KRZYSZTOF WARLIKOWSKI’S THEATRE AND THE POSSIBILITY OF ENCOUNTER

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of PhD in the Faculty of Humanities

2012

JUSTYNA DROBNIK-ROGERS

School of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures
## CONTENTS

Abstract .................................................................................................................. 4  
Declaration ........................................................................................................... 5  
Copyright Statement .............................................................................................. 5  
Acknowledgments .................................................................................................. 6  
The Author ............................................................................................................ 7  

Introduction ........................................................................................................... 8  
Rationale ................................................................................................................ 8  
Research questions and organisation of the thesis .............................................. 19  
Krzysztof Warlikowski’s work in Polish criticism .................................................. 22  
Methodological and theoretical framework ............................................................ 28  

Chapter 1  
Krzysztof Warlikowski and the driving forces of his work: key issues and topics .......................................................................................................................... 38  
Displacement and belonging: the personal and socio-cultural context .................... 39  
Hybrid identity: ‘Polishness’ and ‘foreignness’ at play .............................................. 57  

Chapter 2  
Preconditions of performance .................................................................................. 78  
Discovering a personal way of theatre-making ....................................................... 78  
Creating the ensemble ............................................................................................ 89  
Organic nature of the ensemble ............................................................................. 105  

Chapter 3  
Actors as co-creators or shared creative practice ..................................................... 110  
Training the interpreters of the text ...................................................................... 111
This thesis discusses the work of theatre director Krzysztof Warlikowski, which holds an important place within Polish and world theatre, although it remains little known in the UK. It argues that existing approaches to Warlikowski’s theatre are inadequate as they focus too much on the perspective of an interpreter of productions who decodes the meaning of the performance. Instead, Warlikowski’s work should be approached from the perspective of an observer of the complex creative processes that lead to performance and determine its relationship with the audience. The connection between actors and spectators takes the form of an ‘encounter’ that offers a particular experience of theatregoing. It aims to challenge the existing customs of spectatorship and is based on destabilising and violating the sense of safety of both actors and spectators while expanding their experience of performance beyond the ‘here and now’.

This thesis asks questions about the distinctive conditions that make possible the type of encounter that lies at the heart of Warlikowski’s oeuvre and distinguishes it from Polish repertory theatre. The theoretical framework of ‘intertheatricality’ facilitates identification of the matrix of elements that inform this encounter. These elements are constituted by: 1. The strategies that have led Warlikowski to become a successful director and enabled him to create a new way of theatre-making and communication with audience; 2. The complex processes of the creation of his ensemble of actors; 3. The family-like setting and the collaborative nature of rehearsals; 4. The status of actors who become the co-authors of performance and their idiosyncratic involvement in the creation of shows that cross the borders between work and life; and finally, 5. The role of the audience that becomes an integral element of the performance making process.

Seeing Warlikowski’s work from the perspective of performance as event shows it not as a static and completed artefact, but as a fleeting, transient process that is open to changes and resonates with the outside world. Through its focus on creative processes, this approach sheds new light on the theatre of Warlikowski. It shows how he integrates the actors and audience into his performance making process, and also helps to demonstrate his impact on the status of audience within Polish mainstream theatre post-1989.
DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT

1. The author of this thesis owns any copyright in it (the “Copyright”) and she has given The University of Manchester the right to use such Copyright for any administrative, promotional, educational and/or teaching purposes.

2. Copies of this thesis, either in full or in extracts, may be made only in accordance with the regulations of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester. Details of these regulations may be obtained from the Librarian. This page must form part of any such copies made.

3. The ownership of any patents, designs, trade marks and any and all other intellectual property rights except for the Copyright (the “Intellectual Property Rights”) and any reproductions of copyright works, for example graphs and tables (“Reproductions”), which may be described in this thesis, may not be owned by the author and may be owned by third parties. Such Intellectual Property Rights and Reproductions cannot and must not be made available for use without the prior written permission of the owner(s) of the relevant Intellectual Property Rights and/or Reproductions.

4. Further information on the conditions under which disclosure, publication and exploitation of this thesis, the Copyright and any Intellectual Property Rights and/or Reproductions described in it may take place is available from the Head of School of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have accumulated numerous debts while working on this thesis. I owe my deepest gratitude to my supervisors, Professor Dee Reynolds and Doctor Aleksandar Saša Dundjerovic for their guidance, patience and the time they spent reading and commenting on my thesis, helping me throughout this long journey often beyond their call of duty. Thank you for all our inspiring meetings, your encouragement and support in all the difficult moments and for your continuous enthusiasm and sheer insights into the work of Krzysztof Warlikowski. It has been an honour to work with you.

I am also deeply indebted to my academic advisor, Doctor Ewa Ochman whose enormous kindness, insightful suggestions and encouragement have helped to shape this thesis and have been very important throughout this process.

I am most grateful to Krzysztof Warlikowski and the actors of Nowy Teatr in Warszawa, in particular Jacek Poniedziałek, as well as other collaborators, many of whom I quote in this study. They all gave me their time, energy and attention, patiently answering my questions and stimulating my research. I thank them all for their inspiring theatre work.

I am especially indebted to the anonymous referees and editors of the Polish Theatre Perspective for their feedback and suggestions on my article on Krzysztof Warlikowski, which helped to shape fragments of this thesis, especially the discussion in chapters 2 and 3.

My warm thanks go to the excellent and supportive archivists at TR Warszawa, Teatr Nowy in Poznań, Teatr Powszechny im. Jana Kochanowskiego in Radom and Teatr im. Wilama Horzycey in Toruń for their exemplary courtesy and efficiency, which facilitated my research.

I am especially thankful to Professor Dee Reynolds who helped me with the proofreading of this thesis. I also wish to express my sincere thanks to Doctor Ian Popple for his guidance on academic writing and to Wanda Opalinska for her comments on the last draft.

I thank Jula and Paweł Kacprzak for their long-term friendship and boundless hospitality, which enabled my fieldwork research in Warszawa.

I am also grateful to the School of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures who awarded me with a fee-bursary to conduct this research.

My thanks are also due to my fellow students and colleagues at Language Centre for their help and encouragement. Finally, though not least, I am immensely grateful to my friends, wonderful parents and family, as well as my husband, Zacc, for their patience, understanding and support throughout my studies.
THE AUTHOR

I graduated with an MA in Polish Language and Literature, specialising in Drama and Theatre Studies from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań in 2001. I began my doctoral study at the University of Manchester in 2006.
Introduction

Rationale

Krzysztof Warlikowski’s work is very important in Polish as well as world theatre. No studies to date have addressed the specificity of his theatre, illustrated by his collaborative way of working, the role of the actors, the move away from text and the involvement of the audience in the process of creating performance. Little attention is paid to the fact that the processes used in the creation of a performance continue to impact on the work when it is performed to an audience – and that it is this impact that creates the possibility of an ‘encounter’ between the actors and the audience. In this study, I position myself as an observer of creative processes and aim to define the specificity and the distinctive conditions for this encounter between actors and spectators to come into being.

Despite its standing in Polish and continental theatre (i.e. mainly French and German-speaking countries), as well as its recurring presentations at international festivals and a plethora of prestigious awards, the work of Warlikowski remains relatively little known among English language theatre and research communities in the UK. The only presentation of Warlikowski’s theatre work in Great Britain was the 2008 Edinburgh Festival performance of Dybuk (Dybbuk), five years after its premiere in Poland.¹

Warlikowski’s theatre stems from the Polish repertory theatre system,² but extends beyond its traditional borders and has established itself as a specific kind of artistic activity that opposes clear-cut definitions. Due to the limited presence of Warlikowski’s work in Polish theatres,³ Warszawa’s local government offered Warlikowski funding to form his auteur theatre, the first theatre of its kind in post-war Poland. Envisaged as a multi-spaced

---

¹ See Appendix.
² By ‘repertory theatre’ I refer to a mainstream type of Polish theatre that operates in a purpose-designated venue (traditionally built with a clear division between the stage and auditorium), is financed by either local government or the state, is run by an artistic/general manager and employs a permanent ensemble of actors who work on productions in the given season. The productions usually remain in the repertory for a number of seasons and are performed regularly. This type of theatre is also known as ‘institutional’. My discussion about Warlikowski’s relationship to Polish repertory theatre will appear in chapters 1 and 2.
³ Chapter 2 discusses this issue in greater depth.
centre of culture, albeit a transient one without a permanent building or performing space, Warlikowski’s Nowy Teatr (New Theatre)\textsuperscript{4} commenced its activities in 2008\textsuperscript{5} offering a programme that combined theatrical performances with street happenings, public lectures, discussions, film screenings and other multimedia projects.

Despite its \textit{in statu nascendi} character, this process of theatre-formation constitutes a seminal stage in Warlikowski’s career as it determines the directions for further developments in Warlikowski’s work. This study therefore emerges at a timely moment, which on the one hand, allows me to provide a critical view of Warlikowski’s work over almost two decades, and on the other hand, places these findings in the new and constantly changing context of the circumstances surrounding the formation of his \textit{auteur} venue. In addition, this study aims to undertake the first extended examination of Warlikowski’s work in English, providing a critical perspective of the director’s performance practice. This also coincides with the publication of the first issue of a new peer-reviewed international theatre journal, \textit{Polish Theatre Perspectives}, which is entirely devoted to the work of Warlikowski and aims to present his work to an English-speaking readership.\textsuperscript{6} It is significant that Warlikowski’s work has initiated this new journal as it illustrates the place and status of the director’s work in Poland and abroad. This publication also attempts to challenge the prevalent image of Polish theatre in Anglo-Saxon countries, where it is mainly associated with the work of Jerzy Grotowski, Tadeusz Kantor, Gardzieneice and other alternative theatre companies (such as Teatr Ósmego Dnia) that have never belonged to the theatrical mainstream in Poland.

Despite an extensive and long-standing interest in Warlikowski’s \textit{oeuvre} in both Poland and abroad, the majority of existing criticism of his work focuses on scrupulous interpretations and analyses of the director’s performances, situating them in the context of transformations that have taken place in Polish society following the fall of Communism in 1989. These publications — e.g. Niziołek (2006, 2008); Kwaśniewska (2009) — apply the traditional terminology of ‘production’ and ‘reception’ that is typical of text-based theatre. By doing so, they overlook the importance of ‘process’ and neglect a very important aspect

\textsuperscript{4} The venue, when complete, will comprise a performance space, rehearsal studio, café, gallery, bookshop, orangery, park and play area for children.
\textsuperscript{5} The theatre is based in a number of office spaces on Puławska Street in Warszawa.
\textsuperscript{6} An essay entitled ‘Krzysztof Warlikowski and collaborative processes to performance: an intertheatrical reading’ by the author of this thesis opens the first issue of the journal.
of Warlikowski’s theatre-making that lies in the relationship between actors and spectators. This thesis brings creative processes that inform this specific actor-audience relationship to the centre of its investigation, arguing that the shift from more traditional approaches enables us to see Warlikowski’s oeuvre in a fuller light. This long-established text-based criticism of Warlikowski’s work, which persists to this day, has many shortcomings. On the one hand, it regards performance as a complete and determined ‘product’ that reflects the interpretation of a text and is traditionally considered as an integral and accomplished piece of work. Additionally, this approach is based on the premise that the performance is created using the traditional methods of preparing shows that exist in Polish repertory theatre (the infrastructure and practice of which will be discussed in detail in chapters 1 and 2). Such an assumption simplifies the complex creative processes that lead to the creation of Warlikowski’s performances, and furthermore, it neglects the multifaceted circumstances that affect this process. This approach also diminishes the role of the audience, reducing their status to ‘passive observers’ of the performance that takes place in front of their eyes (the Latin noun ‘spectator’ meaning ‘witness, spectator, sightseer, critical observer’). As a consequence, our understanding of the relationship between spectators and creators is narrowed down to an uncomplicated transaction between ‘givers’ and ‘receivers’.

By contrast, this thesis argues that an analysis of Warlikowski’s theatre requires the employment of different analytical tools, which enable us to perceive his work not as a completed and determined artefact, but as an open, fleeting and transient piece of work that comes into being as the result of a live encounter (or event) involving both actors and spectators. This live moment of interaction will constitute the focus of this study, seen through the prism of the notion of performance as an event.

This approach will lead me to investigate the collaborative nature of Warlikowski’s theatre, which aims to engage both actors and spectators in the process of performance creation. According to this understanding, the notion of creative process in the theatre of Warlikowski extends beyond traditionally established frames, and covers not only the rehearsal period but also the actual point in time when spectators and actors meet ‘in-yer-

---

7 By ‘creators’ I refer to all the people involved in the creative activity that leads to a performance. These are: the director, actors, set and costume designer, composer, lighting designer, choreographer and any other professionals who participate in creating the performance. In this thesis however, I will focus my argument on the actors and their role in creating performance and establishing communication with the audience.
I argue that this ‘encounter’ is also informed by a mesh of complex circumstances (such as, for instance, the infrastructure of repertory theatre, the typical longevity of rehearsals, etc.) that influence the creative process. Furthermore, I consider the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators as a significant element of this encounter due to the immediacy that it provides, deepening and enforcing the relationship that exists between its counterparts.

My understanding of the term ‘encounter’ is based on the word’s Latin origin: in contrāre meaning ‘contra, against’, which also indicates an element of potential hostility and confrontation, ‘to meet as an adversary, to confront in battle’ or furthermore ‘to meet with, experience difficulties, opposition, etc.’ There is also an implied sense of surprise, challenge, even violence here. In Warlikowski’s theatre the spectator is challenged and taken out of their comfort zone and there is a significant adversarial aspect to the relationship between his actors and audience. I shall observe throughout this thesis what conditions and circumstances are needed to create this kind of encounter.

In order to analyse the complexity of Warlikowski’s collaborative process and the distinctiveness of the actor-spectator relationship, it is necessary to shift the focus from interpreting and analysing ‘productions’ towards exploring the net of interdependencies that surround and influence the creative processes. Apart from illuminating the collaborative nature of Warlikowski’s theatre, this study will allow me to demonstrate the impact of this collective mode of work on actors and spectators alike.

The collective working practices of Warlikowski’s ensemble appear to be in opposition to the hegemony of text-centred Polish repertory theatre, in which he debuted. In text-based theatre, the role of the creative team, and in particular of the actors, is limited to decoding a ‘message’ engraved in the text and ‘embodying’ a fictitious character imagined by the play’s author.

---

8 The term ‘in-yr-face’ is associated with the group of young British playwrights whose work emerged on the (mainly) London stage in the mid-1990s. Aleks Sierz is the author of the monograph (2001) on this movement in British drama, which is characterised by introducing new theatrical language, its intensity and ‘pushing theatre into being more experimental, more aggressively aimed at making audiences feel and respond’ (A. Sierz, ‘Introduction’ in A. Sierz, In-Yer-Face Theatre. British Drama Today (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), xi – xiii). One of the writers most closely associated with this movement was Sarah Kane, whose Cleansed – as we will see in a further part of this thesis – was directed by Warlikowski in 2001.

It is important to acknowledge that the distinctiveness of Warlikowski’s theatre developed against the existing model of theatre-making in Poland and, as a result of Warlikowski’s extensive foreign experience, was untypical for young Polish theatre directors at the time. ‘The clash between the East and West’,\(^{10}\) as the director put it himself, became an important inspiration for his theatre-making. At ‘the East’ there was the mainstream Polish theatre that, at the time of Warlikowski’s debut in 1993, was struggling to define its purpose yet aspired to hold on to its former status as a social duty, high art and intellectual enterprise that was accessible only to an elite group of spectators. Crucially for Warlikowski, Krystian Lupa was on the periphery of this model, developing his own hermetic theatre and proclaiming an artist’s right to focus on the personal rather than complying with the political imperative that characterised the artistic thinking of the time. This aspect of Lupa’s theatre, with its strong cult of individualism and the rejection of an erudite model of directing, inspired Warlikowski to draw on his own personal experience and create a distinctive voice in Polish theatre. Perhaps due to its rawness and honesty, this voice began to resonate and continues to do so with international audiences as well.

Warlikowski’s experience of ‘the West’ was constituted by the years he spent in France during the 1980s and his encounter with European theatre there, as well as by his training with some of Europe’s greatest theatre directors, such as Giorgio Strehler, Ingmar Bergman and Peter Brook, all of whom he met in workshops during the following decade. Warlikowski later referred to Brook’s ‘rationalism that was missing from Polish theatre [at the time]\(^{11}\)’ and ‘the simplicity of talking about complicated things’.\(^{12}\) Brook’s approach to placing the audience at the heart of theatre making had a particular impact on Warlikowski, who, dissatisfied with the Polish attitude towards audiences, sought to establish a new type of communication with spectators.

This diverse experience created a distinctive grounding for the development of Warlikowski’s oeuvre which will be closely linked with the creation of his own ensemble. With ensemble work as the preferred method among the alternative and radical theatre


\(^{12}\) Author’s interview with Krzysztof Warlikowski, 27 November 2007b, Warszawa.
practitioners since the mid 20th century, and a plethora of examples available to Warlikowski from both Polish (traditional as well as alternative) and international theatre, it becomes difficult to pinpoint which of these influences could have provided him with the inspiration for the structure of his own ensemble. Since, as this thesis will demonstrate, Warlikowski’s ensemble springs from his personal relationships to members of his family and the subsequent members who join his unofficial company over the years, a structure that is democratic at its roots developed gradually and naturally as the collaborators worked together on the productions.

Unlike, for instance, Jerzy Grotowski’s The Theatre of 13 Rows or The Laboratory Theatre – to reach for an example well known in British academia, and which comes from Warlikowski’s native background albeit rooted outside the Polish mainstream – the members of Warlikowski’s company are never subjected to the strict rules or intensive training that was part of the everyday routine for Grotowski’s actors. Unlike Brook, who since moving to Paris has concentrated on collaboration with international actors, Warlikowski has a strong predilection to work with his native colleagues with whom he shares the experience of post-Communist Poland. Unlike Lupa or Jacques Copeau – to mention another example – Warlikowski did not retire with his actors to a quiet and secluded place away from the big city, but established his position strongly within, and deepened his links with, the capital. Moreover, the close-knit family-like arrangements that exist within the company do not resemble commune-like ensembles such as Copeau’s troupe or the Polish Gardzienice, where the team lives under one roof and shares the chores of everyday life. Warlikowski’s ensemble, as I will demonstrate throughout the thesis, is constituted by a group of artists who are linked by friendship, similar life experience and the urge to redefine the role of theatre in society by restoring more direct, emotional and less intellectual communication with audiences.

By rejecting the supremacy of text, Warlikowski promotes the actors – the facilitators of the encounter with the audience – to the status of co-authors of performance, shifting their traditional repertory roles from skilful interpreters to the legitimate creators of the show’s meaning. This shift, however, does not imply that Warlikowski abdicates responsibility for his shows. On the contrary, the stage microcosm –

---

13 As we will observe, Warlikowski had a chance to create his official ensemble in 2008 when the Nowy Teatr began its existence.
by which I understand the world created by the actors on stage – created by the ensemble in these new unconventional conditions continues to bear Warlikowski’s characteristic signature, the element of control and power that he holds over the performance. Clearly there are difficulties involved in this mode of work: allowing actors to co-author the show becomes synonymous with opening up the space to continuous negotiation and the resulting conflict of personalities that one would expect to be less characteristic of a repertory mode of rehearsing. Moreover, for Warlikowski, allowing the actors to co-author the show does not imply – as we shall observe, particularly in chapter 3 – that all members of the ensemble are equally engaged in the creation of the show. Their personality, age, background as well as the longevity of their work with Warlikowski are all important factors in determining the degree of their involvement. Therefore, identifying the contribution of individual artists to a production becomes particularly difficult for the researcher due to the family-like relationships existing between the members of the ensemble and the work that is carried out beyond a schedule of rehearsals, which often blends with the elementary everyday activities of the group.

Analogously to the actors, spectators also gain prominence within Warlikowski’s work – their active participation becomes not only a key element but also a condition for the performance to come into being. Granting actors and spectators the responsibility for the creation of performance (although their roles relate to its different aspects), Warlikowski allows both counterparts to continuously negotiate the meaning of the show they co-create ‘here and now’. This thesis argues that there is a direct parallel between actors’ and spectators’ experience of the performance.\footnote{This issue will be discussed in detail in chapters 3 and 4.} This means that the various ways in which an audience experiences Warlikowski’s productions are preconditioned by the complex processes undergone by actors during the rehearsal period, as well as during their live encounter with the audience in the course of the show. This directly correlates to the openness and vulnerability with which Warlikowski’s actors approach the rehearsal process and undergo the transition that makes their personal experience collective and accessible to those who come to watch the performance.

Thus, Warlikowski’s idiosyncratic method of rehearsing – which I will discuss in detail in chapter 3 – is based on a continuous deconstructing, questioning and destabilising of the actors’ identity that is intended to provoke similar processes and responses within
the auditorium during the duration of the performance and/or possibly afterwards, when the spectators have left the theatre. In this sense, the spectators are expected to take an active part in the co-creation of the production. Their contribution is realised through their presence, their openness to the happenings on stage and willingness to live through and experience the processes that arise from their direct encounter with the actors in the same place at the same time. Warlikowski envisages that the audience will continue to reflect on the show after leaving the theatre building and that the experience offered to them during their live encounter with the actors will stimulate a further experience.

Furthermore, as this thesis claims, this exchange between actors and spectators results in another meaningful finding. It produces an opportunity for an experience of liminality. According to Erika Fischer-Lichte, whose concept I draw on throughout this thesis, liminality is associated with the destabilisations of frames, with disrupting and jeopardising the sense of safety that is normally enjoyed by an audience when visiting the theatre. A state of ‘in-betweeness’ is created by the violation of these frames, taking both actors and spectators out of their comfort zone and outside the conventions associated with theatre-making and theatre-going. I shall discuss Fischer-Lichte’s concept in greater detail in chapter 4.

Although this study acknowledges the impact of personal experience as a natural consequence of the dual status of a researcher who is also a spectator, it also recognises that it is almost impossible to quantify this ‘transformative’ power or provide evidence for transformations affecting both actors and spectators as a result of their encounter during the theatrical event. The reasons for this difficulty are complex: even though, hypothetically, had I managed to use some advanced scientific technology in order to screen and measure the reaction of the body and its inner organs to events on stage during a performance, these results would not provide us with transparent data, as they could only show us the spectators’ reaction in the ‘here and now’, but would fail to illustrate the long-term effect that tends to remain with us after our experience of art and often returns to our memory triggered by other, often unexpected situations in life. Furthermore, this would raise the question of what reactions, other than visible and biological changes, we experience both during a performance and after we have left the theatre.

My argument concerning the communication between actors and spectators is grounded in the reactions of both parties as detailed in a series of interviews with
Warlikowski’s actors that I conducted for this thesis; my own observation of spectators’ responses, and also comments made by participants of post-show discussions that I have witnessed or accessed in print or recorded.\(^{15}\) Also, inevitably, since my encounter with Warlikowski’s theatre is based on my own experience as a spectator, which began in Poznań in 1996 (with the performance of Roberto Zucco, which, as I shall discuss in chapter 2, marked an important milestone in the director’s career), my argument will be filtered through my personal experience and memories of my regular theatre-going encounter with Warlikowski’s work over the years.

Moreover, central to this approach is my own subjectivity. Since Richard Schechner’s statement made in the ‘Introduction’ to his work *Performance Studies*: ‘Who I am is not irrelevant. I will be leading you on a journey. You ought to know a little about your guide’,\(^{16}\) it is no longer feasible to talk about theatre without acknowledging one’s subjective approach to the researched material. Convinced of the importance of revealing ‘where you are coming from’ as a researcher, Schechner emphasised the impact of his own views and values on the field he had researched: ‘The book embodies the values, theories, and practices of a certain field of scholarship as understood by one particular person in the eighth decade of his life. This person is a Jewish Hindu Buddhist atheist living in New York City, married, and the father of two children …’.\(^{17}\) Therefore, it is crucial to reveal elements of my own biography that feed and determine the way in which I approach the director’s oeuvre. This is especially important because of the polarisation of opinions that surrounded the reception of Warlikowski’s adaptation of Sarah Kane’s *Oczyszczeni* (Cleansed) in 2001, which became a landmark of Polish post-1989 mainstream theatre.\(^{18}\)

\(^{15}\) See *Methodology* section.


\(^{17}\) Ibid., 1.

\(^{18}\) Discussion concerning Warlikowski’s *Cleansed* between critics, scholars and audience members was widely reproduced in the media: both in specialist and non-specialist periodicals and cultural programmes on TV, clearly highlighting the division between liberal and conservative points of view and – for the first time in Polish theatre – the background of the person taking part in these debates also mattered, becoming an important element of the discussion itself. Liberally-orientated disputants defended the show and regarded it as ‘groundbreaking’, marking a new stage in the history of Polish theatre (for example Roman Pawłowski, Piotr Gruszczyński, Janusz Majcherek, Maria Janion) while those with more conservative views of what theatre should be criticised the show and tried to deprive Warlikowski of his right to portray nudity on stage or discuss the issue of homosexual love (for instance, Tomasz Mościicki, Jacek Kopećński, Janusz Kowalczyk).
Inevitably, it is important to notice the impact of my emigration to the UK\(^\text{19}\) on my understanding and approach to Warlikowski’s theatre as is evident in this thesis. My experience of living in Great Britain has, on the one hand, allowed me to see Polish theatre from some distance and detached me from the academic circle of Polish theatre scholars, and on the other hand, has created the opportunity to juxtapose my experience of theatre-going in Poland and the UK. My regular exposure to the theatre in the UK appears in such a great contrast to my experience of Warlikowski’s work that it makes my approach to both primary and secondary sources different than it would have been if I had continued to live in Poland. Perhaps it is also worth noting that the fact that I have conducted this research as a PhD student of a British university and that my research is accessible in English might have – to some extent – affected my interaction with Warlikowski and his ensemble. However, it is difficult to predict how my contact with these creators would differ if I was a doctoral student associated with a Polish university and my research was written in the native language of the ensemble contributing to the plethora of existing literature on this subject.

Furthermore, the timeline of my first-hand experience as a theatregoer is important as it coincided with several changes that took place in Polish theatre in the 1990s. My transition from the position of a lay spectator to a student of drama, and then subsequently a professional theatre worker\(^\text{20}\) and researcher coincided with the changing role and character of Polish mainstream theatre in society. I experienced the local repertory theatre of my hometown of Kalisz, which was typical of Polish repertory theatre in the 1990s. This coincided with my first encounter with Warlikowski’s performance in 1996 (Roberto Zucco); this, in turn, concurred with the start of my undergraduate theatre studies in Poznań. These were memorable occurrences and inevitably redefined my expectations of theatre and affected my approach to the work of Warlikowski and thus this thesis.

---

\(^{19}\) I was a Socrates Erasmus student at Dartington College of Arts in the academic year 2000/2001. I returned to Poland in the late 2001 to complete my Master’s dissertation at Poznań’s Adam Mickiewicz University (I graduated in November 2001). In 2004 I emigrated to the UK again and have remained here ever since.

\(^{20}\) I was involved in the development of Centrum Dramaturgii Współczesnej (The Centre of Contemporary Dramaturgy) at Teatr Polski (The Polish Theatre) in Poznań between 1999 and 2000 and after I graduated, I ran the Literary Department at Teatr im. Jana Kochanowskiego (Jan Kochanowski Theatre) in Opole from 2002 to 2004.
Another important element of my biography for the context of this thesis is the subject of my Master’s dissertation, which was based on the work of Sarah Kane, and for which I collated information during my one-year scholarship in the UK in 2000. Coincidentally, on my return from the scholarship, Krystyna Meissner, the manager of Teatr Współczesny (Contemporary Theatre) in Wrocław, commissioned me to write an essay on Kane for the theatre programme of Warlikowski’s Cleansed. Moreover, I had a chance to share the experience of many who watched this groundbreaking adaptation of Cleansed and I continue to hold a very vivid memory of this performance, which is regarded today as revolutionary within the context of Polish mainstream theatre of the post-Communist period. This production had an enormous impact on me, increasing my interest in Warlikowski’s work and, as a result, this became the obvious choice for my PhD research.

All these aforementioned circumstances have influenced my approach to Warlikowski’s oeuvre. This thesis is certainly written with the view that, as Richard Schechner pointed out: ‘there are many voices, themes, opinions, methods, and subjects’ and thus, this study is one of many possible versions, narratives and interpretations of this theatre that can co-exist and complement one other.

Moreover, due to the specific nature of this thesis and as a consequence of Warlikowski’s decision to cease directing drama abroad and concentrate on the creation of his ensemble of Polish actors, the investigation that is undertaken here is solely limited to the director’s work in Poland with Polish collaborators. There are two further reasons for this decision. Firstly, focusing on Warlikowski’s long-standing work in Poland enables me to trace the trajectory of his development as a director and recognise the relationships that exist between the members of his ensemble, who he has gathered together over almost two decades. Secondly, Warlikowski’s theatre is deeply rooted in Poland’s social and political situation and this context informs the communication with this audience that his theatre aims to establish.

The title of this thesis is evocative on two levels. Firstly, the notion of ‘possibility’ suggests that something may happen and thus it leaves space for indeterminacy and

21 The thesis’ title was ‘The playwriting of Sarah Kane’. My thesis was research-based and supervised by Professor Dobrochna Ratajczakowa.
23 I will however refer to his work with foreign actors in Poland in a few instances in this thesis.
openness, which is itself reminiscent of Warlikowski’s oeuvre. From an analytical point of view, this also entails – as we have mentioned above – that the analysis provided here becomes one of many possible interpretations that could reveal much about the theatre created by Warlikowski and his ensemble. On the one hand, the occurrence of the ‘encounter’ in the title of this thesis implies some kind of promise or potential and simultaneously suggests that there are conditions that must be met for this encounter to come into being. I will explore this notion throughout this thesis in more detail.

Research Questions and Organisation of the Thesis

The core research question that motivates this thesis is:

What are the distinctive conditions for the encounter between actors and spectators that takes place in Warlikowski’s theatre in Poland?

From the beginning of my encounter with Warlikowski’s Roberto Zucco, I have been intrigued by the question of what influences the strength of communication that Warlikowski’s productions appear to establish with their audiences. My interest in this issue gradually grew with Warlikowski’s subsequent works, but it took me a long time to formulate and start addressing this core question. My investigations have led me to examine the process of creation behind the shows and have allowed me to discover an intricate mesh of connections and interdependencies that distinguishes Warlikowski’s theatre from other existing practices in Polish mainstream theatre. During my fieldwork in Poland, and as a result of the interviews that I conducted with Warlikowski and his collaborators, it became evident that there is a direct link between the complex processes of theatre-making and the communicative – and also potentially transformative, as I will argue throughout this thesis – qualities of these performances. It became clear to me that the conditions in which actors work can produce a particular effect on audience and provide them with an idiosyncratic experience of theatregoing. Although, as I have already pointed out, my analysis of these conditions will apply solely to the work that Warlikowski devises in his native country, there is an important network of connections that crosses this
national border, as I will demonstrate (especially in chapter 1), involving the director’s links with international theatre circles. An intertheatrical perspective (as conceptualised by Jacky Bratton)\(^{24}\) will be crucial to this study’s investigation of the ensemble-building process and Warlikowski’s links with repertory theatre, as well as his emergence as a director-
anteur.

The research question is posited with an awareness that, firstly, the specific setting, in which Warlikowski’s ensemble works creates a challenging environment for the researcher. This setting, in which a division between the private and the personal becomes permeable is be best explained using the concept of family of choice as coined by Weeks et al.\(^{25}\) This notion, which I shall discuss further in my Theory section and particularly in chapters 2 and 3, explains the close-knit relations functioning within the ensemble, which are rooted in the director’s personal relationships and affect the way in which his productions are created.

The ensemble’s work on performance is often blended into their elementary everyday tasks such as dining, resting and their leisure activities and thus the complete image of the processes and circumstances in which a performance emerges is not accessible to anyone outside the ensemble. Equally, it is possible that a permanent member of this ensemble would be biased – or at least strongly affected – by the relationships within the group.\(^{26}\) Consequently, it is necessary to acknowledge that the collated data is fragmented as a result of this researcher’s restricted access to the ensemble. However the material presented in this thesis remains representative of the specificity of this environment and therefore it can legitimately act as a valuable source of information. Secondly, due to the provisional nature of Warlikowski’s work, all of his productions are subject to ongoing changes and developments reflecting the fluctuating dynamic of the ensemble and their personal biographies as well as various external circumstances (e.g. the venue and culture


\(^{26}\) This is the predicament of Piotr Gruszczynski, the current dramaturg at Warlikowski’s Nowy Teatr, who, as a former critic, was known as one of Warlikowski’s most vigilant admirers. It was likely that his close relationship with the ensemble affected the way in which he saw Warlikowski’s work and presented it to the public. Perhaps, this is why Ratajczakowa, for example, called his criticism of Warlikowski’s work ‘manipulative’ (D. Ratajczakowa, ‘In Transition 1989 – 2004’, translated and edited by Paul Allain and Grzegorz Ziołkowski, *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 15, 1 (2005): *Polish Theatre After 1989: Beyond Borders*, edited by Paul Allain, Grzegorz Ziołkowski; 17-27.)
of the country where the show is performed). Despite that, however, this thesis is still a record and a valid observation of what is happening at the time of writing. I aim to capture the transformative stage of Warlikowski’s theatre-making, which is ephemeral in its nature, and this is how this research needs to be seen.

In order to investigate the distinctive conditions for the encounter with an audience that lies at the heart of Warlikowski’s theatre-making, there are a number of areas that need to be studied. These areas will be approached through interrelated research questions, which will guide both the study and the structure of the thesis. Firstly, **what are the driving forces behind Krzysztof Warlikowski’s emergence as a director** and **how did he go about gaining recognition and becoming successful both in Poland and internationally?** The investigation in chapter 1 will centre on the general context of Warlikowski’s theatre-making. Situating Warlikowski in the political and socio-cultural context of Poland in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Communism, and against the backdrop of Polish repertory theatre at the time, will make it possible to explore the various ways in which the director makes use of and creatively engages with the opportunities offered by this new reality. Furthermore, I will examine the context of international festival culture and Warlikowski’s abilities to use his networking links to develop his distinctive way of theatre-making and accomplish his theatrical ideals.

Secondly, I will also investigate the important question: **what was the trajectory of the development of Warlikowski’s ensemble?** The discussion in chapter 2 will centre on analysing numerous intertheatrical elements (such as the rigid borders and contexts of Polish repertory theatre, the complex circumstances surrounding the production of *Roberto Zucco*, etc) that both affected the creation of Warlikowski’s ensemble and influenced his rehearsal process. My inquiry into the relationships existing within the ensemble and the ethics practiced by its members will demonstrate how the ensemble’s work crosses the borders between private and professional life, and I will discuss the dangers and downfalls of the commitment that is often associated with this mode of work.

The investigation in chapter 3 will be structured by a series of interrelated questions. **Who are the actors in Warlikowski’s theatre?** **How do their roles as co-authors of performance develop?** **What are the main features of Warlikowski’s shared creative practice?** This part of the thesis will explore the position and
responsibilities of the actors both in the rehearsal process and in facilitating the encounter with the audience. Various examples from Warlikowski’s performances will function here as a testing ground for the analysis of the continuous negotiation between the actors’ private and theatrical existences and will allow an observation of the construction of their stage presence and the way in which they build their characters.

Finally, chapter 4 will ask how the encounter between actors–spectators comes into being in Warlikowski’s performances and what are the liminal and potentially transformative elements of his practice? Based on the investigation in the earlier chapters, this part of the thesis will start with an overview of mainstream theatre at the beginning of the 1990s and will demonstrate how Warlikowski and his collaborators responded to the void that they experienced in the theatre at the turn of the decade and how they embarked on finding a new way of expression that would resonate with contemporary audiences and reflect the new democratic and free-market society emerging in post-Communist Poland. This chapter will argue that the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators plays an important role in Warlikowski’s work. It will also suggest that the personal involvement of the actors determines the way in which the actors present themselves corporeally and how they influence the physical responses of the audience. This concluding chapter will draw on examples from Warlikowski’s productions and will allow me to identify various aspects of the physical co-presence between actors and spectators. Furthermore, this chapter will investigate indicators of the transformative potential that these performances aim to offer their participants. The actor-spectator relationship, which exists in a state of continuous flux and negotiation, will provide a crucial testing ground in which to consider the opportunity for liminal experience.

**Krzysztof Warlikowski’s work in Polish Criticism**

Despite the numerous scholarly and non-scholarly publications that concern the work of Krzysztof Warlikowski published in Polish, there is a limited number of works that inform the research questions of this thesis. The most important contribution in terms of the initial contextualisation of Warlikowski’s oeuvre within Polish theatre is Piotr Gruszczynski’s
In this article, the then theatre critic noticed that a generational change had taken place in the first years of the post-Communist period, characterised by young directors who had taken over the mainstream stage. By associating those young directors – Krzysztof Warlikowski, Grzegorz Jarzyna (b.1968), Anna Augustynowicz (b.1959), Zbigniew Brzoza (b. 1957) and Piotr Cieplak (b. 1960) – with this new movement, Gruszczyński attempted to elucidate some crucial features of their theatrical languages, that positioned them in opposition to existing work produced by the older generation. Although some of his observations (such as a turning to mass culture, the introduction of new themes, a rejection of political issues and the attempt to establish a new relationship with the audience) are worthy of attention, the critic’s category of ‘younger and more talented’ had many drawbacks. Today, thirteen years on from Gruszczyński’s article, it is clear that the directors he grouped together did not constitute a coherent group or share any manifesto, as their views, aesthetics and understanding of theatre differ greatly. I agree with Tomasz Plata that perhaps the greatest credit in coining this phrase should be given to Gruszczyński for ‘noticing that there was a new group of people that appeared in Polish theatre and questioned its existing state.’ I also agree with Łukasz Drewniak, who sees this generation as ‘an omen of the wave of a new theatre’ that had an embryonic form but also encouraged other young directors to search for their own theatrical language. In my opinion, there are two very important aspects of the classification made by Gruszczyński in 1998 that are relevant to my line of enquiry. Firstly, his emphasis on the role of Krystian

---

27 Gruszczyński uses this phrase to refer to an article by Jerzy Koenig in the journal Teatr in August 1969 that proclaimed the emergence of a new generation of directors who were, in his opinion, ‘young and talented’. These directors were: Maciej Prus, Bogdan Hussakowski, Roman Kordziński, Jerzy Grzegorzewski, Izabella Cywińska and Helmut Kajzar.

28 All translations from Polish are my own unless otherwise stated.


30 It is significant that all of them apart from Brzoza are graduates of Kraków’s PWST (Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Teatralna im. Ludwika Solskiego – State Higher Theatre School) and studied under Krystian Lupa, ‘the founding father’ of the changes that took place in Polish post-Communist theatre of the 1990s. I will discuss this in later parts of the thesis.


as a developer of young artists and their freedom in discovering their individual voice as artists is crucial. Secondly, Gruszczyński stresses the sensitivity of young directors towards their audience and their spectators’ needs, which are linked to and reflect the new post-Communist reality in which they function. My argument throughout this thesis will demonstrate how Warlikowski explored and developed this relationship with his audience, and these attempts distinguish him, not only from the group of ‘younger and more talented’ but also from the repertory theatre in Poland.

Another important stage in the critical reception of Warlikowski’s work was the publication of a special issue of Notatnik Teatralny No 28-29 devoted to the director in 2003. The growing importance of Warlikowski’s position within Polish theatre is demonstrated by the dedication of a whole issue to the director’s work. This was inevitably linked to the extensive debate in the Polish media that followed Warlikowski’s adaptation of Kane’s Cleansed. The debate took place in specialist and non-specialist periodicals as well as on TV and radio and made Warlikowski the most distinguished voice in new Polish theatre. This publication also coincided with a significant shift in the official approach to Warlikowski’s theatre, which up to this point had attracted a degree of suspicion and negative criticism. In 2003 Warlikowski was awarded many prestigious awards, both in Poland and abroad. For instance, the director received the Paszport Polityki for ‘the achievements of not only the last season, but for restoring belief in the artistic and ethical mission of theatre’, and he also obtained Laur Konrada during the VI Ogólnopolski Festiwal Sztuki Reżyserskiej Interpretacje (National Festival of Directing Craft ‘Interpretations’) in Katowice for ‘talking about most important human issues’, for ‘his interpretation of the world’ and for developments in acting. The special issue of Notatnik Teatralny shows an awareness of some of these aspects, but since they are mentioned almost ‘in passing’ in interviews with Warlikowski’s collaborators (e.g. an interview with

---

33 Krystian Lupa (b. 1943) is a celebrated Polish director, set designer, translator. Lupa started teaching at PWST in Kraków in 1983 and became professor in 1993. Between 1990 and 1996 he was head of the Directing Faculty.

34 Plata also agrees that this aspect of Gruszczyński’s classification is of great importance – see Plata (2006a), 217-238.

35 A prestigious award given every year in various disciplines by the weekly Polityka.


37 Quoted in Sobolewska (2011a), 363.
Stanisława Celińska or Redbad Klijnstra) there is no scholarly analysis of their significance for the director’s oeuvre. Furthermore, this issue of Notatnik also records some audience responses to Cleansed that illustrate the polarisation of views that Warlikowski’s theatre attracts. All of the aspects of Warlikowski’s work that are only suggested in this early publication will be analysed throughout this thesis and will constitute important lines of enquiry.

Significantly, the recent Notatnik Teatralny No 62-63 published in June 2011 as a celebration of the journal’s twenty years, is also almost in its entirety dedicated to the work of Warlikowski. Again, the most valuable source of information concerning this thesis lies in numerous interviews with Warlikowski’s actors.

The first scrutiny of Warlikowski’s theatre by Grzegorz Niziołek appears in a selection of articles edited by Tomasz Plata, Strategie publiczne i strategie prywatne. Teatr polski 1990-2005. This book is the first synthesised discussion of the conditions in which the new theatre in Poland found itself following the collapse of Communism and Niziołek’s essay also contributes a chronological overview of Warlikowski’s work. He traces the most important recurring motifs in his theatre, and initiates a discussion about Warlikowski’s developments as a director, concluding his essay with the important observation that Warlikowski’s work provides an ‘integrating experience, which is enhancing and cleansing and enables us to create the feeling of community between actors and audience’. From the perspective of this thesis, this concluding observation points out one of the most crucial aspects of Warlikowski’s oeuvre, although Niziołek does not expand on this point, leaving it open to further analysis to which, as we shall see, he will return in his monograph on Warlikowski’s theatre (2008).

Insights into the working processes that Warlikowski developed since his debut came in Szekspir i uzurpator (Shakespeare and the Usurper), Piotr Gruszczyński’s book-length interview with Warlikowski. Due to Gruszczyński’s familiarity with Warlikowski – at first as an admirer and critic and at the time the book was published, as dramaturg of TR

---


40 Warlikowski debuted with Markiza O (Die Marquise von O) based on Heinrich von Kleist – see Appendix.

Warszawa, where Warlikowski worked between 1999 and 2008 – the critic repeatedly shies away from challenging Warlikowski’s often inconsistent statements and allows the director to refrain from providing more specific answers. This, however, does not undermine the book’s value, which focuses on Warlikowski’s adaptations of Shakespeare and tries to define the impact of the Elizabethan dramatist on Warlikowski’s notion of theatre. The book is also informative in regards to the circumstances surrounding the creation of Warlikowski’s other productions such as *Cleansed* (2001), *The Bacchae* (2001), *Krum* (2005) and *Angels in America* (2007). Particularly pertinent to this thesis are the extracts that provide insights into the creative processes and motivations that lie behind some of Warlikowski’s directorial decisions. Significantly, the eponymous noun ‘usurper’ illustrates Warlikowski’s approach to the dramatic text, implying that the director consciously ‘usurps’ the right to adapt the play through the prism of his own experience and that of his collaborators. This aspect of Warlikowski’s theatre – supported by extracts from *Szekspir i użurpator* – will be elucidated throughout this study (in chapters 2 and 3).

Niziołek’s book entitled *Warlikowski. Extra ecclesiam* offers the most comprehensive study on Warlikowski’s work to date. The scholar explores Warlikowski’s productions in the broad context of changes that have taken place in Polish society as the result of the political events in 1989. Although Niziołek’s hypothesis makes Warlikowski’s experience synonymous with the experience of the nation (‘Warlikowski is us’) this is at best speculative, particularly given the backdrop of Catholic Poland, a country in which a large percentage of the population holds strong right-wing values. The scholar rightly uses this phrase to emphasize the connection between Warlikowski’s theatre and Polish society at the turn of the twenty-first century and, as such, sets an important platform for this thesis. However, unlike Niziołek who focuses on decoding the meanings of Warlikowski’s productions, I position myself as an observer of processes that surround the creation of performances. The distinction between these two approaches – as a ‘decoder of meaning’ and an ‘observer of processes’ – reflects the tendency that appeared in the humanities and social sciences in the 1980s and 1990s and was described by Conquergood as a shift from ‘viewing the world as text to the world as performance’.

---


In the light of this performative shift, the approach I propose uses the broad context identified by Niziolek to recognise the mesh of connections that exist at the core of the creation of performance and by analysing these connections, provide valuable insights into Warlikowski’s theatre-making. This enables me to reveal the altered status of both actors and spectators who, unlike traditional text-based theatre, become an important element of performance. The consequences of this ontological transformation are at the heart of this investigation.

Drawing on psychoanalysis, Niziolek argues that ‘Warlikowski creates his theatre for spectators – neurotics’44 implying that only neurotics could enjoy a theatrical experience that exposes hidden and rejected sources of suffering. This experience of pleasure defined here as ‘the increased tension of a mental state’45 – is concurrently combined with resistance. Building on Niziolek’s notion of ‘theatre for neurotics’, which he finds to be a useful formula for understanding Warlikowski’s way of communicating with his audience, I question its limitation to spectators. Instead, I propose to analyse the creative processes of the ensemble – whose members, as I shall argue, experience parallel feelings of pleasure and resistance during the process of performance-making, both in rehearsals and during the course of the performance. I also question the analysis offered by Niziolek as he places Warlikowski’s theatre within the traditional framework of interpretation, focusing on productions regarded as completed and finished artefacts and implying the responses of audiences (without presenting any evidence for that ‘reception’).

The gap that occurs as a result of Niziolek’s refusal to acknowledge the engagement of the actors46 in the creation of this neurotic state suggests that the complexity of Warlikowski’s theatre is not fully understood. My study claims that the ‘neurotic’ experience applies equally to creators and spectators and that the actors’ investment is directly proportional to the potential engagement of the spectators. Contrary to Niziolek’s assumption that each show is presented to passive ‘observers’ of ready-made, completed pieces of the theatrical microcosm, this thesis, by applying the aesthetic of performativity, situates the ‘process’ rather than ‘the product’ at the heart of its scrutiny.

44Niziolek (2008), 56.
45 Freud in Niziolek (2008), 56. Interpreting Warlikowski’s oeuvre through psychoanalysis seems like an obvious and possible path to take. I however decided to approach his work differently.
46 This is also evident at the formal level of the scholar’s argument, as actors’ names do not appear in the main body of the text, their presence can only be traced through photo captions.
and as a result, allows us to address questions regarding the conditions that need to be fulfilled for the encounter between the actors and spectators to take place.

**Methodological and theoretical framework**

**Methodology**

Owing to the nature of this study, which analyses the complex processes that determine and lead to the possibility of an encounter between the actors and audience members, the methodology of this thesis is based on a qualitative approach analysing the role of actors and audiences. This enables me to collect and scrutinize the data that was collected in great part during a number of fieldwork trips to Poland between 2006 and 2010. This fieldwork research took the form of:

1. Regular participation in Warlikowski’s shows as a member of the audience – very often I would watch the same performance two or three nights in a row (e.g. *Burza* (The Tempest), *Bachantki* (The Bacchae), *Anioły w Ameryce* (Angels in America) or *A(pollonia)*. In other instances, I would watch the show that I had seen previously in order to see how the work developed and how changes that happened within the ensemble affected its performances.

2. Observation of the behaviour and response of other audience members during the performance (this was mainly possible when I watched the show for the second or third time in a row).

3. Participation in and observation of various post-show discussions or festival meetings (e.g. Wrocław’s Dialog, Edinburgh) during which various elements of the performance process or audience reception were discussed.

4. My interviews with Krzysztof Warlikowski (twice) and his collaborators: Magdalena Cielecka, Ewa Dałkowska, Piotr Gruszczyński, Małgorzata Hajewska-Krzysztofik, Renate Jett, Redbad Klijnstra (twice), Jacek Poniedziałek, Danuta Stenka. I will discuss the type and my choice of interviewees in the further part of this Methodology statement.

5. The observation of the last stage of rehearsals of *A(pollonia)*, which took place in April 2009 in Warszawa (three full days of rehearsals)
6. Visits to various theatre archives of the repertory venues where Krzysztof Warlikowski prepared his shows (e.g. TR Warszawa, Teatr Nowy in Poznań) in order to collate data (reviews, theatre programmes, press cuttings, photos, etc.) and access the recordings of the performances.

7. Visits to local and university libraries in Poland to collate various printed data concerning Warlikowski’s work and the reception of his performances such as reviews, interviews, essays, press cuttings, etc.

The first five of these activities constitute the primary sources of the analysis undertaken throughout this thesis. They were undertaken during my fieldwork visit to Poland, and exceptionally one visit to Edinburgh in August 2008, where the ensemble presented *Dybbuk* during the Edinburgh International Festival. The remaining two activities constitute secondary sources that will contribute to my analysis of the specificity of Warlikowski’s oeuvre.

Important secondary sources include internet resources:

1. The websites of theatres where Warlikowski has worked, such as for instance, Nowy Teatr’s www.nowyteatr.org or TR Warszawa’s www.trwarszawa.pl;

2. The website of Instytut Teatralny (The Theatre Institute) www.e-teatr.pl, which constitutes the most extensive and up-to-date source of information about Polish theatre. This website also gives online access to the Institute’s theatre archive;

3. Youtube (www.youtube.com) to access video recordings of various meetings, interviews, post-show discussions as well as fragments of the productions.

4. Specialist and non-specialist periodicals that contain information about Warlikowski’s work.

5. Various blogs that share their authors’ opinions and impressions of watching Warlikowski’s productions.

The interviews conducted during my fieldwork are particularly crucial for this study as they are an original source of data, providing information that sheds some new light on the work of Warlikowski’s ensemble, contributing to the understanding of the specificity of this oeuvre. It is therefore important to discuss here briefly the nature and circumstances in
which those interviews were conducted. Firstly, I have used the creative interviewing method\(^\text{47}\) in conversation with all my interviewees. This means that I approached each of them with a prepared set of questions – both generic and specific (e.g. related to a particular part they played, or scene in a given production, etc), which were however not asked in any particular order or sometimes skipped if their relevance was undermined by the answer provided. Moreover, new questions were added based on the context and the narrative of the given interviewee. This interviewing style resembles a typical journalistic interview, in which an interviewer initiates the conversation and then asks subsequent questions based on what has been said as a response to their previous questions.

All the conversations were interviewee-tailored and I prepared for each of them, trying to set myself a list of goals that I attempted to fulfil, such as obtaining an opinion or feeling related to a particular aspect of their work, reminiscences of certain processes, etc. With each subsequent interview with the same interviewee, my knowledge of the context, of the relationships within the ensemble and circumstances surrounding their work, as well as my understanding of their work increased, and therefore, I had more chances to pose certain questions that would help me to cross-examine certain aspects of their work and, as a result, gain a more complex picture of the actor’s contribution and involvement in this theatre-making process. All of the interviews were conducted in an informal setting: from private flats to pubs, cafés and hotel rooms and each of the interviewees were generous in terms of time provided on their behalf. It needs to be noted, however, that it was challenging to make initial contact with Warlikowski and his ensemble: it took me over a year before the first meeting was arranged.\(^\text{48}\) This can be explained by my interviewees’ very hectic work schedule.

My choice of the interviewees was determined by my research questions and the line of enquiry associated with the processes that lead and motivate the ensemble to establishing a specific type of communication with audiences. Thus, I decided to interview people who would represent the most wide-ranging experience of working with Warlikowski. This was, for instance, based on their longevity of working with Warlikowski,

\(^{47}\) As described by Jennifer Mason in her video presentation ‘Creative Interviewing’ (November 2010) presented within Realities, part of the ESRC National Centre for Research Methods based in the Morgan Centre for Study of Relationships and Personal Life. www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/reallities/resources/videos/creative_interviewing/index.html [accessed 1 September 2011].

\(^{48}\) That followed a number of emails, letters and phone calls.
the type of connection with the ensemble (the celebrity status of some of the ensemble members, the nationality of his collaborators, their participation in the most fundamental stages of Warlikowski’s development as a director). Despite numerous attempts, I have failed to arrange interviews with a few other members of the ensemble. Amongst them, the lack of an interview with Celińska is probably mostly regretted due to her long-standing and significant contribution to Warlikowski’s theatre, but also her experience of leaving and returning to the ensemble.

Although, as I stated earlier, the actors – as primary facilitators of the encounter with the audience – are at the centre of the discussion of this thesis and it was their personal accounts that I was mostly interested in, my interview with Gruszczynski, a former theatre critic and currently the dramaturg of the Nowy Teatr is the exception to this (not to mention Krzysztof Warlikowski himself, whom I interviewed at an early stage in this research). Since Gruszczynski is the person responsible for co-creating the vision of the new venue and overseeing the artistic programme, which is mainly targeted at the local community and those who are not regarded as theatre goers, I was interested to discuss the concept of the Nowy Teatr and the plans they had in terms of attracting new audiences and expanding their activities. Besides, our conversation took place during the final rehearsals of (A)pollonia, for which Gruszczynski acted as a dramaturg and since this show marked an important new stage in Warlikowski’s career – it was the Nowy’s first production – it was a great opportunity to talk about the process of the creation of this show, the plans surrounding the meetings with audiences that would address the themes of (A)pollonia and the way in which the theatre programme and poster for this show are designed.

Perhaps the most valuable aspect of this creative interviewing was that it has provided space for my interviewees’ personal accounts or narratives of their own experience associated with this theatre, to be voiced and recorded. And despite the fact that only fragments of these accounts will be quoted throughout this thesis, all of them contributed to my understanding of this theatre-making process. Although I am convinced that my choice of interviewees has provided me with a fair representation of narratives associated with Warlikowski’s oeuvre,49 I am also aware that a different choice could have altered – to some extent – my perception of this theatre or, more likely, provided new

49 I have also supported my findings with numerous secondary sources such as interviews with other members of the ensemble that were published in theatrical as well as non-specialist periodicals.
angles that were worth exploring and could have led me to other findings. To echo therefore once again the words of Richard Schechner that I quoted at the beginning of this Introduction, the discussion presented here is to a significant extent a single and subjective narrative of my own, which is marked by the time and circumstances in which it has been written.

It was essential to draw a line between gaining the trust of the ensemble members and encouraging them to share their stories, and becoming emotionally involved with their narratives and the work they create. For the same reason, as I have already signalled, I did not press for further participation in rehearsals, as due to their very nature – based on day-long schedules, breaks in between the sessions during which the participants often share ordered-in meals – it would be difficult to remain anonymous and detached from the processes that surrounded the work in the studio. My brief three-day participation in rehearsals was sufficient to get an idea of how they work together in terms of their group dynamic and the interactions within the ensemble that are crucial to the understanding of their shared creative practice (I will discuss this in detail in chapter 2) and their focus on the communication with audience, the two important areas for this study. Becoming too familiar with the ensemble could make it difficult to question certain aspects of their work (e.g. the power struggles that I describe in chapter 3) and engage critically with their theatre from a detached scholarly distance. I did not want to find myself in a situation where the only way I could write about their oeuvre was as an unquestioning admirer.

Furthermore, my analysis of the data collected during interviews began with transcribing and then translating into English these fragments of my conversations, which were crucial for my enquiry and helped to answer my research questions. The important part of this analysis was linked to the process of juxtaposition of data gathered from interviews with the material from other primary and secondary sources, especially interviews with other members of the ensemble.

Since Warlikowski’s performances undergo continuous developments and changes, it is worth noting that all the descriptions of fragments of performances that I discuss throughout this thesis are either as I remember them when I watched them last or as I described them in my immediate post-performance notes or, where recordings are

---

With one exception: my interview with Renate Jett was conducted in English.
available, are based on the video version of the shows that preserve them in that given shape.

Theory

The work of Warlikowski, the specificity of which I investigate throughout this thesis, is not easy to classify. Although Warlikowski’s roots are in Polish repertory theatre and his training was typical for a repertory theatre director, his method of working bears little resemblance to the practice considered to be representative of this theatrical model. As his creative processes have developed over the years and drawn on various influences, he has gradually managed to break with existing tradition and create an idiosyncratic, unrepeatable method of working that is specific to him and his collaborators and provides its audiences, as I shall argue, with an idiosyncratic theatrical experience. In order to demonstrate the complex processes that have led and determined the specificity of Warlikowski’s work, I will use select theoretical concepts that will enable me to underpin the nature of his work and the communication with his audience that he aims to establish.

The overarching theoretical framework of this thesis is rooted in the ‘performative turn’ that has changed the way in which theatre is perceived and what categories are used to define its nature. From the perspective of this thesis, the most significant consequence of this performative shift lies in redefining the relationship between actors and spectators and focusing on the interaction that takes place between them. Warlikowski’s notion of theatre can be interpreted through the prism of Fischer-Lichte’s theory of performativity, in which she draws on her predecessor, Max Herrmann’s findings, arguing that the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators and their physical actions constitute and generate the meaning of performance. Such understanding of performance shifts the focus from ‘fictive characters in fictive worlds’ towards the actors’ ‘real’ presence, which realises itself in their body and physical reactions. The possibility of experiencing the real body of the actor, in real place and time (hic et nunc) can provoke an intense reaction from the spectator. But in

---

51 Polskie Wydawnictwo Audiowizualne (The Polish Audiovisual Publisher) has issued two recordings of Warlikowski’s performances that are available in a DVD format, these are Krum (2009) and Burza (The Tempest, 2008).

order to make it tenable, the distance that had normally existed in the repertory theatre in which Warlikowski debuted in the early 1990s had to be overcome and replaced with a more direct means of communication.

In her book *The Transformative Power of Performance. A New Aesthetics* Erika Fischer-Lichte proposes a framework that enables us to analyse theatrical performances in the light of this new perspective, which amends the relationship between actors and spectators. Fischer-Lichte’s concept of ‘performance as event’\(^{53}\) informs this argument about Warlikowski’s productions, works that come into being not as autonomous pieces of work created by an individual God-like director, but as the result of complex processes that take place in the rehearsal room as well as in direct contact with spectators. An emphasis on the fleeting character of theatre performances makes it possible to trace the changes and developments that Warlikowski’s shows continuously undergo and to demonstrate how these changes are determined by and reflect the processes and transformations that take place in the lives of their creators.

The notion of ‘event’ challenges existing approaches to theatre performance and rejects the analysis that theatre is driven by one-dimensional terms of production and reception. Instead, it encourages an approach that sees theatre as an ephemeral, ever-changing shape that depends not only on its creators (namely director and actors), but also its audience, whose reaction, presence, and responses contribute, condition and affect the existence of performance.

This thesis aims to demonstrate the interaction between actors and spectators that happens *hic et nunc* in the course of performance, but also analyse the preconditions that determine the ways in which performance is being created. In order to trace these various processes and recognise the mesh of interdependencies that exist between them, I will reach for Jacky Bratton’s concept of intertheatricality,\(^{54}\) which she developed as a response to the privilege of the written text in theatre criticism since the 19\(^{th}\) century and its dominance in discussions of theatrical performances. Bratton proposes that we shift the emphasis from textual analysis towards the performance context, in which she reads the

---


history of theatre. She defines ‘intertheatricality’ as ‘the co-operative operation of the theatre’. Bratton refuses to treat theatrical creations as single-authored and claims that ‘their collaborative and multiple creation is integral to them’. Thus, she sees the creation of a particular performance as a result of a collaboration happening on different levels and in different phases – from writing, casting and rehearsing to the ‘different every night’ crystallisation of performance in interaction with the audience. This intertheatrical and collaborative model of creativity contrasts with existing belief in the ‘uniqueness of the text and the creative artist’ and as such has been rejected as a valid approach in historiographic interpretations.

Even though the examples provided by Bratton to illustrate her concept concern 19th-century theatre (the case of Susanna Centlivre’s play *The Busie Body* – Bratton (2000) and the interpretation of play bills – Bratton (2003)), intertheatrical practice informs contemporary performance and I propose to utilise it in my analysis of Warlikowski’s work. I define intertheatricality as the way in which Warlikowski explores a network of situations and circumstances – this exploration begins with the strategies that have led him to become a successful director and enabled him to create a new way of theatre-making. It continues through the complex processes of forming his family-like ensemble and thus creating productions as well as initiating communication with his audience. Finally, it carries on to affect spectators long after they have left the theatre. As I argue throughout this thesis, the relationships that exist between the members of the ensemble are particularly significant for the understanding of Warlikowski’s oeuvre, as they determine the personal involvement of the actors in the theatre-making process and affect their communication with audiences. In order to analyse the complexity of these relationships, I turn to the concept of ‘family of choice’ proposed by Jeffrey Weeks, Catherine Donovan and Brain Heaphy in their study entitled *Same Sex Intimacies: Families of Choice and Other Life Experiments*. The notion of ‘family of choice’ reflects the widening changes that affect contemporary models of family. It emphasises an issue of choice that people increasingly make in order to establish a family unit that is based less on blood-related kinships than traditionally anticipated – and sometimes not at all. Although these models are mainly representative of the non-

56 Ibid., 20.
heterosexual world, they are not exclusively of a homosexual nature. I will employ this concept as a useful theoretical underpinning to show the development of Warlikowski’s ensemble that is rooted in the director’s relationship with his wife, Małgorzata Szczęśniak (who is his set designer), and his homosexual ex-boyfriend, Jacek Poniedziałek, one of his main actors. This notion will help to analyse the close-knit relationships that exist within the ensemble, blurring the distinctions between life and work and private and professional.

In order to fully understand Warlikowski’s creative practice, which has stemmed from Polish repertory theatre but crossed its borders and developed into a specific, studio-like working mode, I will draw on two distinctive models of creative process: directors’ theatre and devising. The notion of directors’ theatre defined by Bradby and Williams in 1988 is rooted in 19th-century practice and refers to the rising role of the director, who started to take charge of the process of the creation of a spectacle. Bradby and Williams provided an account of the changes taking place in the European theatre since the 1960s and challenged the distinction between elite and popular, high and low culture, art and entertainment, collective and single-authored theatre. Drawing on this theory, which covers a range of complex and wide-ranging practices, I will situate Warlikowski’s work in the context of European theatre and discuss the notion of authorship and directorial power that he has redefined since his debut in 1993.

By juxtaposing directors’ theatre with the model of devising, as critically described by Alison Oddey and Deirdre Heddon and Jane Milling, I will analyse how Warlikowski and his ensemble adopt collaborative creative practices normally associated – in Polish theatre – with alternative modes of theatre-making. The model of devised theatre will provide me with tools to discuss the actors’ involvement in the creation of performance, their personal investment and work ethics as well as the alteration of their status as co-authors of the shows. Even though the term ‘devising’ is unknown in Poland, I shall argue that the collaborative model of working that this term represents reflects – to some extent – the way in which Warlikowski’s ensemble create their shows. Applying this term will allow me to discuss the various implications of such a model of working.

---

Accordingly, I propose to explore the consequences of these various influences and legacies on the position and role of the audience in the creation of Warlikowski’s performances. In order to analyse the ways of incorporating the audience in the creative practices, I will draw on the concepts of Fischer-Lichte’s liminality and transformation. These concepts offer opportunities to encounter theatre not through intellectual interpretation and an understanding of signs, but rather through experience, through the presence ‘here and now’ that challenges reasoning at a given moment. However, it is important to emphasise that although this challenge is present in the act of watching, Warlikowski’s theatre envisages and invites reflection after the performance, after the spectators have left the theatre.
Chapter 1
Krzysztof Warlikowski and the driving forces of his work: key issues and topics

It is crucial to begin our investigation into the trajectory of Warlikowski’s development as a successful director by identifying those areas of his life and work that constitute the driving forces of his artistic progress. At the core of this chapter lies the question of how Warlikowski achieved his success and built his strong position within Polish mainstream theatre, which created a rare opportunity for him to establish his \textit{auteur} theatre in the centre of the capital. I want to ask how Warlikowski entered Polish theatre and led his career, how he made use of the plethora of circumstances that arose after the fall of Communism and I also explore the manner in which he operated creatively within these circumstances, exploiting situations of a social and artistic nature in order to accomplish his theatrical ideals. I want to ask how his core ideal of establishing a specific type of encounter with his audience, which lies at the heart of Warlikowski’s practice, determined his decisions and how he strengthened and developed his ability to pick up on the \textit{Zeitgeist} and sensed the needs and concerns of the people with whom he wanted to communicate through theatre in a given time and place.

I will therefore discuss the relationship between Warlikowski’s artistic aims and his perceptions of his success and what it is that brings his theatre closer to the experience of a potential spectator. I will demonstrate Warlikowski’s trajectory of development as an individual artist who actively challenges himself and searches for opportunities that allow him to fulfil his ambitions and question the existing orders of Polish mainstream theatre.

Firstly, I will explore elements of Warlikowski’s biography in order to show how the director’s persona started to emerge against the established order. Secondly, I shall focus on the director’s complex identity, which emerges from his experience of living both in Poland and abroad, and which affected his position within Polish and European theatre.
at an early stage in his career. Next, I will examine the circumstances in which Polish repertory theatre found itself after the collapse of Communism, which influenced Warlikowski’s debut and shaped the initial period of his theatre-making in the early 1990s. Looking into various cultural and theatrical happenings that are at play beyond both the stage and the borders of the theatrical venue itself, and validating them as legitimate data, will permit us to see this oeuvre in a new light and understand more about its idiosyncratic nature.

**Displacement and belonging: the personal and socio-cultural context**

Some aspects of Warlikowski’s life have contributed to his feeling of displacement and as such, have inspired his long-term search to define his identity and find a place ‘to belong to’. This search for belonging is closely related to Warlikowski’s need to create a specific type of theatre that changes the status of both creators and spectators and brings them together in an idiosyncratic kind of encounter that creates a sense of community. According to Emma Govan, Helen Nicholson and Katie Normington, autobiographical performance ‘throws up particular questions in that the selfhood of performers is explicitly foregrounded as they seek to represent themselves’ and furthermore, ‘a discussion of autobiographical performance demands a consideration of the performance of self rather than the representation of another person.’

Two aspects are important in the context of this observation, although the role of a director’s biography as that of a person who does not appear directly on stage – or within the performing space – is more multifaceted and disguised. Firstly, in the case of Warlikowski’s work, the ‘selfhood’ of the director becomes more and more explicit within his productions but its nature cannot be understood as a coherent and one-dimensional formation, but rather as an amalgamation of feelings, impressions and acts that are representative of the director’s experience and that lie at the core and roots of his performance-making. Consequently, there is no clear-cut division between the fictional and factual material used in performance. Moreover, ‘the self is not – as the authors of *Making a Performance* dispute after Louis Renza – a coherent unity which

---

might be called ‘authentic’. The production of autobiography will be inevitably linked with a ‘filtering of memory’ and ‘personal editing’. This will result in a new quality: ‘we might say, then, that autobiography is neither fictive nor non-fictive, not even a mixture of the two. We may view it instead as a unique, self-defining mode of self-referential expression.’ Accordingly, I will consider here the elements of Warlikowski’s biography that fed his professional decisions and his theatre-making.

Secondly, the expression of one’s ‘self’ needs to be seen in a broader Polish context. According to Kevin Moss, one of the features of Communism, looking from the perspective of an individual human being, was growing up ‘with two personae, public and private, which are diametrically opposed ones.’ The private persona, strictly separated from the public and official image of ‘self’, resulted in a ‘double consciousness’ and continuous role-playing. The following quotation from Czesław Miłosz’s *Captive Mind* (provided by Moss) shows the complexity of this situation:

> It’s hard to define the type of relationship that prevails between people in the East otherwise than as acting, with the exception that one does not perform on a theatre stage but in the street, office, factory, meeting hall, or even in the room one lives in. Such acting is a highly developed craft that places a premium on mental alertness. Before it leaves the lips, every word must be evaluated as to its consequences. [...] Even one’s gestures, tone of voice, or preference for certain kinds of neckties are interpreted as signs of one’s political tendencies.

Described by Miłosz in this short extract, the ‘captive mind’ was to an extent engaged with preserving its own double status, so much so that there was hardly any space left to employ any other perspective than the one that would link an individual life to political and social existence. The circumstances in which one’s private persona could emerge were very limited. The private ‘self’ was validated in that period only in as much as it became part of the collective ‘us’ that opposed ‘them’, here identified as Communist power. According to Halina Filipowicz, this clearly defined division was fertile ground for theatre artists: ‘As

---

2 Ibid., 60.
5 Czesław Miłosz (1911–2004), a poet, prose writer, essayist and translator awarded a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1980.
long as the opposition between ‘us’ and ‘them’ was held in place, the system of artistic representation functioned effectively.” Filipowicz argues, using Tadeusz Nyczek’s words, that: ‘In a normal country [...] theatre is one’s private passion or career, but in Poland it had become ‘a grim duty’ – to Homeland, to Society, to Polish Culture.’ Moreover, Nyczek proposed that it was time ‘to puncture the hot-air balloon of the Polish artists’ self-importance as gatekeepers of the national culture and conscience.’ Ceasing to treat theatre-making as a national and patriotic duty made it possible for theatre to express one’s individuality and ‘self’. However, this was linked to a difficult and lengthy process of shifting and re-defining that applied not only to individual artists, but also to the status of Polish theatre in a post-Communist society.

Warlikowski declares that: ‘I cannot imagine having to deal with issues that are far away from me, which I haven’t encountered and which I haven’t experienced myself.’ The links between the facts of his life and the imaginary microcosm of his productions are more complicated than a simplistic interpretation of this statement may imply. Warlikowski’s theatrical work is linked to his attempt to make sense of his own experience and of the world that surrounds him. These attempts can be found in a performance-making process that resonates with both the creators of his work and those who – to comply with traditional understanding for now – are the ‘recipients’ of a performance. Thus, communication with human beings on both sides of the performance-making process becomes a condition in which Warlikowski can acquire some awareness of his own being and in effect, overcome his displacement. This corresponds to Nick Mansfield’s argument about individualities not being separate beings, but rather that their subjectivity:

[...] refers to an abstract or general principle that defies our separation into distinct selves and that encourages us to imagine that, or simply helps us to understand why our interior lives inevitably seem to involve other people, either as objects of need, desire and interest or as necessary sharers of common experience. In this way subject is always linked to something outside of it – an idea or principle or the society of other subjects.

8 Nyczek in Cywińska et al. (1989), 54 cited in Filipowicz (2002), 81.
9 Filipowicz (1992), 81.
Therefore, the theatre-making process enables Warlikowski to restore his links with others and concurrently, make an attempt to explore his own identity. As theatre is an idiosyncratic artform, conditioned by the interaction between real people who encounter each other in real time and space, this is a particularly valuable arena for Warlikowski.

It is crucial to explore the geographical aspect of Warlikowski’s formative, adolescent years, as this was a significant factor in the director’s formation of a sense of identity and the way in which he developed his theatre-making process. The characteristics of Warlikowski’s personal (i.e. the director’s background and childhood) and socio-cultural (i.e. the multiethnic social structure of his family town) biography will help to elucidate the motives that have led to the creation of his theatre and determined its idiosyncratic nature. There are two notions than seem to characterise this period of Warlikowski’s life: his sense of displacement and his feeling of ‘homelessness’.

This is partly related to the hybrid make-up of Szczecin12 where Warlikowski was born in 1962. This seaport city in northern Poland was part of the Western Territories that were acquired by Poland from Germany as a result of post-war negotiations in Potsdam.13 These Western Territories, due to their rich sources of coal and iron and their fine network of roads and railways, were meant to increase Poland’s prospect of economic development and modernisation in the post-war period.14 However, the aftermath of the Second World War left Poland facing difficulties caused by its decreased population and the migration of its inhabitants. As Norman Davies states: ‘only a small proportion of the population inhabited the places where they had lived before the war’.15 This affected the city of Szczecin in that:

[M]ost of the towns and the entire Western Territories had to be repopulated by refugees or families transferred from the Soviet Union. In all those localities where uprooted newcomers outnumbered the indigenous inhabitants, former social traditions survived with difficulty. Social structures had been transformed out of all recognition.16

---

12 Szczecin (also known by its former German name ‘Stettin’) is the largest seaport in the region of Pomerania (Pomorze).
14 See Davies (1981), 489.
15 Davies (1981), 489.
16 Ibid., 489.
To many post-war Poles, Szczecin appeared to be a promised land: a place that offered economic opportunities. This economic prospect was one of the determining factors that attracted Warlikowski’s working-class parents to Szczecin. Warlikowski’s father came from Golub-Dobrzyń in the Kuyavian-Pomeranian Voivodeship of central Poland and his mother’s family had roots in the land near Łódź: ‘During the war, both of them were taken away to work in Germany. On the way back, they settled near Koszalin and then moved to Szczecin’, as Warlikowski revealed. The fact that both of them came from different parts of Poland and were to start their new life from scratch in an unknown environment affected Warlikowski’s sense of belonging – there was no tradition to hold on to, no roots or customs that constitute one’s recognisable identity. Consequently, the director frequently contrasts himself with ‘a person who came from Kraków or Warszawa’ and this feeling of dissonance engraves in him an inferiority complex, that of being ‘a provincial boy’, which he tried to overcome by, for instance, emigrating to France in the early 1980s.

Warlikowski’s feeling of displacement in his home town was reinforced by Szczecin’s multi-ethnic social framework, which also did not correspond to commonly understood notions of Polishness perceived as – to use Grossman’s phrase – ‘a strongly monolithic and polonocentric’ concept that was promoted by the Communist regime. Instead, Warlikowski’s experience echoed the social mosaic in which representatives of different ethnic groups co-exist and build lives on a new terrain: As Warlikowski states:

I lived in a working-class district near The Oder River. [...] There was a factory opposite my house that belonged to the Jewish family who arrived there from the East. The Jewish barber had been cutting my hair until I was fifteen. [...] A neighbour from downstairs was a German woman who married a Pole. She never spoke because she was afraid to reveal her national identity. I have the impression that I lived in a multicultural melting pot. On my street the Polish-German and Polish-Jewish antagonisms and racism still existed.

This first-hand encounter with this ‘multicultural melting pot’ made Warlikowski aware of the discrepancy between what officially exists in the public domain and what happens in

---

18 Ibid.
20 By saying ‘East’ Warlikowski refers to the eastern borders of Poland.
the real life of Polish people. A two-fold predilection was engendered from this experience. Firstly, Warlikowski is particularly sensitive to the life accounts of various others – whether they are Jewish, female or homosexual characters constituting the stage microcosms of his performances or those who form his company and co-participate in the theatre-making process. Secondly, Warlikowski has developed a tendency to challenge existing images of Polishness and dig into its uncomfortable and taboo areas, such as religion, gender and sexuality.

As will become evident throughout this thesis, Warlikowski’s theatre-making exemplifies the shift from the understanding of theatre as a patriotic and national ‘duty’ to making it one’s personal ‘statement’ about the surrounding world. The linkage between Warlikowski’s personal biography and his performances rarely takes the form of a simple one-dimensional parallel that could be easy to detect. His theatre undergoes ongoing changes and continues to develop even following premieres of the productions, and becomes more resistant to interpretation as a coherent representation of the director’s self. As a whole, however, Warlikowski’s personal experience always determines the theme, choice of texts and the search to locate the stage microcosm in a broader context of the contemporary world. I will look at some examples of how autobiographical motifs determine Warlikowski’s directorial approach and result in the multi-layered formations of his performances.

For instance, the massacre of Jedwabne in 1941, as well as the events surrounding its anniversary in 2001, became an important context for Warlikowski’s work on the Polish adaptation of *The Tempest* that premiered in January 2003. In his book *Neighbours: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland* (2000), Jan Tomasz Gross described the pogrom of Polish Jews in the village of Jedwabne as perpetrated by Poles, not by Germans as had been previously believed. This sparked a controversy in the Polish media and among historians and, although further investigation into the validity of Gross’s claims was conducted, the responsibility of Poles for the massacre was officially acknowledged by the then Polish President, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, who apologised for the crime during the ceremony on the 60th anniversary of the pogrom. The anniversary, boycotted by the citizens of Jedwabne in 2001, became an important context for Warlikowski, who was interested in the issue of guilt and responsibility that carries through and affects subsequent

---

22 See Appendix.
generations of perpetrators and victims. He situated the relationship between *The Tempest’s* Ferdinand and Miranda in the context of Jedwabne, suggesting that they could represent a contemporary couple, a boy from Jedwabne and a girl from Israel whose ancestors had been killed by local Poles. This context was not literally depicted in the production. Instead, as Grzegorz Niziołek stated:

> Real social and historical circumstances created the space of conflict, resistance and discomfort and allowed the actors to realise what kind of emotions can be caused by the crimes of the past, what a wedding between the children of a former executioner and a victim means, and what kind of mental effort is required in the act of forgiveness.\(^{23}\)

This was particularly important in the final scene of the performance, in which Prospero confronted his oppressors about the events of the past that could not be easily fixed or forgotten. The context of Jedwabne opened up Shakespeare’s text and showed its relevance for the contemporary world. This was achieved by Warlikowski’s personal approach to Jedwabne, and the Second World War in general, and his assertion that arose from talks with his foreign peers that ‘the consequences of war are more painful for me than for them’.\(^ {24}\) This assertion makes more sense if seen in the context of Poland as a country in which the Nazis had operated concentration camps only a few decades previously and in which over eighty percent of the capital was destroyed in mass bombings during the war. This historical context was significant to Warlikowski, who came from Szczecin, studied history and began his theatre career in post-1989 Poland. Interestingly, his earlier adaptation of *The Tempest* in Stuttgart in 2000\(^ {25}\) failed to connect with German audience, and thus Warlikowski wanted to stage this play again, this time in his native Poland and ‘for an audience with which he shared similar experience’.\(^ {26}\) As a Pole and, in the light of the recent anniversary of these atrocities, Warlikowski felt that ‘everyone needed to deal with Jedwabne on their own and decide whether what had happened there gives hope or causes pessimism’.\(^ {27}\) However, his work is never aimed at just commenting on current events or

---

\(^ {23}\) In Niziołek (2008), 125.


\(^ {25}\) See Appendix.

\(^ {26}\) In Celeda (2009).

providing a timely analysis, rather he ‘uses the reality to translate certain situations for the actors. [...] These real events that happen next to us somehow make abstract situations more explicit. They make Shakespeare’s text alive.’

The performance of The Tempest can be watched today without the awareness of the Jedwabne, yet the existence of this context during the rehearsals made the questions about guilt and forgiveness more valid.

In some instances, as the discussion on Roberto Zucco in chapter 2 will elucidate in more detail, autobiographical motifs in Warlikowski’s theatre appear more obvious, as they relate to the director’s age, sexuality, feeling of displacement or ties with family and society at large. The production of Hanoch Levin’s Krum, staged in 2005, constitutes an example of this kind. The story of the forty-year old eponymous character, who returns home after a long spell in another country without money, a wife or success but with a bag of dirty underwear as his luggage, resonated with Warlikowski, who was Krum’s peer at the time: ‘I am a person who cut off the roots – when I was eighteen I left my home town [to live in Kraków] and later I went abroad, because I wanted to cut off from Poland. At some stage, however, you have a reflection which links you with those places, whether you like it or not. And this reflection is enriching.’

Having had an experience of returning home himself, Warlikowski ‘wanted to do a performance about how we forget about ourselves [our roots]’, but he also found some parallels with the lives of his collaborators: ‘I thought a lot about my generation. I realised that all actors who perform in this show are also separated from their past.’

The experience of leaving behind small provincial towns and villages and moving to Warszawa or other big cities was a very common path in a post-Communist Poland that was taking its first steps in a free market economy. Interestingly, Warlikowski came across Hanoch Levin while staying in a hotel during one of his theatrical travels with the TR company, and the play written in 1975 rang true to him. The issue of home became especially vivid when juxtaposed with the experience of Western hotels and continuously being in transit (Warlikowski has travelled extensively since the late 1980s).

From the artistic point of view, it was a difficult stage for Warlikowski, as he struggled with the idea of not knowing where to go next and whether staging fiction in

28 Author’s interview with Warlikowski, (2007a).
29 See Appendix.
theatre made sense. The encounter with Levin revaluated this thinking and made Warlikowski think that ‘it was time to return to myself and reflect on myself and on my actors.’

32 *Krum*, as a play that ‘wasn’t dressed in an intellectual costume’ and told a story of a simple family that could happen in any place or time, reconfirmed the understanding of theatre as a place that ‘touches reality at its most painful points.’ This performance, depicting the banality of everyday life, became a strong collective statement about ‘the pain of existence that is impossible to get rid of.’

33 This collective autobiography that fed the performance became an important feature, not only of *Krum* but of the director’s oeuvre in general: ‘We speak on behalf of ourselves, as Krzyszek [Warlikowski], Staszka [Celińska], Jacek [Poniedziałek], Maja [Ostaszewska] [...]. With *Krum* we want to say something honest about ourselves, something we don’t normally reveal.’

34 This collective statement echoes Mansfield’s conviction that our self is never separate and that we are always linked to somebody or something outside. Warlikowski’s own pains and feelings are combined and juxtaposed with the personal experience of his actors and as such aim to resonate with the similar experiences of the audience.

Furthermore, autobiographical motifs in Warlikowski’s work are associated with his predilection to choose texts that enable him to scrutinise various configurations of family relationships. This reflects the notions of family from Warlikowski’s private and professional life.

35 Grzegorz Niziołek notices this tendency: ‘Warlikowski always draws out a family motif, even if it is not an obvious one at the first reading. *Hamlet*, *The Tempest*, even *The Bacchae* and *Cleansed* are for him family dramas.’

36 Significant in this context are Warlikowski’s choices of Shakespeare’s plays. It is worth noting that Warlikowski has a special connection with Shakespeare, as he holds the record for the greatest number of Shakespearean productions on the Polish stage. Warlikowski stages mainly comedies or tragedies, with the one exception of his early production of *Pericles* in 1998 at the Piccolo...
Teatro di Milano. But even in this show, as one of the critics observed, ‘the director moved [...] from the field of great historic events into the sphere of life of an individual human being. He gave each of us the right to have a dramatic or tragic life story unconnected to the outside complications.’ Moreover, the reflections on family in Warlikowski’s performances are rooted in the director’s everyday observations of his ensemble, and society at large, struggling to form happy and lasting relationships. He acknowledges that traditional family models that have existed for generations are no longer valid in today’s Poland, but concurrently the formation of alternative arrangements is also difficult. To Warlikowski, family becomes an important prism through which he observes the contemporary world.

Another example of the autobiographical nature of Warlikowski’s theatre is his recent shift from directing plays or adapting novels towards *auteur* compilations of various fragments that enable him and his ensemble to express themselves more accurately and freely. In the three recent shows prepared under the name of the Nowy Teatr that illustrate this tendency, Warlikowski returns to the texts and motifs that have appeared in his theatre before. *(A)pollonia* (2009), *Koniec* (2010) and *Opowieści afrykańskie* (2011) contain fragments of ancient tragedies (namely *The Oresteia* by Aeschylus and *Iphigenia in Tauris* and *Alcestis* by Euripides), Shakespeare (for instance, in *Opowieści*, he reworks *The Merchant of Venice* and reaches for motifs from *King Lear* and *Othello*), various contemporary pieces of poetry and prose (e.g. Krall), as well as improvised fragments written during the rehearsals. Recently, South African-born Nobel Prize winner, J. M. (John Maxwell) Coetzee, has become the favourite author of Warlikowski and fragments from his various novels were fundamental to his latest performances. The commentary of Jacek Poniedziałek is quite telling here:

Coetzee writes often about a phenomenon of an aging, mature and slightly bitter writer, who is a very sensitive erudite. This all can be said about Krzysiek [Warlikowski] and this is probably why Coetzee is so close to him. This is a very serious, mature literature. [Coetzee’s] language requires more focus, at least because of his syntax […] but he is contemporary to us and lives through the problems of the contemporary world.⁴³

---

⁴¹ I will discuss Warlikowski’s connection to this venue in the second part of this chapter.
This statement echoes Warlikowski’s tendency to speak about the universal problems of today by filtering them through his own – and his actors’ – personal experience. Georges Banu, a Romanian-French critic and academic who has been observing Warlikowski’s work for many years, provides a very interesting observation recognising that the three factors such as the director’s origin, sexuality and history (which as I have shown here has a very strong impact on his sense of identity) determine and explain why Warlikowski’s theatre becomes a ‘torn’ theatre: ‘the director is literally ‘torn’ and his theatre is a testimony to how difficult such a state is. It is a state of a “man with open wounds” who registers his unbearable existence and at the same time exposes it on the stage.’ This aspect of Warlikowski’s theatre making would not be possible without the influence of Krystian Lupa, whose theatre and mentoring has inspired an important shift in Polish mainstream theatre and made an opening for a personal element to enter the space of theatre-making.

From another perspective, Warlikowski’s early departure from his family nest and breaking of contacts with his immediate family is quite important, especially when seen in the context of Catholic Poland, where the traditional values of family life are heavily promoted by the Church. ‘Home’ and ‘family’ are strongly positioned within the Polish public domain and for a long time they have not been critically examined. Slogans such as ‘family is a base’, and ‘family is the most important’ are heavily engraved in the consciousness of every Pole. As Krystyna Duniec and Joanna Krakowska suggest, only recently – in the last decade – have Polish literature and theatre texts (notably new Polish plays) begun a critical vivisection of the notion of family, reevaluating its role in our lives.

Warlikowski’s openness about his family echoes the critical approaches represented in art in recent years. Warlikowski’s upbringing as a Catholic is crucial, as it gave him an authority figure to rebel against. In one interview, Warlikowski commented on this religious phase of his adolescent years: ‘for eighteen years I kept saying various prayers, I lived in this kind of happiness that a child creates in safety. When one enters independent adult life, the connection with pre-matter ends. As an adult, I search for the proof of God’s

---

45 According to the surveys conducted by the Centrum Badania Opinii Publicznej (The Centre for Research of Public Opinion) family remains the most important factor in Poles’s lives.
46 For instance, Wojciech Kuczok’s novel Gnoj (published in 2003 by W.A.B) was awarded a prestigious Nike Literary Award in 2004 and was subsequently filmed by Magdalena Piekorz under the title of Pręgi (‘The Welts’).
existence. This search has taken various forms: he tried Buddhism, practised yoga and attended Protestant churches. Significantly, these different encounters with the metaphysical sphere of being began in Kraków as a response to a sense of displacement in Poland’s most traditional city, which celebrated its roots, history and deeply embedded connection with the Catholic Church, with which Warlikowski could not identify. One of the ways in which Warlikowski tried to overcome this feeling of displacement was in his search for alternative models of living and by immersing himself in literature, notably the work of Witold Gombrowicz. The work and life of Gombrowicz represents a quite extraordinary model in Polish culture, a conglomerate of features that are normally associated with contradictory beliefs, personalities and views. Gombrowicz’s work inculcated in Warlikowski the belief in the possibility of re-creating his own life. The urge to design his own fate and free himself from the ties that connect him to his family are quite noteworthy. There is a strong element of performativity – understood in its basic meaning as constituting through doing – that characterises this quest.

There are two other important aspects concerning Warlikowski’s work and life that are connected to this idea of ‘re-creating’ and designing himself as both a human being and artist. These aspects have been ignored in the analysis of the director’s work to date. Firstly, Warlikowski openly manifested this urge to ‘form’ or ‘design’ his ‘self’, detaching and distancing himself from the roots of his family. This process of self-creation does not end in redefining one’s identity, but entails the modulation of one’s relationships with others. Warlikowski’s immediate family illustrates this new type of relationship: his marriage to Małgorzata Szczęśniak and his eighteen-year-long partnership with Jacek Poniedziałek is quite telling, particularly if we see this in the context of a Catholic Poland that by 1989 had not been open to any alternative forms of family life. This non-normative personal arrangement and the courage with which Warlikowski established his own ‘family’ against existing societal models has important implications in regards to Warlikowski’s theatrical modus operandi. Warlikowski’s professional life would become

48 Author’s interview with Krzysztof Warlikowski, 27 November 2007b, Warszawa.
49 Warlikowski reveals this, for instance, in conversation with Pawłowski (2003).
50 Witold Gombrowicz (1904–1969), one of the foremost and most controversial figures of Polish literature due to the antinationalist character of his work.
52 I will discuss this in greater detail in the following chapter, using the concept of ‘family of choice’.
closely intertwined with his private one – a crucial feature of his theatre-making that is fed by the director’s biography.

Secondly, Warlikowski’s desire to ‘free himself’ and ‘build his own tradition’ may also apply to his sexuality. Under a Communist regime that placed homosexuality firmly in the closet, driving it underground, there was no official model of living that could have applied to Warlikowski. Moreover, the city of Szczecin, bereft of artistically orientated circles that are usually more tolerant of non-traditional ways of living, was likely to be a difficult place to feel comfortable with what was considered to be a non-normative sexuality. Communism tried to keep the social order under control and Szczecin’s carefully segregated people were susceptible to positive propaganda. This propaganda left little space for alternative identities and this most likely also had an impact on Warlikowski’s feeling of displacement. Perhaps this strengthened his desire to leave his hometown and search for a place – outside Szczecin, and outside Poland, as will become apparent – to belong to, which would allow him to express his personality more openly.

Significantly, for a long time in Poland the notion of homosexuality was regarded as opposite to that of national identity. As Warkocki and Sypniewski argue, the binary opposition ‘gay contra Pole’ has formed its stable position, and is still prevalent in contemporary Poland. To illustrate this hypothesis, the authors of *Homofobia po polsku* (Polish Homophobia) use a literary example from Gombrowicz’s renowned *Trans-Atlantyk* (1953) in which the two main characters of the novel confront each other in a duel. Ignacy is ‘a virtuous son of Poland’ and Gonzalo is a homosexual. Ignacy tries to save his honour, which has been damaged by his encounter with homosexuality. Gonzalo faces a dilemma: he can die like a ‘real’ man or be killed as a gay man. He cannot remain gay and alive.

This literary figure devised by Gombrowicz and used here by Warkocki and Sypniewski to illustrate the position of homosexuals in Polish society links us back to Warlikowski’s aforementioned fascination with this author’s work, notably with his *Diary 1953-1969*. Gombrowicz still holds quite a controversial position within Polish culture for his critical approach to Polish history and its presence and his continuous challenging of

---

54 Until 1956 Gombrowicz’s works were banned in Poland, but gradually the censorship diminished and his prose as well as his plays appeared in Polish. Only *Diary 1956-1969* was subject to an ongoing ban. It was finally published in a censored version in 1986 and then in its entirety in 1989. Under the Communist regime, illegal copies were distributed in underground circles.
the notion of ‘Polishness’. Parallels with Warlikowski can also be drawn in regards to Gombrowicz’s personal life. His emigration to Argentina (and then France) has enforced Gombrowicz’s image as an outsider. Furthermore, he was believed to be homosexual and although there has been, as Filipowicz puts it, ‘considerable effort to protect Witold Gombrowicz from such imputations’ (2002) – neither did he speak about his sexuality openly – various allusions can be found in his literature, most markedly in his Diary. What is best expressed in Gombrowicz’s Diary – and is also characteristic of his other works – is the writer’s pursuit of reinvention, establishing an alternative model of functioning in a reality that celebrates strictly defined and unquestioned values and hierarchies. Gombrowicz wrote in 1952 in a letter to one of his friends: ‘I need to build Gombrowicz-thinker and Gombrowicz-genius and … many other indispensable Gombrowicz.’ As mentioned earlier, a similar urge for a reinvention can be recognized as a leitmotiv in the life and work of Warlikowski. It is also crucial to emphasise here that, while Warlikowski’s attitude towards Polish literature was rather reluctant, Gombrowicz’s story Tancerz Mecenasa Kraykowskiego (The Dancer of Patron Kraykowski) is the only Polish text that has been adapted by Warlikowski on stage in its entirety.

Distancing himself from Polish theatre’s common expectation that a Polish repertory director’s duty is to stage Polish texts, Warlikowski claimed that ‘Polish post-war playwriting is wholly engaged in matters that are no longer valid and that had have lost their relevance.’ In his work he searches for something more universal and less soaked in the context of Polishness: ‘I need a partner in a text that is very neutral. [...] Our Polish determinants will come out in any text, so I wouldn’t like to double it and close it [in a Polish text].’ His choice of Gombrowicz’s story is significant, especially if we read this in the context of the first few words that open The Dancer: ‘Order! Europe! We need to teach,

---

55 This is despite the fact that, half a year before Gombrowicz’s death, he married Rita Labrosse, whom he met in France.
56 Extract quoted on www.gombrowicz.net.
57 Warlikowski’s adaptation of The Dancer of Patron Kraykowski was prepared especially for the International Festival of Witold Gombrowicz’s Work in Radom in 1997. For performance details, see Appendix.
58 In other instances, Warlikowski was inspired by the stories written by Hanna Kral and used them in his performances - e.g. Dybuk in 2003 and (A)polonnia in 2009 – but in each of these cases, Kral’s texts were combined with other texts.
60 Author’s interview with Warlikowski, (2007b).
teach continuously, otherwise, we will not cease to be the nation of Zulus.\textsuperscript{61} Throughout his career, Warlikowski’s relaxed position towards broadly understood concepts of Polishness were the subject of accusations that the director looked to Europe and copied trends that existed abroad.\textsuperscript{62} Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Warlikowski’s sexuality has, to date, not been discussed in any significant or critical overview of his work.\textsuperscript{63} This is a rather peculiar taboo, especially given that the director himself readily offers his spectators and critics various hints regarding his sexual identity (for instance, his auteur theatre’s logo makes use of the rainbow symbol, also associated with the Gay Pride movement).

During one discussion with his spectators and readers – to provide an example – to promote Gruszczyński’s book-length interview with Warlikowski, one of the participants openly asked about ‘homosexual motifs’ in Warlikowski’s work. The director replied: ‘We are fearfully talking here about some ‘homosexual motifs’, but it is not about any motifs but about a [concrete] human being. About the identity of the author, director and actor.’\textsuperscript{64} The indirectness of this question and the honesty with which Warlikowski formulated his answer suggests that such questions can – or perhaps even should – be asked, particularly in Warlikowski’s case, as the director consequently talked about his theatre being rooted in his own personal experience, as well as that of his collaborators. By denying this aspect of the creator’s life, are the critics not also depriving us of an understanding of some of the very crucial – if not fundamental – aspects of Warlikowski’s theatre?

Moreover, such an approach is symptomatic of a tendency to apply a ‘half-way’ solution to discussions of Warlikowski’s personal life. Some critics tend to use a ‘coded’ language that simply produces the impression that the author takes into account information concerning the director’s private life, only to eventually apprehensively withdraw from the temptation of revealing it, instead closeting this information, so that such revelations are recognised exclusively within the circles of the ‘initiated’. An extract from an interview with the director by Gruszczyński typifies this approach. The following passage refers to Warlikowski’s production of \textit{Macbeth} but the discussion soon suddenly turns towards notions of ‘family’:

\begin{flushleft}
\end{flushleft}
P.G.: So, in fact this is a very bleak family story.
K.W.: If one looks at such pairings around us, even amongst the artists, and how they support each other, how ambition works between them, it could be said that this is a family story.
P.G.: You are also in such an artistic relationship, which propels you mutually.
K.W.: I think that such a relationship blinds you to some extent, it gives you a lot of energy and power, but on the other hand it can also be dangerous. Although, I still hope that we use an honest path to reach our goal. [...] The director fights for sense, for a statement about the world, not for an image of the world. This is why multiplied energies are good, because they cumulate and transfer onto the actors.\footnote{Gruszczyński (2007), 185-186.}

Gruszczyński’s euphemistic reference – to Poniedziałek or Szczęśniak or perhaps both of them\footnote{At the time of the interview, Warlikowski was in a relationship with Poniedziałek.} – remains unspecific. It is probably only accessible to those who are familiar with, or have access to, Warlikowski’s intimate personal arrangements. How does Gruszczyński enhance the knowledge of a potential reader of the book or spectator of Warlikowski’s work by asking such a veiled question? Was this meant to reveal the links between the artist’s private and professional engagements? Does this question not signify a certain lack of respect for the readers and spectators of Warlikowski’s productions? Nonetheless, answering the question I have just posed would require further investigation into the motifs behind Gruszczyński’s conversation and this remains beyond the scope of my discussion here.

For now, the question remains, why does Polish theatre scholarship and criticism shy away from asking valid questions about the artist’s life and sexuality? Is this to do with the legacy of decades in which talking about the private was seen as a betrayal of the important issues faced by the Polish nation? Does this legacy apply to the young generation of critics and scholars (such as Drewniak, Pawłowski, Gruszczyński or Niziołek) who belong to the same generation as Warlikowski himself? Is this reluctance the result of the critics’ prudishness, as they shy away from making sexuality an aspect of their official scrutiny but willingly participate in various post-premiere banquets and private gatherings or socialise with theatre artists? Can they disregard the public ‘coming out’ of Poniedziałek, a Polish film and television celebrity and the first person in Polish showbusiness to publicly reveal his homosexuality?\footnote{Poniedziałek publicly announced that he was gay in the most popular Polish tabloid \emph{Fakt} (Fact) in December 2005. Since this courageous act stirred up a heated debate, other media quickly followed the discussion and Poniedziałek was invited on to various TV shows to discuss his decision to ‘come out’.

\footnote{Gruszczyński (2007), 185-186.}
magazine interview that he had just split up with Warlikowski, with whom he had been working for the last eighteen years\textsuperscript{68}

The reaction – or rather a lack of reaction – of critics on this issue represents a traditional mode of thinking, which regards access to information about an artist’s private life as tabloid-specific, and therefore refuses to accept the validity of such data. This approach is still prevalent in Polish theatrical criticism and the wider Polish media.

The observations of Polish-American scholar, Filipowicz are interesting in this context:

In Polish studies, the emergence of the modern Polish nation and nationalism has rarely been discussed with reference to gender and never with reference to sexuality. [...] The sexual taboo in Polish culture operates very much like the Jewish taboo. That is to say, if scholars refuse to be bound by one of these two taboos, they are immediately reminded that it is vulgar to be nosy. This is how Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in a pioneering work in what has come to be called queer theory, encapsulated the views of her opponents: “Don’t ask. Or less laconically: You shouldn’t know”. One’s sexuality, just like one’s Jewishness, so the argument goes, is his or her private matter. But is it really so vulgar, undignified, or inane to be curious about a great writer’s private secrets?\textsuperscript{69}

It is thus relevant to paraphrase this question and ask the same of Warlikowski’s work. Filipowicz provides a convincing example: ‘A case might be made that the most significant methodological development in Western biography since James Boswell’s \textit{Life of Johnson} (1791) has in fact been precisely the attempt to correlate the intimate, even psychosexual aspects of an individual’s character with his or her public achievements.’\textsuperscript{70} Significantly, Niziołek observes this specific predilection in Warlikowski’s work: ‘In his first performances Warlikowski [...] searched for connections between theatre and reality, art and life. As an admirer of Proust he tried to read the texts he was staging from the perspective of the biographies of his authors. He was fascinated by the neurotic personalities of Kleist, Klaus Mann.’\textsuperscript{71} I would argue that this tendency is true of all his work, not only the first performances that Warlikowski staged. But interestingly, Niziołek is blind to the connections that occur as an inherent part of Warlikowski’s theatre-making.

\textsuperscript{70} Filipowicz (2002).
\textsuperscript{71} Niziołek (2006), 82.
Krystyna Duniec and Joanna Krakowska notice a similar approach to the interpretation of productions that are apparently unconcerned with ‘homosexuality’. They argue:

Homosexuality in theatre is being discussed, but at the level of backstage and green room conversations and not as a critical reflection or discussion in the press. Conservative critics do not deal with it, as it hardly stands on the ground of the masculine paradigm; [...] Liberal critics treat homosexuality apprehensively and they are not willing to initiate an open discussion on sexual identity. [...] They limit themselves to superficial statements without trying to draw any conclusions from it. [...] Theatre remains at the level of euphemism, universalism, superficial labels. It is even more paradoxical that productions by Polish directors such as Krystian Lupa, Krzysztof Warlikowski or Piotr Tomaszuk are subjected to such predestined analysis. And this is not because of the sexual preferences of their creators, but the type of sexuality engraved in the texture of their theatre.\(^{72}\)

Unlike the view represented in this thesis, Duniec and Krakowska do not attach any value to the recognition of creators’ sexuality. Their interests and – as a consequence – their accusation addresses performance analysis *per se*. Contrary to Duniec and Krakowska, who suggest reading Warlikowski’s performances (notably *Angels in America* and *Krum*) as ‘homosexual texts’, I do not argue here for applying queer theory to Warlikowski’s work – although this would undoubtedly be an interesting scholarly perspective – but I propose to recognise the issue of homosexuality as part of Warlikowski’s identity, which has influenced the type of theatre he has decided to create. By identifying the director’s sexuality, the problem of ‘otherness’ (whether that of being homosexual, Jewish or female) with which his theatre is continuously engaged, gains a different, more personal perspective – and this personal perspective becomes one of the main features of Warlikowski’s theatre.

As we have seen here, a particular set of circumstances from Warlikowski’s early life and his family’s social and geographical background, as well as his sexuality provide important fuel for his performance-making. The experience of displacement characterised his early life and made him determined to leave his familiar surroundings and take up the challenge of ‘constructing’ himself. This has inevitably had a significant impact on his further personal and professional choices. The search for a place ‘to belong’ has been closely associated with Warlikowski’s need to surround himself with like-minded human

beings. Moreover, from this natural need to restore his links with a society to which he never felt connected, stems a real call for ‘encounter’ that involves both the creators and audience of his theatre.

Although, as I have argued here, the issue of autobiography is a complex and not a clear-cut problem, it would be true to claim that Warlikowski himself is also a constituent part (although not exclusively so, as his collaborators – actors in particular – and their experiences determine the theatre they make together) of his performances – his work is simply a sharing of his experience, his thoughts and fears, strongly rooted in the society and circumstances in which he has lived.

**Hybrid identity: ‘Polishness’ and ‘foreignness’ at play**

The issue of Warlikowski’s identity is rooted in his early and aforementioned life in Poland and his six-year stay in France. This two-fold experience engenders what could be described as a hybrid identity comprised of the director’s ‘Polishness’ and ‘foreignness’. Each of these identities, or rather the tension between them, helped not only to establish Warlikowski’s position within Polish repertory theatre, but also to go beyond its borders and earn him the right to work on his own terms and redefine the communication with his audience that lies at the core of his performance-making.

In order to see how Warlikowski progressed and found a position from which he was able to create this idiosyncratic method of working that leads to an encounter (or the possibility of it) with spectators, I will continue to employ an intertheatrical perspective that allows me to ask questions about ways in which Warlikowski made use of circumstances and manipulated them in order to achieve success in both Poland and internationally and, as we will observe in chapter 4, fulfilled his dream of communicating with an audience. This approach will allow us to recognise how different situations and events from Warlikowski’s career in both Polish repertory and international theatre come into play and affect the director’s work within these two contexts. Moreover, the knowledge of how these processes entwined and impacted upon one another becomes a determining factor in defining the nature of Warlikowski’s performance-making.

Positioning my argument in this perspective requires us to ask the following questions: How do we define these two identities – as a Pole and foreigner – and whose
perspective determines these notions? Are these identities contradictory or complementary? With the awareness that there are no easy and clearly defined answers, in this section, I intend to trace some of the main aspects of these complex identities that, as I claim here, come into play and shape our understanding of Warlikowski’s theatre.

In dealing with the notion of ‘Polishness’, the argument presented by Filipowicz is crucial: she points out two myths associated with ‘being Polish’. One of them is the myth of victimisation: ‘Poles still nourish the traumatic memory of having suffered unjustly, of having been betrayed by the West, of having been victimised by history. Without the myth of victimisation – who are we?’ Second is ‘the self image of Polish exceptionalism’ based on the ‘passionate military heroism stitched into our genetic code.’ Additionally, there are external stereotypes attached to the notion of Polishness:

Polish culture is seen in the West as one of the weaker cultures, and Western perceptions of Poles tend to fall into orientalising stereotypes. This fosters cultural insecurities in Polish society, making open-minded debate of taboo topics all the more difficult. Poles are indeed victims of unflattering stereotypes. I would argue however, that they are also players in their own right as they forge and manipulate their identities and others’ beliefs about these identities. We need to know more how Poles invent self-invention: how they construct their own sense of who they are and how their perceptions of others inform these identity formations.

Filipowicz’s observation concerning the manipulation and forging of an identity by Poles themselves becomes particularly important in the context of Warlikowski’s biography. I will illustrate here how Warlikowski ‘invents’ or ‘acts’ his identity in opposition to the existing models and myths described by Filipowicz. Positioning himself against a prevalent model of Polishness helps and enforces his status in the West. An examination of what seems like a self-invention will be fundamental here in terms of understanding the processes that established Warlikowski’s complex position within Polish and European theatre.

Warlikowski’s hybrid identity first gained prominence on his return to Poland after his stay in France. This foreign episode in the director’s biography, which lasted from 1983 to 1989, followed his time in Kraków where Warlikowski as a young graduate studied various subjects – history, Roman languages and philosophy – at the Jagiellonian

---

73 Filipowicz (2002).
74 Ibid.
University. Studying for years was for Warlikowski ‘the best way of living’. His desire for knowledge was stronger than his need for political engagement at a crucial time in Polish history: ‘during Martial Law, my fellow colleagues conspired while I used to sit in the department of banned books and read the whole content of the Instytut Literacki (The Literary Institute), the work of Gombrowicz and Miłosz. Already in these early days, before Warlikowski commenced his theatrical career, it is evident that the director had a predilection for choosing his own paths instead of following the herd and fulfilling his patriotic duties – or compromising his own dreams.

The years spent in Kraków did not help the director to discover or build his roots – this conservative city, proud of its tradition, was unfriendly to newcomers and deepened Warlikowski’s sense of displacement: ‘it was a shock, a tight shell without space for breathing [...] I wasn’t feeling well, being surrounded by the children of professors and other noble citizens of Kraków.’ Warlikowski admitted that his decision to go abroad was made in order to heal Warlikowski’s sense of alienation from Polish society and in the hope that the experience would allow him to return to Kraków and challenge the city from a different perspective: ‘as a person who has travelled the world.’ The director revealed: ‘Paris was a school of life for me – from a provincial boy, I became a man from the great European metropolis.

In Warlikowski’s eyes emigration was a way of earning himself a place within Polish society. He believed that only with the experience gained abroad, could he try and establish himself in Poland. Such a belief is related to a very Polish construction of the Western world, to which the country had no access during the strict Communist years. The West became terra repromissionis to which many dreamt of escape, and the official Communist critique of everything linked to the West made it even more desirable in Polish eyes, thus deepening the sense of discrepancy between Polish and Western ways of living. Hence, Warlikowski knew and made a conscious use of this prevailing complex.

75 Warlikowski didn’t complete any of these courses.
76 Martial Law (stan wojenny) was introduced on 13 December 1981 and lasted until 22 July 1983.
77 Warlikowski began his studies in Kraków in 1981 – the year Martial Law was introduced. Many students became involved in underground political activity in this period.
78 In Pawłowski (2003).
79 Some critics – i.e. Drewniak (1999) – accused Warlikowski of not rising to his patriotic duties and degrading their importance.
80 In Pawłowski (2003).
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
According to Warlikowski’s wife, Szczęśniak, their decision to become director and set designer respectively was made on the second day after they had met at a philosophy lecture at the Jagiellonian University. Warlikowski studied philosophy (and history) and Szczęśniak enrolled for a philosophy course as a PhD candidate in psychology. She summarises: ‘This decision appeared in each of us separately. The path to realise it was still a long way away, but everything was heading towards this.’ This would therefore suggest that the director’s time in France was also linked to a search for an artistic experience and a career path.

Certainly, the director’s fascination with theatre started before he commenced his undergraduate studies: ‘I came to Kraków and started watching the performances of Swinarski84 and Wajda.85 I became a fan of theatre, I used to go and watch the same performances a few times. Some of them I saw even ten times, I would watch them day after day.’86 Importantly, Warlikowski indicates here his fascination with the theatre of the eighties that he encountered in Polish repertory theatre, to which he later developed a very critical approach.

Warlikowski believes that, in regards to theatre, he ‘learned the most in Paris’,87 although he was disappointed with dramatic theatre and as a consequence, he shifted his interest towards operatic work: ‘I spent my evenings at the opera and ballet. What I saw there were hardly revolutionary productions, but they were undoubtedly beautiful and manifested a sense of style. I saw Baroque theatre productions at the Opéra Comique, operas at the Opéra-Garnier.88 Warlikowski’s interest in operatic forms is quite remarkable, especially given that French opera productions of that time were known for their traditional interpretations. Significantly, from 2000, Warlikowski started to develop his own operatic career,89 which would become a second, parallel line of his artistic activity. Even

84 Konrad Swinarski (1929–1975) - one of Poland’s exponents of directors’ theatre. He was an assistant director in Bertolt Brecht’s Berliner Ensemble between 1955 and 1957. From 1964 he was permanently associated with the Stary Teatr in Kraków and died in a plane crash while in advanced rehearsals for Hamlet. After his death, some of Swinarski’s productions stayed in the repertory of the Stary for years.
85 Andrzej Wajda (b.1926) is a theatre director associated with Stary Teatr since 1963, but best known for his films such as Danton, The Man of Marble, The Man of Iron and Katyn.
86 In Gruszczyński (2003b), 145.
87 Ibid., 145.
88 In Mieszkowski (2003), 229.
89 See Appendix for production details.
though he began this work in Poland, it was in the most prestigious European opera houses (to be precise: Opéra-Garniér and Opéra Bastille in Paris, Beyerische Staatsoper in Munich, Teatro Real in Madrid or La Mannaie De Munt in Brussels) where Warlikowski’s work was most noteworthy and earned him a reputation as a controversial and revolutionary director of contemporary opera.

From a theatrical point of view, Warlikowski’s most formative experience in Paris was gained at the Théâtre de l’Odéon where he had a chance to see ‘the productions of Bergman, Strehler and other great artists of the Theatre of Nations, which subsequently became the Union of Theatres of Europe.’ These great European directors – to whom the name of Peter Brook was subsequently added – are essential here, as Warlikowski (as a graduate of Kraków’s theatre school) got a chance to participate in their workshops. Consequently, these names became associated with Warlikowski and functioned in Polish theatrical circles as his mentors and masters.

Inevitably, this residence in Paris, characterised by the aforesaid theatrical and operatic experience, a year-long course on ancient theatre at the Sorbonne, the encounters and connections with other European artists and access to the classics of world cinema (which were unobtainable in Poland at the time), must have influenced the young artist who was searching for his own identity as a human being and an artist. By the time Warlikowski commenced his directing course in Kraków in 1989, his approach to theatre was therefore shaped by this extensive education – understood here in a literal and metaphorical way – in Poland and abroad.

Warlikowski seemed to have submerged himself in French culture to the extent that on his return, he was hardly recognisable as a Pole. As Poniedziałek, whom Warlikowski met at Kraków’s theatre school, recalls: ‘Krzysiek was thought to be from France, not Poland, although he had only spent a few years there.’ Poniedziałek observes in another conversation:

[Krzysztof] seemed so ‘baroque’ in the aura that he created around himself, in how he wanted to impress people, how he dressed and spoke… We know now that it

90 In Mieszkowski (2003), 229. The translation of these two extracts from Mieszkowski’s interview with Warlikowski quoted on this page comes from: www.culture.pl/en/culture/artykuly/os_warlikowski_krzysztof [accessed 24 April 2010].
91 By that I mean not only a formal university education, but also the life experience that enhances one’s outlook and confidence.
wasn’t pretentious and that this is how Krzysiek really speaks. [...] Although his background is very simple, working class, he never had, so to say, a working-class manner of communication, I would rather say, his style is hyper-intellectual, aristocratic.  

This recollection clearly confirms that Warlikowski consciously constructed and ‘performed’ his identity, in an attempt to overcome his working-class background and become someone who could express themselves in a more sublime and less direct way. To some extent, this is in contrast to Warlikowski’s dream of bringing his theatre closer to the experience of ordinary human beings and removing its high social status. I will discuss this issue in more detail in the following chapters.

Warlikowski admits that he ‘lost perspective’ and submerged himself in French culture so much, that he didn’t even know whether he would return to Poland. At the time when Poles were going abroad for political or economic reasons to escape the grey reality of Communism, Warlikowski’s motivations were evidently different – he went to France to ‘broaden his horizons’. Although he applied for political asylum, it was rather a standard procedure that entitled one to live and work in France legally during the lengthy application process. In France, he worked as a private care assistant looking after people with life-threatening illnesses in hospitals: ‘For the first time in my life I learned what physical work meant. I never worked beforehand.’ His return to Poland was difficult and the perception of people whom he met at the theatre school in Kraków was mainly based on his appearance and manner of speaking: ‘I was seen as a theoretician who didn’t have much contact with reality.’ This particular way of expressing himself made him vulnerable to bullying by one of the school’s professors. Warlikowski’s ‘in-betweenness’, his hybrid and complex identity caused some resentment. A clearly defined self – either as an insider or outsider – makes it easier to establish relations with people and one’s immediate surroundings. On the other hand, a hybrid, complicated persona requires the design of a different set of rules and relationships.

To what extent however was this image, which Warlikowski presented at this initial stage of his career, carefully designed to make an impression? And how much was his appearance just the result of a natural mode of expression that he acquired during his stay

---

93 Author’s interview with Poniedziałek.  
94 Warlikowski talks about this in Pawłowski (2003).  
95 In Pawłowski (2003).  
96 See Pawłowski (2003).
in France? Wasn’t Warlikowski aware of the impact that his ‘baroque’ appearance would make on his teaching staff and fellow students? All of the features listed by Poniedziałek, such as Warlikowski’s manner of speaking, appearance or clothing that were marked by ‘otherness’, were bound to make an immediate impression, being so alien in the Poland of 1989.

These specific, mainly physical acts of Warlikowski’s can be called ‘performative’ as they ‘do not express a pre-existing identity, but engender identity through these very acts.’

In a way, Warlikowski produced an idiosyncratic model of functioning that emerged from his experience of being Polish and of having have spent some time abroad. He positions himself as ‘other’ and manifests his experience of having lived abroad and being soaked in a foreign culture. This ‘performative’ presence — drawing on Judith Butler’s claim that we establish ourselves through acts of ‘doing’ (1990) — had a lasting impact on how Warlikowski and his work would be perceived throughout his career. To some extent, these initial bodily acts — to use Fischer-Lichte’s interpretation of ‘performative acts’ — ‘constitute the reality’ in which Warlikowski would function and establish his ‘social identity.’ This aspect of performativity, which begins here with the most visual, physical entrance into repertory theatre, is strongly linked to Warlikowski’s position within the repertory theatre system. The work that came into being in a new socio-political situation required the construction of a new order — Warlikowski and his ensemble were eagerly occupied by, and profoundly aware of their involvement in the shaping of this new reality.

By entering Polish theatre as a ‘hybrid being’ and/or ‘other’, the director makes a powerful statement and consequently claims the right to create his own way of making theatre. This was a crucial step that in the creation of his own ensemble and later the formation of his auteur Nowy Teatr, demonstrates how Warlikowski created his own position within Polish mainstream theatre. Even the name of Warlikowski’s theatre is unconventional: Polish theatres tend to use the word ‘teatr’ first and then follow this with an adjective. By using the adjective ‘new’ and changing its position within the name Warlikowski and his

---

97 In Fischer-Lichte (2008), 27.
98 Ibid., 27.
100 Significantly, only Stary Teatr in Kraków breaks this rule.
101 This is difficult to explain in English, a language that always puts adjectives in front of nouns. The Polish language is more flexible in this sense.
ensemble marked the status of their new venture, the first theatre venue created in Warszawa since the Second World War.

This ‘otherness’ – or a double, hybrid identity constituted by Warlikowski’s ‘Polishness’ and ‘foreignness’ – is enforced by two further aspects: the theatrical and personal. The theatrical comprises of the experience that Warlikowski gained while studying and living in Paris. With this, he entered Polish repertory theatre, which – it is essential to remember – had very little exposure to what was happening beyond Polish borders during the years of Communism. And although the names of companies such as Jerzy Grotowski’s Laboratory and Tadeusz Kantor’s Cricot 2 or ensembles such as Teatr Ôsmego Dnia achieved a prestigious status in the West and also had a significant influence on theatre worldwide, in Poland they were positioned outside mainstream theatre.102 That meant that Warlikowski was bringing with him the baggage of an experience that not many repertory directors in Poland could be proud of having. Thus, already at his entry point to Polish theatre, Warlikowski held a strong professional card in his pocket. Additionally, there is a personal element that contributed to Warlikowski’s otherness. Being openly homosexual and married to Szczęśniak, who was – as Poniedziałek assures us – ‘very eccentric’,103 added to Warlikowski’s unconventionality: ‘everyone was talking about him, because he was such an original’104 (I will discuss his family relationships in chapter 2). This eccentricity would remain a feature of Warlikowski’s personality, as he continued to have a predilection for collaborators who were unconventional themselves. This image of Warlikowski seemed to be inspired by the director’s encounter with French culture, opera and ballet in particular, and was in great contrast to what was known in Poland at the time.

Seemingly, this ostentatious difference was partly a conscious decision: ‘it was this kind of a programmed cosmopolitanism, I did not want to enter this Polish mess’, he confessed in one conversation.105 This declared cosmopolitanism was to appear in opposition to ‘Polishness’. By choosing to identify himself as ‘cosmopolitan’, he was consciously employing a different, unknown perspective: ‘I wanted to speak with a new

---

103 Author’s interview with Poniedziałek.
104 Ibid.
105 Author’s interview with Warlikowski, 24 November (2007a), Warszawa.
voice and I knew that in this, ‘otherness’ was my chance’. Of great significance in the creation of this ‘cosmopolitan’ identity was William Shakespeare, whose work inspired Warlikowski and helped him to understand the complexity of the contemporary world.

It was not his reading of the Polish classics but an immersion in the literature of Shakespeare – the director claims – that played a role in the foundation of his personality. In a way, literature acted as a replacement for the director’s lack of roots or sense of family values. He familiarised himself with a universal, cosmopolitan culture that shaped his views and life philosophy. This awareness and the discovery of what it meant to be ‘Polish’ came gradually and appeared to be associated with the director gaining greater experience in the field of directing. This brought the realisation that these two identities – Polish and foreign (i.e. cosmopolitan) – did not need to be mutually exclusive and that their amalgamation could stimulate the very theatre that Warlikowski wanted to create.

It is necessary to notice that from his final performance at PWST in Kraków, Warlikowski’s career thrived. The opportunities created by the European festival circuit, that in the early 1990s was particularly keen to promote the work of young directors from post-Communist countries, had a noteworthy impact on Warlikowski’s position in his home country and abroad. Peter Brook, one of the great European directors ‘concerned with what had happened in the theatre of the Communist countries’, created ‘a workshop project in Vienna within the framework of the Wienerfestwochen for which he selected 20 to 30 young directors from Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Russia’.

Warlikowski was chosen to represent Poland after Brook had seen his school performance of Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s Biale noce (White Nights). Tadeusz Bradecki, the then artistic director of Stary Teatr, which was part of the European theatre circuit, recalls the circumstances that led to Warlikowski representing Poland:

[A]mongst his peers, he was distinguished by his great humanistic knowledge and skills in foreign languages that weren’t very popular in those days. That is why without any problems he started assisting [Lupa] and we quickly sent him to the first of a few workshops for the young directors representing The Union of Theatres of Europe in Paris. He was a natural choice, because Krzysztof’s French

---

106 Ibid.
107 Warlikowski’s final performance was Auto-da-Fé by Elias Canetti, which premiered on 10 March 1992.
108 M. Constantinescu, ‘Once upon a Time in Romania… Five years of CommunistPost-Communist Romanian Theater’ in K. Stefanova, ed., Eastern European Theatre after The Iron Curtain (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publisher, 2000); 190.
109 This production premiered in June 1992.
110 Bradecki took over the artistic management of the Stary Teatr in 1990.
was fluent and he was about to complete his studies, so we also started talking about his debut [at Stary Teatr].

Bradecki’s recollection illustrates therefore that at the beginning of his career, Warlikowski was already situated in a beneficial position due to his earlier studies and his experience of ‘Europeaness’, which he brought with him from his immigrant years in France. As Constantinescu writes, discussing Brook’s project from a Romanian perspective: ‘The Viennese workshop was only the first stage of the project. After eight days of strenuous work, Brook chose Alexa and one other person of out 30 or so candidates to assist him on Impressions de Pelléas, an adaptation of the opera Pelléas et Melisande by Debussy, which was performed at the Parisian Bouffes du Nord theatre.’ Warlikowski was that second workshop participant who went to assist Brook in Paris.

This apprenticeship with Brook, working on what Shevtsova calls his ‘most minimalist work’, was formative for Warlikowski’s understanding of theatre as a place in which links with society could be restored and a collective method of work could be created which gives birth to performance. Apart from the simplicity with which Brook talks about complicated matters, the most crucial aspect of this experience was the discoveries related to spectators. Warlikowski described his observations:

When the rehearsals finished, Brook invited spectators to a first show. If laughter appeared in a place where there should be no laughter, he [Brook] started working on this fragment. If he thought that, in some scene, the audience’s laughter was necessary but there was none, he would restructure that episode. Simply speaking, this meant that Brook’s “ear” was geared towards the audience – this was the biggest lesson for me. I stopped being interested in aesthetic issues, in what I could bring to the art, how I could change it. My path towards theatre became rational, logical and clear. I realised that my main aim was to say things that would necessarily and absolutely understandable. And this is very difficult, much more complex than it seems. Especially at the time of the late eighties and the early 1990s, which was a period of great falsity in Poland.

---

112 During this workshop, Warlikowski prepared his adaptation of Marcel Proust’s In Search of Lost Time.
113 Romanian director, Felix Alexa.
As this statement demonstrates, the experience of shadowing Brook made Warlikowski reevaluate his understanding of theatre and realise that it is not aesthetic value but communication with the audience that lies at its heart. This discovery, made in 1992, just three years after the fall of Communism and while Polish mainstream theatre sought to redefine its role, was – as I will observe in the following chapters – a very important direction for Warlikowski’s future development.

Undoubtedly, after having worked with Brook, Warlikowski entered the professional theatre from a much stronger position. This position was not only superior in terms of artistic experience, but also in terms of influence and the extensive networking links that Warlikowski had managed to establish, thanks to this Parisian experience. It is also evident in this short statement that Warlikowski was actively competing, as we will observe in further parts of this thesis, to attract his audience.

It is also likely that being a student of Krystian Lupa, who had been associated with the Stary Theatre since 1988 and had just directed one of the most influential of his productions, Kalkwerk (1992)\(^\text{119}\) influenced Warlikowski’s prestigious debut there a year later,\(^\text{120}\) especially as Lupa had a very high opinion of Warlikowski and had already noticed that Warlikowski ‘would be a great artist. He had an eye on people – on what is hidden in a human being [...] What was hidden provoked him and he liked to provoke this hidden thing to come out of a shelter.’\(^\text{121}\)

Significantly, Warlikowski’s debut was quickly followed by invitations to other theatres: Warlikowski directed at Poznań’s Teatr Nowy\(^\text{122}\) in the same year and the following year in Toruń.\(^\text{123}\) Despite receiving unenthusiastic reviews for his debut, the Stary Teatr nominated Warlikowski as their representative to take part in the workshops organised by Strehler in Milan in 1994.\(^\text{124}\) Thanks to the same organiser, The Union of Theatres of Europe, Warlikowski also went to Kungliga Dramaruska Teatern in Stockholm to take part in workshops run there by Ingmar Bergman.\(^\text{125}\)

\(^{119}\) Kalkwerk based on Thomas Bernhard’s novel, premiered on 7 November 1992.

\(^{120}\) See Appendix.


\(^{122}\) See Appendix.

\(^{123}\) See Appendix.

\(^{124}\) The workshops took place at Milan’s Piccolo Teatro.

\(^{125}\) These workshops took place in 1994.
Warlikowski’s linguistic skills and perhaps his experience in networking were opening up to him possibilities that he would not otherwise have had. In a way, Warlikowski, due to his familiarity with the Western world, became Stary Teatr’s emissary in foreign affairs. In the early 1990s when Poland aspired to democracy and theatres struggled to find their new identity in a free market economy, Warlikowski, as a result of his travels and contacts, was already ‘a European man’, who from the perspective of the West, was also quintessentially Polish and it was this that made him an interesting candidate for any workshops.

In a way, Warlikowski had two cultural cards at his disposal. Being born and bred in Poland and having graduated from Kraków’s reputable directing course, he was rooted in Polish culture and this was one ‘cultural’ card that could be used to access a European stage that was interested in new theatre from the former Communist countries. On the other hand, at the beginning of his career, he had in Poland a reputation as an ‘outsider’ and this brought him as much privilege as harsh criticism from unsympathetic theatre critics. Regarding his ‘foreignness’ as a positive attribute or a subject for disapproval allowed Polish theatre to claim or reject Warlikowski’s work depending on their needs. After strengthening his position abroad, as we will observe in chapter 2, Warlikowski was then able to play and manipulate the existing circumstances in Polish repertory theatre in order to create theatre on his own terms.

These workshops with eminent directors had a significant influence on the development of Warlikowski’s work: ‘I mature slowly and I needed these various points of view to mature inside and get to my own way of thinking. The encounters with these various personalities were very helpful.’ 126 Significantly, in the aftermath of his workshop, in 1998 Strehler invited Warlikowski to direct Shakespeare’s Pericles at Milan’s Piccolo Teatro within the frameworks of the project ‘Young European Directors’. Not many young Polish directors have a chance to work under such established names and Warlikowski acknowledges that he has been the beneficiary of a particular historical time: ‘At some stage the role of being a citizen of second-class country, with second-class literature, second-class art, and second-class monarchy helped as a starting point. I don’t

126 Author’s interview with Warlikowski, (2007b).
think it would help me if I was an heir of imperial Austria." This awareness proves two things. On the one hand, it shows Warlikowski’s ‘down to earth’ approach and illustrates that he is a good judge of the world in which he works. On the other, the sole fact that Warlikowski acknowledges the impact of these circumstances on his own success, shows his confidence and demonstrates that – as Niziołek puts it – ‘[Warlikowski] distances himself from the common Polish inferiority complex of ‘worse than Europe.’

With Warlikowski’s productions gradually gaining acclaim, he rapidly received further commissions to direct abroad. He worked at the prominent Kammerspiele in Hamburg, then twice (1995 and 1997) at the theatre school Beit Zvi in Tel Aviv. Soon, theatres in Zagreb (1998 and 2001) and Stuttgart (1999 and 2000) were added to Warlikowski’s prolific curriculum vitae. Concurrent to winning this approval in theatres abroad, Warlikowski strengthened his position in Poland. Further productions in Poznań (Roberto Zucco in 1995 and The Winter’s Tale in 1997) and in Kraków in 1996 were followed by his debut in the capital with Sophocles’ Electra and then The Taming of the Shrew (both in 1997) at the Teatr Dramatyczny.

The breakthrough in Warlikowski’s career in Poland came in 1999 with his production of Hamlet at the Teatr Rozmaitości where Warlikowski secured the position of an associate director. His Hamlet was devoid of history and politics, concentrating instead on the ‘family drama’, and received mixed reviews. The majority of critics noticed Warlikowski’s sexualisation and deconstruction of the text in which, as Niziołek counted: ‘twenty something characters were reduced to nine.” The critic also noticed that ‘the director carries out a game with the spectators at the level of expectations linked to this text and its staging tradition.” Pawłowski praised the director for ‘good ideas and surprising casting decisions’, but accused him of concentrating on too many motifs and not putting forward a clear idea of what his Hamlet is about. Many other critics, like for

---


128 Niziołek (2008), 60.

129 In 1995 Warlikowski directed there The Trial by Franz Kafka. His second production at the school was Shakespeare’s Hamlet that premiered on 5 July 1997.

130 See Appendix for details.

131 See Appendix.

132 Warlikowski would later be employed at Rozmaitości between 2004 and 2007

133 G. Niziołek, ‘Garderoba zła’, Didaskalia 34 (1999), 3-7 (p.3).

134 Ibid., 7.

instance Sieradzki, also expressed their doubts about the director’s interpretation of the play. While Warlikowski emphasized that the text was filled with question marks and was ‘like an explosive mixture, which doesn’t have any logic. It is a puzzle. [...] Shakespeare doesn’t give answers and we don’t look for them either. [...] Hamlet is an open work – is filled with thoughts that contradict themselves. I agreed with the mystery and puzzle of the text.’ A director admitting his uncertainty and lack of logic did not fit well into existing Polish expectations that directors should have authoritarian views of their productions. To some extent, Warlikowski provoked some of the criticism his Hamlet received.

Significantly, the production of Hamlet received a drastically different reception in 2001 in Avignon, where Warlikowski was invited after the festival organisers saw the production at Slovenia’s Nitra Theatre Festival. Marek Rapacki reported from Avignon: ‘all the influential Parisian dailies express their views about the work of Warlikowski and his actors exclusively in superlatives.’ Warlikowski’s originality and his unpredictability were compared to Declan Donnellan, as was his ‘work as a skilful illustrator who hasn’t left anything to be decided by chance.’ The critics expressed their ‘delight, fascination and emotion’ and praised the work of the Polish actors: ‘the strongmen of the soul, the acrobats of the psyche and gladiators experienced in the difficult vicissitudes of their country’.

This points to two essential aspects of Warlikowski’s work. Firstly, the attention paid to Warlikowski’s actors is linked to a specific way of working on a performance that marks another stage in Warlikowski’s oeuvre: the opportunities created at TR Warszawa enabled Warlikowski to carry out more laboratory-like rehearsals, with an emphasis on his actors, whose status shifted from their roles as ‘interpr...ters’ to ‘creators’ of his work. This aspect of his theatre-making – as we shall argue in the further part of this thesis – had crucial consequences in establishing Warlikowski’s distinctive mode of working, as well as the desire to communicate with an audience that lies at the heart of his practice. Furthermore, the length of rehearsals will also undergo some significant changes and the work will gain a new, ongoing status and will continue beyond the première. Reviewers of

---

138 Declan Donnellan brought his production of Boris Godunov to Avignon, which featured Russian actors.
140 I will come back to this issue in more detail in chapters 2 and 3.
Hamlet have noticed the intensive and ongoing development of the play’s characters over the course of the production’s history.141

These new features of Warlikowski’s method of creating his shows are closely connected to his search for identity as a Pole. Finding actors whose theories of theatre resemble his own made Warlikowski realise that: ‘the strongest theatre comes into being where you have roots, where you speak the same language with both the actors and the audience.’142 This conviction could be understood both literally and metaphorically. The literal understanding relates to our intrinsic ability to communicate in our native tongue and thus to being able to properly express all the feelings, hunches and experiences that cannot be so clearly articulated in a second language. The metaphorical sense points to a broader cultural, social and political context, to working with people who come from similar backgrounds and have comparable life experiences, which can facilitate the establishment of close relationships and agreement about the principles of the theatre-making process.

Secondly, Hamlet’s invitation to the theatre festival in Avignon, which as Warlikowski points out ‘is something special to every director. It’s like a window to the world’,143 marks a new era in his international – but also in his Polish – career. Warlikowski enters a new territory, that of a ‘marketplace’ that will strengthen the presence of his theatre abroad, but also in his home country. Interestingly, Polish theatre had barely set foot in the Avignon Festival before Warlikowski’s Hamlet. Only a year earlier, two productions by Jarzyna144 – his adaptations of Gombrowicz’s Iwona the Princess of Burgundy from the Stary Teatr in Kraków and Myszkin, based on Dostoyevsky’s work and produced at Rozmaitości – broke this pattern and prepared the ground for a restoration of interest in Polish theatre. Gradually, with Hamlet and then with Cleansed, Warlikowski’s productions were regularly showcased in Avignon. Some of them – like Dybbuk145 (2003), Angels in America (2007) and (A)pollonia (2009) – were commissioned by the Festival and this was done ‘on the basis of projects submitted by the artist rather than on the basis of existing

142 In Gruszczynski (2007), 77.
144 Jarzyna has been Artistic Manager of Teatr Rozmaitości (The Variety Theatre) since 1998. Rozmaitości was renamed as TR Warszawa in 2003.
145 Due to the ‘intermittents du spectacle’ (part-time cultural workers) strike, the 57th Avignon Festival was cancelled and Dybbuk did not premiere there, but the production was taken over by the International Theatre Festival, Dialog in Wroclaw (Poland) and premièred in autumn of the same year.
productions’, as Wehle notices about this characteristic of the Avignon Festival.146 Becoming part of the Parnassus of artists whose work is identified with the Festival, changes the thinking about one’s work: ‘[T]he Festival looks after some kind of a continuum and it seems that it doesn’t matter any longer whether the production is good or bad according to one’s criteria. This becomes rather an investment in some encounters with certain directors and ensembles.’147

From such statements, one clearly glimpses that apart from being a talented director in whose work Western (and particularly French theatre) seemed to be more and more interested, Warlikowski was also attracted to success and sought a great international career. From the intertheatrical perspective, it is worth considering how Warlikowski’s desire for success led him to develop a practice that is both successful in an international context – which allows him to achieve this ambition – and is also aesthetically and artistically satisfying as he fulfils his theatrical goals. Significantly, what makes Warlikowski an important person in both Polish and international contexts is the fact that he managed to succeed in these two areas.

After presenting five productions in Avignon, Warlikowski managed to create a community of spectators whom he regards as ‘the second largest after our audience in Warszawa.’148 This popularity of his ensemble in Avignon is certainly illustrated by box office figures, as recent data obtained from Nowy Teatr confirms that in 2009, Warlikowski’s production of (A)pollonia seen in Warszawa by 5,050 spectators over the whole year, while in Avignon it was seen by 7,880 people. In addition, in the same year, 5,154 spectators in Paris saw the same production. If we treat this year as representative, these numbers would suggest that French and international audiences (a further 4,003 spectators saw (A)pollonia in Belgium and Austria in that year) outnumber Warlikowski’s Polish followers. However, his Polish audience numbers are connected to the fact that Warlikowski’s theatre does not have a venue in Warszawa and is forced to spend a large part of its budget on hiring venues for its productions. This certainly limits public access to his theatre and is a continuous subject of debate between Warlikowski and his ensemble and local government.

147 Author’s interview with Warlikowski, (2007a).
148 Ibid.
In addition to developing foreign audiences, such festival commissions must also have affected Warlikowski’s creative process, as global touring became an intrinsic part of his productions. Warlikowski admits that even though his shows are made with Polish spectators in mind, ‘we analyse the situations of new places, in which we are finding ourselves. [...] We think how to open up something else that we have in the performance to make it more accessible. This is very inspiring. The mobilisation of the ensemble is very high’. In this approach, Warlikowski exercises the method of theatre-making passed on to him by Peter Brook.

It is also crucial in this context to examine the nature of the texts that Warlikowski and his ensemble stage. According to Knowles, there is a predilection for performances ‘staged for the international “community”’ to be based on classics or other sources that already have transcultural authority or resonance. However, as Warlikowski has never expressed any interest in drama that could be classified as strictly Polish or Slavic and his earlier shows were the sole adaptations of what can be broadly defined as European classics, this did not require any specific shift in Warlikowski’s oeuvre. In fact, Warlikowski’s preference for ‘cosmopolitan’ texts helped him to get noticed by eminent theatre directors in the first place, and this subsequently opened up other opportunities in the European theatre market. This again proves Warlikowski’s ambition to establish himself within the international theatre circuit.

Reinforcing his position abroad, and discovering his identity as a Pole in his work with Polish actors, which began at the Teatr Rozmaitości, guided Warlikowski’s decision to cease directing drama abroad. This decision has its roots in the responsibility of commitment:

I invested myself at the Rozmaitości where we started with *Hamlet*, thirty people in the auditorium and the protests, and we ended up with the spectators standing up and sitting on the ground in order to see its last performance. I can fulfil my need and talk to Western societies with Polish performances, because it is more and more acceptable to read surtitles [...] I can take a bigger responsibility for my Polish performances than for those that would be a result of momentary circumstances abroad. It seems to me much more important for a Polish director to create his work in Poland.

---

149 Ibid.
151 Author’s interview with Warlikowski (2007a).
This resonated with a significant shift in Warlikowski’s view of his ‘Polishness’. He seemed to have discovered that the process of creating opportunities for encounters with his spectators is not only linked to his and his actors’ personal experiences, but is also inherently rooted in the experience of a particular place and time, the specificity of the Polish background that Warlikowski and his collaborators share. As a result of this decision, his production of *Macbeth* in 2004 marked an end to his adaptation of drama texts abroad. For six years afterwards Warlikowski continued to refrain from such commitments.

In February 2010, however, he responded to a proposition from Isabelle Huppert who talked Warlikowski into directing her as Blanche Dubois in an adaptation of Tennessee Williams’ *Streetcar Called Desire*, which premiered at the Théâtre de l’Odéon in Paris. The results of this collaboration were disappointing and this points to another very important aspect of Warlikowski’s work with Polish actors that is significant in the context of his international career. As Alicja Binder in her article on the reception of Warlikowski’s theatre in France observes:

> The position of [foreign directors such as Thomas Ostermeier and Krzysztof Warlikowski who regularly return to France with new performances] seems to be stable until they start working with French actors and their theatre is no longer a separate phenomenon in comparison to the local theatre.

For French critics, as Binder suggests by quoting D. Conrod from *Télérama*, Warlikowski is at his most attractive as a quintessentially Polish director: ‘Aged forty-six, Warlikowski is already a classic. A European artist, but inseparably Polish, never one without the other. In the dialectics between universal and particular, Poland remains for the director a constant point of reference.’ A two-dimensional relationship with Poland is also a leitmotif in the French reviews of Warlikowski’s Polish productions that are quoted by Binder. French critics are interested in the conflict that Warlikowski has with his homeland: ‘Warlikowski once again defined himself as an artist who “doesn’t like Poland, but cannot live without it.”’ Asked in one interview why he still lives in Warszawa if he struggles to accept Poland, he replies:

---

152 See Appendix.
153 See Appendix.
154 A. Binder, ‘Druga publiczność’, *Notatnik Teatralny*, 62-63 (2011), 159-167 (pp. 159-160).
155 Ibid., 162-163.
156 Ibid., 163.
I’m honoured to have an opportunity to work in Paris or in Avignon [...] where Vilar – via theatre – tried to restore French dignity after the war, a bit like myself who tries to do that in Warszawa. [...] In Warszawa I feel responsible for our eroded, lost, wretched nation that was affected by the war, anti-Semitism and Communism. One needs to help it to find identity and memory. This is linked with the duty of speaking and not hiding anything, with the sharing of unhappiness and shame. For that reason, theatre in Poland is politically important. The feeling of loss is also very inspiring. And this is another contradiction.157

What is striking here, apart from Warszawa being a stimulating place, is Warlikowski’s sense of responsibility – he compares himself to Jean Vilar and his achievements in the creation of one of the best-known theatre festivals – towards Poland and its process of building its new identity. This, as we shall observe in chapter 4, will become a very important element of Warlikowski’s trajectory in establishing his contact with contemporary audiences.

However, Warlikowski continued to be tempted by opportunities and the prestige of working outside Poland. His operatic productions, which have been another vivid current in his oeuvre, appeared as a challenge for Warlikowski who tried to ‘make them close and accessible.’158 Meaningful was ‘the temptation of creating opera on the most prestigious operatic stages in the world and what kind of budget possibilities this presented.’159 These offers appeared in the deadest time at the Rozmaitości, when Warlikowski’s productions became less frequent. Besides, as he states: ‘other challenges give me additional inspiration in theatrical work. [...] I think that opera requires a certain kind of a genius to fulfil the requirements that live opera makes today.’160

Warlikowski’s clear ambition to work and fulfil himself on an international stage reflects a more general current in the history of twenty-first century theatre and performance characterised by great European and American directors (Lev Dodin, Eimuntas Nekrosius, Giorgio Strehler, Robert Wilson, Peter Sellars, to just name a few) who test their imagination by creating spectacular operatic productions. This is mainly made possible thanks to the enormous budgets and technical opportunities created by today’s prestigious operatic venues.

158 Author’s interview with Warlikowski, (2007a).
159 Ibid.
160 Ibid. See Appendix for productions’ details.
Inevitably, Warlikowski’s work under the patronage of some of the most prominent directors in European theatre such as Brook, Strehler and Bergman, juxtaposed with his intensive exposure to the repertory theatre system in Poland, had a considerable impact not only on his thinking and definition of his own identity as a Pole, but also in establishing his distinctive position within Polish and European theatre.

In this chapter, I focused on examining Warlikowski’s trajectory as a successful director and how he established his auteur model of working, which opposes clear-cut definitions and situates itself outside the repertory establishment. The director’s eagerness, hard work and hunger for knowledge and experience have been a determining factor in this discovery. Concurrently, however, a significant role in this process was played by a specific set of circumstances (social, political and theatrical) that influenced Warlikowski’s position in both Polish and foreign theatre. Looking at these circumstances through an intertheatrical prism has allowed me access to data that reveals the complexity of this theatre-making and would go on to feed and provide the foundation for Warlikowski’s quest to establish communication with his audience. In this chapter, I have discussed the main determinants and driving forces that have fed Warlikowski’s desire to create circumstances for these encounters between creators and spectators, the encounter with real people. As I argue throughout this chapter, Warlikowski’s theatre-making is profoundly rooted in his biography and life experience but what is specific to his work and approach is the way in which he explores and makes use of the circumstances and opportunities provided by biographical, historical, social, political happenings that are all interconnected. I have shown how Warlikowski’s personal biography and the trajectory of his development as an artist are closely related to this complex network. As we have seen, Warlikowski has made a very conscious use of his hybrid identity as a foreigner (in Poland) and Pole (abroad, mainly in France) and has managed to follow his intuition to attract audiences and create a following not only in Poland, but also abroad – Avignon being the most significant example. In the later parts of this thesis, I will examine the trajectory of Warlikowski’s

---

161 Warlikowski premiered new productions with an impressive frequency. For instance, between 1992 and 1998, he prepared twenty performances in both Poland and abroad.
ensemble building and discuss what methods in his work lead to the realisation of his quest
to bring theatre closer to life and establish a direct communication with the audience.
Chapter 2
Preconditions of performance

In this chapter I identify and analyse numerous intertheatrical texts such as the rigid borders and infrastructure of Polish repertory theatre, the circumstances surrounding the creation of Warlikowski’s ensemble, the working ethics shared by its members as well as the complex network of connections and interdependencies that exist between the director and his co-creators. This enables me to illustrate the process by which Warlikowski’s ensemble has come into being and the relationships existing within it, which are prone to changes and are continuously tested and strengthened as a result of the group’s various experiences and their on-going development.

I will discuss how Warlikowski discovers and develops his personal way of theatre-making that is deeply embedded in his and his actors’ private experience. My discussion of the circumstances that surrounded the production of Roberto Zucco will demonstrate how biographies of playwright (Koltès) and actors (Klijnstra) merge with Warlikowski’s own and feed the work on performance. This chapter will also show Warlikowski’s discovery of a potential that is linked to working with like-minded artists. The creation of the ensemble that is constructed like a family unit and the working practices that are associated with this type of relationship existing between the members of the company will be at the centre of this chapter’s enquiry. I will discuss the collective nature of Warlikowski’s theatre and will show how all these elements listed above constitute the practice, which is intertheatrical in its very nature.

Discovering a personal way of theatre-making

In Polish repertory theatre, the emphasis placed on the education of young directors-to-be results in carefully designed directing courses that play a crucial role in providing a much-
needed foundation for the development of one’s artistic skills. In Poland, the importance of this education is illustrated by the long-term tradition of prominent directors holding professorial posts at the drama directing departments of either Kraków’s PWST or Warszawa’s Theatre Academy,¹ the two theatre academies that offer degree courses in directing and as such have the monopoly on educating theatre directors in Poland.

Although undoubtedly these artistic studies may act as a springboard or a catalyst for a young artist’s growth, such courses are unlikely to shape a mature artist, especially given that theatre directors create their ‘artwork’ with live and breathing organisms. These organisms have their own mind and consciousness and therefore are bound to constitute much more challenging and resistant artistic ‘substance’. Warlikowski, regards theatre as ‘something cognitive’ that also ‘gives sense to my life’.² This is a very important aspect of his theatre-making. For him, directing is a way of living and searching for sense, which cannot be taught or provided by the actual training received at theatre school, which involves practising various directorial skills.³ From this perspective, the director’s training constitutes a permit to the professional world of the theatre: we have seen in the previous chapter how studying at Kraków’s theatre school enabled Warlikowski to access the theatre circuit, which led him to meet Lupa and Brook, to name but two influential contacts.

Undoubtedly, the encounter with Lupa during Warlikowski’s studies at PWST became one of his most formative experiences. Lupa became Warlikowski’s mentor at Kraków’s academy and enabled him to get access to the Stary Teatr and the network of European contacts that the venue’s artistic manager had managed to establish. As Maryla Zielińska suggests, Lupa’s significance, as a director and theatre school professor, lies in his rejection of the erudite model of directing, which has its roots in the teachings of Leon Schiller⁴ and leads to producing ‘professionals’.⁵ Instead, Lupa proclaimed: ‘the director

---

³ The programme of directing studies at the Polish theatre schools includes the following classes and workshops: the history of theatre and literature, philosophy, aesthetics, psychology, work with a set designer, lighting design, workshops with actors, directing workshops and so on.
⁴ Leon Schiller (1887–1954) was a theatre scholar, director and pedagogue. He is credited as being one of the most influential directors of the first half of the 20th century and his professorship at the theatre school in Łódź and subsequently in Warszawa has influenced the way in which generations of Polish directors were trained.
should be a genius-like dilettante and this is our absurd version of Renaissance man.” This shift from an erudite to a dilettante is also synonymous with removing the overwhelming authority of all-knowing director and, to some extent, moving him from a pedestal and allowing him the right to search and make mistakes. This, as I will discuss in the forthcoming chapters, will have a crucial impact on Warlikowski’s work with his actors and their process of co-authoring performance.

Another important lesson learned by Warlikowski from Lupa was associated with Lupa’s ‘cult of sensitivity’ and ‘cult of individualism’, the former of which proclaimed that ‘the reactions of the individual’s sensitivity are more interesting and more important than [general] ideas’ and, as a result, ‘the experience of truth, which is searching for the way of expressing itself in theatre, is the aim of [this cult of individualism].’ In other words, Lupa had released the younger generation of directors from fulfilling rules associated with theatre making under the previous political system:

Lupa’s students are free from the ballast of conventions, they don’t feel obliged to follow any rules, they don’t believe in so-called ‘iron’ theatre rules. Lupa has released them from the baggage of duties towards culture, society and Polishness. He has freed self-reliant, independent artists who are now able to create their theatre in any city of Europe.

This observation illustrates the extent of Lupa’s impact on the notion of Polish theatre in post-Communist reality. The circumstances that arose from this shift from a duty-driven theatre making to a rule-free theatre that provides the artists with the opportunity to express their individual self influenced the development of Warlikowski’s distinctive language, as will become more evident in the following chapters.

Interestingly, at the time of Warlikowski’s studies in Kraków, Lupa’s work had just succeeded in establishing itself within the repertory theatre practice at the Stary Teatr. Lupa, who ‘kept in the background, worked with a team of trusted actors, mostly on a small stage and for a narrow circle of enthusiasts’, created theatre that was ‘niche and disrespected by many’ and did not have a particular impact on other theatre makers.

---

6 Ibid, 45.
8 Zielińska (2006), 57.
9 Ibid, 57.
11 Ibid. 17.
Splitting his time between the theatres in Kraków and Jelenia Góra, Lupa’s position was withdrawn rather than central, and this resulted in his gaining the opportunity to experiment and develop his method working away from the limelight. Besides, it was significant that Lupa’s theatre career had started late and it had taken him longer to work out his own theatrical language. It was the productions he directed in the late eighties that brought him long overdue acclaim and the apogee came with his production of *Kalkwerk* by Thomas Bernhard in 1991, which confirmed ‘his artistic maturity’: ‘this work became his *Meiserstück* and, as Jarocki dominated the 1980s of Polish theatre, Lupa took charge over the next decade’.

Equal to his impact as a director, Lupa is widely recognised for his influence on ‘the most noteworthy young group in Polish Theatre’. And although one cannot speak of clear-cut generational changes, it appeared – as I have mentioned earlier - that, at a time when the country was undergoing political and economic reconstruction and a new Polish society was taking shape, ideal circumstances were created for the debut of several young directors who were uncontaminated by old modes of theatre and could start afresh. Their theatre was well placed to recognise the changes that the contemporary Pole was undergoing and meet the requirements of post-Communist theatre-making.

Lupa’s work, characterised by ‘a novel poetics and a new field of themes,’ being ‘extremely separate and individual’ and ‘having freed itself from all existing theatrical traditions’, paved the way towards the reforms that were undertaken by his students from the ‘younger and more talented’ generation. These young directors disassociated themselves from the mission of making theatre a tribune for political change. They rejected the so-called ‘Konrad’s coat’, which became a symbol of traditional Polish national and patriotic duty to fight for independence and freedom. In theatre, this ‘Konrad’s coat’ was illustrated by politically involved adaptations of Polish classics, mainly those linked to the Romantic tradition. Freedom from Communism rescued a new generation of directors from their duties towards this kind of dramatic text. Furthermore, one of the most

---

14 Ibid., 22.
16 ‘Konrad’s coat’ comes from Antoni Słonimski’s poem *Czarna wiosna* (Black Spring). After 1918 when Poland gained its freedom after over a hundred years of oppression, the Polish poets decided that it was finally time to free poetry from its patriotic function. Their motto was: ‘New country – new poetry’.
important features of this new current in Polish theatre – one that is particularly crucial in understanding Warlikowski’s work – is the emphasis on audience and its active efforts to attract spectators back to theatre venues. These directors – as I shall argue in chapter 4 – were the first to pay attention to the existing code of communication as they decided to use this contemporary language to communicate with their potential audiences.

However, there was also another side to this encounter with Lupa as experienced by the young adepts of directing, which is related to the powerfulness of Lupa’s personality and his approach to theatre. Warlikowski, for instance, remained under the strong influence of his mentor for some years after he had completed his studies. This is evident in his adaptations of the prose of Canetti, Kleist and the lesser-known Sirera in the early years of his career. Lupa’s impact appeared to be a burden to a young director: ‘Lupa infects you. You discover a completely new world and you become ill, you can’t get over it. When I finished theatre school I didn’t want to do any plays, because I believed they were too poor, too simplistic for me. I only wanted to do adaptations of great novels.’

Thanks to his skilful networking and linguistic skills, Warlikowski could start developing his independent artistic path very quickly in Poland and abroad:

The work in Wrocław, Tel Aviv, Poznań and Hamburg were the first steps away from the masters in Kraków. These jobs were like exiles at the end of the world. It was a stage when I was challenging myself. Nobody watched these productions, every time I was a stranger, an outsider. These performances disappeared like guttering flames. Such experimentation in lesser-known theatrical cities offered more freedom to test his ideas away from the vigilant eyes of theatre critics. In the early 1990s, when repertory theatre struggled with decisions about its own purpose, Warlikowski’s foreign contacts and experience opened the door for him and also, gradually, as we shall argue in the further part of this chapter, for his idiosyncratic methods of working.

The apogeeum of these searches came in 1995 in Poznań when Warlikowski adapted the work of Bernard-Maria Koltés, whose plays he had discovered while living in France and on the journey to create his own language that would allow him to express himself fully as an artist and a man:

17 Sirera, a Spanish translator, scriptwriter and playwright became the most prominent intellectual in Valencian society in the post-Franco, democratic period.
19 In Gruszczyński (2003a), 82.
Suddenly I found a home and I could calm down, judge my potential, start respecting myself. [...] Koltés is like a meeting during which you find out who you are. It is a kind of amorous meeting, not a conflict. To work on Shakespeare is a conflict [...] where you continuously need to struggle with your interpretation and with faithfulness towards the author and yourself. I only regret that Koltés left so little behind. I miss these twenty epic texts that he never wrote. I cannot return to him, revise my opinions about myself and observe how I keep changing.20

The discovery of Koltés’ work was therefore formative and significant in terms of Warlikowski’s future development in both his professional and personal life.

Warlikowski’s production of Koltés’ Roberto Zucco at Poznań’s Teatr Nowy can be considered as an embryonic form of many of the director’s later theatre-making processes. As this production inaugurated the ongoing process of gathering together the collaborators who constitute the core of Warlikowski’s ensemble today, I will begin my intertheatrical analysis by taking it as a case study. By the time Warlikowski commenced his work on Zucco, he had been working actively in theatre for two years developing, on the one side, his links with Polish repertory theatre and, on the other hand, taking advantage of the opportunities created by the European festival circuit, which in the early 1990s was particularly keen to promote the work of young directors from post-Communist countries.

Inevitably, this experience abroad, juxtaposed with Warlikowski’s exposure to the repertory theatre system in Poland, had a considerable impact on the director’s thinking about his own theatrical language, and perhaps triggered an awareness of the creative potential of working with like-minded people. The frequency with which Warlikowski staged new performances21 in the first phase of his career was impressive in comparison to some other directors debuting at this time.22 This intensity has chiefly helped him to realise the shortcomings of working at different theatres and with random groups of people. It seems that relatively early, perhaps while working in Poznań in 1995, Warlikowski realised the potential associated with creating his own company and connected this with the possibility of developing his individual method of performance-making.

This adaptation of Koltés’s play is a key example of intertheatricality operating at many levels. Firstly, it illustrates how the resemblance between the director’s and the

---

20 In Gruszczyński (2003a), 82.
21 See Appendix.
22 For instance, during the equivalent period since his debut, Grzegorz Jarzyna staged one to two productions per season and Piotr Cieplak’s average was one show a year, with the exception of 1991, when he did three productions.
playwright’s biographies plays a role in Warlikowski’s process of self-discovery, and exemplifies his practice of working on texts that resonate with his own life experiences. Secondly, it reveals the connection between the actor Redbad Klijnstra and the character of Zucco and illustrates how the actor’s personal background was employed in the creation of a role. Furthermore, the production evinces the first signs of Warlikowski’s discontent with the limitations of the Polish repertory theatre apparatus, and thus initiates the director’s process of moving beyond the rigid borders presented by this theatrical model. It should be noted that the significance of this early production seems largely to have been overlooked in existing analyses of Warlikowski’s career, and that the key phases of his work are usually considered to have occurred much later.23

Staging Koltès’ text significantly influenced Warlikowski’s discovery of his own personal and professional vocabularies and points of reference. Koltès and Warlikowski have much in common: homosexuality, the lack of appreciation of their talent that both artists initially experienced in their native countries, a feeling of displacement within their own cultures, and a need to challenge their audiences by questioning myths and engaging with controversial issues linked to otherness and marginality. Like Koltès, Warlikowski felt the urge to question many traditional values of contemporary society. Both authors left their Catholic families and moved away from their home towns – first, to travel, and then to settle in new environments (Koltès moved from Metz to Paris, Warlikowski from Szczecin to Kraków and then further abroad). Both shared the belief that only by detaching yourself from the society of your birth can you discover your ‘true’ identity. Warlikowski has commented: ‘Koltès has shown me the way towards myself; he made me take a look at myself and define my individuality. His “otherness” and my own were very similar’.24 This connection between the director and the playwright was fuelled by Warlikowski’s profound need to define his own identity through and within his theatre work. Roberto Zucco acted as a stimulus: Warlikowski found the material that helped him to confront and scrutinise his own experience, to examine his previous professional and life choices, and thus to engage in a process of self-discovery as an artist and human being.

23 For example, Niziolek regards all productions preceding The Taming of The Shrew as ‘drafts, attempts, variants’ that are ‘sometimes interesting, fascinating, but often also half-done, or at times simply unsuccessful’. Niziolek, however, goes on to acknowledge the value of Roberto Zucco, considering it ‘a heralding of the breakthrough’ associated with the period ‘when [Warlikowski] became open about the fact that he had a bone to pick with society’. See Niziolek (2008), 9, 20 and 19 respectively.

24 Gruszczynski (2003a), 78.
Another important ‘theatre text’ determining the significance of the production is constituted by the appearance of Klijnstra, who played Zucco. The plot of Roberto Zucco follows the story of the eponymous serial killer, who is driven by unknown forces to commit apparently motiveless crimes. The narrative portrays the efforts of a lost young man struggling to define his identity, and to find a place within his family and society. This brief synopsis gives an indication of some key elements that interested Warlikowski in the play, whilst also reflecting certain elements of his own biography.

In preparing the production, Warlikowski also had a chance to overcome the usual repertory theatre obligation to select the cast from among the resident company of actors at the Teatr Nowy, and to invite a guest actor (Klijnstra). But, as Eugeniusz Korin, the artistic director of the Nowy between 1989 and 2003 reveals, it was due to conducive circumstances rather than the special efforts of Warlikowski: ‘If there is no actor in the theatre who could perform an eponymous role, it is the duty of the manager, who makes the decision to stage the play, to find such actor. Warlikowski’s request was legitimate and he didn't have to convince me of that.’ Although Klijnstra’s presence in this production was crucial to Warlikowski, as we shall observe, the predicament of bringing a young, inexperienced actor to join a long-term professional company of actors had to have some significant consequences, whether it was the result of natural ‘causes’ or not.

Significantly, Warlikowski found some parallels with his own experience in Klijnstra’s personal history. Being half-Dutch and half-Polish, Klijnstra grew up in Amsterdam and his view of theatre was formed by various socially-engaged productions that he encountered there. In Klijnstra’s eyes, the more ‘academic’ productions prevalent in Poland at the turn of the 1990s, which were filled with national symbolism and metaphorical references to the developing political situation, bore little relevance to contemporary, individual experience. For Klijnstra, theatre was a vocation that held a responsibility to deal with social issues from a personal perspective. After graduating from the Theatre Academy in 1994, he therefore considered returning to the Netherlands:

---

25 Klijnstra was a recent graduate of Warszawa’s Theatre Academy. Warlikowski saw him in one of the institution’s productions and invited him to join his cast of Roberto Zucco in Poznań.
26 Korin, in an exchange of emails with the author of this thesis. Extract from email dated 24 October 2010.
27 Klijnstra had a chance to work with a Dutch director, Alize Zadwijk whose theatrical philosophy exerted a great impact on him. Zadwijk later became an artistic director of the RO Theatre in Rotterdam, one of the three largest theatre companies in the Netherlands.
I didn’t want what I’d seen in Poland. For me, something more important was needed, some kind of necessity… Then Krzysiek appeared and I realised later that it was a meeting of one human being who had become interested in another human being. Krzysiek wasn’t trying to convince me about himself as a director, but rather about the subject, the substance of the play.\(^\text{28}\)

The ‘human’ aspect of this exchange is quite significant here as it demonstrates the type of relationships Warlikowski establishes with his collaborators. In this sense, it also foresees the nature of the communication that the ensemble tries to establish with the audience. Klijnstra’s approach to theatre complemented Warlikowski’s own. Moreover, the plot of *Zucco* resonated with Klijnstra’s own experiences. In this role, Klijnstra not only appeared to be ‘against’ a society that did not understand him, but in his position as a guest-actor, he remained ‘outside’ Teatr Nowy’s permanent ensemble. Klijnstra recalls:

> For me, this was a very difficult situation. The actors comprised a very integrated ensemble... [Although] a few of them supported the project from the very beginning, the rest of the team struggled to accept it. [...] Krzysiek had to spend a lot of time explaining his ideas and convincing the actors to engage with the production.\(^\text{29}\)

Consequently, the private relationships and individual exchanges among the actors significantly influenced the stage environment in which the artists constructed their roles. The impact and efficacy of this dynamic caused Warlikowski to realise the value of creating theatrical situations directly linked to real-life happenings and relationships, which could serve as foundations for the stage microcosm, and as material for its development. As a result, merging theatre with the private lives of the creative team became an important feature of Warlikowski’s theatre.

The presence of Koltès’ play in Teatr Nowy’s repertory was quite unusual, especially given the venue’s regular line-up of classical adaptations and commercial musicals, and its predominantly conservative, middle-class audience that characterised the city of Poznań, famous for its international trade fairs and a thriving business community. Significantly, the Teatr Nowy created close relationships with local businesses, particularly since 1989 when Loża Patronów (the Theatre Box of Patrons) was founded. It consists of influential local businessmen who have sought sponsorship on the behalf of the theatre as well as promoted its activity.

---

\(^{28}\) Author’s interview with Redbad Klijnstra, 31 March 2008, Warszawa.

\(^{29}\) Ibid.
In this context, Warlikowski’s production of Roberto Zucco, which formulates accusations against society and the family and makes them co-responsible for the crimes committed by its eponymous character, appeared ‘experimental’. Interestingly, the same label was attached to Rodolf Sirera’s The Poison of Theatre from 1993, which according to Korin, was Warlikowski’s best production at the Nowy. Korin explains why he commissioned Warlikowski: ‘At the core of true art is not an experiment, but establishing a real dialogue with an audience. As a result of this, the audience is ‘charged’ with an emotional, intellectual and aesthetic load. I invited Warlikowski, because I searched for directors who are clever, wanted to develop and offer their own vision of theatre.’

For Poniedziałek, Korin’s decision to allow Warlikowski to stage Zucco: ‘was a kind of a fig leaf to this commercial theatre’. According to him ‘Korin wanted to show that Nowy also makes some real art, but he treated it very instrumentally, he didn’t have a passion for this production’. This would partly explain why the performance was removed from the Nowy’s repertory in its second season, even though it attracted a lot of attention from a younger, mainly student audience. This is at least, the experience I recall: I was studying in Poznań at the time and this is why I asked Korin about the circumstances that surrounded the removal of the show from the repertory. The information he provided sheds some light on this matter:

It was a very difficult performance for the audience. You state that there was a cult attached to this performance, but Nowy had to come up with various promotional campaigns (for example a competition) to attract an audience to the theatre. We always had a young audience, lots of youths came to my performances. For instance Czerwone Nosy (‘Red Noses’) played 170 times to a mainly young audience.

Unfortunately, I had no way of checking this information against the box office figures and nor would it be possible to discover the age of spectators as Polish theatres do not collect such information about their audiences.

Certainly, much more ground work had to be done to attract people to the venue. However, what Korin’s statement suggests is that this type of audience, who without doubt

---

30 Korin, in an exchange of emails with the author of this thesis. Extract from an email dated 24 October 2010.
31 Author’s interview with Poniedziałek.
32 Peter Barnes’ Red Noses was written in 1978 but performed for the first time in 1985. The Observer chose Red Noses as its Best New Play in 1985 – see: http://litmed.nyu.edu/Annotation?action=view&annid=413 [accessed on 25 September 2011]. The play was known in Poland since it was published in Dialog, 1-2 (1993).
33 Korin, in an email exchange with the author of this thesis. Email dated 21 October 2010.
constituted the majority of the Nowy’s auditorium (the relationship with the city’s affluent business class is crucial here) struggled to accept this show, hence the various promotional tactics used by the theatre that Korin mentions. Although from a British perspective, it does not surprise us that a theatre has to invest in the marketing and promotion of a show, in the Poland of the mid-1990s, theatres were still learning how to employ elements of the free market economy to attract greater audiences.

Importantly, Korin’s statement points to another important aspect of Warlikowski’s theatre-making. Korin saw Zucco as a difficult performance, which struggled to please the audience or offer some kind of hope or consolation. This tendency to deal with difficult yet important themes will become – as we shall observe in chapters 3 and 4 – a main feature of Warlikowski’s theatre. His uncompromising way of forcing audiences to think, filter and challenge these subjects through themselves will make a significant impact on Warlikowski’s relationship with his audience.

There is however another crucial aspect that refers to the difficulties caused by the constraints of the repertory infrastructure. Klijnstra talks about the decision that Korin made to cancel – at short notice – six performances that had sold out two months in advance, because Jerzy Grzegorzewski (the manager of Teatr Studio where Klijnstra was employed) informed him that Klijnstra would be needed for the filming of Grzegorzewski’s show. Klijnstra believes that this situation could have been prevented if the actors’ contracts had been more legally sound and more realistic: ‘Today we have contracts that discuss such circumstances, but in those days, that wasn’t the case. Korin wanted an understudy, but Krzysiek didn’t agree to that. This fatal set of circumstances […] made Roberto Zucco disappear from the repertory.’

Warlikowski’s rejection of the need to prepare an understudy for the character of Zucco is noteworthy. This reflects how Warlikowski’s thinking about theatre differed from the rules and customs existing in Polish repertory theatre. By and large, the preparation of an understudy is a normal and welcomed procedure and although it is usually challenging for a new actor to join the production and take over a part originally played by somebody else, this happens in the interests of the whole acting team. Especially because the set rate the actors receive for each show they perform in (the amount depends on the importance

34 The production of La Bohème in which Klijnstra played was to be filmed for Polish national television.
35 In Minalto (2003), 56.
of their part) is added to their monthly salary\(^{36}\) (the repertory actors are not paid for rehearsals). From a financial point of view, the cancellation of a performance is disadvantageous to all performers involved and to some extent it also affects the theatre’s revenue from ticket sales.\(^{37}\) For Warlikowski, however,\(^{38}\) the original shape of the production presented a value that could not be compromised by replacing the actor who played Zucco. Perhaps the director’s decision was strengthened by the actual connection he had with Klijnstra and the impact of the actor on the success of this production.

The production received great acclaim not only among local critics and their national counterparts,\(^{39}\) but also among the audience at grassroots level – especially the students who ‘invaded’ the theatre and regularly waited outside the venue to meet the artists and share their views. This reaction was likely to be propelled by the essay competition that was launched by the Teatr Nowy in conjunction with the local paper *Głos Wielkopolski*,\(^{40}\) in which audience members were asked to write about their impressions and thoughts inspired by the performance. The competition, which ran in anticipation that the production might be controversial, made both the director and a ‘foreign’ actor from the capital enter the ranks of the local theatrical celebrities.

**Creating the ensemble**

Warlikowski’s early explorations of intertwining theatre-making with his personal life experiences engendered a specific type of artistic environment that attracted other artists who were similarly prepared to cross the borders of professional engagement, and to share material from their own lives in the creation of performances. These artists gradually began

---

\(^{36}\) This monthly salary is usually not much higher than the minimum national wage, although in Warszawa the actors would be paid more than in provincial theatres.

\(^{37}\) Polish repertory theatres are subsidised by local governments (with the exception of Warszawa’s Teatr Narodowy and Kraków’s Stary Teatr, which hold national status and are financed directly by the Ministry of Culture). Ticket prices are usually low in comparison to British theatres and therefore tickets sales do not contribute a great deal to the theatres’ revenue.

\(^{38}\) It is also worth pointing out that a typical director’s contract in Polish repertory theatre comprises of a one-off payment and therefore the longevity of a show in a theatre’s repertory does not affect that director’s earnings.

\(^{39}\) Locally, this included Kusztelski from *Gazeta Poznańska* and Olgirod Błażewiec from *Głos Wielkopolski*. Błażewiec announced: ‘An artistic event on a national scale’. Nationally, Pawlowski from *Gazeta Wyborcza* and J. Wakar for *Teatr*.

\(^{40}\) The competition was announced in O. Błażewiec, ‘Dlaczego oszalałeś Roberto?’, *Głos Wielkopolski*, 210, 10 September 1995, www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/19761.html [accessed 15 August 2009].
to establish a distinctive kind of organism, resembling a family unit. How has this organism come into being, and what kind of ‘theatre text’ does it represent? How does the nature of this organism influence and determine its methods of performance-making? And finally, how can Warlikowski’s experiment be located within other models of proto-family ensembles that have existed in European theatre since the 20th century?

Warlikowski’s ‘familial’ ensemble is rooted in his marriage to the scenographer, his relationship with whom – as already mentioned in the previous chapter – dates back to their student life in Kraków. Warlikowski’s and Szczęśniak’s ‘family’ was engendered by a mutual passion for theatre. Szczęśniak recalls:

At the beginning, nothing fitted. He […] came from nowhere and I’d been living in Kraków, I was already established and was older. Being together has changed us both. Finding a partner in life is a miracle that not many experience. And if it happens, you need to look after it. In such a relationship […] monogamy is not the most important thing.41

Poniedziałek, the director’s former homosexual partner of eighteen years and long-time actor in the ensemble, also refers to his first encounter with Warlikowski, pointing out the director’s openness about being homosexual and having a wife: ‘I was attracted to him as an artist, but also as a man, even though I didn’t come to terms with this for a while. I knew that he was married and I didn’t think that we could be together.’42

It may be worth mentioning in this context that so far in this thesis, the notion of homosexuality has served as a way of describing Warlikowski’s sexual identity, even though in the light of the above statements, bisexuality may seem to be a more appropriate term to do so. I would however agree with Georges Banu who opposes pinpointing the director’s sexuality:

Warlikowski finds himself in the very heart of that erosion of sexual differences, which is a source of confusion, but also of pleasure. Because the border seems leaky, its old fashioned impermeability damaged, Warlikowski moves about in a kind of sexual no-man’s land where heterosexuality co-exists with homosexuality, and the attitude to the body is rooted in so-called undifferentiated love. Which knows no biased exclusions or moral sanctioning. Warlikowski proclaims his attachment to this modern uncertainty.43

More important than defining his sexuality is the fact that Warlikowski lives his life at odds with the dominant norm. This points to the right of each individual to ‘define significant

42 Author’s interview with Jacek Poniedziałek, 26 April 2008, Warszawa.
relationships and decide who matters and counts as family’.\(^{44}\) This kind of relationship echoes the notion of the ‘family of choice’ outlined by Weeks, Donovan and Heaphy,\(^{45}\) whose research has focused on the kinds of familial intimacies that go beyond the traditional construction of a family. The authors observe that:

> Family is [...] traditionally [...] seen as the very foundation of society. It is also a deeply ambiguous and contested term in the contemporary world [...] It is surely of great significance, therefore, that the term is now in common use among many [...] self-identified, non-heterosexuals. Increasingly, it is being deployed to denote something broader than the traditional relationship based on lineage, alliance and marriage, referring instead to kin-like networks of relationships, based on friendship, and commitments ‘beyond blood’.\(^{46}\)

As a result of their close personal and artistic contact, Warlikowski’s private relationships with his wife and Poniedziałek significantly informed their professional lives, and this principle was extended in different ways to relationships with other collaborators. In other words, Warlikowski’s non-normative family became a model for his theatre company, or to be more precise, his personal relationships constituted the embryo of his future ensemble. Despite the fact that - as this and later chapters show - Warlikowski’s personal and professional lives are inseparable, the setting of his theatre company is not synonymous with living in a commune. He and his wife have consciously devoted their life to theatre (‘working in theatre is like selling your life’)\(^{47}\) and for them there seem to be no demarcation between home and professional life, which can be demonstrated for instance by their invitations to all members of the ensemble to spend Christmas day together at the Warlikowskis’ flat. Similar devotion is expressed by Poniedziałek, who declares: ‘For me Warlikowski’s theatre is a way of living, spiritual and artistic. This is a sense of my life. […] This is my life choice number one.’\(^{48}\) The others are not bound to compromise their private life by any means, although it is known that they often spend time together eating, partying, holidaying or working on other projects. However, the fact that they are free to

\(^{45}\) Weeks, Donovan and Heaphy created a research team at the South Bank London University in 1995 that examined various familial structures.
engage with other commitments or take a break from the company when they feel such a break is needed proves that their freedom is not – I will discuss this issue later on in further detail - compromised at any stage.

According to Weeks, Donovan and Heaphy, the arrangement of ‘family of choice’ that is constituted of ‘flexible, informal and varied, but strong and supportive networks of friends, lovers, [...]’, 49 can be best understood through the prism of friendship. Such friendship can provide a framework and ‘adaptable structures’ both for private life and for professional life: ‘The central aspect of these friendship networks, Pahl and Spencer maintain, is that they are voluntary, they are developed over time, not given and that they help to strengthen our individuality. They have to be worked at and they make us more reflexive about who we are and what we are doing.’ 50

This specific type of friendship enables Warlikowski to dedicate himself completely to his work and this appears to be especially true when the ensemble rehearses for a new performance, as one of the testimonies reveals:

Warlikowski comes to the rehearsals at 11am and leaves at 11pm. During the break, he sleeps on a sofa. He doesn’t leave theatre. The outside world doesn’t exist for him. [...] 51

Krzysztof Warlikowski: “I live more and more in a fictitious world. During rehearsals normal life seems too difficult. I wouldn’t be able to cross the street on my own. Perhaps this is an oversensitive person’s escape from life? I don’t have children who would root me in the every day life.” 51

In this detachment from life, Warlikowski’s wife plays a very important role as an organiser and facilitator of his existence. Piotr Gruszczyński observes: ‘Małgosia 52 [Szczęśniak] keeps in her head the plans for their activities for five years ahead. […] [She] has created a heaven for Krzysiek.’ 53 Importantly, Gruszczyński emphasises their enormous loyalty towards each other and quotes Warlikowski as crediting Szczęśniak as the most influential person in his life.

---

50 Ibid., 21.
52 Małgosia is a deminiutive form of Małgorzata.
As Weeks and his fellow researchers suggest, one of the characteristics of families of choice is ‘the commitment to striving for an equal relationship’. The above example depicting Szczęśniak as occupying a traditional and self-eliding role challenges such view. Poniedziałek’s account also questions the egalitarian set-up of Warlikowski’s personal relationships as he describes the emotions and jealousy that were linked to his relationship with Warlikowski and the constant presence of Szczęśniak:

I never had him [Warlikowski] to myself. I didn’t feel that we had an equal chance in this relationship. She had probably cried as well that she had to share him with me. In heated moments, he used to say sometimes that he would always be independent and nobody would ever own him. […] Eventually, I gave up and accepted [my position in this relationship] as a necessity. With time I couldn’t even imagine a different option. I was happy that way. She is exceptional and wise.

It seems that both Poniedziałek and Szczęśniak put their needs second to those of Warlikowski himself and although ‘the potential to cause inequality’ is evident amongst the majority of families of choice researched by Weeks et al., this does raise a question about whether such family hierarchy is being replicated in the professional context and how it affects the work of the ensemble.

Szczęśniak sees jealousy, favouritism and ego struggles as inevitable in a creative environment:

When you make theatre or auteur art, which talks about your self and touches on intimate matters and taboo subjects, you need to work with somebody who understands you. There is no other option. When the shared work starts, everyone begins from the same place. Only later does one’s ego appear and pose such delicate questions as: ‘Why is he more important?’ ‘Why is he more showcased?’ The rivalry starts. When people are young, all is fine, but at some stage ego comes to light more and more and such creative collectives often break up. The model of collaboration based on friendships and understanding is not always the most sustainable. Everything has its cost, especially being an artist. For now, we are good together. […] The actors […] are absolutely free. That’s how it should be, as it is in love. A person is connected to another person if this other person feels free. I believe that everyone should have the freedom of artistic choice.

Thus, despite being based on choice, this family model is not immune from difficulties, particularly concerning power and gender relationships. Weeks and his fellow scholars

54 Ibid., 109.
55 In Poniedziałek (2010), 90.
pointed out that in non-heterosexual relationships it is easier for both women and men to re-evaluate who they are and negotiate equality and freedom within their partnership or friendship. This is due, the researchers claim, to the lack of an apriori framework and the assumption that everything is negotiable and open to discussion: ‘this emphasis on self-invention and agency is very powerful in the non-heterosexual world.’ However, as the examples show, actually living according to these ideals is a more complicated matter. If, as the researchers note, gender is considered as a social construction, then it is likely that these new types of relationships will be ‘reproduced in gendered terms’, despite the reluctance of the families concerned to be seen in this way. This is significant in the light of Szczęśniak’s apparently subservient role. However, in-depth analysis of these sensitive issues would require further research into personal relationships which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Certainly, a major advantage of families of choice is their flexibility as can be seen in Warlikowski’s case where the members of the ensemble are free to come and go. As I will observe in some examples in this and the following chapter, such a dynamic does not undermine the existing bonds between the members of the ensemble, which are often long-lasting and prove the power of these kinds of relationships. Interestingly, even when personal relationships between members of the ensemble break up, the friendship and the profound commitment to the theatre-making continue to be a crucial part of their life. This is exemplified by Poniedziałek who after splitting up from Warlikowski remains a key member of the ensemble and continues to spend holidays together with Warlikowski and the other members of their family of choice. Similarly, the former couple, Magdalena Cielecka and Andrzej Chyra, continue to be a part of the ensemble’s work and social life after their separation a few years ago. Paradoxically, despite the flexible nature of the ensemble, there seems to be some sense of permanence that characterise this family-like setting. Due to a close intersection between private and professional lives of the ensemble members, breaking from one of this spheres would mean removing a very important part of the other.

Warlikowski’s role within this proto-family ensemble does not bear much resemblance to the status of other directors who created a similar type of ensemble. For

---

58 Weeks, et al. (2001), 111
59 Ibid., 114
instance, the ensembles created by Jaques Copeau or Peter Brook, to reach for examples from French theatre, with which Warlikowski is closely linked, were subjected to much more structure and order than is the case with the members of the Nowy Teatr. There is no intensive body or voice training, or setting tasks for actors, as there was in both the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier and at the Bouffes du Nord. Also, while Copeau had an ambition to develop actor training (his acting school) and Brook engaged in performance research (Centre for International Theatre Research), and they both wrote about theatre extensively, such aspirations are alien to Warlikowski, who follows more natural and less structured or theorised rhythms of development within his ensemble. However, what links these three directors is their motivation for establishing their own ensembles which was rooted in their growing distance from the established mainstream theatres of France, England and Poland respectively. They shared a feeling of dissatisfaction with existing theatres, which led them to seek to restore the links between theatre and society. For all of them, theatre is not a place of mere entertainment and they tend to keep themselves away from commercial pressures that would affect their theatre-making processes.

How did this private ‘family of choice’ become a model for Warlikowski’s theatre company? How does he gather his collaborators and what is the trajectory of the development of his ensemble? I will now look at this process of gathering like-minded artists and at how the division between their private and professional lives becomes blurred. From this perspective – following the aforementioned phase of work on Roberto Zucco, which initiated Warlikowski’s trajectory towards his own ensemble – three consecutive stages can be indicated as fundamental, each of which I will examine here: Warlikowski’s initial phase of work in Warszawa in the 1990s; his extended collaboration with TR Warszawa from 1999 to 2007, and his process of establishing the Nowy Teatr, from 2008 to the present day.

The first key period was based at the capital’s theatres, Dramatyczny and Studio, where Warlikowski worked in 1997 and 1998 respectively. For a Polish repertory theatre director, access to the theatrical life of Warszawa was in those days considered a confirmation of one’s status of being held in high regard. Although in the 1990s, many

---

60 See Appendix.
smaller, provincial centres started to gain prominence, Warlikowski’s generation was still affected by the syndrome of centralisation. Significantly, Warlikowski’s appearance in Warszawa coincided with the debut of Jarzyna. To some, as Drewniak testifies, 1997 constitutes a caesura that divides ‘old’ and ‘new’ theatre in Poland. For Drewniak the notion of ‘new theatre’ refers to a movement that did not appear suddenly, but had been gradually growing to signify an evident change characterised by ‘the productions prepared by young directors (between twenty something and forty years old), aimed at and using a code of communication typical to a younger audience – which, as we shall observe in chapter 4 will have specific consequences for Warlikowski’s theatre – and presented in theatres run by managers of the same generation.

Fulfilling all these criteria, Warlikowski, although young, entered the capital’s theatre with some noteworthy experience gained in Poland and abroad. This experience had started to allow him to define the type of theatre he wanted to make. This is of importance, especially due to the specificity of theatrical life in Warszawa, which is characterised as it is by strong competition from the well-paid TV and film industries. Inevitably, this fact has determined the ethics and the quality of work existing in some of the capital’s venues. However, following the breakthrough of 1989, Polish repertory theatre was expected to undergo some major changes in order to adjust to a new reality: “The hot and humid free market of change that was supposed to heal the rifts in Polish social and economic life, seemed to bypass the liveliest aspects of the theatre.” Discussing this phase of transition in Polish theatre between 1989 and 2004, Ratajczakowa notices: ‘Even though there were attempts to introduce something new and relevant to the altered situation, theatre did not respond nearly enough to the social transformation just as society itself would not face up to it.’

This was particularly well-illustrated in the institutional infrastructure that Warlikowski faced on his arrival in Warszawa. The conditions within these repertory

---

61 Nowadays, the theatres in Opole, Wałbrzych or Bydgoszcz create thriving, ambitious theatre of the highest quality that could often put to shame the productions prepared in some of Warszawa’s or Kraków’s theatres.
62 Jarzyna debuted in 1997 with a production of Bzik tropikalny at the Teatr Rozmaitości.
64 Ratajczakowa (2005), 19.
65 Ibid., 26.
venues – with their rigorously limited and defined hours of rehearsal,\textsuperscript{66} and their permanently employed actors juggling theatre work with the better-paid television and film opportunities available in the capital city – emerged as obstacles to Warlikowski’s experiments, which now started to be based on long meetings that extended far beyond scheduled rehearsal times and required an unusual level of involvement from his actors. The support given to the then-unknown director by actors who instinctively trusted his methods was particularly valuable at this stage. This is clearly demonstrated by Warlikowski’s encounter with Danuta Stenka, who held a well-established position in the permanent troupe at the Teatr Dramatyczny.\textsuperscript{67} Stenka was able to use her position to convince her fellow actors of the merits of the director’s work, thus helping to create a ‘safety net’ within which Warlikowski could pursue his unfamiliar working processes. She recalls the rehearsals for \textit{Electra}:

> It was an amazing way of working, long conversations at night, watching some films together, and altering the [play]-texts. Before I’d worked on roles in the typical way – receiving the text and working alone on the part. This time it was like a beautiful adventure, a long expedition. It wasn’t just one job among others, rehearsing between various other duties – rather, I remember it as one whole period in my life, because all these long preparations somehow filled my life.\textsuperscript{68}

Stenka’s willingness to commit to a new approach and her vital personal interventions further highlight a crucial aspect of the continued development of Warlikowski’s theatre within the rigid circumstances imposed by the repertory system: his dependence on like-minded artists with whom he has been able to co-develop creatively. Although Stenka would not become a member of Warlikowski’s official ensemble, she would over the years collaborate with him on various projects.

The nature of this kind of relationship is further exemplified by Warlikowski’s collaboration with the established actor Stanisława Celinśka\textsuperscript{69} at the Teatr Studio. Although their first encounter in person took place during their work on Koltés’ \textit{Zachodnie wybrzeże}

\textsuperscript{66} Rehearsals usually run from 10am to 2pm and from 6pm to 10pm daily, apart from Mondays, which are traditionally days off for Polish repertory theatre actors.

\textsuperscript{67} Stenka played the eponymous character in \textit{Electra} and then Katherina in \textit{The Taming of the Shrew}.

\textsuperscript{68} Author’s interview with Danuta Stenka, 9 April 2009, Warszawa.

\textsuperscript{69} Stanisława Celinśka (born in 1947) is a well-known Polish actor and a representative of the older generation of actors whose career began under Communism. One of her most memorable roles was as Nina in Andrzej Wajda’s film \textit{Landscape after Battle} (1970).
Celińska had already had some indirect impact on Warlikowski’s earlier productions through her fellow actor from the Studio, Klijnstra who had sought her advice on whether to take part in Roberto Zucco:

I remember that during one of the performances when we were waiting to go on stage, I told Staszka that I’d received this offer of playing in an interesting play directed by some young and unknown director from Kraków, but I would have to go to Poznań to do it. Staszka without knowing Krzysiek [...] intuitively advised me to go and experience this adventure. ‘You know, the young need to be helped’ – she told me. Two years later, Celińska experienced similar doubts and wondered whether she was ready to work with Warlikowski. In 2003 she wrote about her first impressions of Warlikowski:

Five years ago at the Teatr Studio. 30 April. […] Yesterday was my fiftieth birthday. Koltés’ Quay West. […] I remember the moment when a young, dark-haired man enters the rehearsal room, he wears an earring. Oh – I think – the director! We start reading. When I read, he is laughing, almost giggling. Supposedly, great Konrad Swinarski laughed like that when rehearsing. I dreamt about working with him. […] I dreamt about total sacrifice. But that was then. Now, I was thinking about making money, of course without doing slipshod work. But my longings for real theatre had died.

The initial resistance with which she approached her rehearsals with Warlikowski was hard to overcome, but as she started to get to know Warlikowski and familiarised herself with the text of Quay West, her reluctance gradually started to give way to Celińska’s former dreams of realising herself in theatre:

I had managed to become fascinated by this new director who is so sensitive to actors. […] He […] is a vampire. But which actor doesn’t dream to meet such a vampire who will take out and expose their soul not only in front of audience, but also in front of themselves. But I didn’t want that when I was walking to the first rehearsal after a holiday. I was providing for my family and I thought I cannot afford to make such an idealistic theatre. […] I had to make money. My God! It is as if somebody would say: I cannot afford to dream, I have no time for my soul.

Importantly, Celińska suggests that through their encounter, ‘the layer of disbelief in the theatre that I had built up over the years began to break’.

---

70 Celińska had been employed at Teatr Studio since 1995, when Warlikowski joined the Studio’s staff as a director in 1997.
71 ‘Staszka’ is a diminutive form of Stanisława.
72 In Minalto (2003), 51.
73 In Wilniewczyc (2003a), 15-16.
74 Ibid., 16.
75 Ibid., 16.
mature and experienced actor to regain her ‘belief’ in the profession, and to invest so extensively in her collaboration with a young, barely-known director still learning his craft? One factor is that both artists shared the conviction that theatre filtered through real-life experiences holds a potential therapeutic value for both creators and spectators. This is based on two assumptions: firstly, that the complex processes to which the actors subject themselves during rehearsals – and which often involve confronting personal traumas and issues that they would normally avoid facing – can result in the overcoming of their suffering; secondly, that this in turn influences the audience, who can sense the extent of the creators’ personal involvement and are consequently encouraged to engage with their own traumas and limitations. The collaboration with Celińska – a talented actor widely respected among theatre audiences – bolstered Warlikowski’s confidence and accelerated the pursuit of his investigations. Celińska’s influence on Warlikowski’s directorial decisions have been significant and she has consistently helped and supported several actors who have struggled with Warlikowski’s acting style and working methods. She has since become another crucial member of the ‘familial’ organism.

Over time, such experiences have led Warlikowski to consider it essential that the journey of creating a performance is shared by a collective of people who trust and know each other well, and who share similar life experiences and convictions about theatre. This vital process of finding like-minded artists helped to encourage and hasten Warlikowski’s artistic growth; however, the nature of their dispersed employment between various repertory theatres formed a significant obstacle to their ongoing collaboration. Jarzyna’s invitation to Warlikowski to collaborate with TR Warszawa brought the possibility of gathering several such individuals together, and thus constituted the second key phase in the development of Warlikowski’s ensemble. Warlikowski would continue to work at TR Warszawa from Hamlet in 1999 to Angels in America in 2007. Jarzyna and Warlikowski already knew each other well from Kraków, where they had studied under Lupa, and both

---

76 For example, she suggested that Hamlet (Poniedziałek) be naked when he meets his mother Gertrude (played by Celińska herself) in Warlikowski’s adaptation of Hamlet in 1999, and persuaded the director to stage Sarah Kane’s Cleansed.

77 For example, she played a key role in helping Bonaszewski – a member of Poland’s National Theatre ensemble who played Tinker in Cleansed – to adapt to Warlikowski’s practice, and addressed the actor’s concerns about this controversial production.

78 Jarzyna, then a thirty year-old graduate from the Kraków theatre school, became in 1997 the youngest artistic director in Polish theatre.

79 Warlikowski was employed at TR Warszawa between 2004 and 2007. Between 1999 and 2004, he was commissioned to work on individual productions.
shared a belief that theatre should be engaged in commenting on contemporary society, whilst simultaneously nourishing new ideas and reinterpreting the classical canon.

Thanks to this artistic fusion, Warlikowski’s key collaborators, such as Poniedziałek, Celińska and Klijnstra were able to secure permanent employment at TR. Soon, others such as Andrzej Chyra, Magdalena Cielecka and Maja Ostaszewska – the latter two already employed at TR by Jarzyna – became crucial additions to Warlikowski’s informal ‘company’. Inevitably this process required considerable effort, which was rewarded, as Klijnstra explains: ‘[Warlikowski] managed to gain an increasingly larger group of [actors] without losing anyone in negotiations. Thus, he devoted a lot of energy in this initial period in order to get the people he believed in. […] Being a good actor isn’t everything. The most important thing is whether you’re moving in the same direction.’

Although, as we observed, the majority of actors share Warlikowski’s Polish background, as with Klijnstra, the case of Renate Jett – an Austrian actor whom Warlikowski met during his production of *The Tempest* in Stuttgart (1999) and invited to Poland to work on *Cleansed* – is an exception, suggesting that similar orientations and artistic beliefs are also paramount in Warlikowski’s considerations. Jett understood immediately during their first encounter that ‘Krzysztof goes very far with you as a director; he doesn’t send you, he goes with you – and this is quite unusual.’ As will become evident in the later parts of this thesis, this ‘place’ to which, as Jett puts it, Warlikowski ‘travels’ with the actors, is a place that pushes them to their limits and takes them out of their comfort zone. The feeling of connection that bound her to Warlikowski as well as the fact that ‘he helps actors and spectators to touch their own truth’ reminded Jett of her close collaboration with another director, George Tabori, and despite Warlikowski having been a relatively unknown director, she decided to accept his invitation to Warszawa. Jett had a minimal knowledge of Poland and the Polish language: ‘It was difficult, but these difficulties made it even more interesting. I felt that there wasn’t much space for me in German theatre. What was happening in Poland was much more interesting to me’. Additionally, this experience was

---

80 Author’s interview with Klijnstra.
81 Author’s interview with Renate Jett, 10 August 2008, Edinburgh.
83 Jett was Tabori’s assistant and actor between 1987 and 1991. Tabori regarded theatre as a laboratory, in which one could analyse his own – Jewish in Tabori’s case – biography.
84 It was also crucial to Jett that it was a co-production of three theatres in three different cities.
enforced by the prospect of working with ‘very strong and interesting actors’ and the rare method of working based on ‘continuous talking to understand more; to grow and to gain awareness through this talking’.  

Warlikowski does not assign the actors tasks related to his prior vision of the performance. As Jett implies, the entire microcosm that is engendered in rehearsals appears as part of a continuous debate. The director also does not impose his own views on the creators; he encourages them to search for answers themselves. He follows this same imperative alongside the actors, sharing and discussing issues that arise for him during the process; this is why his rehearsal period is often enormously long for repertory theatre. Warlikowski frequently meets and works with his actors individually, devoting himself to the development of their particular characters. At times he also ‘inhabits’ the characters himself, embodying them and trying out their particular ‘language’. Stenka describes Warlikowski as ‘a hybrid of director and actor. When he performs something, it always comes deeply from within himself’. Gruszczyński talks about the director ‘immersing himself totally in rehearsals. The rehearsals absorb him to such an extent that there is probably nothing that could take him out of this world’. Warlikowski’s dedication and a shared ethic of exploration most often elicit a reciprocal reaction from his co-creators, who remain open to the unpredictable nature of the rehearsal and performance processes.

This distinctive reciprocity and connection between the artists gathered around TR caused Warlikowski to withdraw from his usual directing commitments abroad and to focus on collaborating with his ‘informal’ ensemble, as I discussed in chapter 1. However, a gradual conflict with Jarzyna resulted in a restricted presence for Warlikowski on the Polish stage; his productions were rarely performed at TR Warszawa, and effectively became a festival commodity. This conflict with Jarzyna doubtless contributed to Warlikowski’s decision to create the first auteur theatre in post-war Poland: the Nowy Teatr.

---

85 Author’s interview with Jett.
86 Work on (A)pollonia lasted from August 2008 to May 2009.
87 Author’s interview with Stenka.
88 Author’s interview with Piotr Gruszczyński, 9 April 2009, Warszawa.
89 Various motives for this conflict have been suggested in the press, and Warlikowski’s accusations that his generation of directors ‘compromise themselves by the fact that with age they start to become interested only in form’, and that ‘they simply have nothing left to say’ encouraged considerable speculation (I. Nyc, ‘Pojedynek potworów’, Wprost, no. 9 (2007), 108-109; also available at: www.e-teatr.pl/en/artykuly/35687.html [accessed 17 August 2008]). Evaluating the dispute with Jarzyna is beyond the scope of this article.
The Nowy Teatr initiative forms the third stage in Warlikowski’s process of ensemble-creation, as it allowed his closest collaborators to be gathered together ‘under one roof’. At the time of writing, Warlikowski’s ensemble is comprised of twelve permanent actors and seven ‘collaborators’. It is perhaps premature to comment extensively on the characteristics of this ensemble, since the particular dynamics of this latest configuration of co-creators are still in negotiation and development as the theatre becomes established. However, it is worthy of note that two of the longest-serving members of Warlikowski’s company, Celińska and Klijnstra, left the core ensemble in 2008 and although for Celińska this departure was only temporary, Klijnstra’s contact with the ensemble is limited to his appearances in Krum and Cleansed.

In one of her interviews, Celińska hinted at some of the motivations behind her decision: ‘one needs to find an inner strength to take radical turns. I’m getting on in years, and I’m aware that I simply don’t manage to understand many things. That’s why I’ve moved away from Warlikowski’. This commentary was undermined by Celińska’s return to the ensemble and her participation in Koniec (The End) in 2010 and Opowieści afrykańskie według Szekspira (African Tales based on Shakespeare) in 2011. The actor elaborated on her remarks, officially announcing her return to the ensemble during the post-show discussion following a performance of Cleansed in Gdańsk: ‘At some stage, I went away from this theatre, now I’m back. Krzysztof said that for him I’d never left. This is true. [...] Now I look at everything from a distance.’

This need to separate herself from the ensemble and find the right perspective has appeared before in conversations and interviews with the actor. In the light of the intensity of such work that draws on one’s personal experience, this shifting between

---

90 That is May 2012.
91 These are: Stanisława Celińska, Magdalena Cielecka, Ewa Dałkowska, Maja Ostaszewska, Magdalena Popławska, Andrzej Chyra, Wojciech Kalarus, Marek Kalita, Zygmunt Malanowicz, Piotr Polak, Jacek Poniedziałek, Maciej Stuhr.
92 These are: Małgorzata Hajewska-Krzysztofik, Renate Jett, Monika Niemczyk, Anna Radwan-Gancarczyk, Danuta Stenka, Adam Nawojczyk, Tomasz Tyndyk.
93 Klijnstra left the ensemble in September 2008. The moment of Celińska’s departure was not specified, although it is believed to have been around the same time.
94 Ibid.
95 See Appendix.
96 The show was presented on 27 June 2010 during the Festival Wybrzeże Sztuki.
97 Celińska in the post-show discussion - www.youtube.com – please see: www.youtube.com/watch?v=v*I-PZpSmak and www.youtube.com/watch?v=1BORfGMHkX88feature=rekated
staying and going seems inevitable. Especially, if as in the case of Celińska, this work appeared as such a formative experience in her acting career. There is a natural rhythm in these fluctuations within the ensemble. Recently, two main actors, Magdalena Cielecka and Andrzej Chyra, took a break and decided against performing in the new production, *Opowieści afrykańskie*. Chyra commented on this decision: ‘I think that we had a realisation of reaching some kind of a wall, a crisis […]. There is no simple prescription for this. One needs to go through this stage until something new will open.’

This seems to be recognised as a pattern in other companies, such as Simon McBurney’s Complicite: ‘The company has grown into ‘a constantly shifting community, like a tribe of people who go away and come back and go away and come back again.’ McBurney talks about food and the meals that the members of the ensemble share and celebrate together that make them connect to each other, but he acknowledges that departures are inevitable.

Another example of a theatre group, which illustrates the fluctuations within an ensemble, is Ariane Mnouchkine’s Théâtre du Soleil. As Judith G. Miller states in the monograph on the director’s work:

> Much has been made of the noisy departures of key performers of the Theatre [...]. Every several years, actors who have functioned as master actors or locomotives [...] leave the company. [...] [Mnouchkine] has been living her own utopian dream since 1964. It would seem that either one enters this dream or leaves it. What is unquestionable is that she is the person who holds the dream together: The collective grows out of her will and is reinforced by the continuing presence of her closest collaborators. She thus feels that she must run a tough and tight ship.

Contrasting with Mnouchkine’s idea about control and ‘ardent directorial style’, Warlikowski’s ensemble is built on democratic order and he allows some space for decisions to resign from his work, as he sees them as a natural consequence of working within his ‘family of choice’ organism for a given period of time.

Unlike Celińska, Klijnstra’s motives for leaving seem to be mainly conditioned by his desire for a more radical approach. His decision lies in the differing perspectives within

102 As quoted in Miller (2007), 56.
the company of what constitutes an ‘ensemble’ and of the proposed structure of this new theatre.\textsuperscript{103} To Klijnstra, who always held a critical view of the repertory system in Poland and who had previously set up his own company, the opportunity to establish a new institution should be synonymous with the radicalism of the approach to creation.\textsuperscript{104} Klijnstra imagined an entirely new organisational structure and considers that there is a need for far-reaching changes in repertory theatre, with actors’ jobs not only limited to performing and a greater focus on the collective, at the expense of foregrounding individuals. Klijnstra’s evident creative potential as a director perhaps also predestined him to oversee his own artistic projects, and Warlikowski seems to have detected this in Klijnstra’s earlier, occasional ‘withdrawals’ from acting. Despite their artistic divergence and the difficulties inherent to Klijnstra’s transition away from the group, Warlikowski’s openness to this changing situation and his efforts to accommodate his colleague’s development have been notable.\textsuperscript{105} For his part, regardless of remaining ‘emotionally connected to Krzysiek’, Klijnstra feels the need to take charge of his time and commitments, noting that: ‘It is likely that my departure [from this theatre] was connected with the fact that I didn’t feel my potential could be fulfilled there’.\textsuperscript{106}

Significantly, both Klijnstra and Celińska, regarded as key members of Warlikowski’s core group, decided – albeit for different reasons – to leave prestigious, sought-after positions in what are considered to be among the most promising of European theatres. However, as theatre history demonstrates, well-established permanent ensembles are few and far between. Warlikowski’s gradual move away from the rigid repertory system and establishment of an alternative mode of organisation seem intrinsically bound to multiple transitions and evolutions within the company, particularly since it is largely dependent on the development and personal fulfilment of its individual members. The ensemble’s ‘family of choice’ setting implies an extraordinarily committed and ‘organic’ mode of existence, which extends to the circumstances of entries and

\textsuperscript{103} Author’s interview with Klijnstra, 9 April 2009, Warszawa.

\textsuperscript{104} In 2006 Klijnstra founded the company Grupa Twórcza Supermarket (Creative Group Supermarket).

\textsuperscript{105} For example, having begun rehearsals for \textit{Angels in America} (2007), with Klijnstra performing the major role of Prior, Warlikowski supported Klijnstra in taking up a directing position elsewhere, which was offered during the preparation of the production; he suggested that Klijnstra take on the smaller role of Belize in order to be able to manage both projects. However, it proved difficult to share time between rehearsals in Warszawa and Wrocław, and finally Klijnstra withdrew from \textit{Angels in America}.

\textsuperscript{106} Author’s interview with Klijnstra (2009).
departures, and which emphasises the full participation and development of all members within the processes of performance-making. Despite Klijnstra’s departure, it is certain that Warlikowski has managed to retain the core group of his long-term collaborators intact, either as full-time members or associates at the Nowy Teatr.

**Organic nature of the ensemble**

One of the main features that determines the success of Warlikowski’s ensemble is the director's approach towards his collaborators. The trust and confidence with which Warlikowski approaches his actors, as well as his humane perspective when judging actors’ personal circumstances, are quite significant. Such understanding, which is devoid of patronising overtones or a push for supremacy, results in a mutual sense of commitment. The ensemble is built on a real exchange of involvement and develops into an organic structure within which each element (i.e. each collaborator) is integrated and irreplaceable. Again, this is well-illustrated by Klijnstra who, following long negotiations between him, Warlikowski and the famous Polish film director Jerzy Skolimowski,¹⁰⁷ in whose film the actor was going to play a main character, decided to join Krum's New York tour at the cost of losing a part in Skolimowski’s film:

> Krzysztof didn’t want to stop me from taking a part in the film. I knew however, how important this tour was to Krzysiek. The film producer did not want to stop shooting for my break and Skolimowski was also phoning Krzysiek to ask him to let me go. Krzysiek was ready to do understudy, but I’ve finally understood that this wasn’t right and that it wasn’t possible to simply replace one part with another within these performances. That this is a kind of a ‘biomass’ and every operation is dangerous. So, I decided to leave this part and go to New York.¹⁰⁸

Moreover, there is another significant aspect of Klijnstra’s recollection – the involvement of other actors who kept talking to the actor trying to convince him that the show without him would have a different quality. As Klijnstra states: ‘everyone felt that they had something to say about whether I can make such a decision. And such reactions show what

---

¹⁰⁷ Jerzy Skolimowski (b. 1938) is a film director, scriptwriter and actor. He is also a poet and painter. He has lived and worked abroad since 1967. Klijnstra was to take part in Cztery Noce z Anną ['Four Nights with Anna'].

¹⁰⁸ Author’s interview with Klijnstra (2008).
a different kind of issue it is. This looks like a performance but it is something more than that. This is built from all these talks and conversations, all this knowledge we have of each other.\footnote{Ibid.}

This relationship between actor and director is distinctive and without doubt untypical of the Polish theatrical establishment, in which the actor is usually regarded as a ‘tool’ or ‘person to hire for various tasks’. Warlikowski’s approach is not driven by schedules, but rather celebrates the ensemble’s own pace and rhythm. It is however also crucial to notice that Warlikowski and his ensemble are the beneficiaries of governmental funding, which supports and protects their method of working. Therefore, despite the fact that the Nowy Teatr has no permanent building, the permanent contracts of the creative team and unlimited rehearsal time are a luxury unusual in any Western ensemble. This kind of approach to making theatre and criticism of Western practices are common within Polish mainstream theatre. Lupa, for instance, writes in his diary entry from 1998: ‘The theatre-factory – known in the West as ‘the theatre of season-ticket holders’ – that plans the rehearsals and premiere with the exactness to one day must at some stage lead to a routine and artistic deadness’.\footnote{K. Lupa, \textit{Utopia 2. Penetracje} (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2003b), 288.} Lupa believes that ‘theatre is creative and it will manage to win from those dealing with finances the necessary margin of un-predictableness…’\footnote{Ibid, 288.} This idealistic attitude of artists towards financial institutions is rooted in the legacy of Communism. Filipowicz reminds us that: ‘the system of state-subsidised theatre was established in the late 1940s as a result of the Communists’ cultural agenda.’\footnote{H. Filipowicz, ‘Demythologizing Polish Theatre’ \textit{The Drama Review}, 39, 1 (T. 145), (Winter 1995), 122-128 (p. 125).} The relative level of security offered to theatre-makers associated with Poland’s repertory theatres has existed ever since.

The relationships that exist within Warlikowski’s ensemble, as Klijnstra’s example proves above, go beyond what is understood as traditional in theatre troupes. Their closeness and the strong element of privacy that is involved in the process of theatre-making constitute something that could be called an ‘organic ensemble’. Intuition plays an essential role in Warlikowski’s oeuvre but this is also closely related to sense of safety, which, the director believes, is a fundamental condition for successful rehearsals.
Warlikowski’s process to performance is long, unpredictable and almost unstructured. His rehearsals can be associated with collective research on the unknown – nobody knows what the final performance brings and all the members of the ensemble explore the subject that emerges from the play. The research involves taking various directions, changing the focus, perpetual questioning and undermining what has been established. It is a painful and excruciating process during which people make mistakes, fail and lose confidence and therefore in order to be able to go through it without breakdowns, the members of the ensemble need to trust each other and believe that they are able to achieve the final goal, which is a performance that will manage to communicate with an audience.

The ensemble consists of ‘like-minded’ people but this affinity is not based on the grounds of religion, faith or outlooks. What makes them a troupe is their similar view of theatre as a place of an aspiritual quest for creation and searching for truth. Warlikowski’s ensemble is not homogeneous. From a generational point of view, the key members represent two main age groups – those born in the 1960s (e.g. Chyra, Poniedziałek) or early 1970s (e.g. Ostaszewska, Cielecka), but there are also representatives of the older generations (Celińska, Dalkowska, Malanowicz). Heterogeneity applies to the actors’ background varying in religion (Ostaszewska is a Buddhist, Celińska a declared and practising Catholic, Chyra reads Osho), nationality (Klijnstra is half-Dutch; Jett comes from Austria; and other actors are invited for particular parts, such as the German artist Thomas Schweiberger in Cleansed or Orna Porat from Israel).

Despite the certain unquestionable advantages of creating a performance in such a close-knit environment, this type of collaboration also has certain drawbacks. Not all of the actors are prepared to undertake the kind of inner journey required in this theatre, which emerges from a long and difficult process. Such an intimate method of working requires a similar artistic orientation, mutual trust, and a willingness to accept the inevitable mistakes that are integral to the process of investigation. The case of Janusz Gajos, a well-known actor who was invited from the Polish National Theatre\textsuperscript{113} to play the part of Prospero in Warlikowski’s The Tempest in 2003, clearly demonstrates the significance of these issues. One of the main problems with this collaboration was the lack of a shared understanding of theatre and of acting. For Gajos, acting is a professional craft, and he describes working

\textsuperscript{113} Warlikowski struggled to cast Prospero in The Tempest as Adam Ferency (with whom he had already worked on The Taming of the Shrew was in rehearsals with Krystian Lupa at the time.)
on a role as ‘banal thing: [you] read, understand and let it process’. He adds: ‘a role needs to be constructed formally from beginning to end. [...] Spontaneity is desirable during rehearsals; you need to draw from yourself – from your imagination, your temperament – as much as you can. But once you’ve stoked the fire, you need to have it under control. You need to make use of yourself, but not to play yourself’.

In view of our previous discussions, these statements highlight certain differences in Warlikowski’s and Gajos’ conceptions of craft and approaches to character, and perhaps shed some light on the latter’s decision to withdraw from The Tempest three weeks before the premiere, following a long series of rehearsals. Warlikowski delivers a blunt assessment of this situation:

I felt really tied up by this work. It was working less and less, and there was no spontaneity. When Gajos left [...] the catastrophe [of his departure] turned out to be [...] a release of energy. Adam [Ferency] joined and suddenly this whole network of thoughts and associations began to function; everything that had been withheld, restricted, came bursting out.

Gajos likely felt like an outsider within a very familiar ensemble of actors, who knew each other well and already had extensive experience of Warlikowski’s working methods. Klijnstra provides a clear interpretation of the drawbacks of this situation:

...for the majority of the rehearsal process we were just talking. None of the scenes were set in terms of directing. [...] Gajos is so shy that he needs to know exactly where he’s supposed to sit and when to get up. Once he knows all that, then he’s able to activate his inner life. Whereas we all knew that things would turn out fine.

This difficult situation holds a clue to the integrative, holistic nature of Warlikowski’s work, which fundamentally comes into contrast with the more detached and ‘professional’ approach of the seasoned repertory actor Gajos. Warlikowski’s theatre-making has become an ongoing, organic process determined by the personal and shared experiences of its co-creators; it develops over years, as do the methods and fruits of the ensemble’s work.

This attempt at an intertheatrical reading of Warlikowski’s theatre-making has aimed to illustrate the complexity of the processes that precondition and surround the creation of each of this director’s performances. I have sought to emphasise that this theatre aims to

---

115 In Gruszczyński (2007), 90.
be a truly collaborative venture, and to highlight the roles of the individual artists for whom performance-making has become much more than a profession or vocation but a crucial part of their lives. Their idiosyncratic combination of artistic and personal engagement – which harmonises with and reflects the creators’ own life experiences – imbues this theatre with a vital energy, which has come to characterise their work. The actors’ self-exposure on the stage aims to establish a specific type of communication with the spectators. The fleeting nature of the processes described here, which intertwine theatre and personal history, renders this intertheatrical analysis at best provisional – especially as the Nowy Teatr establishes itself as an institution and continues its investigations and development.
Chapter 3

Actors as co-creators or shared creative practice

Following on from my discussion regarding the intertheatrical texts of Krzysztof Warlikowski’s performances in the previous chapter, I focus here on the idiosyncratic work of his actors and their role in initiating and subsequently facilitating the encounter – or the possibility of it – that begins between actors and spectators in the course of a performance. I will argue that the idea of profound communication with the audience, that lies at the heart of Warlikowski’s oeuvre and distinguishes it from the Polish repertory theatre in which it is rooted, drives the work of the actors and motivates them to expand their involvement in the performance process.

In the first two sections, oscillating between two conventionally opposed notions of ‘devised theatre’ and ‘playwrights’ theatre’, I will discuss the process of Warlikowski’s actors’ progression from the interpreters of dramatic text to the co-creators of performance. My argument will centre on the shared experience of the performance-making process, which takes place in a family-like environment and changes the roles of actors and director who take equal responsibilities for the shape of the performance.

In the following section, my inquiry into the rehearsal process demonstrates how the ensemble’s work crosses the borders between private and professional life and how this continuous experience determines the possibilities of the encounter with the spectators they wish to achieve. This depicts how the destabilising – or even collapsing – of various binary oppositions associated with acting, particularly the opposition existing between life and art affect the way in which the actors build their characters and construct their stage presence. Finally, in the last section, the prism of postdramatic theory enables us to observe the growing tendency in Warlikowski’s theatre to distance itself from a psychologically driven and coherent narrative towards the fragmentation and intensity of
actors’ stage existence. I will discuss here the ensemble’s methods of approaching text and creating characters and how these determine their communication with the audience.

Training the interpreters of text

Anyone familiar with mainstream Polish theatre is doubtless able to name at least a few actors and collaborators associated with Warlikowski’s theatre. These artists constitute his zespół (ensemble) and as such – although this is rarely acknowledged by critics and scholars – they take an extensive role in the co-creation of Warlikowski’s oeuvre. Over the years, their collaborative practice has evolved away from, and now bears little resemblance to typical practice within the Polish repertory theatre system in which Warlikowski has worked for much of his career.

Firstly, it is crucial to notice that Warlikowski began his career in accordance with the concept-based mode of directing that is common in Eastern European repertory practice, which situates the director as the primary agent in determining how a play is interpreted and performed. Typically in this mode of work, the director independently analyses the play, establishes the message to be conveyed and imposes a vision on all those involved in creating the performance. According to this approach, the rehearsal period is designed to transpose this concept onto the stage and usually attempts to provide the most transparent representation of what the director perceives as the playwright’s intentions and ideas. The role of actors in this process is based on creating characters and a stage microcosm that are compatible with the director’s vision and his interpretation of the given text. All Polish professionally trained actors – and by those we understand the graduates of acting courses offered by drama schools – are skilled in this matter as the whole acting curriculum of the four-year studies is centred on mastering their role as interpreters of both the playwright’s text and the director’s concept. Since all of Warlikowski’s Polish actors are graduates of these professional courses, it is important to enquire about the foundation of their profession before we analyse their current working practice.

In contrast to the British theatre, where becoming an actor can take various routes associated mainly with drama schools or a university’s theatre and performing arts courses,
training in Poland is much more codified and despite various private acting courses that have mushroomed in Poland since 1989,¹ the traditional training offered by the two main state-funded theatre schools in Warszawa and Kraków and one film and television-orientated school in Łódź, as well as their two branches (Wrocław and Białystok),² constitute the foundation of professional preparation for the acting profession. Although Polish theatrical life undergoes continuous transformations and gradually opens up to the tendencies that exist in Europe and the Western world – for instance, in Broadway or the West End – where talent can trump one's formal qualifications – the repertory theatre, which still dominates the Polish theatrical landscape, is reluctant to undertake such changes. Unlike film and TV productions, which are more eager to look beyond formal training, an acting diploma³ is a benchmark requirement for employment in repertory theatre. In contrast to the the UK’s theatre system, where permanent employment for an actor is a rarity, the Polish repertory system has up to the present offered stable and permanent contracts and therefore it guarantees a certain stability. To theatre managers and directors an acting diploma operates as proof of one’s abilities to interpret a dramatic text and create a character as well as confirming one’s familiarity with the repertory system.

Crucially, the major features of Polish acting courses lie in their practical, workshop-like nature⁴ and the encounters with prominent and active professional actors that such training provides. Although the courses comprise of both practical and theoretical training,⁵ the former, due to its intimate, studio-like setting⁶ and the individual attention that students get from their pedagogues presents them with unusual opportunities for professional development. The choice of a theatre school is therefore often motivated by the possibility of being trained by a particular actor whose work one admires or aspires

² Namely, these are PWST in Kraków, Warszawa’s Akademia Teatralna and Łódź’s Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Filmowa, Telewizyjna i Teatralna im. Leona Schillera (PWSFTViT – Leon Schiller State Film, Television and Theatre School). PWST has its branch theatre school in Wrocław and the branch of Warszawa’s academy is in Białystok, although it only trains puppet theatre actors.
³ These are four-year MA courses. Recently PWST introduced nine-semester long studies, (ie four and half years).
⁴ These comprise for instance: key acting tasks, an introduction to acting, classical scenes, contemporary scenes, poem recitation, prose, speech, voice training, signing, dance and movement, pantomime and radio-television techniques
⁵ The theoretical part of training includes: cultural anthropology, history of world theatre and drama, Polish theatre and drama or foreign language, to name just a few.
⁶ Students of each year are divided into smaller groups.
to follow, and consequently, the courses in Warszawa and Kraków, the cities that employ the country’s most celebrated actors, are amongst the most desired. These encounters with experienced actors provide a rare opportunity to gain insights into the profession, not only in terms of acquiring and mastering skills, but also the philosophical guidance that the senior generation can offer.

There are however some drawbacks related to these encounters. The main one is related to the relationship of master-student celebrated by this type of schooling. While constant guidance is useful for the reasons stated above, particularly at the beginning of one’s studies, this teaching mode leaves very little space for students’ independent work and improvisation. This means that the school creates graduates who are accustomed to being ‘directed’ and told what to do, instead of giving them a chance of forming their independent methods of work. This leaves the young actors with a limited opportunity for testing their creativity and making mistakes. To some extent, this absolves actors from responsibility for their performance per se. It clearly makes them concentrate on the directions concerning their individual parts.

Furthermore, the master-student relationship that functions in the theatre school setting reflects the hierarchy within the ensembles of Polish repertory theatres.\(^7\) The actors-lecturers (they are honorarily called ‘professors’) who teach these vocational courses often place themselves in a position of authoritarian power that not only causes distance, but also deprives students of their right to express their views and question the work of their masters. The example provided by the recent report on *The theatre: higher education in Poland* (2010) is a good illustration of this tendency. The report discusses Polish theatre schools’ reluctance to accept and implement some of the Bologna Process\(^8\) reforms that, for

---

\(^7\) This hierarchy can be visible at many levels. For instance, it can apply to the way in which actors address each other. Polish is a language that clearly distinguishes the level of relationship between interlocutors. Listening to a short fragment of a conversation between two persons enables one to instantly recognise how well these people know each other and what kind of hierarchy exists between them. In repertory theatres, young actors address their senior colleagues as ‘Sir / Madame’ (ie the Polish equivalent: ‘Pan / Pani’) despite working closely together on characters in countless performances. Another characteristic feature – which in the UK would be unknown – is the form of address used for older fellow actors, who are accorded the title of ‘Professor’ if the concerned person used to teach or still holds a teaching position at one of the theatre academies.

\(^8\) According to Wikipedia, ‘the purpose of the Bologna Process is the creation of a European Higher Education Area by making academic degree standards and quality assurance standards more comparable and compatible throughout Europe. (...) It is named after the place it was proposed, the University of Bologna,
instance, anticipate monitoring the work of lecturers and measuring students’ satisfaction in order to assure the quality of the offered degrees. The report observes:

Some lecturers of theatre academies reacted negatively to the watchword: students’ questionnaires. [...] The students are to comment on their masters? [...] The lecturers reach for the argument about the uniqueness of master-student relationship, which runs the risk of damage by too honest opinions of students about their lecturers’ pedagogical abilities.9

These efforts to hold onto this over-respected position10 point to another very important aspect of theatre education in Poland. They expose the prevalent desire to preserve old modes of work, leaving very little space for any kind of innovation and improvement. Paweł Płoski, the author of the 2010 report states: “Taking time to react to changes in the theatre world results in theatre schools being regarded as a fortress of conservatism. Many professors strongly believe that the mission of the school is to cultivate theatrical traditions that should not be allowed to die out. They assert that the school’s function is not to catch up with new.”11

This tradition has its roots in a specific approach towards a dramatic text. Faithfulness to text and its central role in influencing the stage microcosm define this approach. Jerzy Stuhr, renowned actor and director, but also a pedagogue and long-term vice-chancellor of PWST, reveals the impact of the supremacy of words that has continued to dominate thinking about the repertory theatre and the role of the actor within it:

[I]n the school which we graduated from, and later in theatres to which we went and which continued to educate us, we were trained for the art of words. This of course is linked to the tradition and great names of masters such as Juliusz Osterwa,12 Władysław Woźnik13 or Danuta Michałowska.14 I was taught that the

10 This is symptomatic of other state universities and colleges too, not only the artistic ones.
11 Płoski (2010).
12 Juliusz Osterwa (1885 – 1947) actor, director and reformer of theatre. In 1919 he created his own ensemble known as Teatr or Instytut Reduta, which was the first theatre-laboratory in Polish theatre that was devoted to the exploration of the art of acting. Jerzy Grotowski and Gardzienice’s Włodzimierz Staniewski draw on Reduta’s work with their own ensembles.
13 Władysław Woźnik (1901 – 1959) actor, director and theatre manager associated with theatres in Kraków. Between 1947 and 1949 he was the dean of PWST and between 1953 and 1959, he was head of the acting department.
14 Danuta Michałowska (b. 1923) is a Polish actor, director and pedagogue at PWST. She has trained some of Poland’s most influential actors.
word on stage is the main means of the actor’s expression. [...] I cannot think any differently. I cannot begin my work from a different question than how to enthrall an audience with words. [...] We were trained to serve an author, we were taught that our art, what we do on stage is the interpretation of an author’s ideas.\(^\text{15}\)

Although these attempts to maintain theatre’s status quo have been prevalent since the political breakthrough of 1989, there have been some who strongly oppose these tactics. One of them is Lupa, who has taught at PWST since the early eighties. Further to his influence on the younger generation of directors that we discussed in the previous chapter, Lupa’s teaching has also influenced generations of actors. As Maryla Zielińska notices, Lupa takes the credit for introducing many changes to Kraków’s theatre school when he was the head of the directing department over two terms in the early 1990s. One of his main ideas was the attempt to establish a close collaboration between the students of acting and directing: ‘shared classes, the development of independent projects, the exchange of roles between students in some tasks’.\(^\text{16}\) But the reforms within such establishments take a long time, especially when they are set against the existing and commonly accepted order.

In 2003, Lupa claimed that ‘the professionally prepared actor in Poland is an instrument that is unable to reach the places to which we need to get today.’ According to Lupa, today’s theatre schools teach very anachronistic theatre, in which ‘the schematic convention of playing Molière, Fredro\(^\text{17}\) or Witkacy\(^\text{18}\) is something invariable. The way in which a phrase should be expressed or how one should move. Simply, all of this is untrue! It appears that people come to the theatre and treat what they see as something completely and utterly museum-like, something that causes nothing but the reaction of rejection.’\(^\text{19}\) Lupa reminds us of the provenance of theatre conventions and emphasises that their creation has always been rooted in the mentality of a certain era. Therefore, according to Lupa, introducing various conventions as part of an acting curriculum is the wrong

\(^{16}\) In Zielińska (2006), 44-45.
\(^{17}\) Aleksander Fredro (1793 – 1876) was a Polish writer and poet, mostly known as an author of comedies.
\(^{18}\) Witkacy is the nickname of Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (1885 – 1939) who was a dramatist, novelist, painter, photographer, art theorist and philosopher. He is regarded as one of the leading representatives of the Polish avant-garde movement in the early 20th century.
\(^{19}\) In Beata Matkowska-Święs, \textit{Podróż do Nieuchwytnego. Rozmowy z Krystianem Lupą} (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2003), 119-120.
decision, since as a result ‘a graduate actor leaves school being inappropriately installed [into the profession] and when commencing to work, he needs to review everything he has been taught. He needs to throw away the armour, the suit that has been laboriously sewn.’

Although Lupa’s thoughts date back to 2003, his revolutionary (by the standards of Polish theatre education) thinking characterised his professorship – as we have mentioned here above – at PWST from the beginning of his appointment. Recognised as ‘the founding father’ of the changes that took place in Polish post-Communist theatre in the 1990s, Lupa influenced Warlikowski and his actors’ thinking about the role of actors in the performance process. Having consequently – since the late 1970s – rejected theatre’s limitations, characterised by the duty to deal with political issues concerning Polish society of the Communist period, Lupa’s theatre set an example of combining ‘avant-garde experiences with the most traditional forms’. His thinking heralded a completely new era in post-1989 Polish theatre. However, it had some drawbacks, as testified by Poniedziałek:

[...] in the early 1990s Polish theatre, even a good one as the Stary in Kraków wasn’t prepared to absorb [...] ‘the children of Lupa’ as we regarded ourselves. We wanted the new in theatre, we searched for freedom, we searched for ourselves. [...] But theatre was numb. Even though such pearls as Lupa’s Bracia Karamazow (Karamazov Brothers) and Jarocki’s Ślub (The Wedding) appeared, theatre was generally hypocritical and formal, ultra-theatrical and concerned with itself.

What comes up quite strongly from this statement is the dissonance between the expectations of the young generations of theatre makers and the artistic conditions offered by repertory theatre in the new political circumstances. In this transformed reality ‘the noble role of theatre serving the nation’ held by it since the Romantic period ceased to be relevant. To respond to this profound need to define their new role in a reality characterised by accelerated transformations, a young generation of theatre-makers had to search for innovative ways of expressing themselves, ways that would be compatible with the world outside the theatre venues that they encountered. Lupa has provided an important compass for this search by inculcating into his students the assertion that, as

---

20 Ibid., 122. Interestingly, young actors who took part in the recent discussions about acting also confirmed this view (see ‘Nie ma jednego modelu. Rozmowa z udziałem Marcian Bosaka, Agnieszki Kwietniewskiej, Marii Seweryn, Anity Sokołowskiej, Pawła Sztarbowskiego i Barbary Wysockiej’, Dialog, 7-8, 2011, 206-219).
21 See Gruszczynski (2003b).
23 In Poniedziałek (2010), 75-76.
24 A phrase used by Ratajczakowa (2005), 18
Beata Guczalska states, ‘in art – including acting and directing that seemingly serve to pass on the visions of others – one needs to always start from what is personal, one’s own. Intimate and individual. Only by speaking about yourself, can one be honest and credible.’

We shall observe how this ideal serves Warlikowski’s work with actors and how it affects their communication with the audience.

**From interpreters to creators**

The theory of ‘directors’ theatre’ proclaims the director to be an independent ‘scenic writer’ or ‘an artist in his or her own right’. In twentieth-century European theatre, the director achieved increasing agency and the position has come to involve a great deal more than simply directing plays; as David Bradby and David Williams suggest, ‘it was the director’s responsibility to develop a style or idiom specific to theatre within which every element became a significant bearer of meaning’. This was often reflected in directors supplanting or usurping the function of the playwright. Moreover, directors have assumed a range of different functions – from prophets or revolutionary agitators aiming to transform society, to pedagogues and sacred leaders.

Warlikowski represents a category of those directors (such as, for example, Peter Brook and Ariane Mnouchkine) who purposefully seek to diminish their power within the ensemble and who see their primary role as a catalyst for the creativity of others. Actors have consequently become an essential component of this theatre-making process and, as such, fully participate in the creation of various different aspects of the performance. For example, they may exert considerable influence on the text used in performances, either through direct proposals (as with *A.pollonia* in 2008-2009, when actors brought together several of the fragments that later constituted the performance-text) or in ‘rewriting’ the text in accordance with their discoveries about the characters in discussions and rehearsals.

As noted above, in traditional Polish repertory theatre, actors usually expect the director to be focused on achieving rapid results and to give instructions accordingly; thus the director is obliged to play the role of an omniscient despot with all-embracing knowledge of the

---

25 B. Guczalska, ‘Krystian Lupa w krakowskiej PWST’ in Grzegorz Niziołek (ed.), *Gry z chaosem. O Teatrze Krzyszta

26 Bradby and Williams (1988), 1.

27 Ibid., 15.
microcosm he or she wishes to establish on stage. Indeed, this very approach was characteristic of Warlikowski’s early work, as he recounts:

When I look at my way of doing Shakespeare in the past, I see how much I used to base everything on what I’d preconceived, [...] I didn’t take enough from the actors. [...] The ensembles were different [for each production]. It was only successful later, with actors of the quality of those at the Rozmaitości... Earlier, this Shakespeare had been constructed somehow. The surroundings – such as the set and costumes – were much more necessary then. Later on, there were more possibilities for the actors.28

Initially, Warlikowski’s method resembled the original experience of Peter Brook with whom he worked as an assistant. Brook approached his first big theatre production – *Love’s Labour’s Lost* in Stratford in 1945 – with the awareness that ‘actors, and above all stage managers, had the greatest contempt for anyone who, as they always put it, “did not know what he wanted”’.29 Thus, succumbing to this view and proving that he had a very clear concept of the show became for him the aim in itself. Giving actors definite and precise orders and persuading them to follow them obediently illustrated such practice. But as the work went along and he was discovering that ‘[actors] were not remotely like [his] cardboard figures’, Brook found his concept deadly and unable to offer any satisfactory results: ‘I stopped, and walked away from my book, in amongst the actors, and I have never looked at a written plan since. I recognised once and for all the presumption and the folly of thinking that an inanimate model can stand for a man.’30

The approach that Warlikowski went on to implement at TR Warszawa echoes the ‘thinking aloud’ rehearsal process that was developed by Brook as a remedy to the ‘deadly theatre’. In *The Empty Space*, the British director emphasises the inherent openness of this process:

...all work involves thinking: this means comparing, brooding, making mistakes, going back, hesitating, starting again. The painter naturally does this, so does the writer but in secret. The theatre director has to expose his uncertainties to his cast, but in reward he has a medium which evolves as it responds: a sculptor says that the choice of material continually amends his creation; the living material of actors is talking, feeling and exploring all the time – rehearsing is a visible thinking-aloud.31

30 Ibid., 120.
31 Ibid., 120-121.
This description also gets to the heart of Warlikowski’s practice, which entails a long process of digesting the ideas and intuitions that appear in the course of interpreting, discussing and analysing the text and of relating it to the creators’ life experiences. Both the actors and the director are entirely occupied in this intricate development of the performance, which requires their patience and consent to multiple experiments.

Warlikowski’s own process of ‘thinking aloud’ about a performance often begins during tours of an existing production; it may emerge in hotel rooms or restaurants. When he worked at TR Warszawa, the process officially began with the próby stolikowe (table rehearsals), in which the whole creative team would meet to read through and discuss the text. At Nowy Teatr, the creative process leading to the Nowy’s inaugural production (A)pollonia was initiated during a collective holiday taken by the ensemble in Greece in 2008, which incorporated ‘informal’ workshops prior to the official rehearsals. (A)pollonia was the first production by Warlikowski to involve the construction of an original playtext, comprised of various classical and contemporary fragments; during the initial discussion and workshop stage in Greece, certain scenes were already being tried out in practice. Gruszczyński gives the example of work on a fragment of Coetzee’s novel Elizabeth Costello, when several of the actors experimented with how to perform the monkey used in a demonstration during Costello’s lecture. Once a draft text was compiled from this exploration (by Warlikowski and Poniedziałek), official rehearsals began in Warszawa in September 2008, with the initial draft updated regularly by assistant director Katarzyna Łuszczyk, according to developments in the rehearsal room. For the first three months the rehearsals were mostly based on reading and discussion. When the ensemble moved to a larger film studio (the Tęcza studio, in Warszawa’s Żoliborz district), the actors would meet Warlikowski in small groups for work on individual scenes. From March 2009, the ensemble worked against the emerging backdrop of the set, as it was being constructed in the studio (the set design began to emerge in December 2008). At this point the final sequencing of the performance was established, and the lighting and live music integrated (Jett had been working separately with the composer Paweł Mykietyn and the musicians). At the beginning of May, the whole set was moved to the Wytwórnia Wódek Koneser (Koneser Vodka Factory) where the performance premiered on 16 May 2009.32

32 This information is based on the author’s interview with Gruszczyński.
Usually, the entire ensemble is wholly engaged throughout the development of a performance, which requires patience and multiple performance ‘drafts’ – which are not always successful. Various members of the ensemble often put creative decisions and solutions into question, and if a possibility does not stand up to collective scrutiny, the search must continue. The experienced actor Dalkowska describes this process:

This work is extremely difficult and intense. You go home in the evening after rehearsals and your head wants to explode. This is completely against everything you’ve learned before [as an actor]... You need to [approach the work] like a child. You do something and this can suddenly be turned completely upside-down. Something that once had a firm foundation suddenly loses its foundation. It can really get to you.33

Undoubtedly, practising such a method requires a special code of communication between the director and actors, but also among the actors themselves. When she joined Warlikowski’s company, Hajewska-Krzysztofik experienced feelings of uncertainty, despite having been a long-term collaborator of Lupa. Hajewska-Krzysztofik joined Warlikowski’s ensemble in 2001, already in the advanced stages of work on The Bacchae:

When I came to the first rehearsal I didn’t know if I’d be able to grasp and understand everything. [...] I felt like they were speaking to me in a foreign language. [...] But Krzysiek suggested to me at some point that I [the actor] was what was important, and after such a long time working with Lupa, who works in a completely different way, I felt that at last I could do something myself, with more courage than ever before.34

Warlikowski has the capacity to encourage his collaborators to extract their hidden qualities and make use of them in performance. Like Brook, he acts as a catalyst for his actors’ creativity – but there is no one technique for doing so that can be defined as ‘Warlikowski’s method’. The most significant feature – which recurs like a leitmotif in the testimonies of his actors – is the singular approach he takes towards each person. Warlikowski resembles an astute psychologist able to identify the approach that will help each particular personality to flourish, and who normally succeeds in making his actors feel special and important – both to the creative process and the performance itself. Regardless of complications, he secures the time necessary to allow the actors to develop their roles. For example, Stenka as Katherina in The Taming of The Shrew first spoke her final monologue – which was crucial to the ensemble’s feminist interpretation of the performance – at the

33 Author’s interview with Ewa Dalkowska, 10 April 2009, Warszawa.
34 Author’s interview with Małgorzata Hajewska-Krzysztofik, 27 April 2008, Warszawa.
dress rehearsal for the production. Warlikowski allowed her to take the time needed to prepare this section without applying additional pressure, confirming the priority he gives to creating at a pace determined by the actors’ needs. Although the role of ‘catalyst’ does not imply an abdication of a certain amount of directorial control, and his work remains a crucial and distinctive component in the ‘authorship’ of the production, this authorship is no longer singular and the rhythm of work is also collectively determined.

Warlikowski remains the person who ‘signs’ the productions, and his name functions as a recognisable indicator of a certain style created with his ensemble, whose impact on the creation of the performance is equally crucial. This results in a shift in the actors’ status, as they undergo a transformation from being interpreters in the repertory theatre mould, to creators who are significant ‘co-owners’ of the production. Facilitating this agency reinforces collective responsibility and deepens the involvement of the actors in the creative process. Additionally, this agency refers to the actors’ consent or rather willingness to share their personal experiences, so that their private lives become a kind of ‘filter’ through which they interact with the text. Such an approach towards acting echoes established methods of devised theatre that ‘[offer] a different route for the actor, which is often associated with having greater status and input within the overall creation of the theatrical product’, and ‘the chance to explore and express personal politics or beliefs in the formation and shaping of the piece’. Furthermore, Heddon and Milling note that such a collective process ‘is more likely to engender a performance that has multiple perspectives, that does not promote one, authoritative “version” or interpretation, and that may reflect the complexities of contemporary experience and the variety of narratives that constantly intersect with, inform, and in very real ways, construct our lives.’ As a consequence, the creative process can become a liberating experience in which, optimally, the actors and director work towards a state of self-awareness. However, to accomplish this, they need to be willing to undertake the risks of mistakes and failure, and to be persistent in examining the personal motives that give rise to the performance.

---

35 This information comes from the author’s interview with Stenka.
36 I will discuss the actors’ work with the text in a later part of this chapter.
38 Heddon and Milling (2006), 192.
How does Warlikowski facilitate this particular, active involvement of his collaborators in the creative process? What drives the collective search that lies at the foundation of each performance? Warlikowski’s thinking is driven by the need to implement democratic rules and principles in rehearsals. In this approach, his ideals yet again resemble the type of creation typically associated with devised theatre, which is further defined by Alison Oddey as: ‘a process of making theatre that enables a group of performers to be physically and practically creative in the sharing and shaping of an original product that directly emanates from assembling, editing and re-shaping individuals’ contradictory experiences of the world.’

Although to a much smaller degree than in ensembles such as, for instance, Forced Entertainment where all team members are involved in building a set or creating props, the participation of Warlikowski’s actors goes beyond what is usually believed to be their role. The actors are sometimes involved in making casting decisions – they played a part in proposing Dalkowska as a replacement for Celińska in the touring performances of Dybbuk when the latter was unable to travel, and in Dalkowska’s subsequent invitation to join the ensemble. Celińska’s considerable role as a focal point for the other actors, and her input on matters of staging also illustrates the extent of the potential influence of the actors in his ensemble. In Warlikowski’s rehearsals, all members of the ensemble are encouraged to dedicate themselves fully to the process through the unrestricted expression of their thoughts, impressions and proposals relating to the production. Working in an artistically democratic way may take various forms, but there is an overriding commitment to democracy in the most general sense, in that everyone has the right to be involved in making practical decisions, and there is an ‘emphasis on skill sharing, specialisation, specific roles, increasing division of responsibilities’.

Warlikowski’s ensemble certainly distributes tasks according to individual abilities, personal interests and orientations, and he understands his role in ‘opening’ the actors up to the various impulses that emerge from within the team. The director is still a central

---

39 Oddey considers these traits as characteristic of devised theatre companies, and as having emerged from the cultural climate of the 1990s. See Oddey (1994), 1.
40 In Warlikowski’s ensemble such work is undertaken by a specialist technical team. In this sense, his company makes use of the existing infrastructure of Polish repertory theatre.
41 Dalkowska was asked to join the ensemble after Celińska left the company in 2008.
42 I will discuss this in greater detail in the second part of this chapter.
43 Ibid., 9.
figure, but is particularly responsive to the various kinds of sensibilities brought by individual actors, and is aware of their personal approaches to the performance process. He distinguishes one group of actors whom he terms ‘actor-leaders’ – a categorisation that does not imply any artistic judgment on the level of craft or technical capability, and which Warlikowski stresses should not be associated with the term ‘leading actor’. The term ‘actor-leaders’ – he lists Celińska, Jett and Poniedziałek within this category – does not reflect an organisational hierarchy, but rather designates those actors who ‘convey the message to the audience in the most intense way [and who] support those actors who understand being on stage in a more traditional manner. This double play grabs viewers’ attention and leads them’. Warlikowski considers these individuals to have a particular disposition that allows them to engage with the audience on taboo subjects and to question established social myths. The nature of their participation – which at times may appear confrontational – often stirs the attention of the audience and provokes post-performance debates. Poniedziałek, for instance, often plays characters whose appearance in performance is confrontational and directed outward, towards the audience; for example, in the recent (A)pollonia, Poniedziałek’s Admetus directs the onstage video camera towards the audience and poses questions to the spectators. Poniedziałek’s communicative skills and presence at post-performance discussions are also significant, and he often engages in debates with audience members at the frequent events that are arranged in connection with performance-runs.

Inevitably, the notion of a democratised creative process is linked to mutual trust. Warlikowski reveals: ‘it depends entirely on the trust that I can say anything, […] that there are no taboo subjects… We always tell each other extreme things about ourselves, we don’t hide. These are the moments when we best get to know each other’. Although this might be true in the relationships between the director and each individual actor, the statement appears very idealistic in the context of the whole ensemble, which is constituted of personalities with very strong egos. In theory, although the director may wish to create this trust-based relationship that equally applies to all members of his ensemble, maintaining this in practice must however be challenging. Perhaps this assertion becomes most true in

44 In Gruszczyński (2007), 94.
45 I will discuss this in more detail in chapter 4.
46 In Gruszczyński (2007), 145-146.
regards to the core members of the ensemble such as Poniedziałek, Celińska, Chyra, Cielecka or Ostaszewska who – due to the longevity of their work with Warlikowski – are at ease with expressing their views and opinions and opening up to the whole process of performance-making. The recent additions to the ensemble, actors such as Dałkowska or Magdalena Popławska exercise this right, as was illustrated during the series of rehearsals of (A)pollonia, which I observed in April 2009, to a much smaller degree.

In his book-length interview with Renata Kim, Poniedziałek provides examples that illustrate the power struggles related to the key members of the ensemble. In his opinions, sometimes the presence of those ‘celebrities’ who joined Warlikowski’s company after they had left TR makes the other members ill-at-ease:

47 Because they constitute a kind of a jury box of reserved and severe judges. They are supposedly inside, but judge everything, as if they were outsiders. That was happening with Dybbuk, a work I don’t have good associations with. There are actors who do not want to throw themselves into the abyss, they need to have everything planned from the beginning and only then can they enter the play.

48 If we juxtapose this with another part of the same interview: ‘I get on much better with the young actors from the production of Enter that Ania Smolar and I directed than I do with my peers from theatre’, it seems that communication within the ensemble is not always as ideal as Warlikowski would wish to present it. My own observations of rehearsals of (A)pollonia, albeit short, have also shown that the presence of the celebrities such as Cielecka or Chyra differs from that of lesser-known fellow actors. It was these two actors who Warlikowski feared would oppose my participation in the rehearsals and therefore he initially refused his consent for me to be there. The intervention of Poniedziałek made it possible for me to participate. This situation in itself confirms not only the special rank of Cielecka and Chyra, but situates Poniedziałek himself in a powerful position, from which he is able to influence (or reverse, as in this case) Warlikowski’s decisions.

49 Poniedziałek and Smolar directed and devised with young amateur actors a performance entitled Enter, which was based on the theme of blogging (premiere – 26 June 2010).

50 Poniedziałek (2010), 209.
collaboration with Warlikowski, rather than his age) within the company,\textsuperscript{51} but also in the profound sense of mission that he shared with the director from the beginning of their theatrical careers. This is visible in his work as a dramaturg and co-author of the adaptation of \textit{(A)pollonia}\textsuperscript{52} or a translator of \textit{Cleansed} (2001), \textit{Krum} (2005) and \textit{Angels in America} (2007). In a different interview, Poniedziałek admits that despite no longer being Warlikowski’s intimate partner, he continues to remain ‘a pillar’ of this theatre that he has co-created for almost twenty years. However, what has changed is that: ‘There are now the others who can co-decide on similar terms to mine. Our theatre is like a witch Sabbath, there are very strong personalities, in fact these are monsters, but somehow we are able to get on and decide what to do next. This is a specific type of family.’\textsuperscript{53} Significantly, these references to family that recur regularly in interviews are often expressed in the context of tensions and conflicts encountered by the company during work on the performances.

Sometimes, as Poniedziałek testifies, these arguments between the members of the ensemble go beyond verbal exchange of opinions. He reveals the circumstances of his confrontation with Celińska:

Staszka is an amazing person and a great actor. [...] But she takes action and is able to interrupt her colleague during a dress rehearsal to say that he is doing something senseless and should try something else. [...] Building a character is a very hard procedure. [D]uring \textit{The Bacchae} at Rozmaitości, Staszka was one of the three Bacchae and I played Pentheus. And everything, completely everything that I was doing in rehearsals irritated Staszka to this extent that she was commenting on it out loud. So, when […] Staszka said something biting again, I threw a jar at her. It was a prop that lay on stage on a metal table. The jar splattered next to Stasia. I wasn’t even aiming at her but the wall next to her. […] She calmed down.\textsuperscript{54}

This hot-tempered reaction by Poniedziałek, which now functions as an anecdote, points out something else that characterises the relationships that exist within this group. The ties between them allow for behaviour that would not be acceptable within the repertory theatre or within a more formal establishment. Here, where the actors know each other’s personalities and are accustomed to extreme reactions at times, these situations are tolerated as a part of the intensive process of building a stage microcosm. Poniedziałek explains:

---

\textsuperscript{51} See chapter 2, \textit{Creating the ensemble}.

\textsuperscript{52} Poniedziałek co-authored the adaptation of \textit{(A)pollonia} with Warlikowski and Gruszczynski.

\textsuperscript{53} In Nowicka (2010).

\textsuperscript{54} Poniedziałek (2010), 120-121.
My relationship with Staszka […] can be described as a mother-son connection. Besides, she has played my mother a few times. A hot-tempered, authoritarian and monumental mother and her angry, abuse-hurling son who is very weak and very much in love with her. And he often hates her and wants to kill her because she doesn’t trust him and doesn’t respect him. A selection of paradoxes and contradictions as in a family. Yes, we have a very complex relationship with Staszka and this is a loving relationship.55

Perhaps it should be asked why Poniedziałek readily reveals such information. Is it for the purpose of publicity? Is it to contribute to the ‘mythology’ surrounding the ensemble within Polish theatre circles? It is worth noticing that the book, from which the above excerpts are taken, inaugurates a series of publications entitled ‘Blow-Ups’ (Powiększenia) and aims to ‘present persons known from public life who have distinct views on important social issues.’56 This description itself suggests that both the expression of controversial ideas as well as stories that concern personalities recognisable from TV or showbiz circles – and the above-mentioned actors unquestionably belong to these realms – are an important element of the conducted interviews. Poniedziałek meets these expectations with his opinions on homosexual marriages and gay adoption rights, as well as his experience as a gay man living in Poland, which he generously shares with his readers. But to situate this in a broader context, the book is not aimed at theatre critics or theatregoers, but a general public who recognise Poniedziałek’s face from his TV appearances – and the reason why he was invited to do this lengthy interview lies mainly in the fact that Poniedziałek was the first person in Poland to publicly ‘come out’ about his homosexuality (in December 2005). At the time, despite being well known for his work on stage, chiefly in Warlikowski’s performances, he was recognised by a wider public for his role in a Polish soap opera57 and therefore his coming out had a bigger impact on Polish society in general. He now stands as a symbol of bravery and honesty and is respected by many for his uncompromising approach to the expression of his views. Even a brief encounter with Poniedziałek is sufficient to prove that spontaneity and openness are traits of his personality. In terms of his role within the ensemble, this approach can cause problems and aggravate tensions, but his commitment as a co-author and the devotion towards this theatre are unquestionable.

55 Ibid., 120-121.
56 This is quotation comes from the book’s inside cover, Poniedziałek (2010).
57 *M jak miłość* (L for Love) broadcast in TVP2 since 2000.
As has been noted, Warlikowski does not hold the monopoly on decision-making, although his particular perspective outside the action enables him to perceive and react to elements unseen by the actors. His position as an outside observer allows him to question certain specific situations and to judge which proposals the ensemble may wish to put forward to an audience; in this sense he fulfils a similar role to that described under the name of ‘outside eye’ by Tim Etchells of Forced Entertainment, who also aspires to a democratic process of creation and conducts similar interventions.\(^\text{58}\) The commitment to a democratic partnership, however non-ideal, strengthens and reinforces the familial organism that the artists create together, with the actor at the core of the rehearsal process. This creativity cannot be imposed or enforced – it appears organically as a result of the explorations undertaken by the group. It is often an unavoidable consequence that tensions occur during this collective exploration, especially among a group of artists who are sensitive and at times egocentric. Conflicts and clashes of ideas are inherent elements of this kind of theatre-making, since nothing within the practice is ever conceived as fixed or stable. The creators develop continuously and therefore the dynamic within the ensemble changes \textit{ad infinitum}. As a result, the visions and perspectives of the director and the actors are in perpetual negotiation. This momentum feeds the performances and contributes significantly to the vitality of this theatre.

The development of the members of the ensemble is also affected by their work outside Warlikowski’s theatre. Unlike some of the devising companies (Forced Entertainment, for instance) or the companies run by powerful directors (such as, for example, Ariane Mnouchkine) whose actors are usually exclusively committed to the work and development of one particular company, Warlikowski’s actors live an often very hectic life outside the theatre. Despite Warlikowski’s various reservations, he understands that he cannot stop his collaborators from taking advantage of the more commercial and financially viable work on Polish TV or in films, especially now that the director himself is also eager to direct opera in prestigious venues across Europe. Warlikowski believes that all experience is fruitful for their work together:

A return to theatre is always beneficial. They do films and other projects as I do my operas and I come back to them as they come back to me. [...] In these actors there

is a kind of debt to society, as they benefited from this new reality and therefore they have to have some mission in order not to lose themselves in this commercialism of our time. This theatre is their mainstay and source.\textsuperscript{59}

There is therefore a two-fold relation existing between Warlikowski’s theatre and commercial culture. On the one hand, the actors take advantage of what the new market economy has offered in Poland: mainly in terms of financial gains, as salaries in Polish theatre are still incomparable with how much one can earn during a day’s filming for a TV production. On the other hand Warlikowski’s theatre acts against commercialisation, offering both actors and audience an experience that opposes capitalistic values. His theatre is set to undermine a popularly held – especially during the initial years following the fall of Communism – belief that this newly discovered ‘capitalist paradise on earth’, to refer to Filipowicz’s words,\textsuperscript{60} is able to provide fulfilment and happiness to a human being. I shall observe in chapter 4 what kind of techniques Warlikowski uses to challenge this belief.

The specific status of the theatre in the actors’ artistic life is also linked to the shift in Warlikowski’s work that makes his actors co-responsible for the performance. At the heart of this collective creation lies Warlikowski’s approach to the actors, which does not resemble the hierarchy of the director over the actor normally seen within repertory theatre. However, as noted above, there are differences that exist amongst the collaborators and their level of involvement in the co-shaping of the performance.

### Between life and acting

The close-knit family environment and the commitment to a democratic order – albeit with its shortcomings – which are celebrated within the ensemble result in a specific position of actors who, being immersed in their private life, are concurrently ‘not themselves’ in the theatre. The minimal definition of acting proposed by Christopher B. Balme states that: ‘the actor seems to speak and act, not as him or herself, but in a role that he or she

\textsuperscript{59} Author’s interview with Warlikowski, (2007a).

\textsuperscript{60} Filipowicz (1995), 123.
pretends to be.”\textsuperscript{61} Balme admits however that the term ‘actor’ ‘becomes questionable on closer inspection’ and can be quickly challenged due to its limited perspectives.

As noted in chapter 2, Warlikowski’s predilection for working with familiar and like-minded people has its roots in the work that the director initiated at the TR Warszawa, where he started bonding with people while working in a laboratory-like way on the production of Hamlet in 1999. The closeness of the bond that he established with these actors (some of them like Poniedziałek, Celińska and Cielecka subsequently became the core members of his ensemble) is illustrated in Warlikowski’s statement:

I’m very sentimental. I cannot imagine doing Hamlet with other people than those who worked at Rozmaitości. This show was a result of an emotional bond with them; they were in a certain emotional condition. If I were to do Hamlet abroad, I would cry that I am not that close to the actors. Maybe it was my first intimate relationship with actors, in such honesty, in such kind of talking about everything, about our life that we tried to express.\textsuperscript{62}

Hamlet was a breakthrough that refocused Warlikowski’s understanding of the theatrical process: ‘I was used to doing big staging; […] I wanted to see whether I could rule these stages. [But] my work at Teatr Rozmaitości imposed a different kind of thinking. This small stage allowed more experiments.’\textsuperscript{63} It allowed Warlikowski to move away from the aesthetic effects and concentrate on the creative process, engaging actors not only to produce the show, but also, as Niziołek notices, ‘to persuade them to get personally involved in creating a collective meaning that is then bravely presented to the audience.’\textsuperscript{64} This emotional, intimate connection would become a staple feature of Warlikowski’s work.

The director is clear about his preferences for working with familiar actors, which goes beyond the typical practice of professional theatre: ‘When I’m searching for an actor from outside the ensemble, it’s from among people I know […] I prefer to be already familiar with someone and to work with him or her rather than someone I don’t know.’\textsuperscript{65} A family-like environment is the fuel of Warlikowski’s creativity and it is therefore something of which he is very protective. What makes Warlikowski attracted to certain personalities? What is the connection that he searches for and how does this connection affect the status

---

\textsuperscript{62} In Gruszczyński (2007), 142.
\textsuperscript{63} In Mieszkowski (2003), 232.
\textsuperscript{64} Niziołek (2008), 53.
of actors within his theatre? As mentioned in chapter 2, Warlikowski’s ensemble is not homogenous. Unlike companies such as Mnouchkine’s Le Théâtre du Soleil, where all members represent one political left-leaning stance, the diversity of Warlikowski’s ensemble is significant. One of the ensemble’s actors, Cielecka, notes: ‘Krzysiek likes people who are original, unconventional, eccentric, because this is what he is himself. This mosaic, this mixture of people fascinates him. People are his fuel; he observes our lifestyle and behaviours. This is what he uses to build’.66 Thus, these different personalities create a multi-dimensional stage microcosm that is in a constant state of flux and reflects the ever-changing world outside the theatre venue.

To some extent, this mosaic of people reflects the diversity of contemporary society. Warlikowski has no illusions about the privileged position some of his actors have in society. For the majority of them, coming from provincial parts of Poland meant that they had to work extremely hard for their success in the capital, demonstrated today with their billboard appearances and celebrity status (e.g. Cielecka or Chyra). What is however remarkable about their success is that they have not ceased their engagement and dedication to Polish affairs. This, in Warlikowski’s opinion, distinguishes all of his Polish actors from their foreign counterparts: ‘they’re very involved in what is happening in Poland. They would come to rehearsals at 10am, having already read Gazeta Wyborcza.67 The difference [between Polish and foreign actors] lies in their commitment and involvement. In the Western theatre, the involvement is expressed by aesthetics, here, in Poland by the inner world of the actors.’68

The commitment of Polish actors is also noted by Jett, who has been continuously working with Warlikowski in Poland since 1999. She believes that

[Warlikowski] searches for those who are willing to reveal what they hide deeply inside. Polish actors are different than Germans. There is bigger honesty within them; they also seem stronger in what they do. I like watching Staszka Celińska. She is a celebrity in Poland yet you don’t feel that when you talk to her. She is open, she doesn’t play a star. [...] [and] is not afraid of playing a Peep-show Dancer in red underwear in Cleansed or playing on a comb in The Tempest.69

66 Author’s interview with Magdalena Cielecka, 11 August 2008, Edinburgh.
67 Gazeta Wyborcza (Election Gazette) is the second-largest daily newspaper aimed at left-leaning liberal readers. It is regarded as one of the most influential, opinion-forming and controversial newspapers in Poland. www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gazeta_Wyborcza
68 Author’s interview with Warlikowski (2007a).
69 In Grzela (2009), 50.
Warlikowski believes that only an actor who engages with an experience from ‘within’ is able to transcend and share her or his sensation with an audience. It is crucial for Warlikowski to work with a specific, familiar group of people, whose personalities he finds engaging – his theatre is not made by actors but by (and for) ‘real people’ who bring their own personal narratives to the theatre space. This inevitably means that the actors put their own distinctive signatures on their work. As Poniedziałek points out: ‘we are not “creating” anything, there is no process of creation taking place. You need to come here with some kind of baggage. Personal stories are what Krzysiek likes the most’. Poniedziałek’s comment holds a clue to the type of involvement Warlikowski ‘requires’. It primarily concerns the actors’ personalities, which themselves determine the lives of the characters, over and above technical competency. The actors’ distinctive ‘fingerprints’ are recognisable in the characters to which they give birth, and this collective ‘genetic code’ establishes the particular quality of their stage microcosm.

The process leading to this outcome is complex. To evoke Brook’s simile of ‘an actor who is like a garden’, the principal role of the ‘director-gardener’ is to remain tolerant and patient, to wait, and to support the actors’ investigations. As Warlikowski states, ‘mistakes [on the part of the actors] don’t exist – there’s no need to create barriers and rules. I often make embarrassing mistakes myself, but this is normal when you’re searching for something.’ This actors’ search is a search for ‘truth’, not just of the character, but of the actor - they are making conscious something that has been previously unknown or unconscious to them. Such a personal search is only possible within this family-like setting where the collaborators know and trust one another and are encouraged by the director to pursue this type of explorations.

This approach is exemplified in Hajewska-Krzysztofik’s account of rehearsals for *The Tempest* (2003). She recalls the complexity and difficulties of working on the scenes between her character Miranda and Ferdinand (Klijnstra), and praises Warlikowski’s considerable patience: ‘it’s very precious when the director doesn’t scare the actor, doesn’t intimidate them. [...] Krzysiek feels so much affection for the actors, and he knows how to work with us. This mindset leads us to explore further and deeper, to permit ourselves to

---

70 Author’s interview with Poniedziałek.
71 See Brook (1968), 128.
72 Warlikowski in Gruszczynski (2007), 91.
be brave in experimenting. I would suggest that this emphasis on mutual commitment also corresponds with Etchells’ definition of ‘investment’, which appears highly relevant in this context:

Investment is what happens when the performers before us seem bound up unspeakably with what they’re doing – it seems to matter to them [...]. When it works it is private, and often on the very edge of words. [...] Investment draws us in. Something is happening – real and therefore risked – something seems to slip across from the private world to the public one – and the performers are ‘left open’ or ‘left exposed’. [...] Investment happens when we are hitting new ground, when we don’t quite know, where we can’t quite say, where we feel compromised, complicit, bound up, without recourse to an easy position.

For the actors to ‘invest’ means to be open and devoted to the ‘matter’ or issue under discussion. Investment can only occur when complete and unrestricted engagement takes place, and when traditional theatrical forms and conventions can make way for the uncontrolled and unexpected. This investment is associated with risk that does not only apply to getting things wrong, but also getting hurt as a result of discovering something painful. This is a very important aspect of Warlikowski’s theatre practice and the engagement of his actors who are ready to take such risks and throw themselves into the creative process.

There is no better exemplification of the actor’s ‘investment’ in Warlikowski’s theatre than Celińska’s role as the peep-show dancer in Cleansed, whose rhythmic striptease in a booth is ‘activated’ by the sound of dropping coins. Her role triggered an outraged debate about aesthetics and the ethics of exposing an aged, corpulent and naked body to public scrutiny. For Celińska the work constituted a complex, personal experience:

A few times during rehearsals, I ran away from this performance. [...] I was afraid of exposing my body, and also of touching what I’d already finished with in my life – that is, the need for physical and emotional love. [...] Love is a quite dangerous subject. It is always associated with a certain fear, with risk. I wanted to avoid this and forget about something [from my personal experience], to live a normal life. [...] But when I found the courage, this text opened me up to people. To love. [...] Kane shows how much we need love, the value it has – and that it can exist.

---

73 Author’s interview with Hajewska-Krzysztofik.
75 In Wilniewczyc (2003a), 24.
Celińska admits that the performance had a significant effect on her personally, and that the approach she established with Warlikowski gave her the chance to make the kind of intense and passionate theatre she desired: theatre that provokes debate. Following the premiere of *Cleansed*, the celebrated director Andrzej Wajda wrote to Celińska, who has performed in his films: ‘you don’t hold anything back, you expose yourself completely. But could we make theatre without this?’ This, Wajda’s testimonial, is an illustration of the shift that Warlikowski’s actors made from their traditional role held within repertory theatre. Here again, the parallel with Brook appears inevitable. According to the British artist: ‘The director must sense where the actor wants to go and what it is he avoids, what blocks he raises to his own intentions. No director injects a performance. At best a director enables an actor to reveal his own performance, that he might otherwise have clouded for himself.’ The achievements of actors depend therefore on a director’s auxiliary abilities in supporting an actor’s developments.

This type of support is particularly important in assisting actors throughout the process of transporting their personal experience, as illustrated in the example of Celińska, into the collective one that will resonate with an audience. Significant here is the pain of this passage that Celińska describes, her uncertainties and fears of exposing herself and sharing her own intimate experience with the audience. This state of threshold – Etchells’ ‘the not-yet and never-to-be certain’ – is never ending, as the actor makes it live every time she performs Woman on stage. Every time she does so, she shares her intimacy, exposing it bare in front of the audience and inviting the audience to take part in it, to transfer it into a collective experience. This process is linked to what Etchells described as the investment that uses ‘live issues’ that are actually lived-through and informed by the real experiences of the actors, as only those have the power to strike the audience and resonate with their own individual experience.

Perhaps the most significant comments on Celińska’s performance came from Janusz Majcherek, a critic for the prominent journal *Teatr*, who described this unusual, committed and ‘sacred’ approach to acting thus: ‘this is no longer dedication, this is a sacrifice, and I don’t hesitate to say that this is a new “total act”’. Majcherek’s implicit

---

77 Brook (1968), 122.
reference to Jerzy Grotowski appears in this context as significant praise, even though Grotowski’s legacy has only recently begun to secure the kind of status in Poland that it enjoys abroad. For Celinka, who in her early career received but did not take up an offer to join Grotowski’s Teatr Laboratorium, this comparison was a fitting tribute. Majcherek’s appraisal further highlights some of the difficulties implicit in such an act of self-sacrifice, indicating the remarkable degree of application and engagement required from the actor, beyond innate talent.

Celińska’s achievements would not have been possible without a director able to provide the actor with the conditions to explore, analyse and then overcome her limitations, and to transform this process into an experience that could be compared to therapy (for both the actor and the audience). Celińska’s case is exemplary in terms of the ‘organic’ collaboration between actor and director, who make theatre that ‘feeds’ on their biographies, and the honesty with which this personal background is revealed. Celińska talks about her fear of exposing herself and encountering love, which she had already eradicated from her life, whilst Warlikowski’s refusal to let her escape this theme also influenced her private life. Furthermore, this collaboration represents a new development in Polish mainstream theatre; the actor – freed from the obligation of simply following directorial instruction – constructs the role at the border between art and personal history, allowing a ‘vivisection’ of the ‘self’.

The distinctiveness of such an accomplishment in mainstream theatre is perhaps best illustrated by the words of Jerzy Jarocki. This director from the older generation, a guru-like figure in the Polish theatre establishment, who ‘makes great use of the tools offered by [repertory] theatre’, surprisingly expresses his feeling that ‘the spectrum of the influence of such theatre – in terms of what kind of spheres of reception it can reach – isn’t sufficient.’ In the discussion from 1971, in which Ludwik Flaszen also participated,

---

79 Grotowski is still viewed with suspicion in Poland as an experimental, alternative theatre artist, and his methods of work are generally rejected by those working in repertory theatre. It is worth noting that Grotowski’s *Towards a Poor Theatre* was only published in Poland for the first time in 2007 – significantly later than the first English-language edition in 1968.


82 Ibid., 156.
Jarocki formulated his dream of theatre as the sphere of profound contact between two human beings. He believed that:

The time will come when the most important thing will lie in the discovery of the secret. And this will be the actor’s task. [...] When does the ‘great act of acting’ come into being? In my opinion, it happens when an actor reveals their secrets. When they make a confession – independently from the author’s text. Independently means additionally or when using the text as a tool [to do so].

Interestingly, Jarocki continues his observation using a direct reference to Flaszen and the Laboratorium:

This is perhaps something that you don’t do in the Laboratorium and what you could be doing. You reveal the secrets quite openly. But there is an other opportunity – when an actor can create such a link between their part, their honesty and spectator that in this mechanism, the spectator knows that not everything has been exposed, that the actor has hidden the layers of the biggest secret. And then the biggest drama takes place, the biggest flashes of insights take place.  

Jarocki repeated the same assertion a few years later, with perhaps greater clarity:

Sooner or later theatre will become more intimate, it will become a place where the actor is closer to the audience and vice versa. Such a theatre will be the laboratory for an actor, in which he will try to test the revealing of his or her own, intimate life in front of the spectators. And then the actor will have to expose themselves mentally much more significantly.

This ideal, as Guzalska confirms, was associated with Jarocki’s theory rather than his practice, which appears to be in complete opposition to these principles. He believed that repertory theatre with its limitations of ‘having to prepare things quickly and release them, the end’, does not create opportunities to fulfil this dream. Jarocki retained, however, his fascination with the confessional character of acting and continued to envy those who worked outside the repertory – like Grotowski – and could afford extended work on performance. He envied their focus and the closeness of their ensembles. Jarocki’s remarks are crucial to juxtapose with the practice of Warlikowski, who, as we have discussed through this and previous chapters, has managed to overcome the limitations of the repertory system and establish for himself and his ensemble an environment that makes it

---

83 Ludwik Flaszen (b. 1930) is a Polish theatre critic, essayist and director who is mostly known for being a close collaborator of Jerzy Grotowski, with whom he co-founded Theatre of 13 Rows, which later became the Laboratory Theatre.
84 Guzalska (1999), 157.
85 Ibid., 157.
86 Ibid., 159.
possible to explore and test all of these ideas as defined by Jarocki. Significantly, it was Jarocki who in 2003 gave Warlikowski his award during Katowice’s Festival Interpretacje\footnote{Jerzy Jarocki was part of the judging committee.} for this very adaptation of *Cleansed*, the production so much criticised and rejected by the older generation of theatre makers.

With this shift towards the penetration of one’s inner world, actors do not ‘play’ characters, but become characters, and consequently, performances such as *Cleansed* are, according to Celińska, ‘a personal confession’: ‘People come to theatre today to see the truth. Created and coldly calculated acting is no longer able to touch anyone. What can touch are honesty, openness and truth. Theatre literature has changed and therefore acting needs changing too.’\footnote{In Pawłowski (2007), 16.} The auto-therapeutic nature of the penetration of the most intimate experience is for Warlikowski an intrinsic part of being an artist: ‘there are no intimate spheres – we don’t have the right to hide anything;’\footnote{Ibid.,16.} and he reveals in another conversation: ‘We don’t talk about anything alien to us; this is not about serving the aesthetic vision of a director. This [theatre] is like a conversation about our life and experiences. Nothing is abstract and just put in a form, but it is performed on our own skin.’\footnote{In Gruszczyński (2010), 133.} The novelty of the way in which Warlikowski’s actors approach their work lies not in the fact that they feed it with their private experience, as the obvious counter-argument to this would be that to various degrees all actors draw on their private biographies, but in the way in which the sharing of the ‘private’ becomes the condition for performance to come into being. Also significant is the assertion of the value of such intimate, personal input on the stage microcosm that the actors co-create together with the director and the way in which they make it the core of their practice. In other words, unless there is a resonance between the idea of a particular theme or text that the ensemble wish to stage and the moment of life in which they find themselves, there are no grounds to go ahead with the work.

Warlikowski’s production of *Cleansed* exemplifies this. The idea of staging *Cleansed* appeared much earlier than 2001 \footnote{Author’s interview with Warlikowski, (2007a).} (the show premiered on 15 December 2001). Celińska
recalls that one day after rehearsals for Koltés’ *Quay West*, Warlikowski was walking her to the underground and

... he mentioned that he had a text of Sarah Kane’s, but he was afraid to do it. I looked at this young man and said: ‘Take a chance’. We started reading it at the Rozmaitości. It scared me. I thought it was too early for that. And Krzysztof put *Cleansed* away and decided to do *Hamlet* instead. But during the rehearsals of *Hamlet*, I started to miss Kane. Marek Kalita\(^91\) felt that too. I was indignant at this text, but concurrently very touched by it. I kept repeating that we must do it.\(^92\)

This example is a great illustration of how certain productions or themes grow and mature in the creators’ mind. Unlike in a professional repertory theatre where the actors are unable to determine the timing of the production, in Warlikowski’s theatre, the actors are very much involved in the process of decision-making. Their ‘readiness’ to discuss certain subjects and open up to the experience that these subjects trigger in order to communicate them with the audience constitutes the condition for the given performance to come into being.

This is also linked to, or rather is the consequence, of Warlikowski’s abdication from the role of a sole author of the performance who holds an authoritarian power. The actors’ decision to co-author the show is synonymous with their conscious responsibility for its existence. Since, however, the pressure on actors is much greater than in a repertory theatre, they are more likely to experience uncertainty and self-doubts, as was testified many times by the actors in the case of *Cleansed*. Sometimes the doubts do not leave the creators until the very last moments before the production’s premiere and in such circumstances, the need to reassure themselves about the motivations behind the performance becomes even more crucial. Celińska talks about a breakthrough moment surrounding the first full rehearsal and her concerns related to her personal outlook that came into question:

I travelled to the first full rehearsal unconscious because of nerves. [...] We were very curious of each other, as we had rehearsed separately until then [...] When I saw my colleagues and they saw me, we were shocked. [...] I was shocked with the power and eerie truth of this theatre. The ghost of Kane spoke. I realised what power, despair and honesty she had. Being a profound believer, I wondered whether I could take part in such ‘filth’. And I came to the conclusion that this is, I

---

\(^91\) Marek Kalita is another actor who worked at Teatr Rozmaitości at the time and later became a permanent member of Warlikowski’s ensemble at Nowy Teatr.

\(^92\) In Wilniewczyc (2003a), 18.
apologise for this statement, my mission. This horrible trauma is a proof that God exists. Because God must exist in order to balance all this evil. That is why I signed up to this production.  

A very strong authorship comes across in this statement of Celińska. Personal views and beliefs inform the production and strengthen the actor’s involvement. It is significant that she mentions a mission, which she feels compelled to carry out. In the same interview, the actor elaborates further on this concept, referring to both *Cleansed* and the production in process at the time, *Dybbuk*:

"Of course it cost me a lot [to perform in *Cleansed*], the work on *Dybbuk* will cost me too. The best way would be to withdraw from the production and say ‘why should I bother about the Holocaust?’ I’m tired myself, I’m fifty-five, I’ve had a hard life, so why bother. But I feel morally responsible to take part in it. This is a kind of sacrifice. Similarly, I wouldn’t have to talk about my alcoholism. [...] But I talk about it to give a testimony that I was saved by Providence and to help other people."

Again, this assertion of a mission and the necessity of total involvement that entails sharing one’s own life experience, with the risk of this being a painful practice, determines the performance. In fact, sharing such pain with others and making use of it in work is the personal cost of making this kind of theatre. Warlikowski believes that:

"The actors don’t give themselves to performance in a professional sense, but it can be painful each time an intimate part of them begins to resonate with an audience. [...] The actors come to Rozmaitości with an incurable sickness with life, with all the defects that caused them to be actors and to live and search beyond their everyday reality."

Interesting here is the assertion that the ensemble is constituted by people with an unusual sensitivity or those who are, as Warlikowski puts it, ‘torn apart by life’ and who use theatre to deal with their own imperfections. The openness in dealing with their ‘scars’ is possible thanks to the friendly family-like environment, where, as mentioned earlier, all artists can express themselves openly and with no fear of being judged by their counterparts.

Additionally, this personally-testified way of approaching their work is also linked to the profound connection they have established with Warlikowski and his ability to sense

---

93 Ibid., 18.
94 Ibid., 29.
95 This quotation comes from the period when Warlikowski worked at Teatr Rozmaitości.
96 In Gruszczyński (2010), 132.
97 The expression used by Warlikowski in the author’s interview, (2007b).
the surrounding world in a spiritual, almost messianic way. Such a connection and the impact of Warlikowski’s specific gift of perceiving the world are illustrated by Celińska, who talks about her return to the company in 2010:

Krzysztof has got this kind of sensitivity that he is able to feel what is wrong with the world at the given moment. It was about continuous war in (A)pollonia, and now in Koniec it’s about what is beyond the gate, what happens when we leave this world. This is something that is burning in him. He leaves the rest to other people who help him to express his pain. Concurrently, he makes us realise that this is what hurts us too. These are usually very serious and important subjects. But in order to do that, one needs to go through a lot. I endured that for ten years, and then I took a break. Now I’m back to these struggles again.98

The importance of pain and suffering comes across strongly in this testimony of Celińska and what is striking are the bonding qualities that these feelings trigger. The connection between the actors and the director is rooted in their individual experience of the world that they collectively analyse in rehearsal. In other words, the individual becomes the collective. The lengthy and intensive process of the creation of the performance is aimed at transferring the personal into a universal situation that could touch and be experienced by an audience.

The ability to make use of such raw, often intimate suffering that concerns Warlikowski and his actors and feed it into the performances is also conditioned by the director’s gift of picking up the Zeitgeist of the surrounding world. As discussed in chapter 1, Warlikowski’s sensitive antennae enable him to sense the concerns of the contemporary Pole who is searching for his or her place within the new post-1989 reality. The success of Warlikowski’s shows abroad demonstrates that he also has the ability to find common ground between the experience of suffering shared by the members of his ensemble and the concerns associated with living in today’s Western societies. This allows him to dig down to something quite raw and honest and then creatively deal with it in the performance situation. Niziołek sees Warlikowski’s early production of Hamlet from 1999 as:

… the expression of his conviction that the current task of theatre consists in documenting the suffering within liberal-democratic societies, which seem to be almost exclusively occupied with the deconstruction of the ossified mental structures of the ‘patriarchal’ system and its oppressive cultural models. At the end

---

98 Celińska in post-show discussion in Gdańsk - see: www.youtube.com/watch?v=v*I-PZpSmak and www.youtube.com/watch?v=1BOtFGMHkX88feature=rekated.
of the 1990s, Warlikowski sensed that it was precisely in this attitude that there was an opportunity to establish real contact with an audience: young, educated, free from any previous settling of scores.\(^9^9\)

These ways of establishing contact with an audience will be discussed in the following chapter. However what is significant in the context of Niziołek’s observation is the process of ‘documenting the suffering’ that in Warlikowski’s theatre is informed by the personal, raw experience of the artists, co-creators of the show. To some less liberal critics, Warlikowski’s actors’ idiosyncratic contribution appears to constitute unprofessional conduct.

Iza Natasza Czapska, for instance, sees Cleansed as the apogee of Warlikowski’s manipulation of his actors and compares the director to Tinker, the cruel persona of Kane’s play who controls and tortures the other characters:

The director manipulates the souls of actors whose work has been sensitive and beautiful in the past. He must have power over their souls and bodies since he has convinced them that moving a bottom in front of a masturbating partner is an expression of closeness with another human being and that the actor who puts on the pants that have just been taken off by another actor talks about love.\(^1^0^0\)

The critic adds: ‘Warlikowski-Tinker conducts on them [actors] his own experiments and takes away what was the strength of their acting – the truth in which we believed. He humiliates them in the eyes of the audience and deprives them of mystery, which we looked for in them. In another life, in another, better theatre’.\(^1^0^1\) These criticisms are significant in terms of the assumptions that Czapska makes on behalf of the audience. The critic of Życie Warszawy not only suggests some tyrannical and manipulating aspects of Warlikowski’s method of working with actors, but also implies that the actors lack authenticity and ‘stage truth’. Similar in tone, Janusz R. Kowalczyk of Rzeczpospolita, states ‘what is shown on stage should not be far from decency’ and he claims that banality shouldn’t be shown on stage. It happens often that apart from shocking form – with


\(^1^0^1\) Ibid.
nudity at the core – many contemporary theatre makers have nothing new to say.\textsuperscript{102} Perhaps Jacek Kopciński puts it in the most explicit way: ‘Warlikowski’s favourite actors understand their role very well. They don’t show the characters, they show themselves.’\textsuperscript{103} These critics, for whom theatre is a high art form, accuse Warlikowski’s actors of exhibitionism and intending to shock, suggesting that their stage presence lacks professionalism.

Mariusz Bonaszewski, who is a permanent actor of Teatr Narodowy (National Theatre) and joined Warlikowski’s ensemble for the production of \textit{Cleansed} (as Tinker) provides a response to these accusations. According to Celińska, despite his initial struggles with Warlikowski’s unusual way of working and his attempts to try ‘to hide behind some kind of a mask’, Bonaszewski began to fulfil himself as an actor.\textsuperscript{104} But not using a mask is not synonymous with ‘reaching for banal borrowings from life or set theatre signs’, as Bonaszewski claims.\textsuperscript{105} He challenges the opinions of some critics who would like to see this work as a manifestation of the actors’ privacy: ‘It is not true that we perform in some kind of a fever. One of the keys to do this work lies in a continuous awareness. There is no hysteria of performance. Everyone controls what he or she is doing.’\textsuperscript{106} Asked what makes a performance reach the highest level, he adds:

There is no recipe for that. There needs to be something against the acting, the interference with the private. I perform my tasks in unusual harmony and concurrently I impose myself on the part [I play]. I say who am I, even though I play Tinker who is a specific machine. It is not about exhibitionism. … Everything stops then: I am entirely in it. I don’t sacrifice my life for it, but I devote myself to that fully in the moment. This is unusual and happens very rarely.\textsuperscript{107}

It is this precise devotion which often creates the grounds for the accusations of Warlikowski’s amateurism by some critics. The director is reflective about his own practice and is aware of the idiosyncrasy of this type of theatre-making in comparison to the existing framework of the repertory theatre establishment. In his conversation with

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{103} J. Kopciński, ‘Nagi król. Nowy idol młodego teatru’ in Kopciński, \textit{Któredu do wyjścia? Szkice i rozmowy teatralne} (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza ERRATA, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, 2002), 253-262 (p. 258). The article was originally published as post-première commentary in \textit{Rzecząpospolita}.
\bibitem{104} Celińska in Wilniewczyc (2003a), 29.
\bibitem{106} Ibid., 153.
\bibitem{107} Ibid., 153.
\end{thebibliography}
Gruszczynski, Warlikowski declares that a high-risk theatre is fundamentally not a professional theatre:

It’s more ‘a-professional’. It’s not about doing away with professionalism. But when something is too ‘well done’, when it starts to lose its sincerity, when it becomes a theatrical form that everyone accepts, theatre sends us to sleep. The operatic form already has this effect. Theatre has a chance, precisely by going against ‘professionalism’ as such, by running away from the more ‘charming’ kind of transmission that acts superficially on the spectator’s intellect.\(^\text{108}\)

This distancing from professional theatre comes even more strongly in another conversation: ‘What we do is nothing to do with the professional theatre; maybe we shouldn’t even call it ‘theatre’. It’s simply a potential and an opportunity that emerges between people who are making something together.’\(^\text{109}\) This statement confirms once again Warlikowski’s devotion to making ‘sincere’, true theatre that celebrates the connection with the inner worlds of his collaborators and by doing so creates the opportunity to establishing a successful communication with his audience. On the other hand, however, there is an element of rhetoric to Warlikowski’s statement, as he is aware that this is professional theatre, i.e. public and commercial, not a private act.

**Work on character**

As we have seen throughout this chapter, and namely with *Cleansed*, Warlikowski’s approach to text bears little resemblance to what is typically considered to be a traditional method of staging drama (or known as dramatic theatre). By that, I mean the theatre in which a director decides what playtext he or she wishes to stage and casts actors (or chooses them from the existing company if this concerns Polish repertory theatre) to fit the description of characters or the director’s imagination of them. Unlike the dramatic theatre, with its subordination to the primacy of the text, in Warlikowski’s theatre ‘staged text is merely a component with equal rights in a gestic, musical, visual, etc. total

\(^{108}\) In Gruszczynski (2010), 133.

\(^{109}\) Warlikowski in *Apolllonia: A Photographic Essay. Images from Rehearsals by Stefan Okołowicz, with a commentary on the creation of the performance by members and collaborators of the Nowy Teatr (selected and edited by Duncan Jamieson*, *Polish Theatre Perspectives, 1 (2010), 149-174, (p. 152).*
composition’. This does not however mean that the relationship with text has been broken, but that ‘text is considered only as one element, one layer, or as a ‘material’ of scenic creation, not as its master.’ The theory of postdramatic theatre created by Hans-Thies Lehmann to summarise tendencies that have been emerging in theatre since the end of the 1960s, does not only dethrone the text from its dominant role within the performance, but crucially for this thesis, it redefines the relationship between theatre and its audience, placing it at the core of the theatre-making process. In Lehmann’s words, post-dramatic theatre is about ‘more presence than representation, more shared than communicated experience, more process than product, more manifestation than signification, more energetic impulse than information.’ Chapter 4 will focus on an analysis of Warlikowski’s theatricality and the relationship between actors and audience that emerges as a result of it. Here, however, I will observe how Warlikowski’s actors approach their work on characters and how the prism of this post-dramatic shift in thinking about theatre alters the positioning of the audience within this process.

While Warlikowski’s earlier productions maintain a close connection with the text and are mostly adaptations of one, particular text, his approach to text and characters has changed significantly since his first production ‘under the roof’ of his Nowy Teatr. Significantly, certain elements of Warlikowski’s approach to text were already visible during his training at Kraków’s theatre school. Lupa struggled with Warlikowski’s way of creating character. He recalls Auto-da-Fé by Canetti, Warlikowski’s final production that Lupa supervised:

The story seemed to me strangely hybrid and amorphous, I was getting lost in it. … I accused him of torpor, chaos, self-love and lack of criticism towards his own work. … In the conversation with Krzysz and Małgosia I ruthlessly judged the condition of their work and suggested radical changes. This was met with desperate resistance […] I didn’t understand this dissolved work, which seemed to lack precise cuts and the leading character seemed illogical. I didn’t understand these strange distractions of energy. … I was unable to get into the inner logic of this narrative. … Today … I can assume that what I judged most harshly was most valuable. What I called ‘theatrical dyslexia’ is Warlikowski’s idiosyncratic vision of the world: his abandonment of a central motif and arrival with a character, an actor

111 Ibid., 17.
112 Ibid., 85.
113 Lupa refers to Szcześniak.
somewhere on the peripheries, in a position of non-importance, in a state of almost non-being.\textsuperscript{114}

In this passage, Lupa defines the characteristics of Warlikowski’s theatrical language. The ‘dyslexia’ points to the director’s predilection for unobvious decisions concerning the narrative and the position of the actor within the stage microcosm. This ostensible chaos and fragmentation of the stage microcosm reflects Warlikowski’s general approach to theatre, which is not to follow predictable paths, but to focus on the human material that is brought to theatre by the artists, with their personal experience.

The importance of such an approach lies in collective authorship. The involvement of actors in the process of ‘staging’ text goes beyond singled-out contributions that concern any one particular character. Rather, the actors’ responsibility is more collective. As Niziołek notices, ‘Warlikowski cares about actors taking on themselves responsibility not only for the parts they play, but also for the whole text and its message [...]’.\textsuperscript{115} This responsibility may take various forms. For instance, we have discussed the case of his recent production of \textit{(A)pollonia}: the initial work did not start with an awareness of who would perform what character. Gruszczyński testified that the actual cast list appeared in January 2009, several months after the rehearsals commenced. The work on \textit{(A)pollonia} began within an informal setting, as the company spent a holiday together on one of the Greek islands. Workshop-like meetings\textsuperscript{116} that took place there in summer 2008 were devoted to the collective reading of texts and discussions. The ideas were rooted around ancient myths and some contemporary texts that concern the theme of sacrifice:

\textit{[W]e knew for sure that Iphigenia would be there, also Clytemnestra, Agamemnon and Orestes, as well as Alcestis, Admet and Rywka and Sławek.}\textsuperscript{117} [...] It was then when Elizabeth Costello\textsuperscript{118} was mentioned and when the fragments of Littell\textsuperscript{119} appeared. [...] We didn’t have the text by Krall\textsuperscript{120} yet, but we were reading her stories. The adaptation of these stories appeared later; this was the text that

\textsuperscript{114} Lupa (2003a), 37.
\textsuperscript{115} Niziołek (2008), 188.
\textsuperscript{116} Apart from the actors, Małgorzata Szczęśniak and Paweł Mykietyn also took part in these workshops.
\textsuperscript{117} The two last names mentioned in this quotation belong to real people: Ryfka Goldfinger and Sławomir Świątek, a son of Apollonia Machczyńska.
\textsuperscript{118} Elizabeth Costello, an aging writer, is a character that apart from being the eponymous character of J.M. Coetzee’s \textit{Elizabeth Costello} (2003), also appears in \textit{Slow Man} (2005) and his academic novel, \textit{The Lives of Animals} (1999).
\textsuperscript{119} He refers to the opening passage of Jonathan Littell’s book \textit{The Kindly Ones} (original French titles: \textit{Les Bienveillantes}).
\textsuperscript{120} Hanna Krall writes short stories based on facts. Her main works deal with the themes of war, Holocaust and the relationships between Poles, Jews and Germans during the Holocaust and soon after the war.
changed the most from the very beginning. [Based on these workshops], [T]he adaptation of the whole thing was written subsequently by Krzysztof.\textsuperscript{121}

This eclectic sourcing and referencing method, which is characteristic of post-dramatic theatre and sacrifices the singular narrative in order to open up to multidimensional possibilities is also to some extent compatible with contemporary perceptions of reality. Chyra recognises this parallel: ‘[For Warlikowski] text is a pretext, but on the other hand, he treats it quite ruthlessly. He is not afraid to juxtapose texts that, at least seemingly, do not match. What I like is the mosaic, because in fact the world is not uniform and homogenous.\textsuperscript{122} Such creation is conditioned by the specific involvement of the actors who willingly share their stories. Poniedziałek reveals: ‘Nothing is created from nowhere. Everything comes from our experience. In our long conversations with Krzysiek we recall certain things, but it isn’t that simple that we have such knowledge, we follow our intuition to search for things. All our words are somehow personally testified.\textsuperscript{123} This continuous development of performance conditions the growth of the play’s characters that, in turn, develop in parallel with the actors’ own personal developments. Additionally, subsequent work on other productions also feeds into the actors’ reprisals of their earlier roles. The latter phenomenon is exemplified by one theatre critic’s commentary on the second run of \textit{Hamlet}:

Horatio is now played by Andrzej Chyra. And although he has no more text or scenes than Omar Sangare\textsuperscript{124} […] this character is no longer only a bit-part, Hamlet’s shadow. […] Perhaps this is the result of [Chyra’s] collaboration on \textit{The Bacchae} and the duet he had with Pentheus (Poniedziałek) as Dionysus […].\textsuperscript{125} Now there is something of Dionysus in this [new] Horatio. Horatio still remains the outsider, [he] functions in a different rhythm from the other characters.\textsuperscript{126}

This short extract points towards a certain predisposition in Warlikowski’s work, highlighting the intensive and ongoing development of the play’s characters. The existence

\textsuperscript{121} Author’s interview with Gruszczyński.
\textsuperscript{123} Author’s interview with Poniedziałek.
\textsuperscript{124} Omar Sangare was originally cast in \textit{Hamlet} as Horatio.
\textsuperscript{125} I believe that the author of this review refers here to the strength gained by Chyra’s Dionysus (\textit{The Bacchae}, 2001) as a result of his confrontation with the tyrant Pentheus (Poniedziałek). At first, Dionysus appears in the performance as a delicate and feminine, divine figure who influences the humans around him, who join his cult. His presence opposes that of Pentheus who rules his kingdom with firm and despotic power. However, following the confrontation with Pentheus, Dionysus now becomes a powerful and uncompromising god who is able to commit horrifying atrocities.
\textsuperscript{126} Targoń (2001), 30-31.
of a new Horatio is ‘sharpened’ under the impact of another character (Dionysus), and this lineage can be discerned and traced by an external observer. This aspect of Warlikowski’s theatre also suggests another crucial issue in relation to the director’s audience. It implies that this oeuvre requires a certain type of ‘expert’ spectator, who knows Warlikowski’s other shows and perhaps re-visits them more than once.

Due to the long duration of the production runs, there is often a need to prepare understudies, who bring distinct perspectives to the performances rather than simply taking up the roles constructed by other actors (as exemplified by Chyra taking over from Sangare). Importantly, Warlikowski hardly ever allows understudies for the ‘core’ members of the ensemble, who are considered irreplaceable, organic elements of the collective world that is created. As Cielecka relates, plans to replace her for a brief run of *Dybbuk* met with certain obstacles:

...with Krzysiek it’s not quite enough to ‘play a part’. [...] With him, you need to bring something of your own. You have to be a separate being within the role. He’s not interested in setting choreography and then ‘performing’ these gestures and movements on stage. He is interested in what can happen ‘underneath’, and this is something absolutely unique to the person who performs [the role]. This is why having understudies in his theatre doesn’t work.127

One individual cannot easily be replaced by another. Moreover, Warlikowski considers that the ‘authentic’ execution of a role can only be achieved through a long rehearsal period, and thus the potential loss of any single element of the ‘mosaic’ of relations between actors and characters cannot be compensated by another individual from outside. Even if changes in casting might not be noticeable to a spectator attending a production for the first time, for Warlikowski this ‘false’ element ruins the shape that was collectively and patiently determined during the rehearsal process.

Warlikowski’s reluctance to use understudies is linked to the issue of the body and its role in an actor’s work with the text. The body is an important element of the presence of Warlikowski’s actors and even though the consequences of this will be further discussed in chapter 4, it is crucial to consider this issue here from the perspective of actors’ work on characters and their creation of a stage microcosm. Firstly, as Monika Żólkoś suggests in her article, although Warlikowski has not created a theory of acting as such, ‘he has nevertheless managed to affect a practical shift in how acting has been conceived in Polish

---

127 Author’s interview with Cielecka.
repertory theatre.\textsuperscript{128} She claims that the main hallmark of difference between how acting was perceived within repertory theatre prior to Warlikowski and Warlikowski’s approach lies in the ways in which the actor’s body exists within theatrical space:

Within the Polish repertory theatre of the 1970s into the 1990s, the body was understood, and largely functioned, as a signifier of certain emotions; in Warlikowski’s theatre it has become a site of liminal experiences. The body does not ‘pretend’ or ‘represent’, it authentically operates in space and sensually interacts with other bodies. In this sense, there is a deep contrast between Warlikowski’s theatre and theatres of ‘rhetoric’, despite the constitutive role of literature within the former. The spoken word is overtly and explicitly incarnated with the whole body, and the experience of language becomes primarily a sensual experience.\textsuperscript{129}

To achieve this specific state of being, Warlikowski’s actors approach their corporeality in a different way than is normally the case within the repertory theatre. The body is not a tool or material with which actors build the characters and emote their ‘existence’. There seems to be no conscious ‘showing what I feel’ process of constructing the stage presence. Quite the opposite, in the rehearsals of \textit{(A)pollonia} that I observed in April 2009, the remarks about ‘not performing’, ‘not making too many gestures’, ‘not playing’, ‘not suggesting too much’ appear like a leitmotif of all scene analysis. A strong desire to not ‘illustrate’, not ‘represent’ anything that is known or recognised as a demonstration of a certain state or emotion was clearly visible. Continuous repetitions of scenes were prompted not only by the director, but also by the actors themselves who were dissatisfied with their own work and accused themselves of ‘reaching the state of performing’. Such comments often referred to the ‘too romantic’ or ‘too sentimental’, or the ‘too artificial and unnatural’ images that actors created with their bodies. At one point, as a reply to Warlikowski’s comments that he did not understand the actor’s reaction and things seemed ‘untrue’, Poniedziałek stated: ‘I’m working on it, it takes time. Things need to agree with me here, inside, I can’t just ‘perform’ it to make it right’. Seemingly, all these attempts aim at achieving such a kind of ‘being’ that bears as close as possible a resemblance to life, in which we react to certain situations without the involvement of a thinking process that would gear us into a conscious ‘showing’ or ‘emphasising’ of particular gestures. Thus, actors are not supporting themselves with forms or conventions behind which they can


\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 137.
hide, instead, they look for solutions within themselves. This is synonymous with exposing
themselves, becoming ‘naked’ and furthermore somehow transparent, almost ‘see-through’.

The body becomes a very important element of that search, especially as
Warlikowski has a predilection for casting that challenges the obvious physical conditions
of his actors. Partly, this is linked to the director’s interpretation of the text, which he is
always eager to read against existing canonical interpretations. A good example of such a
predicament is Celińska, who was cast as Gertrude in *Hamlet* and as Woman (a peep-show
dancer) in *Cleansed*. It would seem that in both cases a heavily overweight actor would be a
miscast, but Warlikowski saw potential in the actor’s body. Celińska reminisces:

He gave me the part of Gertrude and wanted me to have exposed arms. I was
larger than I am now. I saw myself with these arms spilling out of my dress and I
thought I would die. [...] I was so ashamed! I had stopped playing lovers a long time
ago. Gertrude was on an opposite pole from me. Nobody else in Warszawa would
cast me in this part. At the time, I was playing safe, characteristic joyful and fat
ladies and I felt great in that. And suddenly Gertrude. To Warlikowski this was also
a woman. He wanted this to be a story about a normal family. I trusted him more
and more.¹³⁰

This extract demonstrates Warlikowski’s approach to casting characters, which is not about
confining himself to existing models, but looking for new opportunities to challenge our
understanding or imagination of certain characters. By undermining the issue of feminine
attractiveness and clichéd thinking about how Gertrude is usually portrayed, Warlikowski
opens up a new potential in Celińska as an actor, breaking the pattern of her former *emploi*.
Such a type of casting stimulates actors to approach their role in a different manner, it
requires opening up the character through the body, not through the verbal text as in
typical repertory theatre. Żółkoś notices:

The character as conventionally described often conflicts with the actor’s image
and personal and professional experience, and is not easily reconcilable with her or
his emotional and bodily condition. In Warlikowski’s theatre the role must exist as
a challenge, or as an obstruction. To perform a role often means that actors must
inhabit a situation difficult for them, not only in an artistic or physical sense, but
also existentially.¹³¹

This element of conflict between the actor and the role they are to play constitutes a
challenging, but also inspiring setting for the actor. This often means that the body

¹³⁰ In Wilniewczyc (2003a), 28.
¹³¹ Żółkoś (2010), 142.
becomes the place that triggers and conditions the whole performance. The example of Celińska’s role as a female peep-show dancer given by Żółkoś illustrates this process of overcoming not only physical constraints but also emotional difficulties with the role. This came to Celińska at ‘high personal cost’.132 The actor who was ‘embarrassed by [her] physicality’ and, as discussed earlier, ‘didn’t want to touch certain aspects of her life’, found it difficult to express herself through sexual gesture and physical contact with her stage partner, Tinker. The long process of working on this role was supported by the actor’s observation of a peep-show dancer133 and Warlikowski’s conviction of the purity that he saw in Celińska. This led to the dancer becoming in this production ‘an act of kindness and love – a selfless gesture towards the perverted doctor of Kane’s play.’134 Warlikowski played here an important part in leading the actor into a different understanding of her own corporeality. As a result, the actor changes the perception of her own body and accesses a different realm of character. Thus, Warlikowski’s process allows actors to discover hidden parts of themselves. The director’s choice of actors, his casting decisions are the catalyst for this – often painful – process of discovery. This also means that casting is itself an important element of Warlikowski’s theatre practice.

In this chapter, I have explored the specificity of Warlikowski’s work with his actors within the laboratory setting of his own ensemble. I have shown the trajectory of the director’s collaboration with actors, which began with the concept of playwright’s theatre and which limited actors’ role to that of interpreters of a text. I have marked the shift towards a shared creative practice and illustrated how moving in this direction has enabled actors to progress from their traditionally-held position within the performance towards becoming legitimate co-authors of the shows. This shift, as I have argued, was enforced by the specific family-like setting that has destabilised – and continues to destabilise – the boundaries between professional work and private life and opened up the opportunities for a confessional type of acting that is deeply rooted in the actors’ (and director’s) private biographies and experiences. The authorship of performance has also equipped actors in their additional responsibilities towards the shows and allowed them to discover and access

---

134 Żółkoś (2010), 142.
those realms of their own artistic and private personae that would not be available to them in the more traditional context of theatre-making. I have argued that the complex processes of building a character that lead to actors enhancing their awareness of themselves as well as their place within the world, determine the way in which audiences perceive these performances. The idiosyncratic way in which Warlikowski’s theatre deals with the personal experience of its creators and how it transfers this into a collective experience will, as I shall observe, provide audiences with the opportunity to experience liminality themselves and question their own thinking and position within the world. In the theatre of Krzysztof Warlikowski and his ensemble, this communication with the audience is facilitated through the creators’ personal and lived involvement in the performance-making process, which contradicts the traditional model of professionalism that functions within the repertory theatre in Poland.
Chapter 4
Performance as event

As we learned in the previous chapter, Warlikowski’s performances are not complete, fixed and ready-made commodities, but are instead transitory events, open to changes resulting from the ensemble’s continuous work on the production and events in the actors’ and director’s lives. Drawing mainly on Erika Fischer-Lichte’s theory of performance as an event, I will focus the discussion in this chapter on the audience, its status within Warlikowski’s theatre and the various ways in which his ensemble communicates with spectators. Since Fischer-Lichte’s concept replaces the notion of theatre as an artefact with ‘fleeting, unique and unrepeatable processes’ and it relativises or even possibly completely abolishes ‘the fundamental division of producers and recipients’ it is a useful prism through which Warlikowski’s work, and in particular his approach towards his audience can be examined. Thus, this chapter explores the complex processes that lead to spectators becoming the co-creators of performance.

Set against the backdrop of repertory theatre, the first section of this chapter shows how Warlikowski’s novel ideas about the role of the audience within a performance oppose and challenge the existing order. His attempts are depicted in the context of the ‘war between old and new’ that characterises the first post-Communist decade and illustrates the conflicting ideas about the role of theatre in Polish society, and therefore also the role of the audience within it. The second section focuses on the issue of the body and shows its role in expanding and deepening the relationship between actors and spectators in Warlikowski’s oeuvre. Drawing on examples from his productions, this section explores his various methods of engaging his audiences with the creation of a performance and taking responsibility for its shape. Finally, in the third section of this chapter, the discussion centres on the potential of the transformative and liminal qualities of Warlikowski’s

---

1 Fischer-Lichte (2008), 162.
2 Ibid.
productions. My analysis of various extracts from his shows will discuss the techniques and themes Warlikowski uses to communicate with his spectators and which often involve taking them out of their comfort zone in order to challenge their thinking and provide them with a space in which questions about their own lives can be raised.

Reconfiguring the relationship with the audience: new contra old in Polish theatre post-1989

In order to understand the novelty of the relationship between Warlikowski’s theatre and its audience, it is important to refer to the context of Polish repertory theatre, which struggled to redefine its function within society in the first decade after the fall of Communism in 1989. By examining this, together with the mass exodus of theatre audiences as well as the status of culture in a reformed free-market society, this section elucidates how Warlikowski’s ideas developed in the shadow of – indeed against – the existing crisis in Polish repertory theatre at the time and its inability to find a solution to its predicament.

Therefore, what was the situation of Polish theatre in the aftermath of the collapse of Communism and what was the status of audience within it? Ratajczakowa writes about this initial Post-Communist stage, describing how theatre reacted to the new reality:

In order to be free, the theatres had to liberate themselves from mechanistic functioning, existing and thinking. The new situation forced the theatre to reconfigure not only its image but also its identity. […] [Theatre] was unable to change and was shrouded in gloom, feeling imprisoned, traumatized by its weaknesses as well as claims and pretensions resulting from its former elevated cultural status. The noble role of serving the nation, a position it had held since the 19th century when it was the only Polish-language institution in a partitioned country, was no longer tenable.3

Even though the fall of Communism caused tangible enthusiasm among most artists and Polish theatre during this period was filled with hope, such euphoria died down in the early 1990s, as it became more evident that the economic situation of most Polish theatres was catastrophic. The first phase of this new order (or rather a lack of order) ‘transformed the theatres into neurotic enterprises […], characterised by institutional mistrust, the

3 Ratajczakowa (2005), 17-18.
centralisation of power, increased managerial control, and conservative strategies. Various ideas of reforms appeared, including some of more a more capitalistic nature, as a result of searching for a remedy from this difficult situation:

Some thought that central government should still be a main source of funding for theatres; others leaned towards treating theatre like a company […] A third group believed that local communities and private sponsors would be able to save theatre in Poland. They debated over the fact whether there was a surplus of theatres in the country and what kind of criteria should be taken into account while sharing a frugal budget between all theatres. [...] The government's budget put aside less and less money towards culture and in 1991 many theatres spent their money half way through the season.5

Despite these various ideas, the cure for Polish repertory theatre did not arrive quickly and the general situation was daunting. According to Godlewska, theatre attendance between 1989 and 1992 dropped by 40 per cent in comparison to 1988,6 and in 1993, as Ratajczakowa writes, figures were down by 37 per cent.7 It became quickly apparent that theatre was going through a lean time. Its supposed role as a place of resistance and bastion of truth could no longer be sustained in an independent country where censorship had been abolished.

Here, it is worth noting Filipowicz who, attempting to ‘demythologize’ Polish theatre, claims that not all repertory theatre under Communism was anti-regime, and that in fact, the function of theatre at that time is rather exaggerated.8 In reality, she argues, theatre was not as homogenous as its creators would like it to appear. According to Lech Raczak,9 to whom Filipowicz refers in her article, most theatres of that period could be ‘best described by the word ‘servility’. There are exceptions; it is the exceptions that have shaped our perception of Polish theatre as a militant theatre.10 Such myths are deeply engraved in social consciousness and are difficult to overcome. Thus, as Filipowicz observes, ‘debates on the state of Polish theatre can continue to draw on the heroic myth

---

4 Ibid., 19.
5 Godlewska (2001), 298-299.
6 Ibid., 301.
7 Ratajczakowa (2005), 23.
9 Lech Raczak (b. 1946) actor, director and leader (1968-1994) of well-known Polish alternative theatre company, Teatr Osmeego Dnia (Theatre of The Eighth Day).
of political engagement [...]”. This rings true, as we shall notice from the discussion later in this chapter.

As Godlewska’s account illustrates, some theatre managers in the early 1990s continued to serve audiences with ‘the old intelligentsia’s paradigms’, illustrated in productions openly attacking Communism. Their aim was to preserve the old theatrical status quo, which had existed since Romanticism and was especially vital during the Communist years, but the market for such performances was short-lived: “The audience has quickly lost interest in martyrdom, poster-like messianism” and politicised plays (as Mikołaj Grabowski bluntly but aptly said – “we now need to puke it all up”). Freeing theatre from its numerous political obligations produced a space for ‘dealing with what was really crucial, that was the human soul’, as Jacek Sieradzki stated in Polityka. To some scholars and theatre critics, the challenge of engaging with the ‘human soul’ had to be linked to an intellectual quest. Zbigniew Majchrowski complained in the early 1990s:

Today’s theatre seems to exist in an intellectual vacuum. It doesn’t take part in any axiological debate (who would pay for tickets for Heidegger?). Theatre doesn’t reach beyond the proscenium and offer any hypothesis for public life, apart from the one (that is completely false in my opinion!) that people are tired by crisis, financial struggle and the politics of those in power and thus they only desire entertainment, preferably containing some sex. As if the whole nation was reading Scandals and watching Dynasty.

Majchrowski’s disappointment implies that theatre is ontologically destined for intellectuals and, as a consequence, has a strictly intellectual mission to fulfil. Ratajczakowa recognises this tendency to associate theatre with a higher order as one of the artistic stereotypes inherited from the Communist era. She argues that the premise of this cliché was that ‘theatre belongs to the domain of art and was accordingly treated overrespectfully.

11 Ibid., 127.
12 Polish messianism is a movement in Polish philosophy that developed between the two national uprisings in the 19th century. It is based on the belief that Poles were a chosen nation and thus superior to other nations. The history of the ‘suffering’ Polish nation has been compared to the story of Christ.
13 Mikołaj Grabowski (b. 1946) is a Polish director, actor and professor of PWST. He has been artistic director and chief executive of Stary Teatr in Kraków since 2002.
14 Godlewska (2001), 301.
15 Sieradzki in Plata (2006b), 220.
16 Polityka is a Polish left-wing and liberal weekly published since 1957.
17 Zbigniew Majchrowski (b. 1955) is a professor of Polish Literature at the Gdańsk University who specialises in Theatre and Drama Studies.
18 Skandale (Scandals) is a tabloid that was very popular in early 1990s.
19 Majchrowski quoted in Godlewska (2001), 302; Dynasty was the first American soap opera presented on Polish Television in July 1990.
Everything therefore had to operate within a commonly accepted aesthetic framework and performance had to be ‘high art’.\textsuperscript{20} This belief made theatre manifestly distant from ordinary people and incomprehensible to the masses. Ratajczakowa also notices a prevalent assumption within the repertory that theatre should be judged ‘not for its openness to dialogue with audiences, but for its abstract ‘artistry’.\textsuperscript{21} Simply put, spectators were never at the centre of theatre-making processes and their presence was considered as essentially passive. This aspect of theatre-making forms a crucial context for our discussion of Warlikowski’s notions of ‘audience’.

Practitioners of mainstream theatre rarely invited their audience to take an active part in performances. The involvement of spectators was synonymous with intellectual readings of the plays and the interpretation of complicated theatrical metaphors or layers of meaning. The audience’s intellectual aspirations were meant to be satisfied by understanding these multilayered constructions, which also provided hope and support in the fight for freedom. This mutual understanding was seen to support the wider struggle against Communism and feed both artists and spectators with the mental power to preserve Polish values that resisted the regime.

Additionally, there was further reason why the theatre under Communism ignored spectators. Repertory theatre, seen as ‘a primary instrument of social engineering’ that ‘was important in the ideological battle to create a new collective psyche or at least a vision of reality whereby lies would speak with the authority of truth’,\textsuperscript{22} was founded by the government in the 1940s. Although the funding was not lavish, it allowed for the creation of permanent ensembles and generous rehearsal time and experimentation, as well as giving actors and directors some job security.\textsuperscript{23} Filipowicz rightly notices that ‘Polish theatre artists were thus the envy of their Western colleagues.’\textsuperscript{24} However, ‘the subsidies also bred indifference, if not disdain, toward audiences. A theatre could ignore the box office and concentrate on high-brow festival fare which would command the respect of a few theatre critics.’\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{20} Ratajczakowa (2005), 20.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{22} Filipowicz (1992), 71.
\textsuperscript{23} The contracts weren’t seasonal, but permanent and often unlimited. Actors would, for instance, be often employed in the same theatre through their whole professional life, especially in theatres outside Warszawa.
\textsuperscript{24} Filipowicz (1995), 126.
\textsuperscript{25} Filipowicz (1992), 71-72.
This indifference towards the audience was rooted in the socialist custom of factories, offices and other employers bulk-buying tickets for certain productions and distributing them amongst their employees. Tickets would be paid for by the companies and a box office’s report would show sell-outs, but actors would often play to empty seats, as these free tickets did not always appeal to their recipients. A similar custom applied in schools, which were ‘obliged’ to culturally educate their pupils and therefore take classes of students to see matinee performances. The programming of repertory theatres was designed to provide a ‘standard offer’ that catered to everyone’s taste: ‘something from the Polish and foreign classics, something contemporary, something to laugh at, something from the school set texts, something for the kids and something for special occasions such as Christmas.’ Ratajczakowa described this way of programming as ‘repertoire cliché’, which was inherited by the post-1989 theatre and exists in some repertory theatres to this day.

The experience of the intelligentsia that regarded theatre-going as their ‘cultural duty’ appeared therefore in stark contrast to the negative reminiscences of those who were ‘forced’ to attend by their employers or teachers and found this experience of decoding messages and symbols inaccessible and off-putting. From the point of view of actors, performing in front of audiences who were uninterested, bored or misbehaving was also not an ideal experience. In such circumstances, communication between actors and spectators was nonexistent.

In addition, at the time of the political breakthrough in 1989, as theatre started to lose touch with reality, and newly-democratised politics became a forum for debate, Polish society turned actively towards public life rather than the theatre. After many decades of isolation, Poland had suddenly opened to news from abroad. Godlewska points out that television and cinema became strong competitors to theatre in the first years of freedom, especially as video rental shops appeared and took hold of the cultural life of the nation. Thus, theatre failed to respond to its new reality, as bluntly stated by Krystyna Meissner:

26 The cost of school tickets was usually covered by individual parents or by the parents’ committee.
27 This is different from the pantomime season in the UK. In Poland a Christmas performance would not necessarily be addressed to children. It would often have a serious, religiously orientated theme, e.g. evening of carols or recitation of poetry, etc. Sometimes, this would blend into the following carnival season and the performance would be more light-hearted, often music based. Ratajczakowa (2005), 20.
28 Ibid., 20.
29 See Ratajczakowa (2005), 23.
30 See Godlewska (2001), 301.
‘When the political reforms appeared, theatre became marginalized. […] Theatre was unable to meet the expectations of the new times. In this critical moment for the condition of Polish art, theatre was endlessly thinking whether to take part in reality or ignore it.\textsuperscript{31} Although it is unrealistic to expect clear-cut changes to take place within days or weeks of a political breakthrough, nevertheless theatre’s loss of identity became overwhelmingly evident and the inertia within it could not be overcome by theatremakers who tried to preserve theatrical traditions.

The political, social and economic reconstructions happening in Poland and within Polish society at the time created the ideal circumstances for the development of new thinking about theatre. Unlike their predecessors, Warlikowski and other directors of the ‘younger and more talented’ generation (despite this group’s lack of homogeneity) who witnessed the decline and behaviour of theatre audiences, saw a possible solution: restoring theatre’s communication with its audience and therefore luring spectators back to the theatres was a priority. But this new theatre and such changes could not come overnight. Instead, this was a gradual, lengthy process.

There is some consensus\textsuperscript{32} over the date that, in the eyes of many critics, symbolised the transition from the old to new theatre: 1997 (as we have already observed in chapter 1). As Drewniak explains:

> The term ‘new theatre’ groups various performances that are different in terms of stylistics and outlook, are created by young directors (who are between twenty something to forty years old), they are often coded towards their generational peer audience and made with significant input from the peer-actors, as well as performed in theatres that are run by artistic directors representing the same generation.\textsuperscript{33}

Evidently, the age is a dominant factor. Although the marketing slogans used by Warszawa’s Teatr Rozmaitości in the mid-1990s were ‘theatre for Dr. Martens’\textsuperscript{34} and ‘the fastest theatre in the city’, the practitioners of this new approach opposed age limitations. Piotr Cieplak, the author of these slogans and the artistic director of Rozmaitości between 1996 and 1998, (who is credited with paving the way for the biggest revolution in Polish post-Communist theatre initiated by Jarzyna and Krzysztof Warlikowski), observes:

\begin{itemize}
\item Meissner in Plata (2006b), 123.
\item See, for example: Plata (2006a), 227; Drewniak (2006), 103.
\item Drewniak (2006), 103.
\item Polish: ‘Teatr dla martensów’.
\end{itemize}
This declaration was humorous. … It is better to say ‘for Dr. Martens’ than saying modern or universal, because these words sound stupid and empty. When I became the director of Rozmaitości, Dr. Martens shoes made it easier for me to explain what I wanted to do, they replaced a manifesto. But of course, it wasn’t about checking spectators’ birth certificates. […] It wasn’t about any youthful activities, it was an attempt to save the remains of the world.\textsuperscript{35}

Trying to avoid platitudes, Cieplak developed a catchphrase that came to symbolise a new attitude to audiences. Furthermore, this also signified a shift in thinking how to attract audiences and utilise hitherto unused marketing tools:

Each theatre needs to advertise itself and have its marketing policy. [The slogan] was a pragmatic move but also slightly contrary. But I won’t hide that the young audience is the best audience, this is because they are live and open. Besides, this is a generation of people to whom theatre hasn’t given anything yet. Theatre must continuously make its audience younger. Even Coca-Cola needs to care about their customers and attract younger consumers all the time, so what about Rozmaitości.\textsuperscript{36}

A couple of crucial points about this new theatre arise here. Firstly, Cieplak expressed the need to apply a capitalist approach and make theatre responsible for its audiences. Secondly, this new theatre used language that was previously associated with the alternative movement. In fact, distinctions between alternative and institutional theatres were no longer relevant or necessary and this new theatre embraced influences from pop culture, film, music or other fields and by doing so appeared to counter the notion that theatre is ‘high art’ and therefore certain codes of communication were inappropriate.

Interestingly, it was this kind of language that attracted most criticism from the older generation of theatremakers. The aesthetics of this young theatre were criticised for succumbing to its audience’s tastes and expectations. More traditionally inclined critics objected to the use of the language of pop culture, regarding it as degrading and a threat to the existing order. Partly for this reason, Tomasz Mościcki,\textsuperscript{37} for instance, worried that ‘in a few seasons the division between professional and amateur theatre that had existed in the country for two hundred years will cease to be in force.’\textsuperscript{38} For Mościcki therefore, the biggest concern lay in the shifting boundaries and redefinition of a reality hitherto marked

\textsuperscript{35}‘Niektórzy przez teatr. Rozmowa Piotra Gruszczyńskiego z Piotrem Cieplakiem’ in Gruszczyński (2003b), 228.
\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., 228.
\textsuperscript{37}Tomasz Mościcki (b. 1965) has been working as a theatre critic for Po Prostu, Życie, the daily Dziennik and monthly Odra since the early 1990s.
by clear-cut dichotomies. Such an approach precludes the possibility of change – once established, the theatrical order has to exist in perpetuity.

Filipowicz’s summary of the conference entitled ‘Culture at the Time of Transformation’, shows that Mościcki’s way of thinking was widespread during the 1990s. The scholar observes that during one conference, only Lech Raczak ‘did not speak about popular culture with contempt. Theatre artists, he argues, will have to confront popular culture. To ignore it is intellectually naïve and artistically crippling.’ This aversion to popular culture was linked to the fear that the safe world of Communist theatre would cease to exist.

This rejection of low culture is a complex matter. In her Theatre Audiences, Bennett refers to the dependancy between high and low culture, and draws on the discussion of Stallybrass and White who observe that ‘because the higher discourses are normally associated with the most powerful socio-economic groups existing at the centre of cultural power, it is they who generally gain the authority to designate what is to be taken as high and low in society.’ Thus, Mościcki represents a group of critics who are trying to hold on to their status, one that is associated with the former political era, and regards theatre as ‘high art’, which ought to be sheltered from the influences of popular and low culture.

Such attitudes towards audiences and theatre’s mode of communication were at the core of the aftermentioned ‘war between old and new theatre’ of the post-1989 period. As Mościcki’s view illustrates, however, age did not necessarily determine one’s preferences for new or traditional values. Indeed, some of the most influential directors of the older generation – e.g. Jarocki who awarded Warlikowski during the Interpretacje Festival in 2003 – appreciated the work represented by the new theatre. For Mościcki however, the ideals of the old status quo were worth defending:

Theatre as well as good literature, ambitious music or fine arts are not for everyone. Good art is not democratic. In fact it is strictly aristocratic. One needs to mature to it, perhaps one will never do so, but in order to rise to it, one needs to make an intellectual effort. [...] The activities [of the young] negate history and the social mission of theatre in our country. Theatre has served society since the beginning of its existence. [...] Its greatest creators shaped the taste of their audience, with their grand productions they raised the cross bare of aesthetic requirements. [...] What

---

40 Quoted in Bennett (1997), 93.
41 This term has been frequently used in the media. For instance, Notatnik Teatralny entitled its 35th issue in 2004 ‘Wojna w polskim teatrze’ (The war in Polish theatre).
has been happening for some years now not only in Warszawa on Marszałkowska Street, but also in a significant part of Polish culture, flatters contemporary working-class Poles [...] - people who are reduced and stupefied by TV pulp and gibberish streamed from radios: the unlucky ones who think that going clubbing, being fashionable, enjoying the daft entertainment of the big cities and the idiotsim of cinema are cultural activities.

This elitist concept of a theatre that aims to educate, moralise, shape tastes and provide an example to its spectators, even against their will, could not be further removed from the aims of ‘the young theatre’. For this latter group, establishing contact with the audience was their main aim and they believed that communication had to take place in a language that their generation recognised and understood, rather than the patronising tone of those ‘who know and understand better’. In fact, as I stated at the beginning of this chapter, in the immediate post-1989 period, no alternative formula to the prevalent theatrical mode existed. There was a void: so these young directors appeared at the right moment and tried to fill in this gap with their own theatrical vision.

Meissner rightly observes that the young directors were the first to recognise that this new political situation brought some dangers in the sphere of private life and that this was itself a good subject for theatre: ‘They [young directors] had it easier, as they were starting from scratch, from nothing. They started to express their own fears and anxiety, and as it turned out later these were the feelings shared by their generation.’

As discussed in chapters 2 and 3, this view of theatre, based on the artists’ personal experience, lies at the core of Warlikowski and his ensemble’s work. Creating theatre that is founded on the private, individual experience of actors and their director constitutes the basis of their communication with their audience.

As I have argued throughout this thesis, Warlikowski has an ability to sense the Zeitgeist and the major concerns of his society in a given time and place. This ability enables him to connect to his audience by exposing the subjects and themes that concern them. Meissner sees this as the foundation of Warlikowski’s contact with his audience: ‘A clever
director senses the hunger of the audience, the themes that the audience needs in order to be moved. He knows what is fashionable and welcome. But what is dictated by the cleverness must be balanced with what one wants to say himself, with what he needs to shout about. As we have already argued, when examining the personal contributions of the ensemble and the director himself, the initial motivations for the creation of a performance always lie in the profound need to share a particular theme or story that is embedded in the private lives of its creators. The subjects therefore rise from within the director and his actors and not from a trend for certain themes. Nevertheless, Warlikowski's distinctive ability to sense and link the condition of his audience with his own experience and needs strengthens his opportunities to connect with his spectators.

Furthermore, with the political breakthrough of 1989, the culture of this period is characterised by a shift from the political to the private sphere. In one post-show discussion, Warlikowski states:

This theatre is the reflection of what is happening today in our heads and that we more often want to talk about ourselves. And we raise this voice about ourselves. Previously, it was always others who spoke on our behalf. We loved speeches and up to this day, creating a conversation in Poland is still difficult, because we don’t have this in our custom, we rather listen to our masters because we see it as a great opportunity to find something fascinating as if we didn’t have anything fascinating to say ourselves.

One can see that Warlikowski places himself in opposition to a world that is run by hierarchy. Corresponding with his collaborative manner of working with his ensemble as discussed in the previous chapters, Warlikowski uses the same principle to form a relationship with his audience, providing spectators with the possibility of expressing their own views. This allowance for an audience’s voice is also linked to the rise of the Internet which, as Ratajczakowa rightly observes, has ‘become the means of expression of mostly ordinary, young spectators’ who ‘joined in the arguments at the end of the 1990s, defending [...] the inevitable transformation of the theatre.’ Moreover, Warlikowski understands that the circumstances that surround the lives of his peers are much more

47 Meissner in Plata (2006b), 133.
48 Warlikowski in a recording of a postshow discussion on 18 October 2009 in Warszawa. The meeting was chaired by Piotr Gruszyński. This material was provided by Gazeta Świętojańska: www.youtube.com/watch?v=72v75vKnZ2Q [accessed on 11 August 2011] (2-3min into the recording).
49 See Ratajczakowa (2005), 23.
complex and multidimensional than the lives of their parents, and that theatre must respond and be sensitive to these shifts in order to establish meaningful contact with its audience.

One of the areas that seemed paradoxical to Warlikowski was the dissonance that he observed between life on the Polish streets and that expressed on stage. This realisation hit him during rehearsals for the first production of *Hamlet* he prepared at Teatr Rozmaitości in 1999: ‘it struck me how inadequate theatre was to Polish reality. In Warszawa one spoke a very different language, which did not resemble the romantic language of theatre in the early 1990s. I have the impression that we took a long-term break from ourselves’. Restoring this connection with ‘ourselves’ in theatre was somehow synonymous with dethroning theatre from its status as ‘high art’ which, as Ratajczakowa noticed, glorified theatre and treated it over-respectfully by imposing an aesthetic that would sustain its high profile.

According to Warlikowski, the intellect-driven approach towards theatre that dominated the former era acted as a means of escape from reality:

> The intelligentsia tried to create a form, which would oppose the pauperisation of our society. Dealing with the dark aspects of our existence wasn’t popular, while I wanted theatre to speak the language of the guts, the language of the streets [...] I thought that we were so unconventional in the streets and wondered why we suddenly tethered ourselves in theatre. [...] Thus I decided to dig out our brutality and transform it into a genuine and honest theatre.

To many critics and theatregoers, this radical way of treating the concerns of Polish society was difficult to accept and caused a vivid debate, as we shall argue in a further part of this chapter. This innovative approach, as he himself states, meant ‘starting everything from scratch’ and ‘building on ruins’, but importantly – as we have discovered in previous chapters - Warlikowski had a solid foundation gained through his experiences and contacts made when working and living in Poland and abroad. With such an underpinning, his work

---

51 In Radecki (2008).
52 Ratajczakowa (2005), 20.
53 Author’s interview with Warlikowski, (2007a).
54 Ibid.
and attitude towards his audience was – perhaps more so than for than any other young Polish director – bound to make a much stronger impact on the theatre of the time.

The reconfiguration of the audience’s position in the theatre-making process was closely linked to attitudes concerning theatre-going and what literature could be adapted for the stage. The legacy of the notion that visiting theatre was ‘every person’s cultural duty’ was, as Ratajczakowa notices, connected to the adaptations of classics and it needed to be demythologised and stripped of its elitist attitude: ‘The contemporary repertoire seemed to be a key factor in the process of change. It was connected to the search for a new language to re-establish the bond between the stage and the audience, in what had become a ruptured space with little contact.’ This view suggests that to restore communication with its audience, theatre should engage with matters that were relevant to the present day. This view also echoes Antonin Artaud’s belief that:

[W]e must finally do away with the idea of masterpieces. [...] Past masterpieces are fit for the past, they are no good to us. We have the right to say what has been said and even what has not been said in a way that belongs to us, responding in a direct and straightforward manner to present-day feelings everybody can understand.  

Contrary to Mościcki’s quest to sustain elitism in Polish theatre, Artaud criticizes any theatre that creates a barrier for mass audiences or is based on a snobbish mentality incomprehensible to larger audiences:

It is senseless to criticize the masses for having no sense of the sublime, when we ourselves confuse the sublime with one of those formal, moreover always dead exhibits. And if, for example, the masses today no longer understand Oedipus Rex; I would venture to say that Oedipus Rex is at fault as a play and not the masses. [...] If the masses do not frequent literary masterpieces, this is because the masterpieces are literary, that is to say set in forms no longer answering the needs of the times.  

Artaud’s manifesto certainly echoes the notion of theatre practised by Warlikowski, especially as the French creator of the ‘Theatre of Cruelty’ also believed that: ‘The public, which mistakes the bogus for truth, has the sense of what is true and always reacts to it when it appears. Today, however, we must look for it in the streets, not on stage.’  

---

55 Ratajczakowa (2005), 23.
56 Ibid., 23.
58 Ibid., 55-56.
59 Ibid., 57.
search for a less formalised mode of contact creates such an opportunity for an encounter between theatre and its audience.

When staging classic texts – whether it is an ancient text or Shakespeare – his approach towards these ‘masterpieces’ reflects Artaud’s call to make them accessible and situate them in the context of contemporary society. The breakthrough in Warlikowski’s understanding of his relationship with the audience came with his adaptation of a contemporary play, Koltés’ Roberto Zucco. As I argued in chapter 2, this production made Warlikowski realise that a true connection with an audience lies in the personal engagement of both director and actors alike. In this instance, the choice of the author whose experience of homosexuality and ‘foreigness’ mirrored Warlikowski’s, coupled with the story of an outsider who appears against society and the existing social order allowed the (mainly young) audience in Poznań to question their own existence in these new political and economical circumstances.

Unquestionably, another crucial aspect of Warlikowski’s successful communication with his audience, achieved for the first time at Teatr Nowy in Poznań, lied in the specificity of the working method he began to develop at the time. As I observed earlier, the actors’ personal involvement, especially Klijnstra, and their ability to draw on their private experience constituted the key attribute of this theatre. Significantly, this shift in focus from the political and universal to the individual and ‘lived-through’ experience does not claim to be representative or ever-lasting, but emphasizes its fleeting and temporary character, removes the notion of ‘intellectual duty’ and provides the audience with an opportunity for a direct experience. Such directness and this removal of a hierarchy require a different kind of engagement from Warlikowski’s spectators, and as a result, changes their status to that of co-authors of the performance.

Bodily co-presence of actors and spectators

In Warlikowski’s quest to re-establish the position of the audience within Polish theatre and create circumstances in which the encounter between actors and spectators could come into being, the director draws on a fundamental aspect of theatre, which is – as
defined by Simon Shepherd – ‘an art of bodies witnessed by bodies’.\textsuperscript{60} This simple definition points to the most intrinsic feature of theatre, which is the bodily co-presence of human beings in one space and at a given time. For Warlikowski, this physical co-presence offers opportunities to explore the potential interaction between actors and spectators that goes beyond the norms of Polish theatre.

Discussing the performative turn of culture in the 1960s, Fischer-Lichte draws on the work of Max Herrmann to discuss the changed nature of the relationship between actors and spectators. She quotes Herrmann to emphasise the character of this relationship:

[The] original meaning of theatre refers to its conception as social play – played by all for all. A game in which everyone is a player – actors and spectators alike… The spectators are involved as co-players. In this sense the audience is the creator of the theatre. So many different participants constitute the theatrical event that its social nature cannot be lost. Theatre always produces a social community.\textsuperscript{61}

She concludes that ‘the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators enables and constitutes performance.’ In fact, the condition for the birth of a performance is that ‘actors and spectators must assemble to interact in a specific place for a certain period of time’.\textsuperscript{62} The consequences of this shift lie in freeing spectators from their roles as decoders of meaning presented on stage by actors. Instead, they become active co-subjects: ‘Through their physical presence, perception, and response, the spectators become co-actors that generate the performance by participating in the ‘play’.’\textsuperscript{63} Based on this theory, I will examine the ways in which Warlikowski and his ensemble explore the opportunities offered by this shift in the status of the audience.

Firstly, it is worth noting that Polish repertory theatre is rooted in a text-based tradition of performance. To many Polish theatre practitioners, the strong link between theatre and language guaranteed an artistic value and importance, so anything that weakened this was not regarded as ‘real’ theatre. Such thinking was enforced by theatre historians, especially by Zbigniew Raszewski,\textsuperscript{64} author of the canonical \textit{Krótka historia teatru}

\textsuperscript{60} S. Shepherd, \textit{Theatre, Body and Pleasure} (London: Routledge, 2006), 63.
\textsuperscript{61} Herrmann quoted in Fischer-Lichte (2008), 32.
\textsuperscript{62} Fischer-Lichte (2008), 32.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 32.
\textsuperscript{64} Zbigniew Raszewski (1925 – 1992).
Raszewski’s understanding of theatre, which proclaimed the hegemony of text, determined the way that mainstream theatre was regarded in Poland under Communism and in the immediate post-Communist period. Recently, this thinking has been challenged by Dariusz Kosiński, who researches Polish theatre from the perspective of the performative turn and whose groundbreaking book *Teatra polskie* (2010) extends the notion of what constitutes Polish theatre.

As I discussed in chapter 3, the text remains the foundation of Warlikowski’s theatre but as a source of inspiration for the creators, who then filter it through their personal experiences and embody it in their corporeal presence on stage. Correspondingly, this attitude to the text resembles Artaud’s association of textual hegemony with a loss of contact with life and an abandonment of participation. This belief was the root of his proclamation: ‘we must first break theatre’s subjugation to the text and rediscover the idea of a unique language somewhere in between gesture and thought’. Releasing theatre from its textual dependance offered it the chance to search for a new language to bring the theatrical experience closer to life.

Warlikowski’s pledge to ‘speak the language of the streets’ is associated with a renewed focus on the human body in its entirety, including nudity. Since the beginning of Polish institutional theatre in 1765 onwards, nudity had rarely been seen on the Polish stage. This ‘resurrection’ of the body is a complex matter. In his appeal for a ‘celebration’ of the body, Warlikowski aspires to redefine the relationship that naturally and intrinsically exists between mind and body and, again, this thinking bears the stamp of Antonin Artaud.

An Artaudian vision of theatre asserts that ‘one cannot separate body and mind, nor the senses from intellect, particularly in a field where the unendingly repeated jading of our organs calls for sudden shock to revive our understanding’. Artaud suggests that

---

66 See also for example Z. Raszewski, *Teatr w świecie widowisk* (Warszawa: Krąg, 1991), 88.
67 Dariusz Kosiński (b. 1966).
70 Artaud (1970), 68.
71 The first Polish institutional theatre was founded in 1765 and shortly became known as Teatr Narodowy (National Theatre). This date is regarded as the beginning of Polish repertory theatre.
72 Ibid., 66.
theatre should aim ‘at the whole anatomy’. This aspiration could not be realised without uniting the body with the intellect, without re-establishing the body within the theatre and bringing it centrestage. In his essay, *On Affective Athleticism*, Artaud accuses European actors of doing ‘nothing but talk’, they ‘have forgotten that they have a body.’ For Artaud, the amalgamation of the actor’s body and emotions is the crucial condition that affects the audience physically (or rather anatomically). He argues: ‘the key to throwing the audience into a magical trance is to know in advance what pressure points must be affected in the body’.

Warlikowski does not aim to grant the body hegemony within performance, but to redefine its status on stage, reminding us of the intrinsic nature of human existence, which is inherently connected to the mind. In order to achieve this, Warlikowski uses various staging methods to break the distance between the auditorium and the performance space. Consequently, in traditional theatre, the spectator as ‘observer’ remains passive. They enter the theatre venue with the expectation that occupying a seat in the auditorium guarantees their untouchable presence in the darkness throughout the performance. As we shall argue here, Warlikowski’s practice undermines the safety of the auditorium seat.

Undoubtedly in Warlikowski’s theatre, Szczęśniak’s set designs play an important role in initiating the audience’s participation, in line with Artaud’s belief that ‘in order to affect every facet of the spectator’s sensibility, we advocate a revolving show, which instead of making stage and auditorium into two closed worlds, without any possible communication between them, will extend its visual and oral outbursts over the whole mass of spectators.’ Szczęśniak observes: ‘Spectators should be pulled into the directness of being with the actor. The spaces between actors and spectators should interlink energetically and it is best when they are mutually open, when I, as a spectator can access deeply into the world of the actor.’ The spectator is often drawn into this world by, for instance, the positioning of mirrors that, as in the adaptation of *Angels in America*, constitute the back of the stage and therefore, spectators cannot avoid catching their reflection while watching the stage happenings. In *The Tempest*, mirrors are placed in the floor, so the

73 Ibid., 95.
74 Ibid., 95.
75 Artaud (1970), 66.
76 Szczęśniak in K. Łuszczyk, ‘Przestrzeń jako miejsce spotkania’, Notatnik Teatralny, 28-29 (2003), 71-80 (p. 79).
audience sitting in first rows observe themselves through these mirrors. Another way of achieving this is through situating the audience directly on stage, as takes place in Warlikowski’s production of *The Bacchae*. Some audience members are placed along both side walls and become a part of the events on stage. Certainly, it is difficult to separate their presence from what happens at the centre of the stage, as they are there, at the heart of things with their feet half-entwined with the sand that covers the stage, brightly lit and witnessing the events, as the three elderly Bacchae (Stanisława Celińska, Maria Maj and Aleksandra Konieczna), who are portrayed as devout Catholic women and also play the role of Chorus, comment on events and never leave the stage.

This model in which members of the audience not only become part of the stage microcosm, but are also placed in a position to observe and be observed by fellow spectators represents Warlikowski’s concept of bodies witnessed by other bodies. Hajewska-Krzysztofik, who played the part of Agave in the final scene of *The Bacchae*, acknowledges the proximity of this co-presence:

> The audience in Krzysiek’s performances sit so close […] that sometimes I have a spectator closer to me than my stage partner and very often their eyes speak a lot. As in *The Bacchae* when I wallow in the sand and I’ve just given birth to Pentheus’ head, but I’m still in this state from Kithairon and I tie his head to the [wooden] post and I look at these people and I always have this feeling that people don’t want to look at me, that they regret that they are sitting there and they would like to leave… These are for me the most amazing moments in theatre. […] This for sure is some kind of encounter. It would be great if there were some kind of a tool that could measure what is happening between us.  

If such tool existed, it would most certainly show a range of responses and would presumably contain contrasting feelings. For now, what we can observe are the physical reactions of audience members who are faced with such unwanted proximity that it makes them feel uncomfortable and vulnerable. I remember my own feelings of discomfort when in one performance of Warlikowski’s *The Bacchae*, I sat on the stage opposite the three Bacchae who started taking their bras off and showing their breasts, touching and caressing themselves as they experienced the elation of joining the cult of their newly discovered god, Dionysus. It was not my first performance of *The Bacchae*, and I knew what was going to happen, but because I was placed on stage – just a few metres away from the Bacchae.

---

77 In Euripides’ tragedy Agave thinks that she has just killed the lion, so she brings her trophy to show to everyone as a proof of her bravery. Instead, it appears that she has killed her son, Pentheus.  
78 Author’s interview with Hajewska-Krzysztofik.
slowly attempting to catch my eyes – and because I was aware that I was sitting in the
direct view of another two hundred spectators who watched me ‘spectating’ and observed
my reactions, I did feel as though my privacy was being taken away from me. The lack of
darkness typically experienced in theatre also made me control my own reactions – until I
noted the more extreme reaction of the man sitting next to me. This man, in his early
fifties, was in the theatre alone (as I observed later), dressed elegantly and professionally in
a suit, and was so stressed and embarrassed: covering his eyes, changing his positions,
trying not to look in the Bacchae’s direction. But the more he nervously moved in his seat,
the greater the attention he received from the elderly Bacchae, who touched themselves
with more ferocity and excitement desperately trying to establish eye-contact with this
gentleman, whose suit was already half-wet, as we sat next to the pool filled with water into
which the characters jumped from time to time, splashing water all over us. I was curious
to know whether this man had had any knowledge of Warlikowski’s theatre beforehand
and whether he had known that he was going to watch such a show – one that does not
attempt to create the pleasant, relaxing entertainment of standard repertory theatre. Did he
know there would be no interval and he would be forced to remain in his seat for over two
hours, watched by two hundred others? His proximity to me and the strong physical
manifestation of his experience of being there, intensified my own perception of the
performance, and although I had seen the show previously, the performance described
here has been engraved firmly in my memory. When I think about this production, I also
think of this gentleman, as we would have somehow been connected for a couple of hours
in the centre of the Bacchae’s cult. Whether I want it or not, this stranger became a
significant part of my own memory of that evening. And this memory is as much physical
as mental – as even now, a few years since this happened, my own feelings of discomfort
arise when I remember his clear embarrassment.

Szczęśniak tries to explain the goal that the creators are aiming for in their theatre:

The best for me is the feeling of total togetherness, togetherness of space, without
borders and a distance. [...] I think it is good when spectators see each other, that
they sit around the stage and that they observe each other. This makes them co-
responsible; the mechanism for the participation of the audience is perhaps the
most thrilling element of theatre-making. Such theatre ceases to be aesthetic,
illusional, it becomes ritual and ideological. I think Krzysztof’s theatre is more and more becoming such a theatre.79

I will return to the notion of ritual further in this chapter, but in the context of Szczęśniak’s words I will first explore this issue of togetherness that is crucial for an understanding of Warlikowski’s theatre. Helen Freshwater states:

Several barriers block a better understanding of the relationship between theatre and its audiences. One is the tendency to confuse individual and group response; another is the persistent circulation of exaggerated and unsubstantial claims about theatre’s influence and impact.80

In the light of this observation, I wonder how much of my reaction to stage events in The Bacchae influenced my perception of my neighbour’s responses. His body language certainly told a story that could be interpreted there and then, but on a deeper level, his experience of the show – as well as everyone else’s – was strongly embedded in his own life experience and remains inaccessible to anyone else. The words of Freshwater echo Warlikowski’s often-expressed statements about the individuality of the spectator:

So it is important to remember that each audience is made up of individuals who bring their own cultural reference points, political beliefs, sexual preferences, personal histories, and immediate preoccupations to their interpretation of a production.81

Warlikowski’s performances are built with regard to this fact and he is eager to welcome the multiplicity of responses to his work, whether they are positive or negative and whether his work makes spectators stay or leave the theatre. In his practice, Warlikowski is however very much aware of this complex feeling of togetherness mixed with loneliness. Tim Etchells puts it:

Watching the best theatre and performance we are together and alone. Together in the sense that we’re aware of the temporary and shifting bonds that link us both to the stage and to our fellow watchers, plugged into the group around and in front of us, the communal situation, sensing the laughter, attentiveness, tension or unease that grip us collectively, in waves and ripples, in jolts, jumps and uncertain spirals or in other formations that do not yet have a name. Sat watching we spread-out, osmose, make connections. But at the same time, even as we do so, we feel our separateness, our difference from those around us, from those on-stage. Even as we shift and flow within the group, we’re aware that our place in its emerging consensus, its temporary community, is partial and provisional – that in any case

79 Ibid., 79.
80 H. Freshwater, Theatre and Audience, Foreword by Lois Weaver (Houndmills, Basingstoke, 2009), 5.
81 Ibid., 5-6.
the group itself – there is the theatre, as elsewhere, in our cities and streets, in the
relations between nations, peoples and states – is always as much a fraught and
necessary question, a longing and a problem, as it is any kind of certainty.\footnote{82}

The notion of the provisional and temporary sense of community plays a particularly
important role in Warlikowski’s theatre. What rings true in the context of Etchells’
statement is the continuous juggling between a sense of being linked to the others and
concurrently remaining a separate being. That was certainly my experience as a spectator of
\textit{The Bacchae}. Being placed in the middle of the stage action, I had an overwhelming feeling
of connection with both actors and fellow spectators, but concurrently, I felt detached and
overwhelmed by the intensity of my own responses. This feeling of isolation was enforced
by the awareness that I was being watched and that my individual reactions could affect the
reaction of others.

Colette Conroy points out another important aspect to this bodily co-presence that
we experience during performance: ‘our ability to live in society, and also part of our ability
to watch theatre, is based on the fact that when we look at other people we imagine that
their subjective experiences are analogous to our own.’\footnote{83} As I have observed throughout
this thesis, and particularly in chapter 3, this potential is particularly reinforced in
Warlikowski’s theatre by the actors’ personal involvement in rehearsals, which makes the
events on stage more credible for an audience. Such close links with life and the actors’
compatibility with the surrounding world are mainly achieved through improvisation.

Heddon and Milling link improvisation with the emergence of devised performance:

\ldots the use of improvisation presupposed that a performer had an inner creativity
that had been repressed, socialised, censored or hidden. \ldots Improvisation was the
means by which this ‘return’ to the prelapsarian innocence of creativity could be
achieved.\footnote{84}

But for Warlikowski and his ensemble, apart from being an excellent tool to stimulate and
encourage focus during rehearsals, improvisation is also often used as a means to
communicate with the audience. It is common for Warlikowski’s actors to introduce new
elements to live performance without practising or testing them earlier in rehearsals. In
more traditionally understood theatres, this can be considered as ‘bad form’ as it can

\footnotetext{82}{T. Etchells, \textit{Programme Notes}, (p.26) quoted in Freshwater (2009), 7.}
\footnotetext{83}{C. Conroy, \textit{Theatre and the Body}. Foreword by Marina Abramovic (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave
Macmillan, 2010), 26.}
\footnotetext{84}{Heddon and Milling (2006), 30.}
‘throw’ one’s fellow performers, so again Warlikowski’s actors are very free and open to each other’s invention – and trust that they can all cope with whatever arises from it. The actors improvise in front of the audience following suggestions that come up as a result of Warlikowski’s omówienia (commentaries) after each performance. The director states: ‘Actors believe that certain things can be introduced only with the presence of the audience. I think that the audience is already fully present in their acting and is discreetly involved in the performing’. 85

This statement points to a very important aspect of Warlikowski’s theatre-making process. On the one hand, this live improvisation shows the amount of trust Warlikowski puts in his actors, enabling them to devise new versions of the performance without his prior approval. On the other hand, this also illustrates the ensemble’s approach towards its audience, which is embedded in this performance process. The spectators are seen not as judging observers, but are entrusted with participation in the active development of the performance. This improvisation often involves actors seeking direct contact with the audience through eye contact, physical touch, pointing a camera directly at the spectators and projecting such an image on stage, etc. In other words, this improvisation is conditioned by the spectators’ bodily presence in the auditorium: without them there is no space to devise new material or developing the performance any further.

Furthermore, the conviction of Warlikowski’s actors who believe that certain elements can only be introduced in the presence of an audience, raises the status of the audience by giving them the role of co-authors. This seems also to illustrate Abramovic’s belief that: ‘The performer uses the public like a mirror and vice versa.’ 86 This live improvisation also demonstrates once again the close-knit relationships that exist within Warlikowski’s ensemble, which give his actors the confidence to improvise on the spot in front of the audience. This becomes possible thanks to the longevity of the time the ensemble spends together and the nature of their relationships. They know each other enough to be able to put themselves at risk, open themselves to the unexpected that may come from their stage partners.

Warlikowski’s approach to treating the audience as an element of performance creation is parallel to the ideals practised by Brook:

85 In Gruszczyński (2007), 146.
The only thing that all forms of theatre have in common is the need for an audience. This is more than a truism: in the theatre the audience completes the steps of creation. In the other arts, it is possible for the artist to use as his principle the idea that he works for himself [...] and if he is satisfied when standing alone with his completed work, the chances are that other people will be satisfied too. In the theatre this is modified by the fact that the last lonely look at the completed object is not possible – until an audience is present, the object is not complete.\textsuperscript{87}

As for Abramovic, the audience appear in Brook’s observation as a mirror in which the authors of the show testify their ideas. Such performances are however bound to occasionally disintegrate. Moreover, to the ensemble, the production’s premiere is not the final, fixed product of the ensemble’s work, which sets the production in stone, rather a work-in-progress. The performance is never fully completed and is continuously open to events in the actors’ lives, on and off the stage. As a result Warlikowski’s performances ‘waver’:

[...] there are sometimes performances where some actors or some scenes simply fall apart. Because without this under-skin communication and immaterial energy, there is not much left in this theatre. This [...] can be irritating, annoying, tiresome and obvious. Although, on the other hand, if we manage to achieve this kind of involvement and distance, the exchange of this energy takes place, and we let ourselves be lead by that, we reach the peaks.\textsuperscript{88}

The risks associated with this kind of approach are enormous. On the one side, the experience of a performance that fails to reach this level of ‘under-skin communication’ might be limited and as a consequence, may undermine the whole idea of contact with an audience that lies at the core of Warlikowski’s theatre-making. But, concurrently, when things go well and the energy is situated in the right place, there is a lot to gain from such an approach, for both actors and audience alike.

Lupa, to whom the roots of Warlikowski’s thinking can be traced, juxtaposes this approach with more traditional methods. Traditional acting is, for him, characterised by ‘a certain order, certain continuum of intonations and movements, which the actor prepares and arranges within himself and then executes.’\textsuperscript{89} While the alternative method is constituted by ‘improvisational performing, the condition of the inner monologue that makes contact with the space and the stage partner. This condition requires, as a

\textsuperscript{87} Brook (1968), 142.
\textsuperscript{88} Author’s interview with Poniedziałek.
\textsuperscript{89} Lupa (2003b), 278.
prerequisite, an absolute opening, a joyfully open state of soul. The difference between these two approaches is illustrated in the fact that a conventional stage actor ‘even in the moment of stress and anxiety … is able to play his role in the approximate shape’ while actor who begins with the contact and inner monologue is not able to ‘enter into the playing’. He is not able to get into the contact with his partner and as a last resort, he reaches for a conventional approach, which means that he tries to recreate what he has preserved in the superficial (noting the facts of his body) memory, but this is preserved (prepared) in a much worse manner than it would be in a traditional part. Mainly, because the whole intention behind it is to make it unprepared… The result is the loss of the character, its life instinct … and obviously – in a general sense – the loss of the living reality.

Lupa appreciates that this method is challenging, even to more experienced actors who are familiar with this type of theatre. However, he believes that such an approach is future-orientated and that ‘through this condition an actor can cross the border of illustrative theatre and become a tool of a creative medium, and that only through this condition is he is able to discover in today’s theatre the mission of participation and priesthood in the ritual.’ Lupa recognises the main weakness of such an approach: the lack of a safety net when actors fail to accomplish a state of collective involvement. Such a compromise, however, although sensible in terms of reducing risks, would deprive such theatre of a crucial ingredient: the opportunity to access something specific and normally unreachable: meaningful contact with the audience.

One of Warlikowski’s productions that best demonstrates this form of acting, rooted in ‘absolute opening’, is Cleansed. Referring to the production’s showcase in Thessalonica in April 2008, after an eighteen-month interval during which the play was not performed, Hajewska-Krzysztofik described the circumstances of its revival as follows:

We’d forgotten the text. But when we’d gone over it once, it came back immediately. Everything that was inscribed in our bodies was still there, it never left. It’s inscribed so deeply; the body has its own memory. It was so developed, like my actual life itself.

---

90 Ibid., 278-279.
91 Ibid., 279.
92 Ibid., 279.
93 Author’s interview with Hajewska-Krzysztofik.
Hajewska-Krzysztofik’s testimony hints at the unusual extent to which the performed material becomes an intrinsic part of the actors’ lives. This kind of investment made it possible for this production to break many barriers that existed in Polish theatre at the time, particularly those regarding the depiction of the human body and nudity in general.

The play follows simultaneous storylines: the incestuous kinship between Grace and her brother, the story of homosexual love between Rod and Carl, and finally the story of Tinker and his relationship with a female stripper. Cleansed is a story about love, but the notion of love used by Kane concerns homosexual and incestuous feelings. This was difficult enough to accept in liberal Britain when the show premiered in 1998 at the Royal Court Theatre, but it elicited a real outburst of protest in mainly Catholic and conservative Poland. The explicit, uncompromising nudity, the operation of a phalloplasty and acts of lovemaking (although never depicted on stage) resulted in an interesting range of pejorative labels and expressions being applied to the production, such as ‘pornography’, ‘feast of dirt’, ‘sexual restroom’, ‘sex and secretions’. There was a clear division between those who managed to see the outstanding qualities of this production and those whose main attention focused on listing the play’s atrocities and protesting against its illustration of a homosexual relationship. For months afterwards, the Polish media was filled with conflicting views on the limits of theatre, endorsing or denying its right to openly represent human sexuality. It is not possible to discuss this argument fully here, but what is important in the context of this thesis is the issue of nudity, which became the subject of the most fierce public debate.

There are two scenes in this production that caused the greatest controversy. One of the scenes concerns the love-making between Tinker (Bonaszewski) and a female peep-show dancer (Celińska). Nothing is depicted literally. Celińska and Bonaszewski sit on the floor facing the audience. Celińska whom the audience saw a few scenes earlier in a peep-show dance, now exposes her breasts while Bonaszewski masturbates with his hands in his trousers. Although the description may suggest a literal depiction of this scene, apart from the exposed breasts of Celińska, the actors do not touch each other and there is no eye

94 Part of this discussion of Cleansed is based on my article ‘Coming Out of the Closet: Or What “You Shouldn’t See” in the Adaptation of Sarah Kane’s Cleansed, Directed by Krzysztof Warlikowski’ in R. Ganis, ed., Displacement and Belonging in the Contemporary World (Salford: The European Studies Research, University of Salford, 2008), 81-94. The article was based on my conference paper, presented during the Postgraduate Conference at the University of Salford in September 2007.

contact between them. Warlikowski uses light and music to contribute to this scene, which has a dream-like character. He follows Kane’s hope of staging *Cleansed* so that shocking situations can be transformed into poetic, almost beautiful images. As Meissner pointed out:

Warlikowski’s *Cleansed*, despite the drastic themes, is very poetic. I have seen much more drastic adaptations of this play … where there were literal and very brutal scenes of cutting one’s fabricated limbs. Krzysztof managed to find some kind of a metaphor for these acts. This is why his show has been so successful and has travelled around the world, and is praised for its form and bravery.  

The second scene presents the gay couple, Rod (Poniedziałek) and Carl (German guest actor, Thomas Schweiberer) sitting next to each other in chairs in front of the audience. Their genitals were clearly visible to the audience and as such may be regarded as a disturbing image, especially for those who regard nudity – for mainly religious reasons – as something sinful and forbidden and thus unsuitable for public display. However, Warlikowski uses the human body as a metaphor, with full awareness that naked flesh still carries a very strong emotional charge in Polish theatre and art in general. Here, nudity illustrated the natural and integral part of a human being. And as such, it also symbolises an intrinsic form of identity. The problem with his show for many lay in the fact that the adaptation broke a taboo in Polish society: no-one before had presented homosexual love on stage in such a powerful and explicit fashion. It is also significant that it was not the torture performed by the authoritarian Tinker on both lovers (this torture was again not shown literally), but rather the homosexual relationship between Carl and Rod itself, which lies at the heart of the play, that caused the greatest public outrage. Warlikowski noticed:

The audience of my premiere performance appeared to be more shocked by a couple of kissing men than the cutting of legs and feet. This laughter that expresses a kind of racism that destroys all kinds of humanism – it does not matter what happened to this couple; the most controversial issue is their homosexual love. In this sense the text blows up all social prejudices.

The social mission attached to this adaptation was associated with the show from the very beginning. Warlikowski admits:

I wanted to impose something that we cannot see on the streets but that Western societies experience every day, for instance men who hold hands, men who kiss. In

---

Poland such images would cause spitting or fighting. I wanted to open something up for those whose lives are suppressed. I wanted to support Poles’ need to search for their sexual identity.98

Warlikowski not only brought this theme to the Polish stage but initiated its legitimate existence in the public domain. It is significant that homosexuality’s ‘coming out’ in public began on stage in Poland. The idiosyncratic ability of theatre to question and destabilise its spectators’ constructions of identity triggered a fierce debate in Poland about identity and belonging. Significantly, the most conservative critics99 believed that the issues shown in Cleansed were characteristic of ‘Western, middle-class societies’.100 To them therefore talking about homosexuality in Poland presented an ‘artificial’ problem, alien to Polish society. However, critics who managed to see beyond this ‘sexual aberration’101 noticed that Warlikowski’s production gave a platform for the taboo area of human sexuality that until that moment had been discriminated and ignored in the Polish public domain.102

Interestingly, both of the examples above from Cleansed reflect what Conroy states when referring to Grosz: ‘In the introduction to Volatile Bodies (1994), feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grosz accuses Western philosophy of exhibiting ‘a profound somatophobia’ (p.5), by which she means hatred and fear of the body.’103 This attitude towards the body is linked to certain traditions and conventions that function in the given society and ‘determine the sorts of body we expect to see on stage’.104 As I have discussed in chapters 2 and 3, Warlikowski has a tendency to cast actors against the conventional portrayals of certain characters. The casting of Celińska as a peep-show dancer is also a further example of this. We observed in the previous chapter the complicated process that led to the preparation for this show and the difficulty the actor had in creating this character, the actor’s investment and continuous effort to overcome her own fears and prejudices relating to the power of love and the exposure of her aged, corpulent and naked body to public

98 In Gruszczyński (2007), 125.
100 Kopciński (2002), 256.
102 See my article, ‘Coming Out…’ for further discussion on this show.
103 Conroy (2010), 18.
104 Ibid., 34.
scrutiny. The bravery of the actor and her determination – despite many ups and down, escapes and returns to work on the show – in conquering her personal uncertainties and fears, resulted in a performance that, as we already noted, was compared to Grotowski’s ‘total act’.

Moreover, because of the novel way in which Warlikowski used the body on stage, breaking the taboo associated with homosexual love, it was very difficult to find a second actor to play Poniedziałek’s homosexual partner. Meissner reminiscences: ‘This is why we had to use a German actor. I don’t want to talk about names but the search among Polish actors was unsuccessful. Nobody wanted to expose himself in this way, as a clear-cut homosexual. [...] At the time this was unthinkable to many.’ This therefore shows the prejudice and difficulty Warlikowski had in breaking Polish prejudices regarding what kind of bodies theatre should depict – applicable to both actors and spectators alike.

As I shall go on to observe, the reactions of the audience were as fierce as the outrage of the critics: spectators often left the auditorium, or manifested their disapproval or indifference (as well as more enthusiastic responses that, as we will see from Hajewska, broke the rules of existing audience behaviour and the traditional distance between actors and spectators). Meissner, who encouraged this adaptation and offered Warlikowski a space to rehearse in and premiere the production, provides an interesting observation on his theatre:

In my opinion *Cleansed* is one of the best, if not the best of Warlikowski’s performances. [...] The show could be seen as the bravest of Warlikowski’s adaptations also because it appeals to the sphere of emotions in the strongest way, intellectual reflection comes much later, after one has seen it. [...] In his theatre the time between emotional and intellectual experience is extended. He operates with emotions all the time. Similarly to Krystian Lupa and Grzegorz Jarzyna. They all know that spectators come to theatre to sit in a chair and identify with somebody, and understand the matter, but this happens through emotions; the reflection comes much later.106

This therefore represents an important element in Warlikowski’s shift from the intellectualisation found in existing Polish theatre and his attempt to bring theatre closer to everyday life: we hardly ever react intellectually before we react emotionally. Warlikowski relies on the body and its presence on stage to open up and provoke the audience’s

106 Ibid., 243.
emotional reaction. What his theatre did here in the most significant way was question the theatrical conventions prevalent under Communism that were based on decoding messages engraved in complex layers of performance. Warlikowski confronted his audience, with their middle-class culture, and showed them ‘how far the contemporary human being has distanced himself from the approach to a human being that existed in ancient Greece, with its cult of the human body expressed in beautiful statues, which Christianity covered with leaves. It showed how much our culture has become bourgeois and how much we censor the human image today.’

Warlikowski was not the first director in Polish theatre to use the image of the naked body on stage. Dziewulska writes about the reaction of critics to Grotowski’s and Swinarski’s performances (namely Akropolis, Apocalypsis cum figuris and Nie-Boska Komedia) that contained (or planned to contain, as in the case of Swinarski’s unstaged Hamlet) some brave scenes. Interestingly, she also suggests that the reason that reactions to Warlikowski’s adaptation of Kane were often so extreme and negative in comparison was the fact that Grotowski’s and Swinarski’s works were based on the literary canon. She asks: ‘Was the [confrontation of the Polish audience] rooted in more noble matter than the scenes from Cleansed? Was it ennobled by the names of authors such as Wyspiański or Krasiński? The contemporary and intellectually modest text of Kane is difficult to compare with them. Those productions were certainly effectively protected by some kind of high, intellectual agenda’ while, as she rightly points out, ‘Warlikowski does not make use of this protection.’ As the critic rightly notices, Warlikowski walks a separate path. By separating himself from Polish classic literature and immersing himself in the work of a foreign playwright, seen as an ‘enfant terrible’ of British theatre, Warlikowski exposes himself even further. I shall observe the consequences of taking such a risk.

The experience of liminality

One of the central attributes of Krzysztof Warlikowski’s theatre is, in my opinion, its ability to provide an experience of liminal states, of ‘in-betweenness’. This kind of ‘threshold-like’

---

experience has the potential of transformative power that can affect anyone who participates in its creation, actors or audience alike. Fischer-Lichte provides an interesting definition of such an event:

In times of an entertainment and event culture that is marked by an every growing aestheticisation of one’s daily surroundings “disinterested and free pleasure” does not seem the appropriate emotion to transfer the subject into a liminal state. Instead, the subject requires a disruption both of the “sense” and of “reason” through irritation, the collision of frames, and the destabilisation of perceiving oneself, others, and the world. In short, stimulating crises seems the much more appropriate vehicle for achieving liminal states. Crises enable deeply disturbing experiences which can effect transformation in those who live through them.109

Further to what we have already seen in our discussion of Cleansed above, I will examine Warlikowski’s continuous destabilisation and questioning of the existing order to provoke his audiences into redefining their own attitudes and the images they hold about the surrounding world. This encounter with either subjects or images that have the power to influence one’s thinking lies at the heart of Warlikowski’s practice and to some extent, they are also part of the Polish theatrical tradition of the ‘theatre of transformation’, rooted in the Romantic tradition that entails a search for the mythical, universal core of human existence. Created by Kosiński,110 this notion is based on the work of Poland’s Romantic poet, Adam Mickiewicz and covers the work of such artists as Juliusz Osterwa or Jerzy Grotowski. This transformative concept has contributed to theatre’s privileged position in Polish society, one that opposes the notion of theatre as entertainment, seeing it instead as a sacred space. Plata sees a link between this tradition of transformation and the disturbing experience Warlikowski’s theatre tends to offer:

Touching trauma— that could be described as Warlikowski’s shortest way to irritate the audience, and in consequence: taking them out of the existing way of thinking, forcing them to take a position, in order to finally expand the space for what can be expressed loudly in the public discourse.111

Plata recognises social engagement or social duty as something that ‘has been the main duty of our stage for many years.’112

According to Abramovic, in Western societies: ‘it is necessary to have some trauma, some terrible tragedy in your private life, to be able to make a mental leap; perhaps

111 Plata (2006a), 230.
112 Ibid, 231.
somebody dies, or you have an operation, or you clinically die and then recover. In Eastern cultures altered states of minds are often a matter of education and bodily practice.\footnote{Abramovic (2010), ix.}

The opinions of spectators who participated in a post-show discussion of *Cleansed* are most revealing in this context. Some members of the audience felt that the play touched contemporary issues in Polish society:

This performance is a brave attempt to establish a dialogue about issues that don’t want to be discussed and are usually ignored with bashful silence.

It’s good that this is written [by Kane] that way. Maybe our society that operates with stereotypes and dogmas will at last understand that ‘otherness’ that these people condemn in their narrow-minded and limited outlook, is equally good, true and as normal as their specifically understood norms.\footnote{Quoted in Wilniewczyc (2003b), 169, 170.}

But such a view was not homogenous: some spectators could not identify with the events on stage. One participant confessed:

I was detached from it all the time. The show is powerful in terms of stage vision. I watched the set, followed the lighting design, I looked at the acting, but all of this came to me separately. [...] I could not identify with the characters. [...] I cannot agree with such a vision. I don’t think that only evil exists and that a human being is helpless in the face of it. I regret that Warlikowski’s audience believed in that.\footnote{Ibid. 172-173.}

Another spectator revealed:

Warlikowski tired me … This is a psychodrama that contains so much evil, ill visions and brutality that it can be disgusting to the audience and make them indifferent, or even blunt their sensitivity. For me, this extract was indigestible, because I doubted the truth of it.\footnote{Ibid, 169.}

What is striking in these statements is the discussion of values, the way in which spectators filter events onstage through their own hierarchy of values.

There is also evidence that some of the audience came to the theatre with preconceptions that were most likely derived from the show’s media coverage. To some however, personal engagement with the show, altered their view: ‘I went to see it with a lot of reservation and with the belief that I would leave outraged after the first scene […]. But I stayed until the end.’\footnote{Ibid, 169.}
Lupa’s reminiscence of watching Warlikowski’s early staging of Vişniec’s *Old Clown Wanted* at Stary Teatr in Kraków provides a crucial explanation of the audience’s experience of Warlikowski’s productions:

I saw this performance and I was enchanted with its aura, its space and — I now notice this — something new and risky in the relationships… how to define this? […] it was something… like a violation of dignity! Not only the personal dignity of the character, but the violation of the narrative, the violation of the narrator, but in some kind of indecent fascination. Going all the way… The self-respected spectator felt embarrassed and offended. The whole horde of self-respected spectators, the whole horde of self-respected critics felt offended in their dignity. Fair play was violated.\(^\text{118}\)

Evident in Lupa’s observation is the effect of the unusual level of involvement of the actors, the ‘indecent fascination’ with which they approach their characters and create the stage microcosm. The issue of violation applies to both the initial creators of performance (the actors) and those who come to participate in it unprepared, and is quite significant. As one of the spectators of *Cleansed* noticed:

There were moments I stopped feeling like I was in the theatre. I don’t like to spy on people. I think this is an abuse. The director stimulated between me and the actors a relationship that I hadn’t agreed to. […] In this performance the spectator is provoked to a dialogue outside the conventions of theatre, but this isn’t an entirely honest game.\(^\text{119}\)

Establishing new rules of experiencing performance from both sides — actors and audience — or more precisely, questioning such existing rules, lies at the heart of Warlikowski’s practice. The variety and complexity of his audience’s responses proves the remarkable strength of experience this practice triggers.

Drawing on psychoanalysis, Niziołek argues that with his production of *Hamlet*, Warlikowski began creating ‘theatre for neurotics’. The scholar suggests that only neurotics would find theatre that exposes hidden and rejected sources of suffering pleasurable. This experience of pleasure — defined as ‘the increased tension of a mental state’\(^\text{120}\) — is concurrently combined with resistance. Niziołek attributes the phrase of *extra ecclesiam* to the theatre of Warlikowski and the experience of his audiences, which is synonymous with a loss of spirituality and a state of non-salvation. It seems significant to notice here that

\(^{118}\) Lupa (2003a), 38.

\(^{119}\) In Wilniewczyc (2003b), 174.

\(^{120}\) Freud quoted in Niziołek (2008), 56.
Niziołek solely associates the notions of neurosis and *extra ecclesiam* with the experience of the audience, entirely neglecting the role of its creators, who, I would like to claim, play a crucial role in both triggering such an audience’s reaction, but also, and perhaps more significantly, undergo a similar process of ‘exposing the sources of suffering’ themselves.

The examples of the actors’ engagement in the production of *Cleansed* that I cited in chapter 3 illustrate explicitly ‘the vision of an uncured trauma, the heroism of a constant rupture, the shedding of light on wounds inflicted in darkness’ which Niziołek recognises in Warlikowski’s work as borrowed from Freudian theory and therefore must also apply to its creators, namely the actors. Moreover, it appears that there is a direct parallel between the involvement of the actors and the intensity of the spectators’ experience. As we have seen in the examples mentioned earlier, this ‘incurable sickness of life’ and the scars with which they enter Warlikowski’s theatre creates the foundation for the performance to come into being. The authorship of performance that these actors share with their director (and their other collaborators) equips them with the apparatus to access their inner worlds and draw on this experience in the creation of the performance. However, as Celińska states: ‘all this [involvement] is deeply emotional and happens on extremely personal levels, it is very difficult to describe this process.’

This parallel is also sometimes evident in the similiarity of physical responses to a performance that is co-created by actors and spectators, which can last *hic et nunc* or transcend the place and time in which the performance is taking place. The observation expressed by one spectator of *Cleansed* that ‘there is some elusive element in this performance, an experience that cannot be described by language. It affects our bloodstream, flexes our muscles and speeds up the work of our heart with great impact. It violates the intimacy and is comparable to the act of confessing sins.’ Such physical audience responses take various forms, as observed in the post-show discussion following *Cleansed*, and often appear in spectators’ accounts of attending Warlikowski’s performances. The inability to depict them verbally and the struggle to comprehend them, trying to place them in the context of other theatrical experiences becomes an important element of this theatre’s reception.

---

121 In Wilniewczyc (2003a), 27.
122 In Wilniewczyc, (2003b), 177.
Poniedziałek reveals that the spectators often visit actors in their dressing rooms after the shows and instead of sharing their experience verbally, cry as they are unable to express their feelings in any other way. As Poniedziałek testifies, the atmosphere amongst the cast that surrounds the rehearsals and performances sometimes echoes these audience’s responses. The circumstances of The Tempest are exemplary:

There was something very difficult to define that was always causing one to want to cry. And it was a cry caused by one being overcome with emotion. It wasn’t sadness, but everyone was saying that they felt moved inside. We were somehow beautifully pricked. And I think that this beautiful prick or stab is something very humane. This is what we want to achieve, making these performances. If the reactions of audience are positive but trite and there is no chemistry, no alchemy in the air, we are not satisfied. [...] If there is no exchange, the performance doesn’t rise and it should do.123

Hajewska-Krzysztofik cites a similar experience:

I’ve never seen so many people crying and being unable to talk as after the performances of Cleansed. [...] This is a beautiful ritual with Krzysiek that we always need to stay behind and talk a bit about the performance. Sometimes this is just a moment, sometimes it lasts longer, but we need to close it. After Cleansed, we used to stay and other people were joining us, and we couldn’t talk, we sat in silence. At the beginning, we were disoriented by this, but after this repeated itself a few times, and after an hour or so, people started talking and those who saw the performance started to reveal that they couldn’t talk about this, because this belongs to a different dimension, we understood that this was a symptomatic reaction.124

Moreover, in a few cases, as Hajewska-Krzysztofik observes, members of the audience identified with the performance so strongly that they struggled to separate the stage microcosm, the life of the actors beyond the stage and their own personal stories. Identification with the character of Grace – who in Kane’s play undergoes the operation of phalloplasty – played by Hajewska was so powerful that some spectators visited the actor to ask about her experience changing sex, revealing their own secrets and struggles with their conflicting sexual identities. This type of experience, characterised by the audience making such direct links with a production, bears some resemblance to Artaud’s theatre of affect:

To reforge the links, the chain of a rhythm when audiences saw their own real lives in a show. We must allow audiences to identify with the show breath by breath and

123 Author’s interview with Poniedziałek.
124 Author’s interview with Hajewska-Krzysztofik.
beat by beat. It is not enough for the audience to be riveted by the show’s magic and this will never happen unless we know where to affect them. [...] The key to throwing the audience into a magical trance is to know in advance what pressure points must be affected in the body.\textsuperscript{125}

Furthermore, the powerlessness of expressing one’s lived experience verbally and reacting to it physically means that for Artaud: ‘Theatre is the only place in the world, the last group means we still possess of directly affecting the anatomy, and in neurotic, basely sensual periods like the one in which we are immersed, of attacking that base sensuality through physical means it cannot withstand.\textsuperscript{126}

The power of the collective experience that theatre could provide was misused by repertory theatre under Communism, when theatre-going became an elitist activity, satisfying social and aesthetic needs and enforcing one’s sense of status and membership of a certain social circle. This inevitably produced a performance style of reactions and behaviour that were mechanically repeated during performances. Warlikowski, who experienced such formalised encounters with theatre as a spectator, aimed to distance himself from such elite thinking and created his productions for ordinary people. He dreams of appealing to ‘a person who would have a certain sensitivity and who would not feel lost or displaced in the world of these various conventions such as bells, intervals, etc. [...] I want theatre to affect the spectator more directly.’\textsuperscript{127} In this proclamation, Warlikowski mirrors the ideals of Grotowski:

We are not interested in the spectator, who comes to theatre to cater for his ambitions and social snobbisms. [...] We also do not call on spectators who treat theatre as a place to relax after the troubles of an entire day. [...] For us, what is important is a person in the stadium of a spiritual development, somebody who searches in the theatre a key to recognising themselves and their ‘place on the earth’. [...] So, is this theatre for the chosen, elite theatre? Possibly. But this elite-ness has nothing to do with social background nor with material status, not even with education. A simple worker, who has not completed a secondary school can experience this creative process of growing, while an educated professor might be already ‘ready’ with this horrible readiness, which characterises the dead.\textsuperscript{128}

This quotation shows the similarity of approach of these two Polish directors, based on a profound need to communicate with a spectator who does not see theater-going as a social

\textsuperscript{125} Artaud (1970), 95.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 61.
\textsuperscript{127} Author’s interview with Warlikowski, (2007b).
\textsuperscript{128} Grotowski (1990), 30-31.
duty or a form of entertainment, but instead as a place that provides an opportunity to confront themselves with their fears and uncertainties. This premise realises itself in the directness of contact between the performers and spectators (or, rather, their co-presence).

This latter attribute inevitably brings associations with therapy. Significantly, Warlikowski includes this term when defining theatre: ‘theatre is a real group therapy, a positive – or negative – discharge of fears and tensions, of all that which we normally don’t verbalise in our everyday work, in our scientific and political statements, through our racial, national or religious identity’. But what Warlikowski seems to understand as ‘therapy’ has little to do with the dictionary definition of this term. His theatre is not about ‘the treatment of someone with mental or physical illness without the use of drugs or operations’.

Perhaps, Szczęśniak’s recent description of this notion provides a useful commentary on Warlikowski’s own statement:

The art should talk about what mostly concerns a human being. [...] We are not interested in the political situation, because this is manipulated and alien, but the individual person, with all their pains, is fascinating. We observe these pains in ourselves and on those close to us. This has nothing to do with therapy, and if it does – I speak for myself not on behalf of Krzysztof – it is only about the possibility of saying something to somebody through performance, making somebody realise something. For me what is most important is that you start to think about a problem, which enters your circle of consciousness and you can work on it on your own.

Behind Warlikowski’s work lies a desire to share his thoughts and particularly the pain of existence with like-minded spectators. He is certain that ‘people come to theatre because they don’t feel right and because what they experience outside theatre does not fulfill them’. Inevitably, this concept of theatre reminds us of religion: ‘This is like going to church. There is something spiritual in this. If you join a group of 200 people who are sitting in the same studio, you are bound to experience some kind of a transformation – what would be the sense of it otherwise?’

As anticipated, in order for the spectator to experience this encounter with the creators on a profound level, the actors need to provide an honest presence on stage. Such theatre arises from some kind of suffering, and dealing with this experience usually appears

---

129 In Gruszczyński (2006), 164-165.
131 In Skwarczyńska (2011), 47.
132 In Yudilovitch (2009).
133 Ibid.
to be a complicated and painful process. Artaud’s definition of ‘theatre of cruelty’ is relevant here to explain this experience of transferring this experience into a stage happening – perhaps this is why Warlikowski can admit that the theatre they make ‘is difficult and cruel for myself first of all’. However such an experience of pain can be fulfilling – ‘I’m not here to produce the dreams the audience wants to dream or to cater for their aesthetic needs. This isn’t my duty.’ Warlikowski and his ensemble do not want to be the collective authors of a monologue, rather they want a debate: ‘I want discussion with the audience, I don’t want to please them. I am not interested in theatre in which the spectators sit quietly and nicely. When something breaks in you, you will be able to cross your own limitations.’ This debate is therefore represented on stage by the actor-leaders (their role in initiating communication with the spectators is discussed earlier) and takes the form of a mutual therapy or a quasi-therapeutical seance, which provides both the creators and spectators a chance to release tensions and undergo a spiritual re-birth. This is a reciprocal process – ‘the audience fuels a director, it should also fuel the actor’, but as a result, the actor becomes aware of their debt to the audience, and he (or she) also ‘wants to speak more clearly’, not in terms of articulation or technical abilities, but instead sharpening their ideas, clarifying their views and courageously speaking from one’s personal and intimate experience (this process is examined at length in chapters 2 and 3).

Drawing on one’s private experience is an important feature of Warlikowski’s theatre – ‘only as much as we have in life can be represented in theatre’ declares the director. Life becomes a source, but also the ultimate goal of this theatre-making. The theatrical process – as practiced by Warlikowski’s ensemble – could therefore be depicted by a spiral, that symbolises infinity – it starts with life, remains closely related to it and finally, it enhances life through the experience of a therapy or purgation, as it was understood in ancient theatre.

This connection with life or dependance – if not the ontological condition of life – is crucial to Warlikowski’s theatre. Real life can never compete with theatre – the director states:

134Artaud (1993), 60.
135 In Yudilovitch (2009).
136 Ibid.
137 In Gruszczyński (2007), 45.
138 Ibid.
I hope I deal with life. [...] I hate theatre. Theatre is for me the memory, which I would like to forget. [...] I don’t want to work within certain conventions and ready-made concepts, neither use the gained earlier knowledge. [...] My theatre is not a bourgeois theatre, which explains to you your own approach towards God, life and death. My theatre is experience/living through.  

This very aspect of theatre in providing an opportunity for direct and shared experience is the reason why Warlikowski keeps coming back to theatre, exploring its boundaries and accessing its new terrains. The close link with one’s personal experience, one of the most important attributes of Warlikowski’s theatre-making, perhaps explains Kosiński’s observation that ‘Jerzy Grotowski [...] left art in order to reach ritual – while Warlikowski having regarded ritual as ineffective, seems to see the only possibility for sustained existence in a continuous performative artistic process’  

For Warlikowski, the theatre-making process is the only way to access what is normally unachievable outside the theatre space.

As this chapter has demonstrated, Warlikowski’s work reinstates the place of theatre within Polish society of the post-Communist period. It equips it with a completely different role, one based on the principle of provoking and initiating debate on contemporary issues. Warlikowski’s theatre attempts to force the audience out of their complacent state of safety and challenge them with the questions that they would not normally ask in everyday life. The rejection of theatre as a comfort is one of the main features of his oeuvre. With a focus on establishing links with contemporary audiences and sensing and meeting their needs, Warlikowski has created theatre that describes the experience of his peers and resonates with the generations that followed. Spectators play a fundamental part in this theatre-making, they are not just witnesses or passive ‘consumers’ of the ready-made product, but essential participants in the creation of meanings that takes place during a performance, here and now, as a result of the direct bodily co-presence of actors and audience, but also beyond the theatre itself.

139 In Yudilovitch (2009).
140 Kosiński (2010), 499.
Conclusion

My aim here is to revisit the research questions and the main purpose of this thesis, as set out in my Introduction, in the light of the discussion presented in chapters 1 to 4. I will begin by addressing the core research aim of the thesis and its four specific research questions. This will be followed by a summary of the original scholarly contribution of this study.

Revisiting the thesis aim and the research questions

The core research question that I posed at the beginning of this thesis was:

**What are the distinctive conditions for the encounter between actors and spectators that takes place in Warlikowski’s theatre in Poland?**

Initially, this question arose from my experience as a theatre-goer of Warlikowski’s productions, but it was formulated more fully later as a result of my interviews with Warlikowski and his collaborators. These conversations alerted me to the complexity of the processes that lead to performance. I realised that there was a parallel between the commitment of the actors, their specific method of creating performance and the experience of the audience. I therefore embarked on my quest to uncover and define the distinctive conditions that facilitate this encounter between actors and spectators.

I defined the eponymous encounter as a specific type of relationship between actors and spectators that is based on their bodily co-presence and enables them to face and confront each other, challenging each other’s preconceptions and expectations about the given moment when they meet in the theatre, and that also enables the actors to provide the audience with a reflective experience that lingers beyond this moment. Such communication often bears some element of surprise and unexpectedness and constitutes a very important part of Warlikowski’s theatre-making.

In order to define and examine the conditions I describe above, I have combined two concepts – that of performance as event and that of intertheatricality – to facilitate my discussion throughout this thesis. These concepts have enabled me to approach
Warlikowski’s work from a novel perspective. Unlike existing studies of the director’s work, which interpret his productions from the position of an authoritative, omniscient scholar who decodes the fixed meanings of the director’s productions and treats them as complete products, I position myself as an observer of processes in Warlikowski’s work that undergo dynamic changes and reflect his surrounding world.

This perspective has allowed me to identify the following elements that inform the aforementioned encounter between actors and spectators: 1. The strategies deployed by Warlikowski that paved the way towards his success as a director and enabled him to create his distinctive way of theatre-making and communication with his audience; 2. The process of the creation of Warlikowski’s ensemble of actors; 3. The ensemble’s collaborative way of rehearsing, which takes place in a specific, family-like environment; 4. The status of actors who, in Warlikowski’s work, become the co-authors of performance and share the responsibility for the shape of his productions; 4. the role of the audience that becomes an integral part of this performance-making process. My methodology was informed primarily by my research trips to Poland and my first-hand experience of theatre-going, as well as my interviews with Krzysztof Warlikowski and his key collaborators, which provided me with original and illuminating material.

There are four research questions that direct my discussion in each of the main chapters. Firstly, I asked **what are the driving forces of Krzysztof Warlikowski’s emergence as a director and how does he go about gaining recognition and becoming successful both in Poland and internationally?** The investigation in chapter 1 centres on a discussion regarding the nature of Warlikowski’s theatre-making that is fed by the director’s biography and circumstances in which he functions as a director. I wanted to know what the link was between Warlikowski’s various strategies to establish his position and reputation as a director and the gradual development of his thinking about theatre and the role of the audience within it. I therefore situated Warlikowski in the political and socio-cultural context of Poland of the early post-Communist years, and the context of Polish repertory theatre at the time, to explore various ways in which the director creatively engaged with the opportunities offered by this new reality. Furthermore, I used the context of the international festivals in Europe to depict Warlikowski’s ability to exploit his network of contacts and develop his distinctive way of theatre-making, thus
fulfilling his artistic ambitions. I showed how Warlikowski cleverly managed to turn his position within Polish mainstream theatre from that of an unknown young director, to the *enfant terrible* of Polish theatre and finally to one of its most distinguished contemporary practitioners.

Secondly, I posed the question: **what is the trajectory of the development of Warlikowski’s ensemble?** The argument in chapter 2 focused on an analysis of the numerous intertheatrical texts (e.g. the context of Polish repertory theatre, the complex circumstances surrounding the production of *Roberto Zucco*) that affected the creation of Warlikowski’s ensemble and influenced its creative processes, thus determining the quality of the encounter between actors and audience. I investigated here the relationships within the ensemble and the ethics practised by its members, which revealed how the ensemble’s work blurred the boundaries between private and professional life. In addition, I looked into the pitfalls that are often associated with such work and this level of commitment.

Thirdly, I addressed the following issue: **who are the actors in Warlikowski’s theatre, how does their role as co-authors of performance develop and what are the main features of Warlikowski’s shared creative practice?** In chapter 3, I focused on the status and responsibilities of the actors, demonstrating the scale of their involvement in the theatre-making process, both during the rehearsals that initiate the performance, and subsequently, as facilitators of the encounter with the audience. Using extracts from interviews and drawing on examples from Warlikowski’s performances, I showed how the actors continuously negotiate their private and theatrical existences and how this process feeds the performance, making it live and resonate with its audience. Furthermore, I investigated the methods the actors use to construct their characters and fill them with a life that is rooted in the actors’ private, lived-through and often intimate experience.

Finally, chapter 4 aimed to provide the answer to the following question: **how does the encounter between actors–spectators come into being in Warlikowski’s performances and what are the liminal and potentially transformative elements of his practice?** Firstly, I investigated the circumstances in which Warlikowski’s ideas about this specific mode of communication with an audience came about. I analysed the background of repertory theatre of the 1980s and 1990s in order to demonstrate the way in which Warlikowski and his collaborators began their quest for a new form of expression that would resonate with a contemporary audience and reflect the new democratic and
free-market society that emerged in post-communist Poland. Next, I explored the possibilities (based on specific scenes from Warlikowski’s productions) of the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators and the effects this shared space and time appears to have on both counterparts. I also examined how Warlikowski provoked a discussion about the depiction of the human body on the Polish stage and the consequences of such a challenge for the actor-audience relationship. Furthermore, I investigated the conditions that situate both actors and spectators in liminal situations, which I linked to the notions of violation and a destabilisation of the sense of safety and order that apply to both actors and audience.

**The contribution of this study**

This study makes a contribution to at least three fields of academic inquiry: Krzysztof Warlikowski’s oeuvre; Polish theatre in both Polish and English, and European and world theatre directors and their creative practices.

**Krzysztof Warlikowski’s oeuvre**

This study provides a new reading of Krzysztof Warlikowski’s theatre and constitutes an original contribution to Polish and Western scholarship on his work. By rejecting the existing scholarly approaches that apply a traditional vocabulary of production and reception, this thesis offers a wide-ranging analysis of Warlikowski’s oeuvre seen through the prism of the relationship that exists between actors and spectators. By shifting the emphasis from interpretations of his productions to an analysis of his creative processes, my study demonstrates how Warlikowski integrates the actors and audience into his performance-making practice. Indeed, this thesis situates the specific relationship between actors and spectators at the centre of Warlikowski’s theatre.

Drawing on the concepts of performance as event and of intertheatricality, this study challenges the view of Warlikowski’s performances as complete, static artefacts and proposes instead to see this oeuvre as a transient and fleeting process that is open to change and resonates with the outside world. This prism enables me to shed some light on the complex and multi-faceted processes that determine the creation of Warlikowski’s productions and inform the experience of theatre-going that opposes existing theatrical customs.
Situated Krzysztof Warlikowski’s work in the context of Polish repertory theatre and demonstrating his career trajectory, how Krzysztof Warlikowski became a successful director who is highly regarded in Polish, European – but also to some extent world - theatre, this study provides a fresh perspective on Warlikowski’s work and the driving forces propelling his growth as an artist. Rejecting the existing scholarly and critical approaches to Warlikowski’s work that apply the traditional vocabulary of production and reception, it provides a new reading of the relationship that exists between actors and spectators and lies at the core of this director’s theatre.

**Polish theatre**

This study contributes to the scholarship on Polish theatre written in both Polish and English. Stemming from a personal experience of theatre-going, this analysis of Warlikowski’s work is written with the view that this study is one of many possible versions, narratives and interpretations of this theatre that can co-exist and complement one another, providing a better understanding of a practitioner’s oeuvre. However, due to its novel approach, which puts an emphasis on processes and moves away from the traditional tools of interpretation of Warlikowski’s theatre (as mentioned above), my study suggests a fresh way of reading theatre that can be applied not only to Warlikowski’s oeuvre but also to the work of other directors from mainstream, as well as alternative, Polish theatre. A shift in interpretation gives access to new sources of information and contributes to a more complete and multi-dimensional understanding of a director’s work.

Moreover, this thesis contributes to the scholarship on Polish theatre by providing material that demonstrates Warlikowski’s impact on the status of the audience within mainstream Polish post-Communist theatre.

**Polish theatre in the English language**

As the first book-length analysis of Warlikowski’s work, this study makes a contribution not only to the limited studies on the director’s work in English, but also to the scholarship on Polish theatre written in this language. As well as providing a detailed and original analysis of Warlikowski’s oeuvre, it explores the background of Polish repertory theatre and gives an account of the changes and transformations that have taken place in Polish
theatre since the collapse of Communism in 1989. In this sense, this thesis is in line with, and contributes to, recent projects and plans to expand the scholarship and knowledge of Polish theatre within English-speaking academia and theatre practitioners, such as the archive and publications related to the British Grotowski Project,\(^1\) the new journal *Polish Theatre Perspectives* and the Black Mountain Press series of books entitled *Polish Theatre: Tradition of Transformation.*\(^2\)

**Contemporary European and international theatre directors**

By providing a detailed analysis of Warlikowski’s oeuvre and an insight into his method of working, this thesis situates itself amongst the recent studies that concern the theatre-making processes of both European and international theatre practitioners and their companies, such as, for instance, *Contemporary European Theatre Directors* and *Making Contemporary Theatre.*\(^3\) These studies constitute extensive sources of information for theatre scholars, and are also useful for theatre practitioners, students of various theatre- and performance-related disciplines and theatre-goers who are interested in how the performances they witness come into being. Although, as I have discussed throughout this thesis, Krzysztof Warlikowski did not create a system or a method that can easily be applied by other theatre practitioners, his mode of working, commitment, and his approach to both his collaborators and audience can provide an inspiration for other theatre-makers.

**Final remarks**

Finally, it is important to reflect on the question: **what are the distinctive conditions for the encounter between performers and spectators that takes place in Warlikowski’s theatre in Poland?**

---

1 For further details of the project and its publications, see: www.britishgrotowski.co.uk.
2 This project’s publication plans are available on the publisher’s website: www.thecpr.org.uk/shop/blackmountain.php.
Because this thesis is written from the perspective of process rather than the final production itself, it not only challenges received understanding of Krzysztof Warlikowski’s theatre, but also distinguishes it clearly from the creative practices that are prevalent within Polish repertory theatre.

The two concepts – performance as event and intertheatricality – that I combine and utilise as a theoretical framework enable me to demonstrate how Warlikowski crosses clear-cut definitions and establishes an original way of theatre-making that has resulted in the plans to form a multi-purpose venue, Warlikowski’s Nowy Teatr, the first autent theatre of its kind to be developed in mainstream Polish theatre since the Second World War.

This achievement would not be possible without the support of Warszawa’s local government which sponsors this venture and supports the ensemble by providing them with permanent contracts and salaries, office spaces and a budget for new productions both at home and touring abroad. What, however, might have appeared as an enviable level of freedom for the ensemble’s artistic explorations looks bleaker in practice as the Nowy struggles to find money to produce new performances and cover the expensive cost of venue hires in order to present them to Polish audiences. This results in the Nowy’s more frequent collaborations with foreign theatres and thus performing abroad more often than in their local Warszawa. Furthermore, the plans to finally start the development of the Nowy’s venue have been recently – as of May 2012\(^4\) – undermined by information concerning its funding. Due to the complicated and local government-delayed process of arranging the planning permission, the Ministry of Culture, which had agreed to support the project from the European Union’s budget, was not able to include the Nowy on its investment agenda. Although unofficially the Ministry claims it will find the money from different sources to enable the Nowy to start its development, the official letters received by the Nowy do not confirm this information. The alternative solution may now mean a temporary downsizing of the project and focusing on the creation of the theatre space before the multi-purpose centre of culture, which Warlikowski had initially envisaged and received an approval for, can be properly developed.

There are therefore many questions related to the future of the Nowy Teatr in Poland. Will the governing body in Warszawa and the Ministry of Culture keep their promise and create for Warlikowski and his ensemble the conditions for their further development they once promised in order to stop him from moving elsewhere? Or would they rather be more willing to invest in the 2012 UEFA European Football Championship that has already proven to attract the funding previously allocated to Warszawa’s theatre? Will Warlikowski and his actors expand on their collaboration with foreign venues instead and increase their appearances abroad? How would that affect the frequency of their encounters with Polish audiences, which lies at the heart of their theatre making? How would the members of the Nowy Teatr realise their aim of deepening the dialogue with their audience and attracting new audiences?

I have discussed here the circumstances that have allowed Warlikowski to explore opportunities offered to him through networking within festival circles, which have brought him commissions to direct drama and opera in the most prestigious European theatres and brought him further invitations to present the work of his Polish ensemble at prominent theatre festivals.

As this thesis has argued, Warlikowski’s success is rooted in his specific understanding of theatre which becomes for him not only a mission but a personal conviction and a way of living. This creates specific conditions, not only for Warlikowski’s collaborators, who tend to share a similar sense of purpose, but also for the audience that comes to take part in his performances. Warlikowski fully explores the opportunities provided by a theatre based on a live co-presence of human beings sharing the same space at a given moment in time. Moreover, he explores the opportunities provided by such direct communication by incorporating both actors and spectators into the process of theatre-making.

The ultimate aim of this theatre-making is to provide an unusual experience to both actors and audience that takes the form of an encounter. This encounter aims to challenge conventions of theatregoing, as illustrated by the use of techniques to take spectators out of their comfort zone and destabilise the norms of the theatre-going experience.

---

5 An extensive discussion about funding of the capital’s theatres is currently taking place (as of May 2012). See, for instance, Patrycja Wanat, ‘Pieniadze z teatrów na strefę kibica’, www.tokfm.pl, 3 April 2012 http://www.tokfm.pl/Tokfm/1,103089,11472325,Mniej_na_teatry__zwiekszony_budzet_promocji_jest_potrzebny.html [accessed 4 April 2012].
Warlikowski and his ensemble create theatre that attempts to provoke their audience, making them think and reflect on what they have experienced in the theatre long after they leave the venue. In order to incite this reaction, they employ various – often drastic – techniques that are rooted in the personal ways in which the ensemble creates the performances. The actors willingly share their private experiences and often undergo painful processes to access these aspects of their existence that are forced from their everyday lives. This results in actors experiencing a violation of their own sense of safety, an event they then try to repeat during their encounter with the audience, thus transforming it into a collective experience.

The discussions in chapters 2 and 3 demonstrate the specific role of the actors in Warlikowski’s creative practice. As primary facilitators of the encounter with the audience, his actors become co-authors of the performance. Their intimate method of theatre-making is deeply embedded in their private biographies, as well as being linked to the world that surrounds them and issues relating to the society in which they live and grow as artists. Such a personal form of theatre-making requires a different setting to the one traditionally associated with repertory theatre.

Furthermore, the actors’ enormous level of commitment and investment in their work crosses the border of what is commonly understood as necessary for the creation of character and the stage microcosm. This level of involvement requires not only different working conditions, but also the establishment of familial relationships within the ensemble, rather than the professional ones more commonly encountered. For this reason, as I have demonstrated throughout this study, gathering his ensemble together is never an accidental choice, but the result of careful logistics and thought-through incremental decisions that are based on a shared understanding of theatre and its role in society. For the same reason, this ensemble is an organic entity, constituted of various personalities who are valued for their individual contribution to the creation of performance and who can thus be said to share the authorship of Warlikowski’s oeuvre.

This raising of the actors’ profile and their promotion to the role of co-creators is synonymous with their extended responsibility, and we should not underestimate the significance of their willingness to search for new ways of expression, in which the human body plays a major part, and to expose themselves to situations in which their own experience is scrutinised. The actors then transfer this experience from a personal to a
collective one, which they share with the audience, who are invited to co-create the meaning of the performance, as it happens, there and then. Thus the way in which the creators devote themselves to establishing communication with audience is another distinctive condition for the encounter between actors and spectators.

There are some limitations to this study. Firstly, as the actors are the primary facilitators of this encounter with the audience, my thesis puts the actor at the centre of this analysis. There are, however, also other creators, such as the set designer, composer or lighting designer, whose contributions also affect and determine the quality of the encounter between the actors and spectators. Such a consideration is unfortunately beyond the scope of this thesis, despite this being an important aspect of Warlikowski’s theatre-making. The contribution from these collaborators deserves further detailed examination and could be explored as a separate research project.

Secondly, my word limit also restricts the number of examples of the interaction between actors and audience that can be discussed here, particularly in chapter 4. Similarly, limited space is devoted to the discussion of various audience responses to Warlikowski’s shows. These limitations also create scope for further research into the experience of Warlikowski’s audience, whether through an audience research project, participatory workshops or by finding other ways to communicate with audiences on their long-term responses to these productions.

This thesis focused on Warlikowski’s work in Poland with predominantly Polish actors, but due to his popularity abroad, especially in French and German-speaking countries, an enquiry into his impact on those foreign audiences and the communication he establishes there would also make a valuable contribution to the understanding of Warlikowski’s oeuvre.
Appendix
Chronological Order of Krzysztof Warlikowski’s Premieres in Poland and abroad

*Markiza O.* (Die Marquise von O) based on Heinrich von Kleist
Premiere: 20 February 1993
Stary Teatr im. Heleny Modrzejewskiej, Kraków

Premiere: 3 December 1993
Teatr Nowy, Poznań

William Shakespeare, *Kupiec wenecki* (Merchant of Venice)
Premiere: 18 April 1994
Teatr im. Wilama Horzycy, Toruń

Klaus Mann, *Ludwig. Śmierć króla* (Ludwig. The Death of The King)
Premiere: 12 November 1994
Kammerspiele, Hamburg

Bernard-Marie Koltész, *Roberto Zucco*
Premiere: 22 September 1995
Teatr Nowy, Poznań

Matei Vişniec, *Zatrudnimy starego klowna* (Old Clown Wanted)
Premiere: 30 June 1996
Stary Teatr im. Heleny Modrzejewskiej, Kraków

Sofocles, *Elektra* (Electra)
Premiere: 18 January 1997
Teatr Dramatyczny, Warszawa

William Shakespeare, *Zimowa opowieść* (The Winter’s Tale)
Premiere: 5 April 1997
Teatr Nowy, Poznań

Witold Gombrowicz, *Tancerz mecenasa Kraykowskiego* (The Dancer of Patron Kraykowski)
Premiere: 11 June 1997
Teatr Powszechny im. Jana Kochanowskiego, Radom

William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*
Premiere: 5 July 1997
School of Drama, Tel Aviv

William Shakespeare, *Poskromienie złośnicy* (The Taming of the Shrew)
Premiere: 31 December 1997
Teatr Dramatyczny, Warszawa

William Shakespeare, *Pericle, principe di Tiro* (Pericles)
Premiere: 27 January 1998
Piccolo Teatro di Milano

Bernard-Marie Koltés, *Zapadno pristanište* (Quay West)
Premiere: 7 April 1998
Gradsko dramsko kazalište Gavella, Zagreb

Bernard-Marie Koltés, *Zachodnie wybrzeże* (Quay West)
Premiere: 10 October 1998
Teatr Studio im. Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza, Warszawa

William Shakespeare, *Was Ihr wollt* (Twelfth Night, or What You Will)
Premiere: 10 February 1999
Staatstheater Stuttgart, Kammertheater
William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*
Premiere: 22 October 1999
Teatr Rozmaitości, Warszawa

William Shakespeare, *Der Sturm* (The Tempest)
Premiere: 17 March 2000
Staatstheater Stuttgart, Kammertheater

Roxana Panufnik, *The Music Programme*
Premiere: 7 April 2000
BOC Covent Garden Festival in London, Teatr Wielki – Opera Narodowa, Warszawa

Giuseppe Verdi, *Don Carlos*
Premiere: 22 October 2000
Teatr Wielki – Opera Narodowa, Warszawa

Euripides, *Bachantki* (The Bacchae)
Premiere: 9 February 2001
Teatr Rozmaitości, Warszawa

Paweł Mykietyn, *Ignorant i szaleniec* (Ignorant and madman)
Premiere: 4 May 2001
Teatr Wielki – Opera Narodowa, Warszawa

Euripides, *Bakhe* (The Bacchae)
Premiere: 23 July 2001
Gradsko dramsko kazalište Gavella, Zagreba

Sarah Kane, *Oczyszczeni* (Cleansed)
Premiere: 15 December 2001
Wrocławski Teatr Współczesny im. Edmunda Wiercińskiego, Wrocław; Teatr Polski, Poznań and Teatr Rozmaitości, Warszawa

*Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Zeit* (In Search of Lost Time) based on Marcel Proust
Premiere: 25 May 2002
Schauspiel Bonn, Kammerspiele

William Shakespeare, *Burza* (The Tempest)
Premiere: 4 January 2003
Teatr Rozmaitości, Warszawa

William Shakespeare, *Le songe d’une nuit d’été* (A Midsummer Night’s Dream)
Premiere: 7 March 2003
Théâtre National de Nice

Krzysztof Penderecki, *Ubu Rex*
Premiere: 2 October 2003
Teatr Wielki – Opera Narodowa, Warszawa

*Dybbuk* (Dybbuk) based on S. Ansky and Hanna Krall
Premiere: 2 November 2003
Wrocławski Teatr Współczesny im. Edmunda Wiercińskiego, Wrocław and TR, Warszawa, Festival d’Avignon and THEOREM

Andrew Bovell, *Droomsporen* based on *Speaking in Tongues*
Premiere: 1 February 2004
Toneelgroep Amsterdam

William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*
Premiere: 14 June 2004
Schauspielhaus, Hanover
Hanoch Levin, *Krum*
Premiere: 3 March 2005
TR Warszawa and Narodowy Stary Teatr im. Heleny Modrzejewskiej in Kraków

Alban Berg, *Wozzeck*
Premiere: 5 January 2006
Teatr Wielki – Opera Narodowa, Warszawa

Yukio Mishima, *Madame de Sade*
Premiere: 26 February 2006
Toneelgroep Amsterdam

Christoph Willibald Gluck, *Iphigénie en Tauride* (Iphigenia in Tauris)
Premiere: 8 June 2006
Opéra National de Paris – Palais Garnier

Tony Kushner, *Anioły w Ameryce* (Angels in America)
Premiere: 17 February 2007
TR Warszawa, Comédie de Valence – Centre Dramatique National Drôme-Ardèche,
Maison de la Culture d’Amiens – Scène Nationale and TNT – Théâtre National de
Toulouse – Midi-Pyrénées

Leoš Janáček, *L’Affaire Makropoulos* (The Makropoulos Affair)
Premiere: 27 April 2007
Opéra National de Paris – Opéra Bastille and Teatro Real, Madrid

Piotr Czajkowski, *Eugen Onegin* (Eugene Onegin)
Premiere: 30 October 2007
Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich

Richard Wagner, *Parsifal*
Premiere: 4 March 2008
Opéra National de Paris – Opéra Bastille

Luigi Cherubini, *Médée* (Medea)
Premiere: 12 April 2008
Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Brussels

*(A)pollonia* based on a compilation of texts adapted by Krzysztof Warlikowski, Piotr Gruszczyński and Jacek Poniedziałek
Premiere: 16 May 2009
Nowy Teatr in Warszawa, Festival d’Avignon, Théâtre National de Chaillot in Paris, Théâtre de la Place de Liége, La Comédie de Genève, Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels and Narodowy Stary Teatr in Heleny Modrzejewskiej in Kraków

Karol Szymanowski, *Le roi Roger* (The King Roger)
Premiere: 18 June 2009
Opéra National de Paris – Opéra Bastille

Tennessee Williams, *Un Tramway* based on *Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams
Premiere: 4 February 2010
Odéon- Théâtre de l’Europe, Nowy Teatr Warszawa, Grand Theatre de la Ville de Luxembourg, De Kininklijke Schouwburg den Haag, Holland Festival in Amsterdam, La Comédie de Genéve – Centre dramatique, spielzeit’europa in Berlin and MC2: Maison de la culture de Grenoble.

Giuseppe Verdi, *Macbeth*
Premiere: 11 June 2010
Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, Brussels

*Koniec* (The End) based on Bernard-Marie Koltès’ *Nickel Stuff*, Franz Kafka’s *The Trial* and *The Hunter Gracchus*, and J.M. Coetzee’s *Elizabeth Costello*, adapted by Krzysztof Warlikowski, and Piotr Gruszczyński
Premiere: 16 May 2009
Nowy Teatr in Warszawa, Théâtre de l’Odéon in Paris, La Comédie de Clermont-Ferrand, Théâtre de la Place de Liége and Hebbl am Ufer in Berlin

Igor Strawiński, *The Rake’s Progress*
Premiere: 10 December 2010
Staatsoper Unter den Linden im Schiller Theater, Berlin

*Opowieści afrykańskie według Szekspira (African Tales based on Shakespeare)*
Based on William Shakespeare’s *King Lear, Merchant of Venice* and *Otello* translated by Stanisław Barańczak, Eldridge Cleaver’s *Soul on Ice* translated by Edyta Kubikowska, J.M. Coetzee’s *Summertime* translated by Dariusz Żukowski, adapted by Krzysztof Warlikowski and Piotr Gruszczyński
Premiere: 5 October 2011 (Liège) and 2 December 2011 (Warszawa)
Nowy Teatr in Warszawa in co-production with the Prospero Group: Théâtre de la Place in Liège, Théâtre National de Bretagne in Rennes, Emilia Romagna Teatro Fondazione in Modena, Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz in Berlin, Fundação Centro Cultural de Belém in Lisbon, Tutkivan Teatterityon Keskus in Tampere, Grand Théâtre de la Ville de Luxembourg and Théâtre National de Chaillot in Paris
Bibliography

Primary sources:

Author’s interviews with the following persons (in chronological order):

- Krzysztof Warlikowski, 24 November 2007a, Warszawa
- Krzysztof Warlikowski 27 November 2007b, Warszawa
- Redbad Klijnstra, 31 March 2008, Warszawa
- Małgorzata Hajewska-Krzysztofik, 27 April 2008, Warszawa
- Jacek Poniedziałek, 26 April 2008, Warszawa
- Renate Jett, 10 August 2008, Edinburgh
- Magdalena Cielecka, 11 August 2008, Edinburgh
- Danuta Stenka, 9 April 2009, Warszawa
- Piotr Gruszczyński, 9 April 2009, Warszawa
- Redbad Klijnstra, 9 April 2009, Warszawa
- Ewa Dałkowska, 10 April 2009, Warszawa

Secondary sources:

Adamiecka-Sit, Agata, Teatr i tekst. Inszenizacja w teatrze postmodernistycznym (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2005);
Allain, Paul, Gardzienice: Polish Theatre in Transition (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1997);
Allain, Paul and Harvie, Jen, The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance (London and New York: Routledge, 2006);
Allain, Paul and Ziółkowski, Grzegorz, eds., Polish Theatre after 1989: Beyond Borders, Contemporary Theatre Review, 15.1 (2005);
Artaud, Antonin The Theatre and Its Double, Translated by Victor Corti (London: Calder Publications, 1970);
Auslander, Philip, Liveness. Performance in a mediatized culture (London and New York: Routledge, 1999);
________, From Acting to Performance: Essays in Modernism and Postmodernism (London: Routledge, 1997);
Austin, J. L., How To Do Things With Words (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975);
Balme, Christopher B., The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008);
Baniewicz, Elżbieta, Lata tłuste, lata chude? Szkice o teatrze 1990-2000 (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza ERRATA, 2000);
Bates, J.M. ‘Forefather’s Eve’ in Derek Jones, ed., Censorship: A World Encyclopaedia (London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publisher, 2001);
Bosak, Marcin; Kwietniewska, Agnieszka; Seweryn, Maria; Sokołowska, Anita; Sztarbowski, Paweł; Wysocka, Barbara, ‘Nic ma jednego modelu. Rozmowa z udziałem Marcin Bosaka, Agnieszki Kwietniewskiej, Marii Seweryn, Anity Sokołowskiej, Pawła Sztarbowskiego i Barbary Wysockiej’, Dialog, 7-8 (2011), pp.206–219;
Bradby, David and Williams, David, Directors’ Theatre (Basingstoke: Macmillan Modern Dramatists, 1988);
Brook, Peter, The Empty Space (London: Penguin, 1968);
________, The Shifting Point. Forty years of theatrical exploration 1946-1987 (London: Methuen Drama, 1988);
Bułhak, Ewa, ed., Palę Paryż i wyjeżdżam. Wywiady z Jerzym Grzegorzewskim (Izabelin: Świat Literacki, 2005);
Burzyńska, Anna R., The Classics and The Troublemakers. Theatre Directors from Poland (Warszawa: Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute, 2008);
Butler, Judith, Gender Trouble (London: Routledge, 1990);
Caughie, John, ed., Theories of Authorship. A Reader (London and New York: Routledge, 1981);
Cieślak, Jacek, ‘Z Hamletem do Awinionu’, Rzeczpospolita, 21 March 2001, p.10;
Conroy, Colette, *Theatre & The Body* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010);
*Coppeau: Texts on Theatre*, Edited and translated by John Rudlin and Norman H. Paul (London and New York: Routledge, 1990);
Counsell, Colin and Wolf, Laurie, eds., *Performance Analysis. An Introductory Coursebook* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001);
Delgado, Maria M. and Rebellato, Dan, eds., *Contemporary European Theatre Directors* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010);
Donnellan, Declan, *The Actor and the Target*, Rev. edn (London: Nick Hern Books, 2005);
intertheatrical reading’, *Polish Theatre Perspectives* 1.1 (2010), pp.15–47;

______, ‘Upieranie się przy wolności do zmian. Rozmowa z Timem Etchells z Forced
Entertainment’, *Didaskalia*, 89 (2009), pp.77–79;

Dundjerovic, Aleksandar Saša, *Robert Lepage* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008);

______, *The Theatricality of Robert Lepage* (Montreal, Ithaca: McGill-Queen’s University
Press, 2007);

pp.164–175;

______, *Soc and Sex. Diagnozy teatralne i nieteatralne* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza
ERRATA, 2009b);

Dziewulska, Małgorzata, ‘Nieskończenie samotny Konrad’, *Apokryf*, 14, Insert to *Tygodnik
Powszechny*, pp.51–52 (1998),
http://www.tygodnik.com.pl/apokryf/14/dziewulska.html (12/05/2010);


______, *Inna obecność* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1981);

and New York: Routledge 1999);

Evans, Mark, *Jacques Copeau* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006);

Fik, Marta, *Trzydzieści pięć sezonów. Teatry dramatyczne w Polsce w latach 1944–1979* (Warszawa:
Wydawnictwo Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1981);

1995), pp.122-128;

______, ‘Mickiewicz East And West’, *The Slavonic and East European Journal*, 45.4 (Winter
2001), pp.606–623;

______, ‘Performing Bodies, Performing Mickiewicz: Drama as Problem in Performance
Studies’, *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 43.1 (Spring 1999), pp.1–18;

1992), pp.70–89;

______, ‘Taboo Topics in Polish and Polish/Jewish Cultural Studies’, *The Journal of the
International Institute*, 9.1 (2002),
http://www.umich.edu/~iinet/journal/vol9no1/halina.html (01/07/10);

Saskya Iris Jain (London and New York: Routledge, 2008);

______, *Theatre, sacrifice, ritual: exploring forms of political theatre* (London: Routledge, 2006);

______, *The show and the gaze of theatre: a European perspective* (Iowa City: University of Iowa
Press, 1997);

2002);

Freshwater, Helen, *Theatre and Audience*. Foreword by Lois Weaver (Houndmills,
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009);

Fryz-Więcek, Agnieszka, ‘Skondensowany strach. Agnieszka Fryz-Więcek rozmawia z
Krzysztofem Warlikowskim*, *Didaskalia* 47 (2002), pp.5–7;

Fuchs, Elinor, *The Death of Character. Perspectives on Theater after Modernism*
(Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996);

Gerould, Daniel, ‘Introduction to: From Adam Mickiewicz’s Lectures on Slavic Literature.
Given at the College de France’, *The Drama Review* 30.3 (1986), pp.91–92;

Godlewskaj, Joanna, *Najnowsza historia teatru polskiego. Wprowadzenie* (Wrocław: Siedmiogórd, 2001);
Goffman, Erving, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1959);
Goldberg, RoseLee, *Performance Art. From Futurism to the Present* (London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 1979);
Gross, Jan T., *Neighbours. The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland, 1941* (London: Arrow Books, 2003);
______, *Ojcobójcy. Młodzi zdolniejś w teatrę polskim* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo W.A.B., 2003b);
______, ‘30-lecie premiery „Dziadów” w reżyserii Konrada Swinarskiego’, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 15 February 2003c;
______, ‘Székszipir u uzurpator. Piotr Gruszczyński rozmawia z Krzysztofem Warlikowskim’ (Warszawa: WAB, 2007);
______, ‘Warlikowski, Warlikowski’, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 8 (1998);
Guczalska, Beata, *Jerzy Jarocki – atysta teatru* (Kraków: PWST, 1999);
Harrop, John, *Acting* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992);
Harvie, Jen and Lavender, Andy, eds., *Making Contemporary Theatre. International rehearsal processes* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010);
Heddon, Deirdre and Milling, Jane, *Devising Performance. A Critical History* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006);


Hirst, David L., Giorgio Strebler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993);

Hodge, Alison, ed., Twentieth Century Actor Training (London and New York: Routledge, 2000);

Horzyca, Wilam, Polski teatr monumentalny (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Wiedza o Kulturze, 1994);

Jamieson, Duncan, ‘(A)pollonia: A Photographic Essay. Images from Rehearsals by Stefan Okolowicz, with a commentary on the creation of the performance by members and collaborators of the Nowy Teatr (selected and edited by Duncan Jamieson’, Polish Theatre Perspectives, 1 (2010), pp.149–174;

Janion, Maria, Niesamowita Słowianśczyna. Fantazmy literatury (Kraków; Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2007);


Jones, Amelia; Stephenson, Andrew, eds., Performing the body, performing the text (London: Routledge, 1999);

Kane, Sarah, Complete Plays, Introduced by David Greig (London: Methuen Drama, 2001);


Karpiński, Maciej, The Theatre of Andrzej Wajda, Translated by Christine Paul (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989);

Kershaw, Baz, The radical in performance: Between Brecht and Baudrillard (London: Routledge, 1999);

Klóssowicz, Jan, Słownik teatru polskiego (Warszawa: Muza SA, 2002);


Kołankiewicz, Leszek, Dziedzictwo Teatru Święta Zmarłych (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Słowo/Obraz/Terytoria, 1999);

Koltès, Bernard-Marie, Plays 1, Edited and introduced by David Bradby (London: Methuen Drama, 1997);

Koltès, Bernard-Marie, Plays 2, Edited and introduced by David Bradby and Maria M. Delgado (London: Methuen Drama, 2004);


Kosiński, Dariusz, Polski teatr przemiany (Wrocław: Instytut im. Jerzego Grotowskiego, 2007);

_____, Słownik teatru (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Zielona Sowa, 2006);

_____, Teatra polskie. Historie (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN and Instytut Teatralny im. Zbigniewa Raszewskiego, 2010);

Kosiński, Dariusz, et al., Słownik wiedzy o teatrze (Bielsko-Biała: ParkEdukacja, 2005);

Kott, Jan, Shakespeare, our contemporary, 2nd edn (London: Methuen, 1964);
Mościcki, Paweł, Polityka teatru. Eseje o sztuce angażującej (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2008);  
________, ed., Gry z chaosem. O Teatrze Krystiana Lupy (Kraków: Stary Teatr, 2005)  
________, Warlikowski. Extra ecclesiam (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Homini SC, 2008);  
Nowicka, Beata, ‘Kiedy miłość odchodzi. Rozmowa z Jackiem Poniedziałkiem’, Gala 25 March 2010,  
http://gala.onet.pl/0,1606061,1,1,jacek_poniedzialek,tematy.html (30/03/10);  
http://www.e-teatr.pl/en/artykuly/35687.html (17/08/2008);  
Nyczek, Tadeusz, Alfabet teatru dla analfabetów i zaawansowanych, Ilustrował Kazimierz Wiśniak, 2nd edn (Warszawa: EZOP Agencja Edytorska, 2005);  
Oddey, Alison, Devising Theatre. A Practical Theoretical Handbook (London and New York: Routledge, 1994);  
Osiński, Zbigniew, Jerzy Grotowski. Źródła, inspiracje, konteksty (Gdańsk: Słowo/ Obraz/ Terytoria, 1998);  
________, Teatr Dionizosa. Romantyzm w polskim teatrze współczesnym (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1972);  
Patterson, Michael, Peter Stein: Germany’s leading theatre director (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981);  
Pavis, Patrice, Dictionary of The Theatre. Terms, Concepts and Analysis (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1998);  
www.teatry.art.pl/artykuly/35395.html (03/08/2008);  
(2003) (dodatek Duży Format 10), http://wyborcza.pl/1,75475,1357475.html (02/06/2009);
_____, ‘Król jest nagi’, Gazeta Wyborcza, 297, 27 October 1999,
http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/15241.html (03/06/2009);
_____, ‘Najlepsze polskie teatry skazane na emigrację’, Gazeta Wyborcza online, 19 April
2012, http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/137785.html (20/04/2012);
_____, ‘Co dalej z Nowym Teatrem?’, Gazeta Wyborcza, 26, 1 February 2012,
http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/132076.html (15/03/2012);
Phelan, Peggy Unmarked: The Politics of Performance (London and New York: Routledge,
1993);
Plata, Tomasz, Być i nie być. Kategoria obecności w teatrze i performansie ostatniego półwiecza
(Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Siel, 2009);
_____, ‘Osobiste zobowiązania’ (2006a) in Tomasz Plata, ed., Strategie publiczne, strategie
Literacki, 2006b);
Plesniarowicz, Krzysztof, The dead memory machine. Tadeusz Kantor and the theatre of death (Black
Mountain Press, 2004);
Płoski, Paweł, Wyjącz szkolnictwo teatralne – rekonesans. Raport o szkolnictwie artystycznym na
kongresie Kultury Polskiej 2010,
http://lartstudio.krakow.pl/web/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id =780&Itemid=2 (10/04/2011);
Poniedziałek, Jacek, Wyjście z cienia. Rozmawia Renata Kim (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo
Czerwone i Czarne, 2010);
Exklusive, 70 (2008),
http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/62928.html?komentarz=21876 (22/04/2010);
Rapacki, Marek, ‘Polski Hamlet’, Gazeta Wyborcza, 170, 23 July 2001,
Raszewski, Zbigniew, Krótka historia teatru polskiego (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut
Wydawniczy, 1990);
_____, Teatr w świecie widowisk (Warszawa: Krag, 1991);
Read, Alan, Theatre and everyday life: an ethics of performance (London: Routledge,
1993);
Rebellato, Dan, Theatre & Globalisation (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan,
2009);
Ridout, Nicholas, Theatre & Ethics (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009);
Rudlin, John, Jacques Copeau (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986);
Saunders, Graham, ‘Love me or kill me’ Sarah Kane and the theatre of extremes
(Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002);
Routledge, 2006);
_____, Performance Theory, Rev. and expanded edn (New York and London: Routledge,
1988);
Schneider, Rebecca, The Explicit Body in Performance (London and New York: Routledge,


Selbourne, David, *The Making of a Midsummer Night’s Dream: an eye-witness account of Peter Brook’s production from first rehearsal to first night* (London: Methuen, 1982);

Shellard, Dominic, *British Theatre Since The War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000);

Shepherd, Simon, *Theatre, Body and Pleasure* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006);

Shepherd, Simon; Wallis, Mick, *Drama/Theatre/Performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004);


______, *Dodin and The Maly Drama Theatre. Process to performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004);

Shevtsova, Maria; Christopher Innes, eds., *Directors / Directing. Conversations on Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009);

Sieradzki, Jacek, ‘Bokiem. Teatr dla starych, młodych, kochających inaczej’, *Polityka* 47, 20 November 1999;


Smeliansky, Anatoly, *The Russian Theatre after Stalin*, Translated by Patrick Miles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999);


Szczełnik, Andrzej, *Katharsis. O uzdrowicielskiej mocy natury i sztuki* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2003);


Todd, Andrew; Lecate, Jean-Guy, The Open Circle. Peter Brook’s Theatre Environments
(London: Faber and Faber, 2003);
Toporkov, Wasilij O., Stanisławski na próbie. Wspomnienia, Przездмовя 
do wydania polskiego Leszek Kolankiewicz (Wrocław: Instytut im. Jerzego
Grotowskiego, 2007);
Turner, Victor, The Ritual Process (Chicago: Aldine, 1969);
Warkocki, Błażej; Sypniewski Zbyszek, eds., Homofobia po polsku (Warszawa: Sic! 2004);
Weeks, Jeffrey; Heaphy, Brian; Donovan, Catherine, Same Sex Intimacies. Families of choice and
other life experiments (London and New York: Routledge, 2001);
pp.27–41;
Węgrzyniak, Rafał, ‘Spis przedstawień Krzysztof Warlikowskiego’, Notatnik Teatralny, 28-29
(2003), pp.132–137;
Wiles, David, Greek Theatre Performance. An Introduction (Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 2000);
Williams, David, ed., Collaborative Theatre. The Théâtre du Soleil. Sourcebook, Translated
by Eric Prenowitz and David Williams (London and New York: Routledge, 1999);
_____., ed., Peter Brook: a theatrical casebook (London, Methuen, 1988);
Wilniewczyc, Teresa, ‘Dzień wcześniej skończyłem pięćdziesiąt lat’, Notatnik Teatralny, 28-29
(2003a), pp.15–30;
_____., ‘Oczyszczeni czy nieoczyszczeni? Rozmowa ze studentami’, Notatnik Teatralny, 28-29
(2003b), pp.167–177;
Wolford, Lisa; Schechner, Richard, ed., The Grotowski Sourcebook (London: Routledge,
1997);
Wyżyńska, Dorota, ‘Tajemnica, łamigówka, gąbka. Rozmowa z Krzysztofem
Warlikowskim’, Gazeta Wyborcza, 9/10 October 1999,
http://www.c-teatr.pl/en/artykuly/15242.html (12/08/2009);
Yudilovitch, Merav, ‘Teatr to pamięć, o której chciałbym zapomnieć’, Translated by K.D. 
Majus, Portal “ynet”, 2009,
(14/10/2009);
Zarilli, Phillip, ed., Acting (Re)Considered: Theories and Practices, 2nd edn (London: Routledge,
2002);
Zielińska, Maryla, ‘Grzegorz Jarzyna: klarowna bezkompromisowa namiętność’ in Tomasz
Literacki, 2006b), pp.59–78;
Ziółkowski, Grzegorz, Teatr Bezpośredni Petera Brooka (Gdańsk: Słowo/ Obraz/
Terytoria, 2000);
‘Złe duchy Sarah Kane’, Słowo Polskie, 28, 2-3 February 2002;
Żółkoś, Monika, ‘Body, Word, Memory: the actor in the theatre of Krzysztof Warlikowski’,

Note: Numerous additional newspapers, magazines and theatre-related periodicals were
also consulted regularly throughout my research. These include: the daily Gazeta Wyborcza;
months *Teatr* and *Dialog*, and the quarterlies *Didaskalia* and *Notatnik Teatralny*, to just name a few.

**Internet sources:**

Nowy Teatr  
http://www.nowyteatr.org/#/pl  
Video archive - http://www.nowyteatr.org/#/pl/media/mediateka_video

Portal e-teatr  
http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/index.html

TR Warszawa  
http://www.trwarszawa.pl/

Stary Teatr, Kraków  
http://www.stary-teatr.krakow.pl/

Youtube links:

Warlikowski on (A)Pollonia  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ha16H1m857g

Meeting with Krzysztofem Warlikowskim  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=72v75vKnZ2Q&feature=related  
21 Oct 2009
  Part 1/9  
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaLNlNUchgs8&feature=related
  Part 2/9  
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BxkQOBrpxXI&feature=related
  Part 3/9  
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpWYnG6d3mQ&feature=related
  Part 4/9  
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGnCmahAJTQ&feature=related
  Part 5/9  
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8XmYCOSDiXw&feature=related
  Part 6/9  
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydwDgrLymEw&feature=related
  Part 7/9  
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smpVxw5fMY&feature=related
  Part 8/9  
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AT8QjbPlkXuQ&feature=related
  Part 9/9  
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t9RkyhPFyL4&feature=related
Gdańsk: Post-show meeting with audience following the performance of Sarah Kane’s *Cleansed*, Festiwalu Wybrzeże Sztuki, 26 June 2010.

Part 1/6
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8I-PZpSmak&feature=related
Part 2/6
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1BOrFGMHkX8&feature=related
Part 3/6
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kye3-SYMyYo&feature=related
Part 4/6
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p8NLmirFhrU&feature=related
Part 5/6
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dd0yFnfXKA8&NR=1
Part 6/6
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVhH_R3b8O0&feature=related

Fragments of performance *The End*
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U9xKx9ze4TY&feature=related

Warlikowski talks about *The End*
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaLjNUchgs8&feature=related