 'directors' theatre' is a major part of the contemporary scene, with directors such as Krzysztof Warlikowski, Grzegorz Jarzyna, Maja Kleczewska and Anna Augustynowicz being internationally renowned, and their theatrical ancestors such as Tadeusz Kantor and Jerzy Grotowski being extremely influential world-wide. Director-auteurs of their kind write or adapt their own scripts, and are therefore playwrights in a sense, but this study focuses solely on the particular phenomenon that is the 'playwriting' strand, in which one person is responsible for creating new writing for the stage, which they might direct themselves or pass on to a director or a theatre. Other strands such as alternative theatre, children's theatre, puppet theatre, dance theatre and student theatre are all important elements of a diverse scene, and this study centres on one particular aspect. It does not claim to provide a cross-section of playwriting or to provide conclusions that apply to all contemporary Polish playwrights, but to identify commonalities between writers who have shared concerns and approaches despite not belonging to any one given school or movement per se.

Over the last decade the initiatives to encourage the development of new writing for the stage in Poland have included festivals, prizes, projects at theatres, writing schools and masterclasses, publishing initiatives, staged readings and productions of new writing. There are so many festivals in Poland that it is impossible to name them all here.⁵ Many of

⁵ According to Joanna Ostrowska (2006) of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, there were 26 Polish theatre festivals in existence before 1987, which had on average been running for over twenty years. Between 1987 and 1991, 12 festivals were running, with a life span of 16-29 years. In the period 1992-1996, 39 festivals ran with a life span of 11-15 years. From 1997-2001, 74 festivals ran with a life span of 6-10 years. In 2002-2006, there were 128 festivals that had been running for 1-5 years, with 98 of these having started in 2006.

the current festivals are associated with cash prizes and staged productions of winning plays. The R@port festival⁶ in Gdynia already mentioned above is important on the contemporary Polish playwriting scene. It has been running annually since 2006, and after the tenth edition in 2015 it will run biennially. Since 2007, it has been linked with the Gdyńska Nagroda Dramaturgiczna,⁷ which carries an award of 50,000 złoty (over £8,500). All of the writers studied in this project have had plays performed at R@port and have won prizes there, as will be detailed. The Festiwal Dramaturgii Współczesnej Rzeczywistość Przedstawiona⁸ has taken place in Zabrze since 2001 and the Festiwal Prapremier⁹ began in Bydgoszcz in 2002. In 2008, Teatr Polski¹⁰ in Poznań ran the first Metafory Rzeczywistości¹¹ festival and the Międzynarodowy Festiwal Teatralny Boska Komedია¹² was inaugurated in Kraków. Several other new festivals exist, though many concentrate on directing rather than new writing, and older festivals also continue, such as the Warszawskie Spotkania Teatralne¹³ and the Łódzkie Spotkania Teatralne.¹⁴

TR Warszawa is a central force in new writing. It stages contemporary plays, runs script development projects and publishes texts. In 2004 it ran a project called Teren Warszawa,¹⁵ ‘dzięki któremu do polskiego teatru weszła cała grupa utalentowanych dramatopisarzy, reżyserów i aktorów, a repertuar TR Warszawa wzbogacił się o serię przedstawień, zrealizowanych w przestrzeniach nieteatralnych.’¹⁶ Teren Warszawa comprised an actors’ studio, a drama writing studio, a program for new directors, and

⁶ Henceforth referred to as R@port.

⁷ Gdynia Dramaturgy Prize. Henceforth referred to as GND. [Note: the word ‘dramaturgia’ in Polish is used to mean playwriting as well as dramaturgy].

⁸ Dramaturgy Festival of Contemporary Reality Presented.

⁹ Preview Festival.

¹⁰ Polish Theatre.

¹¹ Metaphors of Reality.

¹² Divine Comedy International Theatre Festival.

¹³ The Warsaw Theatre Meetings.

¹⁴ The Łódź Theatre Meetings.

¹⁵ Warsaw Terrain.

¹⁶ ‘thanks to which a whole group of talented playwrights, directors and actors came into Polish theatre, and the TR repertoire was enriched by a series of performances in non-theatre spaces’ <<http://terenr.pl/tag/teren-warszawa-2/>> [last accessed 10 April 2015].

volunteer placements in production and administration. A series of workshops was given by Aleks Sierz and Glynn Cannon from Paines Plough theatre company in London as well as Tom Stoppard and established Polish playwrights Lidia Amejko and Janusz Głowacki, and participants were allowed continued contact with them while working on a play. After further classes with members of the actors' studio, the project culminated in the presentation of ten plays in a Festiwal Nowej Dramaturgii,¹⁷ in May 2004. In 2005 the TR Warszawa ran the project TR/PL, which led to the publication of an anthology of plays by the same name, *TR/PL: Bajera, Kochan, Masłowska, Sala, Wojcieszek: antologia nowego dramatu polskiego: nowa dramaturgia 05*. This project continued into 2006, incorporating plays additional to those printed in the 2005 anthology. In 2014, TR Warszawa ran a project called Teren TR¹⁸ based on the 2004 model but this time the work took place inside the theatre, on the stage and in rehearsal rooms. It was a 'powrót do idei TR Warszawa jako artystycznego schronu, w którym można eksperymentować i podejmować twórcze ryzyko'.¹⁹

Also in Warsaw is Laboratorium Dramatu,²⁰ which from 2003-2005 was associated with Teatr Narodowy²¹ and from 2005 with Stowarzyszenie TAT (Towarzystwo Autorów Teatralnych).²² Founded by playwright Tadeusz Słobodzianek it is a theatre and a playwriting school which acts as a type of agency and union for its writer members and stages some of their plays.²³ Szkoła Dramatu²⁴ is Słobodzianek's two-year distance learning programme for students and graduates. From 2003-2009 and again in 2010, he ran

¹⁷ Festival of New Playwriting.

¹⁸ TR Terrain.

¹⁹ 'a return to the idea of the TR Warszawa as an artistic shelter, in which you can experiment and take creative risks'. <<http://trwarszawa.pl/aktualnosci/aktualnosc/n/teren-tr/>> [last accessed 10 March 2015].

²⁰ Drama Laboratory.

²¹ National Theatre.

²² Society of Theatre Authors.

²³ The Laboratorium Dramatu also runs a 'Lektor' service whereby plays are submitted, read, and commented upon for the author. TAT also runs educational programmes and aims to promote the teaching of playwriting to children. It aims to promote contemporary drama in Poland and abroad.

²⁴ Playwriting School.

residential short courses entitled *Sztuka Dialogu*,²⁵ at which invited writers participated in discussions with experts on a given theme before developing scripts. In 2010, Słobodzianek became director of Teatr Na Woli,²⁶ Warsaw, and since 2012 he has also run Teatr Dramatyczny,²⁷ Warsaw. He is a controversial and extremely influential figure who represents a separate seat of power from other institutions such as TR Warszawa.²⁸ Some playwrights, however, have been involved with both Laboratorium Dramatu and TR. There are both public animosities and close-knit networks between the ‘protagonists’ of the contemporary Polish theatre scene. Several of the new playwrights know each other well, and some have strong creative partnerships with particular directors.

Publishing initiatives are another major force in the development and dissemination of contemporary Polish playwriting. *Dialog*²⁹ is a monthly journal that has been publishing contemporary Polish drama and international drama in Polish since 1959. Every issue for the last 50 years has featured at least one new Polish play or screenplay. It also includes essays, interviews, features and information on contemporary theatre. Some playwrights, such as Sikorska-Miszczyk, have a close enough relationship with *Dialog* to be able to assume that if they send a play to the journal it is very likely to be printed (Sikorska-Miszczyk 2010b). Other playwrights, such as Demirski, are almost never printed by the journal despite their leading role in the theatre scene. Plays are also published, less frequently, in other journals such as *Notatnik Teatralny*,³⁰ which in 2011 ran a special issue on Demirski and his director partner Monika Strzępka.³¹ A number of major anthologies of new Polish plays have been published in recent years, as well as single and collected plays by selected writers. In 2003 an anthology of plays selected by critic Roman Pawłowski was

²⁵ The Art of Dialogue.

²⁶ The Wola district theatre.

²⁷ The Dramatic Theatre.

²⁸ Henceforth referred to as TR.

²⁹ *Dialogue*.

³⁰ *Theatre Notebook*.

³¹ *Notatnik Teatralny* 20 lat, 64-65/2011.

published entitled *Pokolenie Porno i Inne Niesmaczne Utwory Teatralne*³² (Pawłowski and Sulek, eds, 2003), followed by a second volume called *Made in Poland* (Pawłowski and Sulek, eds, 2006) published the same year as the *TR/PL* anthology. Another major anthology is *Echa, Repliki, Fantazmaty: Antologia nowego dramatu polskiego*³³ (2005). In 2012, an anthology of plays selected by Professor Jacek Kopciński (ed. 2012) was published, entitled *Trans/formacja. Dramat polski po 1989 roku*,³⁴ followed by a second volume (ed. 2013).

In analysing and documenting trends in contemporary Polish playwriting, this research contributes to the understanding of Polish theatre history in Britain, extending knowledge beyond well-known writers and directors of previous generations and recognising the importance of including Poland within our British frame of reference for contemporary European drama. There is not room in this study to provide a direct comparison between the works of contemporary writers and those of previous generations, but the study highlights characteristics of contemporary plays which can in turn be compared and contrasted with those by writers such as Gombrowicz, Różewicz, Świrzczyńska and Mrozek, for example. While there are no definitive continuations in style and approach from previous generations, some traces of Polish theatrical heritage can be seen in some plays, such as in the abstract, poetic and absurdist approach sometimes taken by Sikorska-Miszczyk, aspects of which are echoed by Masłowska. In Demirski's approach there are some similarities with Brecht, such as an approach to theatre as a means for effecting social change and a belief in the 'spectator's political awareness as the key to [...] the gradual transformation of society' (Luckhurst 2006: 200). It is clear that many contemporary Polish playwrights draw on an eclectic mix of influences, resulting in melanges of genre and style and distinctive stage language. A striking feature of

³² *Porno Generation and Other Tasteless Plays*.

³³ *Echoes, Replicas, Phantasms: An Anthology of New Polish Drama*.

³⁴ *Trans/formation: Polish Drama After 1989*.

contemporary Polish playwriting in general is its confrontation of social taboos, stereotypes, injustices, inequalities, reconfigurations, prejudices and marginalisation and its engagement of the audience in discourse on these issues. Demirski stresses that over and above observations about form it is important to keep in mind that this type of communication is the ‘podstawowy sens nowej dramaturgii’³⁵ (Demirski 2007). It is this commonality that justifies comparisons between playwrights, while their individual stylistic and formal approaches enable explorations of contrast.

In order to establish common themes and approaches, I embarked upon a very wide reading of plays by a large number of playwrights, including Magda Fertacz, Bożena Keff, Dana Łukasińska, Artur Pałyga, Marek Pruchniewski, Joanna Owsianko, Zyta Rudzka, Paweł Sala, Michał Walczak and others. I attended several performances of new plays, both at festivals and in theatre repertoires. The repertory system in Poland means that plays are usually shown for a few nights at a time, coming back onto the stage periodically for years after their premiere. In addition to festivals there were several albeit short opportunities to see particular relevant plays in theatre repertoires. I also watched recordings of performances at the Instytut Teatralny³⁶ in Warsaw. Examples from stage productions support illustrations from the text throughout this study. Where a production is mentioned, the name of the director and the year of the premiere are given, with further details in Appendix One. With regard to scripts, theatre journals, particularly *Dialog*, and the main anthologies of new plays were key sources, and I also received plays directly from some playwrights, translators and directors. In order to select writers to include, I developed a scoring system which included highlighting the date of the writer’s debut and prioritised new playwrights. It identified plays written, published, and performed, as well as awards won. Reviews and critical reception were also consulted, mainly via online

³⁵ ‘the fundamental sense of new playwriting’.

³⁶ Theatre Institute.

resources. In making and consolidating the final selection, I spoke in person to Grzegorz Jarzyna at the Barbican, London (2010) and to Roman Pawłowski at R@port (2010). Their input was extremely valuable in confirming my decisions, particularly in the case of Sikorska-Miszczyk who was clearly an important writer but did not feature in the earlier anthologies. When I asked Roman Pawłowski why not, he confirmed to me that if he were compiling a new anthology, he would include Sikorska-Miszczyk (Pawłowski 2010). She is included in the anthology edited by Kopciński (ed., 2013). These selection methods reduced but could not eliminate subjectivity in the process, but the thesis does not aim to produce an exhaustive or comprehensive picture of new Polish playwriting. Those writers selected early on in the research proved to stand the test of time, and in fact they all achieved greater prominence during the research. Demirski, Masłowska and Sikorska-Miszczyk were all competitors at festivals at the beginning of the project and by the end of it they had all been judges. Demirski and Masłowska were both judges and special guests at R@port in 2013 and 2014 respectively. Although Wojcieszek claimed during the project to have finished writing for the stage in favour of film, he returned to playwriting before the end of the research. At the beginning of the project, certain writers were left out who could have been included, such as Magda Fertacz, Artur Pałyga, or Michał Walczak. By the end, other writers had emerged who could have been included had they been more prominent earlier, such as Anna Wakulik and Julia Holewińska.

The approach taken in this research allowed the texts to speak for themselves. Predominant themes and concerns emerged clearly from a wide reading of works by a broad range of playwrights. While it would have been possible to approach the texts with an already theme-based agenda based on informed judgments about contemporary Polish society, this would have carried the danger of harnessing texts to themes and, crucially, of pigeon-holing complex texts into one theme. In plays that speak to a contemporary Polish

social reality that is grappling with inextricably linked issues relating to multiple social processes, various themes are inevitably intertwined. This was reinforced by an open reading from plays that were most easily accessible at the beginning of the project. Selected plays are therefore approached from a different angle in each of the three chapters on concurrent themes, in each of which a single thread is pulled out for closer analysis before dramatic techniques are addressed in the fifth chapter, incorporating a discussion of some of the innovative, experimental and eclectic approaches employed by many contemporary Polish playwrights. The plays selected tie in with each other thematically, allowing informed observations to be evidenced before comparisons and contrasts in style are highlighted.

The small amount of academic research that exists in the area of contemporary Polish playwriting post-1989 is mainly in Polish, and some key texts for this study include *dramat made (in) Poland*, (Baluch, ed., 2009) as well as other books in the series ‘interpretacje dramatu’³⁷ published by Księgarnia Akademicka. Another key text was *Zła pamięć: Przeciw-historia w polskim teatrze i dramacie*³⁸ (Kwaśniewska and Niziołek, eds, 2012). Polish journalistic sources were also consulted including online reviews, the e-teatr website,³⁹ and articles and texts in the theatre journals *Dialog*, *Notatnik Teatralny*, *Teatr* and *Didaskalia*.⁴⁰ *Krytyka Polityczna*⁴¹ and *Teksty Drugie*⁴² also provided some relevant articles. The *Inna Scena*⁴³ series that came out of a number of conferences addressing issues in contemporary Polish theatre has also been consulted. Additional Polish sources are also referenced.

³⁷ *Interpretations of Drama*.

³⁸ *Bad Memory: Counter-history in Polish Theatre and Drama*.

³⁹ <<http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/index.html>> [last accessed 16 March 2013].

⁴⁰ *Stage Directions*.

⁴¹ *Political Critique*.

⁴² *Second Texts*.

⁴³ *Other Stage*.

In English, the book *Studies in language, literature and cultural mythology in Poland: investigating 'The Other'* (Grossman, ed., 2002) was a key text. The Memory at War project at Cambridge University also provided useful information, including in the book *Remembering Katyn* (Etkind, Finnin, et al., 2012). Although published late on in the research period, the collection of essays *Polish Literature in Transformation* (Phillips, ed., with the assistance of Knut Andreas Grimstad and Kris Van Heuckelom, 2013) became a valuable resource, as did the presentations given at the conference that led to the book.⁴⁴ Particularly pertinent are Grzegorz Niziołek's 'Ressentiment as Experiment: Polish Theatre and Drama after 1989' and Elwira M. Grossman's 'Transnational or Bi-cultural? Challenges in Reading post-1989 Drama "Written outside the Nation"'. Other papers by Grossman that were usefully consulted include her 'Who's Afraid of Gender and Sexuality? Plays by Women' (2005) and 'Gender dynamics in Polish drama after 2000' (2009).⁴⁵ The special issue of *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Volume 15, Issue 1, 'Polish Theatre after 1989: Beyond Borders', guest edited by Paul Allain and Grzegorz Ziółkowski was extremely helpful. I also came across a summary in English of a Hungarian PhD thesis on Polish drama that was submitted to the University of Debrecen by Patricia Paszt in 2011, but she confirmed (Paszt 2015) that the thesis is available in Hungarian and Slovakian and not in English or Polish, so although Paszt addresses themes in some contemporary Polish plays, her thesis is inaccessible as a reference for this research. Bryce Lease's doctoral thesis for the University of Kent 'Fantasy or symptom?: desire and the political in Polish theatre' (2009) shares some points of interest with this research, such as

⁴⁴ The conference on post-1989 Polish literature was held at University College London School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 10-11 November 2011.

⁴⁵ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the workshop *Poland Under Feminist Eyes* at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies in November 2008, at which I was present.

national identity, though his work focuses on different areas of Polish theatre and on historical texts rather than contemporary plays.⁴⁶

In January 2012, the Instytut Badań Literackich Polskiej⁴⁷ at the Akademia Nauk⁴⁸ in Warsaw opened the Ośrodek Badań nad Polskim Dramatem Współczesnym,⁴⁹ a centre for research on contemporary Polish drama, directed by Jacek Kopciński. The centre's first project, running from 2012-2016 is entitled 'Dramat polski. Reaktywacja'.⁵⁰ In addition to research, it aims, among other things, to publish and popularise the work of selected contemporary playwrights. To that end, the centre published the two-volume anthology *Trans/formacja. Dramat polski po roku 1989* (Kopciński 2013). Masłowska, Sikorska-Miszczuk and Wojcieszek are all included in the second volume. Kopciński is also the author of the useful article 'Gdy żadna ulica nie ma sensu. Wojna w twórczości młodych reżyserów i dramaturgów'⁵¹ (2010).

In addition to these secondary sources I was also fortunate in having personal contact with several people. This included conversations in person with directors Grzegorz Jarzyna and Monika Strzępka, playwrights Małgorzata Sikorska-Miszczuk, Artur Pałyga and Przemysław Wojcieszek, actors including Paweł Tomaszewski and Cezary Kosiński, academics including Michał Lachman and Elwira Grossman, translator Catherine Grosvenor, critic Roman Pawłowski, Marta Keil, at the time from the Instytut Teatralny, and Julita Krajewska, then from TR. I also had email contact with some of them as well as with director Piotr Kruszczyński and translator Benjamin Paloff. I attended conferences on Polish literature where I discussed the research with British and Polish academics.

⁴⁶ Teresa Murjas' article on memory and history in Tadeusz Słobodzianek's *Nasza Klasa* (Murjas 2011) was consulted, as was Bryce Lease's article on anti-Semitism in the same play (Lease 2012). Although Słobodzianek's texts are not analysed in this study, he is an important figure in the development of new Polish playwriting. Paul Vickers' chapter on *Nasza Klasa* (Vickers 2013) was also consulted.

⁴⁷ Institute of Research on Polish Literature.

⁴⁸ Academy of Sciences.

⁴⁹ Centre for Research on Contemporary Polish Drama.

⁵⁰ 'Polish Drama. Reactivation'.

⁵¹ 'When no road makes sense: war in the work of young directors and playwrights'.

Additionally I consulted selected studies of British contemporary theatre for comparison, including Michael Billington's *State of the Nation* (2007) and Aleks Sierz's *Rewriting the Nation: British theatre today* (2011).

1.2 Problems and limitations

Several problems arise when researching contemporary texts. As already mentioned, there is a certain amount of subjectivity involved in the selection of previously unstudied contemporary works. Personal judgements regarding quality and relevance are inevitable, necessarily forming a part of the process, although personal taste does not influence the decision if quality is recognised in a text that does not appeal stylistically. Since selection, some of the texts included here have earned such a predominant position on the contemporary scene that it is possible to assume that they now have a permanent place in Polish theatre history, such as Masłowska's *Między nami dobrze jest*⁵² (2009). Most of the texts analysed over the course of the research have now been performed in full productions, and those that have not might never be, or they might be premiered years down the line. Some texts have been performed as radio plays. Do these count as theatre, or should radio plays be seen as a different genre? By the end of the project, all the texts in focus had either been staged as a rehearsed reading or as at least one full production, with some texts having been produced several times, which adds more depth and complexities to the possibilities of interpretation of the texts in performance, although the central focus of this study remains the script.

Another problem with textual analysis of contemporary plays is that the performed text frequently differs from the written text. Lines get cut by the director or changed by the writer if s/he is involved in rehearsals, words get changed by actors either subconsciously or deliberately because a line doesn't flow, and mistakes are made in live theatre. Changes

⁵² *Things are Good Between Us*, translated by Zapałowski as *No Matter How Hard We Tried, Or We Exist on the Best Terms We Can* (Masłowska 2014b).

to the text may also be made by writers after a play is first staged. The differences between the published text and the performed text are potentially substantial when dealing with a new play that has been published before it has been performed or soon after its premiere without changes being made to the printed edition. While small changes do not necessarily warrant amendments to the printed text, more substantial changes could be incorporated into a new edition of a text that has acquired a certain status. In some cases in this study the performed text differs significantly from the version initially published. A clear example of this is Wojcieszek's *Made in Poland* which had its entire final scene cut from its inaugural stage production, directed by the writer (2004). In Strzępka's (2009) production of Demirski's *Niech żyje wojna*⁵³ there was far more swearing on stage than in the already-colourful printed text, which is relevant when studying such aspects of language. In his (2009) production of Sikorska-Miszczyk's *Walizka*,⁵⁴ director Piotr Kruszczyński chose to arrange some of the scenes in a different order from that in the script as printed in *Dialog*. The written text cannot be seen as a concrete, finished product, and must always be read as something to be performed, which is always subject to directorial interpretation and manipulation in performance. While this presents issues for the textual analysis of contemporary plays, it also adds to the richness and immediacy of the subject.

One major problem in working with contemporary Polish plays, especially from a cross-cultural perspective and being based in the UK, is accessing the scripts. Some texts that might have been useful were inaccessible during the time frame of the project, and others were published late on in the research period. However, during the course of the study once I had established contacts in the Polish theatre industry, I was able to obtain copies of some texts directly from the playwright Sikorska-Miszczyk and from Demirski's assistant, as well as from the administrator of R@port 2010. I also received texts from

⁵³ *Long Live the War!*

⁵⁴ *The Suitcase*.

translators Catherine Grosvenor⁵⁵ and Benjamin Paloff.⁵⁶ In one or two cases, texts have been published since being sent to me. Sikorska-Miszczyk's *Żelazna Kurtyna*⁵⁷ is published in a different version from the one I was initially sent, and the published version is used here. In the case of her *Burmistrz*,⁵⁸ the version published in *Notatnik Teatralny* is in fact an earlier version than that sent to me by the author, and there are some minor differences between the texts. The later version is used here since it is assumed the author saw the changes as improvements, and because it is this later version that is translated into English in the (A)*Pollonia* anthology (Duniec, Klass and Krakowska, eds, 2014). The situation is more complicated with Wojcieszek's *Made in Poland*. This play has been widely circulated in the 2006 anthology of the same name. However, the inaugural stage production, directed by the playwright, differs significantly in places, and it is this amended version that is published in the 2013 anthology *Trans/formacja*. The majority of the research project was conducted using the 2006 version and references to that text are provided here, but major differences in the 2013 version are also indicated. For example, in the 2006 version there are three male gangsters, and in the 2013 version one of them is female, which changes the dynamics as well as the text. In all cases, the version used is indicated, and all published versions of each text are referenced in the bibliography. Appendix One details all known productions and staged readings of each play discussed.

As a speaker of Polish as a foreign language, I faced challenges in reading some of the texts, particularly those that heavily feature slang, invented words, or deliberate grammatical errors. Some of the texts are challenging even for native speakers of Polish. Masłowska wrote on a blog about Demirski's *Niech żyje wojna* in performance 'Nie

⁵⁵ *This Pole walks into a bar...* (Demirski's *Był sobie Polak, Polak, Polak i diabeł*).

⁵⁶ *A couple of poor, Polish speaking Romanians* (Masłowska's *Dwoje biednych Rumunów mówiących po Polsku*).

⁵⁷ *The Iron Curtain*.

⁵⁸ *The Mayor*.

zawsze łatwo prześledzić, co się dzieje, a dzieje się bardzo dużo'⁵⁹ and 'Pada bardzo dużo słów'⁶⁰ (Masłowska 2011a). Where English translations exist I have consulted these, and where no translation existed I wrote my own. Many of the printed English translations were published well into the research period after I had made my own translations, but for the sake of accessibility of sources I have generally used the published translations here. In all cases the source of English translations is indicated. Where no published translation is indicated, the translation is my own. Character names remain in the Polish version when they are proper names, and where they are nouns describing age, social position or occupation, they are first given in Polish with the English translation in brackets, then in English only.

In addition to practical and linguistic difficulties in accessing texts, a pertinent and fundamental truth is that I can never, as a non-Pole, receive the texts in the same way as a Polish audience member or reader can. Although I have Polish heritage and I have spent time living in Poland, my reception of Polish plays will always be filtered by my cross-cultural perspective. This cultural distance, however, can in fact be helpful in achieving a clear overview of several texts read together, facilitating the identification of common threads within deeply 'Polish' plays. A related issue when writing about these texts for a non-Polish reader is that basic details of context need to be conveyed in addition to textual analyses. In some cases, however, a simple understanding of the history of World War II is enough to understand the plays, such as in Sikorska-Miszcuk's *Walizka* and in Masłowska's *Między nami dobrze jest*.

The lack of existing extensive academic studies, especially in English, as explained above, is another difficulty. Some key texts were published during the course of the study, which meant that the research was constantly being revised in order to incorporate the most

⁵⁹ 'It's not always easy to follow what's going on, and there's a lot going on'.

⁶⁰ 'Lots and lots of words rain down'.

up-to-date resources available. Similarly, where playwrights were prolific during the project, it became impossible to include all their plays to date.

The institutional support for new writing in Polish theatre, particularly festivals and competitions stipulating that plays must relate to contemporary social realities, has meant that many plays have been written on similar themes. It is impossible to determine how many of these plays would otherwise have emerged as responses to social issues. There remains a question mark over the extent to which concurrent themes and concerns have been imposed on playwrights keen to be published and staged. However, it is clear that the playwrights selected are no longer reliant on such initiatives yet they still write plays that engage with socio-political realities, and their earlier plays continue to resonate.

What continues to link plays from across the range of playwrights surveyed for the study as well as even newer plays is a close dialogue with contemporary Polish realities, identities, prejudices, stereotypes, and, importantly, possibilities and desires for a positive present and future, as well as innovation, experimentation and eclecticism in dramatic technique.

1.3 Four contemporary Polish playwrights and selected plays

Paweł Demirski, born in 1979 in Gdańsk, studied architecture at Gdańsk polytechnic as well as journalism and public relations at the University of Wrocław. From 2003-2006 he was Literary Director at Teatr Wybrzeże⁶¹ in Gdańsk.⁶² In 2003 he participated in the International Residency at the Royal Court theatre in London where he was introduced to documentary theatre by David Hare. Demirski later made some documentary work but moved on from this phase in his output towards a more eclectic approach. Although Demirski is included in the English language anthology *Dramaturgy of the Real on the World Stage* (Martin 2010), he should not be pigeon-holed in British

⁶¹ Coast Theatre.

⁶² By invitation from Maciej Nowak, at that time the director of the theatre.

understanding as a documentary theatre maker as this would not be representative of his practice as a whole. In 2004 Demirski initiated a project called Szybki Teatr Miejski⁶³ in Warsaw, making performances that responded to socio-political realities using verbatim, journalistic and archive materials and non-theatre spaces. He debuted there as the co-author of *Padnij*,⁶⁴ with Andrzej Mańkowski, directed by Piotr Waligórski. Together with his partner the director Monika Strzępka he has created several productions, and since 2007 they have worked in close collaboration. Many of their early shows were staged at Teatr Dramatyczny im. Jerzego Szaniawskiego⁶⁵ in Wałbrzych but they have since worked with theatres such as Łaźnia Nowa⁶⁶ in Kraków and Teatr Dramatyczny Miasta Stołecznego Warszawy.⁶⁷ In 2011 an anthology of Demirski plays was published entitled *Parafrazy*⁶⁸ (2011g), this title emphasising the plays' borrowings from, and rephrasing of, other texts. This anthology was particularly significant with regard to the dissemination of Demirski's works given that to date the journal *Dialog* has printed only one of his plays, a co-authored one at that,⁶⁹ despite the fact that the 'pozycja autora *Parafraz* na mapie współczesnego teatru jest wyjątkowa'⁷⁰ (Stokwiszewski 2011: 7). The influential director Jarzyna identified Demirski as important when I asked him about new Polish playwrights⁷¹ (2010).

⁶³ Fast Town Theatre.

⁶⁴ *Fall*.

⁶⁵ The Jerzy Szaniawski Dramatic Theatre.

⁶⁶ New Baths Theatre.

⁶⁷ The Dramatic Theatre of the Capital City of Warsaw. This collaboration began before the appointment to the theatre of Tadeusz Słobodzianek, with whom Demirski and Strzępka have a publicly antagonistic relationship.

⁶⁸ *Paraphrases*.

⁶⁹ Issue 5/2009 of the monthly journal featured his play *Tykocin*, co-written with Michał Zadara; issue 5/2011 features a discussion of his works published in the collection *Parafrazy* and staged by Strzępka; his work is also discussed in issue 6/2011. *Notatnik Teatralny 20 lat*, 64-65/2011, is a special issue of the journal, devoted to the work of Demirski and Strzępka. They are also discussed and interviewed with increasing regularity in the major Polish theatre journals such as *Didaskalia*.

⁷⁰ 'the position of the author of *Parafrazy* on the map of contemporary theatre is exceptional'.

⁷¹ In 2010, I spoke to the famous director Grzegorz Jarzyna at The Barbican in London after his TR production there of *4:48 Psychosis*. I asked him whether any contemporary Polish playwrights ought to be included in my research apart from those I had already selected (among them Masłowska, whom he saw as an important inclusion). He named Demirski. This was an informal discussion on 26th March 2010 in the foyer of the Barbican theatre.

Demirski writes regularly for the journal *Krytyka Polityczna*, and his articles include *Teatr Dramatopisarzy*⁷² (2007b). He has been extremely prolific in recent years, having written over 25 plays by 2015, the majority of which have been staged in productions directed by Strzępka. They have won several prestigious awards, including the Paszport Polityki⁷³ in 2010 and the main prizes at R@port in 2010 and 2012. At the 2013 festival Demirski was the special guest and head of the jury and his play *Bitwa Warszawska 1920*⁷⁴ (Strzępka 2013) was a guest performance. Being extremely prolific, Demirski is represented by a small sample of his work here. Demirski's other works include *From Poland with Love*⁷⁵ (2005), *Wałęsa. Historia wesola, a ogromnie przez to smutna*⁷⁶ (2005), *Kiedy przyjdą podpalić dom, to się nie zdziw*⁷⁷ (2006), *Dziady. Ekshumacja*⁷⁸ (2007), *Diamenty to węgiel, który wziął się do roboty*⁷⁹ (2008), *Sztuka dla dziecka*⁸⁰ (2009), *Był sobie Andrzej, Andrzej, Andrzej i Andrzej*⁸¹ (2010), *Położnice szpitala św. Zofii*⁸² (2011, co-written with Jan Suświłło), *Courtney Love* (2012), *Firma*⁸³ (2012), *O dobru*⁸⁴ (2012), *Dario Fo przesłał instrukcje*⁸⁵ (2013), the concept of which was devised with Strzępka, *Nie-boska komedia. WSZYSTKO POWIEM BOGU!*⁸⁶ (2014), and a play in three episodes entitled *Klątwa*⁸⁷ (2014). It is challenging to summarise the nature of Demirski texts and Strzępka shows satisfactorily, but an attempt to outline and contextualise each of four selected plays follows.

⁷² Playwright's Theatre.

⁷³ 'Polityka's Passport', a prestigious award given annually by the journal *Polityka*, 'Politics'.

⁷⁴ *The 1920 Battle of Warsaw*.

⁷⁵ This title is in English in the original.

⁷⁶ *Wałęsa. A Funny Story, But Because of That Incredibly Sad*.

⁷⁷ *Don't be Surprised when they Burn Your House Down* (2010b).

⁷⁸ *Forefathers Eve. Exhumation*.

⁷⁹ *Diamonds Are Coal That Got Down to Business* (2014).

⁸⁰ *Child's Play*.

⁸¹ *There was Andrzej, Andrzej, Andrzej and Andrzej*.

⁸² *Saint Sophia Maternity Hospital*.

⁸³ *The Company*.

⁸⁴ *On Goodness*.

⁸⁵ *Dario Fo Sent Instructions*.

⁸⁶ *Undivine Comedy. I'LL TELL GOD EVERYTHING*.

⁸⁷ *The Curse*.

*Był sobie Polak, Polak, Polak i diabeł, czyli w heroicznych walkach narodu polskiego wszystkie sztachety zostały zużyte*⁸⁸ features a collection of dead Polish characters with little in common apart from their being in limbo and their fear of national ghosts, which is represented by the character Wanda who was killed before all the other characters, just after World War II. The others are two-dimensional stereotypes, thrown together while waiting for transportation to heaven or hell. Wanda was killed when Staruszka (Old Woman) threw her into a well to ensure that she did not reveal secrets about their time as ‘camp whores’ in Auschwitz. Decades later Old Woman burnt herself on her roof to escape debt collectors. The other characters are the sleazy paedophile bishop, Paetz,⁸⁹ based on a real person, Gwiazdka (Starlet), an actress who objects to Poland’s agricultural foundations but was killed by a tractor, Chłopiec (Boy), whose parents deserted him to earn money in England, Dresiarz (Chav),⁹⁰ an angry young football hooligan whose girlfriend takes money for sex acts, Turysta (Tourist) from Germany, and Generał (General), a fictionalisation of General Jaruzelski, who was responsible for the introduction of Martial Law to Poland in 1981, whose main function is to spout national myths. The stage manager, Irena, is on stage, interacting with the characters. The play is a series of individual stories interwoven with each other, culminating in the arrival of the train to transport the characters from limbo to an unspecified destination.

This play premiered on 30 March 2007 at Teatr Dramatyczny in Wałbrzych, directed by Monika Strzępka. It remained in the repertoire until July 2012. Its closing performances were cancelled due to the sudden death of Sabina Tumidalska who played Old Woman. An archived recording of the production was shown on 12 July 2007 to

⁸⁸ *There was a Pole, a Pole, a Pole and the Devil, or in the Heroic Battles of the Polish Nation all the Railings Were Used.*

⁸⁹ Notably, this character is referred to as ‘Biskup’ (Bishop) in publicity and reviews. Paetz is used here since that is what is in the text, however the use of the name ‘Biskup’ conceals Paetz’s true identity.

⁹⁰ Catherine Grosvenor translates ‘dresiarz’ as ‘hooligan’ in this context (Demirski 2012a). The character is referred to here in my translation as Chav. In Polish, the word ‘dresiarz’ means someone who often wears a tracksuit and is of low socio-economic status.

honour Tumidalska and to close the show. This production had already been seen across Poland, receiving plenty of attention and awards at various festivals. For example, at the VI Festiwal Prapremier⁹¹ in Bydgoszcz in 2007 it won prizes for text and acting. In May 2008 it was shown at the 3rd R@port, as well as six other festivals between 2008 and 2010. Since 2007, Demirski texts have very rarely been directed by anyone other than Strzępka, but in 2013 a new production of this play premiered at Teatr im. Juliusz Osterwy⁹² in Lublin, directed by Remigiusz Brzyk (2013). His production has toured around small towns and was also staged at Teatr IMKA⁹³ in Warsaw in September 2014.

To date, this text has not been published. For the purposes of this study I use a playwright's manuscript copy sent to me by Catherine Grosvenor, who was commissioned by the Royal Court theatre, London, to translate the play. A three day script development workshop took place there but the play was not taken any further. I have consulted Grosvenor's unpublished translation and it has informed my own translations, which are used here.⁹⁴ The Polish manuscript copy of the script includes the playwright's notes to the translator, which he has kindly allowed me to quote along with the text. This play will be referred to as *Byl Sobie*.

*Niech żyje wojna!*⁹⁵ is in part based on Janusz Przymanowski's novel *Czterej pancerni i pies*,⁹⁶ which was adapted into a cult television series during the 1960s. It follows the crew of a Soviet army tank. Demirski satirises its characters and scenes while criticising its glorification of war. The play's action moves from parodies of scenes from the television series to the beginning of the Warsaw Uprising in 1944, to Poland in the 1960s, to the contemporary theatre scene. A cameo Jewish 'Aktor' (Actor) explains that

⁹¹ Preview Festival.

⁹² The Juliusz Osterwa Theatre in Lublin.

⁹³ The YMCA Theatre.

⁹⁴ I have referred to the English translation with kind permission from Catherine Grosvenor and from The Royal Court Theatre.

⁹⁵ *Long Live the War!*

⁹⁶ *Four Tank-men and a Dog*.

there should also have been a scene about Polish-Jewish relations but there is not, because there has been too much of that in Polish theatre lately. In Strzępka's (2009) production, Gustlik, a character from Przymanowski's novel, is portrayed by a female actor as a black, male, American soldier. Szarik, Stalin's dog, is portrayed as a soldier turned into a dog by his experiences of war, who barks orders at the younger generations to follow the convention of a minute's silence. They refuse, asserting their right to break with tradition and find their own methods of remembrance. They encourage the audience to do the same.

Strzępka's inaugural (2009) production premiered at Teatr Dramatyczny im. Jerzego Szaniawskiego in Wałbrzych, in the Scena Kameralna,⁹⁷ on 12 December. Subsequent stagings are detailed in Appendix One, as for all plays discussed. In 2010, Strzępka's production won the main prize at R@port, where I saw the show⁹⁸ and attended an after-show discussion with Demirski and Strzępka. At the time of writing, the show is listed as being in the repertoire, rather than the archive, at Teatr Dramatyczny, Wałbrzych, meaning that it could be staged again in future,⁹⁹ since Polish theatres run a repertory system in which they may show plays for a few nights at a time over an extended period, sometimes several years.¹⁰⁰ In 2015, this play was staged in a different production at the PWST¹⁰¹ theatre school in Kraków, directed by Remigiusz Brzyk.

This play (Demirski 2011e) is published in the anthology of Demirski plays *Parafrazy* (2011g), from which quotations are provided, although the initial research was conducted on a manuscript copy (Demirski 2010b). No English translation exists, so quotations are given in my own translation unless otherwise stated. This play will be referred to as *Niech żyje*.

⁹⁷ Chamber Stage.

⁹⁸ I subsequently saw this production again, on DVD at the Instytut Teatralny, Warsaw.

⁹⁹ <<http://teatr.walbrzych.pl/spektakle/spektakle-na-afiszu/>> [last accessed 19 September 2015].

¹⁰⁰ If a production is archived it has had its final performance.

¹⁰¹ Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Teatralna (the State Theatre School).

In *W imię Jakuba S.*,¹⁰² Demirski juxtaposes Jakub Szela, the leader of a peasant uprising against the Polish nobility in 1846 in Galicia, with a contemporary couple who have to borrow money for a home. They are theatre makers who represent Demirski and Strzępka. Szela announces that there are 24 hours to change the world. This is a chaotic, abstract play that borrows from musicals and from Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* in order to depict middle class Poles who are victims of capitalist culture and work all hours to pay off mortgages and loans. Demirski reminds the audience that money does not equal happiness and that many Poles are descendants of peasants like Szela, even if they might try to forget that history. The patchwork of scenes is interrupted when a cameo Sculptor, played by an actor who also plays many other parts, asks the audience to lend him some money. He takes a bag from a woman in the front row and empties the contents.¹⁰³ Later the modern characters go on holiday to Egypt and are relieved when the pills they take in order to commit suicide fail. They realise they are happy to be alive, although they have done nothing to change the world. Szela asks the audience what they would do with 24 hours.

Strzępka's (2011b) production is a collaboration between Teatr Dramatyczny, Warsaw and Łaźnia Nowa,¹⁰⁴ Kraków. It premiered at Teatr Dramatyczny on 18 December and remains in their repertoire at the time of writing. In 2012 it was shown at several festivals including Boska Komedia and R@port, where it won the main prize. This play has not been published and the version used here was sent by Demirski's assistant, as was the English translation by Artur Zapałowski which is also used. This play will be referred to as *W imię*.

¹⁰² *In the Name of Jakub S.*

¹⁰³ I saw this production twice and the bag seems to be taken from a genuine audience member. On one occasion there was a sandwich in the bag, which the actor ate. The money and any other possessions taken, such as a phone, were returned during the curtain call.

¹⁰⁴ New Baths Theatre.

*Tęczowa Trybuna 2012*¹⁰⁵ is based on an ostensibly real but actually fake campaign created by Demirski in which a (pretend) group of gay football supporters campaign for their own stand at the Euro 2010 football games in order to escape homophobic bullying and attacks. The play's protagonists are 'based on' these pretend-real campaigners, alongside a professional footballer who is a drag queen by night, a closeted homosexual government official, a gay waiter, Pani Sędzia (Judge), whose ex-husband is gay, Pani Prezydent (Mayor), the real mayor of Warsaw who is satirised for her lack of support for her citizens, and Po Przejściach, a transsexual priest who used to be a nun. This character name means post-transition or post-hardship, but Zapałowski's translation as Hard Done By will be used here. The ghost of Justin Fashanu¹⁰⁶ appears, as does a satirical representation of Krzysztof Warlikowski, the famous director. Audience members are asked to sign a petition in support of the Rainbow Stand campaign. A swarm of mosquitoes irritates characters throughout the play, and the government official dreams of a human-sized spider before coming out as gay to the audience. The campaigners are unsuccessful.

Strzępka's (2011a) production premiered at Teatr Polski Wrocław, Scena im. Jerzego Grzegorzewskiego,¹⁰⁷ on 5 March. In December the same year it won the main prize at both the Prapremier festival in Bydgoszcz and the Boska Komedia festival in Kraków. The show remained in the Teatr Polski Wrocław repertoire, and in 2013 Lech Wałęsa was formally invited to attend after he made anti-gay remarks (Ansa/k 2013). This play has not been published and I refer to a manuscript copy in Polish and an English translation by Artur Zapałowski, both emailed to me by Demirski's assistant. This play will be referred to as *Tęczowa*.

Dorota Masłowska was born in 1983 in Wejherowo near the 'Trójmiasto' (three towns) of Gdańsk, Gdynia, and Sopot. She was accepted at the University of Gdańsk to

¹⁰⁵ *Rainbow Stand 2012*.

¹⁰⁶ An English footballer who committed suicide in 1998 after coming out as gay.

¹⁰⁷ Polish Theatre Wrocław, Jerzy Grzegorzewski Stage.

study psychology, but transferred to the University of Warsaw's cultural studies course. She published poems while still a student and then debuted as a novelist with *Wojna polsko-ruska pod flagą biało-czerwoną*¹⁰⁸ in 2002. The book met with controversy largely because of its vulgar language, but it was also praised as innovative and was quickly translated into several languages. Masłowska's second work, a 'rap-poem' entitled *Paw Królowej*¹⁰⁹ was published in 2005 and won her the NIKE Polish literary prize in 2006. In 2009, she was awarded the Nagroda Ministra Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego.¹¹⁰ Her most recent novel, *Kochanie, zabiłam nasze koty*¹¹¹ was published in 2012. All three novels have been adapted for the stage, but without Masłowska's involvement, and they are therefore not included in this study. Masłowska's first play, *Dwoje biednych Rumunów mówiących po polsku*¹¹² was written for the TR/PL project in 2005, which asked participating authors to test 'jak najnowsze przemiany (polityczne, społeczne, kulturowe) wpłynęły na nasz sposób życia i patrzenia na rzeczywistość'¹¹³ as well as to explore 'nowe metody scenicznej narracji, odnaleźć dla polskiego teatru nowe estetyki'¹¹⁴ (Tuszyńska: 2006). The play premiered at TR in 2006, directed by fellow playwright/director Wojciechek. In 2009 Jarzyna directed Masłowska's second play *Między nami dobrze jest*. The same year, Masłowska began a year of study in Berlin at the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst.¹¹⁵ The following year, she participated in a residency for international writers at Writers Omi, Ledig House in New York. In 2011, by invitation from the organisers of the Warszawskie Spotkania Teatralne, she published reviews of shows at the

¹⁰⁸ Translated as *Snow White and Russian Red* in the USA and as *White and Red* in the UK (Masłowska 2005b).

¹⁰⁹ *The Queen's Peacock*.

¹¹⁰ An award from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.

¹¹¹ *Honey, I killed our Cats*.

¹¹² *A Couple of Poor Polish-Speaking Romanians*.

¹¹³ 'how the most recent changes (political, social, cultural) have influenced our way of life and outlook on reality'.

¹¹⁴ 'new methods of scenic narrative, to find a new aesthetic for Polish theatre'.

¹¹⁵ German Academic Exchange Service.

festival on a blog called Tramwaj Znany Teatrem.¹¹⁶ In 2013, a long interview conducted with Masłowska by Agnieszka Drotkiewicz was published as a book entitled *Dusza światowa*¹¹⁷ (Masłowska and Drotkiewicz 2013). Masłowska has written for journals including *Przekrój*¹¹⁸ and *Lampa*.¹¹⁹ In 2014 a film adaptation of *Między nami dobrze jest* was released in cinemas, also directed by Jarzyna and featuring the theatre actors, including the then 99 year old Danuta Szaflarska who plays the Osowiała Staruszka na Wózku Inwalidzkim, translated by Zapałowski (Masłowska 2014b) as Gloomy Old Biddy in a Wheelchair, but referred to here as Old Woman. Also in 2014 Masłowska's first play for children, *Jak zostałam wiedźmą*¹²⁰ premiered at Teatr Studio,¹²¹ Warsaw (Glińska 2014). The same year, Masłowska released her first music album in the guise of hip hop / pop / rap musician 'Mister D'. As her music videos suggest and as her live performance confirms (Masłowska as Mister D 2015), the whole act is a spoof, parodying musical genres and celebrity and criticising contemporary social and political issues. Masłowska has won a number of awards, including in 2014 the Kazimierz Dejmek prize 'dla dramaturga szczególnie chętnie granego na polskich scenach w ostatnich dwudziestu latach'.¹²² In 2014 she was a judge and special guest at R@port and performed there as Mister D. Masłowska was also one of several writers whose blog posts formed the basis of the show *blogi.pl*¹²³ at the Stary Teatr,¹²⁴ Kraków in 2008. She was also involved with initial script development for Krystian Lupa's *Poczekalnia. 0*¹²⁵ in 2011.

In *Dwoje biednych Rumunów mówiących po polsku* Dżina and Parcha (not their real names) have been at a drug-fuelled fancy dress party themed 'poverty, stench and

¹¹⁶ <<http://maslowska.blox.pl/html>> [last accessed 11 March 2015].

¹¹⁷ *Worldly Soul*.

¹¹⁸ *Cross-section*.

¹¹⁹ *Lamp*.

¹²⁰ *How I became a Witch*.

¹²¹ Studio Theatre.

¹²² 'the playwright most willingly performed on the Polish stage in the last twenty years'.

¹²³ *blogs.pl*.

¹²⁴ Old Theatre.

¹²⁵ *Waiting Room.0*.

sickness', which Dżina, a single mother, has funded with her child benefit money. She wears a fake pregnancy 'bump' as part of her outfit, the apparent authenticity of which depends on directorial interpretation. Having left the party they continue pretending to be poor Romanians. They hijack a car belonging to Kierowca (Driver) and end up far from home, having given away their money, mobile phones and possessions. Parcha is an actor who has to be on set at 8am in Warsaw to play a priest in a television series. The more his drugs wear off, the more he panics about getting to work. Dżina realises she does not know where she has left her son, or whether her mother collected him from nursery. Parcha criticises her for being a bad mother. She is paranoid that her own mother is following her. They seek help in getting home from Barmanka (Barmaid) who thinks she recognises Parcha because she has seen him stealing her chickens, rather than on the television, and she refuses to let him use the telephone. They get a lift from Kobieta (Woman) who turns out to be driving while thoroughly intoxicated and not wearing her contact lenses, in the car she has stolen from her adulterous husband. She crashes into a boar, leaving her passengers beside a dark forest. They see a light and head towards it, certain it will be their saviour. It is the home of the confused, paranoid Dziad (Old Man)¹²⁶ who thinks Parcha is really the priest he plays. He hopes Parcha has come to bring him food, of which neither man has any. Parcha pretends to be the priest so that he and Dżina can shelter in Old Man's house. Dżina goes into the bathroom and hangs herself. Whether she succeeds in committing suicide or whether this is another game with reality is dependent on interpretation and directorial choices. The action is interspersed with the reporting of its events in the future looking back, as Driver reports the incident of the carjacking to a police officer.

¹²⁶ Paloff translates this character name as Geezer (Masłowska 2015), but it is referred to here as Old Man.

The original production of this play, directed by fellow playwright Wojciech (2006) premiered at TR and remained in the repertoire there until 2012. The play has been produced in at least five different versions in Poland and has been read and performed in the USA, as detailed in Appendix One. In 2013, a major new production premiered, directed by Agnieszka Glińska at Teatr Studio, Warsaw, which was awarded the main prize at R@port 2013, where Demirski was at the helm of the jury. At the time of writing, this production is in the repertoire at Teatr Studio.

The play was published in the anthology *TR/PL* (Tuszyńska 2006) and that text is used here. It has also been published as a single play (Masłowska 2006a) and in another edition together with Masłowska's second play (2010). This play was published in English translation in 2008 in conjunction with its production that year at the Soho Theatre, London, directed by Lisa Goldman, entitled *A Couple of Poor, Polish-Speaking Romanians*. This text (Masłowska 2009a) was adapted by Lisa Goldman and Paul Sirett from a translation by Benjamin Paloff. I consulted this version and made my own translation, which is used here. Paloff later sent me his translation by email (2013), which was subsequently published in the anthology *Loose Screws* (2015) and has been consulted. This play will be referred to as *Dwoje biednych*.

Między nami dobrze jest is a fantasy play about three generations of women, two of whom cannot have existed, because the eldest woman was killed during World War II before having children. It is set in contemporary Poland. Old Woman is the projection of the older self of the young woman bombed during the war. She reminisces about the past from her wheelchair. Her daughter Halina is a dissatisfied TESCO employee whose life is characterised by lack: what she cannot afford, where she cannot go on holiday and, though she is unaware of it, by her non-existence. Her apartment is strewn with rubbish and recycling, and when neighbours meet to put out their rubbish, the 'monstrously fat'

Bożena, an American, hides behind bins so that people don't vomit when they see her. Old Woman's granddaughter, Halina's daughter, is Mała Metalowa Dziewczynka (Young Metal Girl,¹²⁷ hereafter referred to as Girl). She is not interested in Polish history or her grandmother's past. The generations cannot communicate, but they are united temporarily when they listen to a nostalgic radio piece about the golden age when everywhere was Polish. At the end of the play, in a flashback to the bombing that killed the grandmother, the would-have-been granddaughter is alongside her, seeing pieces of relatives' bodies on the ground. All the women turn out to be characters in a would-be film planned by Mężczyzna (Man), a filmmaker, who now lives in the apartment that replaced the one in which the grandmother was bombed.

This play was commissioned by TR in collaboration with the Berlin Schaubühne,¹²⁸ where it was premiered in March 2009, directed by Jarzyna. Its TR premiere took place in June 2009 and it has been performed there many times since, as well as touring widely both in Poland and internationally. This production has won several awards, including the main prize and an award for best playwright at the 9th Rzeczywistość Przedstawiona festival in Zabrze in 2009, the main prize and an award for the text at the 2nd Boska Komedia festival and an award for the text at the 16th Ogólnopolski Konkurs na Wystawienie Polskiej Sztuki Współczesnej¹²⁹ in Warsaw (2009/10). There have also been several other stage productions beside the flagship Jarzyna (2009) version, including one in Swedish, one in German, and a reading in English at LaMama, New York, in 2013, as well as other Polish stage productions and a radio production, all of which are detailed in Appendix One.

The play has been published four times, as detailed in the bibliography. The version used here is the single play published by Lampa i Iskra Boża (Masłowska 2008). It has

¹²⁷ The 'metal' here relates to her interest in heavy metal music.

¹²⁸ Playhouse.

¹²⁹ All-Poland Competition for Staging a Contemporary Polish Play.

been published in Artur Zapałowski's English translation as *No Matter How Hard We Tried, Or We Exist on the Best Terms we Can*, in the *(A)Pollonia* anthology (Duniec, Klass and Krakowska, eds, 2014), which is used here for ease of reference for the reader although my own translation was initially used during the research. This play will be referred to as *Między nami*.

Małgorzata Sikorska-Miszczyk was born in 1964 in communist Warsaw. She worked in advertising before becoming a screenwriter for television and cinema, including for the feature length animation *Tytus, Romek i A'Tomek wśród złodziei marzeń*¹³⁰ (2003). She debuted as a playwright in 2004. Although Sikorska-Miszczyk is older than the other writers included here she belongs to the same wave of new playwrights. In the directory *Teatr w Polsce, Dokumentacja Sezonu 2008/9*,¹³¹ she is described as belonging to the 'youngest' generation of playwrights (Buchwald 2010). Since selection for this study she has become an extremely prominent playwright in Poland as well as being involved in several international projects, both as a playwright and as a dramaturg. In 1982, while Poland was under martial law, Sikorska-Miszczyk began a degree in journalism at the University of Warsaw, graduating in 1987, still two years before the fall of the Berlin Wall.¹³² She later completed the Studium Scenariuszowe¹³³ at the PWSFTViT¹³⁴ film and television school in Łódź as well as studying on the gender studies course at the University of Warsaw. She has been a regular columnist for the online theatre journal *e-teatr*,¹³⁵ run by the Warsaw-based Instytut Teatralny. Her theatre debut with *Psychoterapia dla psów i kobiet*¹³⁶ (2004) was facilitated by the project Teren Warszawa at TR, where Sikorska-

¹³⁰ *Tytus, Romek and A'Tomek Among Dream Thieves*, directed by Leszek Galysz.

¹³¹ Theatre in Poland, Documentary of the 2008/9 Season.

¹³² The same year, Lech Wałęsa was released after eleven months of internment, just days after pro-Solidarity demonstrations in Warsaw and other cities. Martial Law ended the following year.

¹³³ Scriptwriting School.

¹³⁴ Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Filmowa, Telewizyjna i Teatralna, the State Film, Television and Theatre School.

¹³⁵ <<http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly>> [last accessed 05/11].

¹³⁶ *Psychotherapy for Dogs and Women*.

Miszczyk's play was one of two selected for a staged reading. A month later, she was invited by Słobodzianek to attend his Sztuka Dialogu workshop. Słobodzianek then supported Sikorska-Miszczyk with a ten day residency, which was a successful collaboration, but they did not collaborate further.¹³⁷ However, she attended Sztuka Dialogu workshops in 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2010. Sikorska-Miszczyk has held scholarships from the Instytut Adama Mickiewicza¹³⁸ in Warsaw and the Ministerstwo Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego¹³⁹ as well as CEC ArtsLink in the United States.¹⁴⁰ In 2011, at Teatr im. Heleny Modrzejewskiej¹⁴¹ in Legnica, a collaborative play by Sikorska-Miszczyk, Sylwia Chutnik and Magda Fertacz was premiered entitled *III Furie*.¹⁴² The international play *Europa*¹⁴³ (Jester, ed., 2013), written in four languages by four playwrights including Sikorska-Miszczyk, was shown at The Studio, Birmingham Repertory Theatre, UK from 16-19 October 2013. Sikorska-Miszczyk has won several awards, including for the text of *Walizka* at the 2009 Konkurs na Wystawienie Polskiej Sztuki Współczesnej and the GND for *Popiełuszko*¹⁴⁴ in 2012. Several of her plays have been translated into other languages and have had staged readings and performances internationally. Sikorska-Miszczyk has remained prolific during the course of the research. Her other plays include *Śmierć Człowieka-Wiewiórki*¹⁴⁵ (2006) *Szajba*¹⁴⁶ (2007), *Człowiek z Polski w czekoladzie*¹⁴⁷ (2010) *Ko-cham*¹⁴⁸ (2009), *Madonna* (2009), *Zaginiona czechosłowacja*¹⁴⁹ (2011), *Katarzyna Medycejska*¹⁵⁰ (2008), *From Istanbul With Love*¹⁵¹

¹³⁷ Sikorska-Miszczyk, in English, R@port festival, Gdynia, 2010.

¹³⁸ Adam Mickiewicz Institute.

¹³⁹ Polish National Ministry of Culture.

¹⁴⁰ She was a playwright in residence at the Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis, on a scholarship from CEC ArtsLink, from October to November 2010.

¹⁴¹ The Helena Modrzejewska Theatre.

¹⁴² *Three Furies*.

¹⁴³ *Europe*.

¹⁴⁴ This play is named after the priest Jerzy Popiełuszko who was murdered in 1984.

¹⁴⁵ *Death of the Squirrel-Man*.

¹⁴⁶ *Loose Screws*.

¹⁴⁷ *Man from Poland in Chocolate*.

¹⁴⁸ *I-love*.

¹⁴⁹ *Lost Czechoslovakia*.

(2014), *Kobro*¹⁵² (2014), *Twój liść nazywa się Europa, ale to za mało, żeby żyć*¹⁵³ (2014), and *Implozja*¹⁵⁴ (2015). Sikorska-Miszczyk also wrote the libretto for the opera *Czarodziejska góra*¹⁵⁵ (2015), as well as *Niezwykła podróż Pana Wieszaka*¹⁵⁶ (2009), a musical for children.

In *Walizka*,¹⁵⁷ a Polish Narrator¹⁵⁸ tells a story set in contemporary Paris. Its central character, Fransua Żako (François Jacquot) is retired and separated from his wife Sofi (Sophie), who says he does not know his inner self. Fransua's 'stony hearted' mother refuses to talk about his father, who died when he was three. This lack of knowledge makes Fransua feel incomplete. Fransua only knows that his father's name was Leo Pantofelnik. When he visits the Holocaust museum to distract himself while Sofi has surgery, Fransua discovers a suitcase with his father's name on. Narrator calls Fransua's home telephone and falls in love with his answerphone. At the museum, Przewodniczka (Tour Guide) is on the verge of a psychological breakdown because of her daily exposure to the horrors of the war. When she explains that the suitcase is on loan from Auschwitz, she and Fransua realise that it belonged to his father. Tour Guide is saved from insanity. Fransua leaves the museum and meets Poeta (Poet), who spouts advertising slogans about suitcases. Fransua returns to the museum and with his eyes closed opens the suitcase, 'releasing' his father, Pantofelnik. Fransua holds his breath and begs his father not to breathe in. Pantofelnik says he can't save himself in a gas chamber. He tells his son he loves him and begs him to breathe. Fransua exhales, Pantofelnik breathes a sigh of relief, then inhales the Zyklon B around him and dies. Knowing what happened to his father,

¹⁵⁰ *Catherine de Medici*.

¹⁵¹ This title is in English in the original.

¹⁵² This play is named after the sculptor Katarzyna Kobro.

¹⁵³ *Your leaf is called Europe, but it's not enough to live*.

¹⁵⁴ *Implosion*.

¹⁵⁵ *The Magic Mountain*.

¹⁵⁶ *The Amazing Journey of Mr Hanger*.

¹⁵⁷ *The Suitcase*.

¹⁵⁸ 'Narrator' is the same in English and Polish.

Fransua feels complete. He changes his name to Fransua Pantofelnik. Narrator predicts that Fransua and Sofi will be reunited. Żaklin wonders what her future with Narrator holds, and they sing a nonsensical 'French' song together. This text was first produced as a radio play by Teatr Polskiego Radia¹⁵⁹ in 2008, directed by Julia Wernio. The text, as a reading, won the main prize and the audience prize at the first Metafory Rzeczywistości festival in Poznań in 2008, and the radio play won the main prize at the Dwa Teatry¹⁶⁰ festival in Sopot in 2009. The text was then produced as a stage play at Teatr Polski¹⁶¹ in Poznań, directed by Piotr Kruszczyński, premiering in 2009. The same year, another version was produced by Teatr Żydowski,¹⁶² Warsaw, directed by Dorota Ignatiew, premiered in November 2011. Organisers of the seventh International Holocaust Remembrance Day, on 27 January 2012, encouraged people to see *Walizka* at Teatr Żydowski that evening.¹⁶³ Details of other readings and productions are given in Appendix One.

This play was printed in *Dialog*, issue 9/2008, and I use that version here. I use my own translation, which was written before Artur Zapałowski's translation was printed in *PAJ*, issue 97, 2011: 93-117).

In *Żelazna Kurtyna* Steven Spielberg flies to Poland to meet Scenarzystka (Screenwriter) to invite her to write a script about what would have happened had the Germans won World War II, conquered America and ruled the world. Screenwriter rejects the offer, having promised to work for a Polish unknown Reżyser (Director) who wants to make nationalistic films showing Poland in a positive light. His nationalism is symbolised by the appearance of Wielki Złoty Ptak (Great Golden Bird), a large, talking, golden eagle representing the Polish national emblem. Screenwriter daydreams about the island of

¹⁵⁹ Polish Radio Theatre.

¹⁶⁰ Two Theatres.

¹⁶¹ Polish Theatre.

¹⁶² Jewish Theatre.

¹⁶³ <<http://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/cms/news/2155,the-international-holocaust-remembrance-day/>> [last accessed 12 March 2015].

‘Jakunda’ in the Amazonian basin, where the Polish Minister of Culture is inaugurating a ‘Poland Year’. His wife has left him for a man from the island, Czarnuch (a vulgar, racist term for a black man).¹⁶⁴ Director dreams about being in his own Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and Screenwriter lies alongside, dreaming about asking Czarnuch what it is like to be black. When Screenwriter proposes a script based on an autobiographical story of child abuse during communism, Director insists the abuser must be Stalin, not a Pole. Screenwriter meets her child self, Ania, and they agree not to tell their story at all, let alone in a warped version. Screenwriter telephones Spielberg and his earlier offer still stands. The concluding stage directions say that Screenwriter flies to Los Angeles to meet Spielberg, and that the Minister of Culture and Czarnuch built and blew up a dam, forcing Poland under water and its inhabitants to the island of Jakunda, where Director is making a film about their lives as émigrés. This play will be referred to as *Żelazna*.

Sikorska-Miszczyk sent me this text in April 2010. It was published in *Opowiadanie historii*¹⁶⁵ and that version is used here (Sikorska-Miszczyk 2009). In 2012, two staged readings of this text were given, one at Teatr Śląski,¹⁶⁶ Katowice, directed by Waldemar Patlewicz and the other at Teatr Centralny,¹⁶⁷ Lublin, directed by Łukasz Witt-Michałowski.

Burmistrz¹⁶⁸ is set in a small unnamed Polish town that represents the real town of Jedwabne. It is based on events that occurred after Jan T. Gross’s book *Sąsiedzi: historia zagłady żydowskiego miasteczka*¹⁶⁹ (2002) was published, revealing that in 1941 the Jews of Jedwabne had been killed by their Polish neighbours, not by Nazi Germans. The eponymous Mayor is divided into *Burmistrz Przed* (Mayor Before) and *Burmistrz Po*

¹⁶⁴ Exceptionally, this character name is kept in the Polish. This is in order to avoid using the equivalent racially offensive term in English.

¹⁶⁵ *Telling Stories*.

¹⁶⁶ Silesian Theatre.

¹⁶⁷ Central Theatre.

¹⁶⁸ The Mayor.

¹⁶⁹ *Neighbours: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Gross 2003).

(Mayor After) and both are on stage as the play opens. Mayor Before initially conceals the truth about the killings, but once it has been revealed, by the opening of a wax-sealed envelope meant to remain sealed for a thousand years, he appeals to the locals to show love for the Jews. The town has a lavish monument to its glorious past but no memorials to its Jews, who are buried in a ‘cmentarz, którego nie ma’¹⁷⁰ (Sikorska-Miszczyk 2009a: 31). A Niemiec Na Pokucie (Penitent German) lives in the town to atone for what he erroneously assumes are his father’s sins. The locals, led by Mieszkaniec (Townsperson), blame him for the killing of the Jews. The Mayor of New York City arrives via an underground tunnel with his Jewish assistant, Miss.¹⁷¹ The Townspeople do not want to hear about her parents’ past. A chorus of 12 Zięciów Mieszkańca (Sons-in-law of the Townsperson) sing about Penitent German being a born killer. The town’s Jews rise from their graves and walk among the living. Leaflets fall from the sky instructing the locals not to be duped by their Mayor into apologising to these ‘obce szkielety’¹⁷² (2009a: 30). The locals move their monument to the cemetery to prevent the Jews from returning. Mayor Before begs them to leave it in peace but they place the monument on top of him, injuring him and turning him into Mayor After. An ‘Old Testament song’ announces that God rains down fire and brimstone on the town. The audience are warned to leave without looking back, to avoid being turned to stone.

Burmistrz was first produced as a radio play by Teatr Polskiego Radia, directed by Michał Kotański (2011). It has had rehearsed readings in the United States and Romania.¹⁷³ In March 2014 a staged reading was held at the Centrum Kultury¹⁷⁴ in Lublin,

¹⁷⁰ ‘Cemetery that doesn’t exist’.

¹⁷¹ In the manuscript version received from Sikorska-Miszczyk (2009a) this character is called Miss Piękności (Miss Beauty). Zapałowski’s translation is ‘A Beauty Queen’ (2014a). In the published Polish version (2009b), this character is called Miss (in English), and that name is used here.

¹⁷² Foreign skeletons.

¹⁷³ In 2011 a rehearsed reading was presented in English by the USC School of Theatre, directed by Jon Lawrence Rivera. In June 2013, *Burmistrz* was performed at the Sibiu international theatre festival in a Romanian translation by Iulia Popovici, directed by Bogdan Sărătean. In November 2013, a reading was directed by Tea Alagić for the (A)Pollonia festival in New York.

directed by Maria Kwiecień, and later the same year a rehearsed reading was performed in Lwów.¹⁷⁵ In October 2015 the play is to receive its stage premiere, also directed by Kwiecień, at the XX Międzynarodowy Festiwal Konfrontacje Teatralne w Lublinie.¹⁷⁶

Burmistrz was in the finals of both the GND in 2010 and the second Stückemarkt festival in Berlin in 2011.¹⁷⁷ In 2009, the text was published in the journal *Notatnik Teatralny*¹⁷⁸ and in the anthology *Wolna Wola: dramaty Teatru na Woli*¹⁷⁹ (Grzela, ed., 2009). A manuscript copy of the play was emailed to me on 1 December 2010 by the administrator of R@port 2010 and I use that copy here.

*Burmistrz Część II*¹⁸⁰ is a sequel to *Burmistrz*. In her introduction to the second play, the playwright states that the two plays should be seen as a whole but can be staged together or separately (2011a). This second play has the same central character as *Burmistrz*, Krzysztof Godlewski. It is narrated by Poeta (Poet) who writes about Mayor.¹⁸¹ A conference takes place, attended by Mayor and by Jan T. Gross along with the personification of his book *Neighbours*. A flashback to 2000 shows Mayor buying flowers from the anti-Semitic Kwiciarka (Florist) for a wreath in memory of the murdered Jews. Plagued by what he has read in Gross's book and by a lack of support from his town, Mayor prays to Satan for help in escaping life. Mayor advocates an apology for the murders and he hopes for a prayer shared by Catholics and Jews at the site of the killings. The town authorities oppose the laying of a wreath and they establish a Committee for Defence Against Apologising. Three members of the Młode Pokolenie (Young Generation) are fed up with being associated with the murders and with hearing about the

¹⁷⁴ Centre of Culture.

¹⁷⁵ By Art Workshop Drabyna.

¹⁷⁶ XX Confrontations International Theatre Festival in Lublin.

¹⁷⁷ Translated into German by Benjamin Voelkel, with dramaturgy by Daniel Richter.

¹⁷⁸ *Notatnik Teatralny* 2009, number 56/57.

¹⁷⁹ *Free Will: Plays from the Na Woli Theatre*.

¹⁸⁰ *The Mayor, Part Two*.

¹⁸¹ Note: in Zapałowski's translations, the plays are called *The Mayor* (2014a) and *The Mayor II* (2014c) while the character is referred to as Mayor. This convention is followed here.

war. They find entertainment in marijuana and popular culture. In a scene set in July 2011, the then President of Poland, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, apologises for the Jedwabne massacre. He is thanked by the Ambassador of Israel who stresses that many Jews, including his own relatives, were helped by Poles. The Townspeople remain anti-Semitic and unsupportive of Mayor, who admits that he used to be anti-Semitic himself before realising he was wrong, just as he realised that what he was taught in school about Russians being friends and Americans being imperialists was also wrong. Mayor is rejected by the Townspeople. Poet explains that Mayor continued to live in Jedwabne for a year, unemployed and friendless, before changing his name and leaving for the United States. Now in his new life, the ex-Mayor says he is a frightened and lonely foreigner, but he is proud to have stood up for his beliefs. Poet says he too is lonely, and should perhaps give up trying to make this story heard and be proud of having tried.

An excerpt of *The Mayor II* was staged as a rehearsed reading in January 2014 at The CUNY Graduate Center, New York, and the play has also had a rehearsed reading in Romania. Details of both are given in Appendix One.

This text was published in *Dialog* 12/2011 and I use that version here. *Burmistrz* and *Burmistrz cz.II* are published together in English in Artur Zapałowski's translation as *The Mayor I* and *The Mayor II* in the anthology *(A)Pollonia* and I use those translations here. These plays will be referred to as *Burmistrz* and *Burmistrz II*.

Popiełuszko takes its name from the murdered priest Jerzy Popiełuszko, killed in 1984 by Służba Bezpieczeństwa, the Interior Ministry Security Service, because of his involvement with the Solidarity movement.¹⁸² An isolated Popiełuszko meets his murderers on a car journey. Another central character is Antypolak, an anti-Pole. The play

¹⁸² Popiełuszko gave regular sermons to striking workers of the Solidarity (Solidarność) trade union movement, founded in 1980 at the Gdańsk shipyard under the leadership of Lech Wałęsa. Solidarity used non-violent means to fight for political change, and 'in one sense it was the rise' of Solidarity 'which was responsible for the Party's demise' (Davies 2001: 17), and for helping Poland 'extract itself from the Communist morass with [...] relatively few conflicts' (Davies 2001: 416).

opens with his description of an imagined scene in which the Polish Catholic church, personified as a group of people, comes to visit him. Because he has gone against Polish social norms and chosen not to be a Catholic, in this reported scene, the church removes all possessions relating to Polishness, including Antypolak's passport. He later finds himself in the boot of the car of Popiełuszko's murderers, and communism and the present day are intertwined. Having tried but failed to persuade Popiełuszko not to engage openly in politics, Antypolak reiterates his decision to 'rise up off his knees' and assert his right not to be a Catholic, and he urges the spectators to each find their own prayer, and to stand up against the Catholic church yet to be proud of being Polish.

This play premiered in June 2012 at Teatr Polski, Bydgoszcz, directed by Piotr Łysak, and it was performed later that year at R@port 2012. Sikorska-Miszczyk won that year's GND for the text. *Popiełuszko* was published in *Dialog* 6/2012 and in *Trans/formacja. Dramat Polski po 1989 roku. Tom II. Antologia* (Kopciński, ed., 2013).

Przemysław Wojcieszek, born in 1974 in Jelcz-Miłoszyce, studied Polish Studies at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow and journalism at the University of Wrocław. He has been a leading independent film maker, playwright and theatre director. During the research period he stopped writing for the stage in order to focus on film but his plays remained in theatre repertoires, and he returned to writing for theatre in 2015 with his new play *Bema pamięci rapsod żałobny*,¹⁸³ which was shortlisted for the second round of the GND. Wojcieszek made his debut in 1988 as a screen writer for a film¹⁸⁴ called *Poniedziałek*.¹⁸⁵ In 1999, he made his own semi-amateur film, *Zabij ich wszystkich*¹⁸⁶ which he adapted for the stage in 2000.¹⁸⁷ In 2001, Wojcieszek made his first fully

¹⁸³ *Requiem Rhapsody in Memory of Bem.*

¹⁸⁴ Made by Witold Adamek.

¹⁸⁵ *Monday.*

¹⁸⁶ *Kill Them All.*

¹⁸⁷ This play has not been performed but it received rehearsed readings at Teatr Polski in Poznan and Teatr im. Kochanowskiego in Opole.

professional film, *Głośniejszy od Bomb*,¹⁸⁸ a romantic comedy. In the same year, he set up his own film distribution company and launched the Slamdance Poland film festival.¹⁸⁹ He later wrote a screen play entitled *Made in Poland*.¹⁹⁰ A lack of funds meant that this film was not made at the time, and in 2004 the director of Teatr im. Heleny Modrzejewskiej in Legnica invited Wojciech to write and direct a theatre adaptation. The play was first performed to great acclaim on a housing estate in Legnica, with much of the action taking place in a disused supermarket. In 2010, a film version was finally made, released in 2011. Wojciech's second play, *Cokolwiek Się Zdarzy, Kocham Cię*¹⁹¹ (2005) premiered that year at TR, directed by the author. In 2006 he directed Masłowska's *Dwoje biednych* as well as his own play *Darkroom*¹⁹² at Teatr Polonia,¹⁹³ Warsaw, and *Osobisty Jesus*¹⁹⁴ at Teatr im. Heleny Modrzejewskiej. In 2007, he directed his *Ja Jestem Zmartwychstaniem*¹⁹⁵ at Teatr im. Jerzego Szanawskiego, Wałbrzych, and *Zaśnij Teraz w Ogniu*¹⁹⁶ at Teatr Polski, Wrocław. In 2008, he directed his *Miłość Ci Wszystko Wybaczy*¹⁹⁷ at Teatr Polonia and *Była już taka miłość, ale nie ma pewności, że to była nasza*¹⁹⁸ at Teatr im. Heleny Modrzejewskiej. In 2010, he directed his *Jeszcze będzie przepięknie*¹⁹⁹ at Teatr Polonia. The same year, his *Piosenki o wierze i poświęceniu*²⁰⁰ was published in *Dialog* 6/2010. Its stage debut followed in 2011 at The Rag Factory, London, with English surtitles, performed by Polish Artists in London, directed by Margot Przymierska.

¹⁸⁸ *Louder Than Bombs.*

¹⁸⁹ Wojciech's second film, *W dół kolorowym wzgórzem* (*Down the Colourful Hill*) (2004), won him Best Director award at the Polish Film Festival in Gdynia. His third film, *Doskonale Popołudnie* (*The Perfect Afternoon*) made in 2005, won several further awards at various film festivals.

¹⁹⁰ The title being in English in the original.

¹⁹¹ *Whatever Happens, I Love You.*

¹⁹² English in the original.

¹⁹³ Polonia Theatre.

¹⁹⁴ *Personal Jesus.*

¹⁹⁵ *I am the Resurrection.*

¹⁹⁶ *Sleep Now In The Fire.*

¹⁹⁷ *Love Will Forgive You Everything.*

¹⁹⁸ *There Has Been Love Like That, But There's No Certainty That It Was Ours.*

¹⁹⁹ *It Will All Still be Beautiful.*

²⁰⁰ *Songs of Faith and Sacrifice.*

The heroine of *Cokolwiek Się Zdarzy, Kocham Cię*, Magda, has escaped to Warsaw from a small town having been thrown out by her parents for being a lesbian. She wants to be an actress but works in the kitchen of a fried chicken fast food outlet, washing up. She is continually sexually harassed by another employee, Sławek, and by Heniek, the son-in-law of the chicken shop owner. Sugar, another lesbian, comes to work at the chicken shop and introduces Magda to slam poetry competitions, where the fellow competitors are Leszek and Mikołaj, Sugar's on-off male lover. Sugar and Magda enter into a tumultuous relationship and move in with Sugar's mother, Teresa. Sugar continues a relationship with Mikołaj behind Magda's back, partly so that he will continue to write poems for her to pass off as her own at the slam competitions. Sugar's bigoted homophobic brother, Piotr, is an aggressive, nationalistic soldier who has recently returned from Iraq. He tells Magda about Sugar's infidelity. Magda breaks off the relationship with Sugar but later accompanies her to a poetry slam where Sugar admits that her poems were by Mikołaj. Magda makes her poetry debut with a piece that is a declaration of love and forgiveness for Sugar, a rejection of social stereotypes and an expression of optimism about their future – even if that future needs to be in Berlin or Prague, if there is no place for them in Warsaw. They leave the slam together without waiting for the result of the competition, uninterested in the approval or opinions of others.

The play premiered at TR (2005) and remained in the repertoire until its final performances in July 2015 at the Open'er festival in Gdynia. Other performances are detailed in Appendix One. Wojcieszek's production was in the final of the 2006 Ogólnopolski Konkurs na Wystawienie Polskiej Sztuki Współczesnej. The text was published in *Dialog* 10/2005 and in the *TR/PL* anthology in 2006. Artur Zapałowski's English translation, published in the *(A)Pollonia* anthology, is used here. This play is referred to as *Cokolwiek*.

The hero of *Made in Poland* is Boguś, an angry, disillusioned 19-year-old from a rundown inner city housing estate in Poland. He wakes up one morning feeling completely 'wkurwiony'²⁰¹ (Wojcieszek 2006a: 405). Deciding that everything he has been told in church all his life is a pack of lies, he gives up his role as an altar server and has the words 'fuck off', in English, tattooed on his forehead. He wants to start a revolution but has no manifesto, failing to recruit followers other than the car park attendant Emil, a wheelchair user. Boguś seeks answers about the meaning of life from his former teacher Wiktor who has been sacked for being an alcoholic. Boguś goes around attacking cars belonging to people who annoy him, including an expensive car belonging to a group of gangsters, who demand money to replace the headlamps. It is impossible for him to meet their 24 hour deadline. Boguś's mother Irena manages to borrow some money, but rather than pay off the gangsters, Boguś wants to buy a dress for his tracksuit-wearing new girlfriend Monika, Emil's sister, and Irena agrees. The gangsters track Boguś down to his home and attack him. When the gang leader, Fazi, realises his sidekick Tomaszek is destroying records by pop musician Krzysztof Krawczyk, belonging to Irena, he declares he cannot kill a Krawczyk fan. They give Boguś more time to find the money, and the following day they chase him into church, where the priest Edmund hands over money collected to restore the church. Wiktor and Edmund enter into a discussion of religion and Boguś declares himself a working class Catholic who wants to live. Monika appears, he asks her to marry him and she accepts. They are married by Edmund and during the reception Krzysztof Krawczyk makes a guest appearance and a beam of light from above erases Boguś's tattoo.

The inaugural Wojcieszek (2004) production of this play won several awards, including the main prizes at the 10th Ogólnopolski Konkurs na Wystawienie Polskiej Sztuki Współczesnej in Warsaw in 2005 and at the 1st R@port in 2006. It was shown on

²⁰¹ 'pissed off' or 'fucked off'.

Polish television in 2005. A rehearsed reading was given in New York in 2008, as detailed in Appendix One.

The text was published in the anthology that takes its name, in 2006, and in the second volume of the *Trans/formacja* anthology in 2013. An English translation is published in the anthology *Loose Screws: Nine New Plays from Poland* (Laster, ed., 2015), of which an electronic review copy was consulted prior to publication of the printed copy, which is used here. This play will be referred to as *Made in Poland*.

1.4 Thesis structure

In Chapter 2 there is an investigation of the theme of remembering versus forgetting. Several plays relate to certain aspects of Polish history, both to the ways in which facts are presented in terms of historiography, and also to the manner in which particular events are memorialised. Importantly, these contemporary plays do not present the past, but look at it from the present, and the playwrights engage with important socio-cultural processes relating to how the past is viewed and how this shapes contemporary thinking and identity. There is a clear sense among the playwrights that the past should be acknowledged honestly and truthfully, but that younger generations should be allowed to move on from the nation's painful history and to reject or individualise commemorative practices. The particular aspects of history being remembered and forgotten in society are outlined, which include World War II in general. The plays also include more specific references to the 1940 Katyn massacre in which around 22,000 Polish officers and intelligentsia were shot in Katyn forest and elsewhere by the NKVD, Soviet secret police, but the truth about this event was suppressed for decades. Another feature in several plays is the 1941 massacre in Jedwabne when hundreds of Polish Jews were killed by their neighbours, but culpability was assigned to the Nazis. The number of Jews killed is officially reported as up to three hundred and forty, but Jan T. Gross estimates it at one

thousand six hundred. In the plays there are also some references to the 1944 Warsaw Uprising in which the Armia Krajowa, the Polish resistance home army, fought unsuccessfully for 63 days to liberate Warsaw from Nazi Germany. The post-war communist period that ended with the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 is also addressed in some of the plays. An assessment is given as to why this remembering and reassessing of attitudes to the past should be happening now. The plays are then closely analysed through the lens of memory studies, focusing on selected aspects of this broad theory, particularly Assman's *mnemohistory*, Nora's *lieux de mémoire* and Hirsch's *postmemory*.

In Chapter 3 the thematisation of the human body is explored. Under communism, discussion of the body and related matters was suppressed. The playwrights in hand make use of their freedom to address the body and issues to which it relates. There are many examples of eating and drinking on stage, and several references to bodily functions. The playwrights frequently underline the unifying basic sameness of human bodies while at the same time emphasising individuality. The body is approached as a point of connection with the world and with others. The texts are analysed through the lenses of some general tenets of the doctrine of the Polish Catholic church as well as Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach, which highlights the notions of a sentient body and a unity of body and mind. Textual examples are analysed with a focus on dramatic representations of bodies affected by war, including dead bodies, surviving bodies and postwar bodies, which is followed by an investigation of references to the sexually abused body and the sexually abusive body, and finally a discussion of examples of the defiant body, in which characters are shown to assert themselves through their bodies by way of physical aggression or behaviour that reacts against social expectations.

In Chapter 4, social marginalisation as a recurrent theme is addressed, subdivided into sections on protagonists who are (a) marginalised economically, (b) marginalised as a

result of their homosexuality, including by society in general, within the family, and by the Polish Catholic church, and (c) those who are marginalised as a result of their non-conformism with the Polak-Katolik (Pole-Catholic) myth.²⁰² Fundamental to this chapter is the notion of sameness versus difference. A key frame of reference is the work on ‘the other’ in Polish culture, in Grossman (ed. 2002), from which Brian Porter’s chapter supports the section here on the non-Catholic Pole. Economic marginalisation is highlighted by the work of Polish academics Krystyna Duniec and Joanna Krakowska, particularly from their (2014) introduction to the *(A)Pollonia* anthology. The section on the marginalisation of homosexuals references the work of Polish critic and academic Błażej Warkocki (2013). Prejudice against homosexuality is particularly problematic in contemporary Polish society, and being gay is typically seen as incompatible with being Polish. This attitude is challenged in some of the plays by the playwrights in focus.

The final chapter is on dramatic techniques. Stylistic and formal elements are highlighted through the lens of Lehmann’s postdramatic theory (2006), with particular attention to its fundamental points of contrast with Szondi’s absolute drama. Postdramatic theatre is recognised here as a flawed yet influential theory, which shares some traits with several contemporary Polish plays. Evidence is provided to demonstrate non-classical approaches to structure, space, time and place, non-realistic approaches to character, the creative use of language including frequent and often extreme use of swearwords, and intertextualities with other works of art ranging from pop songs to literature, television and film. The prolific use of comedic techniques, especially the ironic and grotesque, is also explored. The playwrights in focus are shown to share particular stylistic traits as well as having some contrasting signature techniques, in addition to their common thematic concerns. Additionally, all the playwrights require an active spectator who will engage

²⁰² According to which, being Polish must equate to being a member of the Polish Catholic church.

with the social issues presented within the play and will piece together fragmented structures, while at the same time being entertained by the dramatic techniques employed.

2 Past Present: Remembering and forgetting as a thematic thread in

contemporary Polish playwriting

‘nie jesteście odpowiedzialni
ani za świat ani za koniec świata
zdjęto wam z ramion ciężar’²⁰³

(Różewicz 1983b: 465).

2.1 Introduction

The theme of remembering and forgetting is of paramount importance to several contemporary Polish playwrights, many of whom problematise and thematise the thorny issue of how key stages in Poland’s national history should be remembered. History and politics have featured strongly in Polish drama in the past. During communism, writers often used elements of symbolism and absurdism to evade the censors in mainstream theatre, although clandestine events took place where freedom of expression was greater. After the immediate post-communist trend for re-staging classics came a brief wave of interest in psychological dramas and Western European plays, followed by a resurgence of interest in contemporary Polish politics. As Monika Kwaśniewska and Grzegorz Niziołek put it (2012: 10) ‘Żywioł historii wdarł się do polskiego teatru z początkiem nowego stulecia’.²⁰⁴ They explain that plays from the period since 2000 include fantasies on the theme of the past, the present and the future, as well as ‘wszelkie formy niepamięci, życiodajne i śmiercionośne procesy zapomniania, ale również strategię polityki pamięci’²⁰⁵ (2012: 9). Many of the plays in question address issues of collective memory, truth and lies, and contemporary attitudes to traumatic past events.

Unlike their predecessors, post-communist Polish writers officially have the freedom to openly criticise, analyse, discuss and reconfigure representations of Polish

²⁰³ ‘you are not responsible | either for the world or for the end of the world | the burden is taken from your shoulders’ (Różewicz 1983a: 465).

²⁰⁴ ‘The element of history rushed into Polish theatre with the beginning of the new century’.

²⁰⁵ ‘all forms of amnesia, life-giving and deadly processes of forgetting, but also strategies of political memory’.

history and to engage in socio-political discourse on the matter. The playwrights in question fully exploit this freedom, sometimes provocatively and controversially. The aims in this chapter are to contextualise this thematisation in theatre of what is essentially a social, political and psychological process and phenomenon, and to evidence this through textual analysis. In the first section of this chapter there is an outline of those aspects of history that are addressed in the plays. Social, political, literary and artistic triggers for the commonality of the theme are summarised in answer to the question ‘why now?’: why should particular aspects of the past be deemed current themes in free, capitalist, ‘European’²⁰⁶ Poland? Cultural memory of historical events has become highly politicised in contemporary Polish society, and the playwrights discussed engage with this discourse in various ways. In this chapter the theoretical framework of memory studies is shown to provide useful tools for an informed reading of the plays. Some specific points of theory have been selected from the vast field of memory studies in light of their particular relevance to the issues brought up by a collective reading of the plays. These points of theory will be outlined before being applied to the texts studied. While other elements of memory studies theory will be referenced where appropriate, the main points to be applied to the texts are: Jan Assmann’s *mnemohistory*, Pierre Nora’s *lieux de mémoire*, and Marianne Hirsch’s *postmemory*. Nora describes memory and history as ‘loin d’être synonymes’.²⁰⁷ Memory ‘est la vie, toujours portée par des groupes vivants [...], elle est en évolution permanente, ouverte à la dialectique du souvenir et de l’amnésie [...] susceptible de longues latencies et de soudaines revitalisations’.²⁰⁸ It is this dialectic with which the playwrights engage. History is ‘la reconstruction toujours problématique et incomplète de

²⁰⁶ European in the sense that it is a member of the European Union.

²⁰⁷ ‘far from being synonymous’ (1989: 8).

²⁰⁸ ‘is life, borne by living societies [...]. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting [...] susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived’ (1989: 8).

ce qui n'est plus'.²⁰⁹ (Nora 1984: xix). For Nora, while memory is tied to the present, history represents the past. Nora also states that we seek 'le déchiffrement de ce que nous sommes à la lumière de ce que nous ne sommes plus',²¹⁰ (Nora 1984: xxxiii), and this is especially pertinent to the plays examined.

Despite the recent 'memory boom' (Bell 2003, cited in Etkind, Finnin et al. 2012: 7) and the surge of interest in memory studies, there is currently little scholarship specifically on memory and theatre. The topic is, however, addressed in relation to contemporary Polish drama in *Zła pamięć: Przeciw-historia w polskim teatrze i dramacie*²¹¹ (Kwaśniewska and Niziołek, eds, 2012), which was published well after the commencement of this study but is nevertheless a key text. Kwaśniewska and Niziołek confirm that 'trudno jest rozdzielić dzisiaj dyskurs teoretyczny i praktykę artystyczną. Choć artyści nie powołują się na teorie postpamięci ani koncepcję *lieux de mémoire*, ich sposób myślenia o przeszłości bardzo silnie z nimi koresponduje'²¹² (2012: 16).

The plays studied are not what Birgitt Neumann calls 'memory-plays', which use dialogue to 'portray specific versions of the past' or 're-enact past events through the use of flash-backs' (Neumann 2008: 40). Unlike films such as Wajda's *Katyn* (Wajda 2007), these plays are not attempts to represent any historical reality. Instead they tackle issues around the ways in which the past is viewed in contemporary Polish society, challenging versions of history, national narratives and methods of memorialisation. While contributing to knowledge on the subject of cultural memory in contemporary Polish drama, this chapter will reveal aspects of the current debates on this issue in contemporary Polish society.

²⁰⁹ 'the reconstruction, always problematic, and incomplete, of what is no longer' (1989: 8).

²¹⁰ 'the decipherment of what we are in the light of what we are no longer' (1989: 18).

²¹¹ *Bad memory: Counter-history in Polish theatre and Drama*.

²¹² 'it is difficult today to separate theoretical discourse and artistic practice. Although artists don't cite the theory of postmemory or the concept of *lieux de mémoire*, their ways of thinking about the past correspond with them very strongly'.

2.2 Remembering and forgetting what? And why now?

Several major periods in Polish history are addressed in the plays analysed, and the playwrights engage with debate around the ways in which historical events should be viewed, remembered and memorialised. Frequently there are political or intergenerational conflicts between characters within this debate. The disagreements that take place in the plays, and the discussions among audience members that are provoked by the plays, form a part of the nation's process of reshaping and redefining its national identity in the wake of significant political and social shifts.

World War II in general is one of the main pertinent points of focus, particularly the way in which it is or should be remembered and commemorated. The 1940 Katyn massacre also features, as does the Jedwabne pogrom of 1941 and the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. Communism is addressed, including the period of Martial Law in 1981-1983. There are also contemporary reflections on communism and the realities of capitalism.

In contemporary Poland the interpretation and representation of the past has become a 'raging ideological struggle' (Törnquist-Plewa 2013: 10), in which playwrights have become involved. Within Poland's 'distinctive and highly performative memory culture' (Etkind, Finnin et al., 2012: 140) there has recently been a 'deep ideological and memorial bifurcation in Polish politics' (Etkind, Finnin et al., 2012: 135). There are many tangible contributing factors to this debate. For example, a policy known as 'gruba kreska' advocating that an ideological 'thick line' be drawn between the past and the present was promoted by Tadeusz Mazowiecki while in office as the first non-communist Prime Minister of Poland from 1989-1991. The 'gruba kreska' notion involves burying lies, severing the past from the present, and leaving truths concealed. The playwrights studied uniformly reject this attitude in favour of a more challenging, more honest approach in which past truths are excavated and faced head on without being allowed to impact

negatively on the present and future. From 1995-2000, Aleksander Kwaśniewski served as president, having gained popularity with the slogan ‘Wybierzmy przyszłość’.²¹³ The playwrights studied here also advocate ‘choosing’ the future, within a context of honest discussion about the past and present.

In 1998, the foundation of the Instytut Pamięci Narodowej - Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu²¹⁴ was greatly significant in the continued politicisation of memory. In 2000, Gross’s book *Sąsiedzi: historia zagłady żydowskiego miasteczka*²¹⁵ was published, bringing to the fore the issue of Polish culpability in the 1941 Jedwabne pogrom. The book is ‘considered a catalyst for shaping right-wing politics of memory’ (Nijakowski 2008: 201, cited by Törnquist-Plewa 2013: 10). Those on the political left saw the book as ‘an opportunity for Polish society to come to terms with anti-Semitism and become more open, democratic and pluralistic’, while those on the right saw it as ‘detrimental to Polish national interests’ and called for a ‘countermeasure’ in the form of ‘consistently propagating solely positive representations of Polish history’, a policy put in place in 2005 (Törnquist-Plewa 2013: 10). Bryce Lease asserts that the ‘publication of Gross’s monograph caused mass outrage, provoking Joanna Michlic to identify the debate around the pogrom as the ‘most important and long-standing in post-Communist Poland’, and the subject of Jedwabne remains traumatic (Lease 2012: 81-82). The publication of Anna Bikont’s book *My z Jedwabnego* (2004) was another factor in the cultural processes involved in readdressing the historiography of the Jedwabne massacre. Gross’s later book, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation*, published in English in 2006 and in an edited version in Polish in 2008, added further to

²¹³ ‘Let’s choose the future’.

²¹⁴ ‘The Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation’. This controversial organisation, established in 1998, began its activities in 2000, including revealing secret documents, dealing with crimes committed during World War Two and under communism, documenting findings, and ‘popularising recent history among the youth’ <<http://ipn.gov.pl/en/about-the-institute/mission>> [last accessed 1 October 2015].

²¹⁵ Translated as *Neighbours: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (2003).

socio-political discourse, and was the ‘next step in the Polish liberals’ fight against the right with regard to Polish collective memory’ (Törnquist-Plewa 2013: 10).

Poland’s accession to the European Union in 2004 undoubtedly impacted on Polish national identity and on perceptions of the country’s past, present and future. The following year, Lech Kaczyński began his presidency. He brought the issue of memory to the fore nationally and internationally and was instrumental in the creation of new museums including the Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego,²¹⁶ opened in 2004. The same year, he organised commemorations of the Warsaw Uprising, which had a ‘significant resonance in Polish society. Focusing on the sacrificial heroism of the Poles and blaming the Soviet Union for neglecting to help this major anti-Nazi rebellion, these commemorations convinced many Polish politicians and intellectuals of the need for a robust memory policy’ (Etkind, Finnin et al., 2012: 133).

From 2006-2008, the way Poland remembered its past was ‘one of the most important dividing lines in the conflict between the major political parties’ (Törnquist-Plewa 2013: 10), contributing to a ‘fierce political struggle’ between the Prawo i Sprawiedliwość²¹⁷ party (PiS), on the right, and the Platforma Obywatelska²¹⁸ on the left, the Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej²¹⁹ (SLD), and other liberal supporters. Seeing the political importance of memory, the PiS was ‘critical of attempts to demythologize and deconstruct Polish national history’, fearing that they would weaken national identity and cohesion (Törnquist-Plewa 2013: 10). The PiS party ‘to some degree, cultivated a sense of moral panic around the idea of a crisis of Polish memory’ (Etkind, Finnin, et al., 2012: 133).

²¹⁶ Warsaw Uprising Museum.

²¹⁷ Law and Justice.

²¹⁸ Civil Platform.

²¹⁹ Democratic Left Alliance.

In September 2009, Kaczyński hosted a ceremony in Gdańsk to commemorate the onset of World War II. He was killed in the Smolensk air crash²²⁰ the following year. His brother Jarosław was defeated in the 2010 election by Bronisław Komorowski, who was opposed to the use of history as a political weapon. Komorowski 'declared that his history policy would be aimed at uniting, not dividing Polish society' (Etkind, Finnin et al. 2012: 142). The Smolensk air crash was not only a tragic event in itself, it was a 'memory event' (Etkind, Finnin et al. 2012), creating what Benedict Anderson refers to as a spiral of signification (Alexander et al. 2004) with regard to the Katyn massacre. This meant that the cultural significance of Katyn was magnified and brought firmly into the present. The 'deep ideological and memorial bifurcation in Polish memory politics was clearly manifested in Tusk and Kaczyński's 'duelling commemorations of the seventieth anniversary of the Katyn massacres in 2010' (Etkind, Finnin et al. 2012: 135). Tusk flew to Katyn on 7 April 2010, Kaczyński flew on 10 April and was killed.

In 1988 Jacek Trznadel, poet and literary critic, wrote that in Poland there 'has been no end' to Katyn. The persistence of the 'Katyn Lie'²²¹ testified to the 'falsity of the [Communist] regime, which has tortured the Polish national consciousness' (Trznadel 1994: 128, cited by Etkind, Finnin et al. 2012: 16). 'Discursive cleansing', that is 'the process of disciplining speech through coordinated epistemic and physical violence that is both retrospective and prospective in its application' was used in Communist Poland to silence and punish 'those who dared speak of Katyn' (Etkind, Finnin et al. 2012: 16). In the context of this suppression of free speech around Katyn, Andrzej Wajda's film *Katyn* (2007) made great impact culturally regarding the politics of memory and contributed to the climate allowing playwrights to speak out about controversial and suppressed issues. The film was financially supported by the Institute of National Memory and was therefore

²²⁰ The crash was on 10 April 2010. All 96 people on board were killed. The passengers were en route to an event marking the 70th anniversary of the Katyn massacre.

²²¹ The false claim, perpetuated by Soviet authorities, that the massacre was carried out by the Germans.

from the outset already itself intertwined with politics in a way that plays are not. While Wajda's *Katyń* is an attempt at dramatic representation of certain aspects of the past, the plays examined deal with discussion of issues relating to the past from a contemporary viewpoint.

In several plays, the playwright not only contributes to free speech about the past but also advocates a collective moving-on from past traumas and an individualisation of commemoration. Problems around coming to terms with Polish guilt for the Jedwabne pogrom are directly addressed. Accepting this culpability requires a shift in the national self-perception, moving away from the Romantic narrative of the Pole as victim and instead casting the Pole as the perpetrator. Jedwabne is central to Sikorska-Miszczyk's plays *Burmistrz* and *Burmistrz II* and it is also mentioned in Demirski's *Był sobie* and Niech żyje. Słobodzianek's *Nasza Klasa*²²² (2008) is also about Jedwabne and although it is not closely analysed here, its prominence on the Polish and international stage as well as Słobodzianek's influence on the writing of other plays on the subject must be acknowledged. Artur Pałyga's *Żyd*²²³ (2008) was, according to Sikorska-Miszczyk (2010b), the first contemporary Polish play on the subject, which then became a 'hot topic' (Pałyga 2010). Pałyga's *Żyd*, Sikorska-Miszczyk's *Burmistrz* and Słobodzianek's *Nasza Klasa* were all developed as a result of Słobodzianek's 2007 *Sztuka Dialogu*²²⁴ ten day residential writing workshop, where Jan T. Gross was one of Słobodzianek's invited experts on the theme.²²⁵

Wider cultural developments have also contributed to the increased presence of the topic of Polish-Jewish relations. In recent years, synagogues have been renovated, Jewish

²²² *Our Class*.

²²³ *Jew*.

²²⁴ *The Art of Dialogue*.

²²⁵ Usually held annually at the Dom Pracy Twórczej w Wigrach, an arts centre in the Polish countryside, in 2007 the workshop was held in Lublin because of the town's connection to that year's theme of Polish-Jewish relations.

cultural centres have been opened, and 2013 saw the opening in Warsaw of Polin, Muzeum Historii Żydów Polskich.²²⁶ As well as the specific issue of Jedwabne, contemporary cultural discourse addresses Polish anti-semitism in general and involves a reassessment of Polish-Jewish relations.

Kwaśniewska and Niziołek confirm that many historical and cultural processes have contributed to the prominence of the themes of remembering and forgetting in contemporary Polish drama:

Emocje związane z publikacjami Jana Tomasza Grossa na temat postawy Polaków wobec zagłady Żydów, a niejednokrotnie także współudziału w niej, polityczna temperatura towarzysząca wstąpieniu Polski do Unii Europejskiej, kompromitacja idei stworzenia jedynej słusznej wersji polskiej historii poprzez jej ideologizowanie i instytucjonalizowanie (przede wszystkim powołanie Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej) wszystko to sprawiło, że temat polskiej historii uległ rozmrożeniu, został włączony w obieg żywej komunikacji społecznej, również w teatrze. Resentymenty zostały obudzone i ośmieliły twórców do bardziej ryzykownych interwencji w dziedzinę naszych wyobrażeń o przeszłości i strategii ich przywoływania²²⁷

(2012: 10).

The plays studied demonstrate this engagement with social debate on the theme of history and the way it is viewed from the present. The playwrights, in the examples in hand, all advocate honesty, acceptance, and reparation, leading to the freedom for younger generations to live without carrying the emotional baggage of Poland's past.

²²⁶ Polin. Museum of the History of Polish Jews.

²²⁷ 'The emotions related to Jan Tomasz Gross's publications on the attitude of Poles towards the mass murder of Jews, and on more than one occasion their participation in it, the political temperature accompanying Poland's accession to the European Union, the embarrassment of the idea of the creation of the one and only correct version of Polish history through its ideologisation and institutionalisation (the primary task of the Institute of National Memory) – all this meant the subject of Polish history underwent a thaw, it became involved in current social communication, including in the theatre. Resentments were awakened and they emboldened artists to make riskier interventions in the field of our depictions of the past and strategies for bringing them up'.

2.3 A close reading of selected plays informed by pertinent elements of Assman's mnemohistory, Hirsch's postmemory, and Nora's lieux de mémoire

The roots of the vast and recently expanded field of memory studies are traceable as far back as Plato and Aristotle. The link between memory and identity was addressed by Locke and explored by the likes of Sigmund Freud and Aby Warburg. The development of contemporary memory studies is credited mainly to French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, who was influenced by philosopher Henri Bergson and sociologist Émile Durkheim. Halbwachs developed a theory of cultural memory, incorporating the notion that individual memories are shaped and/or triggered by socio-cultural contexts. Halbwachs' works *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*²²⁸ (1925) and *La Mémoire Collective*,²²⁹ (1950) are key texts in the field. Halbwachs' personal past relates to the themes in focus, in that he was detained by the Gestapo after protesting the arrest of his Jewish father-in-law who was then deported to Buchenwald concentration camp where he died of dysentery in 1945. Halbwachs's work contributed to that of many other major theorists, including Pierre Nora, Jan and Aleida Assman and Marianne Hirsch, whose ideas contribute to an informed reading of the plays examined.

2.3.1 Mnemohistory

German Egyptologist Jan Assmann's²³⁰ concept of mnemohistory concerns the way in which history is remembered. It is therefore extremely pertinent to contemporary Polish plays that grapple with this very same issue, arguing for a reassessment of the way in which historical events are viewed. Aleida Assmann²³¹ is a German professor of English, Egyptology, Literary and Cultural Studies. In 2011 she began working on a project entitled

²²⁸ *Social Frameworks of Memory*.

²²⁹ *Collective Memory*.

²³⁰ Born in 1938, Jan Assman became professor of Egyptology at the University of Heidelberg in 1976 and taught there until he retired in 2003 – hence the term the 'Heidelberg concept' being applied to the cultural theories developed by Jan Assmann and his wife Aleida Assmann. He later became honorary professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Constance and Professor Emeritus at Heidelberg.

²³¹ Aleida Assman was born in 1947. At the time of writing, she is Professor of English and Literary Studies at the University of Constance.

‘The Past in the Present: Dimensions and Dynamics of Cultural Memory’,²³² which summarises her and Jan Assman’s work in this field. During the 1990s the Assmanns developed a theory of cultural and communicative memory, building on Halbwachs’s work on collective memory. Communicative memory is ‘related to memories passed down from one generation to another, usually via oral tradition, and ‘cultural memory’ refers to collective memories of the past with symbolic character which ‘last through texts, images, rites, monuments and other ‘mnemonic supports’’ (Erl 2011: 164). As Marianne Hirsch explains, the Assmann’s ‘Kulturelles Gedächtnis’, the Heidelberg concept, is a name for ‘institutionalised archival memory’, and as generations who experienced an event first hand get old, they increasingly want to institutionalise memory (Hirsch 2012: 608). Mnemohistory refers mainly to national rather than individual memory and relates to the general notion of historiography.²³³ While historiography refers to the way in which history is documented, mnemohistory focuses on the way in which it is remembered. Mnemohistory requires active ‘meaning-making’ through time. It relates to Mannheim’s idea of generationalism and to Alexander’s idea that trauma ruptures the intergenerational process of handing down. These notions also compare with postmemory as will be discussed later, but where postmemory focuses on the individual, mnemohistory focuses on the collective. Historiography relates to the aspects of history that enter the official narrative, mnemohistory relates to the way it is remembered by people who lived through it, and postmemory relates to the way in which those memories are received by subsequent generations.

As Anderson underlines, the imagination of a community requires the forgetting of certain things (2006). The concept of mnemohistory encapsulates the idea of selective forgetting as well as remembering and memorialisation. Conflicting versions of

²³² The similarity between this title and that of this chapter is coincidental.

²³³ Mnemohistory also relates to other notions including Foucault’s ‘counter-memory’ and Bartlett’s ‘effort after meaning’ in which the past is remembered to serve present needs.

mnemohistory can be seen between characters and between plays. The playwrights address attitudes to truths about the past which contradict the traditional Polish national mnemohistory built on Romantic, messianist myths. The unsuitability of the Romantic myth for assessing the past from a contemporary Polish viewpoint is highlighted by several playwrights. In *Między nami*, when Masłowska's characters listen to a radio speech in which the glorious past is described ironically as a time when all countries belonged to Poland and everyone spoke the Polish language, the playwright exposes and ridicules the messianist myth in which Poland is seen as the 'Christ of nations'.²³⁴ In Wojcieszek's *Made in Poland*, Edmund suggests that God spoke to him in Polish, and Wiktor makes fun of this, bursting into laughter at the thought that it has finally been confirmed that God is a Pole: 'A więc On jest Polakiem'²³⁵ (2006: 460).

In *Żelazna*, Sikorska-Miszczyk brings the national emblem of the eagle to life, turning it into the half-animal half-human Great Golden Bird. At times it goes entirely unnoticed by other characters, which symbolises the fact that they are not paying attention to the version of history that Great Golden Bird represents. This supports this idea that the characters reject the brand of nationalism symbolised by the eagle and instead seek a new mnemohistory and a subsequent change in postmemory, as will be discussed.

As General says in Demirski's *Był sobie*, 'każdy chce przeszłość przedstawić w innym świetle'²³⁶ (2007c: 38). As Paetz says in the same play, 'Gdyby każdy w Polsce miał zobaczyć sztukę o sobie musiałoby powstać jakieś 38 milionów sztuk'²³⁷ (2007c: 64). While these sentiments relate to contemporary searches for a new national identity, they

²³⁴ This 'strongest of all Romantic metaphors' carries the notion that Poland has suffered for the good of others. The 'seminal text' conveying this ideology 'is to be found in Mickiewicz's *Księgi narodu i pielgrzymstwa polskiego* (Books of the Polish Nation and Pilgrimage, 1832)' (Davies 2001: 176). This text includes the line 'the Nation shall arise, and free all the peoples of Europe from slavery' (cited by Davies 2011: 177).

²³⁵ 'So then, He is Polish' (2015a: 321).

²³⁶ 'Everyone wants to present the past in a different light'.

²³⁷ 'If everyone in Poland had to watch a play about themselves there would have to be about 38 million plays'.

are also ironic in view of the strength of nationalist myths that present Poland in one official version. There are many further examples in which characters deal with the way in which the past is remembered, and these are grouped here according to the particular aspect of Polish history they address.

2.3.1.1 Mnemohistory of World War II in general

In *Burmistrz*, Sikorska-Miszczyk's Townsperson promotes a mnemohistory in which the Germans are seen as perpetual killers, and 'Światu nie wolno zapomnieć, jak zabija Niemiec'²³⁸ (2009a: 14). This version of history is contested by Mayor, the play's protagonist, and by the playwright, who both aim to communicate the truth about Jedwabne, and importantly to promote acceptance of that truth and a collective recovery from its impact. Townsperson is referring specifically to the Jedwabne massacre and apportioning blame to the Germans in order to detract from Polish culpability. The grandiosity of the statement means that it also relates to the broader notion that World War II in general must be continually commemorated. In *Walizka*, Tour Guide disagrees with him, saying

Przestańmy pamiętać!
Bo nic to nikomu nie daje
Nie ma żadnego efektu
Poza tym, że ja
Przewodniczka w muzeum zagłady
Jestem wrakiem człowieka²³⁹

(Sikorska-Miszczyk 2008b: 12).

While Townsperson wants the past to be remembered as one in which Poles were killed by Germans, Tour Guide advocates a contrasting mnemohistory, a counter-memory: one that serves the present, and in which the past is left behind.

²³⁸ 'The world must not forget how Germans kill'.

²³⁹ 'Let's stop remembering! | Because it doesn't give anyone anything. | It has no effect | Apart from that I, | The Tour Guide in the holocaust museum | Am a wreck of a person'.

In Sikorska-Miszczyk's *Żelazna*, Spielberg's script proposal for Screenwriter involves Hitler winning the war and taking over America. Screenwriter says she does not know if she would exist if Hitler had won the war, and she is unsure whether fictionalising it or laughing about it is acceptable. Spielberg points out that she survived the Stalinist period, and she replies: 'No w sumie racja. Jestem. Mieliśmy wszyscy szczęście'²⁴⁰ (2009e: 96). This conveys the idea that all existing Poles are lucky to be alive, such was the level of threat they faced from Nazism and communism. This presents an optimistic version of mnemohistory that is not commonly associated with Polish cultural attitudes, which have historically focused on Polish victimhood. Sikorska-Miszczyk presents here an alternative view of the past that allows Poles to be glad they are alive and therefore to be joyful and free in the present. This is the last line of the play and is therefore in a very weighty position which would enable it to come across in performance as poignant and positive.

Demirski's Old Woman in *Był sobie*, unlike her contemporary in Masłowska's *Między nami*, survived the war and lived to tell the tale. This hardened character is a vehicle for addressing brutal truths about life for women in Auschwitz and for challenging the notions of heroism that are intrinsic to Romantic, nationalist myths. Old Woman points out, for example, that she has no medal but deserves one for what she has experienced, which highlights gender inequality around the ways in which the past is presented. She brings up the specific mnemohistory around two real life Auschwitz prisoners, Franciszek Gajowniczek, a Polish army officer imprisoned for assisting the Jewish resistance, and Maximilian Kolbe, a priest who offered to die in place of Gajowniczek after hearing him cry out for his wife and children. Demirski highlights the point that other priests did not save people, revealing uncomfortable elements of truth that are left out of official versions

²⁴⁰ 'Yes, I suppose that's right. I'm here. We've all been lucky'.

of history. He exposes what is commonly deliberately forgotten. In a line full of acerbic sarcasm from the writer, if not from the character, depending on how the line is delivered, Old Woman says: ‘ci księża którzy nie ratowali byli chyba potrzebni do udzielania sakramentów i przenoszenia w sobie wartości moralnych dla kolejnych pokoleń’ (2007c: 29).²⁴¹ Despite horrendous experiences, Old Woman rejects the idea that she should be remembered predominantly as a war survivor, saying ‘nie chcę być żadnym żywym obrazem pamięci historycznej – spłonęłam na dachu – nie spłonęłam w obozie’ (2007c: 40), referring to the fact that she set fire to herself on her roof to avoid debt collectors, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

In *Niech żyje*, Demirski parodies and challenges the heroic versions of World War II history portrayed in the cult television programme *Czterej Pancerni i pies*, set in 1944 and 1945, made between 1966 and 1970. In this play, Gustlik, whose name is taken from the television series, says that when he throws a stick to Szarik, the ‘pies-veteran’²⁴² (Wichowska 2009), Szarik returns with memories of war. He decides ‘Nie będę ci Szarik rzucała patyków’²⁴³ because ‘rzucam ci patyki a ty przynosisz wojenny pamiątki’²⁴⁴ (2011e: 386). Here Demirski uses the idea of a dog being faithful to suggest that Szarik is faithful to the past, or more specifically to remembering the past in a particular way. The image created suggests that the older generation constantly and faithfully brings back the war to the younger generation(s) like a dog returns a stick to its owner.

The heroic national narrative around World War II is perpetuated by Szarik, along with Piotr in Wojcieszek’s *Cokolwiek*, Director in Sikorska-Miszczyk’s *Żelazna* and Townsperson in her *Burmistrz* and *Burmistrz II*. It is rejected by the younger characters in *Niech żyje*, by Sugar and Magda in *Cokolwiek*, by the three Young Generation characters

²⁴¹ ‘Maybe the priests who didn’t save people were needed to give out the sacrament and pass down moral values to the next generation’.

²⁴² ‘dog-veteran’.

²⁴³ ‘I’m not going to throw you sticks’.

²⁴⁴ ‘I throw you sticks and you bring me back wartime memories’.

in *Burmistrz II*, and by Girl in Masłowska's *Między nami*. This will be demonstrated in the following sections which relate to the general mnemohistory of the war.

2.3.1.2 Mnemohistory about Katyn

The Katyn massacre is mentioned, albeit briefly, in two of the plays studied. There are references to an ongoing need to reassert the truth about Katyn and to reiterate the Soviet culpability for the massacre, which was only officially admitted decades after the event. The ongoing 'Katyn lie' added anger to the injustice of the killings. In *Żelazna*, Screenwriter suggests a line for a potential film in which a character says

pozabijali naszych w Katyniu
Przeklęte komuchy²⁴⁵

(Sikorska-Miszczyk 2009e: 86).

In *Był sobie*, General says: 'nie zgodziłem się w swoim sumieniu że w Katyniu wycięli w pień polską burżuazję'.²⁴⁶ (Demirski 2007c: 39). In *Niech żyje*, Mikołajczyk describes an imagined commemorative site, where

zawiesza tam czapki oficerskie naszego przedwojennego wojska
zabitego w Katyniu²⁴⁷

(Demirski 2011e: 5).

This image exposes the truth about Katyn while emphasising the soldiers' humanity over their heroism by using their hats, rather than a traditional monument, as the focus of the imagined memorial. While Wajda's film and the Smolensk crash brought the Katyn massacre greater significance for a younger generation, the rewriting of historiography of Katyn is still a tangibly recent process.

2.3.1.3 Mnemohistory of Jedwabne

There are several examples in which characters grapple with the truth about Jedwabne. Demirski's Paetz in *Był sobie* and Sikorska-Miszczyk's Townsperson in

²⁴⁵ 'Our men were killed in Katyn | By damned Commies'.

²⁴⁶ 'My conscience didn't agree with it that in Katyn they put the Polish bourgeoisie to the sword'.

²⁴⁷ 'there hang the caps of the officers of our prewar army | killed in Katyn'.

Burmistrz are prime examples of characters who deny the truth about the massacre. Both of them adhere to what was the official version of events, asserting that Germans killed the Jews of Jedwabne. Sikorska-Miszczyk's *Mieszkaniec* would fully support Demirski's Paetz in his claim that: 'w tym kraju nigdy nikogo nie spalono'²⁴⁸ (Demirski 2007c: 12). He repeats this later, followed by the assertion that 'w Jedwabnem nie było ani jednego Polaka w Jedwabnem byli sami antysemita'²⁴⁹ (2007c: 41). The lack of a comma or full stop after 'Polaka' is characteristic of Demirski's written texts. The omission of punctuation serves as a type of instruction to the actor as to how the line should sound, in this case indicating that the line should drive forward and land on the word 'antysemita'²⁵⁰ for emphasis. Strikingly, by comparison with other plays that touch on the same theme, Demirski explicitly names the town of Jedwabne, not only once but several times, and here twice in close proximity for added impact. The town is not named at all by Słobodzianek in *Nasza Klasa* or by Sikorska-Miszczyk in *Burmistrz*, but it is named directly in *Burmistrz II*. The naming of the town represents a 'riskier' intervention (Kwaśniewska and Niziołek 2012: 10) in the sense that it leaves absolutely no ambiguity and no opportunity to assign the play's subject matter to pure fiction.

In *Burmistrz*, Townsperson claims that some of the local Jews were killed by Germans while others live happily around the world: 'Jednych Niemiec zabił, a reszta rozjechała się po świecie. Żyją szczęśliwie, w Ameryce najbardziej. Tak słyszeliśmy od naszych, co jeżdżą'²⁵¹ (Sikorska-Miszczyk 2009a: 12). This line serves to exemplify the falsification of history. Both Townsperson and Demirski's Paetz refuse to accept any mnemohistory about Jedwabne that holds Poles responsible. Mayor is at pains to convince inhabitants of the town that a confrontation of mnemohistory is required which allows the

²⁴⁸ 'In this country no one has ever been burned'.

²⁴⁹ 'In Jedwabne there was not one Pole, in Jedwabne there were only anti-Semites'.

²⁵⁰ 'Anti-Semites'.

²⁵¹ 'Some got killed by the Germans, the rest scattered all over the place. They're happily settled in America, mostly. That's what we heard from those of us who've been abroad' (2014a: 71).

truth to be acknowledged and accepted. Townsperson is actively involved in continuing to bury the truth, saying ‘Czego nie widać, tego nie ma’²⁵² (2009a: 23) with regard to the town’s Jewish cemetery. He represents a collective choice to ignore the truth or to deliberately forget. Sikorska-Miszczyk disallows this viewpoint entirely, having Mayor say:

Myśmy zabili tych, co tam leżą. Oto Prawda...
To nasi ojcowie zabili
Nie NIEMIEC
Nie NIEMIEC²⁵³

(2009a: 23).

This mini-monologue stresses the importance both of truth and of the releasing of the Germans from the guilt for Jedwabne, despite Nazi guilt for so many other war crimes. The poetic format leaves space around the words, creating a slow pace and an emphatic tone. Townsperson, like Demirski’s Paetz, insists that: ‘Posądzanie nas, a nie Niemca, to kłamstwo i oszczerstwo!’²⁵⁴ (2009a: 32). Mayor later tries to reassure Townsperson with: ‘Ja wiem, że Pamięć jest ciężka, wymaga dźwigania. ...Potrzebne jest czas’²⁵⁵ (2009a: 33). Yet the official narrative remains anti-Semitic, represented by leaflets falling from the sky, symbolising messages from the authorities, telling the citizens of Jedwabne:

...Burmistrz waszego Miasta
Namawia was
Do kontaktu z tymi zmarłymi
Twierdząc, że to nasi²⁵⁶

(2009a: 29).

This blames Mayor for claiming that the Jews belong to the town and by extension asserts that they do not. The official version of the truth as conveyed in the leaflets is that Jews are

²⁵² ‘What you can’t see doesn’t exist’ (2014a: 84).

²⁵³ ‘I told you the Truth would come to us in the end. [...] Those lying there [...] Were killed by our fathers | Not by THE GERMAN | Not by THE GERMAN’ (2014a: 85).

²⁵⁴ ‘Blaming us instead of the German is a slanderous lie!’ (2014a: 94).

²⁵⁵ ‘I know the truth is hard to bear. [...] We need time’ (2014a: 95).

²⁵⁶ ‘The Mayor of your Town | Is trying to make you | Communicate with the dead | Claiming they’re friends and neighbors’ (2014a: 91).

outsiders. The leaflets inform the citizens they do not have to talk to these dead, because ‘To są obce szkielety’²⁵⁷ and ‘To są obce kościotrupy’²⁵⁸ (2009a: 29). Zapałowski translates ‘obce’ here as ‘strange’, but in fact the word in the original carries the meaning of being foreign in the sense of being outsiders, suggesting that this is a more important reason not to talk to them than is the fact that they are the walking dead. The leaflet goes on to admit that the Jews were born in the town and died there, but it reiterates that they are unwanted. Sikorska-Miszczyk is unrelenting here in her implicit criticism of the anti-Semitism behind the pogrom, highlighting the injustice behind the belief that:

...najlepiej
 Namówić ich do wyjazdu
 Raz jeszcze
 Powiedzieć dobitnie
 Że ziemia, na której urodzili się
 I zmarli
 Ich nie chce!²⁵⁹

(2009a: 29).

In having this point of view falling from above, Sikorska-Miszczyk symbolises that this attitude was part of the national narrative before the truth about Jedwabne was revealed and the historiography of the events was challenged. This official attitude contrasts directly with that of Mayor. He fails to persuade the locals to accept the truth and to see the Jews as residents of the town.

In *Burmistrz*, Sikorska-Miszczyk uses a wax sealed envelope that is opened to reveal the truth as a metaphor for the publication of Gross’s *Neighbours*. In *Burmistrz II*, she is more direct in that she not only names Jedwabne, she also personifies Gross’s book and quotes from it directly. The grotesque character Książka (Book) is a combination of a

²⁵⁷ ‘They are strange skeletons’ (2014a: 92).

²⁵⁸ ‘They are strange skeletons’ (2014a: 92).

²⁵⁹ ‘...the best thing would be | To persuade them to leave | Once again | To tell them firmly | That the land where they were born | And died | Doesn’t want them!’ (2014a: 92-93).

personification of the book and a commentary on its contents. The Autor (Author) referred to in the following lines is primarily Gross and secondarily Sikorska-Miszczyk. Book says:

To ja powiem, jakim tekstem się promowałem: “Jan T. Gross ‘Sąsiedzi’: Tragedia tysiąca sześciuset Żydów z Jedwabnego zamordowanych 10 lipca 1941 roku przez swoich sąsiadów, choć znalazła epilog w łomżyńskim sądzie w maju 1949 roku, nie weszła do historiografii drugiej wojny światowej. Książka wypełnia tę lukę na podstawie relacji niedoszłych ofiar, świadków i uczestników pogromu. Autor zapytuje, czy w świetle dramatu w Jedwabnem nie należałoby zrewidować rozmaitych ustaleń dotyczących historii Polski drugiej połowy dwudziestego wieku²⁶⁰

(2011a: 184).

Here, Sikorska-Miszczyk unambiguously engages with historiographical discourse and the Polish mnemohistory of this particular event. However, she presents the audience with a balanced picture by making clear that the ‘Polaków, którzy czynili to zło, była tylko garstką’²⁶¹ (2011a: 193). She supports this with a dramatisation of the real-life Ambassador of Israel, who gives his personal story, saying:

Ja, Szewach Weiss, ambasador Izraela w Polsce, miałem okazję spotkać w życiu innych sąsiadów. Dzięki nim ja i moja rodzina przeżyliśmy holokaust. Dzięki nim mogę teraz stanąć przed wami. W swoim życiu poznałem także inne stodoły, w których ukrywano Żydów w nadziei na lepszą przyszłość. Pragnę podkreślić te fakty tu i teraz²⁶²

(2011a: 194).

Sikorska-Miszczyk presents the conflict in attitude between Mayor and the Townspeople, which represents a microcosm of the polemical debate in society, with some accepting guilt and others rejecting it. The presentation of these contrasting views, even in a play that is non-didactic, has the effect of causing the viewer to assess their own position

²⁶⁰ ‘Why don’t I say what my blurb was? “Jan T. Gross ‘Neighbors’”: The tragedy of sixteen hundred Jews from the town of Jedwabne murdered by their neighbors, on July 10th 1941, though investigated by a court in Łomża in May of 1949, did not become part of the historiography of World War II. The book fills this gap, relying on testimony by survivors, witnesses, and participants of the pogrom. The author inquires whether, in light of the tragedy in Jedwabne, one shouldn’t revise various established beliefs regarding the history of Poland in the latter half of the twentieth century’ (2014b: 101).

²⁶¹ ‘...only a handful of Poles were responsible for this event’ (2014b: 116).

²⁶² ‘I, Shevah Weiss, the Israeli Ambassador to Poland, had the opportunity to know other neighbours in my life. Thanks to them, I can stand before you now. In my life, I have known other barns, ones in which Jews were hidden in the hope of a better future. I want to underscore those facts here and now’ (2014b: 117).

in relation to the issue concerned. It is clear that for Demirski and Sikorska-Miszczyk in particular the acceptance of a truthful historiography of Jedwabne is not open to debate.

The playwrights in focus use the stage as a forum for making clear their own acceptance of Polish culpability and their firm belief that this acceptance should be widespread. It is especially clear in the case of Sikorska-Miszczyk that the playwright does not advocate a collective penance for the crimes, but instead promotes a process of recovery and moving forward, which is encapsulated in the expression of feeling from the Young Generation of Jedwabne: ‘Chcemy żyć!’²⁶³ (2011a: 192).

2.3.1.4 Mnemohistory of the Warsaw Uprising

In *Niech żyje, Między nami* and *Żelazna*, there is a character that is planning a film about Poland. There are clear parallels between the planning of the film script and the playwrights’ engagement in the process of redefining the national narrative. All the writers use filmmaking as a metaphor for reassessing the national mnemohistory and contemporary identity. In *Niech żyje*, Stalin proposes:

... żeby akcja filmu o powstaniu
skończyła się przed jego wybuchem
to daje nadzieję
że tym razem może jednak będzie zwycięskie²⁶⁴

(2011: 352).

This is comedic given that the Warsaw Uprising is so embedded in the Polish psyche that to change its mnemohistory would seem more or less impossible, but it conveys the idea that remembering the Warsaw Uprising reiterates a failure rather than celebrating a success. Stalin’s proposal is almost identical to that put forward by Sikorska-Miszczyk’s Director in *Żelazna*. He tells Screenwriter he doesn’t want stories about the failed uprising:

Żadnego pchania nosa w sprawy, które
Nam się nie udały

²⁶³ ‘We want to live!’.

²⁶⁴ ‘that the action in the film about the uprising | stops before it breaks out | that gives hope | that this time it could be victorious’.

Żadnego nieudanego Powstania Warszawskiego
Powiedzmy sobie inaczej
Ono było sukcesem²⁶⁵

(2009e: 85).

He continues, saying there is a beautiful museum that is visited by foreigners, so the whole story can be closed:

Mamy piękne muzeum
Niektórzy powstańcy jeszcze żyją
Przychodzą tam cudzoziemcy
Możemy to tak zamknąć
Całą tę historię, rozumie mnie pani?²⁶⁶

(2009e: 85).

In contrast, Demirski's Chav in *Był Sobie* proudly compares himself to participants in the Uprising when saying 'może i kradnę ale tylko niemieckich turystów po siedemdziesiątce'.²⁶⁷ In the same play, Paetz gives the comedic reply: 'opłacało się przegrać wojnę co?'²⁶⁸ before Chav continues: 'jestem wtedy trochę jak z Powstania Warszawskiego'²⁶⁹ (2007c: 26). Undoubtedly Wojcieszek's Boguś would support Chav's nationalistic outlook and criminal endeavours.

2.3.1.5 Mnemohistory of Communism

In Sikorska-Miszczuk's *Żelazna a Niemiecki Reżyser* (German Director) at a film screening describes the metaphorical iron curtain as a physical object, conveying the idea that although it is long gone, it still exists in the depths of the Polish psyche, or at least it does according to the German's point of view. He says: 'Minęło 20 lat od upadku Żelaznej Kurtyny. Kurtyna, zwinięta w rulon, spoczywa na dnie skrzyni, która spoczywa na dnie szafy, która spoczywa na dnie kontenera, który spoczywa na dnie łodzi podwodnej, która

²⁶⁵ 'No poking noses in things | we didn't succeed in | No failed Warsaw Uprising | Let's put it differently | It was a success'.

²⁶⁶ 'We've got a beautiful museum | Some of the insurgents are still alive | Foreigners come to visit it | We can just close | The whole story, do you understand me?'.

²⁶⁷ 'so maybe I steal, but only from Germans over 70'.

²⁶⁸ 'it paid to lose the war, hey?'.

²⁶⁹ 'then I'm a bit like I'm from the Warsaw Uprising'.

spoczywa na dnie'²⁷⁰ (2009e: 68). In the same play, Screenwriter and Director discuss how to present the communist period in a film. Director is keen to present Poland in a positive light, saying 'świat będzie nas tak widział, jak my się sami przedstawimy'²⁷¹ (2009e: 84). They agree that the period of Martial Law took place and that it began on 13 December 1981, but Director does not want to talk about it. When Screenwriter asks him 'Czemu pan nie chce pamiętać tej daty?'²⁷² he replies 'Bo mnie upokarza. Za dużo w tym było tchórzostwa'²⁷³ (2009e: 83). He explains:

... nie chcę historii
o pustych hakach w sklepach mięsnych
Nie chcę wieszać żadnych historii na tych pustych
Hakach
Nie chcę o tym, że był tylko ocet
Że nie było mieszkań
Nie było samochodów
Byliśmy zacoferani
Jeździły furmanki
O tym wszystkim nie chcę nawet słyszeć²⁷⁴

(2009e: 84).

He explains earlier 'że komunistyczny służby fałszowały historię na całego. Jesteśmy atakowani przez kłamstwa. Ja czuję fizyczny ból, gdy słyszę kłamstwa na temat Polski!'²⁷⁵ (2009e: 63). When Screenwriter asks him 'Jak ma wyglądać nasza prawda o stanie wojennym?'²⁷⁶ (2009e: 84), she reiterates the possibility of looking at the past differently.

In *Był Sobie*, Demirski's General is a caricature of General Wojciech Jaruzelski who was responsible for introducing Martial Law to Poland in 1981. He spouts

²⁷⁰ '20 years have passed since the fall of the Iron Curtain. The curtain, rolled up, lies at the bottom of a trunk, which lies at the bottom of a wardrobe, which lies at the bottom of a container, which lies at the bottom of a sunken ship, which lies at the bottom'.

²⁷¹ 'the world will see us as we present ourselves'.

²⁷² 'Why don't you want to remember that date?'.

²⁷³ 'Because it's humiliating. There was too much cowardice in it'.

²⁷⁴ 'I don't want stories | of empty hooks in butchers' shops | I don't want to hang any stories on those empty | Hooks | I don't want stories about there only being vinegar | That there were no homes | No cars | We were backward | There were horses and carts around | I don't even want to hear about any of it'.

²⁷⁵ 'the communist authorities completely falsified history. We are attacked by lies. I feel physical pain when I hear lies about Poland'.

²⁷⁶ 'What's our truth about Martial Law going to be?'.

propagandist statements about various Polish achievements during communism, such as ‘wielkim osiągnięciem PRL był brak kontaktów seksualnych naszej ludności z Niemcami’²⁷⁷ (2007c: 12) which is an ironic reference by the playwright to the Nazi policy of preventing relations with Poles. *Chłopiec* (Boy) in this play confronts General, asking ‘dlaczego dopuściliście do tego że była komuna?’ (2007c: 8). General responds aggressively, highlighting his refusal to reassess his own version of events, saying ‘a dlaczego twoja matka jest kurwą? - bo zmusiła ją do tego historyczna konieczność! - macie wreszcie paszporty i możecie wyjeżdżać’²⁷⁸ (2007c, 8).

Although Wojcieszek does not directly address the communist period in the plays in focus, in *Made in Poland*, the infatuation of several characters with the pop singer Krzysztof Krawczyk serves as a symbol of nostalgia about the past and a reminder of the communist period, since Krawczyk was a famous singer during the 1960s, throughout the communist period, and beyond. When the leader of the gangsters, Fazi, realises that Boguś is a Krawczyk fan, he decides not to kill him. Boguś’s mother reminisces about her past as a young woman going to Krawczyk concerts. The characters are united by this nostalgia and their respect for Krawczyk and his old fashioned style, and this connects with the wider theme of how the past and present relate to each other.

It is clear that mnemohistory, both in general and in relation to specific events, is a prominent issue for the playwrights studied. They tackle their nation’s past and the way in which it is remembered, and this is crucial to their formation of a new national and cultural identity. Read together, the plays examined evidence a collective emphasis on the importance of truthful representations of the past. The writers all advocate the de-politicisation of history and of commemorative practices, favouring an individualisation of

²⁷⁷ ‘a great achievement of the Polish People’s Republic was the lack of sexual contact between our people and the Germans’.

²⁷⁸ ‘and why is your mother a whore? Because she was forced into it by historical necessity! You’ve got your passports, you can leave’.

remembrance and arguing that Poles should be free to define their own relationship to their nation's past.

2.3.2 Postmemory

Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory relates to the memory 'of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth' (1997: 22). Postmemory focuses on the passing down of memories from one generation to the next, involving 'remembering things that have not happened to us' (Etkind, Finnin et al. 2012: 12). This kind of interruption of the passing down of memories from one generation to another is advocated by all the playwrights in one way or another. They all agree that the past should be honestly acknowledged, they reject the systematic 'forgetting' of politically difficult truths, and they oppose enforced methods of collective commemoration.

Hirsch describes postmemory as 'the relationship that the "generation after" bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before'. She theorises that post-generations 'remember' their ancestors' experiences via 'stories, images and behaviours among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right'. Importantly, 'Postmemory's connection to the past is...mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation' (2012: 150). Hirsch explains, drawing on her own experiences, that 'To grow up with overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to risk having one's own life stories displaced, even evacuated, by our ancestors'. It is this risk that the characters such as the younger generation in Demirski's *Niech żyje*, who advocate individualised modes of remembering, determine to avoid. There are many other examples of characters with the same point of view, including Screenwriter in *Żelazna*, the Young Generation in *Burmistrz II*, Boy and Starlet in *Był sobie*, Girl in *Między nami*, and Magda and Sugar in *Cokolwiek*.

Hirsch goes on to explain that postmemory relates to events that happened in the past but ‘their effects continue into the present. This is...the structure of postmemory and the process of its generation’ (2012: 150-160). It is ‘a structure of inter- and transgenerational return of traumatic knowledge and embodied experience. It is a consequence of traumatic recall but (unlike posttraumatic stress disorder) at a generational remove’ (2012: 150-160).

There are many examples within the plays analysed in which characters attempt to sever the ties of postmemory, to bring an end to the inheritance of trauma, to look at it as something firmly in the past but to acknowledge its existence. As Hirsch underlines, it is possible for generations to respond in a particular way to the history of their ancestors, since ‘the work of postmemory’ might ‘constitute a platform of activist and interventionist cultural and political engagement, a form of repair and redress’ (2012: 188-190). These notions of repair and redress sit closely with all four writers’ concerns. The playwrights in question promote the freedom to move on from the past and away from social norms, and to redefine one’s self and one’s country via a ‘discourse of truth-telling, reconciliation, forgiveness and reparation, a pragmatic process to serve a “democratic future”’ (2012: 412). Hirsch suggests that it is time for ‘moving beyond a traumatic past’ (2012: 459), which all the plays support.

In *Walizka*, Fransua’s mother refuses to talk about the past, which prevents Fransua from inheriting the traumatic postmemory of his father’s death in Auschwitz, but for Fransua this equates to a denial of access to an important part of his life story. Fransua recounts how he asked his mother: ‘Jaki był mój ojciec?...Mamo, powiedz mi coś o ojcu’,²⁷⁹ and his mother replied ‘Po co mamy o tym rozmawiać?...Po co ty mnie o to

²⁷⁹ ‘What was my father like? ...Mum, tell me something about father’.

pytasz?’²⁸⁰ When Fransua asks her for a photo of his father she says ‘to są moje sprawy’²⁸¹ (Sikorska-Miszczyk 2008b: 9).

Although Fransua tells his wife that when it comes to his past ‘Musimy o wszystkim zapomnieć’²⁸² (2008b: 10), he continues his personal search for the truth. He is on a quest to find the biography he lacks. This is illustrated in the speech in which he describes visiting a wall which is said to take letters to heaven. He writes a letter to his father and puts it in the wall. It reads:

Opowiedzieć mi wszystkie historie, których zostałem pozbawiony. Proszę też podłączyć mnie do rury pompującej wodę ze źródła naszej kultury narodowej. ...kim pan jest? Jaką pan wyznaje religię? Ja na wszelki wypadek świętuję Ramadan, chodzę na Pasterkę, medytuję w Nepalu, poszczę w Jom Kippur. Nie wiem, kim jestem, więc to wszystko oszustwo²⁸³

(2008b: 10).

When Fransua finds and opens the suitcase, he feels that he has found his father,

Pantofelnik. The father tells the son:

...Oddychaj
Synku
Oddychaj
Nie możesz tak żyć²⁸⁴

(2008b: 21).

The father gives the son permission to access his postmemory but simultaneously encourages him not to carry its pain. He succeeds in conveying this to his son, for whom the transformative experience has been so impactful on his sense of identity that he declares ‘Nazywam się Fransua Pantofelnik’²⁸⁵ (2008b: 21).

²⁸⁰ ‘Why do we have to talk about this? ... Why do you ask me about it?’.

²⁸¹ ‘That’s my business’.

²⁸² ‘We have to forget about everything’.

²⁸³ ‘Tell me all the stories I’ve been deprived of. And please connect me to the pipe pumping water from the spring of our national culture. [...] who are you? What’s your religion? Just in case, I celebrate Ramadan, go to Midnight Mass, meditate in Nepal, and fast on Yom Kippur. I don’t know who I am, so it’s all a fraud’.

²⁸⁴ ‘Breathe out | Son | Breathe out | You can’t live like that’.

²⁸⁵ ‘My name is Fransua Pantofelnik’.

The plays studied provide many examples of postmemory and the passing down of memory. In the majority of cases, characters wish to break the chain of the passing down of postmemory, or to interrupt it and reshape the relevant mnemohistory, allowing their generation to recognise, acknowledge and analyse events without having to bear their traumatic effects or carry those through to the next generation. Fransua, having found his father's suitcase, was able to open it, see inside it, close it again and put it down. He does not have to carry it with him or use it as his own suitcase. Demirski's Boy says in *Był sobie*, 'nie chcę być już romantyczny - nie chcę romantycznych fantazmatów - za kogo ja tutaj właściwie cierpię'²⁸⁶ (2004c: 20), which demonstrates his desire to break with the national tradition of Romanticism and heroism, to reject the inheritance of those myths. Starlet agrees, asking: 'do czego mi jest ta wasza historia [...] a do czego mi jest ta wasza narodowa tożsamość'²⁸⁷ (2007c: 46). Like several other young characters, Boy wants to identify with contemporary Europe rather than with historical Poland: 'nie chcę być dzieckiem powstańca, korowiec, stocznio-wca ani komucha', and instead 'chcę być dzieckiem zawodnika Realu Madryt'²⁸⁸ (2007c: 37). There are several other examples of characters expressing the feeling that memories they are encouraged to carry do not belong to them. In *Burmistrz II* Young Generation III says 'mamy w dupie tę wojnę'²⁸⁹ (2011a: 192) and Demirski's Howard Wagner in *W imię* is tired of having 'w głowie cały szereg wspomnień które nie należą do mnie'²⁹⁰ (2012b: 16).

In the final speech of *Niech żyje* Demirski has Grigorij directly address the older people in the audience about their attitude to the past and how they relate to their

²⁸⁶ 'I don't want to be romantic anymore – I don't want romantic fantasies. Who exactly am I suffering for here?'

²⁸⁷ 'what good is this history of yours to me? [...] and what good to me is this national identity of yours?'

²⁸⁸ 'I don't want to be the child of an insurgent, or of someone from the Workers' Defence Committee, or of a shipbuilder or a commie, I want to be the child of a Real Madrid player'.

²⁸⁹ 'We don't give a shit about the war' (2014b: 114).

²⁹⁰ 'in my head a whole series of memories that don't belong to me'.

grandchildren. This monologue is powerful in Strzępka's (2009) production and it seems the character is genuinely talking to the older people in the audience as he says:

mam pytanie do starszych z państwa
a co jeżeli nic już nie będzie tak pięknie jak kiedyś?
[...]
już nie ma takich czołgów
[...]
takich Niemców
[...]
nie ma opowieści dla wnuczka o medalach
więc wnuczek nie przychodzi
-
niech żyje wojna²⁹¹

(2011e: 392).

Of course, this in fact points out that the grandchildren will still visit even if there are no stories about the war.

In *Burmistrz II*, Mayor acknowledges that traumatic memories must be addressed, and that the postmemory of Jedwabne is painful. He advocates a change in the mnemohistory to allow the truth to be acknowledged without the trauma being internalised:

To wielkie wyzwanie pod adresem współczesnej cywilizacji
Ale najważniejsze w jaki sposób
My sobie z tym poradzimy
My polacy,²⁹²

and 'Z chrześcijańską pokorą musimy przyjąć fakt tej zbrodni'.²⁹³ (Sikorska-Miszczyk 2011a: 185). In the same play, the notion of postmemory is confronted by the three characters Young Generation, I, II and III. Sikorska-Miszczyk encapsulates the idea that they are in tension with national mythology and at odds with inherited versions of Polishness. She has them sing the national anthem with altered lyrics:

Marsz marsz Dąbrowski –

²⁹¹ 'I have a question for the older people among you | what if it's never again going to be as beautiful as it once was? [...] | there are none of these tanks anymore | no more of these Germans | there are no stories for your grandson about medals | so your grandson doesn't come | long live the war'.

²⁹² 'It's a great challenge for contemporary civilization | But the main thing is the way | We'll deal with it | Us Poles' (2014b: 103).

²⁹³ 'We must face the fact of this crime with Christian humility' (2014b: 102).

Chcemy iPhone'y!
[...]
Precz z stodołą!
[...]
Marsz marsz Dąbrowski –
Żydów zabił Voldemort!
(wszyscy razem) Żydów zabił Voldemort!
[...]
Precz z historią!
[...]
Precz z pamięcią!
[...]
Chcemy żyć!
Chcemy żyć!²⁹⁴

(2011a: 194).

Sikorska-Miszczyk emphasises the connection the Young Generation has to modern technology (iPhones) and to contemporary foreign literature - the Voldemort accused here of killing the Jews being a character from J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* books (1997-2007). The young generation here are firmly located in a modern, capitalist international context. They see no connection with the war or Jedwabne and reject the acceptance of any associated postmemory. This version of the song conveys the idea that these young people, presumably teenagers, feel trapped by their cultural context and want to 'live' beyond it. By singing the anthem this way, they reject and reshape a ritual that reinforces national narratives.

In the same play, the character of Aleksander Kwaśniewski, the president of Poland at the time Gross's book was published, makes a speech of apology for the crimes committed against the Jews. Sikorska-Miszczyk uses lines from the real speech made by Kwaśniewski in Jedwabne on 1 July 2010.

Dzisiaj jako człowiek, jako obywatel i jako Prezydent Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, przepraszam. Przepraszam [...] W imieniu tych, którzy uważają, że nie można być

²⁹⁴ 'March, march Dąbrowski | We want iPhones! [...] | Down with the barn! [...] | March, march Dąbrowski | The Jews were killed by Voldemort! [...] | Down with history! | [...] Down with memory! [...] | We want to live! | [...] We want to live!' (2014b: 115).

dumnym z wielkości polskiej historii, nie odczuwając jednocześnie bólu i wstydu zła, które Polacy wyrządzili innym²⁹⁵

(2011a: 193).

This speech touches on issues of mnemohistory and lieux de mémoire, and also relates to postmemory in that an apology is made on behalf of generations who did not personally commit the crimes. It allows an interruption of the passing down and inheritance of untruths, and while it may reveal new difficult truths for some who were unaware of their ancestors' deeds, the emphasis is on the importance of truth.

Masłowska in *Między nami* makes the point that sometimes postmemory is not passed on because the generation who experienced the event cannot talk about it. While Old Woman does not actually exist, she represents the generation of war survivors. She often begins a sentence she cannot finish, such as 'Wszyscy mówili że Hitler, ojciec mówił, że ten Hitler...' ²⁹⁶ (2008: 9). She has inherited memory from her own father and lived through traumatic experience herself but is passing down only an element of it to her granddaughter. Masłowska conveys this further by having Girl say she knows nothing about the war, yet she still plays at hearing the war knocking on the door. This suggests that the war has filtered into Girl's psyche even though she does not understand it and that the cultural significance of the event has been passed on to her. Zbigniew Bidakowski says that 'Dla bohaterów Masłowskiej druga wojna jest pozbawionym emocjonalnej treści pojęciem-straszakiem lub częścią hasła z Wikipedii' ²⁹⁷ (Bidakowski 2009: 6). Jacek Kopciński confirms that in this play, '...pamięć wojny – "postpamięć", "pamięć pamięci świadków" – decyduje o kształcie teraźniejszości' ²⁹⁸ (Kopciński 2010: 236).

²⁹⁵ 'Today, as a human being, a citizen and the President of the Republic of Poland, I apologize. I apologize [...] On behalf of those who believe that one cannot be proud of the glory of Polish history without feeling pain and shame at the evil Poles have done to others' (2014b: 117).

²⁹⁶ 'They all said that Hitler, Father said that Hitler fellow...' (2014b: 423).

²⁹⁷ 'for Masłowska's heroes the war is an idea-bogeyman that is devoid of emotional content, or it is part of an entry on Wikipedia'.

²⁹⁸ 'the memory of war, "postmemory", the "memory of witnesses' memories", decides the shape of the present'.

In *Był sobie*, Demirski's ghostly Wanda is, in Strzępka's (2007) production, dressed in wartime clothing and performed in a grotesque, horror style, in contrast to the more straightforward portrayals of the other characters who although also dead seem alive. In Brzyk's (2013) production Wanda is also more horrific than the other characters, wearing a striped jacket resembling a concentration camp uniform. Through this character, Demirski conveys the point that survivors of war might not wish to remember it, and if they do, what they remember might be the trauma rather than any element of heroism. Wanda says she does not remember much of her time in Auschwitz:

właściwie to niewiele jest do pamiętania
kiedy wszystko co jest w pamięci
się zlewa w jeden jakiś taki obraz
głodu [...]
więc mało pamiętam
jakoś nie chcę o tym mówić [...] w obozie chciałam mieć wszystko za sobą
w Auschwitz²⁹⁹

(2007c: 21).

In contrast to Wanda, Old Woman, who survived the war and later committed suicide to escape debt collectors, remembers and recounts many specific details of her experiences. She does so in a detached, factual manner and engages in the process of passing on these facts by sharing them rather than concealing them or forgetting them. While Wanda is trapped in the trauma of her war time experiences, Old Woman has become hardened by them to a point where she no longer values the human body, as is discussed further in Chapter 3.

There are several other examples of generational differences in attitudes to the war and in the extent to which postmemories are passed on and whether they are accepted or rejected. In Sikorska-Miszczyk's *Burmistrz*, Miss's parents are Polish Jews who survived the holocaust and relocated to the USA. They have blue numbers tattooed on their arms,

²⁹⁹ 'actually there's not much to remember | when everything there is in your memory | merges into some kind of image of hunger [...] So I don't remember much | I don't really want to talk about it [...] In the camp I wanted to have it all behind me | In Auschwitz'.

and their behaviour betrays their past in specific situations. In contrast to Penitent German in the same play, Miss does not seem to have internalised her parents' experiences, although she is affected by them directly through her parents' behaviour. She explains that although she has seen the numbers on her parents' arms 'milion razy'³⁰⁰ (2009a: 12) she doesn't remember the exact numbers. 'Czy to nie dziwne?',³⁰¹ (2009a: 12) she wonders, but her detachment from the details of her parents' suffering is used by Sikorska-Miszczyk to suggest that Miss has not had to inherit her parents' memories as her own. However, she explains that when her mother talks about the past, 'słowa wylewają się z niej na czerwono. Wszystko się robi brudne. Dlatego tata zabronił mamie rozmawiać o dawnych czasach.'³⁰² She describes how when as a child she took her time over her food, her father shouted at her: "'Powinnaś być wdzięczna za mięso! [...] W obozie –',³⁰³ and he stopped there, unable to talk about the camp, before continuing "'Masz jeść, żeby żyć, [...] Masz żyć'".³⁰⁴ This is an order to live, in contrast to Pantofelnik's permission to Fransua to live.

In Townsperson's response to Miss's description of scenes from her family life, Sikorska-Miszczyk highlights the fact that history and memories are subject to being accepted or rejected, and can be selectively forgotten by those who do not want to hear them. He tells her 'ty wracasz tu z historiami, których nie chcemy słuchać. Nie dla nas te historie'³⁰⁵ (2009a: 13).

In *Walizka*, Fransua seeks memory, comes to terms with it and is freed by it. The father gives the son the permission not to become a victim. This contrasts with Penitent German in *Burmistrz*, who takes on his father's presumed guilt. While Penitent German sees himself as the son of a murderer, Young Generation in *Burmistrz II*, and Girl in

³⁰⁰ 'a million times' (2014a: 71).

³⁰¹ 'isn't that funny?' (2014a: 71).

³⁰² 'Everything gets soiled. That's why father won't let mother talk about the old days' (2014a: 73).

³⁰³ 'You should be grateful for having meat! [...] Back in the camp...' (2014a: 72).

³⁰⁴ "'You have to eat if you want to live, [...] You have to live.'" (2014a: 72).

³⁰⁵ 'you come back here with stories we don't want to hear. Those aren't stories for us' (2014a, 73). [Note: the word 'historia' in Polish means both 'history' and 'story'].

Między nami see themselves as completely detached from the war and all memory or postmemory associated with it. Young Generation III: ‘urodziliśmy się pięćdziesiąt lat po wojnie. Jasne? Mamy w dupie tę wojnę. Całą wielką drugą wojnę światową mamy w dupie.’³⁰⁶ (Sikorska-Miszczyk 2011a: 191). He continues:

Tak to ja spaliłem Żydów w stodole,
To chcesz usłyszeć? [...]
Mam dość tej afery z Żydami³⁰⁷

(2011a: 192).

While the Young Generation are trying to get rid of the history they have inherited, Masłowska’s Girl is unaware of having received any such memories. This is encapsulated when Old Woman says ‘Ja pamiętam dzień w którym wybuchła wojna’³⁰⁸ and Girl replies ‘Wojna cenowa?’³⁰⁹ (2008: 75). Here Masłowska conveys the idea that Girl is so entirely immersed in capitalism that the concept of a price war is more familiar to her than the concept of World War II. Similarly, Old Woman and Girl have completely different impressions of Germans and what it means to be a German. Old Woman remembers ‘Aż do Warszawy wkroczyli Niemcy’³¹⁰ to which Girl replies ‘Niemcy, Niemcy, coś słyszałam o jakichś Niemcach...O Jezu, wiem, to ci, co tak jodlują!’³¹¹ (2008: 11) .

Girl’s inherited or acquired stereotype of Germans has nothing to do with her grandmother’s experiences. Within the context of the play it would of course have been impossible for Old Woman to pass on memories to Girl because she, the grandmother, was killed as a young woman during the war before having children. However, their relationship emphasises generational differences. While Old Woman hears sounds of

³⁰⁶ ‘We were born 50 years after the war. Got that? We don’t give a shit about the war. We don’t give a shit about World War II’ (2014b: 114).

³⁰⁷ ‘Yes, it was me who burned those Jews in the barn. | Is that what you wanted to hear? | [...] I’m sick of this business with the Jews’ (2014b: 114).

³⁰⁸ ‘I remember the day the war broke out’ (2014b: 458).

³⁰⁹ ‘A price war?’ [Note: my translation. In his 2014 translation Zapałowski translates this as the Cola war but that is not implied by the original].

³¹⁰ ‘And then the Germans entered Warsaw’ (2014b: 424).

³¹¹ ‘Germans, Germans? I heard something about some kind of Germans...Oh yeah, they’re the ones who yodel!’ (2014b: 424).

bombs going off, Girl interprets them as bikes burning (2008: 80). When Old Woman describes air raids, Girl imagines toy planes (2008: 78). The intergenerational rupture and severing of the passing down of history is further demonstrated when Girl says about her grandmother ‘ona opowiadała mi te swoje pyszne historie, jak pojechała na ten obóz koncentracyjny. Moim zdaniem trochę zżyna z *Czterech pancernych i psa* i *Allo Allo*, ale niech jej tam. W końcu jest postmodernizm’.³¹² Her mother asks her what that word means and she answers ‘Też nie znam, dopiero ściągnęłam z internetu’³¹³ (2008: 17).

Also in *Między nami*, as in Sikorska-Miszczyk’s *Burmistrz*, the idea is repeated many times that World War II could return. Halina (the first postwar generation) and Girl (the second postwar generation) mention the war’s possible return. Referring to preparing recipes, Halina says ‘Teraz możesz już czekać, aż znowu przyjdzie II wojna światowa’³¹⁴ (Masłowska 2008: 24). Repeatedly, Girl says ‘Puk puk! [...] To tylko znowu przyszła ja, II wojna światowa’³¹⁵ (2008: 24). In *Burmistrz*, when the inhabitants of Jedwabne hear the sounds of an approaching thunder storm, it triggers a deep collective fear and they cry:

Wojna! Nowa wojna! Znowu wojna! Wojna z nami! Czy to wojna? Co to, kto to?
Co się dzieje? Boże, Boże!
Będą bombardować
Będą bomby odpalać w nas
[...]
Strzelają!³¹⁶

(Sikorska-Miszczyk 2009a: 20).

Penitent German, despite his misplaced sense of victimhood as the supposed son of a war criminal, is shocked at their response, saying:

Nie mogę na to patrzeć.
...Zamykają

³¹² ‘She was telling me those great stories of hers, how she went to the concentration camp. I think she’s cribbing a bit from *Czterej Pancerni i Pies* and ‘Allo ‘Allo, but let her. After all there’s postmodernism’. [Note: my translation. Zapałowski amends the line].

³¹³ ‘I don’t know either, I just downloaded it’ (2014b: 426).

³¹⁴ ‘Now you can [...] wait for World War II to come again’ (2014b: 430).

³¹⁵ ‘Knock knock! [...] It’s just me, World War II back again’ (2014b: 430).

³¹⁶ ‘War! | A new war! | It’s war again! | War’s upon us! | Is it war? | What, who? | What’s going on? | God, oh God! | They’ll be bombing | [...] They’re shooting!’ (2014a: 81).

pałerponta i biegną kupować cukier...
Świat się zmienił!
...
Jesteście w zjednoczonej Europie!
...
To było dawno.
Wojna była, ale się skończyła...
Uspokójcie się.
[...]
To tylko burza!³¹⁷

(2009a: 21).

Through these lines, Sikorska-Miszczyk juxtaposes the fear of war with elements of contemporary society, emphasising that this continued fear does not have to be a feature of modern life in the European Union. Burmistrz Nowego Jorku (The Mayor of New York) on a visit to Jedwabne also wonders why the locals think the storm is war approaching, and The Mayor of Jedwabne replies:

Bo taki jest nasz kraj
[...]
Co kraj, to obyczaj!³¹⁸

(2009a: 222).

Here Sikorska-Miszczyk highlights the importance of the cultural reiteration of mnemohistory, of the recurrent meaning-making involved in the passing down of postmemories so that such reactions persist from one generation to another. Miss notices that the inhabitants are fearful of the storm because ‘mają niebieskie numery w głowach’³¹⁹ (2009a: 21-22).

Sikorska-Miszczyk stresses the point that generations cannot be collectively responsible for carrying the burden of their ancestors’ experiences, either as victims or as heroes. Penitent German’s attempts to atone for his father’s guilt are futile. His only

³¹⁷ ‘I can’t bear to look. They’re [...] Shutting down PowerPoint and running off to buy sugar. [...] | The world has changed! [...] | You’re part of a united Europe! | It was a long time ago. | There was a war, but it’s over now [...] Calm down [...] It’s just a storm!’ (2014a: 82).

³¹⁸ ‘Because our country is like that [...] Old habits die hard’ (2014a: 83).

³¹⁹ ‘They’ve got blue numbers in their heads’ (2014a: 82).

contribution to the town is as a target at which to direct blame. He says ‘Jestem tu, żeby pokazać temu Miastu, jak bardzo poczuwam się do winy za grzechy ojca’³²⁰ (2009a: 14) and in fact his presence allows the people of the town to continue to suppress the truth. Penitent German is a kind of living anti-monument, used by the locals to facilitate selective forgetting and to perpetuate mendacious versions of history. In contrast to the locals, Mayor Before promotes the idea that the crimes of the past should be acknowledged without being taken on as personal crimes. He encourages ‘Nie popełniliście tej zbrodni. Trudno jest przyjąć taki ciężar’³²¹ and ‘dajcie sobie czas!’³²² (2009a: 33), but the people of Jedwabne refuse to acknowledge the truth. Sikorska-Miszczyk symbolises their active forgetting and lying by having them place the town’s monument on top of Mayor, thus silencing him with the representation of mnemohistory and postmemory they wish to perpetuate. In *Burmistrz*, the monument is a gem-covered statue of a man with golden hair and a silver sword, representative of heroic versions of history and a portraying a positive image of the town. In this play, the town’s monument to its Jews, which exists in the real life town, is conspicuous by its absence, and thus the statue in the play represents a silencing of the truth and a dominant, heroic version of history. In *Burmistrz II*, the statue no longer features and the only monument mentioned is that to the memory of the town’s Jews, on which Mayor wants to change the inscription so that it no longer says that the Jews were killed by the Germans.

In Wojciech’s *Cokolwiek*, the nationalist young Piotr, like Demirski’s Chav, voluntarily carries the history of World War II, in contrast with Piotr’s sister Sugar and her girlfriend Magda who reject it entirely. Piotr compares himself to his grandfather and implies that Sugar’s lesbianism is preventing him from following in his grandfather’s footsteps, saying ‘Siostra dziadka nie był lesbą, kiedy on umierał pod Monte Cassino! [...]’

³²⁰ ‘I am here to show this Town how guilty I feel for the sins of my father’ (2014a: 73).

³²¹ ‘You’re blamed for a crime you’ve not committed. It’s hard to bear such a burden’ (2014a: 95).

³²² ‘We need time’ (2014a: 95) [Note: a direct translation would be ‘give yourselves time’].

Mogłem zginąć, a ty...Jesteś taka na złość mnie!³²³ (2006b: 270). Sugar's girlfriend Magda articulates her disdain for monuments that represent national heroic narratives and prejudicial attitudes by writing in a poem:

jesteśmy kochankami
zróbmy to na grobach królów naczelników powstań przegranych w dniu ich
rozpoczęcia
zróbmy to na pomnikach patriotycznej młodzieży³²⁴

(2006b: 287-288).

She continues: 'poznałyśmy smak miłości zamiast wachawania flagą'³²⁵ (2006b: 288). The nationalist narrative is contrasted directly with homosexuality, as is discussed further in Chapter 4. Piotr later questions the value of his time in the army and doubts his relationship to his nation, which is represented by the flag, when: '(*zrzuca z ramion białoczerwony sztandar*) Dali mi flagę. Na chuj mi flaga? [...] Trzeba zacząć żyć. Trzeba od nowa zacząć żyć'³²⁶ (2006b: 276), a sentiment and suggestion to break with the past that has been made by several other characters, including Fransua Żako's father and the Young Generation. This questioning represents the possibility of positive change in Piotr's simplistic, aggressive character, which in turn emphasises the overall point that younger generations have a choice in regard to their attitude to their country's past and that this in turn impacts on national identity.

All the writers advocate an end to the passing down of traumatic memories and experiences. They favour an honest acknowledgement of the past and a personal separation from it, allowing the present and the future to be unbound by narratives of the past.

Sikorska-Miszczyk's Fransua in *Walizka* benefits from knowing his father's past, although

³²³ 'Grandfather's sister wasn't no lesbian when he laid down his life at Monte Cassino! [...] I could have been killed, and you...you're doing this to spite me!' (2014: 566).

³²⁴ '...we are lovers | let's do it on the tombs of kings, of commanders of uprisings lost the day they began | let's do it on monuments to patriotic youth' (2014: 587).

³²⁵ '...we came to know the taste of love instead of waving the flag' (2014: 588).

³²⁶ '(*Shrugs the white-and-red flag off his shoulders*) They gave me a flag. The fuck I need a flag for? [...] I need to get a life. I need a fresh start' (2014: 572).

it is tragic. Likewise, Miss in *Burmistrz* knows but is not heavily burdened by her parents' experiences. A large number of young characters from several plays explicitly assert their separation of their personal identity from historical narratives. Such characters include Demirski's Boy and Starlet in *Był sobie* and his young characters in *Niech żyje*, Sikorska-Miszczyk's Young Generation in *Burmistrz II*, Wojcieszek's Magda and Sugar in *Cokolwiek* and Masłowska's Girl in *Między nami*. The overarching principle is that Poles of all ages but especially those from younger generations are, or should be, free to shape their own relationships to Poland's past, and to form their own personal identities without being defined by their national context.

2.3.3 **Lieux de Mémoire**

French Historian Pierre Nora's 'lieux de mémoire' theory germinated in a 1977 project of the same name, which was followed by his 1978 book *La nouvelle histoire*. Lieux, or sites, of memory include places, objects, rituals of commemoration and symbols which carry a particular memory. The importance of artefacts is also underlined by Hirsch, who refers to them as 'testimonial objects' (2012: 2854) which carry memory traces from the past and embody the process of its transmission. American Historian Jay Winter has expanded Nora's theory into his own 'sites of memory' (1995). He asserts that sites of memory go through different phases: creative, calendar making, in which a memorial date becomes established and marked on the cultural calendar, and dying out, when the group who began a commemorative practice begin to die out. The foundation of Nora's theory is the 'loci memoriae' of Cicero and Quintilian, which emphasised the importance of place and memory.³²⁷

Nora explains that lieux de mémoire are 'at once immediately available in concrete sensual experience and susceptible to the most abstract elaboration. Indeed, they are *lieux*

³²⁷ This theory is based on the experience of the poet Simonides when he was dining in a large hall with a group of others. When he left the hall temporarily, the ceiling fell in and the hall was destroyed. He could remember who had been sitting where, and was therefore able to recall the victims.

in three senses of the word - material, symbolic and functional. Even an apparently purely material site, like an archive, becomes a *lieu de mémoire* only if the imagination invests it with a symbolic aura' (1989: 19). The 'observance of a commemorative minute of silence, an extreme example of a strictly symbolic action, serves as a concentrated appeal to memory by literally breaking a temporal continuity' (1989: 19). The playwrights studied make use of several lieux de mémoire covering all the different kinds, and in performance objects and rituals of commemoration are particularly prominent.

The intention to remember is key to something being a lieu de mémoire, otherwise it would be a lieu d'histoire. Therefore if post-generations reject postmemory and particular versions of mnemohistory, then lieux de mémoire will change or disappear. When thinking about theatre in performance, it is worth considering that the performance space or building can be a lieu de mémoire - either in the sense that a play is performed in a space that already holds particular meaning, or in the sense that a place takes on meaning because of a performance given there. Wherever plays are performed, they can contribute to the process of memory-making, and space can enhance that potential. A performance of *Burmistrz* in Jedwabne would carry many more layers of meaning than the same play performed anywhere else, particularly an outdoor or promenade performance staged in significant sites in the town, such as the site of the Jewish cemetery or the burned barn. Indeed, Bryce Lease (2012: 97) explains that Słobodzianek has said he would like his play *Nasza Klasa* to be performed in Jedwabne.

The purpose of lieux de mémoire of all kinds is 'to stop time, to block the work of forgetting', and they rely on a shared 'will to remember' (Nora 1989: 19). When this will to remember is not shared, conflict ensues, as evidenced in the plays in focus, and as relates to the notion of postmemory discussed earlier. Textual examples of lieux de

mémoire will now be discussed in the following subsections: objects, memorial sites and monuments, and rituals of commemoration.

2.3.3.1 Objects

There are several examples of an object as a lieu de mémoire in various plays. In *Walizka*, Fransua's father's suitcase, which was found in the Holocaust museum, is a very clear example of an object as a lieu de mémoire. The museum in which it is held is also a lieu de mémoire in itself. The suitcase becomes an inherited object once Fransua identifies it as belonging to his father. At first the suitcase is just an object, but then it is his father, exemplified in the lines:

To jest walizka mojego ojca
Ojciec jest³²⁸

(Sikorska-Miszczyk 2008b: 10).

The idea that the case symbolically contains the man is concretised in performance in the Kruszczyński (2009) production when a dancer who represents the father appears in an upright box behind the suitcase when Fransua opens it, symbolising *Pantofelnik's* metaphorical release from inside. The dancer performs a contemporary dance routine ending in *Pantofelnik's* death.

Many other objects hold symbolic significance in *Walizka*, in the scenes that refer to and take place in the Holocaust museum in Paris. Tour Guide explains to Fransua that

Każda rzecz w tym muzeum
Poddano pracochłonnej konserwacji
Z każdej usunięto
Powojenny brud
Bo nie o niego chodziło
Starannie pozostawiono
Brud najważniejszy
Wojenny brud³²⁹

(2008b: 11).

³²⁸ 'That's my father's suitcase | It's father'.

³²⁹ 'Every object in this museum | Has been painstakingly conserved | From each one | Post war dirt has been cleaned off | Because it didn't matter | They carefully left | The most important | Wartime dirt'.

These verses encapsulate the point that objects hold whatever meaning is assigned to them by people choosing what to remember. Sikorska-Miszczyk makes much use of the symbolic power of objects in this play, and in several cases Tour Guide, Żaklin and Narrator simply mention objects, saying little more about them, because they inherently represent a large amount of history. For example, Żaklin says the museum contains ‘Pierwsza żółta gwiazda’³³⁰ (2008b: 9). The fact that it is the first yellow star amplifies the horror of what it represents by accentuating the beginning of the atrocities. It also underlines the human involvement by highlighting that there was a starting point to the symbolism of the yellow star, and that the decision to introduce it was made by a fellow human. Narrator says that the museum contains ‘Zabawki: głównie lalki i misie’³³¹ (2008b: 8). Here Sikorska-Miszczyk uses objects to create an image of their child owners, allowing the objects to carry emotive meaning without using any description of the children themselves and thus emphasising their significance as lieux de mémoire. Żaklin and Narrator describe the Holocaust as the patron of the museum, which might be seen ‘pod postacią walizka, buta, lub stłuczonych okularów’³³² (2008b: 9). Tour Guide, who is being psychologically destroyed by her daily encounters with the objects in the museum, says the preserved wartime mud on objects

Niczego nas nie uczy
Nie przemawia do nas³³³

(2008b: 11)

and later:

Wyrzucimy to wszystko, co jest w tym muzeum!
Zakopmy i spalmy
[...]
Wszystko spalmy
Druty zakopmy

³³⁰ ‘The first yellow star’.

³³¹ ‘Toys: mainly dolls and teddy bears’.

³³² ‘in the guise of a suitcase, shoe, or broken glasses’.

³³³ ‘It doesn’t teach us anything | It doesn’t speak to us’.

Przestańmy pamiętać!

Bo nic to nikomu nie daje³³⁴

(2008b: 12).

Here, Sikorska-Miszczyk raises the controversial question as to whether objects should be kept as lieux de mémoire, and whether doing so is helpful.

Like Fransua, Demirski's Turysta in *Był sobie* seeks truths about his father's past, and these are encapsulated in objects: 'fortepian - smoking - biblioteka po ojcu - ... przepadły mi w zniszczonym Gdańsku i ja chcę wiedzieć dlaczego'³³⁵ (2007c: 4). This line illustrates the idea that objects that might have seemed insignificant to their owners in a wartime situation take on amplified meaning for later generations and serve as a vehicle for communication between people of different ages.

In Masłowska's *Między nami*, the rubbish and recycling strewn around the flat can be seen to represent the unhelpful baggage of the past in the present. Masłowska conveys the idea that it is time to put out the metaphorical rubbish once and for all, and that, as the other playwrights also suggest, the postwar generations are free to leave the past behind.

2.3.3.2 Memorial sites and Monuments

In *Burmistrz* and *Burmistrz II*, Sikorska-Miszczyk uses the town memorial to symbolise the mnemohistory perpetuated by the locals in which the town is portrayed as heroic and the Jews are not mentioned. In *Burmistrz II* Sikorska-Miszczyk has Mayor advocate a change in the lieux de mémoire when he employs:

Zmieńmy napis na pomnik
Że Żydów zabili Niemcy³³⁶

(2011a: 185).

³³⁴ 'Let's throw away everything that's in this museum! | Let's bury it and burn it | [...] | Let's burn it all | Let's bury the wires | Let's stop remembering | Because it doesn't give anyone anything'.

³³⁵ 'piano – dinner jacket – my father's bookcase – they went missing when Gdańsk was destroyed and I want to know why'.

³³⁶ 'Let's change the inscription on the monument | That says the Jews were killed by the Germans' (2014b: 102).

The monument is a highly symbolic vehicle for continued meaning-making. Descriptions of the town monument's glory are repeated in the same words, in a kind of mantra, in regular editions of the local paper. The memorial is the focus of myth-forming and active continuation of (false) memory. The tone in which it is described is pseudo-religious. Mayor Before demonstrates the monument's involvement in collective memory and the passing on of attitudes from one generation to the next, saying:

Zapytajmy głośno: kto rozjaśnia nasz kolejny dzień? Pomnik, skarb i chluba
Miasta, rozjaśnia nasz kolejny dzień³³⁷

(2009a: 5).

The question form and repetition of part of the phrase emphasise the function of the language in shaping communal thinking.

In *Burmistrz*, Mayor declares that it is 'Czas złożyć kwiaty pod Pomnikiem'³³⁸ at the town's statue (2009a: 15). In *Burmistrz II* he makes clear that he wishes to privately fund flowers to lay at the memorial to the town's Jews, disallowing the heroic narrative conveyed by the alternative monument in *Burmistrz*. He tells Florist: 'Za moje prywatne pieniądze zamierzam kupić wiązankę kwiatów, którą złożę pod pomnikiem pomordowanych Żydów w naszym Mieście'³³⁹ (2011a: 186). Florist embodies an anti-Semitic attitude and accuses Mayor of receiving money from the Jews. By requesting flowers from Florist, Mayor involves her with the memorial process which she personally opposes. Sikorska-Miszczyk uses this dynamic to expose the conflicting beliefs within the community. It also emphasises the role of individuals in rituals of commemoration, highlighting their arbitrary nature which is therefore subject to choice and change. Mayor insists he is using his own money and asks for a ribbon on the flowers reading

³³⁷ 'Let us ask this out loud: what is it that brightens each day? It is the Monument, this Town's pride and joy, that brightens each day' (2014a: 63).

³³⁸ 'Time to lay flowers before the monument' (2014a: 75).

³³⁹ 'I want to use my private money to buy a bouquet that I can lay in front of the Monument to the Jews murdered in our Town' (2014b: 105).

‘Pomordowanym mieszkańcom Jedwabnego narodowości żydowskiej ku pamięci i przestrodze – społeczeństwo’.³⁴⁰ Florist’s reply further highlights the divisions within the small town which reflect wider refusal to face the truth, asking: ‘A gdzie pan widzi to społeczeństwo?’³⁴¹ (2011a: 186).

Also in *Burmistrz*, the cemetery that doesn’t exist is an extremely symbolic lieu d’histoire but it is prevented from becoming a true lieu de mémoire for anyone other than Mayor Before because it is untended and uncared for, illustrating that the memory of those who are buried there is being actively suppressed. The dominant version of history highlighted by the play, though not supported by the playwright, is one in which the Jews of the town are seen by the Poles as outsiders and in which the Germans are responsible for the Jedwabne massacre. This active forgetting and silencing of the truth is demonstrated when Mayor Before addresses international visitors and says ‘A ja chciałbym jeszcze opowiedzieć o naszym cmentarzu’³⁴² (2009a: 11). He wants to share the truth about the site, but the locals advocate collective forgetting, and he backs down when, as explained in a stage direction, ‘*Liczni zgromadzeni Mieszkańcy, a w szczególności Dwunastu Zięciów Mieszkańca i Dwanaście Synowych Mieszkańca jest przeciw*’³⁴³ (2009a: 11). Miss enquires about the cemetery, and Mieszkaniec attempts to conceal the truth, suggesting that the Jews of the town left of their own accord. He says the cemetery belongs to ‘takich, co tu byli i ich nie ma. Wzięli walizki i poszli. Zostawili nam swoich zmarłych’³⁴⁴ (2009a: 11). This mendaciously implies that the Jews of the town left of their own accord, and what’s more that they left behind them their dead to be cared for.

³⁴⁰ “‘To the murdered Jewish townspeople of Jedwabne in commemoration and as a warning – Society.’” (2014b: 105).

³⁴¹ ‘And where is that society of yours?’ (2014b: 105).

³⁴² ‘And I’d also like to say something about our cemetery’ (2014a: 70).

³⁴³ ‘The numerous Townspeople in attendance, especially the Townsperson’s Twelve Sons-in-Law, and the Townsperson’s Twelve Daughters-in-Law, are not in favour’ (2014a: 70).

³⁴⁴ ‘These people who used to be here and aren’t anymore. They took their suitcases, and up and left. They left us their dead’ (2014a: 70).

Mayor has a stone letter from a gravestone in the cemetery which becomes a lieu de mémoire and a kind of miniature monument to the truth and to the memory of the Jews of the town. He describes how when he first went to the cemetery there seemed to be nothing there, but then: ‘powoli, wszystko się przede mną otwierało: pomiędzy drzewami, gwiazdami, liśćmi, kamieniami, księżycem nagle wyrastało Miasto’ ³⁴⁵ (2009a: 18), which symbolises the uncovering of the truth.

In Demirski’s *Niech żyje* the elderly dog-veteran Szarik is in dialogue with Gustlik, who is in the Strzępka (2009) production portrayed as a black male soldier played by a female actor. Szarik wants to set up a shrine on an unspecified street in the centre of Warsaw next to a plaque commemorating nurses from the underground state who were killed during the Warsaw Uprising. Gustlik opposes this and in Strzępka’s (2009) production urinates on the proposed site. This clearly symbolic act is in opposition to Szarik’s intentions and exemplifies generational differences in attitudes to commemorating the Warsaw Uprising and its participants. Gustlik argues that the place in which Szarik wishes to make his memorial shrine holds different meanings to different people, and that the location has been witness to various events in the recent past. Although the character is supposedly male, the female actor uses feminine verb endings, saying:

w tym miejscu w roku takim tam a takim –
o godzinie trzynastej czterdzieści pięć -
zginęły trzy sanitariuszki państwa podziemnego
[...]
jak miałam trzynaście lat
to chodziłam tam nosić kwiatki
i palić świece
trzy sanitariuszki
nikt nie napisał że w roku takim tam a takim nosiłam tam kwiatki
a potem że nie nosiłam
[...]
w tym miejscu zachorowałam na grypę
jak się całowałam z chłopakiem pierwszy raz
potem w tym miejscu mnie rzucił

³⁴⁵ ‘...slowly, everything began opening up for me: between the trees, stars, leaves, stones and the moon, a Town started rising up’ (2014a: 79).

[...]
potem zdarzyło się całe mnóstwo rzeczy
[...]
gdzie jest w sercu tego miasta moja tabliczka? ³⁴⁶

(2011e: 386-387).

As Joanna Wichowska agrees, the play engages with debate about what is remembered and what is forgotten by suggesting that:

Skoro jest tablica upamiętniająca bohaterskie sanitariuszki z Powstania, to może powinna być też inna - na pamiątkę czyjejs w tym miejscu przecierpianej bezsenności albo pierwszego pocałunku. Skoro dominuje wielka narracja, to gdzieś też musi się zmieścić mała, prywatna. Nie wszystkie traumy mają patriotyczny rodowód³⁴⁷

(Wichowska 2009).

Strzępka supports this in saying ‘nie próbujemy narzucić własnej wersji wydarzeń.

Próbujemy tylko upomnieć się o to, co w historii przemilczane, odrzucone’³⁴⁸ (2009).

In *Między nami*, the fact that all the levels of imaginary action are set in the same flat allows Masłowska to juxtapose the filmmaker Man’s life with that of Old Woman and her imaginary daughter and granddaughter. The entire flat is a lieu de mémoire for Old Woman’s personal and national past, and it is a site where different possible versions of history are played out.

2.3.3.3 Rituals of commemoration

Practices of commemoration are addressed in *Burmistrz* and *Niech żyje* in particular. In *Burmistrz II* Mayor wants to arrange a remembrance day for the Jews of the town but Townsperson fears the impact this will have on the way the current inhabitants of

³⁴⁶ ‘In this place in such and such a year at 1.45pm [...] Three nurses of the Polish underground state were killed | when I was thirteen I went there to take flowers and light candles | three nurses | No one wrote that in such and such a year I took flowers there | and then I didn’t | [...] In this place I got the flu after I kissed a boy | for the first time | then in this place he dumped me | [...] Then loads of things happened | Where in the heart of this town is my plaque?’

³⁴⁷ ‘Since there is a plaque commemorating the heroic nurses from the Uprising, maybe there should also be another one – to the memory of the insomnia suffered by someone in this place, or a first kiss. Since the grand narrative dominates, the small, private narrative must also fit in somewhere. Not all traumas have a patriotic lineage’.

³⁴⁸ ‘we’re not trying to impose our own version of events. We’re just trying to speak up for what has been glossed over and cast aside by history’.

Jedwabne are seen by the outside world, and implicitly on the way they see themselves.

Townsperson declares that if there is a commemoration of the anniversary of the killings, then:

Będą nas oskarżać przed całym światem, że jesteśmy synami i córkami morderców. ...Wejdą do naszych domów i powiedzą: śmierdzi u was spalenizną, więc pootwieramy u was okna, bo jesteście jak świny, które nie czują, w jakim smrodzie żyją. Dla nich jesteśmy świniami³⁴⁹

(2011a: 190).

Mayor sees things differently, saying:

chciałbym, żeby mieszkańcy pomodlili się za tych, co zginęli, uczcili ofiary. Żeby nowożeńcy robili sobie zdjęcia pod pomnikiem, który stanie na miejscu zbrodni. Żeby mówili: “była śmierć, jest życie, duchy pomordowanych, przepraszamy was za ojców, pobłogosławcie nasze dzieci”³⁵⁰

(2011a: 191).

This prayer-like tone, which is possibly in a dream, is interrupted when the local dentist replies simply: ‘Wariat’³⁵¹ (2011a: 191). This succinctly summarises the impossibility that some locals, even educated ones, will ever see things from Mayor’s point of view.

In *Niech żyje*, Demirski problematises the practice of a minute’s silence, creating a pinnacle scene which summarises key issues relating to remembering versus forgetting, particularly in terms of intergenerational conflict and individualisation of commemorative processes. When Szarik attempts to impose on the younger generations the practice of observing a minute’s silence to commemorate the Warsaw Uprising, he does so aggressively, saying:

na kolana
to znaczy ręce do góry,³⁵²

³⁴⁹ ‘They will accuse us of being the sons and daughters of murderers, with the whole world watching. [...] They will enter our homes and say: it reeks of charred flesh here, so we’ll throw the windows open, for you are like swine oblivious to the stench they live in. We’re swine to them’ (2014b: 111).

³⁵⁰ ‘I’d like the Townspeople to pray for those who were killed, to pay tribute to the victims. For newlyweds to take photos of themselves in front of the monument that will be erected on the scene of the crime. For them to say “where there was death, there is life, spirits of the dead we apologize for our fathers, bless our children.”’ (2014b: 113).

³⁵¹ ‘Madman’ (2014b: 113).

³⁵² ‘on your knees | that means hands in the air’.

conveying the idea that rituals of commemoration are enforced. Gustlik refuses, replying:

ja nie chcę żadnej minuty ciszy
nie będę żadnej minuty ciszy stała³⁵³

(2011e: 388).

Szarik becomes increasingly annoyed with the refusal to comply, shouting:

minuta ciszy
kurwa
czy już nie ma żadnych dla was świętości?³⁵⁴

(2011e: 389).

Here Demirski emphasises the frustration felt by Szarik over the lack of respect for the practices he wishes to follow. The ‘kurwa’ highlights Szarik’s strength of feeling and the ‘już’ emphasises the time distance between the generations and the tension between them as a result of their different attitudes.

The severed passing down of postmemory and a change in the way younger generations wish to remember the war is strongly conveyed by Gustlik’s line: ‘ja nie mam żadnej takiej minuty w głowie’³⁵⁵ (2011e: 389). Lidka expresses the fact that she does have personal feelings about the war and the country’s past but she does not want to be dictated to about how she should respond to those feelings:

Ja mam takie emocje
ale mnie że on o nich mówi wkurwia³⁵⁶

(2011e: 389).

Throughout the scene, Szarik repeats his attempts to get the younger characters to stand still for a minute’s silence, shouting ‘ani kroku w tył’³⁵⁷ (2011e: 390) each time somebody moves or talks. In the Strzępka (2009) production, the scene is both amusing and poignant

³⁵³ ‘I don’t want any minute’s silence | I’m not going to stand through any minute’s silence’.

³⁵⁴ ‘a minute’s silence | fuck | is nothing sacred to you anymore?’.

³⁵⁵ ‘I don’t have any minute’s silence like that in my head’.

³⁵⁶ ‘I have these emotions | but the fact that he’s talking about them pisses me off’.

³⁵⁷ ‘not one step back’.

and perfectly encapsulates Demirski's point that commemorative practices should be personalised, and that it is meaningless to thoughtlessly participate in collective rituals. The younger characters struggle not to laugh, and they cannot keep completely still, so there is visual comedy as a result of their physical tension and fidgeting which they try to hide from Szarik, who is a representative of the older generations as well as being a man-dog distorted by war. Several characters express the point that they can remember the past but wish to do so in their own ways, underlining the importance of this point to Demirski. Gustlik says he is able to remember the people who died in the Warsaw Uprising but feels it is unnecessary for Szarik to tell him who or what to remember, or how:

ja mogę
 Ja te dwieście tysięcy osób pamiętać mogę
 ale czemu on ma mówić co ja mam pamiętać? Właściwie?³⁵⁸

(2011e: 391).

Czereśniak not only wishes to find his own way to express his emotions about the past, but also wants to include within his retrospection a protest against the authorities who gave the command to begin the Warsaw Uprising:

ja mam takie emocje różne
 ale sam je sobie wolę mieć
 niż z wami
 minutę mogę stać
 ale moja minuta jest przeciwko władzy
 która wydała rozkaz żeby rozpocząć powstanie
 a potem każe nam ten rozkaz świętować
 stoję przeciwko takim świętom³⁵⁹

(2011e: 391).

In the Polish social context it is controversial to challenge the Warsaw Uprising in this way, but the point is succinctly made and communicated in performance with a conviction

³⁵⁸ 'I can | I can remember these two hundred thousand people | but why does he have to tell me what I have to remember? | Really?'

³⁵⁹ 'I have these various emotions | but I prefer to have them alone | than with you | I can stand for a minute | but my minute is against the authorities | who gave the order to start the uprising | and then tells us to celebrate the order | I stand against these celebrations'.

that makes it seem very reasonable. It is part of the dismantling of a framework of generalised attitudes in favour of personally thought through and freely expressed opinion.

Demirski emphasises the importance of individual memories, which are different yet equally as important as each other. He argues that one version of history should not dominate over another, and further that the version of history being promoted and supported by Szarik does not represent Gustlik. This in turn asserts the importance of the individual and the present, while rejecting the notion of communal memorialisation and the assignment of a particular solitary meaning to a given place.

There are many examples of various kinds of lieux de mémoire used by playwrights to illustrate themes of remembering and forgetting. Objects that carry the intention to remember are prominent in Sikorska-Miszczyk's *Walizka*, including all the artefacts in the Holocaust museum and Pantofelnik's suitcase, which acquires new significance after it is discovered by Fransua. In *Burmistrz* and *Burmistrz II*, memorial sites are central, such as the Jewish cemetery and the different town monuments in each play. Rituals of commemoration are also problematised in these plays and in Demirski's *Niech żyje*, in which the four failed attempts at a minute's silence are crucial to the play's overall theme. In Masłowska's *Między nami*, the flat in which the action is set becomes a kind of memorial site to its previous and imaginary inhabitants.

2.4 Conclusions

In performance, the props, set, costumes and sound all add another physical dimension to the possibilities for using objects, spaces, images and music to enhance the theme of memory. It is clear that several plays illustrate issues around the formation of a truthful version of history and a reassessment of the ways in which the past is remembered. Generational differences in attitudes to the past are evidently a source of particular tension, as is amplified through the lens of postmemory. All four playwrights advocate a severing

of the passing down of memory that allows younger generations to face the past without absorbing it as their own history. They move away from the idea of a 'thick line' between the past and present in favour of a version of history that acknowledges the truth but allows the passing on of traumatic postmemories to come to an end. They support a collective moving forward towards a democratisation of history and an individualisation of rituals and processes of memorialisation. The thematisation of attitudes to the past points to an important wider social process that is continually taking place in contemporary Poland. As the epicentre of World War II, together with Belarus in particular, Poland has a particularly significant position in terms of cultural attitudes towards the war and its place in the contemporary narrative, which can in turn impact on British views on the ways in which the war is viewed and remembered, or forgotten.

3 Physical Forces: The human body as a theme in contemporary Polish playwriting

'If you prick us, do we not bleed?'

(Shylock, *The Merchant of Venice*, Act III sc. I)

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the prominence of the human body as a theme in contemporary Polish playwriting is investigated. Historically, both politics and religion have been repressive in Poland with regard to attitudes to the body. Without the restrictions on free speech that were imposed under communism, contemporary playwrights are able to discuss the human body and many have done so, placing the body centre stage thematically as well as physically. While in wider Polish society the body remains a taboo and its discussion is often controversial, theatre is a platform for openness with regard to attitudes to the body and related issues. Within the general topic of the body there are several subthemes around the way bodies relate to each other, such as through sex and sexuality. There is also a common focus on the biology and physicality of the body and the reality of having a body, which in these plays is no longer something that is kept quiet.

Some playwrights focus on the fact that the body is part and parcel of individual identity. Some approach the issue of how the past is remembered and how the war should be discussed through an emphasis on the body. If the mind and body are dealt with as a united entity, and if the mind cannot be switched off from the body, then negative experiences involving the body are all the more impactful, and the atrocities of war cannot be viewed from any intellectualised distance when they are addressed through bodily experience. In the plays analysed, survivors of war often carry their experiences physically and postwar generations experience physical manifestations of their familial and personal past. Unlike the mind, the body cannot be manipulated into forgetting.

The issue of sexual abuse is also addressed, in some of the plays studied, from a primarily physical perspective, in the sense that the physical experiences are described without any explanation of the accompanying emotions experienced by the victims, which has the effect of allowing the emotions to come out of the physical and to speak for themselves.

Social problems are also connected with the body in various plays. For example, disaffected members of the younger generations who feel that their voices are unrepresented and unheard in society express themselves through their bodies, frequently exerting a physical presence through aggression. Another pertinent social problem in contemporary Poland, which relates to the body in terms of gender and sexuality is prejudice against homosexual, bi-sexual, transgender, and transsexual people. In some of the plays, the playwright highlights the point that sexuality is an integral part of identity which should not need to be repressed beneath a social mask. The particular issue of prejudice against homosexuality clearly relates to the body, but it will be mentioned only briefly here because it will feature further in Chapter 4 on social marginalisation.

Elwira Grossman stated in 2005 that ‘sexuality and family-related problems are still the two top taboo topics in Polish culture’ (2005: 112). Polish society remains predominantly Catholic, and since Catholic doctrine is extremely prescriptive with regard to the body it is particularly relevant to this chapter and forms part of its theoretical framework. However the main theory that informs a close reading of the plays is Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological approach as described in his book *The Phenomenology of Perception* (2012, originally published in 1945). His definition of the body’s relationship with the mind fits closely with attitudes commonly conveyed by the playwrights studied. In simple terms, for Merleau-Ponty the body perceives, and it is our point of connection with the world. He rejects the Cartesian assertion that ‘I think therefore I am’ in favour of a

theory that might be summarised as ‘I have a body therefore I am’ or, perhaps, ‘I am therefore I am’. For Merleau-Ponty there is none of the mind-body division that is fundamental to several other theories that prioritise mind over body. While there are many other theories on the body it is not the purpose of this thesis to provide a survey of theory, but to provide an in depth analysis of play texts through the selected lenses of theories that help to illuminate the most pertinent discoveries arising from close readings of the plays. The broad topic of the body will be approached in the following subsections: in sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 the theoretical frameworks underpinning the chapter will be outlined, namely some general tenets of Catholicism and Merleau-Ponty’s theory of phenomenology. The body affected by war and its aftermath will be addressed in section 3.3. This section will focus on dead bodies, including ghosts and absent bodies (3.3.2), injured bodies that have survived war (3.3.3), and postwar generations affected physically by facts relating to the war (3.3.4). The sexually abused and the sexually abusive body are the subject of section 3.4, followed by defiant bodies in 3.5. The texts analysed come from the four main playwrights studied, but there are other plays by other playwrights and particular plays that would clearly fit into a longer discussion of the topic.

In several plays, the focus on the body represents not only a confrontation of social taboos or a reaction against repression, but also a return to the roots of what it is to be human. In the context of a society still redefining itself in a relatively new socio-political context, this focus on the basic elements of being human relates closely to the search for identity. A reconsideration of the body as functional, ‘animal’ without any social or political forces acting upon it allows the potential for the body and therefore the person to be free to make choices. The person-body / the body-person is a *tabula rasa* onto which any identity could emerge. As Moltman-Wendel says, ‘in returning to the body we are returning to the roots of our existence’ (1994: 88). This return to basics and to functionality

in the plays has led to several references to, and examples of, eating and drinking, many mentions of ‘pissing’ and ‘shitting’ (referred to by the playwrights in those terms), and of sexual acts and bodily fluids. By focusing on such functions, the playwrights underline the ways in which all people are the same, which in turn allows for recognition of the perceived and actual ways in which people differ. This is significant within a society that has historically been strait-jacketed into believing that they are homogenous and that there is but one type of Pole. These references are often placed in the texts as reminders of the physical body and its functions without having any significant place in the action of the scene, although they are sometimes comedic. In Wojcieszek’s *Made in Poland*, Boguś walks in on Grześ while he is using the bathroom. Grześ asks ‘Nie widzisz, że sram?’³⁶⁰ (2006: 425), and in Masłowska’s *Dwoje biednych*, Dżina says ‘A łać się chcę’³⁶¹ (2006b: 126). In Strzępka’s (2009) production of Demirski’s *Niech żyje*, a pair of knickers containing a bloodied sanitary pad is left on the stage after a completely un-sensual sex scene. This uncomfortably intimate detail deliberately draws close attention to the functionality of the physical body. This production also features both male and female nudity, which is used to emphasise the characters’ vulnerability.

In *Made in Poland*, Boguś attempts to prove his genuine attraction to his girlfriend Monika using entirely physical, unromantic terms: ‘Kiedy cię zobaczyłem mój krasnalek od razu zesztyniał’³⁶² (Wojcieszek 2006: 448). In Masłowska’s *Dwoje biednych*, Parcha talks about his engagement in casual sex, of which he himself is critical: ‘Ślina i sperma schną jak deszcz. Bo to są soki miłości, soki miłości. Ślina! Sperma! Białko jajka kurzego!’³⁶³ (2006b: 131). In Demirski’s *Był sobie*, Tourist describes the impression he

³⁶⁰ ‘Can’t you see I’m taking a dump?’ (2015a: 282).

³⁶¹ ‘I need a piss’.

³⁶² ‘When I saw you my woody stood to attention at once’ (2015a: 307).

³⁶³ ‘Spit and sperm dry up like the rain. Because those are the juices of love, love juices. Spit! Sperm! Egg white!’.

had as a teenager in Germany that ‘sperma była zabroniona – sperma była bardziej zabroniona niż pedofilia’³⁶⁴ (2007c: 29).

The coarse, sexual language in many of the plays is in some cases so extreme that it can be uncomfortable to discuss, but to omit it would be to ignore a significant characteristic of the work. To include it is to acknowledge its thematic relevance, its refreshing ability to shock, and its role in challenging linguistic and social taboos. Of the playwrights studied, Demirski pushes such language and imagery the furthest. Tourist in *Był sobie* describes the history of the formerly-German city of Gdańsk as being like a ‘wielki ociekający krwią niemiecki penis w świeżej polskiej piździe’³⁶⁵ (2007c: 28). The use of such language is also discussed in Chapter 5 on dramatic techniques.

Some of the playwrights use the body symbolically as well as thematically, but in the plays in question the body is never used simply metaphorically. The writers do not use the body solely as a political metaphor in the way that theorists such as Mary Douglas and others have described in anthropological and sociological theory. The sensing, physical body is focused on by the playwrights, and this is particularly impactful in theatre in which the actors and audience share physical space and where costume, make up, gesture, stance, physicality and proximity to the audience all convey meaning. In this chapter, references will be made where possible to the plays in performance as well as to the texts, which will help to highlight the importance of the physical presence of the performer’s body in a shared space with the audience.

3.2 Theoretical framework

3.2.1 Catholicism - some general tenets

Catholic doctrine remains extremely influential in Polish society. This doctrine is particularly relevant here given its very clear stance on certain issues relating to the body.

³⁶⁴ ‘Sperm was banned. Sperm was even more banned than paedophilia’.

³⁶⁵ ‘A great big German penis dripping with blood in a fresh Polish cunt’.

Catholicism firmly rejects abortion, for example, and in a 1996 debate on whether abortion should be legalised, Pope John Paul II, ‘the Polish Pope’, is quoted as having said that ‘A nation that kills its own children has no future’.³⁶⁶ Catholicism completely forbids contraception, and in 1980, Pope John Paul II said that it ‘can never, for any reason be justified’.³⁶⁷ In *Był sobie*, the sexually abusive bishop Paetz says:

a kiedy toksyczne związki z tabletek antykoncepcyjnych uderzają w twój system nerwowy i zaczynasz się pocić i bać to wchodzisz do kościoła i chciałabyś być małą dziewczynką która wierzy w Jezusa i martwi się że Indianie nie pójda do nieba bo wierzyli w Manitou³⁶⁸

(Demirski 2007c: 20),

emphasising the writer’s opinion that the church is not only critical of contraception but is also propagandist. In Demirski’s notes to the translator Catherine Grosvenor,³⁶⁹ he explains that the above line is an ‘aluzja do poglądów dużej części księży w Polsce że tabletki antykoncepcyjne powodują choroby psychiczne’³⁷⁰ (Demirski 2007c: 20). Catholicism is also strongly opposed to sexual activity outside of a heterosexual marriage, both heterosexual and homosexual activity. In the plays, there are several examples of references to sexual activity of various kinds outside of marriage. As O’Collins explains,

In the immediate post-New Testament period, we find the *Didache* and the *Epistle of Barnabas* warning against ‘the way of darkness’ by repudiating three kinds of sexual activity that the Catholic tradition would consistently repudiate – premarital sex, extramarital sex, and homosexual practices: ‘You shall not commit fornication; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not engage in homosexual activity’ (*Epistle of Barnabas*, 19.4; *Didache*, 2.2)

(2008: 100).

³⁶⁶ <http://www.catholic-hythe.org/pope_john_paul.htm> [last accessed 10 July 2015].

³⁶⁷ http://www.catholicsagainstcontraception.com/statements_by_john_paul_ii_1978_1996.htm [last accessed 11 July 2015].

³⁶⁸ ‘and when the the toxic effects of your contraceptive pills attack your nervous system and you start to sweat and feel scared you’ll go to church and you’ll want to be a little girl who believes in Jesus and worries that the Red Indians won’t go to heaven because they believed in Manitou’.

³⁶⁹ These notes were shared with me by Catherine Grosvenor and I have her and Demirski’s kind permission to quote from them.

³⁷⁰ ‘allusion to the opinions of a large number of priests in Poland that contraceptive pills cause psychological illnesses’.

According to those who believe in this doctrine, Catholics who have dissented from this teaching have been ‘overriding the clear judgement of the New Testament scriptures and the mainstream tradition’ (O’Collins 2008: 100). There are plenty of examples within the plays of characters engaging in sexual activity of kinds disallowed by Catholicism, which in the Polish context has the effect of challenging the authority of the Polish Catholic church and its control over the body. In Catholic teaching there is a ‘duty to glorify God in the body’, requiring ‘firm renunciation and curtailment in the sphere of bodily desires’ (Moltman-Wendal 1994: 35), but several of the characters indulge their bodily desires, engaging in hedonistic drinking, drug taking and sex. There are also examples of characters with tattoos, and the practice of tattooing is specifically opposed in the Bible in Leviticus 19:28, which has been translated as forbidding the printing of marks on oneself and also specifically as forbidding tattooing. This is particularly relevant in Wojcieszek’s *Made in Poland*, as will be discussed.

In the blurb for the anthology of plays *Made in Poland*, Roman Pawłowski underlines the point that Catholic doctrine is so engrained in Polish society that it is possible to talk about ‘narodowo-katolickich wartości’³⁷¹ (Pawłowski and Sulek, eds, 2006). These values are to be taken into consideration when studying Polish culture, even if those values are not held by the writers or by their characters.

3.2.2 Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology of Perception

The work of Merleau-Ponty provides a useful theoretical framework for the analysis of the texts under scrutiny. While certain elements of other theories, for example from Freud, Foucault, Mauss and Butler might relate to some aspects of some of the plays, for the purposes of this chapter, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology seems particularly pertinent. As has been mentioned, Merleau-Ponty rejected the Cartesian duality ‘I think,

³⁷¹ ‘national-Catholic values’.

therefore I am', and disagreed with the rationalist notion that thought is our primary means of engaging with the world. For Merleau-Ponty, as for many of the characters in the plays discussed, the body perceives and it is united with the mind. The body is the person, the person is the body, and the body itself perceives. The body is 'our means of communicating' with the world, 'the latent horizon of our experience, itself ceaselessly present prior to all determining thought' (2012: 95).

Merleau-Ponty views sexuality as being a quintessential form of expression: 'the body expresses sexuality just as "speech expresses thought", not as an "external accompaniment of it, but because existence accomplishes itself in the body"' (Landes 2012: xii). Sexuality is clearly understood as being a result of nature rather than nurture. As will be explored in the section on the defiant body, Merleau-Ponty sees the body as 'a natural power of expression' (2012: 187).

In *Critical Theory and Performance* (Reinelt and Roach, eds, 2010), Merleau-Ponty's contribution to phenomenological analysis is discussed, and Elizabeth Grosz is cited as saying that

Merleau-Ponty locates experience midway between mind and body [...] he demonstrates that experience is always necessarily embodied, corporeally constituted [...]. Experience can only be understood between mind and body – or across them – in their lived conjunction

(Reinelt 2010: 10).

For Merleau-Ponty there is no chance of dividing the body from the soul, of switching off the mind when the body is hurt, or of detaching sexuality from the rest of the person, and this approach fits closely with that taken by the playwrights in many of the plays analysed. Some of the pertinent topics will be discussed in the sections that follow.

3.3 Bodies affected by war

3.3.1 Introduction

Taking Merleau-Ponty's view that the body perceives and is therefore unable to detach thought from itself as Descartes would have it, the atrocities committed against the body during the war are even more disturbing. Harm to the body is concurrently harm to the mind, from which there is no separation. In several instances, writers describe only the physical elements of a situation, leaving the emotion to be inferred by the spectator, which in turn amplifies the emotional impact on the audience.

As has been demonstrated in Chapter 2, Polish society is still grappling with its past; deciding how to deal with it, how to view it and what space and identity to afford that past in the present, and this issue also permeates the theme of the body. This first sub-section will focus on bodies affected by war. This will include dead bodies, such as ghosts who have a physical presence in the play and absent bodies represented by artefacts and objects (3.3.2), survivors' bodies affected by the war (3.3.3) and postwar generations or the descendents of victims or survivors, whose bodies are affected by the impact of the war upon them - either as a result of experiences passed down to them or as a result of the loss of an ancestor, or of a lack of knowledge about their own history (3.3.4). Ghosts, injuries, absent characters and descendants are all used by the writers to emphasise the unity of body and mind. Traumatic past events are addressed primarily through their impact on the physical body rather than through elaborate psychological descriptions. Some characters could fit into more than one of these categories, including characters who are actually dead but in performance are portrayed as if alive, and those who seem alive but have never actually existed and are imaginings of the descendants of characters killed during the war.

3.3.2 Ghosts and the dead

The presence of dead characters in the selected plays is strikingly common. Only occasionally are these characters presented as ghost-like beings, or as zombie-like figures.

They are not ethereal, Mickiewiczian ‘dziady’³⁷² but almost-living creatures who often function in much of the drama entirely as if they were living. All Demirski’s characters in *Był sobie* are dead, awaiting transportation from limbo. They all died in contemporary times apart from Wanda who was murdered just after World War II. In the Strzępka (2007) production Wanda is the only character to be portrayed like one from a horror movie, with unnatural movements, sounds and facial expressions and a ghoulish appearance. The others are played as if alive, and this conjures up the suggestion that Wanda represents a national ghost, that of World War II, which continues to provoke fear in the other characters even though they are all dead.

In *Między nami*, Masłowska’s impossible Old Woman is a projection of who the character would have been had she not been killed as a young woman during World War II. Her daughter and granddaughter are her imagined descendants who would have existed had she lived, but they are real characters in the world of the play. Masłowska uses Old Woman’s wheelchair as a device to differentiate the older woman from her younger self who features at the end of the play when the action is catapulted back to the moment of her death. Masłowska uses this change in the body to mark the passage of time and to differentiate between the real woman before her death and the fantasy character after her death. Old Woman says:

Wojna. Byłam wtedy młodą śliczną dziewczyną, a twarz miałam jak wiosna, serce tłukło się w młodej piersi jak słowiczek schwytany w... Jeszcze wtedy chodziłam na nogach, Boże jak ja chodziłam³⁷³

(2008: 6).

As the younger woman, she stands and walks, which is particularly striking in the Jarzyna (2009) production given the age of the actress, Danuta Szaflarska, who at 101 years old at

³⁷² ‘forefathers’, from Adam Mickiewicz’s ‘*Dziady*’, ‘*Forefathers’ Eve*’ (written in four parts between 1821 and 1832, published between 1822 and 1860, with Part 1 being published last, posthumously, in 1860).

³⁷³ ‘The war. Back then, I was a fair young lass, my face like the spring, heart a-flutter in my youthful breast like a quail caught in a ... [...] I could still walk on my own two feet back then. God, how I used to walk’ (2014b: 422).

the time of writing is still playing the role on stage. Old Woman in the wheelchair is the ghost of her future self, a ghost who has been allowed to experience the passage of time. In the final scenes in which the woman is young, she walks without the wheelchair, and her would-have-been granddaughter, Girl, is forced to face the reality of her history. Old Woman died when she was the wartime equivalent of Girl, who in the Jarzyna (2009) production also goes about on wheels, on rollerskates and on a bike. Masłowska has Girl find pieces of bodies after an explosion that happened before even her mother had been conceived. Thus, she positions the character in the moment that saw the killing of her ancestors and negated the possibility of her existence, rendering her virtual and imagined, operating in a fictional sphere within a fiction. On top of the story about the war, this is a device used by the writer to feed into another of the play's themes around personal identity with relation to what is real and what is imagined or fictional. Girl cries: 'Wuju Maurycy! Wuju Maurycy! Wuju Maurycy, znalazłam nogę wuja, stała w pokoju, gdzie jest reszta wuja? A te usta to czyje?'³⁷⁴ (2008: 82). The horror in this line is conveyed by the juxtaposition of her familiar tone towards her uncle with the image of severed body parts, which leaves the audience no option but to see the body parts and the person as one and the same. The Jarzyna (2009) production emphasises Girl's shock as she experiences the explosion that rendered her existence impossible, but at the same time to come face to face with the history that she has previously ignored. Masłowska uses the body to strengthen the impact of the scene, focusing on different parts in Old Woman's line: 'Zamknęłam oczy jeszcze mocniej, a gdy je otwierałam, już leżało, gruz-ciała-proch-ciała, miał-ciała, gruz-ciała, jak jaka upiorna lazania'³⁷⁵ (2008: 81). This scene is all the more impactful because of its contrast with previous scenes, in which Old Woman has either left

³⁷⁴ 'Uncle Maurice! Uncle Maurice! Uncle Maurice, I've found your leg: It was standing in the living room. Where's the rest of you, Uncle? And whose mouth is this?' (2014b: 461).

³⁷⁵ 'I shut my eyes even tighter, and when I opened them it was all lying there: rubble, bodies, dust, bodies, grit, bodies, rubble, bodies, like some kind of ghastly lasagne' (2014b: 460).

her sentences about the past unfinished, or reminisced nostalgically about the young woman she once was. Masłowska again interweaves the familiar with the horrific, as Old Woman says: ‘Dariu! Wszystko powiem mamie, jak znajdę jej twarz odbijającą się jeszcze w lusterku, które trzyma jeszcze jej urwana ręka’³⁷⁶ (2008: 82). The simplicity of the language accentuates the horror that is emphasised through the focus on the body when Girl says ‘A to nie przypadkiem jak gdyby babci twarz? A cała reszta to nie jest w ogóle cała babcia?’³⁷⁷ (2008: 82). The questioning and the use of the negative encapsulates the sense of disbelief. Thus she is confronted, through bodily evidence, with the history of her country, her ancestors that would have been, and by extension her own non-existence. Her body, her self, is a projection of the future that never was. The emphasis on the body in this scene is emotive in the Jarzyna (2009) production, and it is precisely by leaving emotions un-described that Masłowska allows the emotions to come out of the situation, to hang in the air and to reach the audience.

In Sikorska-Miszczuk’s *Walizka*, when Fransua’s dead father appears in his son’s imagination, this enables a healing process to take place whereby the son finds out about his identity and the father gives the son permission to move forward. The metaphor that Pantofelnik is enclosed within the suitcase that has symbolised him is realised when Fransua opens the case and releases his father. In the Kruszczyński (2009) production, when Fransua opens the suitcase, and simultaneously a dancer appears in a box behind it, part Fransua’s imagination, part ghost, the physical bodily presence of Pantofelnik is what allows Fransua to ‘breathe out’ and to live contentedly. Fransua tells his father not to breathe in the Cyklon B, begging him to hold his breath and demonstrating how to do so, but Pantofelnik implores:

Oddychaj

³⁷⁶ ‘Daria! I’ll tell mother – if I ever find her face, still reflected in the mirror clasped in her severed hand, that is’ (2014b: 461).

³⁷⁷ ‘Isn’t that your face, by any chance? And isn’t that the rest of you, Gran?’ (2014b: 461).

Proszę cię,³⁷⁸

and ‘Nie możesz tak żyć’³⁷⁹ (2008b: 21). This moment emphasises how Fransua has been affected physically by his emotional need for knowledge of his father, in the sense that his held breath in this moment compares to his physical ailments. The implication is that he can be free now that he has this knowledge, and that this empowers him to have a healthier relationship with the past. He can lay his father to rest, and his father is allowed to rest as a result of his son’s release, all of which is enacted through the immediate bodily experience of breathing in and breathing out. Thus the body here represents psychological wellbeing and a sense of identity, in line with Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological view. The physical release that Fransua experiences once he ‘meets’ his father is conveyed in the stage direction ‘*Fransua [...] bierze głęboki wdech, tak głęboki jak nigdy w życiu*’³⁸⁰ (2008b: 21). The resolution for Fransua is then symbolised by the already-dead Pantofelnik dying again in his presence as Narrator says:

Ojciec Fransua nareszcie oddycha z ulgą
Bierze głęboki wdech i wciąga w płuca cyklon B.
Umiera
Widzę go, jest już prochem³⁸¹

(2008b: 21).

In Kruszczyński’s (2009) production, Pantofelnik’s death, represented by a frenzied dance sequence, is not grotesque or horrific but gentle, the emphasis being on the finality and inevitability of the death. This is in a sense expressionist in that the death is viewed from Fransua’s perspective. He is relieved of any responsibility for his father’s death or for failing to prevent it from happening. He is no longer defined by his lack of knowledge

³⁷⁸ ‘Breathe out! | Please’.

³⁷⁹ ‘You can’t live like that’.

³⁸⁰ ‘Fransua takes a deep breath, so deep that it’s like no breath he’s ever taken in his life’.

³⁸¹ ‘Fransua’s father finally breathes easily. | He takes a deep breath and draws into his lungs the Zyklon B. He dies. I can see him now, he’s already dust’.

about his past, and at the same time he is not traumatised by the revelation of his father's history.

In the same play, Sikorska-Miszczyk gives a presence to other dead bodies, those of holocaust victims, by emphasising their absence. She does this by focusing on their possessions that are now in the Holocaust museum. Tour Guide talks about clothes, baths and tables. All these items await the bodies from which they have been separated and will never be reunited, which emphasises the absence of the body and therefore the whole person. Referencing the infamous pile of shoes at Auschwitz, Żaklin says 'projekanci obuwia będą zawiedzeni: istotny dla nich detal, jak sprzączka, kształt czubka czy kolor, przygnieciony został górą innych butów'³⁸² (2008b: 8). Similarly, as mentioned in Chapter 2, Żaklin draws the audience's attention to the 'Pierwsza żółta gwiazdka'³⁸³ (2008b: 9) the first ever yellow star placed on a Jew to identify them as such. The character's focus is on the object, but because the object has an intimate relationship with the body, the audience imagines the body, the person, and therefore experiences an emotion in response to the lack of a person who has not been described. The focus on the object, without the body, emphasises the person's absence even more than would a photograph of someone wearing the star, and the fact that this star is described as the first seems to assign to it the germination of all the war's atrocities. Żaklin lists other objects, such as 'Wanny, stoły'³⁸⁴ (2008b: 9), both of which are intimate objects that point to deeply bodily experiences. The people who once used these baths and tables are conspicuous by their absence both physically and in her speech. The bath's purpose is to have a body in it being washed, so an empty bath emphasises the lack of a body; the table's purpose is to have people sitting at it and eating. The economy of Sikorska-Miszczyk's language here increases its impact,

³⁸² 'shoe designers will be disappointed: details important to them, like the buckle, shape of the toe, colour, have been crushed in a mountain of other shoes'.

³⁸³ 'The first yellow star'.

³⁸⁴ 'Baths, tables'.

as is often the case in her poetic style. The lack of any other words around these simple nouns mirrors the lack of people around the tables or in the baths.

Tour Guide goes on to mention some of the people commemorated in the museum, but she continues to focus on their physicality. She describes photos as if they are the actual people, saying that every day she has to see how

Kobiety wiszą na ścianach
Codziennie rano tak samo nagie,³⁸⁵

and ‘Niech te dzieci przestaną wisieć nagie’³⁸⁶ (2008b: 12). This conjures up the image of the children themselves hanging on the walls, not their pictures, and it further emphasises the point that their body is used by the playwright to represent the entire person. Tour Guide imagines the children laughing and crying, both of which are sounds made by the body:

Niech te dzieci przestaną się wreszcie śmiać
Albo płakać
Albo iść z mamą za rękę
Wzdłuż drutów
Bez końca³⁸⁷

(2008b: 12).

Sikorska-Miszczyk focuses on the physical yet emphasises the fact that the victims were entire people, rather than a name on a list, a head and shoulders on a photograph or a disembodied pair of shoes. The simplicity of the style means that she can do this without being melodramatic or using horrific descriptions, which creates an eerie, grotesque tone.

In *Burmistrz*, Sikorska-Miszczyk’s ash-covered walking dead Jews do not speak. Their silence emphasises their physical presence and bodily appearance. Their bodies demand recognition, as well as offering the Townspeople the opportunity for reconciliation. They walk through Jedwabne, having risen from the cemetery that doesn’t

³⁸⁵ ‘Women hang on the walls | Every morning just as naked’.

³⁸⁶ ‘Let the children stop hanging naked’.

³⁸⁷ ‘Let the children finally stop laughing | Or crying | Or holding their mother’s hand | Down the barbed wires | Endlessly’.

exist. It is not stated in the stage directions how the writer imagines these ghosts being portrayed, and they could be zombie-like, or a group of angry beings with a very ‘alive’ energy. Either way, they exert a physical, corporeal strength. They are not the type of ghost that might be accidentally walked through, and this emphasises the point that they are there to be noticed. They make their physical presence unavoidably felt in order that the other characters and the audience face up to their existence and their truth. They serve a performative as well as dramatic function. The Polish Townspeople characters controversially describe the Jewish dead as ‘foreign bones’. This point of view is supported by the town’s authorities. Flyers fall from the sky, implicitly from the authorities or discourses of power, which read:

To są obce kościotrupy
 Ich kości są zupełnie inne od naszych kości
 Ich czaszki są zupełnie inne od naszych czaszek³⁸⁸

(2009a: 30).

The leaflets tell the inhabitants that they do not have to give these ghosts food or drink or allow them into their houses. Of course, it is absurd to refer to giving food or drink to the dead, and it highlights the anti-Semitism of the Townspeople. The lines about their bones being different serve to underline the fact that bones are bones, and that at a basic level all people are the same, which in turn highlights the futility of religion-based conflict. The writer betrays the point of view conveyed in the flyers and supported by the Townspeople, highlighting their prejudice to the audience.

3.3.3 Survivors’ bodies affected by the war

In Demirski’s *Był sobie*, Old Woman survived Auschwitz and then committed suicide by setting fire to herself on her roof in order to escape debt-collectors. This is described, rather than shown, having taken place before the time frame of the play, as with

³⁸⁸ ‘These are strange skeletons | Their bones are entirely different from our bones | Their skulls entirely different from our skulls’ (2014a: 92).

the deaths of all the characters. Although she survived the war, her body was indelibly marked by it. Demirski's Old Woman is a far tougher character than Masłowska's, correlating with Merleau-Ponty's view that when the body suffers, the mind suffers equally and concurrently. While Masłowska's Old Woman is nostalgic, Demirski's is embittered. Demirski's character talks in flat, physical terms about her experiences as a 'camp whore' in Auschwitz. The absence of any description of feelings or emotions renders the description even more brutal and shocking. In a series of short, matter-of-fact, impactful lines as opposed to any long, emotive monologue, Demirski's Old Woman states: 'w obozie lekarze mi zabrali macicę...w obozie zrobili ze mnie kurwę obozową...macicę mi zabrali ale włosy zostawili skurwysyny'³⁸⁹ (2007c: 12). While the word 'skurwysyny' clearly and succinctly conveys Old Woman's embitterment and anger, Demirski gives no specific explanation of how she feels or felt. Her descriptions give the impression of a numb, hollow person whose body and therefore whole being have been permanently damaged. Through this character Demirski draws attention to the absence of women's voices in many historical narratives, emphasising the fact that their stories and experiences are commonly overlooked.

In *Niech żyje*, the dog-veteran Szarik is on one level Stalin's dog, but he is also an ex-soldier who has been deformed into this part-animal state as a result of his experiences. The implication is that his body and his self have been so affected by his experience of war that he has become this distorted, dog-like being. This part-human, part-animal character is a feature of the grotesque, as is covered in Chapter 5. In the Strzépka (2009) production this character is predominantly human, in full military uniform, full of pent-up aggression with just the occasional growl, bark and pant to suggest the dehumanised, dog-like

³⁸⁹ 'in the camp the doctors took out my womb...in the camp they made me a camp whore...they took my womb but they left my hair the bastards'.

elements of his character which serve to express his bitterness towards his traumatic experiences of war. He describes how during the war:

głód był niewyobrażalny
nawet dla mnie
psa Stalina spuszczonego z łańcucha
który idzie w ostatnim rzędzie armii i strzela³⁹⁰

(2011e: 7).

Other war survivors feature in Sikorska-Miszczyk's *Burmistrz*. The description of the Jewish American Miss's parents is brief but striking. They both have 'takie same niebieskie cyfry na przedramieniu'³⁹¹ (2009a: 12). They are physically marked by war, having had these numbers tattooed on their arms while imprisoned in a concentration camp. Their bodies have become a permanent lieux d'histoire (Nora), or site of history, other examples of which are discussed in Chapter 2. Miss has seen these numbers so often, yet she doesn't recall the actual digits. The tattoos have become a part of her parents' bodies, just as the experiences they betray have become a part of their bearers' psyches. The tattoos are a permanent mark of the effect of concentration camp imprisonment on the body and on the person, and these off-stage characters both continue to suffer as a result of their experiences. In Masłowska's *Dwoje biednych*, Old Man, encountered by the protagonists, is similarly traumatised. He is, based on his age, a war survivor, and he is afraid to go outside in case 'they' come for him. 'They' represent a feared enemy, therefore either the German Gestapo or Soviet soldiers or authorities. In the context of a comparative reading of several plays, the contrast cannot be missed between the tattoos on the arms of Miss's parents and that which Boguś has in *Made in Poland*. His 'fuck off' tattoo on his forehead expresses his discontent with the world. The blue numbers are a symbol of torture and captivity, the 'fuck off' an ill-advised self-inflicted misuse of the

³⁹⁰ 'the hunger was unimaginable | even for me | Stalin's dog let off the lead | who goes in the back row of the army and shoots'.

³⁹¹ '...they both have these blue numbers on their forearms' (2014a: 71).

character's own freedom and a kind of self-mutilation, given the tattoo's content. As has been mentioned already, tattooing is forbidden in Catholic doctrine, so Boguś's decision is part of his rebellion against and rejection of the church. In the original text, printed in the anthology *Made in Poland*, (Pawłowski and Sulek, eds, 2006) Wojcieszek relieves his hero of this mark by having it removed by a miraculous beam of light, but this scene was cut in the inaugural production (Wojcieszek 2004) as well as the film version and in the updated script in the anthology *Trans/formacja* (Kopciński, ed., 2013). The revised ending is less fantastical, and whether it is a happy ending is more ambiguous. Boguś is left with the tattoo, which renders his character journey shorter in the sense that although he still finds love and finds out who he wants to be, he remains permanently marked as being 'fucked off'.

3.3.4 Postwar generations whose bodies are affected by war

In several plays the writer uses the physical body as a means to convey the impact on postwar generations of their ancestors' experiences of war. For Fransua in *Walizka*, the situation is more complicated in the sense that he is affected not only by his father's absence after he was killed in Auschwitz, but also by the fact that he does not know this until he discovers it for himself as an adult. Until that point, he is missing important elements of his biography. His body malfunctions as a result, manifested in his many physical ailments. Fransua's mother knows what happened to his father but refuses to tell him. His mother 'Ma serce z kamienia',³⁹² (Sikorska-Miszczyk 2008b: 10), no doubt calcified by her experiences. Fransua writes a letter to his father, in which he explains:

Może to nie brzmi dla pana zbyt alarmująco, ale stoję na jednej nodze. Mam pół serca, pół płuca, jedno oko. Jest mi źle. Mam kłopoty z oddychaniem. Słabo widzę. [...] Wydaje mi się, że urodziłem się z dwiema nogami, z dwojgiem oczu, całym

³⁹² 'She has a heart of stone'.

plucem i zdrowym sercem. Wie pan o tym? Dostałem dziesięć punktów w skali Apgar³⁹³

(2008b: 10).

His body, as Merleau-Ponty's theory supports, is inextricably linked with his mind. The two things are unified, and his body perceives the world as well as experiencing malfunctions. These physical ailments are not manifestations of psychosomatic illnesses, they are actual physical problems. The assault on his person that results from his lack of an autobiography assaults his body and leaves it quite literally incomplete. He, the whole being, cannot fully function with these pieces missing from his jigsaw. He explains further:

‘Jak się denerwuję, to mi brakuje powietrza. I muszę przysiąść. (*plytko oddycha*)’³⁹⁴

(2008b: 8). This undoubtedly relates symbolically to the later moment in which his father tells him he must breathe out, but again it is not simply a psychosomatic problem. Fransua

explains that a psychotherapist who came to his old place of work told him ‘Oddech to

życie, musicie państwo nauczyć się oddychać, z wdechem przyjmujecie życie, z

wydechem wyrzucacie z siebie to, co przeszło’³⁹⁵ (2008b: 8). This line encapsulates the

writer's desire to encourage Poles to move forward beyond the trauma of war. The

reference to the past here underlines the point that Fransua's body is affected directly by

his relationship to his own past, and thus by the war, though he does not know it until later

in the play. Significantly, Fransua's estranged wife Sofi, who has been advising her

husband to find out more about his ‘inner life’, is at the beginning of the play about to

undergo an operation. She suggests Fransua goes out, perhaps to the museum, so that he is

not waiting at the hospital. She is anaesthetised: her body is numbed and hence she is

removed from the equation of Fransua's life for that short period, and it is this shift that

³⁹³ ‘Maybe it doesn't sound too alarming to you, but I stand on one leg. I have half a heart, half a lung, one eye. I feel ill. I have problems with breathing. I can't see well. It seems to me that I was born with two legs, two eyes, a whole lung and a healthy heart. Do you know about that? I got ten Apgar points’.

³⁹⁴ ‘When I get upset, I get short of breath. And I have to sit down’.

³⁹⁵ ‘Breath is life, you need to learn how to breathe, when you breathe in you take in life, when you breathe out you exhale what has passed’.

triggers the beginning of his journey to finding out about his father at the Holocaust museum. Sikorska-Miszczyk uses this device of anaesthesia to suspend the Sofi character in time, to temporarily remove her from Fransua's life by temporarily halting the body. Here Sofi's being, her self, and her influence on the world, are represented by her body. She re-enters the story once her body comes back to life after the operation, and once Fransua has discovered his father's identity. They both return to themselves in body and mind. Narrator implies at the end that the rift between Fransua and Sofi has been healed, and it could be a directorial choice to show that Fransua's ailments have also been resolved. In the Kruszczyński (2009) production, the director chose not to make any of Fransua's ailments visible or apparent in any way, so it was debatable whether or not any of them were resolved by his discovery of his father's story. In other productions this element of the text could clearly be emphasised or played down according to directorial decisions.

In *Burmistrz*, Sikorska-Miszczyk conveys the eponymous mayor's journey and its conclusion through the effect it has on his body. She opens the play with two Mayors on stage: Mayor Before, from the 'Czas Przed', the time before the revelation of the truth about Jedwabne and the subsequent attack on Mayor, and Mayor After, from 'Czas Po', the time afterwards, whose body is in tatters, held together by the skin. His injuries are the result of the attack made on him by the Townspeople of Jedwabne who set down the town monument on him as a demonstration of their refusal to agree with him that they should face up to Jedwabne's difficult past and admit that their Polish ancestors killed the Jews of the town in 1941. The play begins with a prologue-style scene showing the injured Mayor and his former healthy self. Sikorska-Miszczyk divides the character into two bodies representing two psychological and physical states, and the body illustrates the impact of

the play's key events. Mayor After sits with an injured hand stretched out to Mayor Before, whose journey is encapsulated in the line:

To jestem ja, z Czasu Niewinności. Ten czas się skończył. Drugi ja (przecież jestem tylko jeden ja), siedzi na krześle z wyciągniętą ręką, wskazuje na mnie. Jest cały w ranach, jest tylko w kawałkach, trzyma się skórą, nie umie dużo mówić. Umie tylko powtarzać, wskazując na mnie ręką: 'to ja, to ja'³⁹⁶

(2009a: 2).

Mayor After has been destroyed both physically and mentally. The injured body clearly represents the injured soul, mind and person, but it is at the same time an actual injury. It serves a dual purpose as both factual and symbolic. While it mirrors the character's state of mind, the state of the character's body is primarily actual and secondarily metaphorical.

The character's journey ends up with him 'in pieces', and he explains:

tak się zacznie ta historia, która nieuchronnie doprowadzi do stanu, w którym siedzę z wyciągniętą ręką (cały w ranach, tylko w kawałkach, trzymam się skórą), wskazuję na samego siebie i mówię 'to ja, to ja'³⁹⁷

(2009a: 2).

This opening scene is followed by analepsis and a series of scenes that explain how Mayor After has come to be. Although Mayor belongs to a postwar generation, his body suffers directly as a result of the actions of the Townspeople when they attack him for wanting to bring up and confront truths from the past, and he is therefore affected by the ongoing impact of events that took place during the war. In laying on the ground, Townsperson tries to use his body to prevent the Townspeople from moving their monument to the Jewish cemetery in order to stop the walking Jewish dead from returning to their graves, but they place the monument on top of him, causing his injuries. This symbolises the real life events

³⁹⁶ 'That's me from the Times of Innocence. Those times are over. The other me, the same me (after all, there's only one of me), is sitting in a chair with an outstretched hand, pointing at me. He's covered in wounds, he's all in pieces, hanging on by the skin of his skin, he won't talk much. All he can do is repeat, hand pointing at me: "It's me, it's me" (2014a: 59).

³⁹⁷ 'that's how the story begins, a story that will inexorably lead up to me sitting with an outstretched hand (covered in wounds, all in pieces hanging on by the skin of my skin – , pointing at myself and saying: "It's me, it's me" (2014a: 60).

in which Godzelewski was ostracised by the inhabitants of Jedwabne when he asked for an apology to be made to the Jews. He was expelled from office, he left the town for the USA and took on a new name in order to conceal his true identity.

Also in *Burmistrz*, Penitent German has been affected bodily by the war. He believes his deceased father to have been responsible for the murder of the Jews in Jedwabne. This belief dictates his entire personal identity as he identifies himself through the role of the son of a murderer. He says ‘Przyjechałem tutaj trawiony gorączką’³⁹⁸ (2009a: 16), symbolising his turmoil, and he continually displays his role physically:

Noszę na szyi
Kółko na sznurku
To za karę
Taki wsiołek
Żeby każdy mnie widział
Od razu i z daleka
Żebym się odróżniał
Jako syn mordercy³⁹⁹

(2009a: 6).

He has a shocking and disturbing nightly psycho-physical ritual, which shows the physical manifestation of his psychological state:

Tatuś nie żyje
Lubię patrzeć na jego zdjęcie
I onanizować się
Sam bym na to nie wypadł
Ale kiedyś przeczytałem
Że jest taki zwyczaj wśród synów
Nienawidzących swoich ojców
Intymna sytuacja
Punkt wyjścia do konwersacji:
Patrz, ja jestem, a ciebie nie ma
Poznajesz mokrą plamę
Na swoim nosie?
To ja⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁸ ‘I came here racked by a fever’ (2014a: 76).

³⁹⁹ ‘Around my neck I wear | A ring on a string | As a punishment | A pendant | So everyone sees me | Straightaway and from afar | So I stand out | As the son of a murderer’ (2014a: 64).

⁴⁰⁰ ‘Daddy’s dead | I like looking at his photo | And masturbating | I’d never have hit upon the idea myself | But I once read | That such is the custom among sons | Who hate their fathers | An intimate situation | An ice-breaker: | Look, I exist, and you don’t | Do you recognise the wet stain | On your nose? | That’s me’ (2014a: 67).

(2009a: 8).

This is part of a long monologue that could be delivered either in direct address or as a soliloquy. Penitent German's physical and psychological suffering is in line with Merleau-Ponty's view that the mind cannot experience trauma without impacting on the body and vice versa. The character's mistaken belief that his father was a murderer is experienced corporeally, and he sees the only solution to be a physical one:

Zapisałem się na lobotomię
Wszystko lepsze od wiedzy
Kim jestem⁴⁰¹

(2009a: 9).

There is an ironic, darkly comical element to this planned neurological procedure, a physical treatment to address a psychological state, given his erroneous assumption. The character also underlines the point that members of postwar generations who are the ancestors of perpetrators potentially carry their parents' guilt just as those who are the children of victims carry their history.

In *Niech żyje*, as mentioned in Chapter 2, Szarik barks orders at the younger generations to follow his instructions to hold a minute's silence in remembrance of the war. They oppose this kind of collective remembrance in favour of a more individualistic approach, and when they attempt to obey Szarik's orders their bodies betray their attitudes. As mentioned already in Chapter 2, in Strzępka's (2009) production, the younger characters are unable to stand still or to suppress their laughter for a whole minute. Each time they come close to reaching a whole minute in real time, one of them catches Szarik's attention by moving, laughing or talking and he forces them to start again, a total of four times, each one in real time so that the audience is included in this temporal experience and can feel the tension building from the characters' inability and unwillingness to persuade

⁴⁰¹ 'I've signed up for a lobotomy | Everything is better than knowing | Who I am' (2014a: 67).

their bodies to obey the ritual. This scene emphasises the generational differences in attitudes to memorialisation of the war, as well as the importance of ritual in memorialisation and particularly the role of the body and voice in this ritual. The body's job in this context is to keep still, and the task of the voice is to keep silent. The body is expected to do nothing in order for the mind to think, but in fact the acts of keeping still and quiet are acts of doing, requiring a suppression of physical impulses if the mind is not entirely committed to the cause, and thus this suppression becomes the main focus rather than the thoughts of remembrance. This pinnacle scene correlates closely with Merleau-Ponty's belief that the mind and body cannot work independently of each other.

It is clear that bodies affected by war appear in several plays, including dead bodies, imagined bodies, injured bodies, survivors' bodies and the bodies of postwar descendants whose bodies are affected by the war. All the playwrights employ an approach to the body in which the physical is of paramount importance and represents the entire person, in line with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology. This approach is also apparent in the playwrights' treatment of the sexually abused body, as follows in the next section.

3.4 The sexually abused body and the sexually abusive body

Where the issue of sexual abuse is approached in the plays examined, there is an emphasis on the physical and an exclusion of the emotional. The most prominent examples of sexual abuse come from Demirski's Paetz in *Był sobie*, based on real life bishop Juliusz Paetz who was accused of sexual abuse, as well as from Demirski's Old Woman from the same play, and Sikorska-Miszczuk's victim of abuse Ania/Screenwriter in *Żelazna*. There are also further examples of sexual harassment, molestation and mistreatment of sexual partners. For example, Chav in *Był sobie* is abusive and unfaithful to his girlfriend, who conducts sexual acts in bar toilets for payment, and in *Cokolwiek*, Magda is harassed and molested by Heniek who has a heavily pregnant wife. Masłowska's two plays do not

feature sexual abuse or harassment particularly, but in *Dwoje biednych*, Woman, the drunk driver the protagonists encounter, has been betrayed by her husband, and both Dżina and Parcha describe how they engage in casual sex with strangers despite feeling negative about it, which is therefore a type of self-abusive practice in that they participate in actions they themselves dislike. Dżina tells Parcha ‘generalnie to po prostu pieprzę się z różnymi takimi palantami jak ty, chociaż wcale mi się nie chce’⁴⁰² (2006b: 137).

Another example of a self-abusive practice is the ritualistic nightly behaviour exhibited by Penitent German in Sikorska-Miszczyk’s *Burmistrz* as described above. This section will, however, focus on the main examples of Paetz, Ania/Screenwriter and Old Woman. In Demirski’s *Był sobie*, when Starlet boasts ‘uprawiałam seks z dwoma Hindusami’⁴⁰³ this contrasts with Old Woman’s reply: ‘a mnie zgwałciło dziesięciu radzieckich żołnierzy’⁴⁰⁴ (2007c: 24), emphasising Old Woman’s sexual captivity and victimhood by juxtaposing it with Starlet’s sexual freedom. Through Old Woman’s story Demirski highlights a very specific part of concentration camp life from a woman’s perspective, which is simultaneously shocking and thought-provoking. He underlines the fact that male war survivors are seen as heroes, their bodies decorated with medals, while women are rarely recognised in this regard. Yet Demirski complicates Old Woman’s character by having her push Wanda into a well to prevent her telling others about their past. The audience infers that Old Woman was so desperate for the world outside the camp not to know that she was a ‘camp whore’ that she preferred to become a murderer. In order to conceal actions carried out with and to her body against her will but ultimately to survive, Old Woman attacks another’s body. The audience weighs up the two crimes, that to which Old Woman was subjected and that which she committed. Not only is she a victim but her desperation to hide her shame and her past turns her into a perpetrator.

⁴⁰² ‘Generally I just fuck various dickheads like you, even though I don’t want to at all’.

⁴⁰³ ‘I’ve had sex with two Indians’.

⁴⁰⁴ ‘and I was raped by ten Soviet soldiers’.

In the same play, Paetz attempts to justify his sexually abusive behaviour by blaming the victims and comparing his abuse to an addiction to chocolate or cigarettes. In the following line, Paetz places the fault on the abused, casts himself as the victim and then blames the abused again. He also directly addresses the audience, bringing the lines uncomfortably close to their world:

Ile razy mówię że przy komunii świętej wystarczy tylko wysunąć język - tylko język - ale nie kąsać - nie kąsać - ile razy miałem ślady zębów na palcach po mszy - a w najgorszym wypadku szminkę na palcach - i to nie jest to o czym myślicie - ile razy byłem okaleczony – ale mimo to nie wierzę że komunია do ręki jest słuszna – moje palce obgryzane przez wiernych są no coś dowodem⁴⁰⁵

(2007c: 30).

Demirski uses frequent question forms and verse to add to this character's dark tone and to emphasise Paetz's attempts to blame his victims. In the *Strzępka* (2007) production the actor, Piotr Kondrat, uses a disturbing grin to add to Paetz's menacing and predatory manner. He also undoes the buttons on his cassock and oils his chest, before later removing his cassock completely and sunbathing in trunks and his bishop's cap. This image captures the tone and menace of the character as well as being fiercely critical of sexual abusers in the Polish Catholic church. Particularly repellent in Paetz's lines are the following, when he describes his victims as being like cats asking for milk. The childlike diminutives add to the disturbing tone and atmosphere of the language:

Ale jak taki koteczek siedzi przede mną
Miau miau
Chce mleczka koteczek
I jak takiemu kotczkowi mleczka nie zaproponować?⁴⁰⁶

(2007c: 11).

⁴⁰⁵ 'How many times have I said at holy communion you only need to stick out your tongue – just your tongue – but not bite – not bite – how many times have I had teeth marks on my fingers after mass – and in the worst case, lipstick on my fingers – and it's not what you think – how many times have I been wounded – but even so I don't believe that communion wafers in the hand is right – my fingers bitten by believers are proof of something'.

⁴⁰⁶ 'But if a kitten like that sits in front of me | Miaow, miaow | The kitten wants some milk | And how can you not offer a kitten like that milk?'.

Controversially, Demirski allows Paetz to put across his own point of view that his behaviour is akin to a bad habit. Paetz thus justifies his behaviour and therefore provokes an even stronger reaction in the audience. He asks:

A rzucaliście kiedyś palenie?

A próbowaliście odmówić sobie – żeby wam dupy nie rosły – czekolady?⁴⁰⁷

(2007c: 12).

Demirski involves the audience, removing the option of ignoring what is being presented and forcing them to engage and respond. Paetz continues to blame his victims and Demirski continues to criticise the character by allowing him to speak freely. Paetz blames society, saying ‘Polaka jak przytulisz do siebie to od razu czuje się molestowany - to wszystko kwestia wychowania i lekcji w-fu odbywanych w złych warunkach - zero kontaktu ze swoim ciałem’⁴⁰⁸ (2007c: 34). Here Demirski aims to disgust the audience and to encourage them to sense their own opinions on the character and the issue he embodies. In this play, Demirski ‘names and shames’ both war and the church as settings of abuse, as well as the care system, as demonstrated when Boy fears going into a children’s home, saying ‘będę molestowany w domu dziecka’⁴⁰⁹ (2007c: 10). In this play, the physical body is foregrounded as the site of several serious problems in Polish society.

In Sikorska-Miszczuk’s *Żelazna*, the communist system is identified as another setting in which children were abused. When describing an idea for an autobiographical film, Screenwriter refuses to accept Director’s suggestion that she pretend her abuser was Stalin rather than a Pole, and thus the victim emphasises the reality of the Pole as perpetrator, both in the past and implicitly also in the present. Screenwriter’s child self, Ania, describes being molested and abused on a single occasion by a man who says he can arrange for her to be registered to use a swimming pool, which was a challenge under

⁴⁰⁷ ‘Have you ever given up smoking? | Or tried to give up chocolate so that your arse didn’t get bigger?’.

⁴⁰⁸ ‘‘when you hug a Pole they immediately feel molested – it’s all a question of education and PE lessons in poor conditions – zero contact with your own body’.

⁴⁰⁹ ‘I’ll get molested in a children’s home’.

communism. The adult, Screenwriter, is so affected by the abuse that like the eponymous Mayor in *Burmistrz* her life is divided into two by the event: life before and life after. Sikorska-Miszczyk realises this metaphor by having the child self, Ania, meet the adult self, Screenwriter, to talk about the incident:

czułam się, jakbym rozeszła się na dwie. Jedna jak kukielka stała na tej klatce.
Druga sobie wyszła. On nas tam rozdzielił. Ten palec nas rozdzielił takim jednym
ruchem⁴¹⁰

(2009e: 93).

While Screenwriter here explains to Ania how she felt, the rest of the description focuses on the body. The simple physical descriptions of the abuse bring the audience into close proximity with the scene, even though it is reported rather than shown (although a director could choose to show it simultaneously with the reported speech). Before meeting Ania, Screenwriter describes the scene in which: ‘Pan, który zapisuje na basen, popatrzył na gołą Anię i włożył tam jej palec. Włożył tam palec i stał’⁴¹¹ (2009e: 89). Believing the man’s explanation that he has to conduct a physical examination before he can register her for a swimming pool, Ania waits for the ‘examination’ to finish, and the man is disturbed by the sound of someone else entering the stairwell. When Screenwriter tells this story to Director as the idea for a script, he is fiercely patriotic and refuses to see Poland portrayed in a bad light. He asks how foreigners would view the young Polish girl:

Zobaczą tę małą - co zaraz napiszą? Że to symbol Polski, niewinnej dziewczynki,
którą porzucili oni, czyli Zachód - tak napiszą na pewno [...] napiszą oni:
porzuciliśmy tę małą, malutką Poleczkę, na żer zwyrodnialcowi!⁴¹²

(2009e: 91).

⁴¹⁰ ‘I felt as though I’d been divided into two. One half stood there like a doll in the stairwell. The other left. He split us up. That finger divided us in one movement’.

⁴¹¹ ‘The man who signs you up for the swimming pool looked at the naked Ania and put a finger in her, there. He put a finger in and stood there’.

⁴¹² ‘They’ll see this little girl – what will they write? That it’s a symbol of Poland, an innocent child who they abandoned, the West – that’s what they’ll write for sure, [...] we left this little Polish girl as food to the sexual abuser!’.

Director proposes an alternative film in which the young girl represents Poland and the West sees her abuse, by Stalin, as a historical metaphor:

Zły Stalin osobiście wsadził w tę cipeczkę swój obleśny paluch, kręcił nim i wiercił, bo jest zwyrodnialcem. Biedni ci Polacy, w osobie tej małej, kręcą się bezradni, na tym wielkim palcu, my na to patrzymy [...] jest nam trochę przykro, to nasza wina⁴¹³

(2009e: 91).

Director suggests silencing the girl's story to ensure that sexual abuse by Poles is kept out of the national narrative. The girl's body is used as a metaphor for Poland and the sexual abuse becomes a symbol for Stalin's abuse of the Polish nation, which in turn references the Romantic auto-stereotype of Poland as the Christ of nations. Director takes on an interrogatory, accusative tone and implies that Screenwriter might be perceived as lying about the abuse, regardless of the identity of its perpetrator. He warns her that 'odezwą się głosy, czy Ania nie zmyśla'⁴¹⁴ (2009e: 93), by which the playwright alludes to the problem of sexual abuse being covered up in Poland. Director makes it clear that he is only prepared to tell a story in which the girl's body is a metaphor for Poland, and not one in which her body is not symbolic of anything. He refuses to tell a story about a Polish abuser, conveying the point that talking about sexual abuse is a contemporary taboo. He continues to warn her against telling her story, saying:

Aniu...Najważniejsza dla mnie i dla widzów jest twoja odpowiedź, czyj był ten gruby palec. Bo jeśli ten palec nie był tego pana z czarnymi wąsami, [...] to zmienia całą wymowę...Ta historia z pięknej i metaforycznej staje się paskudna...Staje się dość wstrętna. Nie chcemy jej oglądać ani jej słuchać. Brzydzimy się tobą⁴¹⁵

(2009e: 93).

⁴¹³ 'Bad Stalin himself put his lecherous finger into this little cunt, twisted and turned it, because he is an abuser. These poor Poles, in the person of this little girl, turn helplessly on this huge finger, we look at it, [...] we're sorry, it's our fault'.

⁴¹⁴ 'people will say you're making it up'.

⁴¹⁵ 'Ania...The most important thing for me and the viewers is your answer as to whose that finger was. Because if that finger didn't belong to that man with a black moustache [...] that changes the whole meaning...The story goes from being beautiful and metaphorical to being dreadful...It becomes quite disgusting. We don't want to see it or hear about it. We'd be disgusted with you'.

Screenwriter refuses to change her story, and it is therefore rejected by Director. Ania asks Screenwriter not to share their story again, by which time it has already been told to the audience through being proposed to Director, and thus the character has performed the function of providing a voice to the abused and raising the problem of the concealment of abuse.

The playwrights studied here highlight the problem of sexual abuse, forcing the audience to admit that it is a Polish problem and refusing to be compliant in its concealment. In the case of Sikorska-Miszczyk's Ania, the victim is re-empowered and takes ownership of her body, leading to a positive end. Social empowerment through physical means to less positive effect is a feature in the following section on the defiant body.

3.5 The defiant body

Firstly, it should be reiterated that in the context of a Catholic society, anybody who, or in other words any *body* that engages in any kind of sexual activity outside of heterosexual marriage might be seen as defiant, given that strict Catholic doctrine does not accept such relations. However, in this section a broader definition is taken which focuses on bodies that reject imposed rules and exert their influence on society through physicality. A clear example is Boguś in Wojciech's *Made in Poland*. Demirski's Chav in *Był sobie* is essentially the same character as Boguś; they are the same archetype of a disaffected angry young man, uneducated, unemployed, making themselves heard through their bodies, as will be demonstrated. In *Cokolwiek*, Wojciech's Magda and Sugar display some defiance, and Piotr tries to assert himself through physical aggression when he fails to change the views of others. While there is not a comparable angry young character in the Sikorska-Miszczyk plays scrutinised, Mayor defies the wishes of his Townspeople and suffers as a result, as has been explained. In *Burmistrz II*, young Poles are defiant in the

face of their national past, refusing to carry traditional beliefs and aligning themselves with Western culture.

Merleau-Ponty's main tenet that the body is a natural power of expression is certainly reflected in the cases of several of the characters in question here. Wojciech's Boguś feels unrepresented, unrecognised, and unhappy. He is dissatisfied with the system and with society. He uses his body to express his emotions and make his impact on the world, as he feels this is his only option. As explained, he attacks an expensive car belonging to a group of gangsters, who demand payment from him to replace the headlamps. It is impossible for him to find the money within their 24 hour deadline, and when the gangsters attempt to beat him up, Wiktor comes to his aid. Boguś's mother Irena manages to borrow the money, but rather than pay off the gangsters, Boguś insists on buying a dress for his tracksuit-wearing new girlfriend Monika, in an attempt to change her appearance so that it no longer represents the social class they both come from.

Boguś's anger, expressed in his violent behaviour and his tattoo, is partly against the church. His defiance, expressed physically, is aimed at authorities including Catholic doctrine, which includes the instruction that followers should not tattoo themselves. Boguś hates Polish culture and American culture, but listens to British music, hence his choice of English for his 'fuck off' tattoo, even though the fact that the tattoo is not in Polish renders it pointless since several of the Polish characters cannot understand it. The tattoo is a scream against society which also potentially alienates him from society. As Boguś's mother and girlfriend both point out, it makes him even less likely to get a job. However, the tattoo is an extreme example of Boguś's feelings of defiance against society, and his feeling that he has to use his body to make his impression on the world. His body is his primary connection with the world, as Merleau-Ponty would have it, and it also seems to be his only real means of expressing himself. Boguś describes his visceral, corporeal anger

as being like an illness: ‘To jest jak AIDS, spala mnie’⁴¹⁶ (Wojcieszek 2006a: 407). He recognises the fact that his vandalising of objects is to no avail, but he feels the impetus to continue: ‘Przez cały dzień chodzę i rozpierałam budki telefoniczne. Ale to nic nie daje. Cały spalam się w środku’⁴¹⁷ (2006a: 407). Wojcieszek emphasises the physical nature of Boguś’s issues by having Edmund, the priest tell him to go to the doctor. Boguś replies: ‘Byłem, dziś rano. Ale wkurwił mnie, więc rozjechałem mu samochód. Drugi raz mnie nie przyjmie’⁴¹⁸ (2006a: 407). Boguś frequently describes himself as ‘wkurwiony’, and his character is summed up in the line: ‘Jestem wkurwiony, chcę walczyć. [...] Wkurwienie - to będzie AIDS XXI wieku. Obudziłem się dzisiaj rano i poczułem to - jutro to samo przydarzy się tobie’⁴¹⁹ (2006a: 411). In a similar way to Boguś, Demirski’s Chav in *Był sobie* asserts himself in society physically, deliberately being offensive. He tries to teach Boy how to be like him, training him in how to spit in an aggressive, masculine fashion, but Boy is ill-versed in these ways and Chav comments ‘nie no chłopie co ty plujesz jak panienka [...] nie no kurwa nie tak’⁴²⁰ (Demirski 2007c: 18).

In *Cokolwiek*, Piotr is another angry young man. As a soldier he was ostensibly posted in Iraq in order to use his body for his country but in fact did very little. After returning to Poland he tries to use his body to achieve his nationalist, right wing goals there, by physically attacking his sister’s girlfriend. Piotr says he had hoped that on his return to Poland, his sister would have stopped being a lesbian and become a ‘normal girl’ and he is disgusted to find that his sister and her girlfriend are living together in his mother’s house. Sugar says her sexuality was the reason her brother went into the army: ‘Poszedł na wojnę, jak tylko dowiedział się, że jestem lesbą. Postanowił odkupić moje

⁴¹⁶ ‘It’s like AIDS, it’s burning me up’ (2015a: 262).

⁴¹⁷ ‘All day I go around wrecking phone booths. It does nothing for me. I’m burning up inside’ (2015a: 262).

⁴¹⁸ ‘I did, this morning. But he pissed me off, so I fucked up his car. He won’t give me another appointment’ (2015a: 262).

⁴¹⁹ ‘I’m pissed, I want to fight. [...] Being pissed – that will be the AIDS of the 21st century. I woke up this morning and felt it – tomorrow the same will happen to you’ (2015a: 267) [Note: the translation here uses ‘pissed’ in the American sense, meaning ‘pissed off’ in British English].

⁴²⁰ ‘no man, you spit like a girl [...] no, not fucking like that’.

grzechy, walcząc za ojczyznę'⁴²¹ (Wojcieszek 2006a: 257). Piotr tries to assert the authority of the Catholic viewpoint on the body and on homosexuality and to redeem his sister by putting his body into harm's way, which allows him to see himself as a hero.

Without his mother's consent, Piotr invites his estranged father to her house so that they can be together as a 'traditional' family again, but his mother is outraged at this attempt to exert power over her, and she reiterates her agreement to allow Magda and Sugar to live with her. In a sense, she is defiant in the face of traditional Polish family values, since homosexuality is still a significant taboo in Poland, as will be discussed further in Chapter 4. Piotr is aggressive towards both Magda and Sugar, using his body to try and control the way his sister uses her body and thus to try and change and deny her identity.

In *Dwoje biednych*, Dżina uses her entire body as a mask, to escape her real identity and to play tricks on others. She is defiant in the face of the 'Matka Polka'⁴²² stereotype, according to which she should be a patriot and a good mother in order to be a good woman. She sniffs glue - or pretends to - shocking the taxi driver who asks: 'A to, tto, nie szkodzi dziecku?'⁴²³ (Masłowska 2006b: 108). He questions whether she is fulfilling her *duty* towards the unborn baby. She replies: 'Cso ty...Ja to kontroluję przecież. [...] W małych ilościach to jest nawet zdrowe podobno'⁴²⁴ (2006b: 108). Parcha confirms that Dżina: 'nawet nie jest w żadnej ciąży, [...] taką poduszkę ma tu włożoną, o, he he. [...]. Psychopatka, narkomanka jedna'⁴²⁵ (2006b: 119). She eventually commits the ultimate act

⁴²¹ 'He went off to war as soon as he found out I was queer. Decided to redeem my sins by fighting for the fatherland' (2014: 553).

⁴²² 'Polish mother', 'the idealization of the mother figure [...] as depicted in Adam Mickiewicz's poem "To a Polish Mother," or "To a Mother-Patriot" (*Do Matki Polki*, 1830)' (Chowaniec 2012: 34). 'According to a widespread conviction attached to this symbolic archetype, "womanhood equals motherhood", and if a woman does not become a mother she is an incomplete and unhappy being' (Grossman 2012: 223).

⁴²³ 'Doesn't tha-that ha-harm the baby?'.

⁴²⁴ 'What d'you mean...I control it. [...] In small quantities it's probably even healthy'.

⁴²⁵ 'She's not even pregnant at all [...] she's got a cushion stuffed up here, oh, haha. [...] Psycho, drug addict she is'.

of defiance that can be expressed through the body by committing suicide, by hanging herself. In the play text it is ambiguous whether or not she succeeds, or whether the attempt is real or another pretense, but in Wojcieszek's (2006) direction, no doubt is left, and the play ends with Dżina clearly having succeeded, swinging from a rope. According to Merleau-Ponty's theory this scene represents the fact that her body conveys her mental state, and both the mind and the body have acted against themselves in an attempt to prevent what they are feeling.

In Demirski's *Tęczowa*, *Hard Done By*, the transsexual priest who used to be a nun, is perhaps one of the most controversial characters possible in a Polish context. S/he describes how as a young girl she gave cucumber slices as communion wafers to her toys, and when she grew up, she realised that as a nun she was never going to be able to do this in reality. S/he explains that she went to Thailand for a sex-change operation, returned as a man and became a priest. In Strzępka's (2011) production this character is played by a woman in a cassock, with her long hair tied back in a low pony tail. The character in her original form could neither fulfill her wishes nor change the system, so she changed her body. In doing so she went against Catholic purist ideology about the body yet became able to fit in with its regulations around gender. This character will be discussed further in Chapter 4 on social marginalisation, since the character centres around a conflict between gender/sexuality and the church.

In all the examples presented here of the defiant body, while the plays do not promote violence or encourage sympathy for violent characters, they clearly advocate the assertion of oneself on society through the body-self, the entire person, whatever the particular characteristics of that person might be. The plays discussed emphasise a belief in the power of the individual to impact on society, even if that is through behavior that is

deemed defiant, and this political importance of the individual is central to the plays in focus.

3.6 Conclusions

It is apparent that the human body is commonly thematised in the plays in focus. Within this overarching theme there is an emphasis on the functionality of the body, which has been reclaimed by playwrights as something that can be openly discussed in purely physical terms. The body does not have to serve as a political metaphor or as something to serve the machine of society. It is a means unto itself and an integral part of what it is to be human. The focus on the functional physical body forms part of the investigation of individual and national identity. The symbolic potential of the body is, however, also employed, including in the themes of remembering versus forgetting and social conflict.

The playwrights discussed here commonly reject Cartesian dualism and instead convey an attitude to the body-mind unity that chimes with the theories of Merleau-Ponty. Catholic doctrine relating to the body is challenged by several writers and their protagonists, who are unafraid to address and challenge social taboos relating to the body and its behaviour.

As has been demonstrated, there are several clear examples of bodies affected by war: dead bodies, surviving bodies, and postwar bodies. War and its aftermath still permeate Polish society to the core, though postwar generations have a different relationship to the war than do their parents and grandparents, as detailed in Chapter 2. The body is portrayed primarily as the site of trauma, rather than a vehicle for physical enjoyment. However, there is a clear sense that this trauma can be faced and left behind. Sexual abuse is confronted in some of the plays, and the communist regime, the Catholic church and the care system are all identified as situations in which abuse takes place. Attitudes to sex and sexuality are also confronted and discussed in several examples, and

negative attitudes towards homosexuality are challenged, as will be discussed in the subsequent chapter on social marginalisation.

There are many examples of defiant bodies, characters who assert their influence on the world through their physicality. These are often discontents who feel their voices are unheard. There are also many examples of extreme, coarse language relating to the body and bodily functions, as will be illustrated further in Chapter 5. The actor's body clearly has the capacity to be symbolic on stage, and while the main focus here has been on the text, consideration has been given to examples of plays in performance. The body is used by the playwrights as a symbol for the entire person and of psychological states, as a vehicle for defiance and protest against social stereotypes, as an expression of self, and as a unifying factor that underlines what it is to be human, allowing a progressive emphasis on sameness rather than difference, which is crucial in a Polish cultural context.

4 Moving the margins: Protagonists representing the socially marginalised

4.1 Introduction

The central argument of this chapter is that there is a significant and discernible commonality among contemporary Polish playwrights in the creation of socially marginalised protagonists that are a direct reflection of real issues within Polish society at the time the plays were written. There is also a common tendency for socially marginalised characters to declare their determination to put an end to the status quo and to exact some positive change. In this chapter, it will be highlighted that these characters, while not realistic, are representative of contemporary Polish socio-political realities. It will be demonstrated that playwrights enter into contemporary social discourse, and this will be supported by evidence from a number of Polish academics and theatre critics as well as some useful brief comparisons with the contemporary British context. Textual examples will be given of characters that are marginalised as a result of their economic status, their sexuality, or their non-conformism with the ‘Polak-Katolik’ (Pole-Catholic) myth, according to which a Pole must be a Catholic.

Fundamental to all these areas of social marginalisation is a conflict between sameness and difference, and between society or its institutions and individuals who differ from social norms, be that in terms of social class, sexuality or religious beliefs. Elwira M. Grossman says:

There is a strong tendency in Polish culture [...] to prove the superiority of “sameness” over “difference”, which is said to represent merely a cultural periphery. In order to secure a strong position for the simplified image of a monolithic Poland, “the Other” has been often marginalised, ignored or suppressed

(2002: 9-10).

For all three sections, *Studies in Language, Literature, and Cultural Mythology in Poland: Investigating ‘The Other’* (Grossman, ed., 2002) provides a useful frame of reference and

an elucidation of the fact that in Polish society it has been, and still is, typical to value sameness over difference. Economic marginalisation as a theme will be highlighted by the work of Polish academics Joanna Klass, Krystyna Duniec and Joanna Krakowska (2014). Polish academic and critic Błażej Warkocki (2013) is consulted for the section on the marginalisation of homosexuals. The work of Brian Porter (2002) and (2011) supports the section on the marginalisation of non-Catholics.

4.2 Reality represented

There is sufficient evidence from academic and critical sources to conclude that social issues and marginalised characters in contemporary Polish plays are often reflective of current affairs in contemporary Polish society without having to go directly to sociological or political sources or statistics. Additionally, the plays sometimes relate to areas of conflict that are clearly discernible within everyday Polish contemporary life. For example, prejudice against homosexuals and transsexual people was at the root of a very visible conflict over a large art work, *Tęcza* (Wójcik 2011), depicting a floral rainbow in Warsaw, which was repeatedly burnt down, including on Polish Independence Day on 11 November 2013 because of its inferred support of homosexuality and the refusal of right-wing nationalists to accept this as part of their society. It was, at the time of writing, most recently restored in May 2014. This example encapsulates anti-homosexual feeling among many contemporary Poles, and importantly underlines the sentiment that it is un-Polish or anti-Polish to be homosexual, which is highlighted and challenged in several plays.

British academic and critic Aleks Sierz, who is of Polish descent, comments on the relationship between contemporary British theatre and society, and his observations resonate closely with the Polish context. He asserts that ‘when two or more plays explore the same social issue, it’s a clear signal of national concerns’ (2011: 18), and this can certainly be applied to contemporary Polish plays. Sierz explains that new writing can offer

audiences ‘a vision of the future’ (2011: 18), highlighting the interrelation between plays and society. This notion also applies to the plays examined in the sense that the playwrights frequently make clear suggestions as to how a change in attitude might improve society. In Demirski’s *Niech żyje*, for example, there is an explicit suggestion that people should find their own methods of remembrance rather than follow prescribed communal methods of response to the memory of World War II, such as a minute’s silence at a given time in a given place. Sikorska-Miszczyk makes a clear plea for a strengthening of relationships between Catholic and Jewish Poles in *Burmistrz* and *Burmistrz II*. Wojcieszek clearly advocates acceptance of homosexuality in *Cokolwiek*. Many of the plays have a clearly identifiable call to social action at their core, or to a confrontation of or change in public opinion, as will be discussed further in Chapter 5. As Sierz says, new plays can ‘not only [...] reflect reality, but also [...] take part in the ongoing conversation’ by means of which there is a process of ‘rewriting the nation’ (2011: 77).

Several Polish academics and critics confirm that contemporary Polish plays commonly reflect contemporary Polish society, and moreover that this is a notable phenomenon. In the preface to *(A)Pollonia*, an anthology of new Polish plays in English translation, Joanna Klass explains that ‘In Poland, theater has long played a role in the country’s historical tectonic shifts by disseminating, filtering and transcending national debates and cultural problems’ (2014: x). She continues, juxtaposing contemporary Polish theatre with the wider context of previous traditions in Polish theatre, stating:

Although Jerzy Grotowski’s “poor theatre” and Tadeusz Kantor’s “theatre of memory” remain influential, it is present-day Polish performance and its dramatic texts that grapple with the new world we all live in. Globalization, wealth inequality, [...] the most banal historicism and nostalgia for a glorious past [...] emerging radical post-nationalism are all aspects of modernity visible in every country on this planet

(2014: x).

In their introduction to the same anthology, Krakowska and Duniec say that after 1989, '(A)pollonia', their personification of Polish society based on the Krzysztof Warlikowski (2009) production of the same name, 'had to contend with the real problems of real people and social groups, with local conflicts and global politics'. They note that recent texts 'bring to light matters that have been repressed or neglected' (2014: xv). Roman Pawłowski writes that the heroes of contemporary Polish plays 'are people excluded on economic or moral grounds: gay, unemployed, homeless people, young delinquents' (2008: 18). These types of marginalised characters are the central focus of this chapter. Pawłowski explains that in choosing works for the anthology *Made in Poland* (2006), he looked for plays that gave an 'eye witness' account of contemporary Poland, and for writers who document and analyse society through theatre (2009: 8).

Monika Wasilewska agrees with Pawłowski, asserting that contemporary Polish plays share a selection of themes and an interest in 'zilustrowania rzeczywistości społeczno-politycznej, kulturowej'⁴²⁶ (2009: 60). She confirms that contemporary Polish plays not only thematise issues such as social conflict, but that these issues are actual reflections of current social problems. She suggests that: 'Za najbardziej wyrazistą cechą nowego polskiego dramatu można uznać to, iż jest on bardzo mocno nastawiony na aktualną problematykę społeczną'⁴²⁷ (2009: 63).

Anna Sobiecka says that 'współczesny dramat odzwierciedla – a przynajmniej usiłuje po części odzwierciedlać – polską rzeczywistość. Potwierdzają to nie tylko badanie socjologiczne, ale także obserwacje współczesnej krytyki teatralnej'⁴²⁸ (2009: 208). There is indubitably widespread agreement that contemporary Polish plays share a common

⁴²⁶ 'the illustration of socio-political and cultural reality'.

⁴²⁷ 'the most distinctive characteristic of new Polish drama is that it is firmly oriented towards real social issues'.

⁴²⁸ 'contemporary drama mirrors, or at least tries to mirror, contemporary Polish reality. This is confirmed not only by sociological studies but also by the observations made in contemporary theatre criticism'.

concern with social issues and conflicts, and that this is a significant feature of modern Polish drama.

Paweł Mościcki believes that contemporary Polish theatre is inextricably linked with social issues, and the blurb to his book *Polityka teatru: eseje o sztuce angażującej* (2008) describes his work as expressing the view that: 'teatr wciąż może być miejscem kreowania nowych myśli i projektowania nowych sposobów społecznego działania. Może być przedmiotem filozoficznego namysłu i obiektem pasji. Teatrem zaangażowanym i angażującym'⁴²⁹ (2008: blurb). This attitude is supported by the plays in hand in the sense that even where the playwrights make biting criticisms of Polish society, there is a sense of the possibility of change for the better, which brings a tone of optimism to many of the plays despite the complexity of the conflicts they address. While the writers studied employ differing methods, what they have in common is a close and direct engagement with society and politics. They enter into dialogue with their audience and participate in social discourse, confronting conflicts, myths and taboos. The plays are all, to a greater or lesser extent, 'littérature engagée', with Demirski's work being the most explicit example, followed by Sikorska-Miszczyk, with Masłowska and Wojcieszek being less direct but nevertheless engaged. There are examples in Sikorska-Miszczyk and Demirski plays of the influence of verbatim and documentary methods, such as in the use of quotations from real life. While the tone of the plays remains unrealistic, audience members can identify with on-stage issues and with the playwrights' dramatic representations of key aspects of current Polish life.

The social and political aspects of the plays will be discussed in the following sections with special reference to the types of social marginalisation which feature frequently in the plays studied: economic, sexual and religious.

⁴²⁹ 'theatre continues to be a place to create new ideas and to plan new methods of social action. It can be both the object of philosophical thought and the object of passion. Theatre that is engaged and engaging'.

4.3 Economic marginalisation: the haves and the have nots

4.3.1 The impact of capitalism

Although Communism ended in Poland in 1989,⁴³⁰ Capitalism is a relatively new social phenomenon and its impact and effects are still rippling through society. Joanna Klass agrees that ‘present-day Polish [...] dramatic texts [...] grapple with the new world we all live in’, with globalisation and wealth inequality being some of the main themes (2014: x). Duniec and Krakowska explain that:

Economic transformation, the transition from a centrally planned to a free-market economy, entailed painful social consequences: unemployment and destitution, as well as the emergence of profound differences in standard of living between those who found a place for themselves in the new realities and those who proved helpless in the face of it. This gave rise to frustration at the inability to satisfy newly awakened consumer desires and to complexes at not fitting in with the lifestyle promoted in the media. The vision of success, of becoming true Europeans, targets of advertising campaigns, clients of mutual funds and “consuming consumers” proved unattainable for many

(2014: xxxi – xxxii).

Polish society is simultaneously still adjusting to the change as well as experiencing the issues that come hand in hand with capitalism. As Mark Ravenhill explains, ‘When...the Soviet bloc of communist states collapsed, capitalism seemed to be vindicated, and it expanded with unprecedented confidence, to such an extent that some nicknamed its new unfettered expansiveness “turbo-capitalism”’ (2009: 467). In Poland, what Ravenhill refers to as ‘the emergence of a global high street’ is clearly visible in the major cities. While this is now completely established in Polish society, it is still a relatively new phenomenon, as is ‘the omnipresence of certain shops and brands - Nike, Coca-Cola, McDonald’s, Nestlé, Nokia, etc.’ (2009: 479), as well as KFC, Tesco, IKEA, Apple, and VISA, all of which are featured in the plays studied. Several writers use global companies to symbolise capitalism

⁴³⁰ The transition to freedom was not completed overnight, of course, and in the early years after the fall of the Berlin wall, Poland was ‘still paying for the ravages of the Second World War and of the People’s Republic. Three generations of exploitation and oppression were never going to be overcome instantaneously’ (Davies 2012: 416).

and represent the process of globalisation, and also to draw attention to the influence on society of the changes that have occurred since the fall of communism. As Duniec and Krakowska put it, 'what absorbs us now is mostly shopping and fucking, aroused appetites, social inequity, economic exclusion, collective egoism, the compulsion to consume and the vulgarity of pop culture' (2014: xxxiv). Those who lack the economic power to satisfy this new compulsion to consume are among those who become economically marginalised, along with those who have even less power because they are unemployed or have little prospect of gaining employment.

There are several examples of characters in this position, which contrast with a small number of examples of characters that have succeeded in the capitalist system, of whom the playwrights are uniformly critical as a result of the characters' greed and materialistic outlook, which causes them to behave selfishly and to treat other less fortunate characters badly. These characters are not central protagonists, and instead they serve to highlight the plight of poor, marginalised main characters, while at the same time providing the opportunity for humorous criticism of people who have become consumed by capitalism. The contrast between the haves and have nots under capitalism is highlighted in the exchange in *Był sobie* in which Starlet, the wealthy actress, remarks 'jakoś są ludzie którym się jakoś udaje - jakoś są!',⁴³¹ to which Chav replies: 'są ludzie którym się nie udaje'⁴³² (Demirski 2007c: 10). These characters that have succeeded in the system are juxtaposed with disenfranchised, marginalised characters in order to emphasise the plight of, and encourage sympathy with, the latter.

4.3.2 The haves

In *W imię*, Demirski's *Dziedziczka* (Lady of the Manor), a landowning noblewoman from peasant times doubles up as a modern day banker. At the beginning of

⁴³¹ 'there are just some people who things work out for – there just are'.

⁴³² 'there are people things don't work out for'.

the Strzępka (2011b) production, as the audience enter the performance space, she is lying face down in the sand that covers the entire floor of the wide, epic set, in period costume, with a pitchfork stuck in her back, having been killed by peasant leader Jakub Szela and his followers in an uprising. At a given moment she stands up and enters the action, but the pitchfork remains in place, even when she is portraying the modern banker. This powerful image emphasises the comparison Demirski draws between serfdom and capitalism, which is articulated in Szela's line

to jak już jesteś jeden z drugim zakładnikiem więźniem porządku który jest
to co za różnica w którym gulagu właśnie przesiadujesz?⁴³³

(2012b: 101).

This stage image also encapsulates the anger of the have nots towards the haves in general and, more specifically, towards the system the banker represents. In the programme notes for the play, Strzępka points out that the French Revolution is celebrated and marked with a national day in France, while there is no 'Peasant Day' in Poland. She suggests that there should be, and in reminding the viewer of the majority of Poles' peasant roots, Demirski and Strzępka address the fact that many have become focused on money. The peasant-master relationship is used as a metaphorical comparison for the relationship between the banks and modern Poles needing to live on credit. This parallel is emphasised by having the same actors play different parallel characters from different times, especially the bank manager and Lady of the Manor, who both appear under the character name Lady of the Manor in Demirski's manuscript version of the text (2012b) and are in many ways one and the same. The characters wanting to borrow money are representations of Demirski and Strzępka, as is emphasised by their costumes which mirror outfits frequently worn by the writer and director. Any ambiguity is ruled out in a scene in which the characters refer to

⁴³³ 'when you're a hostage and a prisoner of the existing order of things | Does it matter which gulag you're in?' (2013a: 109).

their work as theatre makers when discussing a mortgage with the bank manager. This play asks the audience to acknowledge the issue of living on credit, to admit it and discuss it. In particular Demirski draws attention to the fact that even those working at a high level in the arts have to borrow money because they are not sufficiently supported by institutional mechanisms. On the one hand the play suggests that credit is a sorry necessity in the unsatisfactory life of capitalism and should not be a taboo, and on the other hand it asks audiences to consider alternatives to debt, while recognising that few exist.

Another comparable character to the bank manager is Government Official in Demirski's *Tęczowa*, who brags about his economic freedom, saying:

ja nie mam kredytu
udało się wykupić okazynie od miasta mieszkanko'⁴³⁴

(2013c: 38).

This contrasts with the majority of the other characters, in this play and others, that represent the economically marginalised. Kelner (Waiter) in the same plays feels anger towards Government Official for taking money from the state, saying: 'od dwudziestu kurwa lat żyjesz na koszt tego państwa'⁴³⁵ (2013c: 38).

In *Między nami*, Masłowska's Girl, who is a have not herself, imagines what could happen in the apartment block in which she lives if 'normal' people, that is to say Westernised, working people with disposable incomes, could buy flats and fill them with IKEA furniture which they would be paying for on credit for the next forty years. She says it would be best if a new building replaced the old one and:

normalni ludzie kupili w nim mieszkanie, wstawili tu tapczan z Ikei RIKKA, stolik z IKEI STAKKA, wazon ROSTE, kwiaty HAMMA, wodę do kwiatów LIKKE, powietrze pokojowe GRETТА, siebie samego SIEBBIE i spłacając kredyt przez następne czterdzieści lat, wpadli tu z pracy się zdrzemnąć, umyć dupsko i z powrotem⁴³⁶

⁴³⁴ 'I don't have a mortgage | I got a sweet deal on a communal flat from the city' (2013b: 45).

⁴³⁵ 'twenty fucking years you've been living off this state' (2013b: 40).

⁴³⁶ 'normal people could buy apartments, furnish them with RIKKA sofa-beds from IKEA, STAKKA, tables from IKEA, ROSTE vases, HAMMA flowers, in LIKKE water, GRETТА ambient air, and their own

(2008: 41).

In Jarzyna's (2009) production this line is delivered in a fast, almost robotic, comedic fashion, which encapsulates the conveyor belt nature of such companies as IKEA and the lives of people who become dominated by their products. Masłowska portrays here the idea that people go to IKEA and buy a new version of themselves, 'siebie samego SIEBBIE', which inherently criticises people who become so involved with global brands that they internalise them to the point of becoming engulfed and losing their own individual identities. In the same play, Man has IKEA furniture delivered to his flat, which also has IKEA paintings on its walls. The stage directions state that '*Schludni szwedzcy robotniczy z Ikei wnoszą za nim kartony, a on pokazuje im nogę, gdzie mają je podstawić*'⁴³⁷ (2008: 42), highlighting the suggestion that with capitalist success may come a mistreatment of those in the so-called service industries.

In *Popieluszko*, Sikorska-Miszczyk's professor Nowak, described in a 'parable' at the beginning of the play, is an expert on chickens. His office is on the 30th floor of the Pałac Kultury,⁴³⁸ in which 'Na ścianie gabinetu wiszą oprawione w antyramy z Ikei portrety słynnych zielononózek... Na stoliku stoi czajnik elektryczny z Tesco'⁴³⁹ (2012: 2). Importantly, the presence of these global brands in the symbol of Stalinism that is the Pałac Kultury conveys the complete infiltration of capitalism into a previously impenetrably communist place.

In *Między nami*, Małowska is critical of Actor, who is self-obsessed and materialistic, reminiscent of those buying their own selves in IKEA as per the previous quotation. Actor says: 'Mam samochód jeden zwykły do jeżdżenia samochodem i jeden

SELVVES, and, while paying off their mortgage for the next 40 years, they could drop by for a snooze after work, wash their butts, and go back again' (2014b: 439).

⁴³⁷ 'Neat Swedish workmen from IKEA come in behind him bearing cardboard boxes, which they put down in the places the man indicates with his foot' (2014b: 440).

⁴³⁸ Palace of Culture and Science, Warsaw.

⁴³⁹ 'On the wall of the office hang portraits of famous green-legged partridge hens, framed in IKEA clip frames... On the table stands an electric kettle from Tesco'.

terenowy do jeżdżenia po terenie, i mam mieszkanie i żonę, z którą połączyła nas oboje wielka miłość do mnie’⁴⁴⁰ (2008: 46). He needs therapy as a result of having to stay in hotels ‘nieraz nawet bez szamponiku, mydélka i osobnego ręcznika do nóg, dlatego teraz potrzebuję spokojnej głucliej cizy, odpoczyнку, medytacji, nowego samochodu terenowego’⁴⁴¹ (2008: 47). He is a representation of greed, as is the friend of Girl’s mother, Halina, the obese Bożena, who is described as being so large that she makes people vomit when she stands in their field of vision. When Girl says: ‘Zawsze będzie już gruba, a otyłość to choroba’,⁴⁴² Bożena replies: ‘Chyba u was, w tym ciemnogrodzie, wiadomo – Polska. U nas w Ameryce jest całkowicie inaczej’⁴⁴³ (2008: 62), thus revealing that Bożena is in fact American and therefore implying that her obesity represents a type of greed that symbolises a normal part of US culture. Sikorska-Miszczuk also uses American wealth as an extreme contrast to Polish poverty in *Żelazna*, when Steven Spielberg comes to meet Screenwriter, who is from Kabaty, a poor suburb of Warsaw. Money is no object for Spielberg but he will not take the time to look around Screenwriter’s impoverished neighbourhood.

In *Był sobie*, Demirski’s Starlet is another committed capitalist. Even once she has died and has arrived in limbo she continues to ask: ‘excuse me may I use my visa card here?’ (2007c: 3), the line being in English in the original text, which emphasises the international market and globalised world in which the Visa company is prominent.

Similarly, in Wojcieszek’s *Cokolwiek*, Heniek, the son-in-law of the owner of the chicken shop, is immersed in the game of capitalism. He brags: ‘Wiesz, że gdziekolwiek

⁴⁴⁰ ‘I have a car, a regular one for driving, and an off-roader for driving off the road, and I have an apartment, and a wife, with whom I share my great love of me’ (2014b: 442).

⁴⁴¹ ‘some didn’t even have shampoo, soap or separate foot-towels. That’s why I’m in need of peaceful total silence, rest, meditation and a new off-roader’ (2014b: 443).

⁴⁴² ‘She’ll stay fat, and obesity is an illness’ (2014b: 451).

⁴⁴³ ‘Maybe in that backward Poland of yours. Things are completely different back home in America’ (2014b: 451).

otwieramy nową smażalnię, tam dochody kejfaka spadają o jedną trzecią?’⁴⁴⁴ (2006b: 262), the use of the word ‘kejfaka’ instead of KFC is reminiscent of the word ‘fuck’, which emphasises the character’s competitiveness. However, he is dishonest, fiddling the books so that he can make more money behind his father-in-law’s back, but confessing this to Magda when he says: ‘Magda, sprzedaję golfa II, kupuję III. Dołożę z tego, co przypierdolę na fakturach u teścia. Powoli, bo powoli, ale spełnia się mój polish dream’⁴⁴⁵ (2006b: 240). Here Wojcieszek refers to the specifically Polish concept of ‘kombinacja’, small scale fraud. Not only is Heniek involved in the new model of capitalism, he is also engaged in activities that characterised the old system. When Tadek, the owner, catches Heniek molesting Magda, his first concern is not the fact that his son-in-law is betraying his pregnant daughter, but that Heniek should be punished by an attack on his status, specifically the status symbol that is his car. Tadek warns Heniek that if he molests Magda again he will be delivering chicken by bicycle and not in a Golf (2006b: 242). In placing so little attention on Magda’s experience of being molested, Tadek shows that he shares his son-in-law’s sexism as well as materialism.

Evidently, characters representing people who have achieved economic success in the capitalist system are depicted as being unsympathetic to those who lack such success. They are treated critically by their creators for their shallow materialism. The writers’ sympathies lie with the have nots, to whom they give a voice, which is frequently angry. Some main examples of such characters will now be outlined.

4.3.3 The have nots

In *Dwoje biednych*, Masłowska’s Parcha and Dżina play at being have nots. While Dżina is not wealthy, Parcha is a television actor with a regular income. They pretend to be

⁴⁴⁴ ‘You know that anywhere we open a restaurant, KFSick’s profits go down 30 percent?’ (2014: 558).

⁴⁴⁵ ‘Magda, I’m selling my Golf II, buying a Golf III. I’m making money by fucking about with my father-in-law’s books. Slowly, slowly, my Polish dream’s coming true’ [Note: this is my translation. This line is cut from Zapałowski’s 2014 translation].

poor Romanians who can only dream of owning a Fiat car (2006a: 105) or an in-car air freshener in the shape of a Christmas tree, but their game backfires on them when they find themselves without any money and therefore with no power. Parcha also loses his telephone and with it his means to connect with the world. Suddenly he is as poor as he has pretended, albeit only temporarily. This emphasises the precarious, potentially transient and superficial nature of wealth within a capitalist economy. The characters' drug induced mishaps cause them to experience marginalisation and powerlessness as a result of their actions.

In *Tęczowa*, Demirski's Pan Spisek describes a friend who is a have in the sense that he has a flat, but a have not in that he cannot afford to live in it:

mam kolegę z dużym mieszkaniem
w którym ten kolega nie mieszka
bo jak patrzy na to mieszkanie od środka to ma stany lękowe na myśl o swoim
kredycie
tyle że tam światła nie można palić
bo to drogie jest⁴⁴⁶

(Demirski 2012b: 17).

There are several other characters tied down by debts, some who are about to take out a mortgage, and others who can only dream of being able to do so. In *W imię*, Secretary, who represents Strzępka, expresses her anger and jealousy at people she knows who have been able to afford to buy a flat and who fill it with cheap IKEA furniture, saying:

pozrywałam wszystkie kontakty towarzyskie z ludźmi którzy mają
mieszkania
nie wchodzę do tych mieszkań bo im zazdroszczę
oczywiście jednocześnie mając ich w głębokiej pogardzie
i ich gust chujowych z ikei mebli
wszystkie te mieszkania wyglądają tak samo⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴⁶ 'I have a friend with a large flat | in which that friend is not living | because when he looks at the flat from the inside he gets anxiety attacks about his mortgage | except you can't turn the light on in there | because it's expensive' (2013a: 20).

⁴⁴⁷ 'I've broken off all relations with people who have | flats | I don't set foot in those flats any more because I envy them | while seriously despising them of course | and their taste for shitty IKEA furniture | all those flats look exactly the same' (2013a: 40).

(2012b: 35).

Biff, who symbolises Demirski, says the same earlier in the play:

nie wchodzę do tych mieszkań bo im zazdroszczę
oczywiście jednocześnie mając ich w głębokiej pogardzie
i ich gust chujowych z ikei mebli⁴⁴⁸

(2012b: 9).

This is an example of Demirski's use of repetition for emphasis, ensuring that a particularly significant line does not go unnoticed. Like Sikorska-Miszczyk and Masłowska he uses IKEA to epitomise global consumerism. Also in *W imię*, when the protagonists meet Lady of the Manor, in the role of the contemporary bank manager, to ask about taking out a mortgage, during the meeting they turn to the audience and shout out at the top of their voices the empty warning 'Nie róbcie tego!!!'⁴⁴⁹ (2012b: 7), 'nie róbcie tego nie róbcie tego nie róbcie tego'⁴⁵⁰ (2012b: 9). Later the Sekretarka (Secretary) asks rhetorically:

Czy to jest taka wielka sprawa mieszkać?
Gdzieś?
Wbić swój gwóźdź i przybić do swojej podłogi wycieraczkę z Leszkiem
Balcerowiczem do wycierania?⁴⁵¹

(2012b: 35).

This is a reference to Leszek Balcerowicz, who was finance minister in the first post-communist Polish government, under Mazowiecki, as well as governor of the Bank of Poland and later the deputy Prime Minister. He implemented several crucial economic reforms in the 1990s. Secretary laments the burden of debt involved in becoming a homeowner, seeing herself as a

człowiek kontra milion złotych całe moje życie

⁴⁴⁸ 'I don't set foot in those flats any more because I envy them | while seriously despising them of course | and their taste for shitty IKEA furniture' (2013a: 10).

⁴⁴⁹ 'don't do it don't do it!' (2013a: 8).

⁴⁵⁰ 'don't do it don't do it | don't do it' (2013a: 10).

⁴⁵¹ 'is it such a big deal to have a place of your own? to live in? a nail to hang your hat and a doormat with a picture of Leszek Balcerowicz to wipe your feet on?' (2013a: 40).

[...] człowiek kontra milion złotych
z czego połowa to odsetki
niezapłacone rachunki⁴⁵²

(2012b: 9).

Later she reiterates: ‘nic nie można zrobić z życiem tylko spłacić w ciągu niego milion złotych’⁴⁵³ (2012b: 81).

In *Był sobie*, Demirski presents in Old Woman an example of a character that has fallen victim to this burden, since having survived Auschwitz she burned herself alive on her roof to avoid debt collectors. Her ghost, who appears as if still living in contemporary society, says she has to live on 124 złoty a month and that ‘hitlerowcy lepiej mnie traktowali niż administracja państwa - wysyłali przynajmniej na roboty - a w tym kraju jestem za stara żeby dostać jakąś robotę’⁴⁵⁴ (2007c: 22). In the same play, Boy dreams of being able to ‘mieszkać na strzeżonym osiedlu i mieć podgrzewaną podłogę w łazience’⁴⁵⁵ (2007c: 27). He imagines a future moment ‘Kiedy będę mógł kupić sobie tyle nutelli ile zechcę’⁴⁵⁶ believing that ‘Wtedy będę wiedział że jestem dorosły’⁴⁵⁷ (2007c: 9). For him ‘kupowanie jest najistotniejszym elementem kształtującym tożsamość’⁴⁵⁸ (2007c: 10). In Strzępka’s (2007) production, Boy smears Nutella on his face and body, as does the sexually abusive bishop Paetz, creating unpleasant, striking images in which the Nutella both resembles excrement and symbolises a deep desire to consume global brands. Old Woman disagrees with Boy’s outlook, saying ‘pieniądze nie są najważniejsze’⁴⁵⁹ (2007c: 12). This intergenerational difference encapsulates the point that in capitalist society, buying in the free market is seen as essential, in stark contrast to life under communism.

⁴⁵² ‘paying off a million zlotys all my life [...] paying off a million zlotys | Half of which is interest | Unpaid bills’ (2013a: 11).

⁴⁵³ ‘all you can do with life is pay off a million-zloty mortgage’ (2013a: 89).

⁴⁵⁴ ‘the Nazis treated me better than this government – at least they sent me to work – but in this country I’m too old to get any work’.

⁴⁵⁵ ‘live in a gated community and have underfloor heating in the bathroom’.

⁴⁵⁶ ‘when I can buy myself as much Nutella as I want’.

⁴⁵⁷ ‘Then I’ll know I’m a grown up’.

⁴⁵⁸ ‘buying is the most important element in the shaping of identity’.

⁴⁵⁹ ‘money is not the most important thing’.

Again in this play, Chav complains that ‘dresiarz nie ma kasy bo stracił na przemianach gospodarczych’⁴⁶⁰ (2007c: 17). He is derided by Boy and Starlet for his cheap clothes and for his shoes which are a failed attempt to participate in global culture. Starlet teases: ‘a jakie buty ma – stary takie buty się nosiło sto lat temu w rumunii’⁴⁶¹ and Boy adds ‘ty patrz niki – kurwa jaka podróba’⁴⁶² (2007c: 19). Here, like Masłowska, Demirski uses Romania as a symbolic other land which their characters place beneath Poland on a global economic scale in order to boost their own economic esteem.

Demirski’s Chav says ‘chcę żeby zwrócił na mnie uwagę rząd’⁴⁶³ (2007c: 13), and Wojcieszek’s Boguś in *Made in Poland* feels the same way. He is infuriated with globalisation and with the capitalist system in general, in which he has failed to succeed and in which he feels unrecognised and unrepresented. He wants to organise a revolution but he cannot pinpoint any specific target for his cause. He is critical of those working for global companies like KFC who fail to recognise their role as a small cog in the huge global capitalist machine and who have lost themselves in the system. He says:

Wszyscy skurwili się w tym kurewskim systemie. Wszyscy najlepsi. [...] Najtwardsi. Jeden z moich kumpli z zawodówki dostał pracę w KFC. Spotkałem go dzisiaj. Cieszył się jak dziecko. Ten skurwiel nie wie nawet jak z nim niedobrze. Trzeba z tym skończyć. Trzeba rewolty. Trzeba to wszystko rozpieprzyć. Może tylko wtedy ci skurwiele przejrzą na oczy⁴⁶⁴

(2006a: 410).

His wrath is particularly directed at Americans and American companies, and the globalisation they represent, which is symbolised above by the fast food chain Kentucky Fried Chicken and here by McDonalds:

⁴⁶⁰ ‘a chav doesn’t have any cash because he lost it all in the economic changes’.

⁴⁶¹ ‘what shoes has he got – old shoes like that were worn a hundred years ago in Romania’.

⁴⁶² ‘look – Niki – fuck, what a fake’.

⁴⁶³ ‘I want the government to pay some attention to me’.

⁴⁶⁴ ‘Everyone is pimping themselves out in this fucking system. Even the best of them. [...] The toughest. One of my homeboys from vocational school got a job at KFC. I ran into him today. He was as happy as a child. The son of a bitch doesn’t even know how bad things are with him. We have to end this. We need to rebel. We have to shatter everything to pieces. Maybe then the motherfuckers will open their eyes’ (2015a: 266).

Ci skurwiele chcą być wszędzie, chcą wszystkimi rządzić [...]. Nienawidzę tych ich gównianych restauracji, których teraz pełno. Nigdy w żadnej nie byłem i nigdy nie wejdę. Na przykład taki McDonald's. Nigdy do niego nie wejdę. I naprawdę w dupie mam to, że mają tam darmowy kibel. Nigdy nie pójde nawet odlać się do McDonalds'a, nawet jak będę miał super ciśnienie. Wolę już szczać na ulicy. Bo ja po prostu nienawidzę tych skurwysynów⁴⁶⁵

(2006a: 423-424).

Boguś wants to make himself heard, declaring:

Wypowiedziałem wojnę tym świniom. [...] Jestem wkurwiony, muszę walczyć. [...] Ale najpierw ONI muszą się o mnie dowiedzieć. Muszę wykonać pierwszy krok – jaki?⁴⁶⁶

(2006a: 423).

When Emil, the only person Boguś manages to recruit to his unspecified cause, tells his sister Monika that he has left his job to join Boguś, she is dismayed. She helped find her brother his previous job, and being a wheelchair user he is marginalised yet further than he already is by his social class, in a society where any kind of difference is frowned upon, and hence for Emil a lack of employment opportunities is even more pronounced.

While Boguś has no specific focus for his 'war', he has a strong sense of injustice about economic inequality which is particularly well illustrated by the example in which he breaks the window of a shop where 'Jedna sukienka kosztuje tam tyle, co trzy wypłaty mojej matki'⁴⁶⁷ (2006a: 431). His ex-teacher, Wiktor, discusses social inequality with him, asking: 'Czy wiesz, że są w tym kraju miejsca, w których nie stoją bloki? [...] Widziałeś kiedyś dom, zwyczajny dom?'⁴⁶⁸ (2006a: 441). Wojcieszek emphasises yet further this divide between the haves and the have nots in Wiktor's subsequent line: 'gdzieś tam jest

⁴⁶⁵ 'Those motherfuckers want to be everywhere, they want to govern everything [...]. I hate those shitty restaurants that are all over the place now. I've never set foot in one and never will. Like this McDonald's for example. I'll never set my foot inside. I don't give a shit that the john is free there. I'll never even take a piss in a McDonald's, even if I'm leaking. I'd rather piss on the street. Because I simply hate those sons of bitches' (2015a: 281).

⁴⁶⁶ 'I declared war on those pigs. [...] I'm pissed, I have to fight. [...] I have to make the first step – but what?' (2015a: 280).

⁴⁶⁷ 'One dress there costs more than my mother's salary' (2015a: 290).

⁴⁶⁸ 'Do you know that there are places in this country without housing complexes? [...] have you ever seen a house, a regular house?' (2015a: 300).

inny świat, inne życie'⁴⁶⁹ (2006a: 441). Unlike Boguś's friend who is delighted to work in KFC, Sugar in Wojcieszek's *Cokolwiek* remains detached from her work in the chicken shop and therefore does not risk losing her identity to the capitalist system, using irony to defend herself:

A teraz stoję tu przed tobą, w tym oto pięknym fartuchu, zmywam te oto piękne gary, w najlepszej smażalni w mieście, przed którą srają się ze strachu kołesie z KFC! A pod koniec miesiąca zapłacą mi jeszcze za to kasę. Czy to nie piękne?⁴⁷⁰

(2006b: 244).

Her need for money in order to survive in the capitalist system means that she has to work in unfavourable conditions in the absence of more appealing job opportunities: 'Od ośmiu godzin zdrapuję zaschnięty kurzy tłuszcz'⁴⁷¹ (2006b: 262). Similarly, Masłowska's Dżina in *Dwoje biednych*, who is unemployed, was detached from her previous job, also in a fried chicken outlet, and she refers to herself with an ironic label relating to the poor conditions: 'Smażyłam kielbasy, frytki, rozumiesz [...] ja i sto pięćdziesiąt litrów wrzącego trzyletniego tłuszczu, i ja, kobieta-olej'⁴⁷² (2006a: 136). Demirski also highlights difficult working conditions, particularly in *W imię* in which he makes direct references to Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, borrowing character names. The workaholic Linda who needs pills to keep going everyday says: 'wstaję rano zapierdalam po łokcie opieram głowę na łokciach przy lunchu i marzę o urlopie a potem winko wieczorem i spać'⁴⁷³ (2012b: 5). Similarly, Biff, in the same play, says: 'Wstaję pracuję wstaję kulam ten życiorys jak kulę śniegową przed sobą kulam'⁴⁷⁴ (2012b: 19). Capitalism does not afford these characters a desirable life, and no amount of work is ever enough. There is a conflict between their

⁴⁶⁹ '...somewhere out there is a different world, a different life' (2015a: 300).

⁴⁷⁰ 'And now here I am in this lovely apron, doing these lovely dishes, in the best fried-chicken joint in town – man, even the guys over at KFC are shit-scared of this place! And at the end of the month, I get paid for it. Isn't that beautiful?' (2015a: 537).

⁴⁷¹ 'I've been scraping dried chicken fat for eight hours' (2014: 557).

⁴⁷² 'I fried saugages, chips, you know [...] me and 150 litres of boiling three-year-old fat, and me, Oil Woman'.

⁴⁷³ 'I get in up in the morning, slave my arms off, cradle my head in my arms at lunch and dream of going on vacation, then some wine at night and off to bed'⁴⁷³ (2013a: 6).

⁴⁷⁴ 'I get up, I work, I get up, I roll this CV like a snowball in front of me' (2013a: 29).

physical needs and their financial needs, with their bodies and minds being unable to keep up with the demands of their work. These examples present the audience with the question as to whether it is worth prioritising work over all else. The play also succeeds in capturing the problem of the necessity to work in undesirable jobs under poor conditions, as well as to borrow money, in order to be an effective member of capitalist society.

In *Tęczowa*, Demirski uses the sociology of the football stadium as a microcosm of unequal Polish society. While wealthy corporate guests have VIP stands, regular fans cannot afford tickets. *Hard Done By* criticises wealthy VIP guests at the football match, contrasting them with ordinary fans, asking rhetorically:

czy oni w ogóle rozumieją co to jest piłka nożna?
[...] się zaczynają nudzić i sprawdzać internet w komórce
drużyna ich potrzebuje
a oni wypijają wodę mineralną gazowaną
zjedzą jakąś kanapkę z krewetkami albo z kozim serem
i nie zdają sobie nawet sprawy z tego co się dzieje na boisku
normalnym kibolom aż się nie chce się śpiewać od tego
pod stadionem
problem w tym że albo ich nie stać na wejście na stadion
albo nie mogą się przebić przez hordy turystów
i posiadaczy karnetów firmowych
w przerwach cała środkowa kondygnacja pustoszeje
bo wszystkie korporacyjne gwiazdeczki wycofują się do baru
nie popieram chuligaństwa
ale osobiście nie widzę niczego złego w szaleńczym ataku na lożę vipów
i przewrócenia kilku stolików z przekąskami⁴⁷⁵

(2013: 43).

Despite being a priest, *Hard Done By* is politically outspoken and would no doubt support Wojcieszek's Boguś in his revolution, with Demirski's Chav in tow.

⁴⁷⁵ 'do they even understand what football is? | [...] they get bored and start surfing on their smartphones | their team needs them | and they go and have some sparkling water | have themselves a prawn and goat-cheese sandwich | and don't even know what's happening on the pitch | it makes normal supporters stop wanting to sing outside the stadium | the problem is they can't afford to get into the stadium | or can't get through the hordes of tourists | and season-ticket holders | at half-time the whole middle tier is vacant | because all the corporate achievers head for the bar | I don't condone hooliganism | but personally I see nothing wrong with overrunning the vip box | and knocking over a few hors d'oeuvre trays' (2013b: 53).

Through unlikeable, amoral characters, the playwrights criticise those who have become selfish as a result of economic success, and they provide a voice for those who are economically marginalised. They do not, however, make any suggestions for how these people might improve their situation. With regard to economic marginalisation, the playwrights address problems but do not attempt to provide solutions. The dramatic representation of economically marginalised characters is direct and straightforward. The voices of these characters represent those of real people, even though the characterisations are unrealistic. The theme provokes thought as well as the opportunity for audience members to identify with some of the issues presented. Economic inequality is exposed but solutions are not proposed. In contrast, the subtheme of prejudice against homosexuality is tackled with a determination to improve the status quo, as will be demonstrated in the following section.

4.4 Marginalisation of homosexuals

4.4.1 Straight talk: cultural contextualisation

The plays provide several examples of homosexual characters being marginalised generally by society, as well as within the family, by government, and by the church. As many Polish scholars have documented, prejudice against homosexuals has been rife in Polish society and only recently was it even acknowledged for the first time. Putting homosexual characters centre stage is culturally very significant. It demonstrates the playwrights' desire to give a voice to these characters and to contribute to an increase in social inclusion of the people they represent, to normalise homosexual relationships and to use theatre as a vehicle for ongoing progressive social change.

Polish academic Błażej Warkocki explains that the subject of homosexuality was absent from Polish public discourse before around 2000 (2013: 125). He explains that this absence affected all kinds of texts, both literary and theoretical, and the word

‘homosexuality’ was rarely used. Homosexuality was ‘inexpressible’ and ‘not subject to discoursivisation’ (2013: 126). Warkocki (2013: 132) cites Czapliński’s statement (2009) that ‘constructing the homosexual as nationally-alienated derives from the fantasy of a real, unchangeable core of national identity’. This encapsulates the generally perceived un-Polishness of being gay, about which ‘Slavic people [...] remain silent’,⁴⁷⁶ according to Swiss Scholar German Ritz (2002: 53). Warkocki describes an ‘epistemological breakthrough’ (2013: 17) taking place since 2000, resulting in a ‘specific tectonic shift in culture [...], which uncovered what had previously been invisible’ and now allows ‘discussion of what had previously been divulged only through silence’ (2013: 126). Polish sociologist Kinga Dunin agrees that before 2000, mainstream literature was ‘overly populated by straights’ but that this subsequently changed (Dunin and Stokfiszewski 2009: 84-85, cited and translated by Warkocki 2013: 125). Following ‘a rapid quantitative and qualitative change’ which took place at the turn of 21st century, new characters of a kind that had been ‘virtually absent’ have ‘entered the worlds presented in Polish prose [...] questioning the assumption that heterosexual identity is the only legitimate or even possible one. In other words: the new protagonists of Polish prose are no longer deprived of their sexual identity’ (Warkocki 2013: 125). This phenomenon clearly also applies to contemporary Polish drama, not just in new playwriting but also in major productions by director-auteurs, such as Warlikowski’s (2007) production of Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America*. Michał Witkowski’s novel *Lubiewo*⁴⁷⁷ (2005) and Krzysztof Tomasik’s collection of essays *Homobiografie. Pisarki i pisarze polscy XIX i XX wieku* (2008)⁴⁷⁸ were also key works in this cultural shift, despite criticisms such as that made by prominent Polish Catholic publicist Tomasz Terlikowski that *Homobiografie* was ‘the apotheosis of sin’ (Terlikowski 2008: 23, cited and translated by Warkocki 2013: 129). The 2003 ‘Niech

⁴⁷⁶ Warkocki’s translation (Warkocki 2013: 126).

⁴⁷⁷ *Lovetown*.

⁴⁷⁸ *Homobiographies: Polish writers of the 19th and 20th Centuries*.

nas zobaczą⁴⁷⁹ campaign also had significant social impact. It was ‘the first socio-artistic campaign to counter homophobia in Poland’, and succeeded in making ‘gayness visible in Polish public discourse’ (Warkocki 2013: 127). Organised by the Kampania Przeciw Homofobii,⁴⁸⁰ it showed Karolina Breguła’s photographs of thirty gay and lesbian couples displayed on billboards in major cities and art galleries in Poland. While it marked a significant breakthrough in public discourse it did not indicate the start of a smooth journey towards acceptance. The following year, the Gay Pride parade in Warsaw was banned by Lech Kaczyński, Mayor of Warsaw at the time. Clearly, while ‘homosexuality is [...] a socio-cultural fact, a part of Polish culture and one of its salient narratives’ (Warkocki 2013: 127), Polish homosexuals are nevertheless still particularly marginalised, including by the government and the church. Many Poles continue to hold the belief that books such as *Homobiografie* are an ‘aggressive attack on “our” culture’; the fact that ‘homosexuality can now be discussed with ease does not mean that people no longer feel its burden’ (Warkocki 2013: 129-130).

Not only do the playwrights challenge widespread prejudice against homosexuals, giving them a voice and bringing them from the margins of society to centre stage, ensuring that they become the object of the audience’s focus and thought, they also highlight the fact that homosexuality has become a function of otherness and sexual liberation more generally. The inclusion by Polish playwrights of gay protagonists therefore contributes to several significant social processes. In view of this particular cultural context, it is clearly an example of Masłowska’s biting irony when, in *Między nami*, she writes into the radio speech at the end of the play the claim that Poland used to be an ‘oazą tolerancji’.⁴⁸¹ (2008b: 70). This is a reference to Polish auto-stereotypes around the country’s past religious tolerance, which contrast with the more recent lack of tolerance

⁴⁷⁹ ‘Let Them See Us’.

⁴⁸⁰ Campaign against Homophobia.

⁴⁸¹ ‘an oasis of tolerance’ (2014b: 455).

towards lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and transsexual people. There are many other examples in the plays studied which highlight the marginalisation of homosexuals. These will be discussed in three separate sections. Firstly, the marginalisation of homosexuals in Polish contemporary society as a whole will be discussed. Secondly, the problem of marginalisation and conflict within the family as a result of homosexuality will be exemplified. Finally, the rejection of homosexuality by the Polish Catholic church as represented by the four playwrights will be briefly addressed.

4.4.2 Marginalisation by society in general

Government Official in *Tęczowa* claims that when it comes to homosexuality,

znakomita większość społeczeństwa
wie że to jest zboczenie⁴⁸²

(Demirski 2013c: 23).

Demirski indirectly asks his audience to consider if that allegation is true, and if so whether they share this view allegedly held by a majority of Poles. The audience are directly addressed and asked if they will sign a petition calling for a separate stand for gay fans at the stadium for the Euro 2012 football competition held in Poland and Ukraine. This ambiguous request implies segregation on sexual grounds, requiring the audience to consider whether this is acceptable, and in turn to question the reasons behind such a request. When Waiter, asking them to sign, says the initiative is part of the ‘modernizację mentalną tego kraju’⁴⁸³ (2013c: 41), this emphasises the dubious nature of the scheme as well as suggesting that the country is currently behind the times in terms of its general outlook on homosexuality. This whole play is an example of theatre of provocation and public intervention, and its premise is based on the ethically ambiguous stunt played by Demirski in which he secretly set up the pretend *Tęczowa Trybuna*⁴⁸⁴ group with its own

⁴⁸² ‘the most part of society | knows that it’s a deviation’ (2013b: 26).

⁴⁸³ ‘the mental modernisation of the country’ (2013b: 51).

⁴⁸⁴ Rainbow Stand.

presence on social media, which gained the attention of the national and international press. This fabricated group then formed the basis of the play. Demirski uses the football stadium as a microcosm of society, so that when the Mayor of Warsaw, as one of the characters in the play, talks about the proposed Rainbow Stand she is in fact revealing prejudices within society in general. The lack of punctuation is a characteristic feature of Demirski's text:

homoseksualnie usposobieni pomylili się przesadzili chcą mieć na moim stadionie
getto nie zbudujemy getta warszawa już je miała i co jeszcze dzieci też chcieliby
adoptować?
dałam im w postaci gay pride palec a już chcieliby całą kielbasę z kieszeni i całą
piłkę nożną
posuwacie się za daleko na moją murawę na mój trawnik
z chłopcami którzy nie będą z wami grać w piłkę bo wy w piłkę nie gracie
widział ktoś geja piłkarza? gdzie?
jest jakaś w demokracji granica dzięki której już mnie demokracja kneblować nie
będzie⁴⁸⁵

(2013c: 45).

This is an outright criticism by the playwright of prejudice against homosexuals in local authorities. These lines are also a representation of a muddled discourse, indicative of that of prejudice. Here, the highly charged and painful topic of the Warsaw Ghetto is somehow conflated with gay adoption rights. Similarly, Waiter accuses Government Official of refusing to meet 'z politycznie niewygodnymi obywatelami'⁴⁸⁶ (2013c: 50). This character in fact keeps his own homosexuality a secret. When threatened with being outed, he begs

nie róbcie mi tego
wiecie ile mi w sądzie zajmie żeby swoje dobre imię od pedalstwa oczyścić⁴⁸⁷

(2013: 50).

⁴⁸⁵ 'the homosexually inclined are mistaken and overdoing it, they want a ghetto in my stadium we're not building a ghetto, warsaw already had one, and they'll be wanting to adopt kids next? | I gave them an inch with the gay pride and now they want the whole sausage out of my | pocket and the whole football | you've gone too far onto my pitch and onto my lawn | with boys who won't play football with you because you don't play ball | has anyone ever seen a gay football player? Where? | there is a line in democracy thanks to which democracy will no longer cramp my style' (2013b: 54-55).

⁴⁸⁶ '[with] politically inconvenient citizens' (2013b: 50).

⁴⁸⁷ 'don't do this to me | you know how long it would take me to clear my good name of this fag smear in court' (2013b: 62).

Here, Demirski asserts that there is institutional prejudice against homosexuals within Polish government. In the *Strzępka* (2011a) production, this character's homosexuality is very apparent from the start, conveyed through his vocal and physical mannerisms, which emphasises the degree of importance attached to his concealment of his sexuality.

Demirski gives Waiter an extremely coarse line to further illustrate the prevalence of such attitudes among government officials, saying

nawet jakby zdjęcie że ktoś któregoś z nich ładuje w dupę pojawili
w telewizorze
to by powiedział jeden z drugim w oficjalnym komunikacie że mu masażysta
mierzył
temperaturę po prostu termometrem
takim specyficznym⁴⁸⁸

(2013: 61).

Demirski's extreme language here is deliberately shocking, forcing the audience to acknowledge the issue of prejudice within government.

Icon, who is a homosexual bar owner who rejects stereotyped models of homosexuality, expresses his frustration with gay characters who, according to his perception, allow themselves to be victimised. The character says very little for much of the play before erupting into a monologue in which he ironically tells other gay characters they might as well provide opportunities for those with anti-gay prejudices, saying why not:

sobie trójkąt różowy naszyj na czoło najlepiej klejem
żeby ci ze skórą oderwali jak się wkurwią⁴⁸⁹

(2013: 62).

This reference to the pink triangle that was the symbol for homosexual prisoners in concentration camps reminds the audience that homosexuals were also persecuted during

⁴⁸⁸ 'besides I'll tell you that even if they showed a photo of them ass-pounding each other on tv | they'd give an official statement saying it was their masseur taking their temperature | with this special thermometer' (2013b: 76).

⁴⁸⁹ 'why don't you sew a pink triangle on your forehead with glue | so they can rip the skin off when they get mad' (2013b: 75).

the war. This comparison with the past also frames contemporary prejudice as outdated as well as immoral. Icon continues, expressing his refusal to be intimidated by homophobes and those who are violent against homosexuals. He makes the point that he is a person first and foremost and should not be defined by his sexuality. He says, in Demirski's bold language:

co to kogo ma obchodzić gdzie ja komu i gdzie a może pod pachę wkładam jak mi się chce
włożyć i co mam się od razu przedstawiać
pedałem jestem zanim powiem dzień dobry?
nie mówię tak
bo pedały to nie są mężczyźni którzy się walą z innymi mężczyznami
homoseksualiści to mężczyźni którzy w czasie 15 lat starania się
nie mogli otrzymać antydyskryminujących ustaw od rządu
homoseksualiści to ludzie, którzy nikogo nie znają i nikt nie zna ich⁴⁹⁰

(2013: 62).

He continues:

ja nie jestem pedałem
ja jestem po prostu człowiekiem
po prostu człowiekiem
który lubi się dymać z facetami po prostu człowiekiem⁴⁹¹

(2013: 63).

This is an example of a character determined to rise above the official prejudice. There are several other characters in the play that are prevented from doing so by fear. The gay Waiter asks the gay Nauczyciel (Teacher) 'czy ty w teatrze też się masz fobie jakieś jak na stadionie że ci ktoś z fotela obok przypierdoli?'⁴⁹² (2013: 3). This line emphasises the point that gay football fans face violence, and asks what the attitudes of theatre-goers are to homosexuality. It also highlights Demirski's deliberate inclusion of gay characters from

⁴⁹⁰ 'who cares who I stick it in and where I stick it - under the armpit if I feel like it, am I to introduce myself | I'm a faggot before I even say hello? | I don't say that | because faggots aren't men who shag other men | homosexuals are men who in 15 years of trying | couldn't get the government to pass an anti-discrimination law | homosexuals are people who don't know anybody and whom nobody knows' (2013b: 75).

⁴⁹¹ 'I'm not a faggot | I'm just a human being | just a human being | who likes banging men, just a human being (2013b: 76).

⁴⁹² 'when you're in the theatre are you also worried that someone in the next seat will bash on you like they do at the stadium?' (2013b: 4).

across social classes and professions in order to underline the fact that homosexuality is internal and unrelated to social factors, that it is nature not nurture. Teacher and Waiter both fear violence, and Teacher wonders ‘co wynika z mojego karate które ćwiczyłem przez dwa lata jak teraz się boję wyjść na ulicę’⁴⁹³ (2013: 6). Demirski reiterates the severity of prejudice in Polish society by having Teacher say

wiesz ile mnie z szafy żeby przed sobą nawet wyjść kosztowało
ja nawet na stacjach benzynowych hot-dogów nie kupowałem
bo bałem się mnie zdradzi jak parówkę wkładam do ust⁴⁹⁴

(2013: 63).

However, Demirski writes an empowering, triumphant development for this character in that he comes to decide ‘właśnie przyszedł czas żeby nie wstydzić się wychodzić na ulicę’⁴⁹⁵ (2013: 34). This line encapsulates one of the play’s main points and the playwright’s aim to give not only a voice but a strong voice to homosexual characters and the people they represent.

In Masłowska’s *Między nami*, the gay characters are not main protagonists, but nevertheless the playwright addresses the problem of prejudice against homosexuals in society, largely through irony. Man describes how in his planned film:

wszędzie się kręci jeden pedał, którego wszyscy w tym polskim ciemnogrodzie
traktują nietolerancyjnie, podczas gdy on na końcu okazuje się normalnym
mężczyzną, tylko po prostu zadbanym i nietolerowanym⁴⁹⁶

(2008b: 44).

Actor says of his wife ‘Oczywiście nie ma nic do gejów, a jedynie podśmiewa się z ich pewnej sympatycznej, przekomicznej, niesmacznej zniewieścianości’⁴⁹⁷ (2008b: 46). This is ironic in that the intrinsic criticism of homosexuals conflicts with the notion that the

⁴⁹³ ‘where did two years of karate classes get me since I’m scared to go outside’ (2013b: 7).

⁴⁹⁴ ‘you know how much it cost me even to come out to myself | I never even bought hot-dogs at petrol stations | because I was scared that the way I put the wiener in my mouth would give me away’ (2013b: 8).

⁴⁹⁵ ‘the time has come to stop being ashamed of going out in the street’ (2013b: 40).

⁴⁹⁶ ‘there’s this queer always hanging around, whom everyone treats with intolerance in this Polish den of bigotry, though he turns out to be a normal guy, who’s simply well-groomed and not tolerated’ (2014b: 441).

⁴⁹⁷ ‘Not that she has anything against gays, mind you. She just makes fun of that endearingly comical, distasteful effeminacy of theirs’ (2014b: 442).

actor's wife has nothing against 'gays'. Man also refers to a 'fryzjer-gej'⁴⁹⁸ (2008b: 64), exemplifying the point that he is seen not just as a hairdresser but a gay hairdresser. He is described in the same way as the gay character previously mentioned:

choć jest nietolerowany, okazuje się dobry i ratuje biedne dziecko z pożaru, bo wcale nie jest żadnym gejem, tylko normalnym mężczyzną, ale po prostu jest zadbany i nietolerowany⁴⁹⁹

(2008b: 64).

The repetition of the same adjectives to describe the two gay characters emphasises and in turn criticises the application of stereotypes to gay people. In this example, the image of saving a child from a fire is ironically framed as being so masculine that it is incompatible with homosexuality.

In Wojcieszek's *Cokolwiek*, Sugar, one of the play's two lesbian lovers, explains that she experienced prejudice in the educational system, in the line 'Chodziłam kiedyś do liceum...ale kiedy rozeszło się, kim jestem, zaczęły się kłopoty'⁵⁰⁰ (2006b: 256).

Wojcieszek has the father of Magda, Sugar's lover, draw attention to the fact that Magda went to high school and failed her final exams. This creates a contrast between Magda who was not forced to leave because of her sexuality but did not succeed educationally, and Sugar who was prevented from fulfilling her potential because of the strength of prejudice she encountered. This contrast accentuates the prejudice experienced by Sugar in the sense that it highlights the fact that Magda had the freedom to succeed but could not, or did not, while Sugar was prevented by prejudice from achieving her potential.

The playwrights clearly emphasise the general problem of societal prejudice against homosexuals by having their characters report problems they have faced. In reporting such prejudices rather than showing them, the playwrights allow the gay characters to tell their

⁴⁹⁸ 'a gay hairdresser' (2014b: 452).

⁴⁹⁹ '[...] though not tolerated, turns out to be a good guy and saves a poor child from a fire, because in fact he isn't gay at all, just a normal guy who's simply well-groomed and not tolerated' (2014b: 452).

⁵⁰⁰ 'I used to go to high school, but things got hairy when they found out who I was' (2014: 551).

own stories rather than being shown to be the object of events. As well as representing prejudice in society as a whole, Demirski and Wojcieszek in particular accentuate prejudice against homosexuals within the family. The institution of the family in itself is shown to be a site of prejudice, as well as being used as an emotionally intensified microcosm of society.

4.4.3 Marginalisation in the family

In the plays examined, the marginalisation of homosexual characters within the family exists as a problem in itself and as a microcosm of society. In Wojcieszek's *Cokolwiek*, the two central protagonists Sugar and Magda are subject to severe prejudice within their families, but for Sugar this contradicts the common model of intergenerational prejudice described by Jerzy Jarzębski.⁵⁰¹ Stating that intergenerational conflict is a multi-dimensional problem in contemporary Poland, Jarzębski identifies one of the causes represented in contemporary Polish literature as 'narrow-minded parents trying to deal with a child's different sexual orientation' (2013: 29), and acknowledges that characters are often victimised for their homosexuality. In relation to the general issue of intergenerational conflict, he says agreement 'between the generations becomes impossible, it would seem, because the young have simply had a completely different education, and understand the mechanisms of social exclusion and oppression much better than their mothers and fathers' (2013: 30). He explains that where 'it is shown to be possible to rebuild an emotional relationship between the generations [...] the reader tends to treat it as exceptional and sensational, not as a regular thing' (2013: 31). The prejudice Sugar suffers is unusual in that it comes from her brother while she receives unconditional support from her mother. This enables Wojcieszek to accentuate the point that prejudice is attitudinal and not generational. He debunks the myth that a homophobic attitude is

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inevitable as a result of a communist upbringing in a person of the age of Teresa, Sugar's mother. Wojcieszek underlines the fact that prejudices are personal, and that the responsibility for such beliefs lies with the prejudiced individual. Sugar's father is absent, having left the family, and it is not said whether he was prejudiced against Sugar. There is however intergenerational conflict between her brother, Piotr, and their mother, Teresa, as a result of Piotr's prejudice. Magda, more stereotypically, is subjected to prejudice by her father. Wojcieszek uses this prejudice as the impetus for the character of Magda to leave her home in Rawicz and go to Warsaw. She explains to Sugar, about her father, 'Kocham go, chociaż wypierprzył mnie z domu...Przyłapali mnie w szatni z jedną głupią pizdą. Rzecz jasna, moja wina. Jaka zrobiła się z tego afera'⁵⁰² (2006b: 261). The strength of Magda's language here underlines her anger at the situation as well as conveying contempt towards the person she was found with. Sugar replies: 'Dobrze, że nie spalili cię na stosie',⁵⁰³ to which Magda responds: 'Nie zdążyli. Wsiadłam w pociąg i przyjechałam do Warszawy'⁵⁰⁴ (2006b: 260-261). In this example, working in poor conditions in Warsaw presented a more favourable option than staying in the confines of the family or in her hometown of Rawicz. Wojcieszek brings Magda's father, Jan, into the action by having him visit to tell her that her mother is ill. He asks Magda to come and see her mother, adding: 'Rodzina powinna być razem',⁵⁰⁵ (2006b: 246). Magda is unmoved by the request, saying: 'Szkoda, że na to nie wpadłeś, jak wyrzucałeś mnie z domu',⁵⁰⁶ (2006b: 246). This gives her the opportunity to assert herself a second time in the face of her father's prejudice and effectively to throw him out as he did her. The playwright suggests momentarily that Jan might have moved beyond his prejudice when he says: 'Zrobiłem straszne błąd.

⁵⁰² 'They caught me in the locker room with this stupid little cunt. My fault, of course. The shit really hit the fan' (2014b: 556).

⁵⁰³ 'Good thing they didn't burn you at the stake' (2014b: 556).

⁵⁰⁴ 'They were too late. I jumped on a train and came to Warsaw' (2014b: 556).

⁵⁰⁵ 'A family should stay together' (2014b: 540).

⁵⁰⁶ 'Should have thought of that before you kicked me out of the house' (2014b: 540).

Przepraszam’.⁵⁰⁷ However, this is quickly followed with ‘Ale wiesz, co ludzie mówiliby’⁵⁰⁸ (2006b: 246), emphasising the importance to him of the opinions of others over and above his child’s feelings and rights. Magda challenges Jan on this, and by extension she challenges everyone who places social prejudices above individual rights, asking: ‘Co z tego?! Kim są ci ludzie, że ich zdanie jest dla ciebie takie ważne?’⁵⁰⁹ (2006b: 246). Jan changes tack, responding: ‘Mogłaś nam od razu powiedzieć, że jesteś...’⁵¹⁰ (2006b: 246), but he then falls silent. When Magda asks: ‘Kim?’⁵¹¹, she is met with ‘*Milczenie*’⁵¹¹ (2006b: 246) in the stage directions. This is a dramatic manifestation of German Ritz’s assertion that homosexuality has typically been kept silent in Polish society, as mentioned previously. This is reiterated in the next lines as Magda gives her father a final chance: ‘Tato, wypowiesz w końcu to słowo?!’⁵¹² (2006b: 246). However, again she is met with ‘*Cisza*’⁵¹³ (2006b: 246), as her father is unable to say the word ‘lesbian’. In the original text published in the *TR/PL* anthology (Wojcieszek 2006b), Jan only has one encounter with Magda during the time-frame of the play. In Zapałowski’s English translation (Wojcieszek 2014), in the *(A)Pollonia* anthology, there is an additional scene, presumably written during the preparation of the Wojcieszek (2005) production, in which Jan comes to see Magda a second time. This scene reinforces the intergenerational conflict, the strength of prejudice against Magda, and also her resolve to remain true to herself without making any compromises. Here Wojcieszek emphasises the strength of the character’s voice and convictions. Jan tells Magda that her mother has ‘six, maybe eight

⁵⁰⁷ ‘I made a terrible mistake. I’m sorry’ (2014b: 540).

⁵⁰⁸ ‘But you know what people would say’ [Note: My translation. Zapałowski amends the line].

⁵⁰⁹ ‘So what? Who are these people whose opinion is so important to you?’ [Note: My translation. Zapałowski amends the line].

⁵¹⁰ ‘You could have told us you were...’ (2014: 540).

⁵¹¹ ‘Silence’ (2014: 540).

⁵¹² ‘Dad, will you finally say it?!’ (2014: 540).

⁵¹³ ‘Silence’ (2014: 540).

months left'⁵¹⁴ and says: 'You ought to be with us', to which Magda replies: 'But I haven't changed, so...'. Jan responds: 'Nobody's going to make a big deal about that', but then undoes this by adding: 'If you don't flaunt it.' Magda replies: 'But I can't live like that anymore. I can't "not flaunt it"!'. This marks her determination to put an end to her experiences of prejudice, which is reiterated in the lines 'You still haven't accepted me for who I am. I'm not going to apologize for being me. I'm not coming to Rawicz with you. I'm staying in Warsaw!' Even when Jan says: 'Mom would like you to be there when she dies at least', and '*Magda breaks down crying*', she refuses to go with her father. Jan again responds with '*bemused silence*', finding the conversation '*very difficult*' (Wojcieszek 2014: 577-578). Despite the extreme circumstances, Jan is ultimately unable to break out of the mould described by Ritz (2002) and Jarzębski (2013), and Wojcieszek demonstrates the problems this causes while allowing Magda to free herself. Wojcieszek's treatment of Magda as a homosexual character follows a conventional pattern of oppression, negotiation and defiance, and the playwright uses this simple representation for dramatic effect, in order to arouse immediate, strong emotion on the part of the viewer.

Sugar's brother Piotr represents a particular archetype within Polish society. A young, nationalist man in the army, he has strict Catholic ideals and 'traditional' family values. He describes his sister's homosexuality as being both a deviation and an illness, telling his mother: 'to nie jest normalne'⁵¹⁵ (2006b: 269) and 'to jest chore, to jest dla mnie nie do przyjęcia'⁵¹⁶ (2006b: 269). Magda also implies that her father described her sexuality as an illness, when she tells him she is not going to return home but is going to live 'Tam, gdzie jest więcej takich chorych świni jak ja'⁵¹⁷ (2006b: 247), quoting her father's past accusation. Piotr also sees homosexuality in general as anti-Catholic and anti-

⁵¹⁴ Here the quotations are given in English only because they come from an English translation which differs from the published text in Polish, in which these lines do not appear.

⁵¹⁵ 'This isn't normal' (2014: 576).

⁵¹⁶ 'But this is sick [...] I can't live with this!' (2014: 565).

⁵¹⁷ 'Where there's a lot of sick little girls like me' (2014: 540).

Polish. When Sugar explains to Magda that Piotr ‘Poszedł na wojnę, jak tylko dowiedział się, że jestem lesbą. Postanowił odkupić moje grzechy, walcząc za ojczyznę’⁵¹⁸ (2006b: 257), Wojcieszek juxtaposes the army and the protection of nation with homosexuality. Piotr is willing to protect Poland but not to defend his sister’s rights or her sexuality. There is a religious facet to Piotr’s actions in that he hopes to redeem his sister’s sins by going to war to protect his country. The notion of homosexuality is incompatible with the nation he is willing to defend. This is repeated in Piotr’s outburst in which he exclaims: ‘Mamo, zobacz! Tak nas wychowywałaś? Tak? To jest rodzina? To jest gnój, nie rodzina!’⁵¹⁹ (2006b: 269-270). He continues, after ‘*dusi się z wściekłości*’⁵²⁰ (2006b: 270), saying: ‘Siostra dziadka nie była lesbą, kiedy on umierał pod Monte Cassino!’⁵²¹ [...] Gdybyś przynajmniej trochę się z tym kryła. A ty wogóle się tego nie wstydzisz!’⁵²² (2006b: 270). Piotr adheres to the ideal of ‘God, honour and fatherland’, a motto which conveys the notion that a Pole is duty bound to serve the nation. It was adopted by the Polish military when fighting to regain independence after the partitions of Poland in 1772, 1793 and 1795. The addition of ‘god’ to the motto was made in 1943 by the Polish government in exile and was removed in 1955 by the communist government before being reinstated in 1993 by the government of the Third Polish Republic. The phrase reiterates the connection between patriotism and Catholicism, which is also intrinsic to the Pole-Catholic model and the idea of a homogenous Poland, both of which Piotr endorses. For this character, homosexuality is something to be ashamed of and to be concealed. Despite having no

⁵¹⁸ ‘He went off to war as soon as he found out I was queer. Decided to redeem my sins by fighting for the fatherland’ (2014: 553).

⁵¹⁹ ‘Mum, look! Is that how you brought us up? Is it? Is that family? That’s shit, not family! (My translation. Zapałowski amends the line).

⁵²⁰ ‘*Sputtering in rage*’ (2014: 566).

⁵²¹ This is a reference to the battle of Monte Cassino in 1944 in which Polish soldiers defeated Nazi forces at the strategically important position of the Monte Cassino Benedictine abbey in Italy. There is a Polish cemetery at the site of the battle, where around 1000 soldiers are buried, as well as General Władysław Anders although he died in London in 1970. Around 55000 allied soldiers were killed in the battle which has become an important symbol of the Polish struggle for freedom.

⁵²² ‘Grandfather’s sister wasn’t no lesbian when he laid down his life at Monte Cassino! [...] If only you had the decency to keep it to yourself. But you’re flaunting it!’ (2014: 566).

family of his own, Piotr claims that the fact that Sugar and Magda are living together in Teresa's home prevents him from carrying out his own plans of marrying, having children and living in a three-generation family with his mother. In fact, his objection is based on prejudice. Although he has no partner or children, he accuses Sugar with 'ty rozpieprzysz mi ten plan, kompletnie go ośmieszasz!'⁵²³ (2006b: 269). Here Wojcieszek pits the rights of the homosexual child against the rights of the heterosexual child, and the homosexual child is triumphant, being the only one of the two in a relationship. Piotr becomes the character to be pitied, and Wojcieszek employs this emotional currency to achieve immediacy and simplicity of reactions on the part of the viewer. Piotr categorically refuses to accept his sister's sexuality, saying: 'Myślałem, że ci "to" przejdzie, że będziesz zwyczajną dziewczyną. Bo ty nie jesteś zбочona, wiem to! Jesteś taka jak ja!'⁵²⁴ (2006b: 269). He claims that she has not tried to like any men and that she is too lazy, although she has relations with Mikołaj. Wojcieszek uses this typical, easily recognisable anti-gay stereotype in order to touch on a sensitive and topical subject in contemporary Poland and to provide an opportunity for the viewer to react in a straightforward, immediate manner, as would happen when watching a popular film. Piotr's mother Teresa tells him: 'Jesteś głupi!'⁵²⁵ and asks: 'Myślałeś, że jak pójdziesz na wojnę, to ona chłopców polubi?'⁵²⁶ (2006b: 269). In a marked departure from stereotypical intergenerational conflict and conservative values, Teresa tells Piotr, and not Sugar: '*(po chwili milczenia)* Robisz mi wielką przykrość...' ⁵²⁷ (2006b: 269). The character of Teresa carries socio-cultural significance in that it presents the audience, particularly the older members, with an example of an alternative parental response. Teresa prioritises motherly love and solidarity

⁵²³ 'I want to have a normal, extended family in this house. And you're messing up my plan, you're turning it into some kind of joke!' (2014: 566).

⁵²⁴ 'I thought you'd get over it, that you'd be a normal girl. Because you're not bent, I know it! You're just like me!' (2014a: 566).

⁵²⁵ 'Don't be silly!' (2014: 566).

⁵²⁶ 'You thought if you went off to war you'd make Sugar like boys?' (2014: 566).

⁵²⁷ '*(silent for a while)*. You're hurting me' (2014: 565).

with Sugar against all odds, which makes her immediately likeable for the audience. She tells Piotr: ‘Twoja siostra ma takie jak ty prawo mieszkać tu, z kim chce! To duży dom, pomieścimy się wszyscy’⁵²⁸ (2006b: 269). This line goes beyond the confines of the house and the family, symbolising the potential for greater openness in wider society. Supported by her mother, Sugar aspires to create a family unit that stands up to society, proposing: ‘Stworzymy małą lesbijską rodzinę. Małą wywrotową komórkę, która wysadzi w powietrze to popieprzone społeczeństwo’⁵²⁹ (2006b: 258).

While it is possible to discuss Wojcieszek’s characters in terms of their storylines and to a point in terms of their emotions, the characters remain too simplified to be seen as realistic. Wojcieszek’s plays are melodramatic, akin to television series plots and dialogue, and his craft as a screenwriter is apparent in his stage work. This simplicity emphasises the plays’ major themes and highlights the contrasts between characters, meaning that in *Cokolwiek*, Sugar and Magda have strong voices which are not successfully silenced despite the efforts of other characters.

Wojcieszek’s work is more conciliatory than Demirski’s, and plays by the latter are provocative and challenging by comparison. In Demirski’s *Tęczowa* the female Judge refers to the issue of prejudice against homosexuals in the family. Her husband was a closeted homosexual when he married her and they have since divorced. Demirski conveys her bitterness in the line: ‘męża swojego co kurwa z całą do ślubu szafą szedł w niej’⁵³⁰ (2013: 34) which in Strzępka’s (2011a) production is delivered when Judge is drunk, making her appear vulnerable and even more of a victim of circumstance. Thus Demirski succeeds in capturing an image of the impact of the oppression of homosexuality on people like Judge, as well on as homosexuals themselves. In a strictly Catholic society, divorce is

⁵²⁸ ‘Your sister has just as much right to live here as you do – with whoever she wants! It’s a big house, there’s plenty of room for all of us’ (2014: 565).

⁵²⁹ ‘We’ll start a little lesbian family. A tiny, subversive cell that will blow this fucked-up society to smithereens’ (2014: 553).

⁵³⁰ ‘went up the aisle with the whole closet he was in’ (Demirski 2013b: 39-40).

a taboo, as is homosexuality, and Judge feels she has been shamed and judged by society in general as well as by the church. Demirski highlights that Judge and her husband met their family's expectations that they would follow the church's traditions, even though this conflicted with her husband's true feelings. Ultimately the divorced wife and the homosexual husband are both marginalised by the church. In the next brief and final section, marginalisation by the church as a result of sexuality will be discussed further as a prime example of marginalisation in contemporary Poland according to the plays studied.

4.4.4 Marginalisation by the church

In *Tęczowa*, Demirski's *Hard Done By* is politically engaged, especially with the plight of homosexual and transsexual people. This character is deliberately absurdist in its complexity, particularly in the Polish context. S/he has no qualms about threatening to 'out' closeted gay people whose confessions s/he has heard when s/he has drunk with them, if it will help the cause of homosexuals fighting for a voice in society. As previously mentioned, s/he explains how as a girl, she realised she would never be allowed to give communion, and thus Demirski highlights the point that she was initially marginalised by the church as a result of her gender, regardless of her sexuality. The following speech outlines the transformation from a nun to a priest. There is ambiguity in the text with regard to the person being addressed. It is possibly the character's mother:

dlaczego człowiek nie może spełnić swojego największego marzenia?
które mnie wpędziło w habit
bo zawsze chciałem iść do seminarium i zostać księdzem
co zrozumiałam będąc zakonnicą
snułam ci przecież te plany a ty się podśmiewałaś że nigdy nie będę komunii
rozdawać móc
a tutaj proszę ot tak i już i jeszcze cię spowiadać mogę
proszę co masz mi do powiedzenia?
słucham cię⁵³¹

⁵³¹ 'why shouldn't a person make their dreams come true? | dreams got me into this habit | because I always wanted to go to seminary school and be a priest | I realised that when I was a nun | I told you about these plans and you laughed that I'd never be able to give communion | and here we are and I can even confess you now | so what have you got to tell me? | I'm listening' (2013b: 28).

(2013: 24).

The character's gender vagueness is presented as a challenge, to the church, society, and the audience. The character uses two different gender endings in this short speech: the masculine ending for 'chciałem'⁵³² and feminine for 'zrozumiałam'.⁵³³ Despite having changed her gender in order to fulfil her dreams within the Polish Catholic church, this character is still marginalised as a transsexual person. Demirski underlines this by having Mayor, a character in a position of authority, recognise the character as being transsexual. She says:

ktoś partia przeciwna rzuciła na mnie pecha
ja nie mogę mieć blisko siebie ludzi zdeformowanych
ja wierzę w boga któremu się to nie podoba
przez takich jak ty bóg się może na mnie obrazić
ja w to wierzę ja jestem religijnie przesądna⁵³⁴

(2013: 25).

Despite his/her 'deformation', this character has succeeded in holding a position of authority and leadership within the Polish Catholic church. Demirski presents this complex character as a provocation, highlighting the unlikelihood of such a person existing in reality. This character does, however, conform to the 'Pole-Catholic' model. The character is subversive in the sense that he is now a man and is treated as such by the Catholic church as he has been accepted into the priesthood, but he has undergone gender reassignment in order to achieve this acceptance, which is itself in conflict with the attitude of the church.

There are clearly several examples in which the playwright portrays a marginalised homosexual character with the emphasis firmly centred on the voice of that marginalised

⁵³² 'I [...] wanted' (2013b: 28).

⁵³³ 'I realised' (2013b: 28).

⁵³⁴ 'somebody, the rival party must have jinxed me | I can't have deformed people around me | I believe in a god who doesn't like that | people like you can get god mad at me | I believe in that, I'm religiously superstitious' (2013b: 28).

character. In this way, the playwrights expose and criticise societal prejudices while empowering homosexual characters and showing them to be able to challenge both victimisation and stereotypes around homosexuality.

4.5 Marginalisation of non-Catholics

In several of the plays, the writer addresses the ‘Pole-Catholic’ myth, according to which to be a Pole is to be a Catholic. Within the predominantly Catholic country, those who do not conform to this model are socially marginalised. The ‘Pole-Catholic’ model is a relatively recent construct. As Elwira M. Grossman explains,

Before 1939 over thirty percent of people living in Poland declared themselves to be of a nationality other than Polish. However, this fact was conveniently ignored and/or suppressed during the years of communism in order to create an artificial, monolithic version of “Polishness”. It is astounding to realise how total the control of the Catholic Church and communist ideology became in this respect when one remembers that before the Second World War “the (ethnic) Other” could be encountered everywhere within the territory of Poland, even though this “Other” was not always made to feel welcome

(2002: 7).

Grossman explains that now ninety-five percent of Poles are members of the Catholic church, and that the ‘group of religious “Other(s)” consists mainly of Protestants and Russian Orthodox believers’ (2002: 9).

Brian Porter (2002: 262) argues that the ‘implications of the “*Polak-Katolik*” model on Polish culture and society are profound’. He cites Adam Michnik’s view that the Polish Catholic church has ‘a triumphalist attitude that leads to intolerance’. Porter explains that it ‘is a commonplace today to credit - or blame’ the politician Roman Dmowski ‘for propagating a “*Polak-Katolik*” ideal, for spreading the message that the Polish nation is essentially Catholic, cohesive and conservative’. Dmowski, who was the leader of the right-wing movement *Endecja*⁵³⁵ during the 1920s, wrote his book *Kościół*,

⁵³⁵ National Democracy.

naród i państwo,⁵³⁶ published in 1927, ‘in which he clearly proclaimed the fundamental Catholicity of the Polish identity’ (Porter 2002: 281). Porter cites:

“Catholicism is not a supplement to Polishness [...] it penetrates to the essence of [Polishness], and to a considerable extent constitutes that essence. To try to separate Catholicism from Polishness [...] is to destroy the very essence of the nation” (Dmowski, *Kościół...*21)

(2002: 261).

Porter also explains that since the interwar years, nationalist politicians have ‘insisted upon the religious homogeneity of their nation, and Church leaders have tended to look to right-wing parties for protection against the dangers of secular politics’ (2002: 261). The ‘Pole-Catholic’ view was reinforced in 1984 when, according to Porter, Primate Józef Glemp wrote, in an introduction to a new edition of Dmowski’s 1927 book: ‘In the writings of Dmowski the idea about the link between the Church and the Nation is a truth’ (Porter 2002: 261), and again in 1999 when, as Porter explains:

the Polish Parliament, controlled at the time by the pro-Catholic “Solidarity Electoral Action” coalition, passed a resolution proclaiming that “in conjunction with the 60th anniversary of the death of Roman Dmowski, the Sejm of the Republic expresses its recognition of the struggles and the work of this great statesman. [...] Particularly worthy of note is Roman Dmowski’s role in underlining the importance of the tight bond between Catholicism and Polishness in preserving the Nation and reconstructing the Polish state

(2002: 261-262).

In contemporary Polish society the ‘Pole-Catholic’ view continues to be promulgated by the Catholic radio station Radio Maria, as well as by some politicians, but it is not, of course, representative of the Polish Catholic church in its entirety. Nevertheless, as Grossman emphasises, the ‘Pole-Catholic’ model is still a significant characteristic of contemporary Polish society, in which Polishness is portrayed according to a ‘mythic image with a homogenous face’ which

⁵³⁶ *Church, Nation and State*.

matches the nation's common belief, which government officials moulded, mass media promoted and teachers taught in schools for almost forty-five years of communism. During this time, Polish national identity was being manufactured, regardless of ideological differences, by both the Catholic Church and state authorities

(2002: 2).

In Demirski's *Był sobie*, Starlet has had enough of the 'Pole-Catholic' model: 'a do czego mi jest kurwa mać ta cała wasza religia [...] a do czego mi jest ta wasza narodowa tożsamość'⁵³⁷ (2007c: 47). In Sikorska-Miszczyk's *Popiełuszko*, the protagonist Antypolak is so named for his non-Catholic beliefs and his confrontation of the 'Pole-Catholic' myth. The name of the play is that of the Polish Roman Catholic Priest who became involved in the Solidarity movement and was murdered in 1984 by three members of the internal intelligence agency during the communist period. The reference to this character points to the interplay between politics and religion that is intrinsic to the 'Pole-Catholic' model, and the playwright uses it for that reason. While the play is ostensibly about the priest, it largely relates to the 'Pole-Catholic' myth and to the involvement of the Polish Catholic church in politics. In the play, the priest Jerzy is 'Nosicielem uniwersalnych wartości'⁵³⁸ and the 'czas akcji to "i komuna, i współczesna Polska"'⁵³⁹ (Mrozek 2012). The Antypolak character name is of course reminiscent of the antichrist notion portrayed in the Bible, including in 1 John 2: 18. In a manner strikingly similar to the way World War II seems to knock on Girl's door in Masłowska's *Między nami*, Antypolak imagines a visit from the Catholic church. It visits him personified as a chorus-like group of people. The Church comes to the door and he replies: 'Słyszę dzwonek. Kto tam? Kościół katolicki. Otwieram drzwi. Kościół wchodzi do mojego domu i pyta: Pan w nas wierzy?'⁵⁴⁰ (2013: 721). When

⁵³⁷ 'what fucking use to me is that whole religion of yours [...] and what use to me this national identity of yours?'

⁵³⁸ 'An advocate of universal values'.

⁵³⁹ 'the time of the action is "both communism and contemporary Poland"'.

⁵⁴⁰ 'I hear the doorbell. Who's there? The Catholic church. I open the door. The church comes into my house and asks: do you believe in us?'

he says he does not believe in the church, it demands all his Polish possessions, including his passport: ‘To proszę oddać nam paszport. I flagę. Zdjąć ze ściany orła w koronie. [...]. Duma narodowa. Zabieramy’⁵⁴¹ (2013: 721-722). Antypolak describes how the church takes everything Polish and everything pertaining to a love of Poland or Polishness, instructs him not to support the Polish football team or to attend matches, and informs him that famous Poles have nothing to do with him: ‘Tusk już nie jest pańskim premierem i nawet o Radiu Maryja musi pan mówić tylko z pozycji cudzoziemskiej’⁵⁴² (2013: 722). Antypolak decides to rise up literally and metaphorically, empowered by his opposition to social expectations. He decides the time has come to ‘wstać z kolan, być wolnym i być dumnym ze swojej tożsamości. Że jest Polakiem’⁵⁴³ (2013: 723). Antypolak clearly articulates the social pressure and expectation that a Pole will be a Catholic, saying:

Mój kościół postawił mnie przed wyborem. Przed wyborem narodowym. Jeśli jestem Polakiem, to muszę wierzyć w Kościół katolicki. Jeśli nie będę wierzył w kościół katolicki, nie będę Polakiem. Bo wtedy za karę pozbawi mnie obywatelstwa⁵⁴⁴

(2013: 721).

While Wojcieszek’s priest Edmund in *Made in Poland* is willing to discuss Boguś’s loss of faith with him, Antypolak’s imagined church refuses to engage in conversation with him, emphasising that he perceives the church’s doctrine to be inflexible and lacking in space for individuality. Antypolak calls it ‘my’ church, but it will not engage with him:

I wychodzi ten mój Kościół. Krzyczę do niego: Stój! Nie interesuje cię, co ja mam do powiedzenia? Nie chcesz wiedzieć? Wejść ze mną w dialog? Kochać mnie po chrześcijańsku, jako bliźniego swego?⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴¹ ‘Please give us your passport. And the flag. Take off the wall the eagle in a crown. [...] National pride. We’re taking it’.

⁵⁴² ‘Tusk is no longer your prime minister and you even have to talk about Radio Maria from a foreign perspective’.

⁵⁴³ ‘get up off your knees, be free and be proud of your identity. That you’re a Pole’.

⁵⁴⁴ ‘My church presents me with a choice. A choice about nation. If I’m a Pole, I must believe in the Catholic church. If I’m not going to believe in the Catholic church, I’m not going to be a Pole. Because then as a punishment it will deprive me of my citizenship’.

⁵⁴⁵ ‘And this Church of mine leaves. I shout after it: Stop! Aren’t you interested in what I have to say? Don’t you want to know? To enter into a dialogue with me? To love me like a Christian, like a neighbour?’.

(2013: 723).

He tries again: ‘Posłuchaj!’⁵⁴⁶ (2013: 723), but the church has left, unwilling to engage in discussion. Antypolak implies that his problem is with the Catholic church more than with belief in God as such, because he has asked himself:

dłaczego nie przejść na prawosławie albo judaizm? Czy to załatwi sprawę? Ktoś powie – możesz być buddystą, prawosławnym, kimkolwiek zechesz – i być Polakiem. Możesz być ateistą. Ale z jakiegoś powodu to nie jest rozwiązanie dla mnie⁵⁴⁷

(2013: 723).

For this character, changing religion is not the solution, nor is becoming an atheist, and his criticism is of the ‘Pole-Catholic’ myth explicitly. Such is the scale of the problem for Antypolak, it seems simpler to change nationalities than it does to change religion:

Mogę się też pożegnać z polskością. Podjąć decyzję, że zostanę Filipińczykiem, Aborygenem, Indianinem Navaho. Mogę poprosić o duchową adopcję, by zostać dzieckiem tego nowego narodu. Mogę, ale nie chcę⁵⁴⁸

(2013: 723).

Demirski’s bishop Paetz, on the other hand, agrees wholeheartedly with Sikorska-Miszczuk’s church and with Dmowski, saying that: ‘kto uderza w kościół uderza w naród polski’⁵⁴⁹ (2007c: 28). Elsewhere in the play, Paetz says Poland is the ‘środek Europy otoczony katolickim murem’⁵⁵⁰ (2007c: 37). He declares his desire for Poland to be a homogenous nation in which the church is inextricably involved in politics:

nasz naród jest katolicki [...] mam nadzieję że w końcu władze przybędą na modlitwę – nawet incognito – nie tylko po to żeby się Matce Łaskawej pokłonić –

⁵⁴⁶ ‘Listen’.

⁵⁴⁷ ‘...why not convert to the Eastern Orthodox church or Judaism? Does that solve the problem? Someone said – you can be a Buddhist, Orthodox, whatever you want – and be a Pole. You can be an atheist. But for some reason that isn’t the solution for me’.

⁵⁴⁸ ‘I can also say goodbye to being Polish. Take the decision to become a Filipino, an Aborigine, a Navaho Indian. I can ask for spiritual adoption, to become a child of this new nation. I can, but I don’t want to’.

⁵⁴⁹ ‘whoever attacks the Polish church attacks the Polish nation’.

⁵⁵⁰ ‘the centre of Europe surrounded by a catholic wall’.

ale też żeby zaprosić ją do współpracy [...]– w ten sposób byłby - jeden naród jeden kościół dwóch wodzów⁵⁵¹

(2007c: 37).

Against all odds, Sikorska-Miszczyk's Antypolak reissues his declaration that he is going to get up from his knees. In the Łysak (2012) production, these lines are delivered directly to the audience, face on, which is impactful and can be interpreted as encouraging the audience to consider doing the same, which is one of the reasons the production has caused controversy, a 'burza'⁵⁵² according to Mrozek (2012). Antypolak does not reject the idea of believing in God, but he does reject the institutionalisation of the Catholic church as a national attribute of Polishness, as well as vice versa, the automatic linkage of Polishness with the Catholic church. He does so with a disclaimer, which serves to focus on the individual, emphasising the spectator's right and ability to think individually about the topic:

To, co mogę zrobić, to wstać z kolan. I wzywam wszystkich: wstańcie z kolan. Tak. Bo ja wstaję z kolan. I mówię: nie potrzebuję Kościoła, żeby wierzyć. Jestem Polakiem. Wolnym człowiekiem. I z tego miejsca, w postawie wyprostowanej, widzę moją prawdę. Nie jestem niczym głosem, tylko swoim własnym⁵⁵³

(2013: 723).

In *Dwoje biednych*, Masłowska also allows Parcha to say in no uncertain terms that he has had enough of the Catholic church, like Sikorska-Miszczyk's Antypolak and Wojcieszek's Boguś, even if the rejection is for very different reasons in all three cases. Masłowska's Parcha is famous for playing a priest in a popular television programme and people often conflate his character with his real self, but he has no affinity with what his character represents, in fact the opposite:

⁵⁵¹ 'Our nation is catholic [...] I hope that eventually the authorities will come to prayer – even incognito – not only to bow to the Holy Mother but also to ask her to work with them [...] – then there would be one nation, one church, two leaders'.

⁵⁵² 'storm'.

⁵⁵³ 'What I can do is get up off my knees, and I urge you all to get up off your knees. Yes, I'm getting up off my knees, and I'm saying: I don't need the church to believe. I am a Pole. A free man. I represent no one's voice other than my own'.

obawiam się, że mogę nie otrzymać życia wiecznego. To znaczy Bóg wie, że teoretycznie byłem lepszy lub gorszy, ale dobry [...] ale z kolei Kościół katolicki się przypierdoli ze swoimi dogmatami, spowiedziami, postami i udupią mnie. Mnie. Księdza Grzegorza udupią⁵⁵⁴

(2006a: 132-133).

In this play it is significant that the priest is portrayed as a television character, and therefore as a figure from popular culture rather than a spiritual one. The implication is that, for some Poles, priests are culturally significant more than they are spiritually significant.

Wojcieszek's Boguś also metaphorically rises from his knees after years of being an altar boy and believing in both God and the church. His protest is accentuated through his 'fuck off' tattoo in English on his forehead, and when he tells priest Edmund what it means, this has a double meaning as Boguś tells the church to 'fuck off'. He explains that he decided to get the tattoo done 'Kiedy dowiedziałem się, że Bóg zdechł'⁵⁵⁵ (2006a: 410), a clear reference to Nietzsche. Boguś feels that the church has been feeding him lies. While not explicitly angry at the 'Pole-Catholic' model, he is implicitly so, given the social expectation that a Pole is a Catholic. He also sees the church as one of the authorities against which he rails, the others of which include the education system. Referring to the church congregation, he tells the priest: 'Teraz wiem wszystko. To świnię. Nienawidzę świni! (*Wskazując swój tatuaż*) Mam dosyć tych kłamstw, nie widzisz?'⁵⁵⁶ (2006a: 407). The priest asks him what lies, and he replies: 'Kłamstw, którymi karmisz tę trzodę. Nie wierzę w nie'⁵⁵⁷ (2006a: 407). Edmund asks Boguś if he would like to talk about it, in

⁵⁵⁴ 'I'm scared I might not receive eternal life. I mean God knows that theoretically I wasn't too bad, mainly good [...] but the Catholic church fucks about with its dogmas, confessions, fasts, and it fucks me up. Me. It fucks up Father Grzegorz'.

⁵⁵⁵ 'When I found out that God croaked' (2015a: 266).

⁵⁵⁶ 'Now I know everything. They're pigs! I hate pigs! (*Pointing to his tattoo*) I've had enough of these lies, don't you see?' (2015a: 263).

⁵⁵⁷ 'The lies you feed your flock. I don't believe them' (2015a: 263).

contrast with Sikorska-Miszczyk's church in *Popiełuszko*. Boguś has made his decision, and he replies directly:

Z tobą? Żebyś znowu zasunął mi ten kit? Jestem tu od pięciu lat i od pięciu lat co niedziela zasuwasz mi ten kit. Nie wierzę w życie wieczne, nie wierzę w Nowy Testament, nie wierzę w objawienie Proroków⁵⁵⁸

(2006a: 408).

When Boguś attacks the priest's car, it is an outward expression of the fact that he is 'wkurwiony'⁵⁵⁹ (2006a: 409) with Edmund, the church, and what they represent. Having conformed to social expectations to be a Catholic, he is angered to realise that he finds the teachings mendacious and useless. His ex-teacher Wiktor advises him to go back to church, but he replies: 'Tam nic dla mnie nie ma. Przez pięć lat słuchałem kazań. Znam je na pamięć. Wszystkie są jednakowo puste'⁵⁶⁰ (2006a: 438). Boguś identifies what he sees as hypocrisy, a clash between religion and capitalism, telling the priest that the congregation are pigs because the majority have driven to church 'prosto z supermarketów'⁵⁶¹ (2006a: 409). The priest defends the congregation, saying that they work hard, but Boguś retorts: 'Ale grilla i dresy mogli kupić w sobotę. Co to za religia, w której nie ma zasad i obowiązków?'⁵⁶² (2006a: 408). This perceived incompatibility between the church and consumerism is therefore one of Boguś's objections to the Polish Catholic church in its contemporary context. His rejection of the institution of the Catholic church is related to its complicity in the social marginalisation which capitalism brings with it, despite all their claims to the contrary. In the climactic lines of Boguś's rejection of the church, Edmund tries to reassure Boguś that God exists, with 'On istnieje, Boguś. Jest

⁵⁵⁸ 'With you? So that you can give me this worthless crap all over again? I've been here five years and for five years every Sunday you try to push this shit on me. I don't believe in eternal life, I don't believe in the New Testament, I don't believe in the revelations of the prophets' (2015a: 263).

⁵⁵⁹ 'pissed off' (My translation. Laster translates it in the American idiom as 'pissed' (2015a: 262).

⁵⁶⁰ 'There's nothing there for me. For five years I was an altar boy, for five years I listened to the sermons. I know them by heart. They are all equally hollow' (2015a: 296).

⁵⁶¹ 'straight from the supermarket' (2015a: 263).

⁵⁶² 'But they could've bought their barbecue grills and tracksuits on a Saturday. What kind of religion is this, with no principles and responsibilities?' (2015a: 263).

realny i pewny - jak ty i ja. On istnieje!’⁵⁶³ (2006a: 408). This provokes anger in Boguś, such that ‘*wykonuje dwa, trzy kroki w kierunku EDMUNDA, jakby chciał go uderzyć*’⁵⁶⁴ before replying with an aggression that is potentially shocking for some audience members as he says: ‘Chyba w twoim chorym Mózgu, ty cholerny klecho!’⁵⁶⁵ (2006a: 408).

At the end of the play, in response to witnessing an argument between his two mentors Wiktor and Edmund, Boguś suddenly exclaims: ‘Ja już wiem kim jestem... Jestem... Młodym katolikiem z klasy robotniczej! I wiem czego chcę. Chcę... Życ, chcę...’⁵⁶⁶ (2006a: 461). This line is a particularly explicit illustration of Wojcieszek’s deliberate simplicity of characterisation. He presents here the question as to whether it is possible to be both a member of the working class and a member of the Polish Catholic church in contemporary Polish society. However, it remains ambiguous whether this return to the church and the structure it gives will represent the beginning of a new positive chapter for Boguś, because at the end of the play, in the Wojcieszek (2004) production, the gangsters arrive outside in their car, but the play ends before it is revealed whether they have come back for the rest of the money Boguś owed them.

The most extreme case of a Pole opposing the ‘Pole-Catholic’ model is of course a Pole of a different religion, the most prominent example of which being the Jewish Pole. Polish anti-Semitism as portrayed in the plays has been discussed in Chapter 2, and it is therefore covered only briefly here. In some plays, there are examples in which representatives of the Catholic church could have intervened to protect Jews and did not, as well as examples of anti-Semitism among the public. In *Burmistrz*, Sikorska-Miszczyk’s Townsperson, the anti-Semitic leader of the Townspeople, is a Catholic who, when the dead Jews roam the town, says: ‘wygonić zmarłych, niech Bóg błogosławi nasze Miasto

⁵⁶³ ‘He exists, Boguś. He is real and true – like you and me. He exists!’ (2015a: 264).

⁵⁶⁴ ‘*Boguś takes two, three steps in Edmund’s direction, as if to strike him*’ (2015a: 264).

⁵⁶⁵ ‘In your diseased brain maybe, you fucking missionary!’ (2015a: 264).

⁵⁶⁶ ‘I already know who I am...I am...A young, working-class Catholic. And I know what I want. I want...To live, I want...’ (2015a: 322).

jak twoje!’⁵⁶⁷ (2009a: 27). This is said to the Mayor of New York, and is therefore ironic in the context of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. The play here aligns Catholicism with anti-Semitism, which poses the question as to whether such anti-Semitism is in fact a feature of the Polish Catholic church in contemporary society or whether this is an empty stereotype. At the end of the play there is a ‘piosenka starotestamentowa’⁵⁶⁸ (2009a: 33) which conjures up images of the smoke of the burning barn in Jedwabne and thereby insinuates that God, a Catholic God, was behind the actions of the locals who burned their Jewish neighbours. This leads to debate on whether the townspeople concerned were actually religious in behaviour as well as in name. By extension this questions the nature of religion, and thus challenges the very basis of the conflict between the Catholics and Jews and of the ‘Pole-Catholic’ myth. The lyrics of the song include:

I dym wznosił
Się z tej ziemi
Jak dym z pieca
Bóg to zrobił⁵⁶⁹

(2009a: 34).

This is clearly an allusion to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and to the notion of a Jewish God of the Old Testament taking revenge.

In *Burmistrz II* there are clear examples of explicit anti-Semitism, including letters from Poles in Chicago sent to the Mayor of Jedwabne telling him ‘Solidaryzujemy się z panem i pańską obecnością w Komitecie Obrony Przed Przepraszaniem’⁵⁷⁰ (2011a: 189), and advising the Townspeople:

Szanowni państwo, nie zgadzajcie się, aby robili u was jakiś żydowski cmentarz.
Nawet w Ewangelii jest napisane, że Żydzi to żmijowe plemię. Działajcie tak, aby

⁵⁶⁷ ‘...cast out the dead, and may God bless our Town, as he has yours!’ (2014b: 88).

⁵⁶⁸ ‘Old Testament Song’ (2014b: 96).

⁵⁶⁹ ‘And the smoke rose | Up from that land | Like smoke from a furnace | It was God’s doing’ (2014a: 97).

⁵⁷⁰ ‘We express solidarity with you and your presence in the Committee Against Apologizing’ (2014b: 109).

mniejszość nie była większością. Polska Organizacja Popaprańców
Patriotycznych⁵⁷¹

(2011a: 189).

This extreme language to describe Jewish people highlights the severity of the problem of anti-Semitism and highlights the extent of the marginalisation of Jews, thereby reinforcing the strength of the 'Pole-Catholic' myth. Thus, the play quotes voices which, by promoting this myth, do not leave any space for 'other' Poles, such as Jewish Poles and their history.

Masłowska's *Dżina* in *Dwoje biednych* is another example of a character who firmly opposes the stereotyped 'Pole-Catholic'. She does so primarily through her non-conformism with the notion of a good mother, which is inherent in the stereotype of a good Catholic woman. Magdalena Zaborowska explains that in Poland there is a 'silencing of women' which

arises from a paradoxical construction of femininity as both powerless and powerful, a construction especially visible in representations of the Virgin Mary as a mortal woman and a goddess. The Marian cult is central to the religious experience of Catholic Poles; the Mother of God symbolises both idealised womanhood, meekly serving the Lord, and a divine figure [...]. An embodiment of divine motherhood and an example of feminine subservience

(2002: 168).

Dżina is a bad mother, as is displayed by the fact that she cannot remember where she has left her son, she describes him as ugly, and she possibly commits suicide. She is an ambiguous character, at times powerful and at times utterly powerless. She refuses to conform to the Marian ideal, and is therefore anti-Catholic and by extension anti-Polish according to the 'Pole-Catholic' model. Similarly, in Wojciech's *Cokolwiek*, Magda goes against Catholic ideology when she refuses to visit her sick mother. However, neither

⁵⁷¹ 'To whom it may concern: don't let them set up some Jewish cemetery in your town. Even the Gospels call the Jews a generation of vipers. Don't let the minority become the majority. The Polish Organisation of Patriotic Pudding Heads' (2014b: 109).

character is apologetic or feels any Catholic guilt about it, which serves to highlight the fact that the 'Pole-Catholic' model is a social construction, open to challenge.

4.6 Conclusions

Protagonists that are representations of marginalised people in society are a key feature of several contemporary Polish plays. Commonly, the playwrights advocate for these characters, giving them a strong voice and enabling them to oppose and rise up against their oppression. The writers also employ marginalised characters for dramatic effect. Wojcieszek, for example, uses such characters to trigger identification and sympathy, while Demirski creates controversial characters who stir debate. In many cases, the writers present an opinion or a provocation to the audience in the aim of leading to positive social change which will improve the situation of real marginalised members of society. There is an overarching emphasis on individuality and freedom of thought, beliefs and actions, as is also reflected in Chapter 2.

There is a clear commonality among the playwrights concerned to give a strong voice to marginalised characters, which while not realistic represent real people within contemporary Polish society. In Demirski's *W imię* and Wojcieszek's *Made in Poland*, the protagonists vent their anger at the downsides of the capitalist system. Poor working conditions and the failure of hard-working people to achieve a high standard of living are emphasised in *W imię* as well as Masłowska's *Między nami* and Wojcieszek's *Cokolwiek*. With regard to economic marginalisation and class divides, the playwrights invite the audience to identify with issues without presenting any solutions.

In *Cokolwiek*, and *Tęczowa*, Wojcieszek and Demirski emphatically stress the normality of homosexual relationships in Polish society and they demand that the spectators recognise this point. Wojcieszek does this through a simple, cinematic story of love and family conflict while Demirski does it through a complex, shocking,

confrontational bombardment of the senses. Both writers ultimately depict lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual characters as strong and capable of speaking out against victimisation. These plays are among those that have contributed to public discourse on sexual marginalisation and which are involved in the ongoing process of greater acceptance of sexual differences in contemporary Poland.

In *Popiełuszko*, Sikorska-Miszczyk's Antypolak confronts the audience in provocative, emotional monologues which challenge the notion that he must be a Catholic. In *Dwoje biednych*, Maślowska draws comedy from the notion that Parcha, an actor playing a priest, has lost any religious faith he may have had, and this ties in with notions of religion being a social mask. In *Tęczowa*, through *Hard Done By*, Demirski accentuates issues of gender and sexual marginalisation within the Polish Catholic church. In *Był sobie*, Demirski refers to the failure by some Polish Catholics and by the church to help Jews during World War II, through brief comments made by Old Woman. In Sikorska-Miszczyk's *Burmistrz* this failure is central, as emphasised when Jedwabne's murdered Jews walk through the town, only to be rejected by their neighbours for a second time in the ultimate rejection of a non-Catholic Pole.

All these particular areas of social marginalisation reflect current, topical issues in contemporary Poland. Along with the notion of remembering versus forgetting the past, as discussed in Chapter 2, all these issues are inextricably linked with the reshaping of Polish identity within the country's still relatively new socio-political and economic context. The plays demonstrate that the mythical, homogenous Pole is an unfavourable, outdated construct. The playwrights invite and encourage a broadening of accepted versions of Polishness and an engagement with discourse around difference.

5 Post-totalitarian Theatre, in the Rubble of the Fourth Wall: Key elements of dramatic technique in contemporary Polish playwriting

5.1 Introduction and theoretical framework: Lehmann's postdramatic theatre and Szondi's absolute drama

In this chapter, major elements of dramatic technique are investigated, with reference to the twelve main plays in focus by Demirski, Masłowska, Sikorska-Miszczyk and Wojciech. Commonalities and differences between the writers are identified and discussed. The plays remain the primary source for this chapter, and they are always considered as texts to be performed. Additionally, illustrations are provided from productions, where available, particularly where they highlight the writer's technique. These include examples taken from performances seen live in Poland as well as recordings seen on DVD at the Instytut Teatralny in Warsaw. Consideration is given throughout to various aspects of stage technique including acting style, staging, physical proximity to the audience, use of space, sound, music, costume, lighting, props, multimedia and direction. Academic sources are consulted where possible, usually in Polish. Useful secondary material is also provided by conversations and interviews with writers, actors and directors, some conducted first hand and others from journals such as *Didaskalia* and *Notatnik Teatralny*. Reviews of performances are also consulted, as are conversations with the critic Roman Pawłowski and a lecture given by him at the 2010 R@port festival (2010b). While the playwrights in question do not form any school or group, there are some clearly discernible trends between them in their approaches to dramatic techniques, as well as distinct differences. As has been discussed, these plays share a common engagement with contemporary social issues and socio-political discourse. Central to this social engagement is the relationship with the audience, and all the playwrights employ impactful dramatic

techniques in order to encourage the viewer to engage with the play's themes and concerns.

While the four playwrights in focus approach traditional dramatic structures differently, each of them rejects the classical rules of drama to a greater or lesser extent. They do not write mimetic, naturalistic plays. Instead, these are dramas of free speech and free expression, in which dominant structures are challenged: those relating to dramatic form, linguistic form, genre, relationship with the audience, social hierarchies and inherited modes of thinking. In the majority of the plays, social reality is approached through entirely non-realistic dramatic techniques. While a large part of dramatic technique depends on performance and on directorial choices, approaches to certain elements of dramatic technique are inherent in the text, although these can of course still be manipulated in production. Those text-based techniques will be prioritised here since they can be evidenced by the script and supported by performances. They include structure and approaches to time, place and action, as well as character and language.

The most common characteristics of the plays studied resonate with Hans-Thies Lehmann's theory of postdramatic theatre, which was proposed in his book of the same name that was first printed in German in 1999. The presence of postdramatic elements in new Polish plays is indicative of the substantial influence of German theatre on the contemporary Polish scene. Lehmann's book was published in Polish in 2004, and in English in 2006 (Lehmann 2006). This theory was, therefore, readily accessible in Poland two years before it was in England. The concept of postdramatic theatre is problematic in its breadth. However, translator Karen Jürs-Munby explains in her introduction to the English edition of *Postdramatic Theatre* that the theory had 'already become a key reference point in international discussions of contemporary theatre' (2006: 1) even before the book was published in English. Jürs-Munby asserts that Lehmann's study 'obviously

answered a vital need for a comprehensive and accessible theory articulating the relationship between drama and the ‘no longer dramatic’ forms of theatre that have emerged since the 1970s’ (2006: 1). Despite its generalisations, the term postdramatic theatre has become a significant one in international theatre studies. Lehmann acknowledges the specific relevance of the concept to Polish theatre, naming Witkiewicz as a precursor to the theatre of the absurd, which is a phenomenon closely related to Lehmann’s theory. He also explicitly claims that Witkiewicz’s ideas have fed into postdramatic theatre (2006: 1804). Lehmann does not mention any Polish work later than that of Kantor or Grotowski. Despite this, certain aspects of Lehmann’s theory compare closely with recurrent trends in many contemporary Polish plays, which might usefully be described as *relating* to postdramatic theatre, if not *being* postdramatic. In *dramat made (in) Poland*, Wojciech Baluch refers to recent debate in Poland over the extent to which contemporary Polish playwriting can be seen to be postdramatic. He says that despite a trend for describing contemporary drama as postdramatic, ‘znacząca część dramatów ostatniego dwudziestolecia w Polsce wpisuje raczej w tradycyjny paradygmat’⁵⁷² (Baluch, ed., 2009: 13). This may be the case, and it does not preclude other works from being non-traditional, but it is also important to bear in mind that Polish theatrical tradition includes surrealism and absurdism, both of which relate stylistically to the postdramatic label. Some of what is considered traditional in Poland might well relate to what we in Britain might consider to be postdramatic, and Lehmann notes that there are ancestors of the postdramatic in Polish theatrical tradition. It is not impossible, therefore, for a play to meet with Polish tradition as well as with elements of the postdramatic, and thus to share characteristics with both the traditional and the postdramatic. According to the 2010 dictionary of Polish theatre since 1997 (Pawłowski 2010a), Polish practitioners such as

⁵⁷² ‘a significant proportion of drama from the last twenty years in Poland is in fact written in a rather traditional paradigm’.

Tadeusz Kantor, Jerzy Grzegorzewski and Leszek Mądzik can be counted among the precursors to postdramatic theatre, and postdramatic strategies can be seen in the work of contemporary Polish directors, such as Wiktor Rubin, Jan Klata and Marcin Liber (Pawłowski 2012: 257-258). Although Lehmann's theory refers mainly to theatre in performance, certain elements of it may be applied to text. Roman Pawłowski asserts in his book *New Polish Drama: Polish Drama in the Face of Transformation* that some new Polish plays can be defined as postdramatic (2008: 16), thus disagreeing with Baluch, and he reiterated this point in his lecture at R@port (2010b). Monika Wasilewska supports Pawłowski's viewpoint, arguing that the 'dominująca dziś procedura artystyczna' is a 'postdramatyczny odwrót od idei sztuki przedstawiającej'⁵⁷³ (2009: 64). It is not the intention here to defend the theory of the postdramatic, but to demonstrate that despite its flaws it can illuminate commonalities in dramatic technique in the plays in focus.

Providing a clear definition of postdramatic theatre is difficult because of its scope. It is an umbrella term held somewhat precariously over a number of theatrical styles, many of which already had functioning labels, such as visual theatre, physical theatre and total theatre. In many ways Lehmann offers retrospective description and fairly distanced observation rather than in-depth analysis or clear categorisation. He blurs the important boundaries of socio-cultural and socio-historical differences between countries by making generalisations that sweep across European and American theatre with unequal emphasis on the different countries he surveys. According to Jüers-Munby, Lehmann relates 'theatre and performance to postmodernism' and 'sets out to find a language for the new theatre forms [...] by systematically considering their relation to dramatic theory and theatre history [...] he also explores theatre's relationship to the changing media constellation in

⁵⁷³ 'the dominant artistic procedure today is a postdramatic departure from the idea of representational art'.

the twentieth century, in particular the historical shift out of a textual culture and into a “mediatised” image and sound culture’ (2006: 228). Lehmann defines postdramatic theatre as post-Brechtian theatre, existing ‘in a time *after* the authoritative validity of Brecht’s theatre concept’ (2006: 1008).

Jürs-Munby usefully and concisely explains that Lehmann takes as one of his starting points Peter Szondi’s 1956 theory of absolute drama (Szondi 1987), which Szondi was not advocating but describing, and which contrasts starkly with the concept of postdramatic theatre. Jürs-Munby describes absolute drama as a kind of ‘self-contained form’ characterised by

the dominance of dialogue and interpersonal communication; the exclusion of anything external to the dramatic world (including the dramatist and the spectators, who are condemned to silent observation); the unfolding of time as a linear sequence in the present; and the adherence to the three unities of time, place and action

(2006: 3).

This concise summary by Jürs-Munby of what absolute drama *is* provides a clear definition of what postdramatic theatre is *not*, thereby helping to define its characteristics. The plays analysed are categorically not ‘absolute’ drama, and in that sense alone they share commonalities with the concept of the postdramatic. Additionally, Polish academic Dorota Jarząbek proposes that fantasy is a key characteristic of contemporary Polish plays. She explains that she understands fantasy as including ‘gry z postacią, fabułą, czasem i przestrzenią, czerpiące z tradycji groteski, ironii, niezwykłości, baśniowości i pozwalające spojrzeć na tekst jako poetycką całość, a nie wyłącznie *pars pro toto* rzeczywistości danego czasu’⁵⁷⁴ (2009: 45). Fantasy is undoubtedly a useful notion to have in mind when exploring these texts, and these characteristics can all come under the term postdramatic

⁵⁷⁴ ‘playing with character, plot, time and space, drawing on the tradition of grotesque, irony, the unusual, the fairytale and allowing the text to be viewed as a poetic whole, and not just a *pars pro toto* of the reality of a given time’.

theatre. There are also clear similarities between some of the plays and aspects of theatre of the absurd, and again Lehmann links these elements with the postdramatic.

In Szondi's absolute drama, dialogue is dominant. In postdramatic theatre and in the plays in question, dialogue is often one of many structures, subordinate to other constructions. Lines often follow on from each other without resulting in any significant communicative exchange. Monologues are common, frequently lengthy, sometimes spanning several pages of text. Poetry, songs and chorus are also regular features alongside prose, in works that are a hybrid of linguistic formats. While in absolute drama dialogue is a vehicle for interpersonal communication, in contemporary Polish plays, as in postdramatic theatre, characters are frequently insufficiently human-like to be capable of anything resembling interpersonal communication. Characters include stereotypes, archetypes, stock characters, two-dimensional conveyors of a political point or social issue, the undead, ghosts, and in some cases a grotesque part-human part-animal or part-human part-machine. Although in several examples from performances the acting style is close to realism at points, there is rarely any intrinsic suggestion that the characters are psychologically real.

In absolute drama, the outside world is excluded. In the plays in focus, the outside world is thematised, referenced, analysed, criticised, named, fictionalised and addressed. This is one of the key methods of engaging with the audience. Many plays feature dramatisations of real people, quotations, intertextualities with other works and contemporary popular culture, references to global brands, and 'real' language, which commonly involves heavy use of so-called 'bad' language. While the voice of the dramatist is silent in absolute drama, it is directly heard in many of the plays studied, for example through comedic stage directions, scene titles, autobiographical references, and even the inclusion of lines spoken by the author in the body of the text. All of these are

techniques for communicating with the spectator, of entering into their world and bringing the spectator into the world of the drama while holding them at an emotional distance to the characters but not to the themes. Far from being excluded or silenced as in absolute drama, in contemporary Polish plays the spectator is often addressed directly, or is placed in close physical proximity with the action, or even confronted. The playwrights require their spectators to be active, putting together fragmentary works and responding to the playwrights' engagement with social discourse. Humour is of paramount importance in the majority of the plays, even those that deal with heavy issues. Comedy, especially irony, acknowledges the spectator in that it requires a shared understanding, a common starting point that enables the viewer to know that what is being said is not what is actually meant. Laughter is of course audible and therefore makes spectators more aware of each other. It is also a form of feedback to the performers, a communication from the audience members in the off-stage world to the actors who are creating the on-stage world. In all cases the spectator is identified as a social being, an individual capable of effecting change within themselves and impacting on wider society. The audience is acknowledged through themes integral to a shared society, a shared country, in a shared time. Although all the plays are about contemporary Poland on a fundamental level and they all have scenes in them that are set in contemporary Poland, within the plays time is frequently fluid and rarely fixed. Plot is rarely linear, place is often transient, and action is often disjointed.

While Lehmann states that in postdramatic theatre the text is not dominant but 'merely a component with equal rights in a gestic, musical, visual, [...] total composition' (2006: 1335), the plays under scrutiny are clearly text-based. In that sense, they cannot be labelled postdramatic, and are closer to a theatre of words. However, many of the plays have intrinsic postdramatic qualities and lend themselves to 'postdramatic' stagings.

Further evidence from postdramatic theory will underpin a close analysis of the play texts, along with secondary sources and examples from productions.

In this chapter, given that character, speech modes, time, place and action all relate to overall structure and are all unfixed in many of the plays, these are dealt with together in the subsection on structure to avoid repetition. There then follows an exploration of the plays' relationships with the real world, including 'real' people as characters, intertextualities and bad language. Finally there is a discussion of the presence of the dramatist's voice and the acknowledgement of the spectator, including through comedic techniques such as irony.

5.2 Loose talk and shifting spaces: fluid time, place and plot

The notion of a well-structured play is generally based on Aristotelian principles of unity: of time, place and action, with one major plotline. Peter Szondi built on these unities in developing his theory of absolute drama. There is a clear and strong tendency among the playwrights in question to entirely shun notions of Aristotelian unity and Szondi's idea of absolute drama. Frequently the plays have an open structure as opposed to a traditional three-act structure with its intrinsic linearity of plot. These open structures often fit with a sense of searching for a new direction, identity or attitude and reflect the exploration of new stage languages. These plays that do not include classical, realist, naturalist or absolute characters or dialogue, need not, nor cannot, adhere to traditional structures. The three-act structure is just one of many conventions and authoritative voices that these writers commonly reject. Even though it appears at first sight, on the page, that Masłowska follows the three-act structure, this is a comedic device employed by the playwright to emphasise her deviation from classical theatrical conventions. Masłowska's acts do not in fact signify any unity of action, time or place, all of which she freely manipulates.

At least one of the unities of time, place and action is challenged in each of the plays, and none of the writers adheres to all three of these at any one time. In most of the plays by Demirski, Masłowska and Sikorska-Miszczyk, there are examples of different points in time and different periods in history being juxtaposed, meeting or overlapping. Particularly in plays by Masłowska and Sikorska-Miszczyk, the concept of a 'time before' and a 'time after' is a common motif, and these times are often juxtaposed, interwoven, or made to meet or confront each other.

Wojciech's plays resemble a forward-moving, linear structure but there are several subplots running beneath the central protagonists' stories. Wojciech generally adheres to the linear progression of time with no analepsis, prolepsis, or reported speech, but there are instances where he manipulates time to allow characters to appear with superhero timing at just the right moment, for example in *Made in Poland* when Monika appears out of nowhere just after Boguś has realised what he wants from life, and he immediately makes her a proposal of marriage. Similarly, Wiktor appears out of nowhere when Boguś is being beaten up by the gangsters. By establishing the use of such theatrical techniques throughout the play Wojciech builds up to the pinnacle moment when a beam of light comes down from above and rubs off Boguś's tattoo. In the text published in 2006 (Pawłowski and Sulek, eds, 2006), this happens at Boguś's wedding reception during a performance by Krzysztof Krawczyk, the pop star idolised by Boguś's mother Irena, whom she has brought to the reception as a surprise. The situation is clearly surreal, reminiscent of a kind of superhero or fairytale reality, and depending on how it is staged it might have a pseudo-religious feel to it and could potentially be satirical. In the Wojciech (2004) production, the on-stage action ends a few moments after Monika has agreed to marry Boguś. He picks her up, spins her round and leaves shouting for his mother and Monika's brother. The curtain call takes place with his tattoo intact. This cuts the most surreal

dimension from the text. There is no wedding reception scene, and the cameo from Krawczyk takes place once the audience have left the theatre space, as a film projected onto an apartment block, with the real Krawczyk speaking to camera, his face the size of much of the side of the building. The final scenes in the original printed text were also omitted from the later film version (Wojcieszek 2010). At the Kinoteka Polish film festival in London in 2011, after a screening of the film I asked Wojcieszek why the final scene was cut, and whether it was his decision. He explained that he had shot the scene but decided himself to cut it 'because it was shit' (Wojcieszek 2011). Presumably Wojcieszek felt the scenes did not work on stage either which explains their absence from the stage production. These cuts alter the overall tone of the ending of the play and screenplay, making the whole piece seem more conventional and less surreal. Presumably Wojcieszek left out this original scene not only because it would be difficult to stage but also in order to avoid a potentially incongruous shift in genre. The version of the text printed in the 2013 *Trans/formacja* anthology (Kopciński, ed., 2013) reflects the Wojcieszek stage production, with the tattoo-removal scene omitted. There are other differences between the text published in 2006 in the *Made in Poland* anthology (Pawłowski and Sulek, eds, 2006) on the one hand and the Wojcieszek (2004) production on the other, which reflects the text published in 2013. For example, the gangster Tomaszek in the text published in 2006 is, in the Wojcieszek (2004) production and in the 2013 text, a female character called Karina. In addition to directorial choices, it is always the case that texts change in performance, perhaps particularly when the director is the writer as in this production. The ending in the second version of the text is more ambiguous and less definitively a happy ending.

Wojcieszek makes frequent changes of place in his texts. Each of the two main Wojcieszek plays in focus here has one clear protagonist: Boguś in *Made in Poland* and Magda in *Cokolwiek*. Each protagonist encounters several antagonists, introduced

throughout the play in reasonably quick succession within an episodic structure. In *Cokolwiek* the action is divided into seventeen scenes which are named according to location, which resembles a film script. The scenes are not divided into a classical three-act structure per se, but the action is punctuated by three poetry slam competitions that take place at the beginning, in the middle and near the end. Thus to a degree it resembles a three act structure. The multiple changes in location were achieved in the Wojcieszek (2005) production through changes in lighting, props, small items of set, and the positioning of the characters in the space. These changes in place were therefore not problematic, despite a small performance space.

Made in Poland is composed of 37 short, numbered scenes in the 2006 version, and this is slightly reduced in the 2013 version with some scenes being merged and some very short, mainly descriptive scenes being cut. In both plays, the action shifts frequently between many different locations, presenting a challenge for the director, designer and budget. At first sight the episodic structure, frequent introduction of new characters and many scene changes all seem unsympathetic to the practicalities and conventions of theatre. However, a closer inspection reveals that this format mirrors the protagonist's character journey, albeit a simplistic one. Wojcieszek, as director, uses minimal set to represent each location, meaning that changes are less technical. Shifts in location in the internal stage space are represented by minimal changes in set and props, carried out by the actors, such as the bartender character wheeling on a trolley with a counter and beer taps to represent the bar. In the Wojcieszek (2005) production of *Made in Poland* the space outside the theatre is used as part of the performance space, with scenes being visible through floor to ceiling windows. The production was set inside a disused supermarket in Legnica, with raked seating and a ground level playing space. Within the play, Wojcieszek's frequent use of fast-shifting location from scene to scene contributed to the

overall cinematic style of the piece, which was further emphasised by the use of real world spaces both inside and outside.

In Demirski plays, the characters usually operate in the present mode, with a minimum of reported speech or explanation of past action. However, the particular point in time in which this present mode is set shifts between various points in history during the plays. Demirski sometimes makes these shifts clear through projected scene titles, sometimes they happen without warning and are deliberately disorientating, forcing the viewer or reader to make connections between different times and places that are linked together thematically. In Demirski's plays, there are several intertwined stories that occur in different times and places. Changes of time and place might be marked by a projection of explanatory text without any discernible change in characterisation, set, props, costume or lighting. Demirski plays in productions directed by Strzępka are high-octane and chaotic, and the audience has to connect the pieces of the fractured structures. The fragmented plot-lines draw attention to the play's major themes over and above any one storyline, constantly keeping the spectator actively engaged.

In describing his approach to plot when discussing his decision to use the television serial *Czterej pancerni i pies* as the basis for *Niech żyje*, Demirski explains:

Ten serial był nośnikiem pewnej ideologii. Zwarta fabuła była wtedy w dobrym kinie i dobrym teatrze wymagana. Ciągłe zresztą spójna struktura fabularna jest miarą dobrej roboty w teatrze. Stąd nasza decyzja, by kompletnie zrezygnować w spektaklu z fabularyzowania. W tym sensie fabularność nie interesuje już nas zupełnie⁵⁷⁵

(Baran 2010: 2).

Masłowska, like Demirski, hops from one point in time to another, from one reality to another, sometimes with sharp contrast and very short scenes between changes,

⁵⁷⁵ 'That serial was a vehicle for a certain ideology. A well made plot was in those days a requirement of good film and good theatre. Moreover a coherent plot structure is still a measure of good quality work in the theatre. That led to our decision to completely reject plotline in this play. In that sense plot doesn't interest us at all'.

sometimes with blurred boundaries between one level of reality and another. Some elements are fixed at certain points in each of the two Masłowska plays, but never all three unities at once. In *Między nami* there is unity of place with all the action being set in the same flat, but time and plot are at the mercy of the writer, changing within an act. Ostensibly, *Dwoje biednych* is in three acts, but within those acts time flits frequently between the present, the past and the reported past. The forward motion of Parcha's need to get back to Warsaw for work underpins the structure, but this linearity is interrupted by flashbacks and reported past, and the time frame of the play expands beyond his return to Warsaw and to an ambiguous situation in which, in the Wojcieszek (2006) production, the events are being reported to a police officer or detective. While there is one driving thread of the actor's need to get back on set, there is no unity of time or plot, but fluidity of time and place. This is also the case in the Glińska (2013) production which begins in the tone of a rehearsed reading in which two police officers, one of them a man in drag, read out stage directions from a script in direct address to the audience. This is followed by enacted and reported scenes in which the past and present interweave.

The first section of *Dwoje biednych* includes the reporting of a past event, when the protagonists hijack the Driver's car, which is then shown as if happening in the present. This compares with the structure of Sikorska-Miszczyk's *Burmistrz* and with the prologue nature of the first scene in Wojcieszek's *Made in Poland*. Having set up this device of reporting and then showing the reported past in the present tense, rather than as an enactment of the past still in the reported mode, Masłowska flits between the reported and the portrayed, sometimes with less than a line between the switch of modes, sometimes more than a scene. The first scene claims to begin in a petrol station but swiftly moves out of that actual setting into the reporting of what happened there. In this play, place is as insecure as time and reality, with locations constantly moving, being fixed for a while, and

moving again. There are frequent switches between past and present, current and reported. For example, in a scene in which Dżina and Parcha have stopped the driver's car and are being confronted by a Police Officer, the driver is reporting on the action in the past while the other characters are enacting it as the present. The Police Officer asks 'Coś się stało?',⁵⁷⁶ to which Parcha replies 'Wszystko w absolutnym porządku. My jesteśmy biednymi uczciwymi Rumunami mówiącymi po polsku',⁵⁷⁷ and the Driver follows with 'Nie napisałem numerów rejestracyjnych tych dwóch policjantów',⁵⁷⁸ (2006b: 112).

In the time zone of the present after Dżina's fancy dress party, which is the time that is subsequently reported, the action moves chaotically between different points on Dżina and Parcha's journey. The psychological journey of their 'come down' from drugs they used at the party prior to the timeframe of the play parallels Parcha's physical journey of trying to get back to Warsaw in time to be on set to play a priest in a television series. The last scene occurs in the latter part of the reported time zone. Dżina is found hanging, and while in the original text there is some ambiguity over whether this act is real within the world of the play, in the Wojcieszek (2006) production the ending is brutal, with no redemption or ambiguity, and as such is in fact a little conspicuous and out of synch with the playful, comedic, anarchic tone of the rest of the production. In the Glińska (2013) production the ending is more ambiguous, because Dżina is seen in a pair of angel wings, dancing with Parcha. However, the two police officers then return to reading out stage directions to the audience, and one of them reads '*A tam wisi Dżina*'⁵⁷⁹ (2006b: 140) before a sudden sharp blackout. This is impactful, partly because it seems to contradict the preceding stage image which allowed a happy ending. It emphasises one of the play's

⁵⁷⁶ 'Is there something wrong?'

⁵⁷⁷ 'Everything is absolutely fine. We are poor, honest, Polish-speaking Romanians'.

⁵⁷⁸ 'I didn't write down these two police officers' badge numbers'.

⁵⁷⁹ 'And there hangs Dżina'.

major themes around reality and pretence, and the audience does not know what is ‘real’ even within the world of the play.

In contrast, *Między nami* is underpinned by consistency of place, with all the action set in the same geographical location of a Warsaw apartment block. However, identity is shown to be dependent on circumstance, as it is in *Dwoje biednych*. In *Między nami*, Acts 1 and 2 are in 5 scenes each, and Act 3 is in 3 scenes, but within each act different time periods overlap without warning as the real and imagined inhabitants of the same apartment cross paths. It is a multilayered play reminiscent of Kieślowski’s *Three Colours* film trilogy (1993 and 1994) in its overlapping of lives. In the case of the play, the overlapping brings together different points in time in the same space, with significant sections of the presented action being fictional even within the world of the play since they involve characters who never lived, and the playwright interweaves these different layers of history and reality. Actual narrated past, present, future and non-narrated imagined past, present and future all converge. Masłowska juxtaposes the filmmaker Man’s life with that of Old Woman and her imaginary daughter and granddaughter. The flat is a symbol of personal and national past, and it is a site where different possible versions of history are played out.

In both of these works by Masłowska, the world of the play begins after past events that are the germination of the story but are not shown in the play. In *Dwoje biednych* this is the fancy dress party and in *Między nami* it is the time before and during the war while Old Woman was young, which is shown at the end of the play when the moment at which Old Woman is bombed is portrayed, but it is overlain with the imaginary plane in which Girl exists. These choices add to the plays’ web-like structures and contribute to their unconventional structure which presents the audience with various ‘jigsaw pieces’ they have to put together. In *Między nami*, the audience has to work out that there are many

different layers of imagined reality: Old Woman's 'real' past, her imagined future and that of her imagined ancestors and neighbours, and the subsequent, yet distorted past in which she exists alongside her fictional granddaughter.

While in *Między nami* the fixed point is the place, in *Dwoje biednych* the fixed points are the two protagonists, though their state is fluid as they move between different psycho-physical states as their drugs wear off. This play is a combination of an adventure story, a road trip, and a metaphor. Dżina and Parcha move from a shared, common, positive experience to a depressed, antagonistic parallel existence. There are a lot of geographical shifts, with scenes taking place in several locations including a petrol station, a bar, in two different cars, an old man's house. As has been mentioned above, there are also multiple shifts in time and sudden cuts from one time plane to another and between the reporting of the past and the depiction of the past as reported or as present. This highlights the notion of fictionality and its place in the construction of identity, as the audience is constantly presented with the question of what is real and what is unreal.

Like Masłowska's and Demirski's work, Sikorska-Miszczyk's plays follow a non-linear structure. Sikorska-Miszczyk creates montages of scenes which are not necessarily connected at all in any tangible chronology. Instead scenes are connected thematically or symbolically, and Sikorska-Miszczyk's plays are frequently poetic in style and form, often chaotic, complex and disjointed, while gentler in tone than Demirski's work. Sikorska-Miszczyk frequently underpins the overall structure with the notion of a 'time before' and a 'time after', as well as often including anagnorisis, a moment of truth or revelation, or a discovery of truth. In some plays there is a peripeteia, a reversal of fortune preceding the downfall of a character, or a second chance. As in the work of Masłowska, reported past is common in Sikorska-Miszczyk's plays and there are frequent shifts in mood, time and location. *Walizka* is a non-linear plot full of reported events, with frequent analepsis and

prolepsis, similar to Masłowska's approach to time but differing from Wojciech's and Demirski's. *Burmistrz* opens with two versions of the same character on stage: Mayor Before and Mayor After. The former introduces a series of non-linear scenes beginning in the time before the truth about Jedwabne was revealed. This is similar to the prologue-type first scene in Masłowska's *Dwoje biednych*.

For Mayor Before, the moment of revelation of truth signifies the peripeteia, the reversal of his fortunes, and the beginning of his downfall from his position of power as Mayor of Jedwabne because the locals turn against him. It represents the turning point between the time before and the time after, and for him there is no second chance. The Townspeople have the opportunity to interact with Jewish people - both with Miss and with the walking dead Jews of the town, but rather than reconcile themselves with their neighbours, they reinforce their ancestors' anti-Semitism, thus failing to avail themselves of their second chance. For Fransua in *Walizka*, the moment of truth is the discovery of his father's name, Pantofelnik, on a suitcase at the Holocaust museum in Paris. For Fransua, unlike for Mayor, the anagnorisis and subsequent peripeteia represent a change in fortune for the better. This turning point also marks the division into a time before and a time after: between Fransua Żako and Fransua Pantofelnik, once he has taken his father's surname. As a result of the positive impact on Fransua of his imagined second chance to meet his father, Narrator predicts that Fransua will go on to have a second chance at his relationship with his estranged wife.

In *Żelazna*, Screenwriter's life is divided into a time before she was abused and a time after: she left part of herself at the scene of abuse. Sikorska-Miszczyk brings these two halves of the same person face to face. The adult Screenwriter tells her child self Ania: 'Wyszłam, a ty tam zostałam'⁵⁸⁰ (2009e: 3). However, once Screenwriter has revealed the

⁵⁸⁰ 'I left and you stayed there'.

truth about her abuse to Czarnuch in her dream and to Director, she creates a second chance for herself. She revisits the scene of abuse and reunites with her child self, marking a new, more positive 'time after'. Screenwriter also experiences a second chance to work with Steven Spielberg after having rejected his initial offer. Flying out to Los Angeles in Spielberg's private jet at the end of the play, she leaves the 'time before' as a struggling writer in Poland and enters a 'time after' as a known writer in Hollywood. These approaches to time are characteristic of Sikorska-Miszczyk's technique. In her plays, the present is seen as a place for moving on emotionally, and she uses abstract non-linear plays to advocate a linear, forward-moving progression in real life.

The techniques discussed here relating to shifting time and a delineation between a 'time before' and 'time after' are connected with the ongoing processes of reshaping cultural identity and reassessing the nation's relationship with its history. The past is portrayed as something to be acknowledged but no longer inhabited. The past is revisited and it enters the present to varying extents in different plays, but the main focus is on the present. In Wojciech and Masłowska plays the disunity of space contributes to a film-like language of theatre, while Demirski's plays are unfixed in time and space, creating maximum focus on the presence of the performer.

5.3 Characterisation: Unreal characters

5.3.1 Introduction

Jüres-Munby describes dialogue and interpersonal communication as dominant characteristics of Szondi's absolute drama. This assumes that characters are sufficiently human-like to be able to replicate interpersonal exchange through dialogue that serves communication. Although all the writers differ from each other in their precise approaches to character and dialogue, none of them writes purely realistic plays with Stanislavskian, psychologically rounded characters and naturalistic dialogue. While there are elements of

mimesis in some plays, the predominant tone that emerges from a collective reading of the works is completely unrealistic. In some cases the acting style leads to a realistic portrayal of an unrealistic character. Nevertheless, the overall effect is usually one of fictionality, storytelling, or fantasy, even though the subject matter always relates closely to contemporary Polish reality. Dialogue is frequently parallel with or subordinate to other linguistic formats such as monologue, poetry and song.

There are a range of different types of unrealistic characters in the plays examined. At one end of the spectrum are non-human characters and the walking dead that feature in some plays by Demirski, Masłowska and Sikorska-Miszczyk, and at the other end are the stock characters, stereotypes and two-dimensional pseudo-real characters of Wojcieszek. In between these two extremes are characters in plays by Demirski, Masłowska and Sikorska-Miszczyk whose humanness is distorted by extreme psycho-physical states and intoxication, and other characters that are sketch-like, simplified representatives of a type of person or issue rather than an attempt at recreating psychological reality.

5.3.2 Non-human and part-human characters

Non-human and part-human characters appear in some plays by Demirski and Sikorska-Miszczyk. In *Walizka*, Fransua's Answerphone is part-human in the sense that rather than being a recorded voice with a set message it is personified, as Żaklin, and she ad-libs her greetings. She comments on Fransua's life, saying, for example: 'Nie ma go w domu, ponieważ wyruszył do museum, nie wiedząc po co i dlaczego, choć głos wewnętrzny podpowiada mu, że w poszukiwaniu Prawdy'⁵⁸¹ (2008b: 6). In the Kruszczyński (2009) production, her speeches are performed in the seductive tone of a television advertisement, with musical underscoring. This adds humour as well as connecting the character with the modern world in which Fransua lives, emphasising the

⁵⁸¹ 'He's not at home because he's gone to a museum, not knowing why or what for, but a voice inside tells him it's in search of the Truth'.

present. It also exposes language structures of advertisements and breaks the conventions of language that are followed in answerphone messages. It plays with conventions of narration in that the character is omnipotent and can move in and out of the other characters' spheres of reality as well as being able to talk directly to the audience. When someone telephones Fransua, Sikorska-Miszczuk has Answerphone address the audience as if they have telephoned him. Answerphone also functions as a narrator of Fransua's feelings and psychology, which he himself does not fully express. Żaklin is an answerphone with feelings herself. The stage directions explain that '*w miarę mówienia uświadamia sobie, że Fransua Żako nie ma w domu, a to sprawia, że czuje się swobodniej*'⁵⁸² (2008b: 6). Żaklin is allured by Narrator's words to the audience, and she falls in love with him. She says 'Wszystko słyszałam. Przejdę do pana po kablu',⁵⁸³ before the surreal stage direction '*Przechodzi po kablu*'⁵⁸⁴ (2008b: 6). Clearly the different levels of fictional reality intertwine here, allowing Fransua's Answerphone not only to hear Narrator but to choose to enter his world.

In *Burmistrz II*, Gross's book *Sąsiedzi: historia zagłady żydowskiego miasteczka*⁵⁸⁵ (2000), which triggered the revelations of truth about the Jedwabne massacre, is personified as Book, as has been mentioned. The style in which this character is portrayed is open to a wide range of interpretations, likely to always be comedic and therefore to lighten the tone of the book's content. Book is disgusted by its own contents, saying 'Prawdopodobnie twarda okładka została wybrana ze względów utylitarnych. Jeśli ktoś w trakcie lektury niespodziewane zwymiotuje, mam szansę nie rozlecieć się od razu'⁵⁸⁶ (2011a: 184). Book's lines are in prose, in contrast to the sections of verse used to

⁵⁸² 'While speaking she realises that Fransua Żako is not at home, and that makes her feel more at ease'.

⁵⁸³ 'I heard everything. I'm coming to you down the wire'.

⁵⁸⁴ 'She comes down the wire'.

⁵⁸⁵ *Neighbours: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (Gross 2003).

⁵⁸⁶ 'The hard cover was probably chosen for practical reasons. If someone suddenly throws up while reading, there's a chance I won't fall apart at once' (2014b: 101).

highlight Mayor's thoughtful moments. Book is therefore down to earth despite being unreal, meaning that its statements cannot be dismissed as abstract. It says 'Cała składam się ze Strasznych Zdań'⁵⁸⁷ (2011a: 185), before quoting sentences from the real publication. The capitalisation here emphasises the personification of the book and its contents, which will be discussed further in the section on intertextualities.

Another part-human character is seen in *Żelazna* in the form of Great Golden Bird, an embodiment of the Polish national emblem of the white eagle and a parody of what it represents. It crows:

My, Polacy, Złote Ptacy!
Prawda nas wyzwoli, lecz raczej powoli.
To tylko chciałem powiedzieć i odlatuję⁵⁸⁸

(2009e: 60).

The use of 'ptacy'⁵⁸⁹ rather than 'ptaki' is a deliberate linguistic error, playing on the fact that the bird is being personified. This character symbolises nationalist, false versions of history. The grandiose opening exclamation is undermined by the subsequent phrases, and the last line of this section is underconfident and informal, subverting the linguistic format of the declamation and undermining its own authority.

In Demirski's *Niech żyje*, the fact that Szarik is part-man, part-dog is established by his first line. Although Szarik appears human, in military uniform, his character is introduced with the sound 'wrff wrff'⁵⁹⁰ (2011e: 347). This bark appears only once in the text as printed in *Parafrazy* but was repeated intermittently in Adam Wolańczyk's portrayal in the Strzępka (2009) production, which conveyed the notion that the character is a human who has become dog-like. While on the one hand Szarik is Stalin's dog, on the other hand he represents victim-soldiers affected negatively by war. Ostensibly a 'pies-

⁵⁸⁷ 'I am all made up of Horrific Sentences' (2014b: 103).

⁵⁸⁸ 'We Poles! Golden Birds! | The truth will free us, just rather slowly. | That's all I wanted to say and now I'm off'.

⁵⁸⁹ 'ptacy' has the noun ending used for people.

⁵⁹⁰ 'woof woof!'.

veteran'⁵⁹¹ (Wichowska 2009: 1), Szarik is essentially a human character. As Monika Strzępka explains, Szarik

Nie jest psem, chyba że psem Stalina, enkawudzistą. Szarik ma w spektaklu kilka wcieleń, ale nie są to odrębne tożsamości. Zależało nam na tym, żeby go rozmazać, stworzyć rodzaj hybrydy tożsamościowej. Teoretycznie niemożliwej. [...] Szarik jest obrazem kombatanta i na jakimś poziomie przestaje mieć znaczenie, czy to jest żołnierz Wehrmachtu, czy Armii Czerwonej, czy Armii Krajowej. To figura ofiary wojennej, która, uprawiając swoje kombatantstwo, świętuje wyrok śmierci wydany na siebie przez władzę⁵⁹²

(Kwaśniewska 2010: 50).

This highlights Demirski's open approach to characterisation, in which a character can be unfixed or carry multiple significations. In turn this underlines the spectator's role as an interpreter and analyst of ambiguous aspects of Demirski and Strzępka's stage language.

In *Między nami*, Masłowska's Monika is another non-human, or perhaps ex-human, as she is the personification of a character from a computer game but laments her lack of human qualities. She is bored by her non-existence and believes she really comes from Western Europe and has wanted to return there since birth. This character conveys the idea of a person trapped in a virtual world, which relates to Girl in the same play, and the young people she represents, who are submerged in the world of the internet and other media but also in historical legacies.

As these examples show, Demirski, Sikorska-Miszczyk and Masłowska all use non-human or part-human characters to engage with the spectator's imagination without inviting any emotional attachment. This technique encourages the audience to become involved in the fantasy world of the play and to see its bigger themes without focusing on the details of a particular character.

⁵⁹¹ 'dog-veteran'.

⁵⁹² 'He's not a dog, maybe Stalin's dog, a member of the NKW. Szarik has in the play several incarnations but they are not distinct identities. It was important to us to blur him, to create a hybrid identity. Theoretically impossible. [...] Szarik is an image of a veteran and to a degree it ceases to matter whether that's a soldier of the Wehrmacht or the Red Army or the Home Army. He is a figure of a war offering, who in being a veteran celebrates the death sentence given to him by the authorities'.

5.3.3 Ghosts and the undead

With their roots in a tradition that includes the classical Mickiewicz drama *Dziady*,⁵⁹³ ghosts and ghouls are far from unfamiliar on the Polish stage. Dead characters appear in Sikorska-Miszczyk's *Walizka* - in the form of the ghost of Fransua Żako's father who is released when Fransua opens his father's suitcase, and in *Burmistrz* in which the murdered Jews of Jedwabne walk the streets. In *Burmistrz II* the dead Jews are represented through quotations from Gross's *Sąsiedzi* (2000) and they are commemorated by the Israeli Ambassador. There is a sense that the ghosts have been put to rest by *Burmistrz II*. The Jews in *Burmistrz* do not have any lines, but in *Walizka* there is a symbolic exchange between Fransua and his father's ghost. Having found his father's suitcase in the Holocaust museum, Fransua finds with it the missing pieces of his personal history. Fransua tries to tell his imagined and ghostly father to hold his breath to avoid being gassed, but Pantofelnik's ghost implores:

Fransua?
Oddychaj
[...]
Nie możesz tak żyć⁵⁹⁴

(Sikorska-Miszczyk 2008b: 21).

Pantofelnik symbolically gives permission to Fransua's whole generation to let go of the past, and this is a central theme of the play: the option to move on positively after the trauma experienced by the previous generation. The poetic format of this exchange highlights its symbolic significance and its heightened emotional charge even against the already fantastical nature of the world of the play.

In *Między nami*, as has been explained, Masłowska's Old Woman is dead, but portrayed as her imagined future self had she lived. Her daughter and granddaughter are therefore also imagined, and also portrayed as if living. They are all impossible characters,

⁵⁹³ 'Forefathers' Eve'.

⁵⁹⁴ 'Fransua? | Breathe [...] | You can't live like that'.

who in addition turn out to be characters from a planned film that never gets made, but in the fantastical world of the play they are allowed to exist. They are a fiction within a fiction and they do not have any direct contact with the other characters in the play. This is ambiguous initially in first encounters with the text on the page or on the stage, but it is revealed explicitly towards the end of the play when Man, the aspiring filmmaker, reveals: 'I wtedy już właśnie widzę się domyśla, że babcia zginęła w tym bombardowaniu',⁵⁹⁵ (Sikorska-Miszczyk 2008b: 85). This line has a double meaning – the 'widzę' here refers directly to the would-be viewer of the would-be film, and secondarily and metatextually also to the viewer of the play, should any doubt remain as to the imaginary nature of the three protagonists.

In Demirski's *Był Sobie*, all the characters are dead, except Irena, the stage manager who is present on stage, therefore existing in the space between the real world and the stage world. The characters are a collection of stereotypes from different social classes and backgrounds, as well as some emblematic historical figures such as General and Paetz, whose paths would have been unlikely to cross in real life, but who are all awaiting transportation from limbo. In the original Strzępka (2007) production it is only Wanda, who was killed during the war after Old Woman threw her into a well, who is presented as a typical zombie. She has red eyes, messy hair, a wartime costume, small jerky movements as if coming from an already decaying body, and unnatural vocal intonation. The rest of the characters are scared of her, even though they are dead themselves, giving rise to the idea that she represents the national ghosts of World War II, which plague the Polish psyche even beyond the grave. Lighting and sound are used to highlight her speeches, each of which is lit by a downward spotlight while the rest of the stage is darkened, and darkly atmospheric music plays. In the Brzyk (2013) production, judging by video clips and

⁵⁹⁵ 'And this is where the audience realizes that Grandma died in that air-raid' (2014b: 462).

photographic stills, all the characters are portrayed as Halloween-style undead with injuries depicted through elaborate make up. Whether they are typical horror movie characters (Brzyk) or mostly normal looking people (Strzępka), all of the characters are caricatures and stereotypes.

In the cases of Sikorska-Miszczyk's *Walizka* and *Burmistrz*, as well as Masłowska's *Między nami*, ghost characters are used to give a voice to those who history silenced, but whose existence is relevant to current debates. Demirski's ghosts are used to dismantle Polish auto-stereotypes of heroism and victimhood used in contemporary political discourse, as the playwright's denomination of the play as a 'bulwarówka polityczna'⁵⁹⁶ might suggest. In exposing the ghosts of the past, Demirski highlights the belief that they should be left to rest. Overall the playwrights use these characters in the context of framing a more positive future, 'opting for life over ghosts of the past, personal happiness over patriotic sentiment' (Duniec, Klass, Krakowska, eds, 2014: xxiv).

5.3.4 Two-dimensional characters

Those characters that are not part-human or ghostly are not fully rounded psychologically detailed characters with a tangible backstory. Some are distorted by an extreme psycho-physical state, others are simply two-dimensional. In *Walizka*, Tour Guide and Poet are both in an extreme psycho-physical state that in the Kruszczyński (2009) production is interpreted as distorting their humanness. Tour Guide is played in a grotesque style, and she is so affected by her daily work in Auschwitz that she breaks into pseudo-operatic singing when she cannot cope. Her normal speech malfunctions and no longer serves her heightened state as she sings:

...choć to mój ostatni dzień w pracy
Nie wiem, czy to mnie ocali
Przed popadnięciem w szaleństwo

⁵⁹⁶ 'political farce'.

Od wszystkiego, co siedzi mi w głowie⁵⁹⁷

(2008b: 13).

In the same production, Poet, whom Fransua meets, is portrayed in a completely unnaturalistic style like a sped-up, drug-fuelled robot, giving the impression that he has lost himself to the capitalist world for which he works. In Masłowska's *Dwoje biednych*, Parcha and Dżina are also distorted by the effects of drugs, and Woman is obscured by alcohol.

Even those characters that are not dead, part-human or in an extreme psycho-physical state are not humanlike in any way that resembles realism or naturalism. Of all the plays in question, the characters in Wojcieszek's *Made in Poland* and *Cokolwiek* come closest to resembling people and engaging in interpersonal communication, but even in those plays, the level of reality in the world of the play is clearly heightened. In the Wojcieszek (2004) production of *Made in Poland*, some of the acting has elements of realism or naturalism, such as the priest Edmund's monologues as portrayed by actor Bogdan Grzeszczak, or Janusz Chabior's portrayal of Wiktor's fit after drinking too much alcohol. Other scenes, however, compare more closely with melodrama, pantomime and commedia dell'arte, such that the overall tone of the play is far from realistic. Wojcieszek's stage world is closed in his own direction of this play, and the characters are fixed and contained, but as in *Cokolwiek* they exist on a level of simplified reality as do characters in a musical, rather than being attempts at recreations of real people. Wojcieszek's characters are clearly defined types and their simplicity is often a source of comedy. Piotr in *Cokolwiek* is an angry young man, a soldier with impenetrable Catholic ideals and aggression towards his lesbian sister for challenging them, and Heniek is the alpha male. In *Made in Poland* there are stock-like, stereotyped gangsters reminiscent of commedia

⁵⁹⁷ 'even though it's my last day at work | I don't know if that will rescue me | from going mad | because of everything that's in my head'.

dell'arte, with master-servant type power dynamics between lead gangster Fazi and his gang members. A similar dynamic develops between Boguś and Wiktor. Boguś himself is unquestionably a stereotype, with what Artur Duda calls a 'kompletnie nieprzystający do rzeczywistości napis "Fuck off" na czole i uwielbienie dla Krzysztofa Krawczyka, które czynią z bohatera karykaturę popkulturowego buntownika'⁵⁹⁸ (2010: 107). He is a comedic, simplified representation of a real type of person rather than a direct reflection of reality.

In Masłowska's *Dwoje biednych*, fragmented identities are a central theme, and the protagonists experiment with the way they present themselves to others as well as altering their state and appearance through drugs and fancy dress. However, it is clear that beneath these fragile superficial identities, there is not intended to be a solid realistic character with a Stanislavskian style backstory. As with Wojcieszek's *Made in Poland*, this play would lend itself to a commedia dell'arte interpretation, or it could be approached in a surreal tone that questions whether any of the characters are real in any sense at all. The characters are caricatures and representatives of particular social and psychological states. Dżina is an anti-mother and anti-woman in the face of strong social and gender stereotypes. In the Wojcieszek (2006) production, there is no angst behind Dżina's drug-induced confusion as to where she has left her child, and chaos prevails rather than panic, underlining the fact that the stage world is one of play, not reality. Woman, the drunk driver, is comical in her total intoxication and her resultant use of extreme language, and she is the archetypal wronged woman.

In *Między nami*, the scene in which Actor, who stars in Man's non-existent film, is interviewed by Presenter parodies shallow media interviews, highlighting the superficiality of celebrity and the two-dimensionality of the caricatured characters. The film itself is

⁵⁹⁸ 'completely unrealistic sign 'Fuck off' on his forehead and adoration of Krzysztof Krawczyk, which make the hero a caricature of a popculture rebel'.

marked out as a parody by its absurdist title '*Koń, który jeździł konno*'.⁵⁹⁹ Presenter's opening question to Actor is how he manages to look so good, rather than relating to the film: 'W głośnym i dyskutowanym filmie *Koń, który jeździł konno* wcielił się pan w rolę Jaśka. Niech pan lepiej zradzi, co pan robi, że pan tak świetnie wygląda?'⁶⁰⁰ (Masłowska 2008: 45). He replies that he eats fruit and vegetables 'z naturalnych owoców i warzyw'⁶⁰¹ and that he doesn't smoke cigarettes 'bo mają 1100 kalorii'⁶⁰² (2008: 45-46), and here Masłowska parodies the language of advertising and consumerism as well as exposing and criticising the shallowness of identity as presented in the media. Masłowska plays with fictionality in her creation of characters and in doing so engages with the notion of fictional identities employed by people in real life.

Demirski also rejects realism in his characterisations, favouring a unique style that is more aligned with postdramatic theatre than with absolute drama. Actors frequently step between roles and at times ostensibly step out of character entirely - though they are actually stepping into the role of an actor. Characters are sometimes ambiguous, even when fixed. Demirski, like the other writers, uses stereotypes and archetypes in some of his plays. In *Był sobie*, for example,

Z plastikowych worków wydobywają się bohaterowie, typy historyczne z cechami współczesnych postaci. Gwiazdka dla kariery pójdzie w tango z każdym, Biskup marzy o męskich pośladkach, prymitywny Dresiarz ma respekt tylko wobec siły, Turysta w hitlerowskim hełmie myśli o Polakach jak o niższej rasie, Generał w ciemnych okularach z sentymentem wspomina PRL. To postaci karykaturalnie przerysowane, rodem z kabaretu albo szopki politycznej⁶⁰³

(Wysocki 2007: 1).

⁵⁹⁹ 'The Horse Rode Horseback' (2014b: 442).

⁶⁰⁰ 'You play Jasiek in the exciting and talked-about film "The Horse Rode Horseback." Why don't you let us in on your secret? How do you manage to look so great?' (2014b: 442).

⁶⁰¹ 'made out of organic fruit and vegetables' (2014b: 442).

⁶⁰² 'because they have 1,100 calories' (2014b: 442).

⁶⁰³ 'From plastic bodybags emerge the heroes, types from history with characteristics of contemporary Poland. The Starlet goes with anyone for her career, the Bishop dreams about male buttocks, the primitive Chav only has respect for physical strength, the Tourist in a nazi helmet thinks of Poles as an inferior race, the General in dark glasses reminisces sentimentally about communist times. These are characters drawn as caricatures, from cabaret or political satire'.

In this play, Old Woman is conveying her memories of life in Auschwitz when Tourist says: ‘to jest wszystko bardzo ciekawe ale jednak powinieneś wiedzieć skąd twoja postać przychodzi - dokąd idzie i kim jest’⁶⁰⁴ (Demirski 2007c: 21). Old Woman responds with: ‘a ty wiesz skąd przychodzisz - dokąd idziesz i kim jesteś?’⁶⁰⁵ (2007c: 21), hereby rubbishing major Stanislavskian principles of character, highlighting the fact that Demirski’s characters are not psychologically plausible ‘dramatis personae’, and that real people are not necessarily aware of their own motivations. This technique also cuts into the action, preventing the tone from getting so dark as to become heavy, which would run the risk of causing the audience to disengage. The line parodies Stanislavskian realism and reiterates Demirski’s rejection of it as a methodology. It also highlights Demirski’s distancing techniques in that it interrupts Old Woman, disallowing sentimentalism and forcing the audience to recognise both the theatricality of the situation and the reality of experiences of the kind being described. It adds comedy but it is also symbolic in that it interrupts the retelling of a traumatic past in order to refocus on the present.

Actor Marcin Pempuś describes the theatre of Demirski and Strzépka as ‘bardziej teatr niemiecki, Brechtowski, w którym można z łatwością wchodzić w rolę i z niej wychodzić’⁶⁰⁶ (Szumańska 2011a: 193). He explains that Strzépka ‘lubi aktorów potrafiących skakać z miejsca na miejsce, z postaci na postać czy po różnych płaszczyznach w ramach jednej postaci’⁶⁰⁷ (Szumańska 2011a: 193). This approach to character in performance is reflected in Demirski’s writing, although he does not describe in any stage directions that particular characters should be played by the same actor, or that one character emerges out of another. Actor Michał Opaliński explains about Strzépka that

⁶⁰⁴ ‘that’s all very interesting but even so you ought to know where your character comes from – where she’s going and who she is’ [Note: Tourist’s use of the masculine form when speaking to Old Woman is a comedic representation of Tourist’s non-native Polish].

⁶⁰⁵ ‘and do you know where you’ve come from, where you’re going and who you are?’.

⁶⁰⁶ ‘more like a German style of theatre, Brechtian, in which you can easily step into and out of role’.

⁶⁰⁷ ‘likes actors who can jump from place to place, from character to character or through different planes in the same character’.

‘Jej nie interesuje wiedza o postaci, psychologia postaci – jest to coś, co zawsze odrzuca’⁶⁰⁸ (Szumańska 2011c: 198). However, she insists that actors know what they are saying and why, and she tells them where to place the stress in a sentence, according to her system of ‘accents’. These methods often result in a performance style in which chaotic, unrealistic text explodes from unrealistic characters at breakneck speed as if it were organic, even though it is not naturalistic.

It is clear that none of the playwrights approaches character in the vein of naturalism or realism, but that realism is one of many genres on which the writers and directors draw, along with absurdism, surrealism, comedy and Brechtian-style distancing, resulting in performances that include a melange of stylistic approaches to characterisation. It is important to point out that while Strzępka, and, by association, Demirski, acknowledge Brechtian theatre as an influence (Czapliński 2008), Sikorska-Miszczyk affirms that despite the frequent comparisons made between her work and Brecht’s, she was not particularly familiar with his dramas when she started writing plays and therefore had not been consciously influenced by them (Sikorska-Miszczyk 2010a). There are also similarities between Sikorska-Miszczyk’s poetic, symbolic characters and those seen in the works of some absurdist writers and post-war Polish writers such as Różewicz and Mrozek. In Demirski and Wojciechowski plays, characters are frequently based on social and historical stereotypes, and in Masłowska’s plays, characters are fictions within fictions and explorations of identity.

5.3.5 Non-dialogue

These various types of unrealistic characters communicate in several linguistic formats, which include but are not dominated by dialogue. Many of these plays are linguistic cacophonies that include a kind of ‘pseudo-dialogue’, which resembles the

⁶⁰⁸ ‘she is not interested in knowledge about the character, the psychology of the character – that’s something she always rejects’.

structure of dialogue but does not represent interpersonal communication, as well as monologue, poetry, chorus and narration. In all of these formats of speech, ‘Choć język pochodzi z rzeczywistości, to jednak dystansuje się od niej’⁶⁰⁹ (Wasilewska 2009: 64). As Anna Wojciechowska says of Demirski, ‘Jego fraza chce być realna, a nie realistyczna, nie naśladować rzeczywistości, tylko się nią stawiać’⁶¹⁰ (2011a: 37). In Demirski’s plays, many characters exist in parallel to each other, talking one after the other but not truly engaging. Interactions are often characterised by a lack of connection, a misunderstanding or a lack of empathy.

In the interview between Actor and Presenter in *Między nami*, the structure is conventional, but the content fails to meet the aim of a communicative exchange of information. For example, when the Prezentarka asks ‘Jak wygląda pana zwyczajny dzień?’⁶¹¹ (Masłowska 2008: 47), he replies ‘To była ciężka rola’⁶¹² (2008: 47). This reveals media language to be shallow, and the structure of language to be superficial. In this instance, dialogue does not represent communication, although it is in the same shape as an effective interview. In the same play, exchanges between the friends Halina and Bożena are characterised by lack and negation. They talk about what they do not have and what they are not doing but they do so in an absurd, positive tone which emphasises not only the absence of real communication but also the characters’ fictionality. Halina says she is not going on holiday this year, and Bożena asks ‘A gdzie nie pojedziecie?...A my w tym roku nie pojedziemy nad morze’⁶¹³ (2008: 30). Halina says they are sure to meet nowhere, and reminds Bożena ‘masz numer na mój brak komórki’⁶¹⁴ (2008: 30).

⁶⁰⁹ ‘Although language comes from reality, it still distances itself from it’.

⁶¹⁰ ‘His phrasing is real, not realistic, not to follow reality but to be based on it’.

⁶¹¹ ‘Can you describe your average everyday day?’ (2014b: 443).

⁶¹² ‘It was a very demanding part’ (2014b: 443).

⁶¹³ ‘So where is it you’re not going to? [...] We’re not going to the seaside this year’ (2014b: 433).

⁶¹⁴ ‘my lack-of-a-mobile, you’ve got the number’ (2014b: 434).

In the same play, the exchanges between Old Woman and Girl show that they cannot communicate effectively, and they almost speak different languages. This is more a representation of generational differences common in Polish society than an underlining of the fact that their lives are disjointed and their relationship actually non-existent. They frequently misunderstand each other and Old Woman often fails to end a sentence, either because she is ignored, interrupted or trails off, depending on the director's decision. Girl is so immersed in capitalist culture that she knows nothing about Polish history or her grandmother's past. This intergenerational miscommunication is encapsulated in the exchange in which Old Woman repeats yet again that she remembers the day the war broke out, and the girl assumes she means a price war. 'Ja pamiętam dzień w którym wybuchła wojna',⁶¹⁵ says Old Woman, and her imaginary granddaughter replies 'Wojna cenowa?'⁶¹⁶ (Masłowska 2008: 75). Throughout the play, Girl's acerbic language cuts comically through Old Woman's nostalgic forms, disallowing the stereotypical nationalism inherent in Old Woman's Romantic language. She reminisces about walks by the Vistula, saying 'wracałam znad Wisły, bo dzień był całkiem upalny, z oczami jeszcze wciąż zblękitniałymi od patrzenia w jej senną, chłodną, mydlaną, czystą...'⁶¹⁷ (2008: 11), and Girl completes her grandmother's sentence with a contrasting view of the river, describing the 'brudną, ciepłą, zielonkową, spienioną, jadowitą taflę tej gnojowy...'⁶¹⁸ (2008: 12). Here the granddaughter mirrors and parodies the grandmother's descriptive structure with her string of adjectives, although her attitude conflicts with that of her grandmother. The river becomes a symbol for the nation, and the characters' difference in feeling about it reflects their contrasting senses of nostalgia for and disconnection from their country's Romantic national identity. This play supports Niziołek's point that there is such 'serious

⁶¹⁵ 'I remember the day the war broke out' (2014b: 458).

⁶¹⁶ 'A price war?' [My translation. Zapałowski translates this line as 'The Cola war?' (2014b: 458)].

⁶¹⁷ 'I was walking home from the Vistula because it was quite a hot day, my eyes still blue from gazing into the sleepy, cool, soapy, limpid...' (2014b: 424).

⁶¹⁸ 'filthy warm greenish foamy virulent currents of that shit-stream' (2014b: 424).

dissonance in inter-generational harmony' (2013: 26) that 'Agreement between the generations becomes impossible' (2013: 30). As a result of their usual lack of communication, the scene late in the play when the grandmother and granddaughter succeed in communicating is poignant, and in the Jarzyna (2009) production it stands out as being the only scene with a serious, non-comical tone. Time and action are moved back to the point when Old Woman was bombed, but her granddaughter is there alongside her. Girl's cries of 'Babciu!'⁶¹⁹ (2008: 85) and 'Chleba! Chleba!'⁶²⁰ (2008: 85) are then delivered full of an expressionist-style angst that is absent elsewhere in the play, which makes the words stand out in contrast to the non-realistic staging and the comedic, light tone of the rest of the play. The overall effect on the spectator is emotive, and the granddaughter begs her now-dead grandmother: 'Babciu! Babciu! Niechże babcia wstaje!'⁶²¹ (2008: 85). Man then acts as a narrator to the action on stage, enveloping it into the hypothetical action of his film as he says of Girl: '...teraz rozumie, że nie dość, że jej ukochana babcia zmarła w tym bombardowaniu, to jeszcze jej matka z tego względu też prawdopodobnie się nigdy nie urodziła, więc nie dość, że jest sierotą, to jeszcze sama nawet nie istnieje, ani nigdy nie istniała'⁶²² (2008: 85).

The granddaughter is alongside the grandmother but she also mirrors the grandmother's younger self at the point of death. The fact that Girl is played by an adult, Aleksandra Popławska, in the Jarzyna (2009) production, without any element of coy, stereotyped childishness but with the playful, lightness of childhood means that this scene can be played with realistic emotion and become the crux of the play. As Niziołek says, the 'generational conflict of languages and experiences is brilliantly overcome in Masłowska's

⁶¹⁹ 'Gran!' (2014b: 462).

⁶²⁰ 'Bread! Bread!' (2014b: 463).

⁶²¹ 'Gran! Gran! Get up, Gran!' (2014b: 462).

⁶²² '...she realizes that not only did her beloved grandma die in the air raid, but that, consequently, her mother was probably never born either, which would not only make her an orphan, but mean that she too doesn't exist, and never has' (2014b: 463).

drama. In the finale, [...] Grandmother and granddaughter dig through the ruins of their home together. Regardless of their differences in language and the experiences of their separate generations', they find a 'common plane of understanding, if not a sense of community' (2013: 236-237). The fictionality of the characters is reiterated throughout the Jarzyna (2009) production, underlined by elements of stage technique, such as the use of animation projected onto set walls to represent some parts of the set and some props, while others are physically present. This accentuates the pertinent interrelationships between the real and the unreal and between the human and the world.

In *Dwoje biednych*, like in *Między nami*, speech is characterised by lack of understanding and confusion between people as opposed to effective interpersonal communication. The whole premise of the fancy dress party that precedes the action of the play introduces the notion of playing with identity, which is reinforced throughout the play as identity is exposed as transient, impermanent and malleable. The freedom to choose identity is relevant not only to the individual but also to society, and thus this relates to the continuing cultural processes of reshaping Polish identity. Barmaid, whom Parcha begs for help, refuses to believe that he is not a chicken thief, and the Old Man he encounters at the end of the play mistakes him for the character he plays on television. Parcha is also confused about why he has no money left because he does not remember having given it to Driver, and he does not know if he slept with Dzina. The lack of effective communication between characters emphasises the isolation of the individual and therefore the importance of their own identity independently of others.

It is clear that in these plays what appears to be dialogue is often not the basis of interpersonal communication. The characters are not usually realistic enough to mirror human speech. The playwrights tend to employ language for means other than an exchange

of information or emotion, and dialogue is commonly secondary to many other constructions, as will now be discussed.

5.3.6 Other dramatic voices

Dramatic voices in structures other than dialogue are extremely common in contemporary Polish plays, including monologue, narration, chorus and song, all of which can in differing ways offer insight into a theme or character type, a commentary on the action and a higher plane of emotional expression while keeping the audience at a distance. Lehmann asserts that monologues are characteristic of postdramatic theatre, and that ‘the chorus is making a resurgence’ (2006: 3482), while ‘the principle of narration is an essential trait’ (2006: 2955). Monologue can function as a means to focus on an individual character’s independence from collective modes of thinking, even when the character is not naturalistic. Narration emphasises the element of storytelling within a play and connects directly with the audience, and chorus emphasises theatricality as well as highlighting important themes and points.

Sikorska-Miszczyk and Demirski both make extensive use of lengthy monologues, and Masłowska uses several shorter monologues. Wojcieszek uses monologues only occasionally, and they are usually very short. In *Cokolwiek*, the slam poems serve a similar function to monologues on the page, but in performance in the Wojcieszek (2005) production they are performed like performance poetry against a background of loud, energetic live music.

In the cases of Sikorska-Miszczyk and Demirski, monologue is dominant over dialogue, frequently written in verse form. Particularly in the case of Demirski, what may look like dialogue on the page is actually an exchange of non-sequiturs, or a series of interwoven monologues with occasional points of connection. Jolanta Kowalska says of Demirski that ‘W jego tekstach - rozgadanych, pełnych wylewnych logorei - słyszeć

przede wszystkim głosy formujące polifoniczną strukturę, w której szczególne miejsce zajmują monolog bohaterów⁶²³ (2011: 174).

Monologues contribute to the ‘narrative fragmentation’ (Lehmann 2006: 816) of plays that share similarities with the postdramatic. Poetry and song offer similar functions, and there are several examples of characters turning to one of these three forms when ‘normal’ speech becomes defunct. In the Kruszczyński (2009) production of *Walizka*, Tour Guide seems to malfunction while she is talking, going from relatively normal speech into pseudo-operatic singing of her lines, representing the fact that her accumulative experiences are simply too much for her to compute. These techniques allow Sikorska-Miszczyk to convey the character’s psychological state without using realism, which would be extremely tough viewing given the subject matter. In *Burmistrz*, Penitent German is so disturbed by what he erroneously believes to be his father’s murderous history that his emotional state is permanently heightened, and Sikorska-Miszczyk emphasises this through the use of blank verse for most of his monologues and exchanges, as well as his recitation of a disturbing poem each night. When the Townspeople torment Penitent German, they do so in a grotesque song. Sikorska-Miszczyk also uses poetry to emphasise other moments of increased emotion or shifts in tone, such as when the Townspeople hear a storm coming and think it is World War II returning.

Demirski and Strzępka’s productions commonly feature recorded music as an integral part of the production. Some of their shows include live song, which serves as a form of monologue as well as punctuating and commenting on the action and energising the viewer. Demirski uses short bursts of direct address and breaking of character. Sikorska-Miszczyk employs a Narrator character in several plays, but this character often

⁶²³ ‘In his texts – wordy, full of expansive logorrhoea – you can hear more than anything voices forming a polyphonic structure in which an important role is played by the heroes’ monologues’.

interacts with others, existing within the story of the play as well as relating to the audience, as in *Walizka*. In *Burmistrz II* Poet interacts with the action as well as addressing the audience directly, performing a narrative function and commenting on characters. Narrator in *Walizka* and Poet in *Burmistrz* are both, therefore, choral characters (Baldick 2008: 54), as is Great Golden Bird in *Żelazna*. There is also a named Chorus in some Sikorska-Miszczyk plays. In *Burmistrz*, for example, there is the Chorus of 12 Sons-in-laws of Townsperson, the anti-Semitic leader of the people of Jedwabne. The rest of the Townspeople also function as a chorus-type mass that shares a single mode of thinking and is unable to think independently. There is a chorus in the first scene of *Burmistrz II* which begins by telling untruths about what has happened to Mayor, suggesting that things could have turned out differently, saying that the ‘Drogą, którą przeszedł, obsypana jest kwiatami’⁶²⁴ (Sikorska-Miszczyk 2011a: 182) before turning to the truth and admitting that he had to leave his country. In *Wojciech* plays, there is no chorus or commentary on the action, no direct address, and no narrator, all of which emphasise the comparatively closed nature of his stage world, which contrasts with the approaches taken by the other three playwrights. However, at the end of the Wojciech (2004) production of *Made in Poland*, outside the theatre after the show, as mentioned, a film of Krzysztof Krawczyk addressing the audience and singing to them is projected against the side of a block of flats. Importantly, this happens in the outside world rather than inside the theatre space and it is after the curtain call, marking it as separate from the world inhabited by the characters. The use of different dramatic voices by the playwrights contributes to the plays’ collage type structures and to the sense that the writers borrow from various other art forms, aspects of culture and real life. Language represents reality but does not mirror it, and so the viewer is always kept at a distance from the action. The writers demonstrate the expressive power of

⁶²⁴ ‘The road he has gone down is strewn with flowers’ (2014b: 98).

language without encouraging their audiences to become absorbed in it, meaning that the major focus remains on the plays' themes rather than their characters or action.

These combined elements of form result in plays with open, heteroglossic structures in which time, place, action, character and dramatic voices are malleable and susceptible to being changed at any point according to the writer's will. Karolina Wycisk cites Jolanta Kowalska in describing that in many contemporary Polish plays 'nie ma już prawie akcji, są za to konkurujące ze sobą ludzkie historie, z których każda chce być opowiedziana'⁶²⁵ (Wycisk 2011: 305). This opinion is certainly supported by many of the plays, perhaps particularly those by Demirski and Sikorska-Miszczuk, although Wojcieszek and Masłowska also have several protagonists rather than one main central character.

5. 4 Open borders. Interactions between the real world and the stage

Plays can, of course, relate to events, issues and people external to the dramatic world without allowing those elements of reality in to that dramatic world, especially if names are changed and fictionalised. If the fourth wall is 'solid' and the audience is not acknowledged then the dramatic world is a bubble of absolute drama observed from the outside, which may or may not reflect or comment upon social reality. With the fourth wall down, and/or with structure open and with names of real people unchanged, real events and issues can become integral to the dramatic world, and the relationship between the two worlds is therefore direct and tangible. This relationship will be discussed in the following separate sections on real people, intertextualities, 'bad' language, the dramatist's voice, and the acknowledgement of the spectator.

⁶²⁵ 'there is almost no action, there are competing stories of people who all want to be heard'.

5.4.1 Real people

Even though characters are not usually presented realistically in the plays, the inclusion of real people from the outside world is an extremely common feature, ranging from brief mentions to main characters. This technique engages the audience, brings their world on to the stage, adds to a play's comedic potential, highlights aspects of social issues and in some cases criticises particular individuals. As Rafał Węgrzyniak explains, the practice of parodying and staging caricatures of real people 'ma długą tradycję, wywodzącą się z komedii Arystofanesa'⁶²⁶ (2011: 50).

In Wojciech's *Made in Poland*, Boguś's mother idolises the real singer Krzysztof Krawczyk more than she does Pope John Paul II or Lech Wałęsa, whose portraits hang on her wall. Boguś and the gangster Fazi are also Krawczyk fans and this common interest eventually prevents Fazi from killing Boguś. In Demirski's *W imię*, two of the main protagonists are fictionalised autobiographical representations of the writer and his real life partner and director of his work, Monika Strzępka, which is highlighted in the Strzępka (2011b) performance through costume, in that the characters wear outfits identical to those that the writer and director are commonly seen in, including Strzępka's distinctive grey and yellow zip-up tracksuit top. In *Tęczowa*, the famous director Warlikowski is satirised: the character is arrogant and pretentious, speaking extremely slowly and saying he doesn't have time to speak to people he does not know, and Demirski and Strzępka thereby provide an unashamedly critical representation of this extremely influential, world famous director. In the same play, the real mayor of Warsaw, Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz is mocked. In *Był sobie*, as has been mentioned, the sexual abuser priest Paetz is based on the real bishop of the same name, who was accused of sexual abuse. In other plays written after the time frame of this study and therefore not included here in detail, Demirski fictionalises the

⁶²⁶ 'has a long tradition going back to Aristophanes' comedies'.

singers Amy Winehouse (*O dobru*, premier June 2012) and Courtney Love (*Courtney Love*, premier December 2012).

In Sikorska-Miszczyk's *Walizka*, Fransua is based on the real life story of Frenchman Michel Lévi-Leleu who found his father's suitcase in the Mémorial de la Shoah in Paris while it was on loan there from the Auschwitz-Birkenau museum. In several of her other plays Sikorska-Miszczyk includes real people by name as characters, such as in *Burmistrz II* where Professor Jan T. Gross, Aleksander Kwaśniewski and Szewach Weiss, the Israeli Ambassador to Poland from 2001-2003, all feature, and real speeches are quoted. This technique overlaps with documentary theatre and firmly emphasises the relationship between these plays and contemporary realities. In *Burmistrz* and *Burmistrz II*, Mayor is a fictional representation of the real mayor of Jedwabne at the time, Krzysztof Godlewski. Steven Spielberg is satirised in *Żelazna*. Unlike Demirski and Sikorska-Miszczyk, Masłowska does not fictionalise any real people in her two plays to date, but instead she plays with the fictional nature of her own characters. In doing so, she raises questions around the nature of identity in general, the social masks people wear and guises they adopt. The use of characters based on real people is another method employed by Demirski, Wojcieszek and Sikorska-Miszczyk to highlight their engagement with contemporary social issues. It creates familiarity for the viewer as well as encouraging connections between on-stage and off-stage realities.

5.4.2 Intertextualities

Many of the plays contain references to other works of literature, music, television, film, poetry and drama. This is one of many evident methods of bringing the spectator's world on to the stage, mixing 'high' and 'low' art, and placing the play within the framework of socio-cultural references and structures. Jolanta Kowalska says that 'Osobną kategorię wśród bohaterów spektakli Strzępki i Demirskiego stanowią role-cytaty. To

figury zaimplantowane na postaciach z istniejących już fabuł⁶²⁷ (2011: 177). In Strzępka's (2011a) production of *Tęczowa*, a section of Warlikowski's (2002) production of Sarah Kane's *Cleansed* is enacted alongside the satirical representation of the director Warlikowski as mentioned already. *Niech żyje* draws heavily on the television series *Cztery pancerni i pies* and includes parodies of famous scenes including one from episode two entitled *Radość i Gorycz*,⁶²⁸ in which soldiers eat boiled eggs extremely politely: in the play, eggs are scoffed in a grotesque manner until they are falling out of characters' mouths. The television series was itself based on a book of the same name written by Janusz Przymanowski, which was first published in 1964. Demirski's title for the play is shared with a song by Malenczuk & Waglewski. The play also includes, as stated in the text, a recording of the song *Miasteczko Belz*,⁶²⁹ which carries important meaning, being a Jewish song that was sung in Yiddish originally, about the town Belz which was almost entirely Jewish until World War II.⁶³⁰ This short verse from the song is an example of how Demirski uses one quotation to encapsulate a whole nugget of cultural, social and political history. In both *W imię* and *Był sobie*, Demirski includes the same line from the famous Mickiewicz play *Dziady*: 'kto z was pragnie, kto z was łaknie',⁶³¹ instantly creating an intertextuality between his work and the Polish dramatic canon. Also in *W imię*, Demirski draws on Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, including character names such as Biff, Willy, Linda and Happy. He pursues the idea of people overworking themselves and draws a comparison between the American Dream and the promises made by capitalism in post-communist Poland, while using the parallel story of peasant leader Jakub Szela to remind the viewer that many Poles have peasant roots, rather than aristocratic origins as

⁶²⁷ 'a distinct category among the protagonists of shows by Strzępka and Demirski is constituted by role-quotations. These are figures implanted onto characters from already existing stories'.

⁶²⁸ *Joy and Bitterness*.

⁶²⁹ 'The little town of Belz'.

⁶³⁰ The music was composed by Aleksander Olszaniecki and the lyrics are by Jacob Jacobs.

⁶³¹ 'what will slake you, what will feed' (2013: 178).

autostereotypes often suggest. Szela was the leader of a peasant uprising in Galicia in 1846. He is reputed to have been cruel, yet he fought for the rights of the Polish peasantry in times of disenfranchisement. In *Burmistrz II*, Sikorska-Miszczyk quotes directly from Gross's *Sąsiedzi*. In Wojciech's *Made in Poland*, ex-teacher Wiktor quotes works by poet Broniewski and directs Boguś to his work, telling him it will provide him with all the answers he needs.

It is clear that intertextualities with other works and with the outside world feature strongly in the plays analysed. The writers bring the outside world in to the dramatic world, and place their plays into the context of the outside world. In doing so, they create links between the audience's world and the on-stage world, encouraging the viewer to identify with the play. They also locate the drama within the outside world, which emphasises thematic connections with real social issues. The plays clearly contrast with Szondi's notion of the exclusion of the outside world in general, and they support Lehmann's idea that some forms of Postdramatic Theatre find inspiration 'in the patterns of television and film entertainment', including 'quiz shows, commercials and disco music, but also [...] a classical intellectual heritage' (Lehmann 2006: 3204) with their action being 'fragmented and riddled with other materials' (2006: 2940).

All the playwrights also include explicit intertextualities with the real world through references to real global brands, as is discussed further in Chapter 4. Companies such as IKEA, TESCO, KFC, and McDonalds are named and criticised either implicitly or overtly in several plays. TESCO is prominent in *Między nami*. IKEA is attacked with vitriol in *W imię* and also features in *Między nami*. KFC is mentioned as the business competitor to Heniek's chicken shop in *Cokolwiek*. The inclusion of real brands by name is actually a significant example of the presence of the outside world in the dramatic world. Global brand names are particularly relevant in the Polish context where the languages of

advertising, capitalism and globalism are still tangibly new, having only entered the culture after 1989. Brand names not only create intertextualities between the worlds inside and outside of the theatre, they help to place Polish characters in a global setting, emphasising Poland's European and global identity as well as its national identity.

5.4.3 Bad language

'Real' language is a common feature of contemporary Polish plays even though the characters are not realistic and do not communicate through realistic dialogue. The language is real because of the inclusion of characters that represent real people, especially though not exclusively those of middle and lower social classes, and/or those who do not belong to social elites or the intelligentsia. A very prominent feature of that real language is the use of slang and profanities. As well as representing reality, swearing used creatively can be both shocking and comedic and it grabs the audience's attention. It also serves as a warning of sorts, in that spectators who are offended by bad language are likely to be offended by some of the themes or points of view expressed within the play. The use of swearing is also an example of the playwrights' playfulness with language, their revelling in its power and in their freedom to maximise its impact. Importantly these post-communist playwrights maximise their uncensored freedom to explore the richness and poetic qualities of 'substandard' language. Although it is not within the scope of this thesis to provide international comparisons, in this case it is worth pointing out that in 2014 in Russia a ban was placed on swearing on stage, and offenders are issued with a fine. In Ukraine, according to the director Andrej May (2014), there is a form of self-censorship in which swearing is not used freely on the stage although it is not expressly banned. It is clear that contemporary Polish theatre and Polish culture are extremely free in relation to their neighbours to the east, in terms of language and content as well as theme. This is a significant change that has occurred since the fall of communism. Swearing was almost

completely absent from the Polish stage prior to 1989. The removal of censorship after 1989 allowed for freedom of expression as well as the rejection of the notion that the theatre should only house ‘high art’. While some of the contemporary characters are foul mouthed and uneducated, others are educated wordsmiths who include swearwords in their linguistic arsenal. While some characters speak in a low register peppered with swearing, others juxtapose ‘decent’ or highly poetic language with ‘bad’. There is not, however, any value judgment placed on this bad language by the playwrights, nor is its usage gratuitous. They are selective in when and how to exercise their freedom to swear on stage, and the extent of swearing varies in different plays by the same writer. Under communism, Polish theatre was ‘treated over-respectfully’ and therefore had to ‘operate within a commonly accepted aesthetic framework’ (Ratajczakowa 2005: 20). One of the functions of censorship under communism was to ‘preserve a form of linguistic purity’, and in the post-modern era some sections of Polish media and culture ‘have become home to such previously unacceptable forms of language as extreme colloquialisms’ and ‘even downright obscenities’ (Dunn 2002: 25). The plays examined prove that the contemporary Polish theatre is one of these sections of culture where obscenities are commonplace, and where high and low art collide in productions that incorporate influences from all aspects of postmodern society. Each of the writers displays a total rejection of previous dominant modes of thought in which theatre was either a bastion of propriety or a place in which political messages had to be concealed under the language of allusion.

Kowalska says of Demirski that he has managed to ‘znieść bariery pomiędzy „literackością” tekstu i różnymi żywiołami mówionej polszczyzny’⁶³² (2011: 172). Of the four writers studied, Demirski is the most prolific and the most extreme in his use of swearing, creating shocking phrases and using extreme graphic imagery. He stands apart

⁶³² ‘to break the barrier between the “literary quality” of the text and various elements of spoken Polish’.

from the other writers in the strength of swearing he employs. Mościcki describes Demirski as a writer who uses ‘profanacja’⁶³³ as a way to ‘aktywizować’⁶³⁴ his audiences, to grab their attention, to engage and provoke them, and to challenge the ‘Fantazja, wedle której teatr ma być świątynią pięknego słowa’.⁶³⁵ He explains that ‘Jednym z wymiarów teatralnej profanacji tekstu jest profanacja języka dramatu uznawanego za nietykalny ze względu na swą literacką wartość’⁶³⁶ (2008: 201).

As stated in the publicity for *Był sobie*, and as can be applied to Polish contemporary plays in general: ‘Jeśli ktoś oczekuje wyrafinowanego języka – zawiedzie się’.⁶³⁷ Actor Rafał Kronenburger says of Demirski ‘Paweł z premedytacją używa przekleństw, które wyznaczają rytm i działania postaci’⁶³⁸ (Szumańska 2011b: 214). So-called bad language is reclaimed, expressing an anti-authoritarian outlook and allowing characters from all social backgrounds on to the stage.

Demirski’s Chav in *Był sobie* is one of several young discontents, including Wojcieszek’s Boguś in *Made in Poland*. In terms of archetypes, these two characters are the same. Both are young, uneducated, disaffected, working class men who are angry at a world they feel does not represent or accommodate them. In *Made in Poland*, Boguś’s linguistic leitmotif ‘Jestem wkurwiony’ (Wojcieszek 2006a) is repeated throughout the play. It summarises Boguś’s character and the linguistic culture to which he and Demirski’s Chav belong. The word ‘wkurwiony’ comes from the word ‘kurwa’, which means ‘cunt’, but does not carry the strength that word has in English. It is closer in strength and usage to ‘fuck’, and ‘wkurwiony’ or ‘wkurzony’ is usually akin to ‘fucked

⁶³³ ‘profanity’.

⁶³⁴ ‘activate’.

⁶³⁵ ‘fantasy according to which theatre has to be a sanctuary of beautiful words’.

⁶³⁶ ‘One of the theatrical dimensions of profanity in the text is the profanation of the language of drama regarded as inviolable in terms of its literary worth’.

⁶³⁷ ‘if anyone expects refined language they’ll be disappointed’

<<http://teatr.walbrzych.pl/spektakle/spektakle-archiwalne/byl-sobie-polak-polak-polak-i-diabel/>> [last accessed 21 July 2015].

⁶³⁸ ‘Paweł makes premeditated use of swearwords, which determine the rhythm and action of the character’.

off' or, sometimes, 'pissed off'. Wojcieszek brings Boguś crashing in with: 'Wstawać, skurwysyny, wstawać'⁶³⁹ (2006a: 405). This encapsulates his desperate need to communicate and connect with others, and, through the swearword, his anger at the world and his social status.

In *Cokolwiek*, Piotr embodies 'traditional' Polish Catholic family values and cannot accept his sister's homosexuality or their mother's decision to allow Sugar and Magda to live together in her house. He has returned from an uneventful posting as a soldier in Iraq where everything was 'real', and he refuses to see his sister's relationship as compatible with reality. He uses swearing to express his anger, shouting 'A teraz, kurwa, wracam do domu i wszystko jest na niby! Dwie dupy planują ślub i zajebistą przyszłość'⁶⁴⁰ (Wojcieszek 2006b: 278). Here the word 'kurwa'⁶⁴¹ is used like punctuation, as is very common in real speech. The fact that he calls the two women 'dupy'⁶⁴² emphasises the sexual aspect of their relationship as well as his lack of respect for them. Earlier, although he is not in a relationship and does not yet have a family, he tells Sugar 'Chcę zbudować w tym domu normalną, trzypokoleniową rodzinę. A ty rozpieprzysz mi ten plan'⁶⁴³ (2006b: 269). His nationalistic and conservative values serve as a counterpoint to the supportive attitude of his mother. In the same play, Magda swears very rarely at the beginning of the play but does so increasingly as she advances on her character journey. Her growing sense of identity and freedom of expression is mirrored by her increasingly free language. When explaining to Sugar that her father threw her out, she says 'wypieprzył mnie z domu'⁶⁴⁴ (2006b: 261). There is no direct equivalent in English for the verb 'wypieprzyć' in this context, because it is a swear word which carries intrinsically the meaning of being thrown

⁶³⁹ 'Get up, you sons of bitches, get up' (2015a: 260).

⁶⁴⁰ 'And now I come home and everything's make-believe! Two chicks planning a wedding and a wonderful life together. It's ridiculous, man!' (2014: 575).

⁶⁴¹ 'cunt', used in a similar way as 'fuck' is used in English.

⁶⁴² 'arses'.

⁶⁴³ 'I want to have a normal, extended family in this house. And you're messing up my plan' (2014: 566).

⁶⁴⁴ 'he kicked me out of the house' (2014: 556).

out. This word shows how strongly Magda feels about having been thrown out and conveys that she is still hurt by it while also relating to the reason she was thrown out. Magda goes on to say: ‘Przyłapali mnie w szatni z jedną głupią pizdą’⁶⁴⁵ (2006b: 261). ‘Pizda’, another extremely strong swear word, which means the same as ‘cunt’ but is stronger than that word in English and than ‘kurwa’ in Polish, expresses Magda’s anger at the incident as well as emphasising the sexual nature of the situation.

Demirski’s ‘wkurwiony’ Chav states ‘mnie tam faszyzm nie pociąga bo gnój zrobili w Polsce [...] chujowo się żyje’⁶⁴⁶ (2007c: 26), and later: ‘romantyczny paradygmat bojownika nie sprawdził się kiedy moja kobieta się puściła - od tamtej pory czuję się jak pizda w krzakach i to ranna’⁶⁴⁷ (2007c: 20). This is one example of Demirski’s extremely coarse sexual language and his comedic juxtapositioning of high and low language in the phrase ‘the romantic paradigm of the warrior’, which is incongruous with the rest of Chav’s speech. This graphic language is not restricted to younger characters. In *Niech żyje* the older character Szarik uses the word ‘kurwa’, and in *Był sobie* when Chav is describing his negative feelings at finding his girlfriend in a pub toilet performing oral sex for payment, the Old Woman who was a ‘camp whore’ at Auschwitz replies: ‘nie przesadzaj - przecież kobiecie z pizdy niczego nie ubywa - a z ust co najwyżej zęby - a to musiała być młoda dziewczyna więc zębów jej nie ubywało’⁶⁴⁸ (2007c: 27). This line is shocking in its obscenity, its brutality and its content. Demirski uses it to demonstrate that Old Woman has been so affected by the trauma and abuse of Auschwitz that her outlook has been permanently warped. In another particularly coarse line in the same play, the German

⁶⁴⁵ ‘They caught me in the locker room with this stupid little cunt’ (2014: 556).

⁶⁴⁶ ‘I’m not drawn to facism because they made a shithheap of Poland [...] life is fucking awful here’.

⁶⁴⁷ ‘the romantic paradigm of the freedom fighter didn’t come true when my woman started putting it about – since then I’ve felt like a cunt in the bushes – a wounded one’.

⁶⁴⁸ ‘don’t exaggerate – I mean you can’t wear out a woman’s cunt – and in the mouth it’s only the teeth – and she must have been a young woman so she won’t have lost any teeth’.

Tourist gets carried away when imagining a reclaimed German Gdańsk as a ‘wielki ociekający krwią niemiecki penis w świeżej polskiej piździe’⁶⁴⁹ (2007c: 27).

Demirski is utterly relentless in his use of obscenities, and this is particularly evident in *Tęczowa*. Icon tells Waiter he has not noticed any kind of ghettoisation of gay football fans, to which Waiter replies ‘jakby ci kurwa wuwuzelę w dupę włożyli to byś może zauważył’⁶⁵⁰ (2013: 40). Referring to media repression of the open discussion of homosexuality in professional football Waiter says:

nawet jakby zdjęcie że ktoś któregoś z nich ładuje w dupę pojawili w telewizorze to by powiedział jeden z drugim w oficjalnym komunikacie że mu masażysta mierzył temperaturę po prostu termometrem takim specyficznym⁶⁵¹

(2013: 61).

Masłowska also makes use of obscenities, but not to the same extent as Demirski. In *Dwoje biednych*, Woman, who has stolen her adulterous husband’s car, speaks to him on the phone in a slurred, drunken manner and says ‘A kto tam tak għada w tle z tyłu? Nhikt? To ona? [...] iż tam do niej, wyliz jej cipę’⁶⁵² (2006b: 128). Parcha swears increasingly as his come down progresses. As the drugs wear off and reality sets in, he becomes more concerned about getting to work. The game of being a poor Romanian is over and is replaced with harsh reality:

Koniec, kurwa, koniec. Koniec imprez, koniec ćpania, koniec zajebistych imprez, które kończą się tak, że kurwa w malignie jakiemuś dupnemu dziadkowi z neurastenią dałem pięć tysięcy. [...] jestem Polakiem na zjeździe mówiącym po polsku i budzę się w jakimś polu [...]. I kurwa mam jutro na ósmą plan⁶⁵³

⁶⁴⁹ ‘a great big German penis dripping with blood in a fresh Polish cunt’.

⁶⁵⁰ ‘maybe you’d notice if they fucking shoved a wuvuzela up your ass’ (2013b: 48).

⁶⁵¹ ‘even if they showed a photo of them ass-pounding each other on tv they’d give an official statement saying it was their masseur taking their temperature with this special thermometer’ (2013b: 74).

⁶⁵² ‘And who’s there talking like that in the background? No-one? Is that her? [...] just go to her, lick her cunt’.

⁶⁵³ ‘That’s it, for fuck’s sake, that’s enough. No more parties, no more taking drugs, no more fucking brilliant parties that make me get so delirious I give some fucking grandpa with neurasthenia 5 grand. [...] I’m a Pole on a come down, speaking Polish, and I’ve woken up in some field [...]. And I’ve got to fucking be on set tomorrow at 8’.

(2006b: 117-118).

At his lowest point, he asks himself ‘Co za jebana Rumunia. Co za samotność’⁶⁵⁴ (2006b: 139), exemplifying the notion that this Romania is a sense of isolation and destitution rather than having anything to do with geographical location. His character provides an example in drama of a trend in post-1989 Polish prose in which loneliness ‘constitutes the major defect of the heroes’ (Jarzębski 2013: 32).

In comparison to the other three writers, Sikorska-Miszcuk uses swearing selectively. In *Burmistrz II*, the minor character Young Generation III, one of the three chorus-like young characters, is ‘wkurzony’⁶⁵⁵ (2011a: 192), just like Wojcieszek’s Boguś and Demirski’s Chav. Since the publication of Gross’s book, whenever this character tells new people where he comes from, they ask him if that is ‘that town where people kill their neighbours’:

jadę gdzieś, [...] i mówię skąd jestem. Zawsze wtedy znajdzie się jakiś debil, który spyta: czy jesteś z tego Miasta, gdzie sąsiedzi zabijają sąsiadów, palą ich w stodole? I mnie to wkurza. Mówię wtedy: Koleś, zamknij się, nie wkurzaj mnie. A kiedy się nie zamyka, mówię: Jestem wkurzony⁶⁵⁶

(2011a: 192).

Here the repetition of ‘wkurzony’ in its different forms accentuates its use and emphasises the youth culture to which the character belongs. In Sikorska-Miszcuk’s *Żelazna*, there is a surreal scene between Screenwriter and Czarnuch that is peppered with swearing.

Czarnuch explains that he is the type of person ‘który lekko powie kurwa, powie spierdalaj’⁶⁵⁷ and Screenwriter says ‘lubię jak ktoś po prostu powie kurwa’⁶⁵⁸ (2009e: 78).

Czarnuch explains that he is less ‘fucked off’ than he used to be after discovering where

⁶⁵⁴ ‘What fucking Romania. What loneliness’.

⁶⁵⁵ ‘pissed off’ (2014b: 114).

⁶⁵⁶ ‘whenever I go anywhere, [...], and say where I come from, there’s always some ‘tard who’s like: Are you from that Town where neighbors kills their neighbors and burn them in a barn? And that pisses me off. So I’m like: Shut up, dude, don’t piss me off. And if he doesn’t shut up, I go: Now I’m pissed off’ (2014b: 114).

⁶⁵⁷ ‘who freely says fuck, says fuck off’.

⁶⁵⁸ ‘I like it when someone just says fuck’.

his ancestral roots lie. ‘Byłem kurwa taki szczęśliwy, że jestem z wyspy Jakundu! Nigdy bym nie pomyślał, że to spowodowało, że byłem mniej wkurwiony!’⁶⁵⁹ (2009e: 80). The swearing here colours the language to comic effect as it does not carry any anger and is superfluous to the meaning, although it does underline the impact on Czarnuch of having found his origins and learned about his identity.

In *Burmistrz*, Mayor is also ‘fucked off’, or ‘pissed off’, but he only uses this language in a dream in which he encounters the Mother of God. She says she will refrain from destroying the town if it has fifty righteous inhabitants. He reports that in his dream:

[...] nagle cały się wkurzam, tak się
przeokropnie wkurzam, i mówię: “kurwa mać” a
przecież nigdy tak nie mówię⁶⁶⁰

(2009a: 7).

and tells the Mother of God she is crazy if she thinks there are even ten righteous people in this ‘pieprzonym Mieście’⁶⁶¹ (2009a: 7). The fact that Mayor is swearing at the Mother of God is comedic rather than being intended to shock those with Polish Catholic beliefs. It is one of many examples of a playwright playing with social expectations and using ‘bad’ language to comic effect. Swearing is also used by the writers to express emotional states, to shock, particularly in Demirski’s case, and to explore the poetic potential of substandard language, which is especially apparent in Masłowska’s plays. All the writers, by including swearing and realistic language, open up Polish theatre to a large segment of reality which had been effectively banned from it while drama and theatre were deemed the domain of highbrow, proper language.

⁶⁵⁹ ‘I was so fucking happy that I was from Jakunda! I would never have thought it would make me less fucked off’.

⁶⁶⁰ ‘suddenly I get all pissed off. I get so terribly pissed off that I say: “Motherfucker”, though I don’t normally use such language’ (2014a: 65).

⁶⁶¹ ‘this fucking Town!’ (2014a: 65).

5.4.4 The dramatist's voice

While Szondi's absolute drama requires the dramatist to be entirely hidden behind his or her characters, the plays examined provide many examples of the dramatist's presence in stage directions that are not simply perfunctory instructions or descriptions but are instead a mode of communication between the writer and the reader, the writer and the director, and potentially between the writer and the spectator. In the plays analysed, stage directions range from non-existent (most of Demirski's work) to simple and factual (Wojcieszek), to metatextual commentary, often comedic (Masłowska and Sikorska-Miszczyk). When scene titles and stage directions are comedic or poetical as opposed to providing information about or instructions on the action, this presents a clear choice to the director as to whether, and if so how, to include these parts of the text in performance. Some plays include the writer of the play as a character, and others have a writer or creative character that serves to represent the creative process.

Traditionally, and in absolute drama, stage directions are, of course, a vehicle for the writer to give information on details of time, place, action, and other aspects of stage technique such as lighting, props and sound. Each of the four writers in focus uses them differently. Demirski hardly uses them at all, even in published versions of texts, and when he does use them, it is to describe a piece of stage business or to give the title of a song that is played at a given moment. He is sporadic in his usage with only a handful of stage directions in each play. For example, in *Niech żyje*:

piosenka Lao Che Godzina W
Janek Kos wychodzi na ulicę
*i zostaje zastrzelony*⁶⁶²

(2011e: 345).

⁶⁶² 'the song 'Godzina W' by the band Lao Che | Janek Kos goes out into the street | and gets shot'.

Demirski does not use stage directions as a vehicle for his own voice as the writer. He does, however, use scene titles, which are generally very straightforward descriptions of place and date but nevertheless add a different mode of language to the text and one in which the writer's presence is asserted through the visual presentation of the written word. In many of Strzępka's productions of Demirski's plays including those of *Niech żyje, W imię* and *Tęczowa*, scene titles are projected onto set walls for the audience to read, which acknowledges the presence of the spectator as will be discussed further. However, Demirski often includes swift changes of time, place and/or character without giving a stage direction. His plays have a sense of immediacy in which the time and place of the action intersperses with the time and place of the play. The spectator becomes disorientated and has to remain alert and engaged, and in these instances the writer's voice is noticeable by its absence.

Wojcieszek uses stage directions fairly traditionally, and there are more of them in the 2013 text of *Made in Poland* (Wojcieszek 2013) than there are in the 2006 version (2006a). At times he goes into depth of detail about performance elements such as set, lighting, costume and props. He also uses stage directions to describe non-verbal action, with some short scenes having no text at all although these scenes are reduced in the updated version. Wojcieszek's voice as writer is not apparent in stage directions, but his role as the director of his own plays is apparent in the scripts through his attention to visual and audio elements and his engagement with details of performance. This also shares characteristics with a cinematic approach, as would be employed by Wojcieszek in his practice as a screenwriter and filmmaker. In *Cokolwiek: 'Puste wnętrze hali magazynowej. Cała przestrzeń oświetlona jedną mocną lampą. Mikołaj, Leszek i Sugar krążą po polu wyznaczonym kręgiem światła'*⁶⁶³ (2006b: 235). And in *Made in Poland*: 'IRENA [...] ma

⁶⁶³ 'A deserted warehouse. The whole space is lit by one strong lamp. Mikołaj, Leszek and Sugar are circling inside the illuminated space'.

*na sobie koszulkę z napisem – BORN IN THE USA. IRENA patrzy na BOGUSIA, zauważa tatuaż, wybucha śmiechem*⁶⁶⁴ (2006b: 416).

Wojcieszek uses scene titles in *Cokolwiek* in the text but these are not conveyed on stage in his direction. They are simple statements of location, such as ‘U Mikołaja’⁶⁶⁵ (2006b: 247), ‘Smażalnia’⁶⁶⁶ (2006b: 259). There is also one scene titled in English in the Polish script ‘Somewhere in Between’ (2006b: 274), implying that this scene is in an unfixed location and has an ethereal quality, but in Zapałowski’s translation it is entitled ‘A Room in Sugar’s House’ (2014: 570). Generally, Wojcieszek’s own voice is not explicitly a part of his productions and it is largely possible to say that in his case, the dramatist is excluded from the dramatic world.

Masłowska uses stage directions in two ways: firstly to provide information about set and other production elements, as does Wojcieszek, and secondly, to entertain the reader, as does Sikorska-Miszczyk. Masłowska does not directly address the reader or spectator, but in some stage directions in *Między nami* she uses comedic language, which increases the presence of her voice as writer. The parodic, long, detailed, descriptive stage directions that open the play are also ironic in the context of the comparatively minimalist Jarzyna (2009) production. The stage directions give the impression that the play is going to be naturalistic, with its details of set, sounds, the world outside the room, and the stage business, when actually the play that follows does not continue this illusion of realism at all.

*Stary wielokondygnacyjny budynek ludzki w Warszawie. Mieszkanie
jednopokojowe. Dwie pary drzwi – jedna wychodzą na podwórko z pojemnikami na
odpady wtórne, zza drugich dochodzi cały czas toaletowy szum, wodne bełkoty,
ciurkanie rur. Okno, za którym przetacza się cały czas w bezpośredniej bliskości*

⁶⁶⁴ ‘Irena [...] is wearing a T-shirt that says: “Born in the USA.” Irena looks at Boguś, notices the tattoo, bursts out laughing’ (2015: 272).

⁶⁶⁵ ‘Mikołaj’s Apartment’ (2014: 541).

⁶⁶⁶ ‘Back of the Fried-chicken Restaurant’ (2014: 533).

*dzika, wszystokożerna karuzelka wielkiego miasta ze swoimi tramwajami,
samochodami, klaksonami i przelatującymi po niskim niebie samolotami*⁶⁶⁷

(2008: 5).

In the same play, when the ‘*monstrualnie gruba*’⁶⁶⁸ Bożena enters, the stage directions state that the ‘*Poziom przedmiotów w mieszkaniu podnosi się o 40 centymetrów*’⁶⁶⁹ (2008: 25). If taken as a serious stage direction, this presents a challenge to the director, who might instead choose to reject it or to see it as a joke. In other examples, a lack of stage directions presents a different kind of challenge. In *Dwoje biednych* the first scene, which is a prologue in effect, begins with no character name assigned to the abstract lines and no information about setting. Here Masłowska’s voice is both conspicuous by its absence and is reiterated by it. The reader, without any of the visual cues there are on stage, is brought in to an absurd sounding text with no guidance. The play ends with self-referential, conditional stage directions that are in lieu of a concrete scene, inviting directorial interpretation, cutting, or concretisation in performance:

I co następuje dalej, a co ja piszę, co by się działo wtedy: wybiega Parcha, a Dżina [...] biegnie za nim, odpychają po drodze przerażonego dziadka w kalesonach: Szczęść Boże, spieszymy się na nasz prom!

*Po śniegu nadpływa rudowęglowiec Ibupron, wbiegają na jego pokład, gdzie życzliwie wita ich rumuńska załoga i pasażerowie: nareszcie, nareszcie! [...]*⁶⁷⁰

(2006b: 140).

⁶⁶⁷ ‘An old multistory human tenement in Warsaw. A one-room apartment. Two doors: one looks onto a courtyard with recycling bins, the other barely muffles constant toilet noises, burbling water and gurgling pipes. Spinning all the while outside the window is the wild, all-consuming merry-go-round of the big city with its trams, cars, horns and airplanes flying past across the low-hung sky’ (2014b: 421).

⁶⁶⁸ ‘morbidly obese’ (2014b: 431).

⁶⁶⁹ ‘Everything in the apartment rises by 40cm’ (2014b: 431).

⁶⁷⁰ ‘And what happens next, and what I write, what would happen then: Parcha runs out, and Dżina [...] runs after him, on the way they knock over the terrified old man in longjohns: Praise God, we’re hurrying to get to our ferry! The coal barge Nurofen sails onto the snow, they run onto the deck, where they are warmly welcomed by the Romanian crew and passengers: at last, at last!’.

These 'stage directions' are in fact a surreal poetic communication between the writer and the reader or director that relates back to elements of the play without providing a neat ending, instead adding to the many layers of fiction within the play.

In Sikorska-Miszczyk's case, the playwright's voice is extremely apparent in the text. She uses stage directions and scene titles as her own role in the play. Stage directions are written creatively and lend themselves to inclusion in the performance, either as spoken or written language. In the Kruszczyński (2009) production of *Walizka*, scene titles are written on suitcases carried by the characters. Sikorska-Miszczyk combines brief, traditional stage directions with her more frequent technique of using the stage directions as a vehicle for poetic commentary on the action, creation of style, tone, and atmosphere, and intimate communication with the reader, director, and potentially the spectator. In *Walizka*, at the moment when Fransua sees his father's name on the suitcase:

*Różne głosy podchwyciły to nazwisko
Nazwisko płynie w powietrzu
Odbija się od drutów
Pozdrawia dzieci
I nagie kobiety
Płynie do Fransua
Pantofelnik⁶⁷¹*

(2008b: 14).

This is a poem in form, content and effect, and it is up to the director to decide on its place in performance, but it could be interpreted as a direction to use sound effects of voices to achieve symbolic and emotional impact in performance.

In *Burmistrz*, Sikorska-Miszczyk addresses the audience directly in stage directions. For example: *'Idźcie do domu, Widzowie, i nie oglądajcie się za siebie. Już nic nie ma. Nie ma na co patrzeć. Nie ma cmentarza. Jest Pomnik. Nie ma Burmistrza. Jest*

⁶⁷¹ 'Various voices pick up the name | The name sails through the air | Rebounds off the barbed wire | It greets the children | And naked women | It floats to Fransua | Pantofelnik'.

*Pomnik*⁶⁷² (2009a: 33). The final text of the script is: *‘Nie oglądajcie się, Widzowie, bo skamieniejecie jak Miss’*⁶⁷³ (2009a: 34). In these ‘stage directions’, Sikorska-Miszczyk addresses the spectator directly and makes it clear that the play carries a warning of sorts, but she does not give any suggestion to the director as to how to respond to that. Such directions could be absent from the production or interpreted in various ways and incorporated into the performance. In the same play, the short scene *‘Noce burmistrzów’*⁶⁷⁴ has no lines at all, just italicised text resembling stage directions, but it is actually just a metatext to the play’s main text.

*Nocami burmistrzowie wszystkich krajów nie mogą spać.
[...] Uczciwi zastanawiają się, ile świat ma twarzy Zła i jak być burmistrzem w świecie, który ma tyle twarzy zła.
Odpowiedź na pierwsze pytania jest prosta: świat ma 365 twarzy Zła, a co cztery lata 366.[...] Odpowiedź na drugie pytanie [...] jest trudna. Każdy Burmistrz mierzy się z tym zdaniem indywidualnie*⁶⁷⁵

(2009a: 8).

With no lines at all, this scene could be interpreted as postdramatic. It could be conveyed as a silent scene of various types, performed as a ‘voice off’, or left out of the performance altogether.

Sikorska-Miszczyk’s own voice has become increasingly louder and clearer in her plays over time, and she eventually changed her pseudo-stage directions to lines by ‘the author’ in her play *Popiełuszko*⁶⁷⁶ (2012). In his (2012) production, Paweł Łysak took the step invited by the text by having Sikorska-Miszczyk perform the lines, albeit on film. To push this technique to its ultimate conclusion would be to have Sikorska-Miszczyk present in person to perform the lines live on stage.

⁶⁷² ‘Go home, Gentle Viewers, and don’t look back. There’s nothing left. Nothing to see. There is no cemetery. There is the Monument. There is no Mayor. There is only the Monument’ (2014a: 96).

⁶⁷³ ‘Don’t look back, Gentle Viewers, or you’ll turn to stone like the Beauty Queen’ (2014a: 96).

⁶⁷⁴ ‘The Nights of Mayors’ (2014a: 66).

⁶⁷⁵ ‘At night, the Mayors of the world cannot sleep. [...] Honest Mayors wonder how many faces of Evil there are in the world, and what it’s like to be a Mayor in a world with so many faces of Evil. The answer to the first question is simple: the world has 365 faces of Evil, and every four years it has 366. [...] The second question [...] is a tougher one. Every Mayor has to deal with it on his own’ (2014a: 66).

⁶⁷⁶ Named after the priest Jerzy Popiełuszko.

5.4.5 The acknowledgement of the spectator

Far from being ‘condemned to silent observation’ (Jürs-Munby 2006: 3), the spectator in contemporary Polish playwriting is encouraged to actively engage in the themes and issues presented on stage. Apart from Wojcieszek, all these playwrights create theatre ‘bez czwartej ściany’⁶⁷⁷ (Szumańska 2011a: 193), or with a temporary fourth wall that is sometimes up and sometimes removed within the course of one play. In the cases of Demirski and Sikorska-Miszczyk in particular, theatre is seen as a vehicle through which to have an impact ‘na świadomość widza’⁶⁷⁸ (Kowalska 2011: 180). It can be said of all the plays analysed that ‘nie jest rolą tego teatru formułowanie gotowych odpowiedzi, ale uruchamianie myślenia’⁶⁷⁹ (Pawłowski 2011: 73). The spectator is acknowledged in both the form and the content of these plays.

The audience is also acknowledged through any text that is written or projected in the performance area, as well as through humour which provokes an audible reaction, through staging and seating arrangements, through direct address and audience involvement, and through ‘total theatre’ approaches in which all elements of the production engage the spectator’s senses.

Wojcieszek’s stage world is closed within the texts, but as the director of his own plays he acknowledges the spectator through staging. He does not use direct address, and the fourth wall stands in most scenes, but he often brings his audiences very close to the actors. The Wojcieszek (2005) production of *Cokolwiek* and the Wojcieszek (2004) production of *Made in Poland* were both premiered in small studio theatres with a thrust playing area. In this production the front row of the audience is on the same level as the performance space, and there are seats on three sides of the action. Audience members can see each others’ faces across the playing space, which serves as a constant reminder of the

⁶⁷⁷ ‘without a fourth wall’.

⁶⁷⁸ ‘on the consciousness of the viewer’.

⁶⁷⁹ ‘it’s not the role of this theatre to formulate set responses but to provoke thought’.

real world and prevents the spectator from becoming immersed in the on-stage fiction. Wojcieszek's first scene in *Made in Poland* serves as a prologue, encapsulating several main themes of the play. This function of the scene was underlined in the Wojcieszek (2005) production by having the first scene performed outside the theatre space, with the audience standing around while Boguś interacted with other characters inside real adjacent flats, shouting up to them before destroying a real car parked outside (Wojcieszek 2015c).⁶⁸⁰ On one occasion this prologue-type scene outside was apparently so realistic for one audience member that he or she tried to call the police (Pawłowski 2004). This testifies to the fact that while Wojcieszek's productions are not entirely in the mode of realism, they do sometimes include realistic elements. This example defies the idea of unity of place as well as the exclusion of the spectator or the world outside the dramatic world. After the first scene, the audience of the Wojcieszek (2005) production followed the protagonist into a small performance space and sat on three sides of the action fairly close to the audience. Some lines were delivered from the aisle between two seating banks, thus the characters/actors continued to share the space with the audience, implicating them in the action (Wojcieszek 2015c). Wojcieszek's directorial decision to have the first scene take place outside emphasises its introductory function and highlights the play's structure. The audience go on a physical journey into the more conventionally structured main body of the text inside the more conventionally structured location of the playing space inside the building. These textual and directorial techniques together emphasise a desire by Wojcieszek to include the audience in the action, to involve them closely, to encourage them to engage with the characters' emotions and to see themselves as a part of the same physical space and society as the characters. This differs from a more distancing approach employed by all the other three writers in focus. The audience's inevitable, conventional

⁶⁸⁰ <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNNY9BtZszg>> [last accessed 24 September 2015].

passivity in this prologue scene, despite their being a gathered crowd, emphasises Boguś's inability to drum up support from the masses. He is observed rather than joined both in the text and in the performance. Similarly, the cameo characters he shouts up to when looking for supporters for his 'revolution' stand at the open windows of 'their' flats, united by the architecture of the building while he stands outside, fighting to connect with a like-minded soul. This scene is a microcosm of Boguś's search, and the overarching principle of the first scene is paralleled in the play as we see Boguś appealing to several other characters for connection and answers.

In performances of several plays by different playwrights, there is a clear trend for direct address, monologues and narration, and in some plays by Demirski there is also interaction with the audience and, on occasion, a degree of audience participation. This acknowledges the spectators, involving them in the action and talking to them across the divide between the on-stage and off-stage worlds. In Demirski's *Tęczowa*, the audience are put on the spot when the characters ask them to sign a petition in support of their campaign for a separate stand for homosexual football fans. Waiter asks the audience 'o no są chętni żeby się podpisać?'⁶⁸¹ and says 'Już do pana idę'⁶⁸² (2013: 40), as well as

kto jak nie my wrażliwi inteligenci chodzący do teatru ma poprzeć tę inicjatywę
i modernizację mentalną tego kraju
poczekam jeszcze na kolegów żeby donieśli więcej formularzy⁶⁸³

(2013: 39).

Demirski and Strzępka, in her (2011b) production, challenge individual audience members publicly, creating a socially uncomfortable situation, both in relation to the controversial topic and in relation to theatrical convention, as spectators are unsure how, or whether, to respond. The Rainbow Stand initiative is contentious, and supporting it does

⁶⁸¹ 'do we have someone willing to sign?' (2013b: 51).

⁶⁸² 'you sir? coming' (2013b: 51).

⁶⁸³ 'will you sign and endorse the rainbow stands 2012 initiative? | who if not us sensitive theatre-going intellectuals is going to support this initiative and the mental modernisation of the country? | I'll wait for the guys to get us more forms' (2013b: 51).

not equate to supporting gay rights, which creates further tension in this moment. Waiter pours ‘petrol’ on himself and asks if there is a firefighter in the audience. As audience members re-enter after the interval, some of them are selected to join characters on stage to participate in yoga, and an audience member is left on stage for the first few lines of the opening scene before being dismissed. In the Strzępka (2011b) production of *W imię*, after the Sculptor cameo character asks if anyone can lend him some money, he takes an audience member’s handbag and removes money and contents on stage, after saying

możecie mi pożyczyć jakieś pieniądze?
zacznę wam zaraz kraść z torebek
performance współczesny nie ma granic⁶⁸⁴

(2012b: 69).

The surprise of the moment and the total destruction of the boundary between the stage and the audience are comedic, as is the self-referentiality in the line, which holds far more comedy and meaning in performance than it does on the page. In the same play, a frustrated, angry Secretary says she is looking for someone in the audience to hit. Demirski not only acknowledges the spectators, he confronts them directly, sometimes with a tone of passion or aggression, but that is always underpinned by humour. These characteristics are intrinsic to Demirski’s texts and highlighted by Strzępka’s direction. Strzępka explains that one manifestation of the acknowledgment of the spectator in her productions is that the performer delivers ‘Zawsze dużo en face’⁶⁸⁵ (Hernik Spalińska 2011: 23). As Czerkowski and Szpecht state:

Strzępka and Demirski do everything they can to engage the audience. They do not want them to identify with any particular character, they want them to immerse themselves in the illusion of theatrical magic. They constantly punch the audience in the face to make them think twice and re-evaluate their world-view

(Wojciechowska 2011b: 521).

⁶⁸⁴ ‘can you lend me some money? | I’ll start going through your handbags soon | contemporary performance knows no bounds’ (2013a: 75).

⁶⁸⁵ ‘There’s always a lot “en face”’.

Karolina Wycisk describes Demirski's theatre as one of 'contact with the viewer', in which the writer 'assigns the viewer the role of a director, whose duty it is to organise the staging, that is the reading' (Wojciechowska 2011b: 524). This could also be applied to the work of Sikorska-Miszczyk and Masłowska, whose approaches to the spectator are gentler than Demirski's but nevertheless demanding. According to Piotr Rudzki, contemporary Polish theatre 'ceased to be a museum of ready forms and became a living medium of a dialogue thanks to popular culture' (Wojciechowska 2011b: 525), and this is evidenced in the works of all four playwrights in focus, though their methods of creating that dialogue differ. While Demirski challenges his viewer forcefully, Masłowska encourages laughter of recognition, and while Sikorska-Miszczyk aims to provoke re-evaluation, Wojciechowski encourages his audience to recognise issues presented by the story of the play, which might in turn affect their attitudes towards a particular type of person within society.

The notion of openness has been useful in highlighting the interactions between the world of the play and the real world inhabited by the spectator. As has been demonstrated, the playwrights engage several techniques in achieving this interactivity, many of which chime closely with the postdramatic. Real people are satirised and quoted, and 'real' language reclaims theatre for 'real' people, as well as shocking and entertaining the audience. The dramatist's voice is frequently tangible and the spectator is acknowledged in many ways, including projected text, close proximity with the performers, direct address, audience interaction, and, importantly, through humour, as will now be discussed.

5.5 Humour

Humour is a key characteristic of all the plays studied, even though they frequently deal with potentially heavy issues. With the history of World War II and the problems of anti-Semitism, child abuse and homophobia among the plays' themes, unsurprisingly much of their comedy is dark. Particularly in the plays of Demirski, Masłowska and Sikorska-

Miszczyk, irony, satire and grotesque are common elements, and there are also examples of parody. Character-based situational comedy also features, particularly in plays by Wojciech. In plays that address national narratives or put out a call to the spectators to take social action, laughter allows both artists and audience to gauge other people's responses to a theme or mode of delivery. Individual audience members can compare their reactions to those around them. They can hear whether the reactions of the majority differ from their own, and if so this can provoke thought in the spectator, which is a main aim of many of the plays. Additionally, irony and grotesque are key tools in the enablement of the discussion of terrible atrocities in plays that advocate a collective moving on. Issues are faced that are so dreadful they cannot easily be approached on stage, and comedic techniques provide the distance necessary to make these topics watchable.

Parody is understood here in Chris Baldick's definition as 'a mocking imitation of the style of a literary work [...] ridiculing the stylistic habits of an author or school by exaggerated mimicry' (2008: 248). Satire is defined by Baldick as 'a mode of writing that exposes the failings of individuals, institutions, or societies to ridicule and scorn', the tone of which 'may vary from tolerant amusement' (Horatian satire) to 'bitter indignation' (Juvenalian satire). Martin Gray adds that satire 'uses laughter to attack its objects', making them appear 'ridiculous or contemptible', and that the 'Menippean' or 'Varronian' satire 'goes back to the derivation of the word and is not necessarily satirical in the usual sense: it is a rag-bag of prose and verse loosely relating to some topic but making use of all kinds of literary modes, including conversations, digressions, lists and so on' (1997: 255-256). This definition could in fact be used to describe some of the plays as a whole.

Irony is understood according to Claire Colebrook's definition (2004). She explains that irony 'has a frequent and common definition: saying what is contrary to what is meant', but it can also refer to 'the huge problems of postmodernity; our very historical

context is ironic because today nothing really means what it says' (2004: 1). Colebrook explains that one of the simplest, more stable forms of verbal irony relies on 'the audience or hearer recognising that what the speaker says can *not* be what [he or] she means' (2004: 15). This recognition occurs as a result of shared assumptions and norms expressed through language. In order to read irony, one has to be aware of context. Irony 'is possible when language is used in ways that run *against* our norms; it thereby brings our norms into focus' (2004: 39). When language is not used conventionally, 'we can all clearly see what is *really* being meant' (Searle 1994, cited by Colebrook 2004: 40). The reader of an ironic text can 'imagine an author behind the work who presents certain positions but does not really intend or mean what is said' (Colebrook 2004: 5). This concept of shared assumptions being key to understanding irony in a text is especially crucial when dealing with a cross-cultural perspective, as in this study. Not only does the textual irony have to be identified, it also has to be read with an understanding of relevant aspects of, and attitudes within, contemporary Polish society. Colebrook explains that extended irony or a 'figure of thought' (2004: 8) can occur when a *character* means what s/he says while the author clearly does not. As Baldick summarises, structural irony involves a naive or 'deluded hero or unreliable narrator', dramatic irony occurs when the 'audience knows more about a character's situation than the character does', cosmic irony denotes 'a view of people as the dupes of a cruelly mocking Fate' (2008: 174-175), and socratic irony is achieved by 'feigning ignorance in order to expose the self-contradictions' (2008: 311) of others and thereby to seek the truth.

Grotesque is understood here according to Bernard McElroy's definition (1989). He explains that 'historically and semantically', the word 'grotesque' 'has variable meanings': that in its 'most limited sense, it refers to a type of decorative art combining human features with lithe beasts and fantastic birds', and that in colloquial usage 'it can

mean almost anything unseemly, disproportionate, or in bad taste'. He stresses that the grotesque is a continuum which may be present in varying degrees in otherwise disparate works' (1989: 2). For critics Flannery O'Connor and Nathanael West, asserts McElroy, 'the departure of religion and myth from the modern world and the inability of secular culture to supply any comparable conviction on which to base meaning or value is the situation that gives rise to the grotesque' (1989: 1). Further, 'both the impulse to commit aggression and [...] the fear of being the victim of aggression' (1989: 4) are features of the grotesque, and it 'distorts or exaggerates the surface of reality in order to tell a qualitative truth about it' (1989: 5). McElroy also underlines the fact that the grotesque combines elements of the playful and the fearful, each being present to varying degrees in different works but always co-existing in the grotesque. Another fundamental element of the modern grotesque according to McElroy is the depiction of a struggle between the self and a hostile world, and related to that, the theme of dominance and submission. McElroy describes the modern grotesque as 'internal, not infernal', coming from humans rather than gods or devils, and says evils are commonly carried out by 'mediocrities'. A sense of powerlessness in the world and 'a fear of collapse of the psyche' (1989: 184) are the 'fears with which the modern grotesque plays', and 'the lowest common denominators of the modern grotesque are guilt and fear' (1989: 22). There are several examples among the plays of all these types of grotesque as will be discussed.

Social issues and cultural references are interwoven with the audience reception of certain types of comedy, as is a detailed understanding of the subtleties of the language. Importantly when dealing with texts for the theatre, it must be remembered that the manner in which a play is directed and acted can greatly affect tone and can heighten or suppress elements such as the grotesque and exaggerate or play down the ironic. Within the common comedic techniques in question there are discernible trends in usages. The

languages of media, advertising and consumerism are parodied; social stereotypes are caricatured and subverted; Polish national stereotypes and myths are satirised; grotesque fears of the collapse of the psyche and combinations of fear and playfulness are common.

Sikorska-Miszczyk makes extensive use of irony and grotesque in each of her plays. The world of her play is always partly surreal, absurd, symbolic and humorous. She often employs simple verbal irony and to a lesser extent she also makes use of cosmic irony and dramatic irony. Commonly, Sikorska-Miszczyk's characters mean what they say while the author clearly does not. This is particularly clear when extended irony or a 'figure of thought' (Colebrook 2004: 8) renders an entire situation, concept or character ironic. In *Burmistrz*, Penitent German is an ironic character in that he has devoted his life to doing penance in Jedwabne for his father's supposed killing of the town's Jews, when in fact the Jews were killed by Poles. Assuming that the audience knows and accepts to be true that the Poles were the perpetrators, then this would also be an example of dramatic irony, as the audience has greater knowledge than the character. His misplaced guilt and his practices render him grotesque. He wears a 'Kółku na sznurku'⁶⁸⁶ around his neck 'za karę',⁶⁸⁷ so that everyone knows immediately that he is a 'syn mordercy'⁶⁸⁸ (Sikorska-Miszczyk 2009a: 6). Both his appearance and his behaviour are distorted. He likes to look at a photograph of his father and 'onanizować się'⁶⁸⁹ because he read somewhere that

jest taki zwyczaj wśród synów
Nienawidzących swoich ojców⁶⁹⁰

(2009a: 8).

Burmistrz also contains an example of cosmic irony in that the Jewish Miss is brought by fate via underground tunnels to Jedwabne at a time when being Jewish - and especially

⁶⁸⁶ 'A ring on a string' (2014a: 64).

⁶⁸⁷ 'As a punishment' (2014a: 64).

⁶⁸⁸ 'the son of a murderer' (2014a: 64).

⁶⁸⁹ 'masturbating' (2014a: 67).

⁶⁹⁰ 'such is the custom among sons | Who hate their fathers' (2014a: 67).

being *alive* and Jewish is so significant, bearing in mind that the only other Jewish characters in the play are the town's walking dead.

In *Żelazna* the irony in the relationship between Steven Spielberg and Screenwriter extends across the entire play and forms part of its conceptual basis. Sikorska-Miszczyk playfully highlights the sheer unlikelihood of the situation, in which Spielberg personally invites the unknown Polish Screenwriter to work with him, but finds she is initially more interested in showing him around her neighborhood than in accepting his offer. When at the end of the play Screenwriter asks Spielberg if his offer still stands, he says it does and he will fly over, and he will look around the suburb. While it is a happy ending for Screenwriter, Sikorska-Miszczyk is still being ironic: she does not actually *mean* that Spielberg would do any of this in reality. The ironic concept highlights the distance between the Hollywood film industry and the Polish film industry, and although Screenwriter believes that 'to pewnie dla pana ciekawe, czym żyje świat filmowy w środku Europy'⁶⁹¹ (2009e: 57), Sikorska-Miszczyk disagrees with her protagonist. While it is easy for Screenwriter to get a 'break' with Spielberg, her creator sees it as an incredible scenario.

Another major source of irony in *Żelazna* is Director's conviction that the Iron Curtain prevented Germans from accessing Polish culture and not vice versa, and that the Poles who hijacked planes from Poland to Berlin in 1978 were on a cultural-rescue mission rather than a quest for a better life away from Communist Poland. His beliefs are a parody of Polish nationalistic modes of thought. By the end of the play, Screenwriter has forced him to accept that he knows this was not the case, and his ironic façade is dropped. In the same play, Great Golden Bird, being part-human, part-animal, is also grotesque, and a representation of Polish nationalism. The personification of this symbol is what renders it

⁶⁹¹ 'you must be interested in what's going on in the film world in the centre of Europe'.

comical as well as allowing the writer to destroy it; to expose the stereotypes behind it and to trash its significance. The half-person half-bird appears at several points, crowing in verse, with lines that subvert the nationalism the eagle represents, such as:

My, Polacy! Złote Ptacy!
Prawda nas wyzwoli, lecz raczej powoli⁶⁹²

(2009e: 60).

This destruction of national symbols also occurs in *Burmistrz II* when the Young Generation sing a parody of the Polish national anthem, with the right tune but with altered lyrics referencing youth culture, implying that the Young Generation do not feel that the national anthem and its associated myths represent them. They sing ‘Marsz marsz Dąbrowski – Chcemy iPhony!’⁶⁹³ (2011a: 192).

In *Walizka*, Tour Guide feels trapped in the macabre and psychologically bizarre situation of being faced with the details of the Holocaust every day, fearing she will lose her identity to madness, in common with McElroy’s fear of the loss of the psyche in the grotesque. If this were presented naturalistically it would be brutal and difficult to watch but in Sikorska-Miszczyk’s technique, when the character reaches a level of experience she cannot process on a day to day level, she ascends to an even less natural mode of language, first to poetry, and then to song. In the Kruszczyński (2009) production her mental malfunctioning is presented in an extreme and unrealistic state, in high-pitched intoned speech, meaning that it is comedic and that the audience can laugh, even though, and because, it is so awful. Sikorska-Miszczyk also employs the grotesque in the scenes in which Narrator and Żaklin describe the Holocaust museum. The playwright strikes a tone between playfulness and fearfulness, and the characters’ excitement about the alleged wonders of the Holocaust museum parodies the language of advertising and consumerism, resulting in a tone of uncomfortable dark comedy that, again, allows the audience to laugh

⁶⁹² ‘We Poles! Golden Birds! | The Truth will free us, albeit somewhat slowly’.

⁶⁹³ ‘March, march Dąbrowski | We want iPhones!’ (2014b: 115).

at a completely unfunny situation. It is this comedic technique that facilitates the presentation of these issues in a form that is bearable even in the Polish context and invites the spectator to engage in discourse about whether museums of this kind should exist. Narrator says ‘Nikt nie zagadnie, co można zobaczyć w muzeum zagłady. To jest muzeum niespodzianek’⁶⁹⁴ (2008b: 8). This is clearly ironic in that what is said is not what is meant, and its tone, emphasised by the exclamation mark, is crucial in the creation of the air of the grotesque. Continuing with the same technique, Sikorska-Miszczyk has Żaklin add ‘Každy znajdzie tu coś dla siebie’⁶⁹⁵ (2008b: 8). Narrator continues: ‘Wielbicie fotografii ucieszą się bezgranicznie: tyle zdjęć, tyle twarzy’⁶⁹⁶ (2008b: 8), his enthusiasm further adding to the uncomfortable, grotesque atmosphere, which escalates throughout the scene, culminating in the lines repeated for emphasis, when Żaklin asks ‘Czego tu nie ma?!’ and Narrator responds ‘Czego tu nie ma?’⁶⁹⁷ (2008b: 9). The repetition here draws out the dark comedy, continuing with the technique that allows the audience to laugh at the use of language rather than the subject matter. It also parodies the language of advertising and consumerism. Narrator goes on:

Inne niespodzianki to:
Prawdziwy wagon, można do niego wejść, dzieci to uwielbiają⁶⁹⁸

(2008b: 8).

Żaklin adds ‘Nie ma dinozaurów, świetlnych mieczy, piratów’⁶⁹⁹ (2008b: 8). The language of advertising is also parodied in Answerphone’s description of the truth, which in the Kruszczyński (2009) production is underscored by music. She says truth

jest gładka i ciepła, aksamitna i zaokrąglona, pachnie bazylią cytrynową, “Kodem”
Armaniego i pieczonymi kasztanami...Bo jest ta Prawda jak nadgrzyziona

⁶⁹⁴ ‘You’ll never guess what there is to see in a Holocaust museum. It’s a museum full of surprises!’.

⁶⁹⁵ ‘there’s something for everyone’.

⁶⁹⁶ ‘Photography lovers will be delighted: so many photos, so many faces’.

⁶⁹⁷ ‘What don’t they have here?’.

⁶⁹⁸ ‘Other surprises: a real wagon, you can go inside it, children love it’.

⁶⁹⁹ ‘There are no dinosaurs, light sabers or pirates’.

brzoskwinia, która kapie, a pierwsza kropla ma tak słodki smak, że wydaje się, że nie może w brzoskwini być więcej słodczy⁷⁰⁰

(2008b: 6).

Describing truth in these advertising slogans fits in with the recurrent theme of truth versus lies, and with the exploration of what is actual truth and what is presented as truth by the media or by various authorities. Poet in this play is also a comment on advertising, and in the Kruszczyński (2009) production he is played as a drug-fuelled high speed caricature with small robotic movements and twitches, rendering him distorted, grotesque and comedic.

Like Sikorska-Miszczyk, Masłowska uses irony, grotesque, parody and satire to expose national stereotypes, polonocentric attitudes and capitalist society, as well as to subvert gender role stereotypes and to play with the fragile nature of identity and the fear of the collapse of the psyche. In *Dwoje biednych*, several of the characters are in a distorted state, and many at some point fear the collapse of their psyche. Indeed at the end of the play Dżina might or might not succumb to that collapse through suicide, depending on whether the directorial interpretation renders the suicide successful or not. In the Wojcieszek (2006) production, the ending is harshly unambiguous and the play finishes with Dżina clearly hanging. This is similar to a 'bouffon' style twist, when a clown or comic character makes the audience laugh and then turns on them, and it has the effect of an anti-happy end. As previously mentioned, in the Glińska (2013) production the ending is more ambiguous though the audience is still told that Dżina is found hanging.

During their drug fuelled trip, Dżina and Parcha are distorted by drugs and in extreme psycho-physical states that are used to comedic effect, and as the drugs begin to wear off they become completely desperate and directionless in an absurdist sense. Driver

⁷⁰⁰ 'it's smooth and warm, velvet and rounded, it smells of lemon basil, Armani "Code" and roast chestnuts...Because the Truth is like a peach, which drips when it's bitten, and the first drop has such a sweet taste that it seems there can't be any more sweetness in the peach'.

is so tormented by the protagonists who try to hijack his car that *'popada w histerię'*⁷⁰¹ (Masłowska 2006b: 106), and eventually he speaks while *'cały czas płacząc'* (2006b: 111).⁷⁰² Woman, a parody of the wronged woman, is so drunk that she is distorted. To add to this, she has removed her contact lenses while driving. She too is totally directionless in a hostile world, fearing her own collapse. In the Glińska (2013) production this character is played by Monika Krzywkowska who also plays the male Driver. Woman is tragicomic as she smiles broadly to try and conceal melodramatic sadness. The notion of psychological collapse is prominent in this production, with many characters falling into intense fits of crying. Old Man, whom the protagonists meet at the end of the play, is also in a distorted state, either as a result of dementia or post-war trauma, and he fears 'they' will come and get him if he leaves his house. All these characters are comedic as a result of their completely distorted states and their two-dimensionality. This play also involves a great deal of situational irony, of which there are two main examples. Parcha and Dżina are dressed up as poor Romanians, and by losing all their money and their mobile phones in a drugged stupor they become albeit temporarily poor, unable to help themselves or to get help from others. Parcha's costume is so effective that when Barmaid recognises him from his role in a TV sitcom, she does not realise that is how she knows him. Instead she thinks she has seen him stealing eggs from her henhouse. There is irony and black comedy in the fact that the protagonists hope that each new person they encounter will be their salvation, but in fact each brings with them new problems and no help. Dżina and Parcha are in a constant ebb and flow of hope and despair, and each other person they meet is also in an extreme state themselves, rather than being the saviour they might have been. In fact, Woman and Old Man both want help from Dżina and Parcha: Woman with driving and Old Man with finding food, but these are the very things that Dżina and Parcha need help

⁷⁰¹ *'gets hysterical'*.

⁷⁰² *'crying all the time'*.

with themselves. Driver, whose car the protagonists hijack first, is forced into a crying fit, and the second driver, Woman is too intoxicated to drive her car properly. Parcha is in a state of complete breakdown when he first sees Woman's car, and when she says she is driving to Warsaw he replies 'Ty cudzie Boga ty [...] zawołałem cię i przysłaś. [...] Cud. Cudy się dzieją'⁷⁰³ (2006b: 124). In fact, Woman is in no fit state to provide help. When Parcha and Dżina eventually see a light on in Old Man's house, they hope it will be their refuge and its owner will be their saviour. In another pseudo-religious moment, Dżina says 'Boże, ty jesteś, widzę jakieś światelko'⁷⁰⁴ (2006b: 133). In fact, the house is full of rubbish and Old Man is afraid to go out. He has no food because, ironically, he has been waiting for a priest to bring him some. Old Man recognises Parcha as the 'priest' he plays on the television, but in his confusion he does not realise that Parcha is an actor, and so Parcha goes along with playing the role of the priest in real life, although ironically he has lost his own religious faith. This chimes closely with the notion of religion as role play, which is one of the core ideas in the performance artwork by Artur Żmijewski and Igor Stokfiszewski (2011) called *Msza*⁷⁰⁵ which is a video showing what seems to be a Catholic mass, but is revealed at the end to be a theatrical performance.

In this play, Masłowska also satirises and subverts gender role stereotypes such as the *Matka Polka*. Driver serves the function of expressing certain social expectations which Dżina trashes. Parcha and her mother share Driver's views, particularly on motherhood. Dżina describes how her mother tells her to look after her son and to conform to gender stereotypes, reporting:

⁷⁰³ 'You miracle of God, you [...] I called to you and you came. [...] Miracle. Miracles do happen'.

⁷⁰⁴ 'There is a God, I can see some kind of light'.

⁷⁰⁵ *Mass*.

A ona: to się nim zajmuj, a nie: palisz, pijesz, chłasz, gacie zdejmujesz z kim się da, a potem wstajesz o 17.30 i się dziwisz, że ci niedobrze. Weź się za coś, wzięłabyś odkurzacz i...⁷⁰⁶

(2006b: 108).

Dżina is expected to conform to the Marian ideal image of a mother, which she could hardly reject more fully in her behaviour. While Dżina is a caricature of a bad mother, her own mother, who is an off-stage character in the text but could be staged, is a satire of the Matka Polka and stereotypical housewife. Dżina's drug-induced paranoia leads her to believe that her mother is following her in order to take her to task for not looking after her son:

Ta dziwka mnie śledzi. Chodzi o to, że puściłam wczoraj wszystkie alimenty i ona chce mnie zabić na pewno teraz, nie zdziwiłabym się, gdyby tu wsiadła za nami, muszę cały czas uważać, nie mogę ani na chwilę się obracać, ona się pojawia i mówi do mnie: weź się za coś, zetrzyj po sobie, to jest twój syn⁷⁰⁷

(2006b: 109).

Due to her altered state, Dżina remains confused about where she left her son: 'Właściwie to nie jestem nawet pewna, czy go odprowadziłam. Bardzo możliwe, że może został u mojej matki. Bardzo niewykluczone.'⁷⁰⁸ Her lack of concern is comedic and its extremity is what renders it grotesque and enables it to be funny. A few pages later, continuing to focus on Dżina's lack of responsibility rather than his own, Parcha comes back to the same argument:

No to piękną jesteś matką [...]. Dzieciaka zostawiłaś o tak [...] dzieciak sam w przedszkolu dzień i noc, nawet sprzątaczkę już poszły, woźny poszedł, a ono tam siedzi w kałuży moczu i ciśnie w te samochodziki, bo co ma robić, co ma robić, no

⁷⁰⁶ 'She says: you ought to look after him, but no: you smoke, you drink, you get wasted, you take your knickers off for whoever, and then you get up at 5.30pm and you wonder why you don't feel right. Do something with yourself, you should pick up the hoover and...'

⁷⁰⁷ 'That bitch is following me. It's because I spent all the child benefit yesterday and she definitely wants to kill me now, I wouldn't be surprised if she got in here with us, I have to be careful all the time, I can't turn round for a moment, she'll appear and say to me: do something with yourself, clean up after yourself, he's your son.'

⁷⁰⁸ 'Actually I'm not even sure if I dropped him off. He probably stayed at my mum's. Not at all impossible.'

co. Wszystkie zabawki się z niego śmieją. Okej okej. Luz, jak zaczynam przeginać to mi powiedz⁷⁰⁹

(2006b: 131).

Parcha's moralising is ironic in view of his own irresponsible behaviour, which is in turn ironic in light of his TV role as a priest. Driver, without irony, says of Dżina:

była kobietą, to nadawało jej jakichś takich ludzkich cech, kobiety nie mogą być nigdy do końca złe jak mężczyźni, moim zdaniem to fundament istnienia świata, ponieważ muszą i dziecko urodzić, i nie są alkoholiczkami⁷¹⁰

(2006b: 107).

Woman and Dżina refute Driver's view that women are good, child-bearing and sober, and not 'evil alcoholics' like men. Dżina offends Driver's sensibilities and perceptions of both motherhood and womanhood when she sniffs glue in his car while appearing to be pregnant. When reporting her actions to the police officers, Driver describes Dżina as a monster, an awful woman, and says 'nawet nie będę nazywał jej kobietą'⁷¹¹ (2006b: 108). His beliefs are also, therefore, so extreme as to become comedic in their polarising view of men and women.

Masłowska also makes extensive use of irony in *Między nami*, often to highlight criticisms of the Polish psyche. One of the strongest examples of irony from her two plays is when Old Woman, her daughter, granddaughter and their friend listen to the radio speech in which the glorious past is described as a time when all countries belonged to Poland and everyone spoke the Polish language. Poland is described as an oasis of tolerance, which is an ironic means to underline the country's stereotypical lack of tolerance towards outsiders and otherness. This also refers to a crucial historical Polish

⁷⁰⁹ 'Well you're a brilliant mother [...] You've just left your kid [...] your little kid alone at nursery day and night, even the cleaners have gone home, the caretaker's gone home, and he sits there in a puddle of piss and chucks his toy cars in it, because what else can he do, what can he do, hey, what? All the toys are laughing at him. OK, OK, cool, if I start to go too far, just let me know'.

⁷¹⁰ 'she was a woman, that gave her some kind of human qualities, women can't ever be completely bad like men, in my opinion that's the fundamental basis of the world's existence, because they have to give birth to babies and they're not alcoholics'.

⁷¹¹ 'I'm not even going to call her a woman'.

autostereotype that references the pre-modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and its exceptional religious tolerance, as well as the fact that the Commonwealth was a large realm with Polish as lingua franca. The speech is delivered in a nostalgic tone, bringing out the long sentences and Romantic atmosphere:

W dawnych czasach, gdy świat rządził się jeszcze prawem boskim, wszyscy ludzie na świecie byli Polakami. Każdy był Polakiem, Niemiec był Polakiem, Szwed był Polakiem, Hiszpan był Polakiem, Polakiem był każdy, po prostu każdy, każdy, każdy. [...] Byliśmy wielkim mocarstwem, oazą tolerancji i multikulturowości, a każdy nieprzybywający tu z innego kraju, bo ówczynie jak już wspominaliśmy ich nie było, był tu gościnnie witany chlebem⁷¹²

(2008: 70).

This speech also alludes to the sermon-like style of the Catholic radio station Radio Maryja, and this is highlighted in performance in the Jarzyna (2009) production where the tone is reminiscent of religious preaching. In the same play, Man's planned film about Poland is deeply ironic and also parodies tragic, nationalistic narratives. The film's protagonist, though, is an unemployed man who lives in a radioactive block, whose father has broken both his arms and legs and whose whole family are dying. Man describes a camera shot in which a baby sits playing with a fish skeleton wrapped in a Polish flag: 'siostrzyczka, jeszcze niemowlę, bawi się szkieletem od ryby zawiniętym w zatłuszczoną polską flagę'⁷¹³ (2008: 44). This image parodies media representations of poverty as well as blind nationalism, and it includes an inherent criticism of a lack of social support for the poor, in that the country represented by the greasy flag has done nothing to ameliorate their situation.

⁷¹² 'In the old days, when the world still lived by divine laws, everyone in the world was Polish. The Germans were Polish, the Swedes were Polish, the Spaniards were Polish, everybody was Polish, simply everybody. [...] We were a great power, an oasis of tolerance and multiculturalism, and everyone not coming here from another country, because, as we've said, there were no other countries to come from, was welcomed with bread' (2014b: 457).

⁷¹³ 'his [...] sister, still a baby, is playing with fish bones wrapped in a grease-stained Polish flag' (2014b: 441).

Throughout the play, characters return to reading the magazine *Nie dla ciebie*,⁷¹⁴ ironically titled in order to point out the vacuous nature of the lifestyle promoted by the media. Impoverished characters such as Halina and her family are subjected to ironic advice such as: ‘Nasza porada: swojego kremu Nivea, aby starczył ci na dłużej, nie używaj’⁷¹⁵ (2008: 22). This parodies the language of media and criticises the world of consumerism as well as underlining the characters’ poverty through comedic techniques. Halina is pleased to find the magazine in the recycling, which she can afford because it is free: ‘Niedroga, za darmo, stać mnie’⁷¹⁶ (2008: 57).

Demirski also makes extensive use of irony and some elements of grotesque, as well as creating comedy from direct, acerbic criticisms and by breaking theatrical conventions and social expectations. A significant amount of the comedy in Demirski productions is only tangible in performance, but some of it is inherent in the text. Like Sikorska-Miszczuk and Masłowska, Demirski uses comedy including irony and grotesque to expose and criticise national stereotypes and socio-political issues. Starlet in *Był sobie* is a simple character who is ‘przeciw kulturze rolnej tego kraju’⁷¹⁷ (Demirski 2007c: 31), which is an impossible and pointless viewpoint. Demirski often creates comedy by shifting linguistic registers and giving characters lines that clash with their overall tone, as is the case when Starlet says the following:

jadę jutro do Warszawy do teatru obejrzeć trzy tysiące dwudzieste ósme wystawienie “Trzech sióstr” Czechowa – umieram z ciekawości jakiego klucza użyje tym razem reżyser do reinterpretacji tego znakomitego uniwersalnego tekstu który dotyka i targa ludzką duszę⁷¹⁸

(2007c: 3).

⁷¹⁴ ‘*Not For You*’.

⁷¹⁵ ‘Our tip: If you want your Nivea cream to last longer, don’t use it’ (2014b: 429).

⁷¹⁶ ‘Free, so I figured, why not, I can afford it’ (2014b, 425).

⁷¹⁷ ‘against the agricultural culture of this country’.

⁷¹⁸ ‘tomorrow I’m going to Warsaw to see the 3028th version of Chekhov’s ‘Three Sisters’ – I’m dying to know what key the director will use to reinterpret this wonderful universal text that touches and tugs at the human soul’.

This line carries a criticism of the Warsaw-centric theatre scene and of the regurgitation of old classics in the theatre as well as parodying the way theatre is discussed in some circles. The scene previously mentioned in which an audience member's handbag is taken and the contents removed is another extremely comic moment in the *Strzępka* (2011b) production. The total annihilation of the fourth wall and of social etiquette surprises and entertains the audience, contributing to the already anarchic atmosphere. These are just a few examples of the comedy that permeates Demirski's angry, critical works and which contributes greatly to their popularity.

Wojcieszek creates situational comedy through characters' weaknesses and the power dynamics between characters. There are several sets of master/servant type relationships in the *commedia dell'arte* mould, similar to that between Harlequin and Pantalone. Boguś's main mentor/mentee relationship is with his priest, Edmund, who represents an antithesis to the derailed teacher, Wiktor. In the crucial scene of the play, when Edmund and Wiktor are debating the existence of God, Boguś finds his own middle ground between his two mentors. Of course, Edmund's mentor is God, but in performance it is ironic that Edmund becomes physically violent when defending his belief, unbefitting the role of a priest. Wiktor has two idols, literature and beer, both of which dominate him until his relationship with Boguś gives him an additional though not alternative focus. For Irena, Boguś's mother, the saviour is pop singer Krzysztof Krawczyk. Although she has pictures of Lech Wałęsa and Pope John Paul II on her wall, Krawczyk is held in her highest esteem, as is encapsulated in her joyful declaration that 'Jest prawdziwie wielki!'⁷¹⁹ (Wojcieszek 2006a: 449). This is an ironic choice of phrase which highlights the point that she reveres Krawczyk in a pseudo-religious way, mirroring phrases like 'God

⁷¹⁹ 'He is truly great!' (2015a: 309).

is great'. It is also ironic that Boguś and the gangsters admire Krawczyk given that he is so dated.

Just as Boguś looks up to Wiktor, Emil looks up to Boguś, declaring 'przyłączyłem się do Bogusia!'⁷²⁰ (2006a: 429). It is ironic that having searched hard for a comrade, the only person Boguś has found to support him is a wheelchair user who is unable to walk and is therefore unable to commit the physical acts of destruction in the ways Boguś has planned. Both Emil's admiration of Boguś and the existence of the gangsters mean that Boguś is not at the bottom of the hierarchy. He is not the villain of the piece, which enables him to gain some of the sympathy of the audience despite his violent outbursts. When the gangsters follow Boguś into the church, their status is subverted as they instantly become subordinate to Edmund and to the church conventions. Each of them says 'Szczęść Boże'⁷²¹ as they enter the church (2006a: 454-456) and each refrains from swearing and being rude to the priest. God and the church are above them in the hierarchy. They are Catholic gangsters, defining their own hypocritical, ironic identity.

There is little obvious use of the grotesque in Wojcieszek's work, but there are examples that fulfil certain criteria of the grotesque according to McElroy's definition. Piotr in *Cokolwiek*, and *Made in Poland*'s Boguś and Wiktor all experience a loss of direction. Piotr inflicts violence and a fear of aggression on others, and Wiktor fears a collapse of his own psyche as a result of his alcoholism. In the same play there is submission and dominance between the gangsters and Boguś, and the gangsters inflict violence on Boguś, Wiktor and Eryk. In *Cokolwiek*, Heniek attempts to dominate Magda, forcing her into a position of submission, but it is one that she refuses to accept. In telling Tadek about Heniek's molestation of her, Magda sets up another relationship of submission and domination between those two characters. Many of Wojcieszek's

⁷²⁰ 'I [...] joined Boguś!' (2015a: 287).

⁷²¹ 'God bless you' (2015a: 314).

characters, such as Boguś and Piotr, are so simplified that they could be portrayed as distorted caricatures, which could become grotesque to a greater or lesser extent depending on interpretation.

Comedy in Wojcieszek's plays frequently results from the characters' simplicity and flaws, as well as from power dynamics between them. Sławek, the actor who frequents the chicken shop in *Cokolwiek* is a parody of an alpha male and is comedic in his sexual ambition: 'Idę wypieprzyć wszystkie kobiety w tym kraju!'.⁷²² This is quickly amended once he learns that Magda is a lesbian. The speed of his immediate acceptance of this is comical and he responds: 'Za ciebie'⁷²³ (2006b: 273). It is this simplicity and lack of subtlety that makes Wojcieszek's characters comedic.

For all the playwrights studied, comedy is crucially important. Humour allows heavy historical and socio-political issues to be explored in an entertaining, enjoyable manner, often through the use of the grotesque and black comedy. Parody, irony and satire are employed to expose and criticise national stereotypes and foibles, and they are one of the methods by which the writers engage with the ongoing formation of new national identities. While each of the playwrights has their own signature techniques, they are unified in their commitment to the use of comedy.

5.6 Conclusions

Evidently, the playwrights in question aim to engage in public debate and social discourse, and in order to do so they employ dramatic techniques that maximise impact on the spectator. The playwrights engage, involve, and entertain the audience but do not attempt to absorb them in mimetic representations of reality. These plays are vibrant, cacophonous reactions against existing structures, both social and theatrical. Szondi's definition of absolute drama has provided a stark contrast with the plays studied, and in

⁷²² 'I'm going to fuck all the women in this country!' (My translation. In the Zapałowski translation this is altered, reading 'I'm off to nail all the women in the world!' (2014: 569).

⁷²³ 'Except you!' (My translation. This line is cut from the Zapałowski translation).

turn it has highlighted their common features. All the plays in question contradict Szondi's theory entirely, leading to the conclusion that the plays are not classifiable as absolute drama. It is clear that instead the plays share certain commonalities with the broad notion of postdramatic theatre, particularly in their approaches to time, space, plot, character, the outside world, the dramatist's voice and the relationship with the spectator. All the plays in question place too much emphasis on text to be labelled postdramatic in their entirety, even though speech does not often represent an exchange of interpersonal communication, and the characters are not usually human-like enough to be capable of such dialogue. Instead, the plays' postdramatic characters include two-dimensional stereotypes and archetypes as well as the undead, ghosts and part-human beings. Monologue, narration, poetry and song are common, as in postdramatic theatre. Disunity of time, place and action is the norm, although Wojcieszek's plays do represent a forward-moving, chronological plotline, albeit with many concurrent stories and frequent shifts of location. It has been illustrated that none of the writers closes off their dramatic world to the outside world entirely or excludes the writer and the audience. The dramatist's voice is loud and clear in many cases, and the spectator is always acknowledged in some way. Intertextualities with the spectator's world are central to most of the plays, as is the use of 'real', language such as verbatim quotations and profanity. All the writers fully make use of their freedom of speech, juxtaposing high and low forms, playing with language, and exploiting its uncensored power. Comedy is of paramount importance in the communication between the on-stage and off-stage worlds and in making difficult topics stageable and entertaining. All of the writers surveyed use comedy even though the plays convey socially important themes and messages. Self-deprecating comedy in relation to national stereotypes is common across the board, and warmth towards Poland exists alongside sharp criticism of particular prejudices and attitudes and a rejection of national myths, stereotypes and rituals.

Wojcieszek employs situational comedy, as do the other writers in addition to elements of irony and grotesque and, particularly in the cases of Sikorska-Miszczyk and Maślowska, there are tangible absurdist influences.

Where it has been possible to view performances of the plays, it is clear that production and staging techniques contribute greatly to the overall effect, with several of the productions being 'total theatre', in which all elements of performance contribute to one complete vision, aesthetic and message. Acting styles are heightened, comedic, sometimes experimental, and often physical, without it being possible or necessary to categorise the productions completely as physical theatre, comedy or experimental theatre. All the performances are high energy, high impact pieces which serve to emphasise form, content, language and theme, which are underlined by bold and colourful production design, loud music, frequent varied lighting changes, striking costumes, multiple props, and interactivity between technology and performers. Read together these plays give an impression of a powerful 'theatre of words' that exploits its theatricality and fuses the time and space of the play with the audience's here and now, fully breaking down the fourth wall and implicating the viewer in the staged events. For all the writers, the relationship between the dramatic world and the outside world is of paramount importance and a two-way process. These plays show that the playwrights analysed maximise their freedom of speech and freedom of artistic expression in order to engage the spectator on complex themes, and to enter into public debate and socio-political discourse.

6 Conclusions: The Personal Within the Political: artistic freedom and social constraints

6.1 Main findings

At the very beginning of this research project I set out to ascertain whether there was a trend for psychological drama in contemporary Polish playwriting. It soon became clear that psychological dramas, such as those by the pseudonymous Ingmar Villqist, were the exception rather than the norm. One of the project's main findings is that there is a clear commonality between contemporary Polish playwrights who do not come from any one particular school, but who all use drama as a vehicle for engagement with social politics. Demirski, Masłowska, Sikorska-Miszcuk and Wojcieszek all emphasise social context above individual psychology, and they often accentuate the role of the spectator as a potential social activist. Within this common engagement with socio-political issues, several main subthemes became discernible, the most prominent of which are remembering versus forgetting, the body, and social marginalisation.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the notion of remembering versus forgetting Poland's past is a major theme in contemporary Polish playwriting. The writers engage their audiences in the debate as to how and whether to remember the past, and in doing so they frequently correlate with memory studies, particularly with Nora's work on lieux de mémoire, Hirsch's notion of postmemory, and Assman's mnemohistory, all of which provided a useful frame of reference for analysing the writers' approaches to this theme. All the writers question the notion of collective commemoration, and Demirski and Sikorska-Miszcuk in particular ask their audiences to consider how this practice can be individualised and de-politicised. Read together, the plays convey a strong sense that the past should be viewed openly and honestly, in relation to World War II and communism in particular. The plays also demand the acknowledgment of difficult truths including with

regard to Polish culpability in crimes such as the Jedwabne massacre. However, the playwrights propose that the past should then be disconnected from the present and future, allowing younger generations of Poles not to be defined by history. There is therefore the sense that the dramas that engage with this topic contribute to a process of cultural recovery and to an improvement of intergenerational conflicts with regard to attitudes to the past.

In Chapter 3, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological understanding of body-mind unity, which opposes Cartesian duality, illuminated the playwrights' common approach to the human body. The writers all firmly reject any tabooisation of the body which had historically been a feature of Polish culture. It is clear that by using the body as the primary connection with the world, the writers are able to approach traumatic topics such as war and sexual abuse in a manner that remains accessible for the spectator rather than being overly disturbing while simultaneously bringing out the horror of traumatic events. Trauma is depicted without being passed on to the audience, which is reflective of the shared approach among the playwrights which argues for a cessation in the passing down of traumatic memories. In several examples, the playwrights present the body not only as a site of trauma but also as an emblem of basic humanity, and sameness, as that which connects us all, and this in turn underlines the futility of prejudice based on difference.

In Chapter 4, social marginalisation was shown to be another major theme, subdivided into economic, sexual and religious marginalisation. As this chapter demonstrated, the writers commonly present socially marginalised protagonists, which, while often unrealistic as characters, represent real socio-political issues and give a voice to the marginalised within contemporary Polish society. The playwrights undoubtedly view the theatre as a vehicle for advocacy and social engagement, presenting the audience with a criticism of the present and the vision of a better future.

Chapter 5 focused on the main dramatic techniques employed by the playwrights, demonstrating that although the writers work independently from each other there is an indubitably clear common rejection of realism. Particularly in the works of Demirski, Masłowska and Sikorska-Miszczyk, close comparisons can be drawn with some but not all aspects of Lehmann's theory of postdramatic theatre, contrasting with Szondi's absolute drama. None of the writers create fully rounded, realistic characters, although Wojcieszek comes closest in his depiction of archetypal characters that represent particular social types. All the plays in focus are too language-based to be labelled postdramatic in their entirety, since in postdramatic theatre language shares equal status with other theatrical elements. Traces of the absurdist, grotesque, symbolist and poetic characteristics of some of the playwrights' literary ancestors such as Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (known as Witkacy), Witold Gombrowicz and Tadeusz Różewicz are apparent in the works of Masłowska and Sikorska-Miszczyk in particular, and also in Demirski's plays, while Wojcieszek's work is simpler and more linear, comparable to screenplays. Post 1989-playwriting clearly continues the abstracted, absurdist, poetic, comedic characteristics of the likes of Gombrowicz, Różewicz and Mrozek, while at the same time drawing inspiration from anywhere and everywhere, including European playwriting, contemporary artworks of all forms, and quotations from everyday life. For all the writers, intertextualities with the real world are of paramount importance and one of the main ways in which they both reflect and enter the spectator's world. Direct address is also strikingly common. The spectator is also acknowledged through the fundamental characteristic of comedy as well as through self-referentiality and the presence of the dramatist's voice. While the playwrights approach difficult socio-political problems, they fully intend to entertain their audience in the process and to exploit theatricality, which is brought out in production by directors and actors.

6.2 The plays in performance

Viewing many of the main plays in production, both live on stage and on DVD recordings, was an essential part of the research project. It was extremely fruitful to experience the texts as performances and to engage with directorial interpretations which emphasised both the plays' major themes and prominent characteristics of the playwrights' techniques. It was also extremely useful to see productions of plays by other writers in order to gain a greater overview of commonalities in contemporary Polish writing and staging. Demirski's plays in production are colourful, noisy, comedic bombardments of the senses. Strzępka's (2009) production of *Niech żyje wojna!* is close and intimate while her (2011a) *W imię Jakuba S* and (2011b) *Tęczowa Trybuna 2012* are epic and large scale. Strzępka's (2007) *Był sobie Polak, Polak, Polak i diabeł* is comedic and controversial, and like most of Demirski's plays it is shocking in parts, especially in its use of language and sexual imagery.

A particularly significant moment in performance of Demirski's work is the scene in *Niech żyje wojna!* when the younger characters try and fail to observe a minute's silence, as ordered by Szarik, followed by the moment when one of them addresses the older members in the audience, imploring them to allow younger generations to remember the past in their own way. These stage moments encapsulate the key themes of remembering versus forgetting and intergenerational conflict as well as exemplifying the use of theatre as a means to enter into dialogue with the audience. The acting style in all Demirski-Strzępka collaborations is unique, with Demirski's dense texts being delivered at the speed of light with extreme dexterity, facilitated by Strzępka's technique of using 'accents', whereby she tells an actor where the stress lies in a line. This is an intriguing method which produces extremely impactful results.

Masłowska's *Między nami dobrze jest* in Jarzyna's (2009) production has become somewhat of a cultural phenomenon, touring around Poland and internationally, and being made into a film in 2014. The (2009) production is comedic, moving and visually exciting, with the actors interacting with animations that depict aspects of the set. This production is undoubtedly the flagship version among many in Polish and in translation. Masłowska's previous play, *Dwoje biednych Rumunów mówiących po Polsku*, has been reinvigorated with Gliška's (2013) production, which has been well received critically and brings out the text's humour as well as the multilayered fictionality that is intrinsic to its form and content. Gliška also brings out the recurrent motif of the collapse of the psyche and many characters break down completely, though the tone is always comedic. She also highlights the importance of shifting personal identity and the role in that of the body, gender and sexuality, as well as the contrasts between truth and fiction.

Sikorska-Miszcuk's *Walizka* in Kruszczyński's (2009) production was far more grotesque than it had first appeared on the page, with Narrator played like a 1930s cabaret MC, in a dark blue and white striped jacket with no shirt underneath. Tour Guide's psychological malfunctioning was portrayed through expressionistic, pseudo-operatic bursts of song which emphasised the importance of the play's dialogue with debate around the usefulness of lieux de mémoire, Holocaust museums and collective forms of commemoration. The economy of Sikorska-Miszcuk's poetic language was accentuated through Kruszczyński's simple theatricality. Scene titles written in chalk on numerous suitcases which, when put side by side, created the title for the audience to read, emphasised the mode of storytelling that is central to the play while acknowledging the presence of the audience. Kruszczyński highlighted the crucial point that Fransua does not claim his father's trauma as his own, and discovering his father's past, while tragic, allows Fransua to have a more positive present and future.

Wojcieszek's productions of (2005) *Cokolwiek* and (2004) *Made in Poland* are light and cinematic. Wojcieszek's direction brings out his plays' comedy as well as moments of heightened realism and melodrama. While the stage world is closed, Wojcieszek's productions emphasise the play's social context, with minimal set and with seating on all sides of the playing space, meaning that audience members can see each other and cannot become fully immersed in the play's action. The social importance of these plays as well as their position in Polish contemporary playwriting has been firmly established.

6.3 Developments in the institutional framework

There are still numerous initiatives to support new Polish playwriting, albeit fewer than in the earlier years after 2004. Although R@port will become a biennial rather than annual festival from 2015, it has continued importance in the development of new writing through staged readings and the GND prize, and it will continue to stage major productions from theatres around Poland. Other significant new festivals continue, such as *Rzeczywistość Przedstawiona*, organised by Teatr Nowy w Zabrzu, *Metafory Rzeczywistości*, run by Teatr Polski Poznań and *Prapremier* at Teatr Polski Bydgoszcz. These and other regional and national theatres also support new plays and playwrights in their regular repertoires, through productions staged soon after the play's completion. *Dialog* remains a crucial force in the dissemination of new Polish plays, and of new international plays in Polish. At the time of writing, Słobodzianek still runs his *Laboratorium Dramatu*, though not the *Sztuka Dialogu* workshops. TR Warszawa continues to be a powerhouse of new writing in performance and a centre for the development of new work. The 2014 project *Teren Warszawa* aimed to attract and support the newest generation of theatre makers. Also in Warsaw, the *Ośrodek Badań nad Polskim*

Dramatem Współczesnym under the direction of Jacek Kopciński will continue to be instrumental in the support, study, publication and publicisation of new drama.

6.4 Scope for future research

The playwrights studied proved to be sound choices, in the sense that since being selected they have gained in prominence and secured firmly established positions in Polish playwriting. There are also other writers who have emerged or gained in prominence over the course of the project who could be the subject of future research along the same lines as this thesis. These include Artur Pałyga, whose play *Żyd* (2008) was instrumental in the development in new Polish plays of the theme of Polish-Jewish relations. Anna Wakulik is another writer of interest, and her play *Zażynki* (2012) fits closely with the theme of the body, with its subject matter of sexual relationships, abortion and the role of women in the Polish Catholic church. Julia Holewińska's play *Ciała obce* (2010) also fits with themes of the body and gender, and could be the focus of further study. Generally, the theme of gender dynamics and inequalities is one that could be investigated in plays by several writers. Another logical extension of the research would be to see how the themes covered in the thesis have developed in later plays by the writers studied, as well as to explore these themes and others in plays by other playwrights. The topic of cultural memory in theatre would appear to be a particularly fruitful field which could be expanded into further research. It would be especially interesting to establish whether, and if so how, the theme of remembering versus forgetting Poland's difficult past has been, or could be, addressed in theatre for children. Masłowska's recent play *Jak zostałam wiedźmą* is aimed at children and adults, but in Glińska's (2014) production it is dark and grotesque in parts, while being colourful and fantastical in others, and this production feeds curiosity about techniques used in Poland when making theatre for young audiences.

Another clear area of development from this thesis is to stage some of the plays studied in English translation for British audiences, and to determine which of the plays' themes and concerns are universal or can be read outside of an immediate Polish context. Wider scope for this kind of practice as research would be to investigate acting and rehearsal methods used in Poland and to experiment with their application in the UK with British-trained actors. It would also be rewarding to produce the plays in English translation using Polish actors. Within the plays studied, and presumably among other new Polish plays yet to be studied, there is clear potential for the development of new translations of plays that have already entered the Polish literary canon and can speak to an international audience. The two Wojcieszek plays featured here have had marked cultural significance. Masłowska and Sikorska-Miszczyk have gained international recognition, and Sikorska-Miszczyk in particular has been involved in several collaborative international projects. Demirski remains prominent and prolific, and with Strzępka has forged an entire methodology of theatre-making. The plays in focus here have contributed to, and been a part of, major socio-cultural processes in Poland. Their writers seem set to follow in the footsteps of Gombrowicz, Różewicz and Mrożek in becoming playwrights who achieve international acclaim, through their bold, assertive, eclectic new dramas which reflect and converse with contemporary Polish society.

Appendix One. The Plays in Performance:

Productions and staged readings of the twelve main plays

Plays are grouped by author, with play titles in alphabetical order, listed under the name of the director, in alphabetical order.

Demirski, Paweł

Był sobie Polak, Polak, Polak i diabeł, Czyli w heroicznych walkach narodu polskiego wszystkie sztachety zostały zużyte

Brzyk, Remigiusz (dir.). 2013. Premiere 25 May, Teatr im. Juliusz Osterwy, Lublin. This production has toured in Poland, including in 2014 to Puławski Ośrodek Kultury Dom Chemika, Krasnostawski Dom Kultury and Teatr IMKA, Warsaw

Strzępka, Monika (dir.). 2007. Premiere 30 March, Teatr Dramatyczny im. Jerzego Szaniawskiego, Wałbrzych. In 2007 this production was staged at the VI Festiwal Prapremier in Bydgoszcz. In 2008 it was staged at the 3rd R@port festival, the 11th Talia festival in Tarnów, the 37th Jeleniogórskie Spotkania Teatralne, the 8th Rzeczywistość Przedstawiona festival in Zabrze and the 28th Warszawskie Spotkania Teatralne. In 2009 it was shown in Poznań at the Bliscy Nieznajomi festival. In 2010 it was staged along with three other Demirski plays as part of the Wakacyjny Przegląd Przedstawień in Chorzów

Niech żyje wojna!

Brzyk, Remigiusz (dir.). 2015. Premiere 12 January, PWST Kraków, Scena im. Stanisława Wyspiańskiego

Dworakowski, Konrad (dir.). 2014. *Pancerni* (based on *Niech żyje wojna!*), premiere 2 March, Wydział Sztuki Lalkarskiej w Białymstoku (the puppet theatre department in Białystok) of the Warsaw Theatre Academy

Strzępka, Monika (dir.). 2009. Premiere 12 December, Teatr Dramatyczny im. Jerzego Szaniawskiego Wałbrzych. In 2010 this production was shown at the 4th R@port festival in Gdynia, and in 2011 this production was shown at the 17th Festiwal Sztuk Przyjemnych i Nieprzyjemnych in Łódź, at the 31st Warszawskie Spotkania Teatralne, and the 22nd Gliwickie Spotkania Teatralne

Tęczowa Trybuna 2012

Strzępka, Monika (dir.). 2011a. Premiere 5 March, Teatr Polski, Wrocław, Scena im. Jerzego Grzegorzewskiego. In 2011 this production was also staged at the 10th Prapremier festival in Bydgoszcz and the 4th Boska Komedia festival in Kraków. In 2012 it was staged at the 18th Festiwal Sztuk Przyjemnych i Nieprzyjemnych in Łódź and at the 32nd Warszawskie Spotkania Teatralne

W imię Jakuba S

Strzępka, Monika (dir.). 2011b. Premiere 8 December, Teatr Dramatyczny im. Gustawa Holoubka, Duża Scena, Warsaw. In 2012 this production was staged at the R@port festival in Gdynia, Festiwal Sztuk Przyjemnych i Nieprzyjemnych in Łódź and at the 32nd Warszawskie Spotkania Teatralne. In 2013 it was staged at the 15th Interpretacje festival in Katowice

Masłowska, Dorota

Dwoje biednych Rumunów mówiących po polsku

Bogajewska, Małgorzata (dir.). 2013. Premiere 23 March, Teatr Studyjny PWSFTviT, Łódź

Dracz, Krzysztof (dir.). 2013. Premiere 15 February, PWST Kraków - Filia we Wrocławiu, Sala Czarna, Wrocław

Glińska, Agnieszka (dir.). 2013. Premiere 16 September, Teatr Studio im. Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza, Warsaw. In 2012 this production was staged at the 8th R@port festival

McCracken, Anna (dir.). 2010. Premiere 5 June, Bałtycki Teatr Dramatyczny im. Juliusza Słowackiego, Koszalin

Wojcieszek, Przemysław (dir.). 2006. Premiere 18 November, last performance 27 October 2012, TR Warszawa, Warsaw. In 2007 this production was staged at the 2nd R@port festival

Productions and staged readings in translation

Bargetto, Paul (dir.). 2011. *A Couple of Poor, Polish Speaking Romanians*, trans. by Benjamin Paloff, premiere 4 February, last performance 26 February 2011, Abron Arts Centre, New York, USA

Goldman, Lisa (dir.). 2008. *A Couple of Poor, Polish Speaking Romanians*, trans. by Lisa Goldman and Paul Sirett,⁷²⁴ premiere 28 February

Petras, Armin (dir.). 2008. Trans. by Olaf Kühl, premiere 6 June, Vienna, then at Maxim Gorky Theatre, Berlin

Truax, Max (dir.). 2009. *A Couple of Poor, Polish Speaking Romanians*, trans. by Benjamin Paloff, premiere May, Trap Door Theatre, Chicago, USA

Między nami dobrze jest

Jarzyna, Grzegorz (dir.). 2009. Premiere 26 March, Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz, Berlin. Polish premiere 5 June 2009, TR Warszawa, Warsaw. This production has toured in Poland and internationally, including in 2009: the 9th Rzeczywistość Przedstawiona festival in Zabrze, the 5th Dialog festival in Wrocław, the 8th Prapremier festival in Bydgoszcz and the 2nd Boska Komedia festival in Kraków; in 2010: the 50th Kaliskie Spotkania Teatralne, the 16th Ogólnopolski Konkurs na Wystawienie Polskiej Sztuki Współczesnej, the 3rd Wybrzeże Sztuki festival in Gdańsk, the Stage Theatre Festival in Helsinki and the Złota Maski festival in Moscow; in 2011: at the 46th Kontrapunkt festival in Szczecin, the 16th Konfrontacje Teatralne in Lublin, the 20th Divadelna Nitra festival in Slovakia, the Una Mirade del Mundo festival in Madrid, the BOZAR festival in Brussels and the TEART festival in Minsk; in 2012 at the Raduga festival in St. Petersburg and the Radu Stanca festival in Romania

⁷²⁴ Adapted from a literal translation by Benjamin Paloff.

Kuczevska-Chudzikiewicz, Krystyna (dir.). 2011. Premiere 24 November, Teatr Propozycji Dialog im. Henryki Rodkiewicz, Koszalin

Majczak, Andrzej (dir.). 2011. Premiere 7 May, Teatr Bagatela im. Tadeusza Boya-Żeleńskiego, Scena na Sarego, Kraków

Pabian, Michał (dir.). 2013. Premiere 23 May, Lubuski Teatr, Zielona Góra

Ratajczak, Piotr (dir.). 2011. Premiere 14 October, Teatr Zagłębia, Sosnowiec

Rosen, Henryk (dir.). 2010. Premiere 24 October, Teatr Polskiego Radia (Polish Radio Theatre)

Salamon, Agnieszka (dir.). 2013. Premiere 23 February, AA Vademecum theatre company, Theater Brett, Vienna, Austria (performed in Polish)

Waligórski, Piotr (dir.). 2014. Premiere 26 January, Teatr im. Aleksandra Fredry, Gniezno

Productions and staged readings in translation

Djilas, Ivana (dir.). 2012. *Pri Na Je Vse V Redu*, trans. by Darja Dominkuš, premiere 7 November, Small Stage, Slovensko narodno gledališče Drama Ljubljana, Slovenia

Lanik, Tina (dir.). 2010. *Wir Kommen Gut Klar Mit Uns*, trans. by Olaf Kühl, premiere 10 April, Bayerisches Staatsschauspiel, Munich, Germany. In 2010 this production was also staged at the 5th R@port festival, Gdynia

Mataj, Ondřej (dir.). 2012. *Mezi náma dobrý*, trans. by Barbora Gregorová, premiere 6 November, Divadlo Komédie, Prague, Czech Republic

Ringler, Natalie (dir.) 2010. *Metallflickan*, premiere 22 February, Teater Galeasen, Stockholm, Sweden

Safer, Dan (dir.). 2013. *No Matter How Hard We Tried*, staged reading, 22 November, The Club, La Mama, New York, USA

Truax, Max (dir.). 2015. *No Matter How Hard We Tried*, trans. by Artur Zapałowski, staged reading, 1 March, International Voices Project, Victory Gardens Theatre, Chicago

Film versions

Jarzyna, Grzegorz (dir.). 2014. Premiere 3 October (Stowarzyszenie Nowe Horyzonty)

Sikorska-Miszcuk, Małgorzata

Burmistrz

Kotański, Michał (dir.). 2011. Premiere 19 June, Teatr Polskiego Radia (Polish Radio Theatre)

Kruszczyński, Piotr (dir.). 2010. Staged reading, 20 November, 5th R@port festival, Gdynia

Kwiecień, Maria (dir.). 2014. Staged reading, 10 March, Centrum Kultury, Lublin

Kwiecień, Maria (dir.). 2015. Produced by Konfrontacje Teatralne, premiere 12 October, Oratorium, Lublin, 20th Konfrontacje Teatralne, Lublin

Pabian, Michał (dir.). 2014. Staged reading, 2 December, Teatr Polski, Szczecin

Wedral, Iwo (dir.). 2008. Staged reading, 21 May, Teatr Na Woli, Warsaw

Productions and staged readings in translation

Alagić, Tea (dir.). 2013. *The Mayor (I)*, trans. by Artur Zapałowski, staged reading, 24 November, 4th Street Theatre, New York Theatre Workshop, New York, USA

Gühlstorff, Nina (dir.). 2011. Staged reading, 8 May, Haus Der Berliner Festspiele, Berlin, Germany

Rivera, Jon Lawrence (dir.). 2011. *The Mayor*, staged reading 1 December, USC School of Theatre, MCC Studio Theatre, Los Angeles, USA

Romanow, Anton (dir.). 2014. Staged reading, 6-7 November, 'Драма.UA', Art Workshop Drabyna, Lvov, Ukraine

Sărătean, Bogdan, (dir.). 2013. Trans. by Iulia Popovici, 8 June, Humanitas Bookshop 'Constantin Noica', Sibiu international theatre festival, Romania

Unknown (dir.). 2014. 9-11 April, Polish Institute Ukraine, Kiev

Burmistrz cz. II

Productions and readings in translation

Nica, Radu-Alexandru (dir.). 2013. Staged reading, *Primarul*, 6 April, Sala Parking, Teatrul Național, Târgu-Mureș, Romania

Stites, Sarah (dir.). 2014. Staged reading, excerpts, *The Mayor II*, 13 January, Martin E. Segal Theatre, The CUNY Graduate Center, New York

Popieluszko

Łysak, Paweł (dir.). 2012. Premiere 9 June, Teatr Polski, Bydgoszcz. In 2012 this production was shown at the 7th R@port festival, Poland

Pabian, Michał (dir.). 2013. Staged reading 7 February, Lubuski Teatr, Zielona Góra

Walizka

Ignatiew, Dorota (dir.). 2011. Premiere 4 November, Teatr Żydowski im. Estery Rachel i Idy Kamińskich, Warsaw

Kruszczyński, Piotr (dir.). 2009. Premiere 14 February, Teatr Polski, Poznań

Małecki, Ewa (dir.). 2015. Staged reading, 11 May, Akademia Teatralna im. Aleksandra Zelwerowicza, Warsaw

Mielczarek, Grzegorz (dir.). 2014. Premiere 26 April, Scena Tęcza, Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Teatralna, Kraków

Wernio, Julia (dir.). 2008. Premiere 31 October, Teatr Polskiego Radia (Polish Radio Theatre)

Performances and staged readings in translation

Kurzeja, Katarzyna (dir.). 2009. *La Valise de Pantofelnik*, (trans. by Kinga Joucaviel), premiere 22 May, Compagnie Pollen, Théâtre Sorano, Toulouse, France

Noon, Katharine (dir.). 2011. Staged reading, *Pantofelnik's Suitcase*, 27 November, Ghost Road Company, Atwater Village Theatre, Los Angeles

Unknown (dir.). 2011. Staged reading in Russian translation, March, Złota Maska festival, Moscow,

Film version

Kostrzewski, Wawrzyniec (dir.). 2015. Broadcast on TVP2 television channel, 26 April (Wytwornia Filmów Dokumentalnych i Fabularnych projektu TEATROTEKA)

Żelazna Kurtyna

Patlewicz, Waldemar (dir.). 2012. Staged reading, 30 January, Teatr Śląski, Katowice

Witt-Michałowski, Łukasz (dir.). 2012. Staged reading, 8 March, Teatr Centralny, Lublin

Wojcieszek, Przemysław

Cokolwiek się zdarzy, kocham cię

Wojcieszek, Przemysław (dir.). 2005. Premiere 25 October, TR Warszawa, Warsaw. This production remained in the TR repertoire until 2015. In 2006 this production was shown at the 2nd Polski Express festival at the Hebbel am Ufer Theatre, Berlin, and in 2015 at the 14th Open'er festival in Gdynia

Made in Poland

Wojcieszek, Przemysław (dir.). 2004. Premiere 21 November, Teatr m. Heleny Modrzejewskiej, Legnica. This production has toured widely, including in 2005: at the 7th Interpretacje festival in Katowice, the 35th Jeleniogórskie Spotkania Teatralne, the 5th Rzeczywistość Przedstawiona festival in Zabrze, the 4th Prapremier festival in Bydgoszcz, the Międzynarodowy Dnia Teatru in Wrocław, and the Przegląd Współczesnego Dramatu in Zielona Góra; in 2006 this production was staged at the 1st R@port festival, Gdynia, Poland

Productions and staged readings in translation

Gay, Jackson (dir.). 2008. *Made in Poland*, trans. by Alissa Valles, staged reading 29-30 November, 59E59 Theaters, New York, presented by the Polish Cultural Institute New York

Film versions

Wojcieszek, Przemysław (dir.). 2010. *Made in Poland*, premiere 25 March 2011 (Epelpol)

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Wakulik, Anna. 2012. *Zażynki*, received by email from translator Catherine Grosvenor on 15 September 2012

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