

**JUGGLING POWER:
PERFORMING ETHNOGRAPHY
IN POSTSOCIALIST POLAND**

by

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Abstract

This dissertation is an autoethnographic account of my interdisciplinary Ph.D. research project – conducted in postsocialist Poland between May 2001 and June 2003 – which explored theatre performance as an ethnographic research methodology. I document and analyse the process through which the relations of power in the field challenged my original research field, plans, objectives, assumptions, theoretical frameworks, and methodologies that were to guide my fieldwork; and forced me to re-articulate and critically reflect on my role as ethnographer and theatre artist.

At the center of my discussion are three ethnographic theatre projects – *Dance as I Play You*, *Horses and Angels*, and *Hope* – I developed in collaboration with my co-investigator, Shawn Kazubowski-Houston, and with the research participants. The first two performances were created with student actors from the Cultural Centre for International Cooperation in the Arts in Elblag, and explored themes of intolerance, racism, gender and violence. *Hope*, created with student actors and five Roma women from Elblag, examined issues of racism, sexism, and violence in relation to Roma.

This thesis analyses the relations of power as they were negotiated in the various stages of the project, including the building of rapport with research participants, my professional engagement with the Cultural Centre, the development process, the public presentation, and audience and participant responses to the performances. The participants' struggles over representation, resulting from disparate notions of aesthetics, ethnography, and the political, are the focal points of the study.

My analysis draws from Antonio Gramsci's and Michel Foucault's conceptions of power; and Johannes Fabian's, Dwight Conquergood's, Jim Mienzakowski's, and Paul Stoller's approaches to participatory and performative ethnography. It also explores the Polish avant-garde theatres of Jerzy Grotowski, Tadeusz Kantor, and Jozef Szajna; and the political theatres of Bertolt Brecht and socialist Poland, and their influences on my work. I discuss my re-conceptualisation of performative ethnography, and my roles as ethnographer and artist, as the outcomes of the study. To conclude, I consider an ethnography of discovery as the trajectory I envision for my future ethnographic journey, and for any study of this kind.

Dedication

*For my mother,
Halina Kazubowska*

An anthropology that makes an ethnographic problem of itself offers pragmatic insight into the social worlds it examines and to which it belongs.

Michael Herzfeld

The critical ontology of ourselves has to be considered... as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment of going beyond them.

Michel Foucault

What has not been given sufficient consideration is that about large areas and important aspects of culture no one, not even the native, has information that can simply be called up and expressed in discursive statements. This sort of knowledge can be represented – made present – only through action, enactment, or performance.

Johannes Fabian

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As I reflect back upon the journey of my Ph.D. research and the writing of this dissertation, I would like to express my gratitude to all of those who have traveled alongside me, providing support, inspiration, and encouragement.

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To all my research participants – the Roma women and Roma community from Elblag, the Roma I met throughout Poland, and the student actors from the Cultural Centre – goes my heartfelt gratitude for undertaking this challenging journey with me, and teaching me so much about anthropology, art, and life itself. Their insights, stories, and hard work marked countless days in the field, and are impressed upon every page of this dissertation. I also thank Elblag's Cultural Centre for providing me with rehearsal and performance space, without which this project would have been so much more difficult to realise.

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My husband Shawn and my son Amadeusz have traveled with me most intimately on this journey, and know all-too-well its joys and sorrows. Shawn's collaboration as co-investigator on the project, and his intellectual and moral support in every aspect of this journey has been too generous to convey in words. I thank my little son for sharing with me his curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and his passion for wanting to "make the world a better place."

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Introduction: Pre-Boarding

This dissertation is a documentation of my Ph.D. research project, conducted between May 2001 and June 2003 that began as an attempt to use theatre as an ethnographic research methodology to study violence as experienced by Roma women in postsocialist Poland. I document and analyse the process through which the original project changed in response to the conditions in the field and my fieldwork experience. Particularly, I focus on the ways in which processes of power entered, and were produced in and through, the field relations; how they challenged my research plans, objectives, assumptions, theoretical frameworks, and methodologies, which were to guide my fieldwork; and how they forced me to re-articulate and critically reflect on – both during fieldwork and post-fieldwork – my role of ethnographer and theatre artist.

At the center of this discussion are three ethnographic theatre projects – *Dance as I Play You*, *Horses and Angels*, and *Hope* – that I developed in collaboration with my husband and co-investigator, Shawn Kazubowski-Houston, and with the research participants. *Dance As I Play You*, and *Horses and Angels* were created with student actors from the Cultural Centre for International Cooperation in the Arts in Elblag (see appendix B), where Shawn and I worked as artistic directors and instructors from September 2002 to June 2003. *Dance As I Play You* explored themes of intolerance and racism, while *Horses and Angels* studied gender and violence in Poland. *Hope*, created with student actors and five Roma women from Elblag, examined issues of racism, sexism, and violence in relation to Roma.

In this dissertation, I look at the relations of power that were being negotiated among the research participants, Shawn, and me. Struggles over representation, resulting from our disparate notions of ethnography and aesthetics, and our divergent understandings of what constitutes “political” versus “cultural/traditional” performance, are the focal points of the analysis. The ways in which audiences, the immediate contexts of each project, the Cultural Centre for International Cooperation, and local Roma and non-Roma beliefs and values mediated and shaped our struggles over representation are also given thorough consideration.

In my analysis of power, I look to Antonio Gramsci's (1971; 1977; 1978) and Michel Foucault's (1977; 1979; 1980; 1984; 1993) conceptions of power, which I set out in Chapter 4. I draw from these conceptualisations of power because their emphases on the pervasiveness, multiplicity, and diversity of power relations (the insidious and all-encompassing nature of power that works through the intermingling of coercion, consent, and force), and their considerations of the possibilities for subversion and manipulation on the part of human subjects poignantly elucidate the complex workings of power in my projects.

As an account of my ethnographic journey and its encounters with power, this dissertation finds an affinity with some of the work in anthropology referred to as autoethnography. Autoethnography has been broadly defined as "highly personalised ethnographic accounts" in which ethnographers "draw on their own experiences to extend understanding of culture" (Holt 2003, 2), and commit themselves to reflexivity – exposing their presence, personal history, and methodologies of research as instruments of data generation (Ruby, 1980). Autoethnographies usually disclose the author of the text by using the pronoun I, incorporating dialogue, and an emotional and evocative narrative style to expose themselves as stories constructed in, and shaped by, particular historical and social contexts (Ellis and Bochner 2000). Autoethnographers have challenged – by incorporating themselves into their own work – "accepted views about silent authorship, where the researcher's voice is not included in the presentation of the findings" (Holt 2003, 2). Autoethnographies committed to "strong readings" of reflexivity (Wasserfall 1993) also seek to destabilise power differentials between ethnographers and research participants by "weakening the interpretive authority of the former and empowering the voices of the latter and thereby, minimiz[ing] the potential for exploitative research" (Groves and Chang 1999, 238).

While I have questioned – both in the field and while writing this dissertation – my authority as the ethnographer/theatre artist, and sought to empower the voices of the research participants, I have also been cautious not to gloss over the relations of power that defined my relationships with the research participants in the field,¹ but rather, to acknowledge them and focus on "the research relationship as power relationship" (Ibid.). As such, this work adopts the kind of reflexivity that "critically analyse[s] power as it is

perceived and negotiated in the field” (Ibid.). For me, “*who* [including myself] *has what kind of power over whom*” in the field is a central concern (Ibid., 257). I focus on the shifting nature of power in the field, and the ways in which it shaped my field relations at different stages of the ethnographic process. In this sense, I acknowledge, as Kirin Narayan (1997) urges, that “fieldwork is [not always] a celebration of *communitas*” because relations of power in the field are complex, where “disjunctures can swell into distance [and] ruptures in communication can occur” (Ibid., 34). My work, thus, is a reflexive analysis of power in my ethnographic process.

This dissertation blends narrative and critical analysis so that the analysis “builds directly from cases evoked by narrative, providing a chance to step away, reflect on, and reframe the riveting particulars of the story at hand” (Ibid., 36). This, as Narayan suggests, acknowledges ethnographers’ own complicated identities (Ibid., 35) they negotiate in the field. By mixing social analysis with the research participants’ narratives, a narrative “from or about” the research participants, it constructs a “double-vision” (Rosaldo 1989, 127-43). Finally, it gives voice to the research participants in the text, recognising “that it is *people* and not theoretical puppets who populate our texts” (Narayan 1997, 36). In its focus on the particulars of the narrative, this document needs to be understood as what Lila Abu-Lughod (1991, 154) calls “the ethnography of the particular,” an ethnography, which by focusing on specific individuals and relationships in time and space, “necessarily subvert[s] the most problematic connotations of culture: homogeneity, coherence, and timelessness” (Ibid.).

Indeed, a critical goal of this document is to expose – in addition to the workings of power in the field – the ways in which the encounters with power in our “on-the-ground” relationships and interactions challenge our theoretical and methodological assumptions. As the workings of power in my field testify, “culture” is not homogenous, coherent, and timeless. And as Carol J. Greenhouse (2002) points out, in this lies the strength of the ethnographic method: the strength to refuse such an understanding of culture that does not account for life itself, which is fragmented, unstable and full of contradictions (28-30).

In constructing this account of my ethnographic journey, I have relied on my memories, fieldnotes written throughout the course of the fieldwork, transcriptions of the

recordings of the Roma women's interviews, life stories/histories, transcriptions and video recordings of the rehearsals of *Dance As I Play You*, *Horses and Angels*, and *Hope*, and video recordings and scripts of the three ethnographic performances.²

A big milestone in the writing of this dissertation has been the translation of fieldnotes, interview and life stories/histories transcripts, and the scripts of the three performances from Polish into English. Although I did at times communicate with the student research participants in English, particularly when Shawn was in the studio, our primary language of communication – also my first language – was Polish. I spoke with the Roma women only in Polish because they were reluctant to teach me Romani³ – a choice I understood to be part of the Roma women's strategy of self-protection from me, a Gadjo⁴ outsider. Likewise, I wrote fieldnotes in Polish in order to capture the nuances and cadences of the research participants' speech, as well as the specificities of Polish social realities embedded in the language that constructs them.

For me this act of translating from Polish into English has not been about precisely replicating the original text, because as Walter Benjamin ([1923] 1973) maintained, no translation is capable of “capturing the meaning contained in the original . . .” as meaning is shifting, unstable, and “mutually constructed between . . . translations and their readers” (78). Instead, I have tried to create what Benjamin refers to as a “transparent” translation – a translation that “does not cover the original, does not cover its light but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully” (Ibid.). By “pure language,” Benjamin suggests “an inter-lingual exchange in which the recipient's language – English in this case – gains lexical novelty from the idiosyncratic word groupings and images of the original” (Kazubowski-Houston 2001, 217). For example, the statement made by research participant Zefiryna, “What is allowed a voivode, you are not allowed, you brat!” is a translation of the Polish proverb, “Co wolno wojewodzie, to nie Tobie smrodzie!” which by a novel arrangement of phrases inserts novel meaning into the recipient's language (see p.193). In this “linguistic expansion” (Ibid.), my translations of fieldnotes and transcriptions constitute a move toward Benjamin's “pure language.”

These acts of translation, however, have not been without challenge. The most profound difficulty in translating fieldnotes, transcriptions and scripts was that such a

“transparent translation” did not always adeptly convey in English the “soul” of the Polish language. And this indeed is a difficult challenge to overcome, as I struggle with it daily in order to competently convey my still-so-Polish thought processes in English words, sounds, intonations, and rhythms. Having lived in Canada for nearly fifteen years, I often feel “lodged” in an unsettling position, where I find myself no longer fully proficient in Polish, and not yet fully-fluent in English, to say in either language what I “really” want to say. In writing this account, such difficulty has been twofold, because the challenge lay not only in “transmitting the soul” of the Polish language to the English reader, but also “the soul” of Roma-spoken-Polish, with all the peculiarities of the Romani language in terms of rhythm, tempo, intonation, and accent. Here, Shawn was helpful with his insights into how this combination of Polish and Romani might “feel” in English, and helped me to translate, as accurately as possible, the “soul” of Polish-cum-Romani onto these pages.

Another challenge I have faced in translating research materials was the conveying of terms of endearment achieved in Polish by using different derivatives of personal names in order to relate various emotional nuances. For instance, in the original Polish script of *Hope*, Nadzieja’s mother often refers to her daughter as “Nadziejka” to convey her love and tenderness; or Nadzieja shows her affection for her canine companion by calling it “piesek” (the Polish root “pies” means “dog”). In such cases, as there is no equivalent in English, I inserted adjectives, such as “little,” when Nadzieja refers to her dog, in order to convey the emotional richness of her utterance (i.e. “Little one, come here...” [see appendix G, p.452]).

Another undertaking of this dissertation important to explicate in this introduction is my use of tense. For the most part, I have recounted my ethnographic journey in the past tense, including the development of the three ethnographic theatre performances, post-performance participant/audience discussions, and personal reflections during the research. My responses to the performances, as articulated in Chapters 7 and 8, and post-fieldwork reflections and analyses throughout this document are articulated in the present tense. I have combined both present and past tenses, as I believe it is important, methodologically, for the reader to know when I am describing actions or speech that took place during my fieldwork (recorded in fieldnotes, interviews/life stories/life

histories, and audio/video recordings), and when I am articulating post-fieldwork reflections and analyses. On the other hand, I have used the present tense to relate my responses to the performances to echo, as much as possible, the dynamic ways in which theatre performance can engage its spectators, in order to also engage the reader dynamically with the actions of the performances recounted in this document. I believe the use of the present tense, by “privileging the saying and not the said, the doing and not the done” (Conquergood 1998, 31), can more effectively convey the unfolding of the performances’ actions, and possibly engage the reader more interactively with the text than a more dispassionate retelling in the past tense. However, I am still aware of all the knotty implications of writing ethnography either in present or past tense – implications I believe one cannot entirely smooth out. The use of the past tense risks revisiting anthropology’s colonial legacy of portraying other people as the exotic, antediluvian “other” (Fabian 1983; Tsing 1993). The use of the present tense, on the other hand, as much as it acknowledges that our research participants live in the present and share the same moment in history as we do, it also carries the danger of turning the people with whom we work into a “people without history” (Wolf 1982; Tsing 1993). I hope that in this document, past and present tenses will complement each other – the past will “historicise” the present, and the present will “contemporise” the past.

I have replaced all names in this dissertation with pseudonyms to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants. The Roma women requested me to do so, as the stories I relate here could have negative impacts on their lives due to the highly politicised contexts of Poland. On the other hand, while the student actors were not concerned about their anonymity, I have replaced their names with pseudonyms in order to further ensure that the Roma women are not identifiable, and to protect the students’ identities, given the political subject matter of this dissertation.

This document is accompanied by ten appendices: appendix A (Timeline); appendix B (Maps); appendix C (Cultural Centre Organisational Chart); appendix D (Roma Family Trees and Actors’ Sketches); appendix E (Interview/Life Story Excerpts); appendix F (Transcript/Fieldnote Excerpts); appendix G (Scripts); appendix H (Photographs); appendix I (Informed Consent Forms); and appendix J (DVD Recording).

However, I do not consider these additional documents as auxiliary research materials. I view them as “complementary forms of research publication” (Conquergood 1991, 190) – a different way of presenting one’s ethnographic work that can potentially deconstruct and challenge the text of the dissertation proper (Denzin 2003, 13) by making the presence of the ethnographer in the field, and the relations of power that defined it, all the more apparent. While the scripts and DVD-recording of the performances, like this dissertation, are “something made, something fashioned” (Geertz 1973, 15) because they present a world invented by the research participants and the ethnographer, they are not fictions in the literary meaning of the word. They constitute what Jim Mienzakowski refers to as “ethnographically acceptable fictions” (Mienzakowski, 1994, 1995, 2000, 137) since they “emerged” out of fieldwork, were created in collaboration with the research participants, and were based on the participants’ experiences, memories, understandings, and explanations of the social worlds in which they live. As such, they remain – like the dissertation itself – accountable to the world beyond the narrative, to the people whom they represent (Narayan 1999, 141-2).

Finally, the structure of this dissertation – a journey – reflects how I conceptualize both my “groundwork” in the field, as well as the writing of this document. To me, both have been parts of a journey in which I revisit my role as ethnographer and artist. Yet, for me this journey has not concluded with an arrival. I look to the future, pondering more than ever, what it means to be an ethnographer and artist, what it means to do anthropology and theatre in a world where gross inequalities of power between us and our research participants unsettle the very foundations of such concepts.

In Chapter 1, I discuss my histories, interests, assumptions, theoretical frameworks, research plans, objectives, and methodologies with which I entered the research field. I sketch out the main theoretical and artistic influences on my conceptualisation and practice of ethnographic theatre, and highlight the salient aspects of the approach to ethnographic theatre performance I developed in my Master of Fine Arts Thesis and Graduating Project. I speak of my personal encounters with violence in socialist Poland, and the roles they played in my decision to study violence in my Ph.D. research.

In Chapter 2, I outline the personal experiences, and central arguments and debates in the study of postsocialism, that compelled me to study violence committed against Roma women in Poland.

Chapter 3 focuses on the pilot research I conducted in the summer of 2001. I recount my search for a research community, and how I originally arrived at a decision to conduct research with the Romanian Roma women in Morag.

In Chapter 4, I provide an overview of the assumptions – and the theoretical underpinnings that informed them – about the various hegemonic forces that I believed constituted and promoted violence against the Roma women of Morag, which I developed following my pilot research in Poland in 2001. I explain my understanding of hegemony and power in reference to both Foucault's and Gramsci's approaches to power. A discussion of the research plans and objectives I originally set-out for my Ph.D. research, and my apprehensions about, and expected outcomes of, the project closes the chapter.

Chapter 5 discusses the beginning of my Ph.D. research in the summer of 2002. I relate the circumstances that ended my plans of working with the Romanian Roma women of Morag, and how I subsequently decided to work with the Roma women in Elblag. I also provide a brief history and my personal recollections of Elblag, and describe present-day settings of the city. The chapter concludes with an account of my professional engagement with the Cultural Centre.

Chapters 6-8 are "thick descriptions" of the ethnographic theatre projects *Dance As I Play You*, *Horses and Angels*, and *Hope*. I outline the main stages of the projects' development, from pre-rehearsal sessions through rehearsals, public performances, and the participant and audience responses to the performances. In the account of *Hope*, I also discuss the initial building of rapport with the Roma women of Elblag, learning about the women's lives through participant observation, informal conversations, interviews and life stories/histories. As well, I explore the disparate ways in which the Roma women spoke, in the various stages of the research process, about their experiences of violence. While discussing all three projects, I explore the participants' understandings of racism/intolerance, gender inequality, and violence against Roma, and the numerous factors that shaped our decision making in the process. The relations of power that were being negotiated in our mutual interactions in and outside of the studio are at the centre of

my analysis. I also consider the role of “sensuous scholarship” – an engaged, physical, and empathic construction of ethnographic knowledge – in the projects. Finally, I discuss the responses of the participants, the Cultural Centre, and audience members, to the performances, both during and after their public presentations.

In the Epilogue, I focus on my visit to Elblag in the summer of 2005. I describe the developments in the research participants’ lives since 2003, and their current perceptions of the project.

The Conclusion explicates how the powers-at-play in the field problematised my original assumptions, theoretical frameworks, research plans, objectives, and methodologies; and how they forced me to re-conceptualise my approach to performative ethnography, and my roles as ethnographer and artist. I consider an ethnography of discovery as the trajectory for my future ethnographic journey, and for any study of this kind. I close by relating my dissertation’s struggles with the “shadows” of the powers that were at play in the research field.

PART I: BEARINGS

Chapter 1

A Theatre Anthropologist's Baggage

Standing at a Passport Control counter in Warsaw's International Airport on July 1, 2002 with my husband Shawn and our five-year-old son Amadeusz, about to undertake my Ph.D. research, I was hauling along with me baggage bursting at the seams with 31 years of my life, haphazardly compartmentalized. Amadeusz pulled at my sleeve and exclaimed, "Mama, we went so fast... we were just there, and now we're here." It was this "there" that had led me into this project, and had influenced the ways in which I had entered into it. Simply put, I carried my histories, interests, biases, and clearly marked-out research field, objectives, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks that were to guide me throughout my Ph.D. project.

My interests in ethnographic performance, and experimental, collaborative, and participatory ethnography, had stemmed from both my work as a theatre artist, and my academic endeavours. Shawn and I had been performers, playwrights, and theatre directors for nearly fifteen years, both in Canada and Poland. As theatre artists, Shawn trained at the University of Winnipeg, while I studied theatre both in Poland and at the University of Manitoba. In our artistic practice, we had been particularly committed to the physical, image-based avant-garde theatre traditions of Jerzy Grotowski,⁵ Tadeusz Kantor,⁶ and Jozef Szajna.⁷

These theatre traditions carry particular histories, world-views, and aesthetics. Their genealogies range from the inter-war years to the present. Grotowski's, Kantor's, and Szajna's art flourished after the uprisings of 1968 when the Communist's Party's cultural policy supported alternative art forms, both economically and ideologically (Cioffi, 1996).⁸ While the theatres of Grotowski, Kantor, and Szajna are each unique, they all share certain assumptions, worldviews, and aesthetic concerns that in contemporary art/social theory have been categorised under the umbrella term the "ideology of modernism" (Moi 2004, 247).⁹

The ideology of modernism seeks the attainment of the “artistic absolute” through an autonomy of the aesthetic from culture (Ibid., 248). Thus, it disdains the ordinary and the everyday, and consequently realist representations (Ibid.), including realism,¹⁰ verisimilitude,¹¹ naturalism,¹² melodrama,¹³ and romantic drama,¹⁴ with their focus on narrative, character, plot and mimesis (Ibid., 251). Generally, modernism – although it often draws from popular culture – disdains everything that falls within the limits of “the popular,” and clearly differentiates between high art and mass culture (Huysen 1986; Strey 1993, 156). Similarly, while fascinated with “the exotic,” it perceives the cultural/artistic practices and artworks of non-Western people as folklore and artifacts, not as art, per se (Dimitrijevic 2003, 1). For modernists, folkloric products are valuable as practices and/or artifacts of the “authentic,” “pre-modern,” “primitive,” “savage,” or “vanishing” “ethno-culture,” but not as artistic objects (Dimitrijevic 2003, 1; Hall 1997, 161). Non-Western works of art that satisfy modernist aesthetic standards have been dismissed by modernist art criticism as replicas of superior, Western originals (Dimitrijevic 2003, 1).¹⁵ Despite a pronounced disdain for “bourgeois philistinism,” modernism gained access to the museum through its strong affiliation with society’s elite (Strey 1993, 156). Ironically, the modernist project is thus, inadvertently, another lackey of bourgeois sensibility (Ibid., 154) from which the theatres of Grotowski, Kantor, and Szajna also developed. The metaphysical-existential questioning of Grotowski, Kantor, and Szajna’s theatres; Kantor’s abstract-Dada imagery and sense of humour; and Szajna’s surrealist and expressionist angst, always appealed to the Polish intelligentsia (Filipowicz 1992, 79). And like the ideology of modernism itself, which operates through universalising metanarratives (Strey 1993, 159), their theatres also excluded the voices of “others” – women for example – in the name of universal principles and general goals.

As a theatre aesthetic, modernism favours visual over verbal modes of expression, and is concerned with “the unsayable, the unpredictable, the impossibility of meaning, absolute negativity . . .” (Cioffi 1996; Moi 2004, 248). Emphasis is placed on the unpredictable, impulsive, and apocalyptic moment, and quite often the grotesque, which has long been a favourite tool, particularly in the Polish avant-garde (Klossowicz, et al. 1986; Plesniarowicz 1994). Modernist theatre also seeks to mirror the artist’s inner processes (Plesniarowicz 1994). The world-view of the modernist aesthetic has been

generally described as apolitical, formalistic, anti-tradition, and anti-religion. Its apolitical character is usually understood as unintentionally politicised (Filipowicz and Tymicki 1987). The theatres of Grotowski, Kantor, and Szajna do not seek – in the Brechtian¹⁶ sense – the politicisation of audiences, by inviting them to social critique and action; however, this is not to say that they have been merely apolitical. Like all artistic practices, when placed in their social contexts, they also have a political dimension (Ibid.).¹⁷

The theatre aesthetics of Grotowski, Kantor, and Szajna appealed to both Shawn and me for a variety of reasons. I was introduced to their theatres by my Polish language teacher when I was a Lyceum student in Poland. I am not sure why I became so fascinated with this kind of theatre in particular, but perhaps I can explain it in terms of my love for visual art. My great aunt was an avid drawer and painter, and inspired me to look at the world with the “eye” of a visual artist. When Shawn was training as an actor at the University of Winnipeg, he found Grotowski’s focus on the body more appealing than Stanislavski’s psychological realism. As we were attracted to the theatre aesthetics of Grotowski, Kantor and Szajna, we adopted many of their modernist assumptions, preferences and flavours into our own theatrical style and practices, although with time we began recognising their elitism, exclusionism, and misogyny. In short, as no aesthetic can be separated from its history, politics, and world view, neither could our own aesthetics leave entirely behind all of modernism’s baggage.

Our theatrical style of expression abstained from realism, naturalism, and melodrama. Our acting methodology – Illustrative Performing Technique – which we had developed with our theatre ensemble, Teatr Korzenie, relied heavily on grotesque, abstract, and physical (over verbal) means of expression. The chief trademarks of our technique are the following: the contrast of staccato-legato movement sequences; the use of tableaux to separate scenes and/or highlight dramatic moments on stage; the employment of “facial masks”¹⁸ – a performative tool in which the actor isolates, contracts, and releases facial muscles to create a desired facial expression with a highly expressive “carved-in-stone” effect; and the use of metaphoric, symbolic, and poetic speech. There was also a certain repudiation of conventional plot in our theatre, as we wove more circular and repetitious ideational threads and actions within the play’s

narrative – where beginning and denouement were reduced to ephemera. Both Shawn and I rejected – what we then saw as – mainstream theatre’s over-bloated naturalistic inclusion of objects on stage, and opted for the sparser scenography of Grotowski’s “poor theatre,” an economy of mise-en-scene that kindled our love of a more symbolic aesthetic. There was no room in our ideal of theatre for the everyday, for the prosaic, for the miniscule.

Thus, our theatre, like that of Grotowski, Kantor and Szajna, did not appeal to all. It was not uncommon for our aesthetic vision to be lauded by some theatre critics as thought-provoking and striking, and at the same time criticised for its inaccessibility to the broader public, and for our highbrow art elitism. And while early in my career I dismissed such criticism as being an issue of “taste” or “preference,” over time these criticisms began to unsettle, slowly but steadily, my conceptions of art, its purpose, and my role as an artist.

However, in my artistic practice I had always been interested in the possibility of “the political” in theatre, particularly the intentionally “politicised political” of Bertolt Brecht’s theatre. I believe this was because I had spent the first twenty years of my life in socialist Poland, where such politicised theatre was an important means of critiquing social reality for many¹⁹. Beyond the formalism of Grotowski, Kantor, and Szajna, Polish theatre – Teatr Osmego Dnia (The Theatre of the 8th Day), Andrzej Wajda, Kazimierz Dejmek, Provisorium Theatre, Teatr Wspolczesny (Contemporary Theatre), Pomaranczowa Alternatywa (Orange Alternative) to name a few – “thrived on subversion” that aimed to politicize audiences into resisting the totalitarianism of the Polish government (Filipowicz 1992).

This was the style of theatre from which I had first “caught the bug” when I was studying at the Lyceum. I still keenly remember one particular Polish language class I attended in the late eighties. It was a cold January morning, and my classmates all seemed rather lethargic. Our teacher, a vocal opponent of the communist regime, walked in excitedly (too excitedly for an early morning in January) and asked, “Have you ever heard of Dejmek’s theatre production of *Forefathers’ Eve*?” Most of us had not. “No?” she cried out, utterly outraged by the blanket of ignorance that covered us. “Then I shall tell you!”

Dejmek's production of *Forefathers' Eve* (written by Polish playwright Adam Mickiewicz) premiered in Warsaw in 1967, and sparked a cycle of violent protests and resistance in Poland. The performance, which railed against Russia's occupation of nineteenth-century Poland, was received by Polish audiences with widespread enthusiasm, and was largely seen as a critique of the communist regime. Communist Party officials responded by banning the play. However, at the final performance, a group of students sang Poland's national anthem in the theatre, and then marched over to the Mickiewicz Monument, where police beat and arrested many protestors. This led to further demonstrations, police brutality, the expulsion of students and faculty from the University of Warsaw, arrests, and a chain of increasingly violent demonstrations across the country (Cioffi 1996, 96-7).

Our teacher related this story to us with immense passion in her voice as we all sat transfixed. Then a student commented, "I don't really like political theatre." "What," our teacher retorted, "you don't like political theatre?! But this is the ONLY theatre that makes sense!" Those words stayed with me, influencing the ways in which I conceptualised and practiced theatre – as a medium of social critique, in the Brechtian sense.²⁰ It was this medium of social critique that I was trying to marry – in my artistic practice – with the theatre aesthetics of Grotowski, Kantor, and Szajna²¹.

My circuitous journey from political to ethnographic theatre was guided by my academic endeavours. The journey began in the Master of Fine Arts Program in Interdisciplinary Studies at Simon Fraser University where, initially inspired by Grotowski's and Eugenio Barba's²² cross-cultural explorations in performance,²³ I began examining potential alliances between theatre and anthropology. Soon, however, my growing acquaintance with contemporary debates in anthropology concerning notions of truth, cultural relativism, performance, and power, pushed me away from both Barba's (1991, 1995) and Grotowski's (Osinski 1991) quest for universally, cross-culturally recurring principles of performance. It was then I came across the works of Victor Turner (1982), Richard Schechner (1985), Catherine Allen and Nathan Garner (1997), and Johannes Fabian (1990), which all explored theatre as an ethnographic research methodology. The approach to ethnographic theatre performance inaugurated by Turner (1982) in collaboration with Schechner (1985) – and later adopted by Allen and Garner

(1997) – employed theatre performance as a means of documenting and engaging the audience in a learning process about another culture’s way of life. Turner and Schechner practiced what they called “instructional” ethnographic theatre with a particular focus on “authenticity” (Turner 1982, 41, 48).

Fabian (1990) employed theatre performance as a mode of ethnographic participatory observation, where the ethnographer – no longer an investigator – became a “co-performer,” whose purpose was to create “a ground where cultural knowledge is dialogically constituted” (6). Fabian’s approach advanced a “performative,” as opposed to “informative,” form of ethnography. He argued that certain kinds of cultural knowledge were embodied only in performance. The ethnographer’s questions did not usually elicit informed answers “about . . . important aspects of culture [because] no one, not even the native, has information that can be simply called up and expressed in discursive statements” (Ibid.). Thus, employing theatre performance as a methodology of research could inform us about how cultural knowledge was constituted and produced, and how it was embedded in relations of power (Ibid., 86). Fabian’s performative ethnography offered the ethnographer a means to “work *with*, not *on* the people with whom he interacts” (Ibid., 19).

The approach to ethnographic theatre performance I developed in my MFA work was largely inspired by Fabian’s notion of performative ethnography. I had found Turner and Schechner’s approach problematic because it uncritically assumed that the “truth” about another culture was accessible to the ethnographer, and could be described, represented, and transmitted through a theatre performance to largely passive audiences. It also failed to problematise the conditions of its own ethnographic representation. My approach – implemented in two ethnographic performances, *Name Day*, and *Name Day: The Defence*, that focused on women and violence in socialist and postsocialist Poland, and the politics of artistic/ethnographic representations – like Fabian’s, employed theatre performance as a mode of ethnographic participatory observation, where the ethnographer addressed her research question by collaboratively creating a performance with the participants. However, I extended Fabian’s work by considering audiences – alongside the ethnographer and research participants – as active participants in the production of ethnographic knowledge, because they also interact with, interpret, and construct

meanings of ethnographic representations. Additionally, recognising the central role that physical means of expression – such as movement, gesture, and non-verbal vocalisation – plays in the construction of ethnographic knowledge,²⁴ I facilitated in *Name Day*, and *Name Day: The Defence*, a performative ground where the construction of ethnographic knowledge took place through both spoken narratives and physical modes of expression. Finally, *Name Day*, and *Name Day: The Defence*, problematised the conditions of their own representations. In both plays, strategies of reflexivity, polyphony, and politicisation were employed in order to provide audience members a space in which to negotiate meanings in more dialogic, interactive, and critical ways; to explore physical means of expression in the construction of ethnographic knowledge; and to problematise the conditions of the performance's representation.

The strategy of reflexivity employed in the performances was influenced by Jay Ruby's (1980) notion of reflexivity, which called for the exposing of the anthropologist's presence, personal history, and methodologies of research, as instruments of data generation. It also drew from Fabian's (1990) argument that theatre performance, as an ethnographic research methodology, could provide insights into the ways in which cultural knowledge was constituted and produced, as well as the relations of power that defined it (86). *Name Day*, and *Name Day: The Defence* were reflexive theatre events because they directed the audience's attention back upon the conditions of the performances' representations, namely the sundry power relations between creators, subjects, spectators, and the society-at-large that designated them as theatre events, by employing both Brecht's²⁵ and Kantor's²⁶ illusion breaking techniques.

The use of polyphony in the performances was inspired by Mikhail Bakhtin's (1984) "dialogic sense of truth" – the plurality of equal, contesting voices, which confront the audience with varied and shifting representations of reality (6-7). The polyphonic techniques employed in the performances included performers assuming double roles; presenting a collective action against a collective problem; incorporating diverse acting styles to highlight the diversity of voices in the performance; and employing Faye Ginsburg's (1995) principle of the parallax effect²⁷, by having the spoken and physical texts of the performance contest each other's representations (Kazubowski-Houston 2000, 17).

Finally, the strategy of politicisation, drawn from Brecht's (1964) epic theatre, and from Bakhtin's notion of the grotesque in carnival – with its mockery and profanation of everyday life, and emphasis on the body and bodily processes, such as eating, drinking, vomiting defecating, and fornicating – was a means to temporarily subvert the established order (Bakhtin 1968, 11, 19-20, 34).

As such, my performative ethnography could be seen as bearing an affinity with a school of visual anthropology that concerns itself with negotiating “the anthropological” with the “aesthetic expressive.” While there has been a significant denial of aesthetics – through a distancing of oneself from any artistic concerns – in much contemporary visual anthropology, Elizabeth Edwards (1997), for example, argues that “exploring the intersecting space between aesthetic expressive and ethnographic documentary in photography” is crucial, as “there are components of culture which require a more evocative, multidimensional, even ambiguous expression than the realist documentary paradigm permits” (53-4).²⁸ In Edward's view, a visual ethnography in which the past and the present are “decentred, repositioned and reactivated through an expressive medium” (Ibid., 55) problematises the boundary between “fact and allegory.” It exposes what has long been known in anthropology: there is no “definite way of separating the factual from the allegory, for cultural “facts” are not necessarily ‘true’ and allegory ‘false’” (Ibid.). Thus, it “decentres anthropological authority,” and repudiates any claims of authenticity (Ibid., 69). This, in turn, Edwards argues, can – in the Brechtian sense – involve the viewer in “discovering the casual complexities of society/unmasking the prevailing view of things as the view of those who rule it. . .” (Ibid., 59). This is provided, of course – warns Edwards – that the aesthetic expressive in our ethnographic representations does not “overwhelm the content in a way that objectifies. . .” (Ibid., 58). In short, in my conceptualisation and practice of performative ethnography, I sought – as Edwards does – to speak about people's lives, cultural practices and beliefs, not in a descriptive, documentary fashion, but through a “visual metaphor . . . which communicates not through the realist paradigm but through a lyrical expressiveness” (Ibid.). It was in this lyrical expressiveness that I saw – like Edwards – the power to politicise the viewer. And most importantly, adopting this lyrical expressiveness in

ethnographic theatre performances allowed me to firmly maintain my romance with “the unsayable,” “the unpredictable,” and “the abstract” of the modernist tradition.

I entered the Ph.D. program under Special Arrangements at Simon Fraser University with the intent to explore the performative research methodology I had developed in my MFA project in the study of violence. My interest in violence was influenced by my life experiences in socialist Poland, where I had spent the first twenty years of my life. The Poland of my youth was a country where people talked about, wrote about, and experienced, violence on an everyday basis. In Poland, the social memory of violence was, and still is, widespread. People continue to talk and write about the various forms of violence of the country’s past. As a child, I regularly heard about the atrocities committed by both the Nazis and the Soviets during the Second World War. Members of my family endured the horrors of the war, fighting against Fascism and Stalinism. My grandpa and his sister nearly lost their lives at the hands of Soviet partisans. My grandma, mother, and uncle lived in extreme poverty during the war, and one of my great uncles died of starvation.

The violence of the war left an indelible footprint across Poland. An entire section of Elblag (the city in which I had been born and grew up as a child) remained in ruins throughout my childhood. I heard stories about the Soviet gulags, where two of my relatives had perished. The legacy of the Second World War was an integral component of the school curricula. In primary and secondary school, I learned about the war in almost every class, including Polish language, theatre, history, and even physical education, where we were often ridiculed for not marching evenly like “good Polish soldiers.” The ever-present threat of nuclear holocaust was perpetually hovering above our heads, as our school held periodic nuclear attack drills. Field trips to the Nazi concentration camp museum in Stuthoff also had a significant impact on how I thought about the past.

Violence was an everyday reality in the Poland of my youth. I was ten years old when Wojciech Jaruzelski, First Secretary of the Polish Socialist State, declared Martial Law on December 13, 1981. The day is vividly etched into my memory, with images of tanks and armed soldiers patrolling the streets of Elblag. The civil disobedience of the Solidarity movement soon followed. I remember one day sitting at a desk in elementary

school. Tear gas was lobbed through the window of our classroom. My eyes and head burned with pain, and I was unable to see anything. Our teacher, also temporarily blinded, scrambled to evacuate us. What happened next is not so clear, but I remember standing outside for hours, waiting. As the effects of the gas wore off, we were sent home. While the burning in my eyes left me a few days later, my memories still remain.

In my Ph.D. research, I decided to explore issues of violence by using my approach to ethnographic theatre performance, because I believed it could provide a valuable research methodology in future studies of violence. Violence is a socially and culturally constructed “sphere of human existence” that can assume as many diverse manifestations as there are people who experience, employ, and resist violence in various historical contexts (Robben and Nordstrom 1995, 6). People’s experiences and understandings of violence are always framed by their personal biography, class, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and position within the global economy (Ollujic 1995; Robben and Nordstrom 1995). Thus, in order to study violence, one must enter the “field,” and conduct research on the ground. However, as many postmodern critiques of Western objectivism have pointed out, ethnographic research does not entail collecting readily available information; instead, it is a process in which ethnographic knowledge is being constituted through interactions – dialogue and debate – between ethnographer and research participants. The viability of such a dialectical construction of knowledge about violence is further complicated by the fact that certain kinds of knowledge about violence cannot always be constituted through discursive statements. Sometimes, certain experiences, memories, and conceptions of violence are taboo, ineffable, unacknowledged, painful, or embarrassing, and cannot always be discussed directly in spoken narratives; and thus, might require more indirect, non-discursive, metaphoric, and physical means of expression²⁹. Fabian maintains that knowledge about certain aspects of culture “can be represented – made present – only through action, enactment, or performance” (1990, 6). Accordingly, to study violence, I believed that a unique methodology of inquiry was necessary to provide a ground upon which knowledge about violence could be dialogically constituted by the ethnographer and research participants, not only through spoken narratives, but also through physical means of expression. The

blueprint for ethnographic theatre performance developed in my MFA studies, I thought, might provide such a research methodology.

Pivotal to my conceptualisation and practice of ethnographic theatre performance in my Ph.D. research was the work of Jim Mienczakowski, Dwight Conquergood, and Paul Stoller. Before I discuss their influences on my notions of “the aesthetic expressive” and “the political” in ethnographic representation, I will first sketch out the main points of their theoretical and methodological frameworks.

Health researcher Mienczakowski’s (1992, 1994, 1995, 2000, 2001) *critical ethno-drama* is a form of ethnographic performance, where “participants and audience empowerment [can take place] through forum reconstruction and ‘dialogical interactions’” (Ibid., 1995, 361). Mienczakowski creates scripts for his ethnographic theatre performances from his previous fieldwork and interviews conducted in a variety of healthcare settings, writing in accessible, everyday vernacular. As well, sections of what he refers to as *acceptable fictions* – texts created out of separate informant interviews, albeit approved by the informants themselves (Ibid., 1994, 1995, cited in Mienczakowski 2000, 137) – are inserted into these ethno-drama scripts. His ethnographic performances strive to replicate the research settings “so that . . . the informants’ behaviours and routines can be accurately portrayed” (Ibid., 130). In this sense, Mienczakowski’s ethno-drama echoes Turner (1982) and Schechner’s (1985) commitment to “authenticity.” The scripts are then circulated within healthcare communities for feedback, and subsequently performed by medical or nursing students to groups of “health consumers, health professionals and health agencies.” They are also workshopped – in line with Augusto Boal’s (1979) methodology of forum theatre³⁰ – in post-performance sessions (forum sessions) with the informants and audience members (Mienczakowski 2000, 128). According to Mienczakowski, such ethno-dramas have an emancipatory potential for health informants, health professionals, and audiences (Ibid., 133), because in forum sessions, “audiences question . . . and debat[e] the representations made on stage with the actors, informants, and representatives, and project writers and directors” (Ibid., 129).

To facilitate a critical debate and questioning of events represented on stage in forum discussions, Mienczakowski’s ethno-drama adopts a “multi-perspective narrative,”

in which the story being told is “interpreted and explained from the contrasting perspectives of each participant” that seek to challenge the audience’s and informants’ stereotypical understandings of the issues presented (Ibid., 133). The emancipatory potential of such ethno-dramas, as Mienczakowski understands it, also lies in the empathy they evoke in both informants and audiences (Ibid.). In Mienczakowski’s view, the emotional involvement of informants and audience members in the issues presented is facilitated “by the audiences’ understandings that the staged representations they are seeing are documented, informant-worded research narratives based upon real lives” (Ibid.,135). Mienczakowski recognises that while the ethno-drama process is unlikely to “bring about emancipation collectively . . . it retains the potential to effect instrumental change through the insights it gives to the audience,” and the opportunity it provides “for informants to be heard where previously they were not” (Ibid., 139). Particularly, Mienczakowski stresses, “the greatest level of insight, and subsequent potential emancipation has been gained by the nursing students working [on such ethno-dramas], many of whom expressed profound changes in their understanding of, and dealings with, persons involved in these health issues” (Mienczakowski 2000, 139). Finally, according to Mienczakowski, the emancipatory potential of such ethno-dramas lies in the opportunity for “more accessible and clear public explanations of research than is sometimes the case with traditional, written report texts” (Ibid., 136). Mienczakowski’s *public voice* ethnography addresses audiences that have been traditionally marginalised by, and/or unresponsive to, more traditional ethnographic accounts (Mienczakowski 2000, 127; 2001, 470).

For Conquergood (1985, 1986, 1988, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1998, 2002), performance is a method of research, a process in which the ethnographer engages collaboratively with the research participants adopting the role of a theatrical producer, and a subject of ethnographic research, because Conquergood views culture as performative (verb), rather than performance (noun). Ethnographic performance, according to Conquergood, must arise out of engaged fieldwork “because [the] ethnographer must gain people’s respect and trust in participating in their lifestyles” (Conquergood 1986, 23). In Conquergood’s view, doing ethnography by means of performance is, in Renato Rosaldo’s (1989, 91) words, “to put culture into motion” (Conquergood 1998, 31); it is about giving precedence

to “experiential, participatory epistemology” (Ibid., 1985, 2). Conquergood concurs with Fabian (1990) that not all knowledge can be constructed by means of asking questions and providing answers, because “knowledge is not stored in storytelling so much as it is enacted, reconfigured, tested, and engaged by imaginative summonings and interpretative replays of past events in the light of present situations and struggles” (Conquergood 1993, 337). Knowledge and ideas, according to Conquergood, “are dynamic and co-experienced instead of static and transmitted . . . knowledge [thus] is a matter of doing” (Ibid., 338).

Furthermore, for Conquergood (1991), performance – be it a methodology of research or another cultural process – is an avenue for “public discussion,” where people can “gain . . . visibility and stag[e] their identity” (189). Conquergood (1985) argues for this performative “public discussion” to be dialogic, so it “speaks to and with,” and not “about and for,” the other (10). It should also facilitate a critical and open dialogue that allows for “facing up to other positions that might challenge and interrogate one’s own location” (Ibid., 1993, 343), and leads to “honest intercultural understanding” (Ibid.). Yet he cautions that such a “public discussion” cannot be viewed outside of its politics of power, that is to say, how the performance “enables, sustains, challenges, subverts, critiques and naturalises” ideology, and how the performance “accommodate[s] and contest[s] domination” (Ibid., 1991, 190).

Conquergood also recognises that the “public discussion” of the performance is not always verbal, because “. . . discourse is not always and exclusively verbal: issues and attitudes are expressed and contested in dance, music, gesture, food, ritual, artefact, symbolic action, as well as words” (Ibid., 189). Physical means of communication, Conquergood asserts, are flexible and nuanced and can carry multiple and contradictory messages (Ibid.). While physical means of communication, such as “. . . intonation, silence, body tension, arched eyebrows etc, blank stares [have been largely ignored by] the visual, verbal bias of Western regimes of knowledge” they are an important means of communication for oppressed people, who often must rely on “indirect and non-verbal and extralinguistic modes of communication where subversive meanings and utopian yearnings can be sheltered and shielded from surveillance” (Conquergood 2002, 146, 148). Conquergood follows Gramsci’s (1971) call for engaged knowledge: “The

intellectual's error consists in believing that one can know without feeling and being impassioned . . . that is without feeling the elementary passion of the people” (Conquergood 2002, 149; Gramsci 1971, 418). Performance, for Conquergood, challenges ethnography's textual modes of analysis and representation in which culture has been “read” like a manuscript (Conquergood 1988, 26; Denzin 2003, 16). Conquergood (1991) maintains that performance should be “treated as a complimentary form of research publication,” a different way of presenting one's ethnographic work. The authority of performance lies not in its scholarly references, but rather, in “its ability to evoke and invoke shared emotional knowledge and understanding between performer and audience” (190).

Conquergood's call for “emotional” and “impassioned” knowledge echoes Stoller's (1989, 1997) “sensuous scholarship.” Stoller argues for a “sensuous” mode of ethnographic inquiry that studies the embodied worlds of other societies through more engaged, physical, and sensuous ways. In order to understand “other” worlds, Stoller suggests, we need to adopt “their ways” of knowing, which involves “smells, tastes, textures, and pain... sensuousness” (1997, xiv-xv), in addition to our own rational and analytical ways that tend to numb the senses. In Stoller's view, for many non-Western societies, “the Eurocentric notion of text – and of textual interpretations – is not important” (Ibid., xv). Rather, the “lower senses . . . are central to the metaphoric organisation of experience – they also trigger cultural memories” (Ibid., xvi). Stoller continues:

[Sensuous scholarship demands that as ethnographers we] open [ourselves] to others and absorb their worlds [because] for ethnographers embodiment [should be] more than the realisation that our bodily experience gives metaphorical meaning to our experience; it is often the realisation that . . . we too are consumed by the sensual world, that ethnographic things capture us through our bodies, that profound lessons are learned when sharp pains streak up our legs in the middle of the night. (Ibid., 23)

Although Mienczakowski's approach to ethno-drama largely echoes Turner and Schechner's problematic commitment to “authenticity,” I found several aspects of his performative ethnography thought provoking. Mienczakowski's (2000) understanding of the emancipatory potential of ethno-drama, not as “collective emancipation,” but as the potential for bringing about “instrumental change through the insights it offers the

audience,” as well as giving voice to those who might have been previously silenced (139) was particularly important to my understanding of how the politicisation of the ethnographic performance might be realised. Further, in terms of the politicisation of the ethnographic performance, I was also intrigued by Mienczakowski’s argument that the “greatest level of insight” and “subsequently potential emancipation can be gained by the people involved in the research process” (Ibid.).

As well, I was inspired by Mienczakowski’s concept of post-performance sessions as a forum for debate in which the informants, project participants, and audience members can partake in critical discussions about the issues presented (Ibid., 129). In my Ph.D. research, I was particularly interested in exploring the disparities and similarities between how audience members and research participants could be “politicised.” Finally, I appreciated the attention Mienczakowski paid to empathy as a means to encourage social critique and change in both informants and audiences (Ibid., 133) as I envisioned it to be a particularly relevant “politicising strategy” in the ethnographic research of violence.

While I generally found Conquergood’s approach to ethnographic theatre inspiring, because in many ways it echoes Fabian’s performative methodology of research, there were also some aspects of Conquergood’s account that I found compelling in novel ways. For example, I found his argument, that the ethnographic performance should be based upon engaged fieldwork to gain “people’s respect and trust” (Conquergood 1988, 18), particularly engaging, because for me, participant observation and interviews had primarily been the foundational research upon which to base some aspects of the performance. Alongside Mienczakowski’s call for empathic engagement of audiences and research participants in the issues presented, I found Conquergood’s (2002) call for “emotional” and “impassioned knowledge” appealing, as it asks for a more tangible and empathic involvement of the researcher in the research project (149). As such, it is also compatible with Stoller’s “sensuous scholarship,” which urges “allow[ing] ethnographic things to capture us through our bodies” (Stoller 1997, 23). This in turn appealed to my concern with “the aesthetic expressive.”

However, I was also wary of both Conquergood’s and Stoller’s calls for an emotionally engaged scholarship; while it indeed might be the case that on many

occasions oppressed people are forced to resort to extra-linguistic modes of communication as a means of self-protection, I was suspicious of the sensuous “them”/ de-sensued “us” dichotomy that their accounts set up. Such conceptualisations risk recycling age-old stereotypes of the West as the locus of thought and rationality, and the “other” as a site of irrationality and emotion – stereotypes by which the West so perniciously established its hegemony in the world. In contrast, I believed that “sensuous scholarship” was not so much about “us” adopting “their” embodied ways of being in the world, as all people possess their own both “more” and “less” sensuous ways of experiencing social realities; but rather, it was about providing a ground where ethnographic knowledge could be constructed by the ethnographer and research participants in ways that involved them more concretely and empathetically – a methodology particularly important in the ethnographic study of violence.

Chapter 2

Charting the Way (1)

Why I Chose to Work with Roma Women in Poland

I originally decided to work with Roma women in Poland, and inquire – by means of ethnographic theatre performance – into what constituted and promoted violence in their lives. I chose this particular research field and line of inquiry for several reasons. First and foremost, I was interested in doing ethnography in postsocialist Poland because I am Polish. I lived there until immigrating to Canada in 1991, and made numerous returns since. My personal experiences in Poland and my readings on postsocialism in Eastern Europe have given me a heightened awareness of the ways in which the rapid political, social, and economic changes there contributed to the stigmatisation, discrimination, and suffering of those considered to be “the other:” ethnic/racial/sexual minorities, the disabled, the mentally ill, the elderly, and women.

According to Katherine Verdery (1996), for example, the situation of women in postsocialist Eastern Europe has largely deteriorated; while socialist states enforced women’s participation in the labour force by assuming, in part, their “traditional” “care-giving roles,” postsocialist states, on the other hand, are attempting to re-establish the more “traditional” gendered paradigms of nature/culture and public/private (79-82). Emerging ethnonationalist discourses emphasise a return to “traditional values” (family, church). Women are often urged to reclaim their “natural roles” within the “domestic” domain, while men are pushed to return to “cultural” roles within the “public” domain (79-82). Feminism is negatively associated with communism, and feminists are accused of complicity with old political regimes (82). Communism is portrayed as an enemy of “nature” that had forced men and women to act contrary to their “natural destiny (Ibid).” In Verdery’s view, the entrenchment of the “traditional” models of nature/culture and domestic/public are political and economic tools for postsocialist governments, which can

no longer afford to subsidise daycare centres, kindergartens, or comprehensive maternity benefits (80).

Mira Marody and Anna Giza-Poleszczuk (2000), who write specifically about postsocialist Poland, analyse violence and gender in relation to a shift in women's subjectivities from "self-sacrificing superwoman" of the socialist epoch to "self-investing,"³¹ and in men's subjectivities from "big child" dependant on a wife for security and support, to "strong," "independent," and "dominant" (151-75). Marody and Poleszczuk point out that in such discourses, female subordination is particularly evident when one considers that notions of self-investment are not for their own good, but primarily to attract men (Ibid.).

Sexual minorities in Poland are also largely disadvantaged; homosexuals experience widespread discrimination, and same-sex relationships are still considered to be socially or psychologically pathological (Kitlinski and Leszkowicz 2005). Even some of the current, more liberal views on homosexuality in Poland that speak against discrimination on "any grounds" still oppose gay adoptions and the "exhibitionism" of gay pride (Ibid.). The Catholic Church – a prominent influence on Poland's politics, and the moral authority for many Poles – considers homosexuality to be a sin, and is the driving force behind opposing any liberal "tolerance" toward gay people (Garnier 2003, 149-153). According to Wojciech Szajnar (2001), while Poland formally adheres to European and international standards on protecting the rights of sexual minorities, "violence . . . slander . . . blackmail . . . intimidation" and discrimination in the workplace, the army, and virtually every other aspect of every-day life directed against gays and lesbians are commonplace (Ibid., 1). In particular, there is a strong backlash against gay men, as many people perceive them as weak, promiscuous, unattractive, cowardly, effeminate, etc. Men who fail to live up to popular ideals of heterosexual masculinity that construct men as strong, domineering, and sexually aggressive, are stigmatised as emasculated and deficient (Kitlinski and Leszkowicz 2005). Joanna Garnier (2003) decries that scant research has been done concerning the situation of lesbians in the country. In her view, lesbians are generally "invisible," as "they are integrally tied to the gay male movement," and are apprehensive about social organising,

both because of society's expectations of women to be passive, and due to a lack of financial/institutional resources (149, 153).

The situation of elderly people in Poland is also problematic. Although there is limited research available documenting in detail the lives of the elderly, Judith Butler (1980) and Jasmin McConatha et al (2003, 204) argue that ageism is as widespread in Poland as in many countries in the West. Stereotypes of older people as ill, disabled, senile, depressed, lonely, sexless, boring, and unintelligent perpetuated through the media, and popular and medical discourses breed fear, resentment and antipathy toward the elderly (Thornton 2002, 3). In recent years, particularly since Poland's economic and political crises ushered in endemic unemployment, many people see the elderly as a burden on society. Anyone above thirty is likely to face discrimination in the workplace, and other spheres of social life, such as post-secondary education, because universities are often reluctant to admit students above the age of twenty-four. However, discrimination against older adults is not a recent development; under socialism, when the state valued the citizen in terms of one's productivity as a worker, anyone perceived as not fully productive was considered to be an encumbrance to the state. With a relatively early retirement age, even those approaching forty were seen as "ageing" and less capable. Youth was socially and culturally desirable, as the state considered the young as a pillar of socialism, and the future of the working collective. The present economic and political instability only reinforces discriminatory beliefs and practices directed against older people that are already deeply entrenched in Polish society (Butler 1980; McConatha et al 2003; and Thornton 2002, 3).

On par with ageism, prejudice and discrimination against the disabled and mentally ill in Poland is ubiquitous. While in more recent years the country has introduced some positive reforms, such as the legislation of affirmative action, and the establishment of certain NGO's to help disabled and mentally ill people find employment, they are still subjected to ridicule, exclusion, and abuse (Kim 2003). According to Inessa Kim, such discriminatory practices need to be understood in relation to the past. Prior to 1980, disabled persons were largely ignored by the government, because under socialism it was considered shameful to engage in a discussion about disability rights, particularly for the mentally disabled, whose disability was often blamed on parents' alcoholism or

sexual disease (Ibid.). Consequently, there were inadequate state-funded social support or rehabilitation facilities for people with disabilities. By the 1980s, the issue of disability rights was emerging, but unfortunately, following 1989, disability rights all-but-disappeared from the political radar, as there were “more important political problems” to deal with (Ibid.).

As well, xenophobia and anti-Semitism are still largely unaddressed in Poland, and there is little data available about the extent and manifestations of violence committed against ethnic minorities (European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance 2000). Unfortunately, many sources point out that current economic crises in postsocialist states have contributed to an increase in incidences of prejudice and violence experienced by ethnic minorities who are often scapegoats for the countries’ economic woes (Sakwa and Stevens 2000, 170). Emergent nationalisms – widely embraced by the public, as market capitalism and liberal democracy fail to provide tangible solutions to the social and economic problems facing Eastern European countries – also have a large impact on the increase of violence committed against ethnic minorities in many postsocialist states, including Poland (Ibid., 57).

I decided to study the situation of Roma minorities, in particular, because I have witnessed, heard and read about widespread acts of discrimination and violence against the Roma. These include verbal and physical abuse, police harassment, exclusion from public spaces, discrimination in both the workplace and public services (such as social protection, healthcare, housing, and education³²), and racial stereotyping.³³ Such instances of violence against the Roma in Poland have been documented by various Roma organisations, by the European Roma Rights Centre, Amnesty International, the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, as well as discussed by some Polish and Western scholars, primarily in the context of cross-cultural comparisons between the different forms of violence perpetrated against Roma throughout history (Bartosz 1994; Crowe 1995; Lucassen 1993, 1997; Mayall 1988; Ringold 2000; Stewart 1997; Willems 1997; Willems and Lucassen 1998).

The most widely documented instances of physical violence against Roma in Poland are the pogroms that have been carried out since the collapse of state socialism. These include a pogrom in Mława in 1991, where after two non-Roma Polish pedestrians

were struck down by a car driven by a drunk Roma teenager, a mob of inebriated Poles retaliated by attacking and destroying numerous Roma homes, driving many Roma families out of town (Bartosz 1994, 53); and a pogrom in Swebodzice (1996), where a gang of approximately fifty masked, local youths threw Molotov cocktails at Roma houses (European Roma Rights Center 1997 [a], [b]).

Several instances of skinhead attacks have also been reported in Poland, such as in Bytom (1992), where Silesian skinheads physically assaulted a group of Roma at the local train station (Bartosz 1994, 56); and in the town of Debica (1994) where a thirteen-year-old boy was attacked and severely beaten by thirty skinheads who later destroyed Roma houses in the nearby Roma settlement (European Roma Rights Center 1997 [a], [b]) (see appendix B).

Furthermore, numerous incidents of police brutality against Roma in Poland have been documented (European Roma Rights Center 1997[a]). In 1996, for example, a fifteen-year-old boy was severely beaten by police officers in the southern town of Wodzislaw Slaski. The case was never investigated, and charges were never laid (Ibid.). Similarly, in Olsztyn (see appendix B), the local newspaper reported that police officers routinely attacked Roma women fortune telling in the city's old market square (Gazeta Olsztynska [Olsztyn, Poland], 18 May 2001). Although occurrences of police brutality are frequent in Poland, they are rarely investigated.

In addition, some incidents of structural violence committed against Roma in Poland have also been documented. The European Roma Rights Centre, for example, notes that many Roma in Poland live in substandard housing, and the Polish government refuses to remedy the situation, arguing that Roma do not deserve decent housing as they will only destroy it (European Roma Rights Center 1999, 2). In many instances, Roma are forced to live in dwellings that Polish health authorities consider unfit for human habitation, such as refuse dumps and railway stations (Gozdziaik 1995, 3). Also, many Roma report difficulties in finding work, because there is no market for their skills, and there are few employers willing to hire them (European Roma Rights Center 1999, 2). Subsequently, some Roma support themselves by working "under the table" for non-Roma Poles, selling clothing in local villages and markets, or by fortune telling or panhandling. Yet, according to the European Commission against Racism and

Intolerance (ECRI), and the European Roma Rights Centre, while some incidents of structural violence have been documented, formal monitoring of racism and discrimination within Polish institutions is negligible (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance 2000, 1).

In terms of the racial stereotyping of the Roma in Poland, there is a general dearth of research. However, some academic works that address Roma stereotypes in Western Europe are also relevant to Poland. Daniel Strauss (1998), for example, points toward an anti-Roma ideology that has been deeply entrenched in Western legends, literature, school texts, and encyclopaedias. Roma stereotypes in these sources are at times “positive,” where Roma are represented as “close-to-nature,” “carefree,” “romantic,” “musical,” “nomadic,” “strikingly beautiful,” and “musically talented;” and as “tinkers,” “sieve-makers,” and “horse-traders” (Bartosz 1994; Fonseca 1995; Krausnick 1998; Stewart 1997; Strauss 1998; Willems and Lucassen 1998). However, Roma are also often presented in negative terms: “frightening and hideous,” “pernicious and parasitic,” “disinterested in the future,” “preferring [a] boundless and rootless life,” “of [an] inherently low morality,” “sly,” “thieving,” “frivolous,” “lecherous,” “greedy,” “dishonourable,” “promiscuous,” “cruel with animals,” “cowardly,” “wild and uncivilised,” “lazy,” “unreliable,” “unmotivated,” “criminal,” and “cannibalistic;” and as “demonic monsters,” “child kidnappers,” “fortune tellers,” and “passive victims” who throughout history – particularly World War II – lacked a “fighting spirit” (Krausnick 1998; Novick 2000; Willems and Lucassen 1998). In Western literature, the marital practices of Roma have often been harshly stigmatised as “incestuous,” “un-Christian,” and “chauvinist” (Willems and Lucassen 1998, 42-5). Roma women, in particular, have been represented as “sexually promiscuous” and “unhygienic,” and as “demonic witches,” “bad homemakers,” “negligent mothers,” and “obsequious servants” (Bartosz 1994; Haney 1999; Stewart 1997; Willems and Lucassen 1998, 101). Romani men have been portrayed as “sexually promiscuous” and “uncivilised,” and as “women abusers” (Bartosz 1994; Stewart 1997).

As well, in many Western sources, Roma have been represented as lacking religious, literary or artistic traditions. Some have argued that Roma adopt local religions in order to benefit from their host country’s resources.³⁴ It was not until the mid-

seventies that some literature recognised that Roma possess their own religious beliefs linked to certain food practices, understandings of impurity, and reverence for trees and animals (Willems and Lucassen 1998, 45-7).

Furthermore, while Roma have often been portrayed as “musically talented,” their music has rarely been attributed to their indigenous tradition; instead, it has been seen as a replica of local popular music. Finally, many Western sources have argued that Roma largely lack a literary tradition, neglecting to consider Roma storytelling (Ibid, 48-50).

I decided to study violence as experienced by Roma women, in particular, both because of my interest in gender-based oppression, and because I believed that the Roma women occupied a very disadvantaged position within Polish society and their own culture. Roma women were marginalised on the basis of their race/ethnicity and gender within Polish society, and subordinated by Roma culture’s gender hierarchy in which men dominate and exploit women. Michael Stewart (1997), for example, links the subordination of Roma women within Roma culture to its denial of the female body. While male sexuality carries no negative values within the Roma system of beliefs, a woman’s sexuality is considered “impure” and “shameful,” a stigmatisation employed, in Stewart’s view, to control women and establish an ideology of male supremacy. Stewart argues that this allows Roma men to transcend – by transferring onto women – their own stigmatisation by non-Roma as “impure,” “unhygienic,” “primitive,” and “shameless.” As there was virtually no ethnographically based research that explored the current situation of Roma women in Poland, I wanted my project to create a space in which Roma women could express their own points-of-view.

Chapter 3

Departures

The Pilot Project, 2001

Elblag, May 2001

When I arrived in Poland in May 2001 (see appendix A) to conduct my pilot research, I did not yet know with which Roma community I would be working. My preference was to work with the Roma in Elblag, because Shawn, Amadeusz, and I could live with my mother – a financially sound option – and spend ample time with her. However, I was concerned there would be a dearth of Roma participants in the city, as I had not seen many local Roma in Elblag in recent years; and because various friends and family members warned me that I would never gain access to the local Roma community, because the Roma “only kept to themselves.” Frankly, I did not even know where to begin establishing contacts with Roma in Elblag, for the city did not have an active Roma Society – as far as I knew – like many other cities and villages across Poland. Also, since arriving in Elblag, I had not seen any Polish or Romanian Roma. During a visit to Poland in 1999, there had been numerous Romanian Roma panhandling in the streets, as well as a few Polish Roma women fortune telling.

As I did not encounter any Roma in the streets of Elblag, I decided to look for an organised Roma Society. When I visited the Department of Citizens’ Affairs in Elblag’s City Hall, I was provided with the name and phone number of a Polish ethnologist – Zbigniew – in Tarnow (southern Poland [see appendix B]), who was also the founder, curator and director of Tarnow’s Museum of Roma Culture. Zbigniew had written extensively about the Roma and Jewish people of Europe, and worked with various ethnic minorities in the Carpathian region of southern Poland (see appendix B). The clerk at Citizens’ Affairs also gave me the phone number of Father C., a Polish Catholic priest in the Carpathians who, the clerk informed me, was “looking after the Roma.” When I

asked why there were no Roma visible in the streets of Elblag any longer, the clerk qualified that the ones begging in the streets were the Rumuni (Romanian Roma) who had been residing in Poland illegally; he further asserted that the Polish Roma, who were legal citizens of Poland, were distancing themselves from their Romanian counterparts because the Rumuni created a “bad image” for Polish Roma (Fieldnotes 2001). According to the clerk, many of the Rumuni in Poland had been recently “rounded up” by the police and deported; their “camps” were demolished, and they were “banished from Poland forever” (Ibid.). He believed they were either sent to Romania or to Germany (Ibid.). He suggested that I should talk to someone in the State Office – Citizens and Foreign Affairs Section, as they would certainly know if there were any registered Roma organisations in Elblag.

On my way to the State Office, I ran into a group of Roma sitting on a park bench: two women, a man, and three young children. As I walked passed them, a younger woman stopped me to tell my fortune. At first, I was not sure what to do. On the one hand, I knew that permitting the women to tell my fortune might provide me with a chance of gaining access to their community and building rapport with them. On the other hand, I was afraid. Afraid of what? As I stood facing the group, I was trying to convince myself that I really did not want to hear anyone’s attempts at guessing my future; I was justifying to myself that my reservations were the product of some sort of personal, irrational superstition. Deep inside, however, I knew very well that this was not what I feared: what I really feared was being robbed. Yet was I not here, in the first place, to undertake research with the Roma to somehow address and challenge prejudice against them? At the same time, however, I knew very well that some Roma women did steal from their fortune telling customers, particularly from casual ones “recruited” off the street. As a teen I had personally witnessed friends and relatives being robbed in such situations. In the end I decided to put aside my fears, as I really needed to make contacts with the Roma in Elblag. I jokingly asked the woman not to tell me anything tragic, as the day had already been filled with misfortune. This, I hoped, might help to “break the ice,” and lessen the chances of being robbed. As I spoke, the woman looked at me with curiosity. At the time I thought she had found my “foreign” accent strange. I now realise

that the woman's surprise was a response to my willingness to speak to her. Poles usually ignore Roma fortune tellers, or even insult them.

The woman looked through her dog-eared deck of cards and told me that a long and difficult life awaited me, and that the cards revealed nothing further unless I was willing to pay to continue. Fearing the worst was yet-to-come, I quickly introduced myself as a student of anthropology from Canada who was doing research about the lives of Roma in Poland. The woman seemed interested, and related to the elder woman who I was. The man then asked me to sit with them on the bench. The Roma proceeded to introduce one another, and describe their current situation.

The two women – Ana and Randia – complained that they suffered from poverty, discrimination, racism, and even physical violence. Ana explained that she lived with her husband, her children, and her mentally ill mother in a small apartment, where they all “were fighting and beating each other up” (Fieldnotes 2002). Yet she could barely afford such a “small hole.” Randia fretted that she could no longer go on living “like this,” sitting on a bench by the tramline all day long, hoping that someone would want to have their fortune told. She also said that Roma were discriminated against everywhere except in the church because, “after all, [the church] is the House of God [and] everyone is equal in God's eyes.” Ana and her husband Wlodek disagreed. In their view, there was discrimination against Roma in the church, especially concerning baptisms. Polish priests did not want to baptise Roma children if Roma parents did not strictly adhere to Catholicism's tenets.

The women also mentioned that their children were ostracised and physically abused in Polish schools. When I asked if there were any Roma organisations in the city they could approach for help, Wlodek sarcastically retorted that there were not, because, to set them up, one needed the cooperation of Poles. Such cooperation in Elblag was not possible, in his view, because local non-Roma wanted all Roma dead or gone. It was the widespread unemployment in Poland, he argued, that had affected the Roma so negatively, because “if there were no jobs for Poles, who would ever hire a Roma?” He had applied for countless jobs, but was always turned down after the interview.

Further, the Roma spoke about their fear of skinheads, which made them prisoners in their own homes. They never went out at night in fear of being attacked. It was the

Roma's fate, they agreed, to have such difficult lives. Yet, Wlodek also conceded that Elblag was not the worst city for Roma to live. Larger centres like Warsaw, Gdansk, Krakow, and Olsztyn (see appendix B) were more dangerous. Roma there were subjected to frequent home invasions, still a rare occurrence in Elblag. According to Wlodek, a smaller Roma community in a city meant fewer instances of hate crimes – in Elblag there were only approximately twelve Roma families. In Ana, Randia, and Wlodek's view, the persecution of the Roma in Poland was "unjust" because "Gypsies don't hurt anyone, don't kill anyone . . . they don't steal!" (Ibid.)

After sharing their stories of hardship, the Roma wanted to know how long I would be staying in Elblag. When I told them I would be conducting preliminary fieldwork for another two months, they warned me that if I visited the Roma in other cities – Olsztyn in particular – I needed to be cautious, both because the Roma there were "wild" and "uncultured," and because I could be attacked by skinheads (Fieldnotes 2001).

I was disturbed by their stories. Ironically, I remembered once telling Shawn that there was no bullying in Polish schools when I was a child. Obviously, I was fortunate enough not to witness or experience it. Likely, my memories would have been different had I been a Roma child. I was also plagued by the guilt that I had initially feared Ana might rob me.

Throughout our conversation, the Roma were very warm and friendly, although they watched me keenly. Perhaps, they were not entirely convinced that I could be trusted. This was particularly evident when Randia cynically asked me, "And why do you want to study US?" I told them that I had lived in Elblag for twenty years prior to immigrating to Canada, and had witnessed many incidents of discrimination against the Roma. I also told them that I had been committed to fighting injustice and racism, and that I thought it was necessary to write about the violence committed against the Roma in Poland, as there was a dearth of literature on this subject matter. They all concurred with me, and asked if I wanted to work in Elblag. I admitted that Elblag would be an ideal place for my research, as I could live with my mother. I said that if they were interested in working with me, I would initially want to spend some time with them, watching them fortune tell, doing other daily activities, visiting their homes if possible, and conducting interviews. I also explained that I would like to develop with them, later in the research

process, a theatre performance based on their life experiences. Ana and Randia wanted to know about their roles in the theatre project. When I said that they could contribute in any way they wanted – as playwrights, actors, directors, dramaturgs, or designers – they laughed, and stated that they were not “artistic Gypsies,” and thus could not work with me in these capacities.

Wlodek wanted to know who would read my “book” about them. When I clarified that at first it would be professors at Simon Fraser University, and later, when my thesis was submitted to the library, virtually anyone who could read English, he warned that I could not identify their real names or addresses, because this might “bring misfortune upon their heads,” both from Poles, and from other Roma. If Poles knew their whereabouts, they could invade their homes. And since “not all Roma could be trusted these days,” they did not want other Roma in Poland to know about their participation in my research. To ease their apprehensions about the project, I assured them that all research materials, interviews, and fieldnotes would be kept confidential. Only my husband – co-researcher – and I would have access to them. In my “book” I would use pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity.

Yet, Ana, Randia, and Wlodek warned me that there might not be enough Roma in Elblag to conduct research. Wlodek stressed, once again, that although Elblag had its share of racism, their situation was not the worst. If I wanted to “really” learn about the hardships suffered by Roma, I should conduct research elsewhere.

Nevertheless, before departing, Ana and Wlodek invited me to visit their flat the following day. They gave me their address and promised to invite other Roma to share their experiences of living in Elblag with me. I thanked them and offered twenty zloty (\$8 cdn) to compensate for the time they had taken away from fortune telling to talk to me.

On the way home I felt confused. The Roma were friendly, yet I was not convinced they would want to work with me. And for sure, they would not be willing to participate in a theatre project which, unfortunately, was the cornerstone of my research. I was also worried about visiting Ana and Wlodek in their home. Was it safe? Were skinheads really a danger? Would I be putting Shawn, Amadeusz, or my mother at risk? Were the Roma inviting me because they hoped I would give them more money? My

enthusiasm for the project waned. I realised that the amounts of energy, courage (or foolhardiness?), and money to carry out this research would be greater than I had originally expected. This paralysed me. What did I get myself into? What did I drag my family into? Was there a way out?

The next day Shawn and I went to visit Ana and Wlodek. I decided to go inside alone. I did not want to drag Amadeusz into a situation I was not sure was safe. I brought some food for the family: eggs, bread, milk, butter, cheese, and chocolate. The area of town in which Ana and Wlodek lived was depressed economically. Their flat was in a dingy, neglected pre-war block. The hallway smelled of urine. When I rang the bell, an elderly woman opened the door and informed me that “the children had gone into the city.” She introduced herself as Ana’s mother, took the groceries, and shut the door. I left disappointed. I was convinced that the Roma had no interest in me. “And why would you expect otherwise?” asked Shawn. True. What was in it for the Roma? Why would they wait for me instead of going out to make some money?

From Ana’s house I returned to the park where I had previously met the group. From a distance I could see Ana sitting on the bench. Shawn and Amadeusz went home, but I decided to speak to the Roma. When I told Ana that I had been to her place, she apologised and explained that her husband had been trying to set up a meeting with other Roma, but no one showed interest. Ana’s aunt Elzbieta, who was sitting beside Randia, asked me, “Lady, is that research of yours going to help anything? Is it?” (Fieldnotes 2001) I answered that things would not likely happen right away, but that I hoped this research would one day help improve their lot. The women looked disappointed, and Ana asked me if I knew any organisations in Canada that could help them. When I admitted that I did not, they were surprised.

Soon their interest in me began fading. The women started conversing in Romani. Then they informed me they had to go home and “feed the kids.” When the women left, I was certain I could not work in Elblag: they were not interested in my project. Perhaps they realised that the benefits of working with me were marginal; or maybe they sincerely believed that Elblag was not the right place for this research. While disheartened, I was not surprised. How could I expect people of such poverty to work with me for nothing? I knew I would need to pay them honoraria, especially if they agreed to participate in a

theatre project, because this would involve a substantial commitment of time. I felt I needed to look for another research field. And while I knew this might not solve all of the financial quandaries, I decided to try my luck.

Olsztyn, May 2001

In a search for a new research field, I travelled to Olsztyn with Shawn and Amadeusz (see appendix A). I knew Olsztyn very well. Some of my close family members lived there, and I had studied English Philology at the University of Olsztyn before I immigrated to Canada in 1991. I knew that Olsztyn had a large Roma community, as I had always seen many Roma around the city: the women fortune telling, the men selling cars, and the children playing on the streets. When I arrived in Olsztyn, I went to the main gates of the Old City. A few Roma women were stopping passers-by to tell them fortunes. One woman came up to me and asked if I wanted to know the future. When I agreed, she looked in the cards and told me that I would soon marry. Then I introduced myself as an anthropologist from Canada who was studying violence committed against Roma in Poland. The woman, Zuna, called other Roma women over to join us. When I asked them about life in Olsztyn, they primarily talked about the skinhead attacks they suffered, and their poverty. The women also asserted that they were interested in the project, and invited me to visit their homes the next time I was in Olsztyn. The Roma women in Olsztyn – like the Roma in Elblag – were likely pondering the benefits of their affiliation with me, such as the possibility of immigrating to Canada. Zuna mentioned that she would like to live in Toronto.

Although the women were very friendly and interested in my research, I was not sure about Olsztyn as a research site. Finances and logistics were my foremost concerns. Travelling to Olsztyn on a daily basis – nearly a two hour commute – would be costly and timely. Staying at my aunt and uncle’s apartment would be too burdensome both for them and my family.

Intercity Train Olsztyn – Elblag, May 2001

On the train back to Elblag, I noticed a Romanian Roma woman and three children – two boys and a girl – standing in the corridor. I invited them to join us in our compartment. I told the woman who we were, and briefly explained to her my project. The woman listened intently while her children were eagerly showing Amadeusz trading cards of motorcycles and cars. The woman introduced herself as Ella, and in strained Polish, started telling me about her life (Fieldnotes 2001).

Ella, her husband, and their three children, had emigrated from Romania soon after the December coup d'état in 1989.³⁵ There, they had endured extreme poverty, and came to Poland seeking asylum. Her family, and other Romanian Roma, ended up in Morag – a small town in Northern Poland (see appendix B)

Although they lived in a shanty with no electricity or running water, they managed to survive – asserted Ella – by selling articles of clothing door-to-door, and by panhandling. They were very poor, and often had little to eat, but life in Poland was much better than in Romania. They did not have to fear for their lives because the people of Morag were friendly. Ella felt lucky to live in Morag, and hoped the government would permit them to stay in Poland. As long as they could live in Morag, she maintained, there was hope for a better future.

Ella invited me to visit her in Morag, and encouragingly assured that other members of the community would also be interested in my project. Although the encounter with Ella on the intercity train was a brief one, there was something about it that had profoundly touched my heart. Perhaps it was Ella's heart-wrenching optimism for the future, or maybe her courageous spirit that had shone in the brief time we spoke? I knew I would be going to Morag to visit Ella and her community shortly.

Tarnow, June 2001

Although after the encounter with Ella on the intercity train I was optimistic about conducting research with the Romanian Roma in Morag, I still wanted to explore my options further. I contacted Zbigniew, the Polish ethnologist in Tarnow, and Father C., priest-designate of Poland's Roma. Zbigniew invited me to come to Tarnow for the folk festival at the beginning of June. Father C. agreed to meet with me when I visited Tarnow (see appendix B).

With Shawn and Amadeusz in tow, I left for Tarnow (a ten-hour train ride south) at the beginning of June. We attended the *Tarnow Folk Festival*, which was primarily a celebration of the culture, art, dance, and song of Poland's Gorale (mountain people), and Krakowiacy (people living in the environs of Krakow). Some Roma performers were also featured at the festival. We also visited Tarnow's ethnographic Museum of Roma Culture, which was under the curatorship of Zbigniew. The museum was largely disappointing in its exhibit's – primarily photographs, paintings, and clothing articles – blatant exoticisation of Roma as “romantic,” “carefree,” “mystical,” “musical,” and as an “endangered species;” or its representation of them as a people without a history, victims – not agents – of historical and social forces (Fieldnotes 2001).

Throughout the week-long stay in Tarnow, I met with Zbigniew numerous times, went to the small mountain village of Limanowa (see appendix B) – a two hour drive from Tarnow – to meet with Father C., and established a few contacts within the Roma community. Zbigniew was very sceptical about my research in Poland. According to him, there were very few “real” Roma remaining in the country, and their situation was generally favourable, with the exception of a small number in southern Poland who lived in abject poverty, and supported themselves through begging (Ibid.). Yet conducting research with these Roma, in his view, would be nearly impossible, as they were “inhospitable” to non-Roma (Ibid.).

Father C, on the other hand, thought that my research was critical. He maintained that “racism should not be tolerated,” but did not believe there was any racism against Roma in Poland. According to him, there was only a certain level of “impatience” with Roma on the part of Polish citizens, because Roma “liked getting into trouble” and were

“forceful” about fortune telling and asking for money (Ibid.). However, he offered that if I wanted, he would introduce me to the Roma “living in the mountains” – the most economically disadvantaged group of Roma in Poland. But working with them would not be easy, he warned. They were not friendly with strangers,” and he would have to “mediate” between them and me substantially (Ibid.).

I was introduced to the Roma community in Tarnow by Zbigniew who, while sceptical about my work in the city, thought I should meet with the local Roma. I spent most of my stay in Tarnow with Marek, the head of the Association of Roma in Tarnow, his sister Luna, and elderly mother Marina. Marek and his family were very kind to me and interested in my project. This was likely the case because Marek, as the Roma leader for the region, was a Roma rights activist. He was documenting incidents of discrimination and violence committed against Roma in Poland, and was pleased to see that I was also interested in the plight of Roma. Marek and Luna encouraged me to conduct research in Tarnow. Marek even offered that he would arrange funding for an ethnographic performance. He wanted this to be a large profile theatre event involving Roma from the entire region. However, he was primarily interested in research about structural and physical violence against the Roma people in general. He had no interest in the plight of Roma women, and believed that the problems of women were the same as the problems of men, because “all Roma suffered as one . . . regardless if they were men or women . . . in Tarnow or in Gdansk” (Ibid.).

The Roma women in the community were often hesitant to talk to me. Even Luna and her mother refused any formal discussions, as they claimed they had nothing significant to say. They were also concerned about offending Marek, whom they – and other Roma in Tarnow – considered the local authority on Roma issues. Marek himself asserted, on several occasions, that only he could provide me with all the necessary information for my research (Ibid.).

While the visit with the Roma in Tarnow was enjoyable, and I had grown very fond of Luna’s family, by the end of my stay I realised that any research in Tarnow looking at issues affecting the Roma women would be impossible. Since I did not want my research to be controlled by Marek, or “mediated” by Father C, I decided not to work in Tarnow or Limanowa.

Morag, July 2001

Shortly after I returned to Elblag, I went to Morag – a one hour train ride – to visit Ella, whom I had met a few weeks earlier on the train (see appendix B). The community was comprised of approximately fifteen families who, as Ella mentioned earlier, had come to Poland in the early 1990s. The average family in the community consisted of a mother, a father, children, and occasionally a grandparent(s). They were one of the last remaining groups of Romanian Roma refugees in Poland since the massive deportations of their communities in the mid and late nineties.

They lived in utter poverty, in a smattering of clapboard shanties huddled on a large field on the outskirts of Morag. They sold clothing for the landowner in exchange for squatting rights. The women spent their days in nearby urban centres such as Morag, Olsztyn, and Elblag, begging with their youngest children for food and clothing. Ella and her sister-in-law told me about their hard life of poverty and violence in Romania, and their arduous journey to Poland, marked by chronic hunger and illness, street violence, and police harassment. They also told me about the discrimination they endured in doctors' offices and churches in Poland, and the violence they suffered in their own households. Yet they spoke very favourably about the people of Morag, including the police and municipal government officials, who – they insisted – had been very helpful and compassionate.

Ella and other Roma in the community were very interested in my research, including my idea about an ethnographic theatre performance. They wanted to work with me when I returned the following summer. Perhaps they thought that their affiliation with me might improve their prospects for immigrating to Canada. Ella asked me to help her obtain Canadian citizenship.

I left Poland and returned to Canada in August 2001. This was the end of my pilot research. I decided to work with the Romanian Roma in Morag. They were interested in my research, no one seemed to be censoring what others said or did, and the women were willing to talk to me. The commute to Morag was reasonable, both logistically and financially. Most importantly, I hoped that through my research I could one day help members of this community improve their life circumstances.

Chapter 4

Charting the Way (2)

Assumptions, Theoretical Underpinnings, Research Plans

After returning to Canada in August 2001, I began exploring ideas about what constituted and promoted violence against the Roma women of Morag.³⁶ Based on what I had learnt during the summer of 2001, my experiences of living in Poland, and my studies, I developed a set of assumptions. I maintained that the violence – in Poland’s tumultuous postsocialist context – as experienced by the Roma women in Morag (ranging from physical and sexual abuse, to marginalisation and stigmatisation at all levels of society) was being perpetrated by various hegemonic social forces, such as the reinstatement of certain socialist values and ideas, the revitalisation of Catholicism, and the penetration of Western capitalism³⁷ and liberal democracy into Poland’s economy and politics (Kazubowski-Houston 2001; Marody and Poleszczuk 2000).

In my conceptualisation of hegemony, I was influenced by conceptions of power³⁸ put forward by both Gramsci (1971, 1977, 1978) and Foucault (1977, 1979, 1980). Gramsci speaks of power in terms of hegemony. Although Gramsci’s notion of hegemony has been widely debated in scholarly discourse – Gramsci himself did not provide a straightforward definition of the concept – my understanding of it is largely informed by Kate Crehan’s (2002) interpretation. In Crehan’s reading of Gramsci, hegemony refers to power that achieves and sustains structures of domination in society by means of various ideologies and practices that naturalise a certain social order so it seems inevitable³⁹ (Crehan 2002 172-4; Gramsci 1971, 12). Hegemony usually supports the ideology and practices of the dominant group, which are accepted by subordinate groups as common sense (Crehan 2002, 110-14; Gramsci 1971, 12, 244). Crehan argues that Gramsci’s hegemony needs to be understood as a complex mixture of coercion, consent, and force, which assume diverse forms in diverse social contexts (Crehan 2002,

101-4; Gramsci 1971, 159-60). In her view, Gramsci coined the concept to “explore the relationships of power in concrete ways in which these are lived” (Crehan 2002, 99; Gramsci 1971, 328). According to Crehan, counter-hegemony – actions and processes that contest domination and oppression – as articulated by Gramsci, can be achieved by challenging “the fragmentary, incoherent, and inconsistent world of common sense through critical discourse and practice” (Crehan 2002, 113-4; Gramsci 1971, 326-7, 333, 352). For Gramsci, “common sense” is “the most widespread conception of life and of man” – popular knowledge – “sedimented” by philosophical and scientific ideas that have infiltrated “ordinary life” (Crehan 2002, 110; Gramsci 1971, 325-6, 330). It is flexible and shifting, and has been “absorbed [by people] uncritically, and as it were, mechanically, from the ‘social and cultural environments’ within which they have grown up” (Crehan 2001, 114; Gramsci 1971, 333, 419-20). As people comply and identify with the very ideologies and practices that frame their marginalization and oppression, challenging counter-hegemonic actions is a difficult process (Crehan 2002, 101-114, 116-117, 126-127; Gramsci 1971, 183, 326-327, 333, 342-3).

Michel Foucault (1980) formulates his conception of power in response to a juridical model of power, according to which power is the property of a dominant class, individual, state or sovereign (78-109). Foucault inverts this notion of power by conceptualising it as a “complex strategical situation,” a “multiplicity of force relations” (1979, 92-97). In other words, Foucault (1980) does not see power simply as “global domination” wielded by a person or a group over another, or by the state or sovereign; instead, he sees power as “manifold forms of domination that can be exercised within society” through a multitude of processes, institutions, and organisations in which we are all bound (92). “Power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away. . . . power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (Foucault 1979, 93-4). Power, thus, is not centralised, but diffused throughout society by means of complex social networks: everyone is implicated, albeit, not on equal terms (Foucault 1980, 98). In Foucault’s view, individuals are the effects of power: “It is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires,

come to be identified as individuals. The individual, that is, is not the vis-à-vis of power; it is . . . one of its prime effects” (Ibid.).

The body, according to Foucault (1977), is the site of control and operation of power, a product of social processes that “act upon the body. . . its elements, its gestures, its behaviour” through a variety of disciplining techniques (136). Discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies – “docile bodies,” which are “manipulate[d], shape[d], and train[ed]” (Ibid.). Since an individual and the body are effects of power, there is no subject. Foucault writes, “One has to dispense with the constituting subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that’s to say, to arrive at an analysis which cannot account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework” (1980, 117; 1993, 139). Foucault’s subject is primarily “the product of particular disciplinary practices and rationalising discourses of the modern era” (Diamond and Quinby 1988, xiii).

Foucault’s ideas of power are inextricably linked to discourse. For Foucault (1980), “. . . discourse can be both an instrument and effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it” (Foucault 1979, 101). Power, according to Foucault (1977), produces discourses of control and discipline of the body, which are framed by relations of domination and social control (136-7). Hegemonic discourses in society are those accepted by the majority as “the truth” (Foucault 1980, 131-2), which, in turn, stems from knowledge. So for Foucault, power and knowledge are interrelated. He points toward a reciprocal relationship, wherein power relations are comprised of a “field of knowledge,” and knowledge is constituted by power relations (Foucault 1977, 14). While power is often considered in such negative terms as “. . . refusal, limitation, obstruction, censorship . . .” (Foucault 1980, 96), Foucault also highlights the positive and productive aspects of power as “it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms, knowledge, [and] produces discourse” (Ibid., 119).

Finally, Foucault (1979) argues that “where there is power there is resistance” (92-7). Resistance, however, is dependant on a “multiplicity of points of resistance,” rather than on a specific act of rebellion (Ibid.). Thus, resistance is multiple: it “exists . . .

by being in the same place as power,” and as such, it “can be integrated in global strategies” (Foucault 1980, 142). While an occasional act of mass revolt occurs, we generally deal “. . . with mobile and transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remodelling them, marking off irreducible regions in them, in their bodies and minds” (Foucault 1979, 96). It is “the strategic codification of these points of resistance that makes a revolution possible,” according to Foucault (Ibid.).

Foucault’s conception of power has been critiqued from the feminist standpoint. On the one hand, feminist and Foucauldian analyses converge in their understanding of power as “local and intimate [in its] operations,” and of the individual as an outcome of power and its discourse (Diamond and Quinby 1988, xiii). And both recognise “the body as the site of power, that is, as the locus of domination through which docility is accomplished and subjectivity constituted,” and the hegemonic role of discourse (Ibid., xii). On the other hand, many feminists are troubled by Foucault’s understanding of power as merely dispersed and de-centralised; power – they warn – has long been a masculine property, and its “primary target has been the subjugation of women, most especially through their bodies” (Ibid., xiv). While Foucault’s analysis is crucial to understanding masculinist power as not monolithically appropriated by men, at the same time, feminists point out that power largely “remains vested in individual men and men as a group” (Ibid.). Nancy Fraser (1981) argues that if power – as Foucault maintains – is everywhere, then it is ultimately nowhere, “and domination viewed from above is more likely to appear as equality” (274). From a feminist standpoint, the two kinds of power – dispersed and centralised – “coexist and often intertwine in contemporary society” (Diamond and Quinby 1988, xiv).

Additionally, feminist theorists criticise Foucault’s conception of hegemonic discourse for failing to account for the relationship between “masculinist authority and language, discourse, and reason, . . . [as] language . . . is never gender free” (Ibid., xv). Similarly, feminists concerned with critiquing and resisting the oppression of women are troubled by Foucault’s denial of the subject (McLaren 1997, 109). Nancy Harstock (1990) poignantly articulates a critique of Foucault’s notion of subjectivity: “Why is it

that just at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history, that just then the concept of subjecthood becomes problematic?” (Ibid., 171-2) This directly links to the feminist critique of Foucault’s cynical notion of resistance, which, Harstock suggests, is a result of his conception of the individual as an outcome of power – a docile body incapable of any meaningful revolt (Ibid.). Similarly, Fraser (1989) argues that if individuals are simply understood as effects of power, then it is impossible to conceptualise them as agents who can also resist power, which renders Foucault’s notion of resistance incoherent (129).⁴⁰ Others, however, stress that Foucault’s idea of resistance, albeit underdeveloped, does not abrogate the possibility of the subject to resist and struggle for justice: it only envisions such struggle on a more dispersed level (McLaren 1997; Sawicki 1991).

In my reading of Foucault, I concurred with feminist assertions of the possibility of resistance within Foucault’s conceptualisation of power. More so, I believed that his notion of power as a “multiplicity of force relations” in which everyone is implicated invited an understanding of power whose “strings [could] be pulled by everyone, no matter how socially or economically disadvantaged,” and thus of “individuals as agents of their lives, [who] cope, negotiate, manage, resist, redefine, manipulate, connive, subvert and empower. . . . within the narrow confines of those systems that threaten to oppress” (Groves and Chang, 1999, 236, 261). After all, Foucault emphasised that discourse could “undermine and expose” power – “render . . . it fragile and make . . . it possible to thwart it.”(Foucault 1979, 101)

I drew from both Gramsci and Foucault to explore the ways in which various hegemonic social forces – interacting with, contesting, and shaping one another – had spun new webs of ideologies of gender and ethnicity across both Polish and Roma cultural spaces that were responsible for the violence as experienced by the Roma women. In my view, the ghosts of some socialist values, such as the “selfless superwoman,” combined with Catholic conservative notions of motherhood, marriage, and abortion, and Western traditional family values, in which the woman is conceived of as housewife and mother, and the man as sole breadwinner, created a hybrid of ideologies of femininity and masculinity (Kazubowski-Houston 2001; Marody and Poleszczuk 2000,

151-75). This ideological hybrid constructed the female subject mainly as a seeker of a male partner, whether by becoming a successful professional, a mother, a housewife, an object of sexual desire, or all of the above; and the male subject as strong, autonomous, and domineering (Marody and Poleszczuk 2000, *Ibid.*). Such a construction of female subjectivity (both Polish and Roma) sanctioned unequal power relations in which men dominated women, often through violent means.

I also believed that these changing conceptions of gender in Poland were rearticulating Roma notions of femininity and masculinity. Newly circulating ideals of the woman as attractive sex object were contesting and renegotiating the dominant Roma ideology of male supremacy defined and maintained by the stigmatisation of female sexuality as “impure” and “shameful” (Bartosz 2001; Kazubowski-Houston 2001; Stewart 1997). This clash of ideologies – Roma versus Polish – had led to internal conflicts within the Roma community over values about female sexuality. Violence committed against women – physical/verbal assault, rape, and exclusion from the community – was one response to this conflict (Kazubowski-Houston 2001).

Finally, I believed that old socialist notions of honest labour, just prices, and remuneration-for-effort continued to fuel the fear and antipathy directed against ethnic minorities, especially Roma (Bartosz 1994; Stewart 1997), often leading to pogroms and deportations of entire Roma communities (Bartosz 2001). Although the power wielded by many of today’s (non-Roma) *nouveaux-riches* in Poland was not always commensurate with the axiom “remuneration-for-effort,” it was usually a wealthy Roma who was accused of deception and criminality attributed to his/her cunning and thieving nature (Stewart 1997). At the other end of the spectrum, the impoverished Roma who had fallen between the cracks of Poland’s competitive market economy was stigmatised as lazy, unambitious, and inherently unintelligent (Bartosz 1994; Stewart 1997). The Catholic Church’s depictions of Roma as savage, pagan, blasphemous, unclean, and sexually promiscuous (Kazubowski-Houston 2001; Krzysztof 2001), and Western liberal notions of Roma as close-to-nature, carefree, romantic, musical, slothful, and deceitful, supported the religious indoctrination of Roma children in Church-sponsored “special-ed” schools, and Roma women in Church/state-backed human ecology classes. They also fuelled discrimination in the workforce, and the appropriation and exploitation of Roma

culture in the tourism, entertainment and art industries (Bartosz 2001; Godwin 2001; Kazubowski-Houston 2001).

With these ideas in mind, I began making plans to return to Morag in the summer of 2002. I decided that my Ph.D. research in Morag would have four distinct stages. In the first stage, I hoped to engage in participant observation, conduct semi-structured and unstructured interviews with the women, and record their life stories/histories. In this stage of the research, I planned to assemble a performance troupe, comprised of two performers from my theatre ensemble Teatr Korzenie (my husband Shawn, and Kim, a performer who had worked with me for several years, and at the time resided in Poland), and three Roma women from Morag. I planned to select the three Roma women based on their ability to participate in, and commit to, two months of rehearsals. I realised that such selection criteria might favour young, single, or elderly women with fewer familial obligations over a mother who needed to panhandle daily to feed her children and husband. In an effort to include as many diverse voices as possible, I intended to do the following: interview women who were unable to commit the time to participate in the performance, ask the women involved in the performance what they thought the differences were between how they and other women in their community experienced violence, and ask elderly women about their past experiences as single women or as mothers.

In the second phase of the research, I planned to develop – in collaboration with the participants – a theatre performance that would involve over two months of regularly scheduled rehearsals. The development of the performance would entail implementing the blueprint for ethnographic theatre I had developed in my MFA studies, with some of aspects of Mienczakowski's, Conquergood's, and Stoller's ethnographic approaches.

The third stage of the process would, ideally, involve several public presentations of the performance. I planned to first present the performance to the Roma community of Morag in a local venue, such as a community hall, church, or theatre. I also wanted to present the performance to national and international audiences at the *International Festival for the Fine and Performing Arts* in Tczew, Poland, where we had been invited to perform in September 2003.⁴¹

In the fourth stage of the process, I planned to record audience reactions during performances, post-performance in-theatre talkback sessions, and interviews. I also planned to facilitate a dialogue with the participants about what they believed the performance “revealed” about violence committed against them. I intended to conduct follow-up interviews with individual participants, and meet with them as a group to discuss and analyse the research materials.

My intention was that the knowledge generated through an ethnographic performance would constitute a negotiation of both the Roma women’s assumptions, and my assumptions, about what constituted and promoted violence committed against them. I was hoping that this process would reveal how the women talked about, and remembered, their experiences of violence. I also set-out to question the conditions of my knowledge as ethnographer, the methodologies of research, the theoretical frameworks that would steer the research, and the relations of power that would define it. Finally, I hoped the emancipatory potential of the project would lie in the insights it would allow for both the audience and the research participants, and in the opportunities it would provide for the Roma women to speak in a public forum about their lives.

Chapter 5

Arrivals

Starting My Ph.D. Research: Summer 2002

A year later, I was ready to begin my Ph.D. research with the Romanian Roma women of Morag. But events conspired against me. I returned to Poland on July 1, 2002 (see appendix A), and soon after, took the train to Morag with Shawn and Amadeusz. As we approached the city limits, we noticed that the field where the Roma had been living was empty. There were now only horses where once the Roma shantytown had stood. I walked to a house across the road from the field to ask if the Roma had relocated to another part of the city. The woman who lived there told me that local authorities had deported the Roma in September 2001. Police had rounded the Roma up one night, forced them to leave their belongings behind, and transported them back to Romania. The woman claimed that many Morag residents had liked the Roma, and she did not understand why they had been deported.

I was devastated. I knew I would never see Ella and the other Roma from Morag again. Not a trace remained, and nobody had any information about their whereabouts. I knew that the Roma's lives would certainly not improve in Romania, a country that was infamous for its systemic mistreatment of Roma.

I now had to look for a new research field. Tarnow and Olsztyn were not options. Shawn, however, convinced me that Elblag was. After all, we could live with my mother there, and spend the year with her. He also suggested that I contact Elblag's Cultural Centre for International Cooperation about the possibility of producing the Roma project, if the women agreed to participate. Although I knew that building rapport with the Roma in Elblag would be difficult, and that my plans of developing a theatre performance with them might altogether backfire, persuaded by Shawn, I decided to approach the Roma in Elblag once again. I also decided to speak to the Cultural Centre's director, just in case.

Elblag Snapshots (1): Histories

Elblag – a mid-sized city of 130,000 people, and an important industrial, commercial, and cultural centre – lies at the core of Poland’s scenic highland region, approximately eighty kilometres southeast of Gdansk. It is one of the oldest cities in northern Poland, and is populated by ethnic Poles with a small percentage of German, Ukrainian, Russian, and Roma minorities. Until the late nineteenth century, Elblag was a central port, competing with Gdansk. Later, Elblag’s significance as a port city waned, but between the two world wars, it became an important hub of ground transportation. As Hitler rose to power in Germany, Elblag’s port activities once again – albeit temporarily – flourished due to the increase in production of weapons for Prussia. At the end of the Second World War, the Red Army penetrated the Reich’s frontlines in north-eastern Prussia (Gierszewski 1978, 194). The fight for Elblag was protracted and bloody. On February 10, 1945, the Soviet army walked into Elblag, and the city once again became Polish (Ibid., 198). By the end of the war, approximately seventy percent of Elblag had been destroyed.

The reconstruction of Elblag began relatively late due to a shortage of skilled labour and capital, and the country’s priority of first rebuilding the nation’s capital, Warsaw (Ibid., 208). The dominant political parties of that time in Elblag were the Polish Workers’ Party and the Polish Socialist Party (Ibid., 199-200). Heavy industry and commerce dominated the economic landscape (Ibid., 212). The largest factories in Elblag, until the collapse of socialism, included Zamech (heavy machinery/turbine plant), Plastyk (manufacturer of leather clothing), and Truso (textile manufacturer) (Ibid., 215). Elblag had become one of the most important industrial cities in Poland by 1989 (Ibid., 216). As an artistic and cultural centre, Elblag lagged far behind other Polish cities. A cinema, a small library, and the occasional artistic event barely nourished the cultural needs of its citizens (Ibid., 224). It was not until 1962 that the factory Zamech built Elblag’s Cultural Centre, which included reading rooms, community clubs, a cinema, and various artistic sections, such as fine arts, dance, ballet, photography, and theatre. Another important centre of artistic activity was Elblag’s Galeria El, which exhibited works of prominent artists from Poland and abroad, and was home to spatial and conceptual art

(Ibid., 231). In 1975, Elblag became the capital of the province of Warmia (Ibid., 234). During the general strikes of Solidarity, the city was the scene of numerous riots.

After 1989, the restoration of Elblag's Old City commenced. In the 1990s, the local government promoted Elblag as a modern and economically sound city. Elblag's largest companies included ABB Zamech, Ltd., Elbrewery Co. Ltd, Elblag Energy, Poland Post, Daewoo Cars and Furnell. Industries involved the production of energy, and the manufacturing of machinery, consumables, textiles and furniture. City Council was actively creating economic incentives to attract foreign investment in Elblag. The collapse of state socialism left Elblag, like other cities in Poland, with monolithic state enterprises, a smaller consumer base, and extensive debt-loads. The private sector did not fully replace the services originally provided by the state. In such economically dire times, Elblag's rate of unemployment, like in many other regions of Poland, has climbed steadily – by 2002 it was 32 % (Tonowicz 1997).

Elblag Snapshots (2): Personal Recollections

I was born in Elblag in 1971, and lived there until moving to Canada at the age of twenty. I remember the Elblag of my youth as a culturally active city. As a teen, I was a humanities student at a local Lyceum. My Polish language teacher introduced me to the vibrant life of Galeria El and Elblag's Cultural Centre, where I regularly attended exhibitions and performances.

Although Elblag was rich culturally and artistically, everyday life was hard. There were chronically empty store shelves, overnight queues for food, a restrictive food/clothing coupon system, housing shortages, the ever-present military police and threat of random arrest, censorship, and a general fear of what the future might bring. Though life was hardly idyllic under socialism in Elblag, I remember that people in general were not overly fatalistic. Before Prime Minister Wojciech Jaruzelski imposed martial law on Poland in 1981, many of the people I knew were surprisingly optimistic about their future, and often willing to resist the communist regime. I also remember the indomitable spirit of people standing in line for food. Coupons were often traded, and

political/personal news, gossip and jokes exchanged. An important hub of activity in the city was – and still is – the “Rynek,” the local market. Here people came not only to shop, but also to meet one another and get up-to-the-minute news about “what was going on in the city.” Elblag’s many Catholic churches and cathedrals were not only vibrant religious and cultural centres, but also critical bastions of resistance against the Communist Party. Congregations would gather to pray as well as listen to anti-communist sermons. During this time, Solidarity began organising general strikes, providing people with the hope that things might improve.

When martial law was imposed in 1981, I was only ten years old. I remember an instantaneous deterioration in the general mood of people in Elblag: wholesale apathy overcame the city. Tanks and soldiers dominated the streets. There was tear gas in the air, and rumours of indiscriminate arrests, torture and abductions. The fear of “what might happen” never left us. Many people felt shut-in, as travel outside of Elblag, like every other city in Poland, was severely restricted. This sombre spectre prevailed until state socialism collapsed in the fall of 1989. I remember well the euphoria of that year: everyone was celebrating the new era that was to bring about “freedom.” Change swept through the country literally overnight. I remember walking into a store one day to buy something, and to my astonishment, I noticed that the shelves were filled with everything, even chocolate. Yet, I was soon to find out that while “everything” was now available in the stores, not many people, including my family, could afford much of this abundance. Inflation ballooned overnight. The changes sweeping through the country, both politically and economically, were overwhelming, but not without promise. Tadeusz Mazowiecki formed the first non-communist government in Eastern Europe, which introduced a radical program of economic and political reforms. Shortly after that, I left Poland to attend university in Canada.

However, I also hold memories of Elblag as being a generally intolerant city. Although the state officially considered everyone – including women, men, and ethnic minorities – equal, this was often not the case in practice. It was common knowledge that party officials had better jobs, bigger houses, and higher salaries. Men generally had higher salaries, and were more powerful both politically and economically. Although both boys and girls were encouraged to pursue a post-secondary education, girls were still

deemed more suited to become nurses, teachers, childcare providers, secretaries, doctors (primarily dentists, general practitioners, and paediatricians), actors, and art historians. Boys were encouraged to work as surgeons, medical specialists, lawyers, politicians, architects, drivers, theatre directors, musicians, writers, poets, and visual artists. The primary role of a woman was still widely perceived as that of a good wife and mother. Men, on the other hand, were believed to be “naturally” disposed as leaders and innovators. Thus, as in the playground, where boys ran around with guns and cars, and girls skipped rope and cared for their dolls, in the world of grownups, men brought home the bread, while women brought home the bread as well as served it. Feminism had always been a dirty word in Poland, and I recall people commonly arguing that feminism, albeit necessary in the Middle East or Asia, had no role to play in an egalitarian Poland.

Despite its sexist underpinnings, the family unit in Poland was important, as for many it was a buffer against the harsh reality of everyday living. Family members generally supported each other through times of adversity. The extended family was ubiquitous – grandparents, parents, and children often lived in one household. Many households took great pride in welcoming guests and strangers alike into their homes. The old Polish maxim, “A guest’s home is God’s home,” ensured that unexpected visits were always an extravagant affair. People at these gatherings would often talk longingly about the West, longings compliments of Radio Free Europe’s propaganda machine. I was not immune.

I remember, as a child, playing a game called “I take this.” My friends and I would look through a department store catalogue from the West. If we spotted something appealing, such as clothing, furniture, or especially toys, we would cover the picture with our hands and say, “I take this.” This meant that the object would become the property of the one fortunate enough to spot it first. The child who accumulated the largest amount of “appealing” objects from the catalogue would win. Such catalogues were not widely available, and therefore, were precious artefacts in the household. Of course, many of my friends and I dreamed about one day immigrating to the West.

I also remember Elblag as a city unwelcoming to ethnic/sexual minorities, people with disabilities, and the elderly. People commonly referred to Jews as stingy, pious, and untrustworthy, and to Roma as lazy, dirty, criminals. Sexual minorities were simply

invisible, and regularly talked about as sinful, ill, or devious. People with disabilities were also largely invisible, especially people with mental illness who were often referred to as “imbeciles.” I also recall that those considered elderly – people as young as forty – were shunned as “inefficient.” Only those over seventy were respected for their advanced age and “life’s wisdom.”

In 1992, I returned to Elblag for a short visit. Despite the deepening economic crisis, growing unemployment, increasing violence, and lack of adequate housing, people still seemed optimistic about the future and largely convinced that the turbulence of this “transitional” period was necessary: the fruits of democracy and freedom would soon fall from the tree of economic hardship. Socialist political parties were still struggling for popular support. While racism and intolerance toward “the other” were as prevalent as ever, the displaced Romanian Roma who were everywhere in the streets of Elblag – and other Polish cities – begging for food, clothing or money, were largely treated with kindness.

Elblag Snapshots (3): Present Settings

During my summer visit to Poland in 2001, for my pilot research, and my yearlong stay in 2002, for my Ph.D. research, I noticed that the euphoria of 1989, still going strong until the mid-nineties, had worn thin. The emotional landscape was similar to that of the martial law years: apathy and hopelessness were once again pervasive. Many of my friends and relatives were despondent, distrustful of the changes taking place, and tired of the hardships they had to endure. The unemployment rate in Elblag was high, and people who had always worked were suddenly without jobs; and prospects of re-entering the job market were scant. Poverty was widespread, with many people living on less than a dollar a day. A serious shortage of affordable housing continued in Elblag. People barely a few years my senior were referring to themselves as the “lost generation.”

Privatisation was the buzzword of the day, as the government dismantled many state-subsidised enterprises. Without affordable childcare, many children played

unattended after school for hours; people bemoaned that television and video games were now inexpensive alternatives to caregivers. I witnessed children spending hours at local internet cafes unattended, chatting online, playing violent video games, or viewing pornographic websites.

According to friends and family, violence and substance had risen dramatically. Teachers I knew claimed that drug use was now a problem in the primary grades – children eight years and younger were using drugs and alcohol. In the Lyceums and Gymnasiums, substance abuse was rampant.

People's attitudes towards the West had changed significantly since the early nineties. Although many still supported the Western model of liberal democracy and capitalism, by 2001 some critics were warning against blindly following Western models, as they were unfit for Poland. Similarly, there were deep divisions over Poland becoming a member of the European Union. There were those – frequently twenty and thirty-somethings – who viewed EU membership as the best solution to the country's social, political, and economic problems. They argued that Western European standards of governance would finally “bring order to Poland.” Sceptics, however, predicted unacceptable hikes in inflation and unemployment if Poland joined the EU.⁴² The majority of ordinary Poles with whom I spoke were not sure what to think about Poland joining the EU. They complained of a dearth of “balanced” information in the public domain and media to help them make informed decisions, and suspected that the politicians were lying about what joining the EU might really entail. Thus, many people turned to the Catholic Church for guidance in understanding Poland's role in the EU. Members of the church seemed also divided in their opinions on the matter.

It seemed the unemployment and poverty in Elblag were fuelling the intolerance and prejudice toward “the other” more than ever. I witnessed many instances in which passers-by insulted Roma women fortune telling on the streets, and in which clerks acted condescendingly toward Roma shoppers in supermarkets. In Elblag's local market, vendors were arranged according to nationality/ethnicity. Polish vendors were set up in prime, high traffic locations, while Ukrainian and Russian vendors sold their wares in sections less accessible. Although Poles bought from Russian and Ukrainian vendors, many complained that they sold at low prices because of their “black market”

connections. The Roma vendors at the market were at the greatest disadvantage, as people simply did not want to buy from them. Some local people admitted they would never buy from Roma vendors, because they believed that “Roma only sold stolen goods.” Roma stereotypes continued to circulate with people referring to them as “criminals,” “thieves,” and “lazy parasites.” Although prejudice and discrimination against ethnic minorities was widely evident in the city, a majority of the people to whom I spoke denied there was any racism in Poland; only a small percentage admitted racism was a problem in the country.

Attitudes toward women had not changed significantly since the nineties; perhaps now more than ever the ideal of femininity was being articulated in terms of motherhood, homemaking, and sexual attractiveness. Furthermore, women’s opportunities in the job market had now deteriorated dramatically. Many of my female friends were now without jobs. While attitudes toward the elderly and the disabled remained unchanged, their economic circumstances had worsened significantly. Some elderly and disabled people I knew confided they had to live off of meagre pensions or disability monies. Due to the lack of funding, many rehabilitation services still available under socialism were now unattainable to them. “We are the forgotten burden,” one elderly woman told me.

The situation of gay and lesbians had hardly improved. Despite their efforts to speak out publicly against homophobia, they continued to be perceived as “deviant,” “sinful,” or “ill,” as they had been in the eighties and nineties.

Making Contacts with the Cultural Centre

In 2002, the Cultural Centre was a vibrant institution. It changed its name to Swiatowid: the Cultural Centre for International Cooperation in the Arts to reflect its newly adopted diverse and international artistic and cultural agenda. There were now numerous sections at the Centre, including theatre, dance, sculpture, martial arts, fine arts, film and photography. The Centre also organized various local, national, and international festivals and cultural events, such as the *International Workshop of Art* (Kadyny – a Village of Art); the *International Workshop of Photography* (View-

Environment-Art); the *National Festival of the Spoken Word: Is that Love?*; *Elblag's Nights of Theatre and Poetry*; and the *International Dance Festival* (Baltic Cup). It ran some programs for people with disabilities, such as art therapy, performance festivals, and workshops. Recently, it opened a state-of-the-art cinema (WOK 2002). The Centre's main funding came from Poland's Ministry of Cultural Affairs, while local businesses and individuals sponsored various events.

Despite its diverse cultural and artistic agenda, I discovered that, the Centre was not enjoying a universally good reputation in Elblag. Many people claimed the Centre had "gone to the dogs" in recent years because all of its efforts went into promoting the box office sales. Additionally, the Centre had been widely criticised in the local press for its mismanagement of funding, corruption, and enormous debt.

I had met with the Centre's director, and the theatre section manager (see appendix C), to discuss the possibility of producing the Roma project in one of its studios before I even approached the Roma women in Elblag. Though I doubted the women would agree to participate in a performative ethnography, I wanted to explore my options in terms of both rehearsal space and performance venue, as soon as possible. I knew that by September, with the theatre season in full swing, it would be too late to negotiate anything with the Centre.

The director was enthusiastic about my research, and not only agreed to provide me with a studio for rehearsals, but also hired me as a theatre instructor, and as artistic director of the student theatre section from September 2002 until September 2003, with the option of a contract renewal if I stayed in Poland an extra year. He also suggested that Shawn could work as a theatre instructor with English speaking students. We would teach courses in art and culture studies, and acting,⁴³ and direct student productions. All productions would be fully funded by the Centre, including the Roma project. Of course full funding, the director qualified, meant minimal design and technical support, given the Centre's recent financial troubles. While all other productions were to be developed primarily as part of our actor training program, the director wanted the Roma project to be a form of "cultural exchange" between Roma and Poles, and a means of familiarising Elblag's citizens with Roma culture. He stressed that although the terms and conditions of the Roma project were open, as I would ultimately decide how to develop and present

my Ph.D. research, the centre would handle – if I wanted to – all publicity efforts, both locally and nationally. Moreover, he offered that, funding provided, he would be willing to sponsor the project's participation in the following summer's *Fringe Festival* in Edinburgh. As well, he promised he would help me look for funding to cover the small honoraria for the Roma women.

Shawn and I were free to design the courses according to our own liking, as long as each of us taught two courses per semester: one in theatre studies and one in acting. The acting course would involve the development and public presentation of a play in the Centre's "off-mainstage" studio theatre at the end of each semester (fall, spring, and summer).

I was thrilled about working at the Centre. When I was a youth, the House of Culture, as it was called then, had been like a second home to me, where I spent countless hours attending theatre workshops, plays, art exhibitions, and film festivals. As well, although our contracts were part-time, Shawn and me were both offered above-average salaries. In fact, my part-time salary would have been comparable to the full time earnings of many people I knew in Poland. This, I believe, could be explained both in terms of the director's enthusiasm for having Shawn and I work at the Centre, and in terms of the prestige that the positions of artistic director/theatre instructor occupied in Poland. The director's enthusiasm perhaps stemmed from the fact that he saw certain advantages in having international artists employed at the Centre; "The Centre needs more international exposure," he asserted while signing my contract. This was generally true in Poland. It was easier for a person educated abroad to find employment in the country. The positions of theatre instructor/artistic director are also considered quite prestigious. Generally, to be employed as such, one must have the minimum of a Master's degree, or years of equivalent experience. And while working in a cultural centre has never been as prestigious as working, for example, in a state university's drama department, or a larger theatre venue, an artistic position in any institution still holds a high social status, largely carried over from previous decades when the arts were highly valued, supported and funded by the state.

As good as it all sounded, I soon discovered that working at the Cultural Centre would be fraught with politics and compromise, as its organisational structure and work

ethos were still, to a large degree, products of socialist Poland. Under state socialism, the very structure and organisation of the workplace inspired resistance in the workers. Many work rituals imposed by the party, such as work competitions between different departments, voluntary workdays, and production campaigns to celebrate the Party's cult of work, bred the worker's revolt (Verdery 1996, 23). One form of such revolt was the ethics of non-work: workers performed a bare minimum of labour to receive a paycheque (Ibid.). This created a certain attitude toward work, where work was hardly rendered a priority, and other activities such as standing in a queue to get necessities like bread or milk took precedence (Ibid., 46). Also under state socialism, the Secret Police was instrumental in maintaining surveillance in the workplace, where they planted informants (Ibid., 23). As a result, workplaces were characterised by a high degree of paranoia, suspicion, and fear: no one trusted anybody (Ibid., 24).

After the collapse of state socialism, many organisations changed their names in order to break with the past. For instance, many "Houses of Culture" became overnight "Cultural Service Centres," or "Institutes for European Studies." However, these cosmetic changes merely reflected their desire to convince the public that they had made a break with the past; but much of their structural and ideological underpinnings remained deeply submerged in the previous era (Malesevic 1995).

These structural and ideological ghosts were undeniably walking the halls of Elblag's Cultural Centre. Executive offices stood empty for days, with secretaries instructing everyone to check back tomorrow, eternally. Only when a major cultural event was approaching, the corridors were abuzz with everybody preparing for the upcoming event. After the event was over, management once again became scarce. The director of the centre was even scarcer. When I tried to set an appointment with him, his secretary usually advised me to come back the following day. An atmosphere of suspicion dominated the Centre's offices. Employees were distrustful of each other, as staff members were routinely and summarily dismissed from their jobs. They worried that their colleagues, out of self-preservation, might betray them to save their own positions.

Working at the Cultural Centre as a woman complicated things even further because of firmly entrenched patriarchal attitudes. As in many Western corporations,

men dominated executive positions, while secretaries were invariably women. The director's secretary not only answered his phone and filed his papers, but also served him coffee and sweets. There were exceptions: the manager and artistic director of the mainstage theatre section were both women. However, their positions were at best precarious: as long as they remained in the director's favour, they could do as they wished. People's condescension towards women was very apparent in their interactions with me. Staff at the Centre often referred to me as "little girl," likely because it was unusual for a woman to be a theatre director at the age of thirty-one. The theatre manager reminded me that it was my duty, as a woman, to clean up after a male colleague and his students had left the studio. When I countered that the director had never mentioned my custodial duties when hiring me, the manager was stunned that I would not accept my obligations as a woman.

**PART II:
ETHNOGRAPHIC EXCURSIONS
- JUGGLERS OF POWER**

Chapter 6

Excursion #1...

Dance as I Play You

Meeting the Actors/ Negotiating Collaboration

On the first of September, 2002, I began working at the Cultural Centre teaching a “theatre and culture” seminar,⁴⁴ and a studio course on the fundamentals of acting (see appendix A). Although Shawn was teaching his own courses, we decided that he would assist me as an instructor. We scheduled our courses on different days of the week so he could facilitate in my absence. While I would do research with the Roma women during the day, and teach at the Centre at night, I knew that sometimes I might need to work with the women in the evenings. Shawn was fluent enough in Polish to lead my studio sessions. If the need arose, and he had to teach my seminar, we would ask our English speaking students to help translate.

I had ten students enrolled in both my seminar and studio class: Olga, Grazyna, Agnieszka, Gosia, Maria, Derek, Tomek, Tadzio, Irena, and Joanna. Agnieszka (19) was a student of Polish Philology at Gdansk University (see appendix D). Sisters Grazyna (18) and Olga (16) were both attending Lyceum in Elblag; Grazyna planned to study at the University of Poznan after her maturity and entrance exams in the spring. Tomek (18) was in his final year of Lyceum, and wanted to attend university in the fall to become a professional actor. Gosia (18) and Derek (18) were also preparing for maturity and university entrance exams. Irena (17) was a third year student at Elblag’s Economics Collegiate. Joanna⁴⁵ (20) was a Lyceum graduate, and was working at a private firm. Tadzio (35) was employed as a dance instructor in the city. The youngest was Maria (14), who was in her first year of Lyceum.

Most of the students, aside from Agnieszka, Olga and Grazyna, had little or no training as actors. Agnieszka had previously trained in physical theatre in Gdansk, and

participated in a few acting workshops in Elblag. Olga and Grazyna had completed elementary acting courses at the Cultural Centre. However, all of the students knew a lot about theatre, both Polish and international. This was the case because – except for Irena – they were attending, or were graduates of, Elblag’s lyceum humanities programs, specialising in drama.⁴⁶

Most of the students hoped to pursue a post secondary education in drama and/or cultural studies. They saw the courses offered at the Cultural Centre as a step toward becoming theatre professionals. For Olga, auditioning to the National Theatre School in Krakow was her ultimate goal. Agnieszka admitted that she was studying Polish Philology at the University of Gdansk only because she had not passed her audition to the National Theatre School. She hoped that by taking the courses at the Centre she would improve her acting skills and succeed at the auditions the following year.

When we began working in the studio, I wanted to direct two one-act plays by contemporary Polish playwrights. However, the students, who had learned about my performative ethnography in our seminar, asked me to develop ethnographic performances with them. They were fascinated with the idea of combining theatre with anthropology. At first, I was not sure about what these ethnographic performances should be. Soon, however, I realised that they could become additional material for my Ph.D. research. I decided to develop ethnographic performances with the students to learn about the various social realities in which they – and the Roma women – lived. The students suggested that we explore issues of racism and intolerance in Poland in our first performance in the fall semester, and then gender relations in the spring. I also mentioned that if the Roma women agreed to participate in the development of an ethnographic performance, I would like the students to be involved in the project as dramaturgs or designers or even co-actors with the Roma women. The students were very excited about this opportunity, because they thought it would be an important learning experience.

Soon afterwards we commenced working on the first performance, which was to become *Dance as I Play You*. We decided to rehearse three days per week, for three hours each session. The students requested that Shawn and I train them in our physical acting style, and that we adopt it for the performances. Some of them had seen the

performance of *Replika 8*⁴⁷ in the summer at the Cultural Centre's annual festival, *Elblag's Nights of Poetry and Theatre*, and wanted to learn this style of performing. The Illustrative Performing Technique appealed to their aesthetic preferences. The students – largely from middle-to-upper class families – were influenced, much like Shawn and me, by the Polish avant-garde theatre traditions of Grotowski, Kantor, and Szajna, and their successors: Theatre Gardzienice,⁴⁸ Leszek Madzik,⁴⁹ and Witkiewicz Theatre.⁵⁰ Thus, they were passionate about non-realist, symbolic, visual, and metaphoric modes of dramatic representation.

I was both relieved and apprehensive about this. On the one hand, I looked forward to working with the acting style I was most passionate about; on the other hand, I was not convinced that it was best suited for the project. While I did want to incorporate a degree of the “aesthetic expressive” in the performance, I was concerned that working with such a demanding mode of acting in an ethnographic theatre project could limit the actors' freedom of expression. The Illustrative Performing Technique, while intended to stimulate the performers' imagination, also relies on rigorous vocal-physical training that, ethnographically speaking, could restrict the actors' choices to communicate ideas, feelings, and actions. Although the actors themselves had chosen this style of acting, I felt that, as anthropologists, we should not be telling our participants how to move their bodies, just as we would not tell them what words to use to relate their stories. And while any form of acting in this project would be “mediated” by Shawn and me, I knew that realism was less rigorous, physically and vocally.⁵¹

In the end, I decided to comply with the students' requests. I had made this decision for two reasons. First, I felt that if I denied their request, I would risk diminishing their enthusiasm for the project. As the students' instructor, and the artistic director of the Cultural Centre's Student Theatre Section, I had licence to train them in any style. Yet, this was not a “straightforward” acting course: we were to collaboratively engage in performative ethnography. The students saw their roles in the project as multiple: ethnographers, actors, and “the subjects” of my ethnography. They had recorded their informed consent on audiotape as performers and research participants,⁵² and were aware that they could withdraw from the project at any time. And this I did not want to happen. Second, refusing the actors' request would have compromised the very

idea of collaborative ethnography to which Shawn and I were committed. The actors assured me they would use the technique as a springboard for explorations in physical acting. We agreed that the first two weeks of the process – the pre-rehearsal sessions – would involve actor training, and discussions about the project and the issues of racism and intolerance in Poland.

Pre-Rehearsal Sessions

Conversations on Racism and Intolerance

We spent the first few pre-rehearsal sessions on actor training, and discussing the project (see appendix A). I outlined the key issues of ethnographic performance and collaborative ethnography that I had already introduced in the seminar. I also gave the actors some questions I thought we might want to explore through the performance:

- What is racism? What is intolerance?
- How does racism/intolerance manifest in Poland?
- Who is affected by racism/intolerance?
- What/who is responsible for racism/intolerance?
- Can racism/intolerance be eradicated? What needs to be done to eradicate them?
- Are racism and intolerance synonymous?⁵³

During the pre-rehearsal sessions, we explored issues of racism and intolerance through informal conversations.

Racism vs. Intolerance

Initially, the students clearly differentiated between racism and intolerance.

Tomek was the first to point out that racism and intolerance were synonymous:

Agnieszka: I'm thinking. I'm not sure, but I think we need to differentiate between racism and intolerance... intolerance doesn't necessarily have to mean racism.

Olga: Maybe... maybe intolerance does not always imply racism, but racism always implies intolerance. I guess someone could be intolerant of a particular culture... like Muslims... if one does not tolerate Muslims, then one would avoid their company... it would not mean that he actually hates Muslims... that's a big difference... or that he wants them all killed off.

Grazyna: I agree, because maybe true cases of racism would be against blacks in the times of slavery... and Nazis against Jews... or Indians in America... that would be racism... but if I don't like someone's culture, that doesn't make me racist, yet.

Tomek: I disagree... I think that both terms are interchangeable... racism results from intolerance and intolerance results from racism. (see appendix F)

As the pre-rehearsal sessions progressed, the students began perceiving parallels between intolerance and racism. Olga and Grazyna argued that while racism could be viewed as a form of intolerance, not all forms of intolerance were racist: a person's impatience directed at a panhandler was not racism if the panhandler was white (Fieldnotes 2002). Other students, however, agreed with Tomek that racism and intolerance were synonymous: although one might be intolerant of all panhandlers, regardless of ethnicity, it was virtually impossible to separate class from ethnicity, as many panhandlers in Poland were visible minorities (Ibid.).

Racism/Intolerance and History

Similarly, in the beginning, the students talked about racism as being a "thing of the past" that had occurred "somewhere else." Tomek, though, saw racism as being a part of present-day reality:

Tomek: ...but you're only talking about the past... how about the present... there's racism in the present... there's definitely racism in Poland now. Until we accept everyone as equal, there'll be racism in Poland. If you only talk about the past, then someone might think that there's no racism in Poland. I also don't agree that one's upbringing should be blamed for racism. Sure, one could, but it's just one part of it... there's more to racism than that. I was raised in a house where everyone was racist, and I'm not racist, at least to the extent that I'm aware of, because we never know whether we are free from racist attitudes... because I don't think that we can totally free ourselves from racism in a totally racist environment. (see appendix F)

With time, however, all the students recognised that racism was a part of Poland's present. Olga and Grazyna even pointed out that the Polish media often presented racism as a "past occurrence" in "other countries." (Fieldnotes, 2002).

What is Racism/Intolerance?

At first, the students identified racism mainly as discriminatory ideologies, perpetuated through both negative and positive stereotypes of “the other.” Again, Tomek was the one who recognised that there were other forms of racism, such as “physical racism.”

Magda: So let’s once again talk about racism... what do you think it is?

Agnieszka: It’s a stereotype...

Olga: ...thinking according to particular schemas.

Grazyna: The belief that people of different races are worse or inferior to whites. (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Dance as I Play You*, 11/5/02)

Gosia: I asked in class questions about the Roma, what my friends thought about the Roma, and the answers I got were that the Roma are lazy, sly, thieves... but they also admitted that they had never met any Roma. I mean, they saw them on the streets, but they never spoke to them... or had any close contact with them.

Grazyna: I asked that, too, but people also said that the Roma are musical. I think that our knowledge about the Roma is engrained in the culture we live in... people grab onto ideologies and believe them without really checking things out... without thinking if things make sense. (Ibid.)

Tomek: There are different forms of racism: physical... pogroms, physical attacks on racial groups and individuals... and psychological... insults, spreading stereotypes that someone is inferior because of their skin colour. (Ibid., 10/30/02)

With time, however, the students began extending their definitions of racism to include not only discriminatory ideologies, but also a wide range of circumstances and practices in which prejudice is embedded, such as physical forms of violence, verbal insults, discriminatory practices in social protection, indifference, exclusion from social life, and certain professions (Ibid.). They also identified as racism more covert attitudes

and practices, such as the exoticisation of “the other,” the fear of “the other,” and the indifference toward “the other’s” plight.

Exoticisation of “the Other”

The students recognised that certain art forms – such as the popular Polish song, *Today There are no Longer Real Roma*, which speaks of the Roma as disappearing – propagate the exoticisation of non-Western people. However, they did not see a Western anthropologist, ethnologist, or journalist, travelling to “distant lands” to study “distinct cultures,” as problematic. They argued that by studying other cultures, one could “break certain stereotypes,” and eventually eradicate racism. Only Agnieszka disagreed, and recognised the Western practice of “studying” others as a product of the West’s self-proclaimed superiority, and its arrogant assumption that Westerners could understand another culture:

Magda: What do you think about an anthropologist or an ethnologist... or it could also be a journalist... going to a “distant” country to study a so-called primitive culture?

Agnieszka: I think this is the problem of exoticisation... that one culture, usually the white culture, goes to study the other culture that they consider primitive and less developed... there’s definitely racist underpinnings there.

Grazyna: I don’t think that someone going to another culture to study them is a form of racism. I think that it’s good if someone goes to study another culture... that means that they’re not afraid of it.

Agnieszka: Yes, but the mere fact that a white person... a scholar goes to study a primitive culture, lies on the assumption of a certain superiority of the white person... because that white person enters a different culture with the conviction that they will have the necessary knowledge to understand that culture.

Olga: I think the opposite... getting to know another culture can only break certain stereotypes.

Maria: I agree that knowledge can break certain stereotypes.

Olga: I think that if an anthropologist or ethnologist entered such a country, they wouldn’t want to represent it in a bad light... and also, it would be good for us to know about cultures that are still not touched by civilisation... maybe we could learn something from them.

Grazyna: Because there are still some cultures like that remaining... very few though.

Magda: So you think there still are cultures that are untouched by civilisation.

Maria: Sure... there are tribes in Africa that are totally primitive.

Everyone except Agnieszka agrees with Maria.

Agnieszka: I don't agree... the mere fact that a culture doesn't have so much technology doesn't mean that the culture is not touched by civilisation. The mere fact that one culture has more technology and the other doesn't is the result of that civilisation and Western progress... that one culture ripped off the other culture... of course the First World is rich because the Third World is poor. (Ibid.)

Fear of “the Other”/ Indifference Toward “the Other’s” Plight

According to the students, the fear of getting to know non-white people, and a lack of interest in “the other’s” plight, were widespread forms of racism in Poland.

Stereotypical views of Roma fuelled people’s fear of, and apathy towards, them:

Olga: People aren't really interested in the plight of Roma... they don't really want to see Roma around. . . .

Agnieszka: People say, “Why should I help Roma if there are so many poor people in Poland?” People don't think that the situation of the Roma is different... they think it's the same. People say, “Why should I help Roma and pay taxes for their laziness... they get money, and they can't even invest it properly. You walk into their houses and it looks like a stable!” And yet, no one has ever walked into their homes... they're afraid... all those accusations are based on people's racist conceptions of Roma... but they don't really know any Roma.

Olga: I once saw an incident at the market... people were fighting about who should stand where, and insulting one another. A Roma person that was being kicked out, because people were arguing that this was their spot, and why would a foreigner have a job... why didn't they.

Agnieszka: And the Roma aren't even foreigners!

Olga: Right!

Agnieszka: I'm sick of it! Even young people are like that. They're refusing to think... they don't know, but they won't try to find out either. There're a lot of

uninformed opinions circulating all around, and a lack of knowledge breeds fear... because if I don't know anything about that person, except all the stereotypes about Roma, then how could I respect them? (Ibid., 11/6/02)

Homophobia

The students also pointed out that homophobia was a prevalent form of intolerance in Poland. However, their understandings of homophobia were at times ambiguous:

Magda: What are attitudes towards gay people like in Poland?

Tomek: Polish society is very homophobic.

Olga: [to me] What do you think about same-sex relationships?

Magda: I think of them the same as heterosexual relationships.

Olga: I guess if people were born that way, then there's no other way out of it.

Grazyna: What really annoys me about gay people is that they have all those gay clubs and parades... to me it's unnecessary exhibitionism.

Magda: Well, I think you need to look at it from a point of view of discrimination. It's a means of maintaining a particular aspect of one's identity... and a form of resistance against the status quo... heterosexual people do not need to protect that part of their identity, as they are not discriminated on the basis of their sexuality.

Olga: [to me] What do you think about same sex couples adopting children?

Magda: I think that's great... there are many unwanted children. I think that children can function well in any setting, if it's based on love and respect. There are many unhappy children in heterosexual relationships... the parent's sexual orientation has nothing to do with the happiness of their children. Of course, there is ... or there might be bullying at school, but that's not because the parents' sexual orientation is causing it... it's just that society is not accepting it. (Ibid., 11/05/02)

The above fragment demonstrates that some of the students' conceptions of sexuality were also prejudiced: Olga perceived homosexuality as an "unfortunate

occurrence” from which “there [was] no way out,” and was uncertain about gay people’s right to adopt children; and Grazyna denounced the “unnecessary exhibitionism” of gay-pride parades. However, they did not perceive their perceptions of homosexuality as problematic.

Sources of Racism/Intolerance

The actors argued that racism and intolerance were the result of socialisation – people were indoctrinated with racist beliefs and attitudes right from childhood (Ibid., 11/5/02). They also blamed racism and intolerance on what they referred to as Poland’s “monoculture:”

Agnieszka: It’s our Polish monoculture. I think that in other countries, like Canada or the U.S., racism maybe isn’t so prevalent now, because there’s more diversity there... maybe where there are lots of different people living together. . . they are more accepting of each other. (Ibid.)

Representing Racism/Intolerance

The students agreed that racism concerned everyone, and that the performance should present and critique it. They recognised, however, that the challenge of representing racism on stage was to avoid sensationalism, which could further entrench racist stereotypes and practices:

Agnieszka: We could show the stereotypes.

Olga: Yeah, but if you just show the stereotypes, then people will think that’s what we think!

Agnieszka: No, we’d show both positive and negative stereotypes, and then reality, to contrast things.

Magda: We’ll work using improvisations. I mean we’ll build the scenes around the above issues... we’ll start doing that in the next rehearsal. (Ibid.)

Reflections

The pre-rehearsal sessions turned out to be a valuable part of the project. In addition to revealing how the students understood racism and intolerance, the process demonstrated how the development of the ethnographic performance could facilitate social critique and action, the kinds of power dynamics that defined our mutual interactions, and what my role was in this phase of the research.

In the pre-rehearsal sessions, the actors revisited their long-held beliefs about racism and intolerance, and re-articulated novel understandings of these issues. While initially they talked about racism and intolerance as separate categories, later they began perceiving the two as, more or less, interchangeable. And while the students did not critically assess all of their ideas and beliefs – such as some of their perceptions of homosexuality – the propensity of the ethnographic theatre performance development process to facilitate a potentially transformative critical dialogue was clearly manifest. Perhaps this could be attributed to the group setting of our in-studio discussions. It might have been that the mutual exchanges and constructions of knowledge between the participants allowed greater opportunities for re-evaluating one's opinions against those of others. The pre-rehearsal discussions also extended beyond the studio's walls, and led to critical exchanges between people not directly involved in the process. Grazyna and Olga, for example, conducted a survey in their Lyceum to find out what other students thought about racism and intolerance. This was an important educational opportunity for all of us because the responses that Olga and Grazyna solicited from their peers indicated – and helped us critically evaluate – how others perceived and understood such problems.⁵⁴ It also provided other students in Elblag with the opportunity to think about racism and intolerance.

Moreover, our pre-rehearsal sessions provided important insights into the power dynamics that defined our mutual interactions, and my role, in the studio. What Fabian (1990) argues about performance was also applicable to the pre-rehearsal sessions: as integral constituents of the performance development process, they did not represent or enact a pre-existing cultural text, but were texts in “the moment of [their] actualisation” (17). As such, the pre-rehearsal sessions exposed the relations of power that defined them

as events, because we all – the actors, Shawn, and I – related to one another, and to society, in terms of power.

The power dynamics that defined our interactions in the studio situated me in the problematic position of “expert,” which compromised the collaborative spirit of the project. The students, to some extent, perceived me as the “expert” because I was their theatre instructor. As a result, they were reluctant to express their opinions before first soliciting my position on any given topic. For instance, Olga asked my opinion on same sex relationships before elaborating on her point-of-view. The students also treated me with a certain degree of suspicion, likely because in Polish schools, an authoritarian and paternalistic model of the teacher-student relationship, based on mutual distrust, is still the norm. Gosia confided in me that for the longest time, she and her fellow students were hesitant to express their opinions “honestly,” because they did not know if they could trust me (Fieldnotes 2002). They self-censored opinions they thought might compromise their relationships with me. And while I recognise that collaboration is not synonymous with egalitarianism, the students’ self-censorship relinquished their initiative and input during the research process, which in turn compromised our collaboration.

Rehearsals

Performing Racism and Intolerance

After we explored racism and intolerance in the pre-rehearsal sessions, we started developing the physical text of the performance in rehearsals. This involved improvising sketches to examine the various issues through physical means of expression. The students worked both in groups and individually, then presented their sketches to fellow students, Shawn, and me. Each presentation was followed by group discussions. We developed and presented several sketches before selecting the ones to be included in the final performance.

While working in small groups, the students first discussed ideas for a scenario, and then worked out the actions physically and vocally. The groups had ten minutes to develop their scenarios, and the students did not communicate outside of their groups. The first sketches developed were based on our pre-rehearsal discussions, and thus explored racism and intolerance according to some of the themes that emerged earlier.

Olga and Derek's first skit explored racism as the stereotyping of "the other:"

Olga and Derek – "Stereotypes"

Olga comes up to Derek and extends her hand to shake with his. Derek looks at Olga, scrutinises her... and then with disgust, turns his back to her and walks away.

Olga: We were trying to portray what stereotypes actually do... that the stereotype about a Roma as dirty actually leads to the avoidance of them. Not many people would want to shake their hands. (Transcript, Rehearsal, Dance as I Play You, 11/10/02)

Olga and Derek portrayed racism as stereotypes through concrete physical movements and gestures, such as scrutinising, turning back, and walking away. There were also specific emotions they explored. When Olga approached Derek, her face betrayed anticipation; then, as she extended her hand to greet Derek, her face expressed uncertainty. At the outset, Derek appeared surprised. As he scrutinised Olga, his facial expressions, gestures, and movements revealed suspicion, then slowly turned to disgust,

and eventually to anger as he walked away (Fieldnotes 2002). According to Olga, working on the scene gave her a sense of how it might feel to be ostracised as dirty: although “they were only acting,” and “the situation was not real,” she “felt a shudder go through her body” when Derek “looked at her like that” (Ibid.).

In the scenario “I’m Afraid of You,” Irena, Derek, and Maria “conceived of” racism as the fear of getting to know “the other:”

Irena, Derek, Maria – “I’m Afraid of You”

Irena is lying on the stage on her back, legs slightly bent upwards. She is scratching the air, meowing like a cat... maybe meowing for attention. Derek is standing stooped over in front of Irena, with his back towards her... hands touching the floor. He lifts his leg like a male dog urinating. Irena begins rolling across the floor, her meows more desperate. As a dog, Derek starts looking around. Maria enters from backstage and approaches cat and dog. She walks slowly and carefully... stops and watches both the cat and the dog. The cat stands on its hind legs, meowing before Maria... the dog also stands on its hind legs and stands in front of Maria, whimpering. Maria grabs the “paws” of both the cat and the dog, attempting to bring them closer together, but they start fighting and resisting. Derek and Irena claw at each other, meowing and barking louder. Maria continues to hold them. The cat and the dog start pulling away in opposite directions... they pull relentlessly until Maria drops to the floor, motionless on her back. Irena and Derek notice Maria on the floor, go over to her, meowing and whining... sniffing her. There is no response. They begin fighting with each other, meowing and barking and scratching. The cat eventually injures the dog, which collapses to the floor, whimpering in agony. The cat then lies down on her back beside Maria and meows contently. (see appendix F)

The students metaphorically portrayed the fear of “the other” with a cat (Irena) and a dog (Derek) – commonly viewed in Poland as adversaries – resisting each other, and competing over their owner’s (Maria) attention. They employed various movements, gestures, and emotions, such as biting, barking, whimpering, clawing, lurching, and retreating. After the presentation of the scene, the students agreed that it effectively explored, through the image of the fighting cat and dog, the relations of power that were at play between non-Roma and Roma Poles, and other ethnic minorities in Poland. They argued that while non-Roma might perceive Roma as lazy and dirty, Roma could view non-Roma as dangerous and hateful (Fieldnotes 2002).

All of the students explored racism-as-exoticisation through individually developed scenarios. Maria's scene opened with her sitting on a chair, slouching, utterly bored:

Maria – “I Love You So”

The energy exerted in this sketch is very minimal. She raises her hand up and down, miming channel surfing... continually “flipping” from one program to the next. Suddenly she jumps up and screams, “Look! Look!” She throws herself at the imaginary television, kisses and hugs it madly, and then carries it away upstage. (see appendix F)

In this short scenario, Maria critiqued the ways in which the Polish media exoticised and objectified Roma. Her scene also commented on the hypocrisy of people who shunned, and discriminated against, Roma in every day life, but watched and admired Roma culture on TV. The students pointed out that in Poland, people saw Roma culture as a folkloristic “curiosity,” a must-see for those who considered themselves to be educated. Maria contrasted her passive, relaxed, and indifferent movements and gestures with ecstatic jumps, screams, hugs and kisses to highlight, in parodic terms, the absurdity of her character's enchantment with “the exotic.”

The students also critiqued the exoticisation of “the other” by contrasting their exoticised portrayals of “the other” with more “sober” representations of reality. In the following scene, Olga contrasted the sadness of her life with the fleeting joy of dancing a traditional Roma step:

Olga – “I’ll Dance for You Through Tears”

Olga stands facing the upstage wall. As she turns around to look at us, her face conveys sadness... she begins walking the steps of a traditional Roma dance, singing a popular Roma song, “Ore... ore...” Her face and movements now intimate joy. After she finishes her dance and song, she returns to her original “sad” position. (Transcript, Rehearsal, Dance as I Play You, 11/12/02)

Agnieszka, in “Joy is Shit,” juxtaposed her delusional song and dance with angry outbursts over the circumstances that had coerced her into this “position of pretence.” She contrasted her frenetic, delusional, disjointed dance and ecstatic shouts of “joy” with

a precise, forceful slamming of her hands against the floor as she screamed “shit” and “reality,” which exposed the illusory nature of exotic images (Ibid.).

In the scene “Violin,” Irena’s rapturous violin playing, dancing, and humming of the song “Love Will Forgive You Everything,” was steadily overcome by sharp and chaotic movements. The irony of the scene was pointed. Irena asserted, in metaphoric terms, that a Roma’s joy was as fleeting as a song or a dance, because racism would eventually swallow it up. But there was also the irony of the song, “Love Will Forgive You Everything,” which spoke of the immense power of love to forgive and forget anything. In the context of this scene, the song rang hollow: while so many non-Roma loved Roma music and dance, they could not “forget” the prejudices they harboured against Roma (Ibid.).

Tadzio’s scene, “What Beautiful Music That Is,” and Tomek’s scene, “Violin,” portrayed a more insidious side of Roma life, where the joy of singing and dancing sprang from a bottle of vodka, or a syringe. Tadzio’s resigned, slow, strained, and rigid movements of opening and drinking a bottle of vodka contrasted with his intoxicated, uncontrolled, and more relaxed stumbling as he slurred words from a Roma song, “Ore, Ore.” Tomek, on the other hand, juxtaposed the frantic, chaotic, and paranoid movements and gestures of injecting a needle into his arm with the calmer, more fluid gestures of playing a violin. Tadzio’s utterance, “one has to live somehow,” which also rang true in Tomek’s scene, was a bitter retort to those who might blame the plight of Roma on their alleged “inadequacies,” be it substance abuse, inherent laziness, or lack of ambition (Ibid.).

Derek’s scene “Sketch about Me and You,” questioned people’s conceptions of “the other” as spiritual and pristine, and their failure to see non-white people as human beings (Ibid.) He contrasted his initial static yoga posture, soft droning, and legato swaying with more frenetic hand movements and loud humming. Derek’s burp at the end of the scene constituted a critique and subversion, in the Bakhtinian sense, of the hegemonic social order, which perpetuates the exoticisation of non-white people (Bakhtin 1968).

The students’ strategy of contrasting exotic images of “the other” with more “sober” representations of reality was also meant to challenge the views of those audience

members who might look to blame Roma for the stereotypes and practices that exoticised their culture. According to the students, many audience members might do so, because they could argue that “it was the Roma themselves who did the dancing and singing” and “no one forced them to do it” (Fieldnotes 2002). The students argued that not many would see the Roma’s participation in Polish exotic representations of themselves as a strategy of counteracting negative stereotypes with more “positive images of their culture;” or as a means of survival in a world where the only “real job” a Roma might get was playing traditional Roma music, dressed in traditional clothing (Ibid.).

Grazyna and Agnieszka explored racism as acts of apathy towards “the other” in their sketch – aptly named – “Indifference,” in which Agnieszka was desperately trying to get Grazyna’s attention, and Grazyna was ignoring Agnieszka as though she was invisible. They enacted racism-as-indifference through looks of annoyance, retreating, humming indifferently, screaming or jumping in desperation, shifting impatiently, and wailing out of frustration (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Dance as I Play You*, 11/10, 13/02).

Olga, Gosia, and Agnieszka, through brutal pushing, shouting, crawling over one another, standing indifferently, recoiling to the ground, looked at racism as the rejection of “the other.” Their scene exposed the arbitrary ways in which people choose whom to accept and whom to reject within a group:

Olga, Gosia, Agnieszka – “Rejection”

Olga, Gosia, and Agnieszka are kneeling in a circle facing one another... hands joined at chest level. They begin gently swaying, repeating, “shaga, shaga, shaga,” then stop. A five second tableau. Agnieszka and Gosia brutally push Olga out of the circle, who then collapses to the ground. Agnieszka and Gosia are now kneeling, facing one another, hands joined at chest level. They repeat, “ma, ma, ma,” swaying. Now Agnieszka modulates her voice, changes her sound to an excruciating “aaaaaah!” disconnects her hands from Gosia. Leaning her body into Gosia, she shouts at her, sending her to the ground. Gosia covers her ears and withdraws. Olga slowly rises up, comes over to Agnieszka. They are now both on their hands and knees, looking at each other... edging towards one another. Suddenly, Gosia gets up and walks energetically through Olga and Agnieszka, separating them. Gosia stands motionless, and watches as Olga and Agnieszka recoil to the ground. Olga and Agnieszka again crawl up to each other, look, and hug. Then Olga throws her head back across Agnieszka’s shoulder and collapses to the ground. Olga crawls over to Gosia, who is standing indifferently, observing the whole situation. Olga slides up Gosia’s body, looks at her face, and collapses. Then Gosia comes up to Agnieszka, and looks her directly in the eyes. Agnieszka shouts “aaaaaaaah!”

at Gosia, who then drops to the ground. Agnieszka remains on her knees, alone. She looks at the audience triumphantly. (see appendix F)

Later in the rehearsal process, the students developed sketches that were no longer based on our pre-rehearsal discussions. They worked mainly through spontaneous improvisations, with minimal, or no, preparation time. The themes that emerged included: racism as a practice of “moulding” people according to the beliefs and actions of those in power, and racism as a struggle for power:

Tadzio, Grazyna, Agnieszka, and Tomek – “You’ll be Like Us”

Tadzio is kneeling on the floor, his head resting on his knees... his hands covering his face. He starts to drone repetitively. Tomek enters from backstage and stands behind Tadzio. Tomek stands like a soldier, hands straight at his sides, face chiselled out of stone. Grazyna and Agnieszka enter, marching like soldiers. They stand on both sides of Tomek, facing the audience. Simultaneously, they swing in to face Tomek. Grazyna starts lifting Tomek’s right leg up while Agnieszka is lifting raising his left hand. Tomek is standing motionless, staring into space. Grazyna and Agnieszka are obsessively adjusting his hands and feet into various positions. Tomek stands with both hands raised up. Now Grazyna and Agnieszka bend Tomek over to one side. Tadzio continues droning. Grazyna and Agnieszka attempt to sculpt Tomek’s face. Suddenly he screams out “no!” and jumps away from them. He uses his hands to force both Grazyna and Agnieszka down to the ground. He returns to his original position behind Tadzio, and starts to drone with Tadzio. Grazyna and Agnieszka remain on the floor. (Transcript, Rehearsal, Dance as I Play You, 11/13/02)

Although the actors developed some of the elements of this scene through group discussions, most parts emerged through improvisations, as the actors intuitively responded to each other’s movements and gestures. The scene could be “read” in a variety of ways. For example, Gramsci’s and Foucault’s notions of power – as set out in Chapter 4 – could offer insights into how the scene might be interpreted. In a Gramscian reading, the actors’ movements and gestures – Tadzio’s persistent droning, Grazyna and Agnieszka’s militaristic marching, and the sculpting of Tomek’s body – can be seen as the hegemonic ideas and practices that those in power impose upon others through coercion, consent, and force (Crehan 2002, 101-4, 174; Gramsci 1971, 159-60). In terms of

Foucault's (1977) analysis of power, racism here can be seen as a power that produces discourses of bodily control and discipline – as manifest in Agnieszka and Grazyna's moulding of Tomek's body – that “act upon the body . . . its elements, its gestures, its behaviour” through a variety of disciplining techniques (136).

In “My ‘Aaaah’ is Better than Yours” (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Dance as I Play You*, 11/13/02), Derek and Agnieszka engaged in a struggle to exert and establish their utterances of “aaahs” over each other. The actors enacted the struggle by repeating “aaah” relentlessly, and by pulling, pushing, shoving, lifting, and collapsing. Neither of them “won” the fight for dominance. At times, Derek towered over Agnieszka, while at other times, the scales of dominance were tipped to the other side. This relates to Foucault's (1979) notion of power as a “complex strategical situation... a multiplicity of force relations” that implicates everyone (92-7). Although nobody won the struggle over hegemony in this scene, there were moments when either Agnieszka or Derek clearly dominated. For instance, Agnieszka's – albeit momentary – victory over Derek was apparent when she walked him on his arms like a wheelbarrow, drowning out his “aaah” with hers. This moment in the scene could be “read” through the lens of feminist critiques of Foucault – as set out in Chapter 4 – which maintain that in certain relations of oppression, power is localised in a specific subject or subject group.

Factors that Shaped the Performance

After we explored racism and intolerance through scene work, we selected the scenarios to be included in the final performance, and planned the performance's design. We made our decisions and choices taking into account not only aesthetics, but also the immediate contexts of the performance, and its practical/technical viability. We also arrived at certain decisions by chance.

The actors chose some scenes because they saw them as particularly relevant to the context of Elblag. For example, they decided to include Grazyna, Irena, Agnieszka, Tomek, and Tadzio's scene, “Lesbian Love,” because they thought it was important to

initiate a dialogue about homophobia in Elblag, where anti-gay sentiments were commonplace (Fieldnotes 2002).

For similar reasons – following Agnieszka’s suggestion – we decided to open the performance with all of the actors kneeling upstage in a horizontal row, rhythmically slapping the floor with their hands to highlight the homogeneity of Elblag’s social reality. We also developed a scene in which the actors standing in a circle, stomped their feet, hummed synchro-rhythmically, and violently dragged back into the circle those who managed to break free. This opening sequence exposed and critiqued society’s insistence on conformity (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Dance as I Play You*, 11/13/02).

To further highlight the claustrophobia of Elblag, where people are wedged into conformity, the students chose ambient reds, ambers, and cool blue undertones for the lighting plot. Such colours reflected the false comfort through which dominant ideologies and practices enchanted people into obedience. Olga initially wanted to use mainly blue lights to underscore the “coldness” of racism; however, the other actors convinced her that this would be too predictable and stereotypical (Ibid., 11/21/02).

In consideration of the performance’s potential audiences, the actors chose not to incorporate a strategy of reflexivity – Brechtian and Kantorian illusion breaking techniques that would expose the performance as a constructed event – into the performance’s representation. They worried that in the artistically conservative context of Elblag, such an unorthodox theatrical device might not have mass appeal, which could, in turn, compromise them professionally in the community (Fieldnotes, 2002).

For practical and technical reasons – a limited budget and production support, and inadequate time – we decided to keep the stage, lighting, and sound design simple (Ibid.). Our lighting plot was basic, and we worked on an empty stage, without music or sound effects. The costume design emerged by chance. The students found a cache of identical red vests in the studio’s office (Ibid.). When they tried the vests on, the visual effect was striking, and effectively emphasised the overarching theme of the performance – racism as the guardian of sameness.

Reflections

The rehearsals, like the pre-rehearsal sessions, were an important component of the research process for a variety of reasons. Apart from providing further insights into the ways in which the students conceptualised racism and intolerance, the rehearsal process also illuminated ways in which physical means of expression could contribute to the construction of ethnographic knowledge. The rehearsals also uncovered the relations of power that defined our mutual interactions, and Shawn's and my roles in the studio.

By improvising the scenarios, we discovered that exploring racism and intolerance in physical terms forced the students, Shawn, and me to imagine, in tangible ways, racism as a multitude of concrete violent and discriminatory practices and actions. The actors, in particular, were not only compelled to enact – through specific movements and gestures – what such practices and actions might be; to some extent, they also experienced how such practices and actions might feel to both the victims and the perpetrators. Thus, exploring racism and intolerance by means of the body constituted what I understand as “sensuous scholarship:” a way of doing research that involves the research participants and the ethnographer concretely, tangibly, and empathetically in the construction of ethnographic knowledge. Such “sensuous scholarship,” however, was not fully employed until the later stages of the rehearsal process, when the actors improvised the sketches spontaneously. It was then that they began using their bodies, senses, and emotions to “conceive” of forms of racism to explore.

In the early scenarios, although the students also explored racism by physical means of expression, they still privileged speech over the body. They based the scenarios on the pre-rehearsal conversations, and also prepared them through in-group discussions. Consequently, they did not explore the full potential of gestures, movements, and emotions.

In retrospect, it seems that the scenarios developed spontaneously through improvisation facilitated more complex and open-ended explorations of racism and intolerance, which challenged the active oppressor/passive oppressed dichotomy. This, in turn, invites more complex interpretations that stress the complexity and unpredictability of counter-hegemonic acts, as well as the struggles for hegemony. In the Bakhtinian

(1984) sense, the spontaneously improvised scenes facilitated a more dialogic negotiation of “truth,” which I believe, had the potential to confront audiences with more complex representations of reality; or in Wilton Martinez’s (1990, 1992) words, they offered more “open” texts that allowed for multiple interpretations, which in turn could have had a greater potential in engaging audiences in a critique of cultural hegemony. Perhaps, this was the case because “sensuous scholarship,” in its reliance on more spontaneous, sensuous, physical, and empathic means of communication, allowed us, to some extent, to circumvent our binary thinking.⁵⁵ Such an explanation, however, while provocative, still has to grapple with the problematic Cartesian binary it sets up, where mind is the locus of rational, deliberate thought, and the body, the locus of irrationality, spontaneity, and sensuousness.

The rehearsal process also provided important insights into the power relations that defined our mutual interactions, and Shawn’s and my roles in the project. Like the pre-rehearsal sessions, the rehearsals uncovered, in Fabian’s (1990) terms, the relations of power that defined them as events, because we, as participants, related to one another and society in terms of power.

Tensions and antagonisms between the ensemble and Tadzio, and between the ensemble and Tomek, dogged our rehearsals. Friction between the ensemble and Tadzio arose at the outset of the project, and escalated with time. Initially, the antagonisms mainly surfaced outside of the studio, either during breaks, or after rehearsals. The students openly avoided Tadzio’s company, ridiculed him behind his back, and were hypercritical of his opinions. When I reproached the students for their mistreatment of Tadzio, they blamed these tensions on Tadzio’s age, and on his “inability to fit into the group”⁵⁶ (Fieldnotes 2002). Eventually, the relationship between Tadzio and the rest of the group deteriorated to the point that antagonisms spilled into rehearsals. The students refused to work with Tadzio, ignored and criticised his ideas, cast him in theatrically insignificant roles when developing scenarios, and mocked his performance. For example, when Shawn asked Tadzio and Irena to work together on a scene, Irena adamantly refused. Tadzio confided this to Shawn with the help of Olga’s translation:

Tadzio: I have asked her [Irena] to come up with something... I asked her a few times, but she's running away from me... so I'm walking around behind her. What am I supposed to do, force her?

Shawn: Should I talk to her?

Tadzio: No, I don't think that she wants to work with me.

Shawn: I think I'll still talk to Irena... thanks Olga. (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Dance as I Play You*, 11/13/02)

While working out their scenarios in small groups, the students ignored Tadzio's input. Tomek, Grazyna, and Agnieszka, for instance, while developing their scene "You'll be like Us" – which spoke of people's rejection of "the other" – excluded Tadzio from their group's work (Ibid.). When they were improvising the scene, Tadzio stood watching from a distance. No one invited him to participate. When he tried to ask a question, Agnieszka brushed him off with a curt hand gesture. When he demonstrated a movement – swinging his body back and forth – for the scene, the actors turned away from him (Ibid.). Also, it is evident from this particular scenario (see p.84) that the actors' assigned Tadzio with insignificant roles. Although Tadzio's role was important thematically – as a symbol of hegemony – it was artistically unchallenging. When I asked Grazyna, Agnieszka, and Tomek whether Tadzio himself chose this part, they admitted that the part was originally developed by Tomek, but they asked Tadzio to perform it. Since I insisted on having Tadzio in the project, they argued, the only capacity in which he was competent to participate was to perform marginal parts – otherwise, he would "ruin the performance" (Fieldnotes 2002, Grazyna).

The students also openly criticised Tadzio's ideas. For instance, while working out their scenario "Shut Up!" – a scene about society's rejection of difference – Gosia and Maria denounced Tadzio's suggestion to portray intolerance against music subculture as senseless (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Dance as I Play You*, 11/12/02). Instead, they developed a scenario in which the characters played by Gosia and Maria stonewalled Tadzio's character:

Maria, Gosia, and Tazio – “Shut Up!”

Maria and Gosia are standing on the stage, talking in gibberish to each other. Tazio walks over to them, also speaking gibberish. Maria violently slaps her hands in Tazio's face. He then addresses Gosia in gibberish, and she claps her hands in his face. Tazio once again attempts to say something, but they simultaneously mock-slap his face. Tazio walks away. (Ibid.)

At other times, the students instructed Tazio on how he should perform. For example, when Shawn was helping Tomek, Agnieszka, Grazyna and Tazio polish up their scene, “You’ll be Like Us,” Grazyna authoritatively instructed Tazio on how he ought to approach Agnieszka (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Dance as I Play You*, 11/13/02):

Grazyna: [to Tazio] But from a lower position... lower position!

Tazio: [to Grazyna] Should I come up from behind her, or in front of her?

Grazyna points to where Tazio should stand. Shawn reprimands Grazyna with a “shhh!”

Grazyna: [to Tazio] You’ve gotta fix it... you can’t do it like that!

Tazio: Yeah, I’ve gotta fix it.

Grazyna: Go get into your position!

Tazio gets into his position, and remains there while the other actors are working out the details of their movements. (Ibid., 11/15/02)

Generally, during the rehearsal process, Tazio avoided discussing with me the antagonisms between him and the actors. Only once, when I asked him to stay after a rehearsal, did he admit that he was worried the group was rejecting him, and would eventually expel him from the project (Ibid., 11/13/02). But he stressed he did not want me to confront the students about this, as it might jeopardise the project (Fieldnotes 2002). The relationship between the students and Tazio did not improve until a few days before opening night, when everyone’s interest in “the good of the performance”

overshadowed the politics in the studio. However, after *Dance As I Play You* had closed, the old antagonisms between Tadzio and the rest of the group returned with a vengeance.

While Tadzio was the most ostracised by the ensemble, Tomek was also a victim of group politics. Tensions between the group and Tomek began mounting due to his chronic tardiness and numerous absences from rehearsals. Although both Shawn and I warned Tomek he would have to withdraw from the project if he continued missing rehearsals, he was still occasionally absent. Eventually the students called a group meeting and demanded – despite Tomek’s pleas for one more chance – his expulsion from the project (Ibid.). After an emotionally-laden discussion, Tomek left the theatre in tears; his mother later spoke with Shawn in the office, asking that the group reconsider the decision. She explained that Tomek had been dealing with family problems, and while he missed some rehearsals, the project was very important to him. When Shawn called another group meeting to review Tomek’s predicament, the students – except one – adamantly refused to allow Tomek back into the group.

The power struggles between the ensemble, Tadzio, and Tomek need to be understood within the contexts of the goals the students set out for the project. For the students, the success of the performance – which entailed an enthusiastic reception of the performance by the audience, the centre’s directors, the media, and theatre critics – took precedence over its political critique of racism and intolerance, or its educational merit. Conflicts between the students, Tadzio, and Tomek arose, in part, from the students’ concern that Tadzio’s “incompetence” as a performer, and Tomek’s absences and tardiness, would jeopardise the success of the performance.

According to Pamela Trotman Reid and Eduardo Vianna (2001), and Beth Humphries and Carole Truman (1994), in collaborative research methodologies, which strive to facilitate non-hierarchical relationships between participants, and between participants and the researcher, interactions are still marked by difference in terms of culture, gender, class, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, position within the global economy, and various personal goals. Therefore, there are always certain agendas that accompany such hierarchies, which can be difficult to reconcile, and thus can stymie collaboration and lead to the exclusion of certain individuals from the research process. And in a theatre process – even the most collaborative – this is further exacerbated by the

tensions that naturally erupt between the director and the actors, and/or among the actors themselves. Such tensions are inherently linked to the risks that both actors and director assume while developing a theatre piece. The risks stem from being perpetually evaluated and critiqued in the studio by the project's participants, and on stage by audience members, theatre critics, and the theatre community-at-large; the professional/personal stakes participants invest in the process; the problematic director-performer relationship, which, even in the most collective endeavour, unwittingly rests on a certain "authority" of the former; the physical and emotional demands of acting; and undeniably, stage fright – an intimate of many performers. In our project, such risks were double, given that the amateur cast members were wholeheartedly seeking to establish themselves as successful performers in the eyes of Elblag's theatre community.

In such contexts of competing agendas and inherent risks, usually those who – like Tadzio and Tomek – are unable to meet the expectations of the majority, or those who hold the balance of power in the project, can fall through the cracks. They might be considered a threat to the project, and stigmatised as "the other" in order to be "controlled" by, or expelled from, the group.

This is what happened to Tadzio and Tomek. The students "otherised" Tadzio from a variety of standpoints. They argued that he was too old, and thereby "unfit," to participate in the ensemble. Some of the students even claimed that Tadzio had autism, which they blamed for his alleged "incompetence" as an actor. Finally, they ridiculed Tadzio's physicality, and although they never asserted it in front of me, I suspected they believed he was gay, primarily because his physical demeanour did not "obey" the visual-bodily codes of heterosexual masculinity. Tomek, on the other hand, was "otherised" by the students as "unreliable," "lazy," "non-committal," and "unambitious."

The power struggles that took place in rehearsals also shaped, in significant ways, how the students constructed their relationships and interactions with Shawn and me, how Shawn and I articulated our relationships and interactions with the students, and what roles we assumed in this stage of the project. During the pre-rehearsal sessions, the students mainly perceived Shawn and me as instructors, and thus, to a certain extent, as figures of authority; whereas in rehearsals, our mutual relations were less predictable or fixed. The students continuously reconstructed and redefined their relationships with

Shawn and me in ways that served their own ends in their struggles over the goals they had set out for the project. When they believed Shawn's and my suggestions supported their interests, they endowed us with authority and respect, and expected us to assume directorial/dramaturgical roles; however, when, in their view, our suggestions jeopardised their interests, our authority was questioned.

For example, when I confronted Grazyna and Tomek about their disregard for Tadzio's input, and emphasised that everyone should have the right to contribute their ideas, Grazyna abruptly remarked, "providing that those opinions make sense" (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Dance as I Play You*, 11/12/02). After that rehearsal, some of the actors approached me to reaffirm that the project was collaborative, and that I "just [could not] come and tell them how they should be acting with Tadzio" because I was not the one working directly with him, and thus, "[did] not understand the challenges [they] were facing" (Fieldnotes 2002). Similarly, when I asked the students to give Tomek one more chance with the project, they countered that I was not "the sole director of the project," and "because we [were] all working collaboratively, the decisions about who should be given what chances should also be made collaboratively" (Ibid.).

However, when Tadzio voiced his concern that the vests they had found in the office might be too tight for the performance, Olga, Grazyna, and Maria reminded him that Shawn and I wanted to use the vests as costumes, and that he should respect "what the directors of the play want" (Ibid.). Likewise, the students requested Shawn and I to simply direct – by demonstrating – the transitions between the scenarios, because, they argued, "no more time should be spent on working things out together . . . [as] . . . we should get to polishing up the details as soon as possible to have a show ready on time" (Ibid.).

Shawn and I also redefined and reconstructed our roles, relationships, and interactions with the students according to the current power dynamics in rehearsals. We did this in ways that both conciliated the students' goals for the project, and mediated the power struggles in the studio. This, in turn, served our own agenda of preventing power struggles in rehearsals from jeopardising the project. We wanted the project to be performed in Elblag, because we saw it as important to the actors and us, and the

performance's future spectators, in terms of initiating a dialogue about racism and intolerance.

Thus, to facilitate the collaborative and participatory objectives of the project – important to both the students and us – we often acted as project facilitators to allow for a more dialogic and equitable construction of knowledge. We encouraged the students to develop – through improvisations – the scenarios of the performance on their own, and did not intervene with the choices the students made regarding the themes, modes of representation, and choreography, as well as their decisions about which scenarios to include in the final performance.

However, in order to both conciliate the students' goal of having a successful performance, in terms of its reception in the community, and mediate the power struggles that took place in rehearsals, Shawn and I at times also assumed directorial/dramaturgical roles in the more traditional sense. As directors/dramaturgs, we assisted the actors in ensuring that the various elements of the performance (i.e., ideas, images, symbols, movements, gestures, and text) were meaningful and effective from an audience's perspective:

Shawn: [to Tomek] Stop. When you're doing your drugs, I want you to bring more style into it. A little more abstract... not so abstract that we don't understand. Bring more abstraction into it... so instead of doing this [mimes smoking marijuana], you could do more like this [presses face into hand, snorts]... not like that, but more abstract... don't change what you're already doing... just make it a little more abstract. You [looking at Tomek, who smiles knowingly], I don't want to see the tube

Tomek: Without the tube.

Shawn: Dobrze [that's good]. Bez [without] tube! (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Dance as I Play You*, 11/21/02)

In the above excerpt, Shawn was helping Tomek realise the physical and metaphoric style of theatrical representation the students wanted to employ in the performance.

Similarly, I worked with the actors to clarify their stage positions, blocking, characterisations, movements, and gestures. The fact that I was not always attending rehearsals gave me the particular advantage of having a “perspective from a distance,” a

“fresh look” that allowed for insights not readily available to Shawn and the students, who were more intimately involved in the process:

The actors are entering from the backstage and lining themselves up on their knees against the upstage wall. . . . In line, they begin clapping a rhythm against the floor.

Magda: The person who comes in last should enter at the middle.

Tomek: So we’ll do it that way... one person comes in and turns left... another person comes in and turns right.

Magda: That’s right... and the people who are close to the walls should be even closer, and watch the distances between you... there have to be even distances. Also watch your faces, because now you’re walking in as yourselves, not as your characters. [Derek shakes his head at Magda confused] When you’re walking in, you have to think that you know something... that you have some kind of a secret that you’re going to reveal to the audience. Also watch your body... you can’t come in sloppy [walks sloppily... hunched over, hands limp]. This is theatre... we don’t walk on the stage like we do in real life... first comes Gosia, and then Grazyna, so make sure that there is room for Grazyna here. . . . (Ibid.)

Assuming the roles of director was also a means for Shawn and me to negotiate the ongoing power brokering between the students in rehearsals. Appealing to the authority with which the students at times endowed us, on several occasions we approached the actors about their mistreatment of Tadzio, and their lack of regard for Tomek’s situation (Fieldnotes 2002; Transcript, Rehearsal, *Dance as I Play You*, 11/12, 13/02). While Shawn and I attempted, in various ways, to prevent Tadzio from being ostracised, and Tomek from being expelled from the project, we “played” our roles as directors in ways that also served our agenda of completing the project. In this sense, Shawn and I were, at times, the actors’ accomplices in their exclusionary practices, as we were also critical of Tomek’s absences and tardiness, and did not assert firmly enough our defence of Tadzio. Perhaps we could have suspended the rehearsal process to help mitigate the exclusion of both Tadzio and Tomek. Yet, a response like this risked shutting down the project permanently, and would have had a negative impact on our relationships with the rest of the cast, and with the Centre’s directors and staff. These “players” were critical in helping us realise our future projects, especially the Roma

project. Shawn and I also did not want to lose the incomes we received working at the Centre.

Finally, while Shawn and I were working together as facilitators of the project, and we both, at times, donned our dramaturgical/directorial hats, the ways in which we articulated our roles, interactions, and relationships with the actors in rehearsals; and how the actors constructed their roles, interactions, and relationships with us, were not isomorphic. Also, the interactions between Shawn and me were not always power-free. For both the actors and Shawn, I bore the utmost responsibility for the project, both because I was its principal investigator, and because it was my Ph.D. research. This was evident on several occasions in the rehearsal room: when the students could not come to an agreement, they looked to me to intervene. This happened, for example, when the students were choosing the title of the performance. After a lengthy debate, Olga interjected, “Let’s ask Magda.... that’ll be the easiest!” (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Dance as I Play You*, 11/17/02)

The power dynamics between Shawn and me, and the actors and me, were further evident when I discussed directorial notes with Shawn and the actors after I had watched a run-through of the performance: Shawn and the students accepted my notes without debate (Ibid., 11/22/04). However, the actors were more likely to contest Shawn’s directorial suggestions. For example, they ignored his idea to change their “shhhhh” to a different sound when they were forming a “circle of sameness” in the opening scene of the performance (Ibid., 11/21/02).

The roles Shawn and I assumed during the rehearsal process were sometimes in agreement with, and sometimes contrary to, the expectations of the students. While the students wanted us to assume directorial/dramaturgical responsibilities to ensure the performance’s success, they were less enthusiastic if we attempted, as directors, to reconcile competing interests in rehearsals, especially if their goals were at risk. At such moments, the students expected us to be, primarily, the project’s facilitators, and wanted to make decisions “collaboratively.”

In Response – *Dance as I Play You*

Various Characters Performed by:

Agnieszka, Grazyna, Olga, Gosia, Derek, Tazio, Maria, Irena

Dance as I Play You consists of six sketches based on two central themes, racism and intolerance. The play opens with the actors, dressed in black trousers and shirts with red vests, filing onto the stage and forming a horizontal phalanx. They proceed to pound, with their hands against the floor, a rhythm that reappears throughout the performance. Then they form a circle, clicking the same rhythm with their mouths. A few individuals fight to break free from the circle, but fail. Everyone is returned to the group. This tension between the individual and the group, between difference and sameness, continues to be played-out throughout the six sketches. Following the final sketch, the actors return to their tableaux, clicking and clapping. The lights fade. The choreography, the costumes, and the ever-present rhythm, all speak of conformity and sameness. (see appendices H and I)

Dance as I Play You was publicly presented on December 14, 2002 (see appendix A) at the Cultural Centre for International Cooperation in the Arts in Elblag. The Cultural Centre was mainly responsible for audience recruitment, and the performance was advertised in Elblag's local newspapers, local and regional news, the Centre's website; and on posters distributed to Elblag's secondary schools, museums, and libraries. The performance was advertised as an ethnographic theatre event, created by Shawn, me, and students from our theatre program. Press releases, media spots, and the play's program distributed at the performance specified that *Dance as I Play You* explored issues of intolerance in Poland, and that its overarching theme was that intolerance – the “guardian angel” of sameness – eradicated difference in order to maintain the status quo.⁵⁷ Before the performance commenced, an employee from the Cultural Centre read out the “Information Letter” (see appendix I) requesting the consent of audience members to participate in the research project, and have their responses recorded in fieldnotes.

Shawn and I did not conduct any systematic audience research, therefore no recorded audience demographics are available; however, from our observations, as well as from the ticket reservation list, we can estimate that the audience members (approximately 100) were mainly the participants' parents, friends and acquaintances, several employees from the Cultural Centre, two of my Roma research participants, and various people from the general public, largely consisting of local lyceum students and teachers.

Likewise, Shawn and I did not conduct any systematic audience response research, focussed ethnographic observation of audience responses during and/or following the presentation of the performance, or formal post-performance interviews with attendees. However, we managed to record in our fieldnotes some audience and participant responses – both articulated verbally and demonstrated in practical terms – immediately after, and in the weeks following, the public performance of *Dance as I Play You*. The recorded audience responses, however, were anecdotal and cannot be read as generalisable beyond the situation.

A Wider View

Shawn solicited audience and actor responses at the public presentation of *Dance as I Play You*, as I was too ill with a flu to attend. He noted that the audience members received the performance enthusiastically, as they gave the actors a standing ovation. Following the performance, some audience members came up to Shawn to congratulate us on a very engaging theatre piece, and offered some comments. The audience members largely addressed the theatrical aspects of the performance. A small number of people commented on the issues the performance raised. The actors spoke about the theatrical aspects, and the content, as well as about their own involvement in the project.

Addressing the theatrical aspects of the performance, people appreciated that the project was developed collaboratively, because they believed that it offered the Lyceum students an invaluable educational opportunity. Several audience members also commended the commitment of the young actors, the unique choreography, and the visually striking costume design.

Those who commented on the content of the performance remarked about the ways in which the play represented issues of intolerance in Poland. For one young man, the performance accurately sketched out the issues of intolerance in the country. In his view, Polish society was very hostile to difference, and anyone who refused to join the status quo was ostracised. While in many Western countries, he claimed, nobody was judged on the basis of appearance, in Poland, everyone was expected to look the same, act the same, and hold the same beliefs (Fieldnotes 2002).

A woman in her fifties pointed out that while the performance dealt with important issues, such as intolerance, we could have focussed more on the handicapped, as they were the “most discriminated and marginalised in Poland” (Ibid.). According to her, handicapped people in other countries were treated with compassion and dignity, and provided with a wide range of support, whereas in Poland, they were forced to live on the margins of society, ostracised by everyone around them, including peers, teachers, and even doctors. While there was enough money in Elblag to open a bank at every street corner, the woman argued, there was no money to make public spaces more accessible to wheelchairs (Ibid.).

A group of young women agreed with the main message of *Dance as I Play You*, that intolerance in Poland worked like a song to which everyone was forced to dance. If someone tried to break free, they were immediately forced back into the circle of sameness, and ridiculed for trying to be different: “If you have dreadlocks or pierced eyebrows in Poland, people will look at you with burning eyes... so many people have such narrow minds... to them, being different is being deviant,” asserted one of the women (Ibid.). According to the women, religious minorities had suffered the most discrimination in Poland. Even the Catholic Church, considered by many to be the voice of wisdom and tolerance, had not always respected people of other religions, such as the Jews. The women gave as an example the Polish Catholic priest Henryk Jankowski who publicly argued that there was no place for a Jewish minority in the Polish government, and condemned the Polish Prime Minister’s official apology for the post-war massacre of Jews in Kielce on its 50th anniversary (Ibid.).

The actors’ responses immediately after the performance were very enthusiastic. They thanked Shawn for giving them the opportunity to work on *Dance as I Play You*. They maintained that they had learnt much about intolerance and racism in Poland, and collaborative ensemble work. The students were also very pleased with the positive responses they had received from the audience members.

In the weeks following the public presentation of *Dance as I Play You*, I solicited responses from various people who had seen the play, including members of the general public, employees of the Cultural Centre, and the Roma research participants. While most audience members from the general public spoke mainly about the theatrical aspects of the performance, some did remark on the performance’s content. Employees from the Cultural Centre commented on both the performance as a theatre event, and the issues it raised. Two Roma participants – Ana and her son Kacper – primarily spoke about the performance’s content.

The comments of audience members who spoke about the performance as a theatre event were generally very positive. People were particularly impressed by the performance’s stylised form of theatrical representation and “tight choreography” (Fieldnotes 2002). The actors also received a lot of positive feedback from various audience members throughout the weeks following the performance. Several people

commented that the performance was one of the few interesting and inspiring events presented at the Cultural Centre in recent years, because it involved young Lyceum students in the development of a theatre piece in very innovative ways. People also expressed their discontent with the Cultural Centre's patronage of predominantly renowned, mainstream theatre artists from Warsaw, Krakow, and Gdansk.

Audience members who commented on the content of the performance primarily associated intolerance with the disabled, mentally ill, addicts, sexual minorities, Jewish people, and other markers of difference. One woman stressed that the lives of people with chronic illness, particularly mental illness, physical disabilities, or addictions, were very difficult, because they did not have access to adequate social funding, struggled to find work, and were treated like "half-humans." Her sister, she argued, who had a mild case of Down syndrome, was unable to find employment, was often the victim of ridicule, and at times, even violence. According to her, the situation of people with disabilities was radically different in the West. She had lived in Germany for some time, and the German people treated the disabled with more respect and care (Fieldnotes 2003).

I also spoke to a group of young Lyceum students. They mostly talked about Agnieszka and Irena's sketch, in which lesbian love was mocked and rejected as deviant and disgusting. One girl argued that this sketch effectively portrayed the situation of gay minorities in Poland, because in small cities like Elblag, being gay generated ridicule, at best, and violence at worst. She admitted, however, that even in larger centres there had been violent attacks against gays, because the Catholic Church still "ha[d] its grip on many" (Fieldnotes 2002). Another girl argued that there was so much prejudice against gay people in Poland because homosexuality was considered deviant, against God's will, or an illness to be cured. Two boys pointed out they knew some young gay men who had chosen to lead heterosexual lives because they feared the potential consequences of revealing their homosexuality. According to another girl, gay men experienced even more prejudice than lesbians, because while some people perceived lesbianism as erotic and beautiful, not many thought of male homosexuality in similar terms (Ibid.).

When I asked these students whether there was any racism in Poland, they emphatically declared "yes," and gave as an example the current stereotypes of Jewish people prevalent in Poland. In their view, Poles were no more tolerant of Jews than they

had been in the past; the only difference now was that people were more cautious about what they said in public, since there had been much criticism of Polish racism levelled by the international community. One boy also pointed out that everyone was now trying to make a good impression for the European Union, so that Poland could soon join its ranks (Ibid.)

A woman in her thirties really appreciated *Dance as I Play You*, and its use of physical images to speak of intolerance. She was particularly fond of the scene in which all the actors formed a circle, hands linked, clicking in synchrony. According to her, life in Elblag “[felt] like that” because everyone was so afraid of “doing things differently;” even when people held novel ideas about how to live their lives, they did not pursue them in fear of ridicule. The woman drew from her own life as an example. After graduating from the Lyceum, she had wanted to travel and learn about different countries and cultures. Yet her family and friends were so critical of her plans that she eventually abandoned her dreams and went to the University of Warsaw. She graduated with a Master’s degree in engineering, and now had a “respectable job,” but detested every minute of it, and was filled with regret (Ibid.)

To one audience member, the performance both spoke about Poland’s intolerance and racism of ethnic minorities, and the current situation of Poland under the influence of U.S. imperialist politics. In his view, there was definitely intolerance of ethnic minorities, especially of Jews and “Gypsies,” in Poland. He stressed, however, that Polish racism was not anything exceptional in Europe, because most Western European countries “[had] the persecution of Jews or Gypsies on their conscience,” and even Canadians “could say a word or two about racism in their own back yard” (Ibid.). He also noted that when the characters in *Dance as I Play You* entered the theatre, all wearing red vests, pounding the floor on their knees in unison, it made him think of the people of Poland being “lined up against the wall and forced to swallow American politics, ideals, and values without gagging.” He believed that *Dance as I Play You* was an effective metaphor that addressed the erosion of Polish culture, and the forced Americanisation of Poland, where everything, from politics and economics, to television programs, and the shape of a milk bottle, was being imported from America. According to him, the Polish government and large corporations signed Poland over to Western powers, and once Poland joined the

European Union, “the distinctiveness of Polish culture [would] be no longer;” instead, everyone would look the same, speak the same, and act the same as the characters in the opening scene of *Dance as I Play You* (Ibid.).

A significant number of audience members, however, differentiated between racism and intolerance. They spoke of racism as the overt hatred of people of colour, and intolerance as a lack of acceptance of another person’s culture, values, and beliefs, or various other markers of difference. Some argued that while there was a certain level of intolerance, there was no racism in Poland; others denied the existence of racism and/or intolerance toward ethnic minorities in the country.

For example, the woman who had spoken about the intolerance of disabled people, mental illness, and addictions, believed that Poles’ intolerance of ethnic minorities was not racism, because real racism had happened in Africa and America against the blacks; in Poland, there was a small level of intolerance of people from different cultural backgrounds. In her view, racism entailed hatred and violence against people with darker skin, and such incidents in Poland had not occurred for many years.

Similarly, when I asked the engineering graduate from the University of Warsaw how the play addressed issues of racism, she pointed out that the scene in which the “Gypsy” woman tried to tell someone’s fortune, and was subsequently shoved to the ground, did not speak of racism. According to her, the scene addressed “a different issue,” because “Gypsy” women were overly persistent about fortune telling and assaulted people in the streets. One could not explain people’s frustration over this type of harassment in terms of racism or intolerance, she argued, because “what else [was] one to do...when they [didn’t] want to leave you alone?” (Ibid.) She also maintained that there was no racism in Poland because there were virtually no ethnic minorities in the country, and the small number of ethnic minorities permanently living in Poland was treated very well. She gave as an example a “black doctor” in Elblag who, she argued, was widely respected in the community; and no one was treating him differently because he was black. She also noted that no one discriminated against gay people in Poland either, as “there were no beatings of them or anything;” but she herself would never accept their lifestyle as normal, because “what they [were] doing [was] against the laws of nature” (Ibid.).

A man in his sixties said that he enjoyed *Dance as I Play You* because it raised questions about people's narrow-mindedness and provincial thinking; however, he wondered whether we were accusing people in Poland of racism. When I explained to him that the actors and I were asking – through the performance – questions about intolerance in Poland, he said he hoped I would not “spread any more of those ridiculous ideas that Poles [were] racist in Canada,” because “all of America already [thinks we are] Jew killers!” He argued that American Jews were spreading lies, that Poles were bigots, in the U.S., which was very painful for him, as he remembered countless Poles helping Jews during the Nazi occupation of Poland. While he agreed there was a certain degree of intolerance in the country toward difference, he stressed that it did not concern ethnic minorities – only “people who were different in general” (Fieldnotes 2003).

The actors also received some feedback about the performance's subject matter from audience members in the weeks following the performance. According to the actors, people primarily equated intolerance with the rejection of difference in terms of fashion, ability, and personality, and did not address the intolerance of ethnic minorities.

Two Roma research participants – Ana and Kacper – who attended the play appreciated the performance because it dealt with issues of racism against the Roma, and intolerance toward people of difference. Ana particularly enjoyed the scene in which the Roma fortune-teller was brutally pushed down to the ground. She was pleased that somebody was finally talking about racism against Roma, and hoped there would be more plays like ours to urge people to question their disdain for the Roma people. She further liked how the actors represented racism through movement, and pointed out that “showing things with movement [was] always more powerful than merely talking about them.” Kacper agreed with Ana, and added that the entire world should learn how people treated the Roma in Poland (Fieldnotes 2002).

There were also some positive responses to *Dance as I Play You* from Cultural Centre employees. The director of the Theatre Section told me she was very impressed with the production, as it “demonstrate[d] high artistic vigour, and [presented] thought-provoking ideas.” When I asked her about the content of the performance, she responded that we “did a good job about educating Poles... about tolerance... because [many] Poles could learn a lot from Canadian democracy about respecting human rights” (Ibid.). The

artistic director of the Spoken Arts Section complimented Shawn and me on developing the performance collaboratively with our students. She was very interested in collaborative theatre, which she said was only now growing in popularity in Poland. She thought that more Poles should be looking at issues of intolerance, as the country was lagging behind other developed countries in terms of human rights.

Finally, *Dance as I Play You* generated some responses – from the actors, the actors' parents, the director of the Theatre Section, and Shawn and me – that manifested in material terms. Even after the performance was over, its “spirit,” in very concrete ways, continued to affect the power dynamics within our theatre ensemble for several months to come. Already in the first weeks following the performance, old antagonisms between the students and Tadzio once again rose to the surface.

We were to begin rehearsals for our two new projects, both of which were to compete at the *National Festival of the Spoken Word: Is that Love?* to be held in Elblag at the Cultural Centre, March 21-23, 2003. One group of actors – Tomek, Maria, Gosia, Tadzio, and Irena – were to work with Shawn on developing a performance of their choice, in English; the other group – Derek, Grazyna, Olga, and Agnieszka – would work with me on creating an ethnographic performance to explore issues of gender in Poland. The news that we were to compete at the national festival fell on us unexpectedly. In January, the director of the Theatre Section informed me that the performances would compete at the festival in March 2003. The main director of the Centre had unilaterally made this decision, and the performance was entered into the competition at the end of December. We were to ensure that the performances were of high artistic calibre, because, she informed me, the festival had high standards and was very competitive. The plays could not be exclusively physical pieces, since the festival, as its name suggests, was “about” the art of the spoken word (Fieldnotes 2003). Additionally, the performance was to be no longer than forty-five minutes and, to some extent, needed to deal with issues of love, because the festival was devoted to drama, literature, and poetry inspired by love (Ibid.).

The news created havoc among the actors. They were both excited and anxious about competing in the festival. On the one hand, they were grateful for the opportunity to perform in a national competition; on the other hand, they were worried that, as

inexperienced performers, they might lose, which could compromise their professional reputations in Elblag's theatre community. Not surprising, under such circumstances old antagonisms between Tadzio and the students revived with a vengeance. The students in Shawn's ensemble wanted Tadzio expelled from the group. Even some of the actors in my group lobbied for his expulsion from Shawn's ensemble. The actors wanted Tadzio removed, because, they argued, he did not "fit in" due to his age, his "difficult personality," and his inability to act, which in their view had diminished the quality of *Dance as I Play You*.

When Shawn and I categorically refused to expel Tadzio from the group, arguing that this would be an act of discrimination (Fieldnotes 2003), the situation spun out of control. When Shawn began rehearsals for his project in January 2003, the actors blatantly ostracised Tadzio by openly laughing at his work, refusing to work with him, and insulting him during breaks. Tensions mounted as rehearsals continued, and Shawn was eventually compelled to call an ensemble meeting to address the situation. The actors confronted Tadzio and asserted they no longer wanted to work with him. Tadzio said he would only leave if Shawn asked him to. When Shawn reaffirmed he would not expel Tadzio from the group, some actors threatened to leave. They requested that I join the meeting to make the final decision as artistic director of the Student Theatre Section. I refused to oust Tadzio from Shawn's ensemble, and warned that the actors not willing to work with him were free to leave (Ibid.). Competing factions within Shawn's group developed: some wanted Tadzio expelled, while others wanted to find an alternative solution that would satisfy everyone (Ibid.).

A few days after the meeting, the director of the Theatre Section called me into her office. She already knew about the "problems" with Tadzio, and strongly urged me to force him out from the group. According to her, Tadzio was a man "who [had] trouble belonging" to most dance and theatre ensembles in Elblag, and that he had made a name for himself for breaking up the finest of groups (Ibid.). If Shawn wanted to have an ensemble, she warned, it was in his better interests to let Tadzio go (Ibid.). However, Shawn did not alter his decision, despite the director's request, aware that this might lead to the eventual dissolution of his group, and the loss of his position as an instructor (Ibid.).

In the meantime, the atmosphere in the rehearsal room deteriorated further, and some actors stopped attending. One night, walking home from rehearsal, a group of students confronted Tadzio, and warned that if he did not resign, he “would regret it” (Ibid.). At the same time, the parents of two students approached me, and demanded that I expel Tadzio, as he was a “neglected autistic” who was compromising the work of all the other ambitious and hard-working students (Ibid.).

When rehearsals became no longer productive, Shawn decided to dissolve his group. It was at this point that Tadzio resigned from the ensemble. He told me he wanted the project to continue, because he thought it was valuable, and he did not want to compromise the other students’ opportunities. He said he knew he was different, and that he could never hope to achieve the level of accomplishment of his fellow actors (Ibid.). Shawn continued rehearsing with his group, and although it was too late to present their play, *The Cinderella Project: Prometheus Rebound*, at the festival in March, it was publicly presented in May 2003.

Chapter 7

Excursion #2...

Horses and Angels

Pre-Rehearsal Sessions

Conversations on Gender Inequality

In January 2003 (see appendix A), I started developing with a group of students – Derek, Grazyna, Olga, and Agnieszka – an ethnographic theatre piece that was to compete at the *National Festival of the Spoken Word: Is that Love?* in March 2003. The performance was to explore gender inequality in Poland, particularly violence against women. We began the pre-rehearsal sessions by going over issues of informed consent,⁵⁸ and discussing the details of the project (see appendix A). Together we developed a list of questions to explore:

- What is gender inequality in Poland?
- How does it manifest?
- What are Polish women’s lives like?
- What problems do women confront? Why are women experiencing those problems? What problems need to be addressed immediately, soon, later?
- What makes women unhappy or happy?
- How is “violence against women” defined in Poland?

I involved the students in the development of the questions because I wanted to engage them critically in the process right from the start. However, I emphasised that the questions were only a guide to our inquiry, and that we should remain open to new questions that might arise in the course of our research. I also discussed the students’

roles in the project. This was mainly in response to Derek's concern that, as a man, he would not have much to contribute to a performance about women and violence. I explained that both the female actors and Derek would contribute to the research process by sharing their understandings and beliefs about gender inequality in Poland; the female actors could further contribute by bringing into our discussions personal experiences of violence they might have suffered as women. I also stressed that in projects grappling with issues of gender inequality, the involvement of women and men was important, as it would take the combined efforts of both to combat gender oppression.

Furthermore, I cautioned that throughout the development of the project, we should remain aware that women's experiences of violence and oppression were not homogenous: class, ethnicity/race, sexual orientation, age, geography, etc. all shaped how women experienced violence. I urged the students to think about the questions we had asked in the studio while performing everyday activities, such as watching the news, films, and television programs, reading newspapers or magazines, and talking to people (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Horses and Angels*, 1/07/03). Finally, we agreed that we would once again use the Illustrative Performing Technique as the style of representation for the play because the actors enjoyed working with it in our last project.

In our pre-rehearsal sessions, we discussed various magazine and newspaper clippings that the students had brought to the studio, and the results of a survey Olga and Grazyna had conducted in their Lyceum⁵⁹ (Ibid., 1/21/03). The students chose articles from popular magazines and newspapers, ranging from local/regional/national daily and weekly newspapers, art and culture magazines, to magazines specifically marketed to teenaged girls and women. The students primarily selected articles that either focussed specifically on issues of gender, violence against women, and/or feminism, or were deemed – by the students – as important sources of information about the ways in which femininity was being conceptualised in Poland, and how women were perceived and represented.

Themes that Emerged

We discussed various themes, such as feminism, stereotypes of femininity and masculinity circulating in Poland, rape, sexuality and pregnancy, the objectification of women, homosexuality, and the socialisation of boys and girls as sources of sexism.

Feminism

We started our inquiry into feminism by reading and discussing “Feminism and Spaghetti,” an article I stumbled upon in *Gazeta Elblaska* ([Elblag] January 18-19, 2003) by Mariusz Siewlewicz, who described his experiences of attending an international feminist symposium at the University of Warsaw. The author admitted he had attended the conference out of his “chauvinist curiosity.” According to Siewlewicz, he was the only male in attendance at the symposium. When dinner was served, he was apparently overlooked. He asked a server why he did not have a meal, and she answered, “Don’t you know that ladies go first?!” He spent the remainder of the meeting finishing his meal under the scrutiny, as he put it, of every feminist at the table. His discomfort was finally alleviated when a “male electrician” walked into the hall to change a light bulb, attracting the interest of all the feminists in the room.

The students’ reactions towards this article varied. At the beginning of the discussion, Olga – in agreement with Derek and Grazyna – thought the article demonstrated how certain “methods” used by feminists to critique chauvinism were too harsh and extreme:

Olga: I think that such methods of showing men what they think are a bit harsh and slightly exaggerated... but on the other hand, the women accomplished what they wanted to as they criticised the stereotypical notion that claims “Ladies go first.” (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Horses and Angels*, 1/21/03)

Agnieszka was the first one to point out that the article was chauvinist, and that it perpetuated feminism’s negative reputation in Poland. Agnieszka’s remark encouraged the other students to examine the article more critically. Olga, for example, recognised that the article “underline[d] the stereotype of feminists as “ugly man-haters” (Ibid.).

Eventually, the actors started wondering whether the article was merely a fabrication written as an attack on feminism (Ibid.). However, the article inspired the actors to explore issues of feminism further. We all agreed that the word “feminism” carried negative connotations in Poland, since it was commonly represented as an extremist movement that propagated the hatred of men. According to Olga and Grazyna, this was the case because Polish radical feminists openly spoke out against men and engaged in bra-burning ceremonies, which gained media attention and perpetuated stereotypes of feminists as men haters (Ibid.).

Stereotypes of Femininity and Masculinity

The article also encouraged us to talk about various stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. According to the students, one of the most prominent stereotypes of femininity in Poland constructed the woman’s role in society in terms of her reproductive capacities, namely, as that of a mother:

Olga: I also have an article... about what control a woman has over her reproductive capacities. It says that when a woman gets married, and then the couple finds out that they can’t get pregnant, then this is the greatest suffering a woman can undergo, because of the blame... she is the one who should have a family and devote her life to family... and everyone is asking why she doesn’t have a child, and she’s embarrassed to talk about it. And usually it’s not until she ends up in the doctor’s office that she learns that her husband could be the reason why they might not be able to have children... that he also could have some problems with having kids.

Agnieszka: In a lot of medical books, a woman is portrayed as a machine that needs to be managed, and she only fulfils herself as a machine if she manages to conceive and reproduce. Also, a woman after menopause is seen as more useless.

Olga: Women themselves really take it hard if they are infertile. (Ibid.)

Olga: ... the important role a woman’s fertility plays in society is evident . . . if a woman has cancer, and she loses a breast, she can’t have children... then she’ll see herself as a failure... a failure as a woman. (Ibid.)

Grazyna: I think that every woman is seen as a potential mother, although some women’s bodies might not be meant to carry babies... everyone talks about motherhood, but no one really talks about fatherhood . . . and it’s believed that a woman has a natural

instinct . . . , and that is why girls are being given dolls to play with, so we get used to our caring role from the beginning. (Ibid.)

In terms of masculine stereotypes in Poland, the students stated that a popular image of a man – poignantly encapsulated in the popular Polish maxim, “a true man should plant a tree, build a house, or conceive a boy” – was the man-as-achiever, in which his wife, children, and property were his “achievements” (Ibid.):

Agnieszka: I have an article about what a Polish man should be like: a Polish man should be better than his wife... he shouldn't drive his wife's car or sleep in her house, because that would not be manly . . . and have a career so that he can say “my house, my son, my woman.” I think that it's very difficult to break down those stereotypes, because that's what people believe so much in... and that's how men and women are raised. . . . I also think that men do prefer to have male babies. I think that most men do, anyway. (see appendix F)

“Achieving” a son, according to the students, was particularly important for many men in Polish society, as it was seen as the endgame of masculinity. Olga argued that she had known a friend who refused to spend time with his newborn daughter because he was bitter about not having a son. Agnieszka noted that often in Poland, if a woman failed to give birth to a son, she “was forced into getting pregnant again” to give her husband a boy. According to Agnieszka, men wanted sons because they perceived them as the “torch-bearers” of their male legacy. Olga linked men's desire to have sons to the distant past, when having a girl did not bring material benefits to the family, as the parents were expected to provide a dowry for their daughter at marriage (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Horses and Angels*, 1/21/03). Derek, on the other hand, disagreed with Olga and Agnieszka:

Derek: . . . I don't think that this is the case. I think it depends on the man. I think it depends, and I think it's a personal preference for each man and family. I don't think that you can draw such general conclusions here. I don't think that we can say that all men want this or that... to me it doesn't make sense... if you want to have a child, what difference would it make if it's a girl or a boy?

Magda: Yeah, I think this would be an ideal scenario, but I also think that it used to be like that... at least for my parents' generation. . . .

Agnieszka: I think that men just can't relate to daughters... they want their son to be like them, and follow their legacy... and they can relate to their son's friends... hang out with their buddies. (see appendix F)

Other common stereotypes the actors identified included women-as-emotional/men-as-aggressive. For the actors, men in Poland were expected to be aggressive, and it was unacceptable for them to display certain emotions in public, such as crying, which was commonly viewed as a feminine act. What was acceptable for men, however, was to enact aggressive behaviours, which were justified in terms of male testosterone (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Horses and Angels*, 1/21/03). Women were often viewed in more passive, emotional terms – merely desiring platonic love. However, the students recognised that people were slowly recognising such perceptions as stereotypical (Ibid.).

Rape

Such stereotypical explanations of male aggression, according to the students, were at times used to justify rape, because rape was commonly seen as a “natural by-product” of masculinity. Rape was largely believed to be committed against a woman by a stranger in a “dark alley.” Sometimes rape was blamed on a woman's sexually provocative behaviour. A husband forcing his wife to engage in a sexual act was almost never considered rape, because in Poland, sexually satisfying her husband was seen as a woman's obligation (Ibid.).

Magda: What do you know about rape? And what things are being said about rape in Poland? Could you talk about that for a while?

Olga: There is very little being said about rape in families... the rape of a woman by her husband. Not many women would admit that they were raped. They probably don't perceive it as rape, because it is generally considered a woman's duty to satisfy her husband... so when he comes home from work, a woman needs to please her husband in many ways: turn on the television for him... give him dinner... and have sex.

Olga: Still the most stereotypical view of rape is that a woman is walking down the street, and a man catches her and pulls her into the bushes and rapes her... that's considered rape... but then you'd still hear such comments, "Why was she walking around at that time?" or, "Why was she walking there at night?" "She was asking for it."

Agnieszka: There was once a program on television about a woman who was coming home from a pub, and her friends brought her home, and then they all raped her... and the discussion started from how she provoked them, because she was drunk... and she was dressed really sexy... and that it was dark... and that provoked them to rape her... because rape is really still considered a normal part of masculinity, and it's up to a woman not to provoke men (Ibid.).

Sexuality and Pregnancy

We also discussed issues of sexuality and pregnancy, and how people in Poland understood and talked about them:

Olga: Yeah, I have some articles that talk about pregnancy, and I generally think that it is an interesting topic. But to start a sexual life, we need two people... a man and a woman... but commonly... the common expression is that "a woman fell into pregnancy," and even if everyone knows who's pregnant, people always say that "she fell into that pregnancy," and not, for instance, her and her boyfriend. But it's strange, because she couldn't make love all by herself and make herself a baby.

Grazyna: Or there are expressions, like you said, she fell into pregnancy... he gave it to her... he screwed her... so a woman has a very passive role.

Olga: Here I have an extreme statement... someone writes it in this women's magazine: "I think that women who get pregnant at sixteen are not really responsible ... they should know what the consequences could be of having sexual intercourse at such a young age. They're surprised that a boy leaves them, and that they have to raise their children alone. It's their fault, and they shouldn't be surprised!"

Grazyna: I think that such attitudes towards early sexuality are widespread... that there is something like that among many young people, that if my friends have it already behind themselves, why wouldn't I, too... and they take it very seriously (Ibid.)

The students intimated that pregnancy was understood in Poland to be a "woman's problem," because pregnant teenage girls were blamed for their pregnancies, while the

boys were not held accountable. Yet during the act of “getting pregnant,” the woman was seen as a passive recipient, being “acted upon,” whereas the man was the active, productive subject. The students linked teen pregnancy in Poland to a lack of awareness among teenagers about contraception, people’s inadequate knowledge about sexuality, erroneous information about contraception and sexuality propagated by Polish sexologists, and general perceptions of sex as taboo in Polish society:

Grazyna: But I’m not sure, because I don’t think that the average age of sexual initiation among young people is any lower than in Western countries... but there is less awareness, because some girls who get pregnant would say, “How would I get pregnant if we were making love standing up?” They’re not very aware.

Agnieszka: I heard on television... there was a discussion between a sexologist and young people... and one girl, who I think was fourteen, asked if it is true that if you have a bath with lemon oil before intercourse you won’t get pregnant... that is really funny...

Olga: I remember once that someone asked on television that if you drink coke, would it make you not get pregnant. . . . Also, sexologists talk very irresponsibly about issues of sex. . . . I had an article about PMS, and a girl was writing, “Why don’t I have PMS?” And the sexologist wrote that maybe her menstruation is too short... that for two years after you’ve begun menstruating, there’s no ovulation . . . and there’s such an opinion that all women for two years after starting menstruation don’t ovulate... and when someone reads that they’ll think, “Okay, I got my period a year ago, so I won’t be able to get pregnant.” And then she grabs a boy! That was very generalised. And in another article, it said, “You are young, and your ovulation is irregular, so you should not have sex without protection.” They change it according to what they want to say.

Grazyna: There’re also lots of absurd statements. There’re lots of arguments in Poland about the calendar method... of course, people over seventy are for it. I don’t understand how can anyone still believe in such absurdity, but there’s those Christian traditions, and that [sex] is a topic that is taboo... and people don’t talk about it in schools, and they also don’t talk about it at home... and children don’t really have anyone to go to and talk to. (Ibid.)

The Objectification of Women

The objectification of women in the work place was another subject discussed by the students. They argued that employers treated women as sex objects – particularly in some tertiary sector professions – as they were often required to wear sexually

provocative clothing. Women who refused to comply with a company's "dress code" risked losing their jobs:

Olga: She'll wear a mini skirt and flaunt her legs, and she'll get the job.

I ask Olga if she thinks a woman "flaunting her legs" will get any job she wants. The actors concur that "beautiful legs" can only get certain jobs; they will not get a woman a job as a surgeon.

Olga: Mainly secretarial positions... or positions suited for women... that's what they'd get.

Grazyna: I once read an article in a woman's magazine, and they were recommending what a woman should do after completing her education, and how she should find work. So they were saying that she should dress in a particular way, like wearing short skirts above her knees, and that she should have nice cleavage... and when she's sitting down, she should cross her legs in a feminine way... those things were particularly important in an interview, they were saying.

Derek: Basically, what it comes down to is that it's not your qualifications that count, but how an employer sees you, and that is particularly important for women.

Olga: Are you suggesting that this is a good thing, and that women should dress like that? And what first impression are they talking about anyway... a first impression should not be about how a person looks... it should be a subconscious impression. Besides, since when should one trust one's first impressions, because a girl could be beautiful, but have no intelligence!

Derek: Are you telling me that? I know that!

Olga: Oh, I thought that you were defending him. (see appendix F)

Similarly, the students identified the objectification of the female body in advertising, where – they argued – dismembered female bodies were featured to sell products, satisfying the pleasures of the voyeuristic male gaze:

Grazyna: ...I also once read an article about advertising, and it mentioned that the body of a woman becomes an icon for many different things... women advertise cars... cell phones... drinks... everything can be sold with a woman's body.

Agnieszka: Women have also been dismembered, disembodied ... when products are advertised, we see a woman's thighs or her legs... there are many body parts... she is the beautifying effect of the product. . .

Olga: . . . also, everyone says that cars are such a manly thing, but then in every car salon, there sits a near-naked woman . . . and no one even knows what the role of that woman is... and most people don't know which to look at... at the beautiful car or the beautiful woman. . . . I also don't like advertisements where a woman is getting undressed and men are watching her through a window. (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Horses and Angels*, 1/21/03)

The students also spoke about the pathologising of women's bodies and bodily processes, such as PMS, menopause, and menstruation, in pharmaceutical advertisements, and by medical experts in Poland. Such advertisements, according to the students, represented – with a voice of male authority – certain female bodily processes as diseases to be cured (Ibid.). The actors also pointed toward the objectification and humiliation of women by gynaecologists, who in Poland were primarily male:

Olga: Here I have an article about gynaecological tests. . . . And women discussed their own feelings about such examinations. Women would say that they felt like an object. They were frightened by all those tools. And they felt like a piece of meat on the table. The doctors don't make anything easy... a woman has to lie with her legs spread, while a man gets all those tools ready. And one young brave doctor, during a congress of medicine, proposed that every gynaecologist should sit down on such a chair with his legs widely spread to understand how women feel... and you can just imagine how he was received. . . .

Agnieszka: There is a certain conviction that a male gynaecologist is better because a woman would be too cold and too abrupt... and that a man knows better.

Grazyna: I also heard once that women gynaecologists must be deviant, or not normal... it's very strange that a man would talk about that, when they don't really have a clue about our bodies!

Agnieszka: It's like a priest who's talking about the value of the family, not knowing what it's like to have a family and children... the same with a gynaecologist... how can he know what I feel? He'll never have a child.

Olga: And they tell a woman how long she'll be pregnant, and how long she'll have labour pains... but all women are different, and you can't have a universal rule for all women. And I think that this is the reason why most women just dread their visits to the gynaecologist... just because the way they are being treated. (Ibid.)

Homosexuality

As well, the students discussed homosexuality. As in our pre-rehearsal sessions of *Dance As I Play You*, the students asserted that homosexuality was still largely perceived in negative terms, and people were not willing to openly talk about it. Gay people were commonly represented as promiscuous, exhibitionistic, and devious, and when portrayed more positively, homosexuality or bisexuality was represented in exotic terms, mainly as a curiosity. The actors admitted that lesbianism was more acceptable in Poland than male homosexuality, because people perceived the latter largely as “the feminisation of a man,” which was almost invariably stigmatised in Polish society (Ibid.).

Sources of Sexism

According to the students, the roots of sexism in Poland lay in the socialisation of children framed by a ubiquity of feminine and masculine stereotypes. Grazyna argued that the social roles imposed on children are very “constraining” because “girls are being taught to be like mommies, and boys are being taught to be like their daddies” (Ibid.). The students believed that children’s fairy tales were pivotal in the entrenchment of such stereotypes, because they portrayed women as “blonde Barbie dolls. . . dependant on men” (Ibid.). In Agnieszka and Olga’s view, such stereotypical perceptions of men and women could only change if people began identifying them as such and “tr[ie]d to go beyond them” (Ibid.).

Reflections

The contributions the pre-rehearsal sessions made to the research project were manifold. The sessions were an important source of knowledge about the ways in which the students conceptualised gender inequality in Poland. However, like the pre-rehearsal sessions of *Dance as I Play You*, they also provided important insights into how the ethnographic theatre performance development process could facilitate social critique and action, and into the power dynamics that defined our mutual interactions and roles in this phase of the project.

As in *Dance as I Play You*, the pre-rehearsal discussions allowed the actors to critically explore, and at times, re-evaluate, their own pre-conceptions – in this case – about gender inequality in Poland. Although the actors, especially the women, already came into this project with very critical ideas about gender inequality, our in-studio dialogue facilitated a more complex rethinking of this problem. For example, when Olga, Derek, and Grazyna initially responded to Siewlewicz’s article “Feminism and Spaghetti” with relative ambivalence, Agnieszka’s observation that the article was chauvinist, and perpetuated negative images of feminism, inspired the students to re-question the article’s representation of feminism (Ibid.). Clearly, the group setting of our in-studio discussions facilitated the actors’ mutual explorations and revaluations of their ideas. The propensity of the pre-rehearsal discussions to facilitate critical thought and action was made manifest, as with *Dance as I Play You*, in ways that reached out beyond the studio. The actors also engaged their peers and family members in discussions about the issues explored in the studio. Olga and Grazyna again conducted a survey at their Lyceum to see how their peers understood and explained gender inequality. Derek inspired his male friends to think about sexism. While some of them refused to speak about “women’s issues,” there were those who showed great interest. Others admitted they had never realised before that there was sexism in Poland. According to Derek, some of his friends began recognising the various stereotypes of gender in the media (Fieldnotes 2003).

Furthermore, the pre-rehearsal sessions exposed the relations of power that framed our mutual interactions and roles in the studio. It seems that in this early stage of the research process, our mutual relations and roles were being shaped not only through our present interactions in the studio, but also by the ghosts of our previous project. The level of trust we held for one another at the start of the pre-rehearsal sessions in *Dance as I Play You* had significantly diminished in this project. The position of “expert” I had “enjoyed” in the previous project was destabilised by my refusal to expel Tadzio. The actors no longer trusted that I would always make decisions in their best interests. Olga even cautioned me, “We can only hope that in this project you’ll consider what’s best for the show” (Ibid., Olga). Although the actors still were, for the most part, interested in, and showed respect for, my opinions, I was no longer “the expert;” now I was more of a “facilitator,” or whom Fabian would call, “the provider of occasions” (Fabian 1990, 7).

Now the female actors were negotiating their roles as “experts.” “We can still tell you a lot more about women and violence, because we live it... you haven’t been around for a while, so you’ve got no clue what’s cooking here,” asserted Grazyna (Fieldnotes 2003). As an ethnographer, I favoured such a development, because it gave the research participants more control over the project. However, as a woman, passionate about the issues of gender inequality, I found my newly assigned role of “facilitator” at times restrictive: it limited the ways in which I could participate in the discussions. The female students also asserted their expertise over Derek, which at times led to tensions in the studio. In one instance, when Derek noted that looking attractive was important for women to be successful in the job market in Poland, Olga accused him of defending chauvinist employers (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Horses and Angels*, 1/21/03).

The female students’ assertions of authority over Derek, I believe, could be linked, on the one hand, to the fact that Derek was a man; and, to a certain extent, they perceived him as a threat: he was a “representative” of the gender that discriminated against women. On the other hand, the female actors were more familiar with contemporary feminist theories and debates than Derek, and thus took a leadership role in the project. In response to the female students’ assertions of power, Derek attempted to counteract any unfavourable and generalising portrayals of men put forth in our discussions:

Olga: I was really surprised that it was a girl who was so scandalised about her friend being homosexual... because I think that as a rule, women are less homophobic than men. If men see a woman sitting on another woman’s lap, they’d say “Yuck! You’re gross!”

Derek: Not true!

Olga: I have such friends! “I can’t imagine a guy sitting on another guy’s lap!”
(Ibid.)

Moreover, the interactions among all of the actors in the studio were framed by distrust, as memories of the group’s rift in *Dance as I Play You* were still fresh. It seemed that the actors were aware of the uncertainty of their own loyalty toward one another. This was intimated when Olga asserted that “this project should go more smoothly”

because now we had a smaller ensemble; and Agnieszka replied, “If not, you’ll just get rid of me . . .” (Fieldnotes 2003). While no significant antagonisms marked this phase of the project, major power struggles between the actors – particularly between the female actors and Derek – would surface in rehearsals.

Rehearsals

Performing Gender Inequality

After the pre-rehearsal sessions, we set out to develop the physical and verbal texts of the performance in rehearsals. We began thinking about the storyline by identifying central images (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Horses and Angels*, 1/23/03). The images the students identified included: the sale of a female body at the local market, sex-shop paraphernalia, a mother giving birth to objects that signify stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, and a female marionette having lipstick applied to it (Ibid.). Although the students came up with them spontaneously, the images had been clearly inspired – to a certain extent – by some of the earlier themes discussed. For example, the image of “selling a woman’s body at the local market” could have been influenced by our discussions about the objectification and dismembering of women’s bodies in advertising. The images of “sex shop paraphernalia” and “a mother giving birth to the stereotypes of masculinity and femininity” contain parallels to the stereotypical representations of women as sex objects and/or mothers in Polish society we discussed earlier. Finally, the image of “a female marionette having lipstick applied to it” could have been inspired by our talks about the stereotypes of women as sex objects.

Thinking about the storyline of the performance in terms of images led us to focus first on the physical text. With these images in mind, we developed the physical text of the performance in the following ways: by deciding on the “issues” we wanted a particular physical action to illustrate; by discussing how to develop a particular physical action in terms of movements, gestures, and non-verbal vocalisations; and by enacting a physical action on stage.

For instance, the students developed a scene based on the image of “selling a female body at the market” by discussing what they wanted the scene to “be about.” Grazyna suggested that the scene could feature a man buying an assortment of female body parts. Derek offered that the scene could take place in a store, or in a butcher shop (Ibid.). Yet, he worried that if we portrayed only men buying female body parts, the

scene would stereotypically render men as the sole perpetrators of violence against women, and women as passive victims. In response to Derek's concern, Olga suggested that one of the female actors should be a salesperson (Ibid.).

While the students enthusiastically discussed ideas, they were reluctant to perform them. It usually took a student's exasperation over talking about a particular issue to generate more material responses from the group. For example, when Derek and Grazyna vigorously debated the "sale of a female body" scene, Olga protested, "And how are we going to show this... we're talking about things, but we're not showing anything!" (Ibid.) In response, Derek proposed that the butcher could twist the woman's head as he sold her off; while Agnieszka recommended that one of the actors could play a mannequin being inspected by a client as an object for sale (Ibid.). On some occasions, however, even a student's exasperation was not sufficient impetus to mobilise the group to perform a scene. In one rehearsal, when Derek interjected, "We're not supposed to discuss all those issues now... we're supposed to create the text!" the students ignored his plea, and continued plotting out their ideas for the performance (Ibid.).

Perhaps the actors' preference to discuss "issues" rather than perform the actions could be attributed, in part, to their relative lack of experience working with the body as actors. Derek had had no training as an actor prior to *Dance as I Play You*, and although Olga and Grazyna did, they primarily worked in text-based, realist acting. The only actor with prior physical training was Agnieszka.

When the actors finally began performing, they rarely allowed themselves to work exclusively through spontaneous improvisations; instead, discussions still tempered their "doing." The development of the play was a constant negotiation between the original images the actors identified, and the actions that emerged from improvisations. For example, when Derek and Olga improvised a wedding scene in which they exchanged marriage vows, the other actors stopped the action and protested that the "butcher scene" and "birth scene," both originally to be performed at the end of Olga's wedding train, would not "suit" the wedding scene. They decided that Olga, as the bride, should give birth to two girls – Agnieszka and Grazyna – who would emerge from beneath her train. Agnieszka also suggested that, as Olga was giving birth to her daughters, Derek could be

assisting in her labour, and perhaps a medical text objectifying female reproduction could be read.

As the actors performed a variety of movements, Grazyna submitted that a conception scene should precede the birth scene. Then Agnieszka and Grazyna decided that the conceiving of the daughters should be presented as a rape to underscore that rape can also occur between a husband and a wife. The actors improvised the scene, but the transition between the recitation of the vows and the subsequent rape was tricky. I suggested that Derek could slowly creep up to Olga as she repeated her vows, bend over her slightly, slip his hands beneath her bouquet, and push her down to the floor. The actors improvised the scene. Yet, when Derek pushed Olga to the floor, and then collapsed into her legs, the movement was ungainly and uncomfortable for Olga (Ibid.).

As demonstrated here, the actors' choice of actions for the birth scene was haunted by our previous discussions about the alienation of women from their own bodies during gynaecological exams. The ways in which the students wanted to represent rape on stage sought to address society's denial of spousal rape. However, the actors were apprehensive about portraying rape realistically. On the one hand, they felt uncomfortable about it, and did not want to shock or offend audience members; on the other hand, they believed that representing rape metaphorically would be a better choice artistically (Fieldnotes 2003).

As a solution, the actors suggested that Derek should walk upstage to the end of the bride's train where he could thrust his pelvis repetitively (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Horses and Angels*, 1/28/03). After Derek performed this action, I asked Grazyna and Agnieszka to make their movements beneath the wedding train larger. Olga then observed that Derek's movements made her think of a person riding a horse. Agnieszka noted that the scene invited an interpretation in which women are horses for men to "mount" and control (Ibid.). For a greater visual impact, the actors suggested that Derek should repeat his vows while mounting the "horse," and that Agnieszka and Grazyna should accompany him by singing their vows like cantors underneath the train. When Agnieszka and Grazyna started chanting, I heard a touch of sarcasm in Agnieszka's voice that created an interesting dramatic tension; I suggested that both of them should incorporate it into their chanting (Ibid., 1/29/03).

Once again, after we had developed the birthing scene, a dialogue ensued between the actors and me about the physical text. The actors suggested that objects representing stereotypes of femininity should be placed underneath the bride's train; after the two girls were born, they would discover and play with the objects. Olga insisted the girls should be naked, as we should portray the newly born as tabula rasa upon which society "writes" its norms and expectations. Grazyna and Agnieszka, however, did not want to perform naked. To assuage their fears, I offered that they could wear skin tone body suits to make them "appear" naked. Derek suggested that the bride and groom should dress the girls, but Agnieszka thought that the parents should merely instruct the girls on how to dress themselves to intimate that, as people, we do have a certain amount of autonomy (Ibid.).

We also wrote down the names of objects that could signify stereotypes of women, such as lingerie, stilettos, Barbie dolls, cosmetics, baby bottles, diapers, a dustpan, a skirt, nylons, a rosary, earrings, a nurse's hat, a tailor's measuring tape, flowers, scissors, a hairbrush, and Harlequin Romances. As we worked on the scene with some props preset beneath the bride's train, I asked the actors to polish up the labour "transition." At this point, the actors were mainly working with their bodies, improvising a variety of transitions. Finally, they developed two versions of the transition scene:

Version one: The groom comes up to the bride, and as she notices him, she falls down onto the ground, opens her legs with the groom standing over her... then she goes into labour. The children crawl up to her, then spontaneously emerge from beneath the train, and lurch towards her stomach, lying down, puckering and opening their lips like fish out of water.

Version two: The groom skulks over to the bride, and then suddenly and violently, mounts and crushes his body into her backside. She collapses under his weight, and spreads her legs. (Ibid.)

We decided to use the second version, and spent some time working out the action of Olga collapsing under Derek's weight, as she found it challenging. At some point, an interesting movement emerged as Derek tossed Olga to the floor. It was very provocative, because Derek looked like he was tossing a rag doll, rather than a living person. I asked the actors to exaggerate the action to make the visual effect even more striking (Ibid.).

Although the above examples, of how our group developed the physical text of the performance, underscore the significance of dialogue in the process, the relationship between dialogue and physical action was not merely unidirectional, where discursive pronouncements always informed physical actions. This relationship was also reciprocal: verbally expressed ideas informed physical actions, while physical actions inspired new ideas.

The development of the spoken text of the performance took place later in the process. We often developed the spoken text in response to a particular physical action. This was the case because, as I have already mentioned, we first worked with the physical text, inspired by the images the students identified. We developed the spoken text by writing it out individually, or as a group; and by having the actors improvise it.

For example, our choice of having the bride in the birth scene sing a lullaby, was first inspired by a concrete physical action. After the actors performed the birth scene during a rehearsal, Olga protested that she felt awkward lying on the stage, staring up at the audience with her legs spread. It was then that Agnieszka jokingly proposed that Olga should sing a song. I suggested a lullaby. Agnieszka thought that having the bride sing a lullaby would underscore the stereotyped image of the woman-as-mother. At first, we had trouble choosing an appropriate song, but finally, Olga proposed a traditional Polish lullaby, *From the Ashes an Ember is Flickering at Voytush* (see appendix G, p.433). In the lullaby, an ember jumps out from the hearth, and promises the boy named Voytush that it would tell him a long fairy tale. Cruelly, just as the tale commences, the ember dies in a wisp of smoke (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Horses and Angels*, 1/29/03). The students liked the lullaby because they thought it poignantly revealed that there were no magical fairy tales for the bride to tell her daughters. After all, from their earliest days, society would force them to be “real girls” (Ibid.).

Similarly, the spoken text exchanged between Agnieszka and Grazyna in the scene in which Agnieszka escapes from the bondage of her parents emerged in response to a particular problem with a transition movement. When I noted that Agnieszka’s transition from her “captivity” to her escape scene was awkward, Derek offered that Agnieszka and Grazyna should engage in a dialogue to ease the transition. Agnieszka and I developed the following text:

Girl 1 finally breaks free, flees downstage with back to audience...her arms are straight back as she crouches forward... groom struggles to restrain Girl 2.

Girl 1:⁶⁰ I want to fly.
Do you hear me? I want to fly!

Girl 2, addressing Girl 1, continues her pledge, speaking over Girl 1... their voices competing to be heard...

Girl 1: Do you hear me?!
I want to fly... do you hear me?!
High!!!
(see appendix G, p.435)

While the actors performed the action with the text, I suggested that the parents should join Grazyna in shouting at her sister.

The improvised spoken text also emerged in response to particular physical actions. When Derek and Olga were sculpting Grazyna into the posture of a horse, she suggested that there should be some dialogue between them. I asked the actors to improvise the text while performing the action (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Horses and Angels*, 2/11/03):

**Groom
(Derek):** Look how she stands!

**Bride
(Olga):** How noble!

Magda: [to Derek] Say, "So elegant!"

Derek: So elegant!

Magda: [to Olga] "She'll never fade!"

Olga: She'll never fade!

Derek: Never grow old!

Magda: [to Olga] "Never wither! Check out her jowls!"

Olga: Never wither! Check out her jowls!

Derek looks into Grazyna's mouth.

Derek: And what fine teeth she has!

Magda: [to Olga] "Not too big..."

Olga: ...not too big...

Derek: ...not too small...

Magda: [to Olga] "...not too yellow..."

Olga: ...not too yellow...

Magda: [to Derek] "...not too white...."

Derek: ...not too white...

(see appendix G, pp.435-6)

At times, we developed the spoken text by mere chance. As Olga and Derek trotted Grazyna like a horse from wall to wall, holding on to her legs, Olga whimsically sang – and Derek joined her – an old Polish war tune sung to children as a nursery rhyme:

*Once a Krakowiak
Had seven horses...
He went to war
And was left with one.*

(see appendix G, p.436)

Agnieszka and I thought we should incorporate the song into the scene because it had an unnatural feel. Grazyna was initially sceptical of the idea, but eventually agreed with us (Ibid.).

The actors and I also wrote the spoken text in response to particular physical actions. When we decided to conclude the performance with the girls singing a song about heaven, I asked everyone to work on the final text of the song. We developed the following text:

*Heaven, we shall build heaven...
Upon a path of red roses
The dead will pry the gates open,
With the help of my guardian angel.*
(see appendix G, p.439)

There were some instances, however, when I wrote the spoken text myself. This usually happened when the actors were unwilling, or unable, to develop it themselves. For example, after Agnieszka managed to break free from the reigns of her parents, she mounted Grazyna's back; unclear of the symbolic meaning of the action, I suggested that she should now speak about "freedom." I asked the students to work on the text together. However, after twenty minutes, they had turned to me for help:

Magda: If I write too much, the project won't be collaborative.

Olga: It will still be collaborative... we're thinking about the movement.

Magda: How about you try improvising the text. Agnieszka, go up to Grazyna.

Agnieszka: Should I first gently stroke her face... because I feel sorry for her?

Magda: Try it.

Agnieszka touches Grazyna gently, takes the carnations out of her mouth, and then sits down on her... but instead of riding her, she hugs Grazyna.

Magda: Try this text: "I am free and I can fly all over the sky while you are here being ridden like a horse." (see appendix F)

After Agnieszka repeated the text, the actors laughed; out of frustration, I took a piece of paper and jotted down the following lines: "I'm flying high, across the sky. I have wings that have grown into my heart, and bleed with freedom" (Ibid.).

At times, I also came up with the spoken text spontaneously, especially when I felt moved by a particular action and wanted to try out the words that came into my mind.

When Derek recommended that the bride and groom should force the two girls to recite

another vow as they were binding them, I suggested the text, “I pledge to be a woman... always, and forever, to remain a woman, thus help me so” (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Horses and Angels*, 1/30/03).

In terms of design, we concurred that the costumes should symbolically underscore the problems with which the performance grappled. Ideas for the costumes, which evolved and changed throughout the entire rehearsal process, were largely born during our physical work. We decided to have the bride and groom dressed in traditional wedding regalia early in the process when we were working on the wedding scene. The traditional wedding clothes were meant to underscore Poland’s traditional notions of femininity and masculinity (Ibid., 1/23/03). We also decided to replace the two girls’ costumes – pink and blue petticoats (colours of femininity and masculinity) – with flesh coloured body suits. I suggested this, because when I saw Agnieszka and Grazyna improvise the birth scene, I found the petticoats too metaphorically ambiguous. The body suits, which made the actors appear naked, highlighted the idea of the new-borns as *tabula rasa* (Ibid., 2/04/03).

Factors that Shaped the Performance

What we decided – and how we made our decisions – to include in, and exclude from, the performance was influenced by a variety of factors: present, future, and past contexts of the performance; potential audiences; the subject matter of the performance; our aesthetic sensibilities, tempered by practical/technical considerations and limitations; and the actors’ shyness and unease with their bodies and sexuality.

The present, future, and past contexts of the performance influenced its scope in many ways. When developing the performance’s physical and spoken texts, the students took into consideration the immediate social realities in which they lived. Olga and Agnieszka, for example, proposed that there should be a scene in which the newly born girls unearth from their mother’s train – and play with – objects that symbolise femininity and masculinity. They believed this would be relevant to the current social and political

contexts of Poland in which “older generations urged children to respect ‘traditional values’” in terms of gender, family, religion, and sexuality (Ibid., 1/29/03).

Real life events also influenced the performance in very concrete ways. In the last weeks of rehearsals, Grazyna suffered serious flu complications, and was unable to attend rehearsals or perform in the festival. Since we did not have enough time to audition and train another student to replace her, we decided that Shawn – who had seen several run-throughs of the performance – would be the best person to step into Grazyna’s part.

Having Shawn replace Grazyna had a tremendous impact on the performance. First of all, it transformed Grazyna’s role from Daughter into Son. The character of Son, alongside the other daughter (Agnieszka’s character), opened up new avenues for interpretation. *Horses and Angels* was no longer primarily about the oppression of women; it was also a meditation on both feminine and masculine stereotypes. Now the play underscored that men and women were on both sides of the oppression/power fence (Ibid., 3/05/03). Both Son and Daughter were born under the bondage of Bride and Groom, and while Daughter was expected to reiterate her mother’s femininity, Son was “destined” to follow his father’s footsteps into “real manhood.”

Moreover, having Son break away from Bride and Groom’s bondage (see appendix G, pp.434-5) underscored – echoing feminist critiques of Foucault (see pp.48-9) – that men as a group do have more power and opportunities than women to “break free” from the oppressive reigns of societal expectations. At the same time, it also risked reiterating stereotypes of men as “agents” and women as “objects.” After all, not only was it Son – and not Daughter – who managed to break free from Bride and Groom’s bonds first, but it was also Son who invited Daughter to travel with him to “heaven” in search of freedom (see appendix G, p.437). Yet, as Son and Daughter travelled to “heaven” together, and closed the performance casting red carnations, one by one, upon the corpses of Bride and Groom, we were reminded that struggles for gender equality need to involve joint efforts of both women and men.

Shawn performing in *Horses and Angels* also had a great impact on the performance in theatrical terms. Shawn was a “consummate actor” of the Illustrative Performing Technique, as he had trained and performed in this style for nearly a decade. Thus, he was able to endow his role with a certain degree of professionalism and finesse

that would have been difficult for Grazyna, given her relative lack of experience as a performer. Shawn's abilities had both positive and negative ramifications. On the one hand, the character of Son benefited tremendously, as Shawn brought a subtlety, precision, and expressiveness into the role that competently plumbed Son's emotional and physical struggles with the oppressive world. This, in turn, improved the overall calibre of the performance, as the other actors pushed to catch up to Shawn's abilities. On the other hand, Shawn's professionalism stood out in the performance in ways that were at times detracting from the other actors on the stage. Shawn's age also was not a perfect fit for the role of Son, given that Derek and Olga as Groom and Bride were over fifteen years his junior.

The future also had a very tangible presence in the rehearsal room. The fact that the performance was to compete in the upcoming *National Festival of the Spoken Word: Is that Love?* influenced almost every aspect of the performance. The students wanted the performance to be successful, both in terms of winning a prize, and of being well received by the audience. Thus, in many ways, the actors privileged the performance-as-product over the performance-as-process. Right from the first rehearsal, they were preoccupied with managing the rehearsal time and ensuring that the performance met the festival's high standards.

In order to "manage" time, the students were reluctant to develop the texts of the performance through improvisations, which they thought were too time consuming and unproductive. For example, while improvising the rape scene, Agnieszka grew frustrated, as she believed improvising was a waste of time and brought few results (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Horses and Angels*, 1/23/03). Or when we brainstormed ideas about how to clarify the symbolic meaning of the train to the audience, Derek warned that "we will never finish the script the way things are going" (Ibid., 1/30/03).

The prospect of competing in the festival influenced the choices we made regarding what to include in, or exclude from, the physical and spoken texts of the performance. Overall, the students avoided thematic/theatrical elements that were "too risky." Specifically, they wanted to ensure that the performance was not "radically" feminist, as they believed the festival's jury would snub it. Olga argued, "It's already difficult to be presenting a show about gender... no one will relate to it... and then to be

bashed for it!” (Ibid., 2/20/03) To avoid the “man-hating show” label, Agnieszka suggested that we refrain from didacticism, and allow the audience members greater latitude in interpreting the play:

Agnieszka: Maybe we could show a scenario without providing a commentary, so that the audience thinks about it by themselves... and we don’t directly say, “This is what we believe... and this is what we want to propagate.” (Ibid., 1/23/03)

The actors were also apprehensive at times about adopting an “unorthodox” theatrical aesthetic. Although, as I have already argued, they were committed to the avant-garde tradition of Polish theatre, in this particular project they worried that eccentricity on stage might compromise the performance’s success in the festival. When I suggested that we suspend the illusion of the play in the final scene, and invite audience members to co-create the resolution of the performance in order to engage them critically in the negotiation of the play’s meanings, the actors saw it as being “too risky” for a conservative festival:

Magda: Maybe the play could end the way that it is now... the characters talk about building a new heaven... but maybe break the illusion of the performance a bit... talk to the audience, telling them how the play might end... and maybe we could even offer different possibilities to the audience.

Olga: This would never work... people wouldn’t understand what we’re doing... it’s too risky because the judges in the festival are very traditional...

Derek: ...yeah... we might not win because of that. (Ibid., 2/25/03)

As well, practical/technical considerations and limitations were key players in our decision-making, as the project had a small budget, minimal production support, and an amateur cast. For example, while we initially wanted to have a variety of objects preset beneath the bride’s train as images of feminine and masculine stereotypes, we eventually decided against it, as the students questioned the scene’s aesthetic appeal, and the technical and practical feasibility of such images. Instead, we represented gender stereotypes by means of the body (Ibid., 1/30/03). On another occasion, an actor’s phobia

shaped how we blocked the opening scene of the performance. When the students suggested that we completely cover Olga with the train as Derek recites his vows, Olga rebuffed the idea, as she suffered from claustrophobia (Ibid., 1/23/03). Consequently, we blocked the scene so that Derek and Olga were standing side by side as they recited their vows.

A negligible budget and production support from the Cultural Centre influenced our decision to keep the design of the performance spare. As the costumes – Bride’s wedding dress and train, Girl’s tulle slip and body suit, Boy’s blazer, and Groom’s wedding suit – were indispensable due to their symbolic significance, but also costly, we chose to relinquish the use of all set pieces, use a minimum of props, and design a basic lighting plot (Ibid., 3/05/03).

Finally, the actors’ shyness and unease with their bodies and sexuality shaped the ways in which the performance’s text was created. As discussed earlier, the actors did not want to portray rape realistically on stage, both because they felt uncomfortable about it (understandably so, considering their ages), and because they did not want to offend audience members (Fieldnotes 2003). Thus, they chose to “act out” the rape scene in more metaphoric and stylised means.

Reflections

The rehearsals, like the pre-rehearsal sessions, provided insights into the ways in which the students understood gender inequality in Poland. Moreover, like the rehearsals of *Dance as I Play You*, they constituted Stoller’s (1997) “sensuous scholarship” by involving the participants in more concrete, tangible, and empathic ways in the construction of ethnographic knowledge. Although discussions underlined our practical work, exploring gender inequality through movements and gestures still invited a more complex exploration – and consequently a more dialogic, in the Bakhtinian sense, interpretation – of the issues. The actors recognised the complex ways in which society entangled both women and men in the web of gender oppression, and “acted-out” gender inequality beyond the simplistic men-as-oppressors/women-as-oppressed dichotomy. Already at the beginning of rehearsals, Derek decried the one-sided representation of men

as sole perpetrators of the objectification and commodification of women's bodies; and as a result, Olga suggested that we have a female actor selling body parts to men to illustrate women's complicity in sexism (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Horses and Angels*, 1/23/03).

Thus, working with physical means of expression, to a certain extent, challenged our binary thinking.

Additionally, exploring gender inequality by physical means of expression, was particularly beneficial, because it engaged the actors empathetically, and in turn, impelled them to think about, critique, and challenge some of the sexist assumptions and practices in their own backyard:

Magda: What do you actually learn about violence and women here in rehearsals... does it make you think about it differently than if we were to just talk about it... if we only had conversations here... or a lecture for the audience members?

Olga: Doing this project... I mean actually acting the Bride... she's so... how would you put it... she's so dependant on him [Groom] that it makes me really sick... that she puts up with it... many women do. When's he's tossing me like a fish between his legs, that really makes me angry, that women are treated like dolls. I said that at home... we had this whole conversation about gender and that, but my mom and dad they don't... I don't think they see it... maybe my mom.

Agnieszka: Yeah, it makes me feel angry, too! I wonder... especially in Elblag, when you look around at all these women in high heels walking around... even in the forest... I don't understand how can they do it... don't they see? But then I understand where it comes from. When I'm walking in high heels like here... on my hands... I feel so utterly low that it makes me want to scream... then I see all those commercials... I'd like to stop that... I'd actually want to speak to those who make them... I think that has to be done... we (Agnieszka and her friends) talked about it at school... not everybody agreed with me, especially men, but the women generally see the point.

Grazyna: I think that acting things out makes you really feel that. . . . even when I watch it, it makes me feel agitated... it instigates, I think, a kind of agitation in you... that's what this show actually does... it makes you feel agitated... but if the audience also feels that, it's good for them, I guess... maybe it'll make them think. I don't think talking about it simply could have the same effect. (Fieldnotes 2003)

For the actors – especially the female actors – this physical “acting out” of gender inequality generated critical thinking, discussions, and actions. For Grazyna, the mere act of watching her fellow actors perform set off “a kind of agitation in [her]” that she believed, if felt by audience members, could perhaps urge them to think critically about

the issues explored. For me, like for Grazyna, watching the actors' performances in the rehearsal room "stir[red] up powerful emotions" and compelled me to think about the parenting of my son as a means of "speaking to" society's gender inequality:

Today my son watched parts of the show. I was worried that it would scare him. I covered his eyes during the 'inappropriate' parts... he watched, with particular engagement, the scene in which the Bride and Groom squeeze their children with the wedding train... the train of stereotypes of femininity and masculinity. It's a powerful scene... it always stirs up powerful emotions in me... makes me think about the difficulties of raising a son in a chauvinist society. When Shawn [in the role of Son] uttered a cry of desperation, Amadeusz looked at me and said, 'that's mean! I don't like how they're treated!' I told him he was right. I told him that this was really what the play was about... that many women are not being treated "nicely"... and also men... and boys, because, I told him, we are expected to be BOYS or GIRLS, and that's it...and that we couldn't be who we wanted to be. 'You mean like when I can't wear pink when I go outside?' he asked. I felt horrible... we had told him that wearing pink outside, because he was a boy, could cause him trouble... he could be bullied... but then we always wanted to raise him so that he could live beyond gender stereotypes, and one day also challenge them. . . . So how do you raise a child that both protects him from, and speaks to, gender inequality? (Fieldnotes 2003)

Finally, the rehearsals provided important insights into the power relations that defined our mutual interactions, relationships, and roles in the project. Real life events, such as Grazyna's illness, and "inserting" Shawn into the performance, tremendously affected – largely in negative terms – the power dynamics in the rehearsal room. The mood in the studio was often tense, as everyone worried about "getting things done on time." As we spent numerous hours adapting the texts of the performance for Shawn's part, antagonisms surfaced as Olga, Agnieszka, and Derek found the changes to the spoken and physical texts challenging, and Shawn, overwhelmed, struggled to memorise his Polish text (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Horses and Angels*, 3/05/03). As well, the students, largely intimidated by Shawn's performance, sought to undermine his competence as a performer. Olga, for example, criticised his acting as "too dynamic and abrupt," while Derek complained that Shawn was "not acting in synchrony" with other members of the ensemble (Fieldnotes 2003). Moreover, Olga – disappointed that her sister was no longer acting in the play – complained that Shawn's failure to "precisely" replicate Grazyna's movements compromised the precision of her own performance.

The students' relentless preoccupation with the upcoming festival also shaped, in many ways, our mutual interactions. As the group was focused on winning, conflicts were prone to arise. The students became hypercritical of one another's work. Olga, for example, persistently criticised the other students' work, as well as many of my suggestions. When Agnieszka, Derek, and I were improvising the spoken text for the "heaven scene," Olga outright denounced our efforts (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Horses and Angels*, 2/18/03). When I suggested that Agnieszka and Grazyna wear body suits to appear naked, Olga derisively shunned the idea as too costly (Ibid., 2/04/03). Olga's negative opinions not only created tensions in the rehearsal room, but often compromised the other actors' morale.

The fact that the performance was to compete in the festival also shaped my role in the project, specifically, how it was negotiated through our mutual interactions in the rehearsal room. Like the students, I too felt the pressures of competing in the festival. I wanted the performance to be successful because I did not want to disappoint the students. I also worried that the "failure" of our performance – in the eyes of the festival's judges and audience members – could permanently compromise my relationships with the students and with the directors of the Cultural Centre, and ultimately jeopardise my next project with the Roma women. As a result, I put on a directorial/dramaturgical hat more often than the ethnographer-in-me would want to. This was evident, for example, when I argued against having one-half of the Bride's train red to symbolise the stereotype of woman-as-prostitute, because, from a dramaturgical and directorial point of view, I believed the metaphor was too obscure (Ibid., 1/30/03). On another occasion, I rejected Olga's suggestion that the newborn girls should wear pink and blue petticoats:

Olga: Maybe the blue and pink petticoats could still be used.

Magda: I don't think that the petticoats will really make any sense in this play... the stereotypes are the bride and the groom... the bride in her traditional white dress, and the groom in his traditional suit. If we want to make the girls look like the bride and groom, which in this scene means the ghosts, then we should maybe have clothing preset for them that is the same... another wedding dress and another suit. (Ibid., 1/20/03)

On numerous occasions, I wore a directorial/dramaturgical hat because the students expected it from me. Now in rehearsals, under the pressure to win the competition, the actors had, to a certain extent, restored my position of “expert” that I had “enjoyed” in the pre-rehearsal sessions of *Dance As I Play You*. They were willing to compromise their ownership of the project in order to create the best performance possible, which in their view, could be achieved if I took charge of the rehearsal process as a director/dramaturg. For example, in one of the scenes discussed earlier, when I asked the actors to develop a spoken text for the scene in which Grazyna broke away from the Bride and Groom’s train, the actors argued that they were not “good with text,” and asked me to write it instead (Ibid., 2/04/03).

When the ghost scene, in which Derek and Olga’s characters enchant the girls into joining their “waltz of death,” proved to be lengthy and theatrically awkward, Grazyna and Olga expected that I would “fix it” as a director might. Initially, I did not want to “fix” the scene in a directorial manner because I believed that, since the project was ethnographic, it was more important to have the actors develop the scene by themselves than to have it “perfectly” polished. Eventually, however, when the actors stressed that the final product was just as important to them as the process, I conceded and offered some possible solutions:

Olga: (to me) You have to fix it!

Grazyna: We have to remember, we’re going to compete in a national festival...

Magda: . . . well, don’t forget that the performance is first of all ethnographic... sometimes, although things might not look interesting theatrically, they are important ethnographically.

Olga: I wouldn’t act in a show if it’s “crap”... I have a lot of people coming to see it, and I don’t want to be embarrassed, even if it’s ethnographic!

Magda: But I told you at the beginning that in this project, the process is really important... and you wanted to participate.

Olga: For you it doesn’t matter, because your career is set... but we’re just starting out. I don’t want to be seen in a bad show... I’m auditioning to theatre school next year. You might care about the process, but for me, the product is also important... that’s what people come and see!

Both Derek and Grazyna agree.

Magda: Then perhaps what would be more interesting is if you [Olga] had a slip underneath your dress, made of tulle, and Derek had another jacket on top of the one he's wearing now... and you both could put it on the girls at the beginning of the play, when the girls are just born, and they look at the audience... they get embarrassed, and then you could take off your slip and jacket, and dress your children just before you wrap them in the train. (Ibid., 2/20/03)

The students' expectations of me as a director were also clear in the crisis when Grazyna became ill and was unable to attend rehearsals. They demanded that I not merely facilitate the process in an ethnographic sense, but, first and foremost, bring the performance to a successful conclusion:

Magda: We should think positively... Grazyna has only been sick for a few days... even the flu doesn't last much longer.

Olga: Are we going to win in the festival?

Magda: I don't know... I'm not really too worried about something I can't influence ahead of time.

Olga: But you decided to enter our show into the competition, and now you're not concerned?

Magda: I didn't enter this show... the director entered it. (Ibid., 2/25/03)

While I found the shift in emphasis to my role as director/dramaturg constraining, I also welcomed it with a certain degree of relief, because as a woman, I had stakes invested in the project, which at times made it difficult for me to remain a more "distant" facilitator.

Additionally, the past – the previous project, *Dance as I Play You* – influenced our relationships in the studio. The incidences involving Tadzio and Tomek continued to compromise the mutual trust within the group. This was made particularly apparent when Derek became worried that I would expel him from the project after Olga had reprimanded him for "not doing things properly:"

Derek: But when we were doing *Dance as I Play You*, you got rid of one of the actors when he was having trouble with Olga.

Magda: It had nothing to do with Olga... we let him go because he wasn't committed enough to the work, and was missing too many rehearsals and showing up late. (Ibid., 2/12/03)

Moreover, the subject matter of the performance – gender inequality – shaped the relationships and interactions between the actors themselves, and between the actors and me. While gender is central in influencing any ethnographic research project, the subject matter of *Horses and Angels* brought gender even closer to the fore of our interactions. With the mounting pressure of the upcoming competition, tensions between Derek and the female actors that had already been present in our pre-rehearsal sessions resurfaced with a vengeance. The female students, particularly Olga and Grazyna, openly ostracised Derek for a variety of reasons. As I have mentioned in my discussion of the pre-rehearsal sessions, this likely took place because the female students perceived Derek, to a certain extent, as implicated – by merit of being male – in the sexist ideologies and practices that stood against their interests as women. Perhaps ostracising Derek was a means for them to negotiate power in rehearsals in ways that both undermined any attempts Derek might make of asserting his authority as a man over them, and permitted them to serve Derek his come-uppance as a man. Following a confrontation between Olga and Derek, Olga asserted, “He can’t do whatever he wants to... I’m not putting up with his bullshit just because he’s a man!” (Fieldnotes 2003)

Generally, the women ostracised Derek by disparaging both his suggestions and his acting. For example, when Derek accidentally hit Olga with a bouquet of flowers, she accused him of carelessly hitting her with “that male energy of his” (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Horses and Angels*, 1/20/03). A similar situation occurred when we were working out the scene in which Bride and Groom bind their children in the wedding train:

We work on the scene for a bit. Then we establish how the parents should entangle the children in the train by improvising different movements. Olga becomes impatient with the improvisations and claims that Derek is not gentle enough when he flings the train across the stage.

Derek: [to Olga] I'm sick of your comments about me... I'm not gentle! You've hurt me flinging that train too... I'm not the only one!

Agnieszka: Enough... let's stop this... we should keep going.

With diminished enthusiasm, the actors continue improvising. In their first improvisation, the groom holds the girls by their hair, while the bride wraps them up in her train like in a cocoon. However, the fabric is very long and heavy, and the action looks clumsy. Olga once again accuses Derek of "not watching what he is doing." (Ibid., 2/04/03)

The female actors often patronisingly dismissed Derek's suggestions:

Derek: How about we have two women walking around... one is very feminine and the other one practically looks like a man... so the man ignores that woman who is looking like a man, and follows that other woman... and finally the first woman, the one that looks like a man, opens her shirt, and a huge stomach pops out... and then we see artificial boobs, and so on... I don't know!

Olga, Agnieszka, and Grazyna laugh, and I know they do not take Derek's suggestion seriously. Derek droops despondently, and gives up.

Olga: I think that we should show the body of a woman as all those things... that it has become all the things that it is being sold for . . . (Ibid., 1/23/03)

Olga, in particular, made derogatory comments about Derek's demeanour, which appeared to be aimed at undermining his masculinity:

The actors start waltzing together. Derek and Olga have some trouble with following the steps of the waltz. We spend the remaining minutes of the rehearsal working on the waltz. The waltz is challenging because the ghosts and the girls are joined together, with hands that are stretched out like wings. Olga continues criticising Derek's movement and calls his movements "chaotic"... and that it looks like he does not know what he wants to do. Then vitriolic, she says, "Just make a manly decision, which way you want to go!" Then she instructs him to use his hips more like a woman would, and she shows him the difference between how women and men walk. Derek starts mimicking the "feminine" way of walking. Olga is now pleased that he swings his hips more like a girl. We continue practising the waltz until the end of the rehearsal. (Ibid., 2/18/03)

As the above excerpts illustrate, the women ostracised Derek by referring to common male stereotypes – which they had earlier critiqued in the pre-rehearsal sessions – to deride his masculinity. Thus, he was rendered deficient either because he was “too stereotypically male,” or because he failed to live up to what they asserted to be the ideal of masculinity – an ideal, which in itself, was stereotypical. Derek, then, was either “too male,” or “not male enough:” he was not male enough because he was indecisive, whereas “real men made manly decisions;” or he was too male because he “hit with that male energy of his,” did not know how to “swing his hips like a girl”, or was not gentle enough. And although Agnieszka sometimes tried to mediate the conflicts between Derek and the other actors, this did little to remedy their mutual relations (Ibid., 2/04/03).

Derek, however, adopted his own strategy of dealing with the female students’ ostracising. While in the pre-rehearsal sessions he had tried to counteract the female students’ – and to a certain extent, my – claims to authority by challenging our generalisations of men-as-a-group, now during rehearsals, his strategy took on a different dimension. Although at times he challenged the female students’ insults, his strategy of subversion – passive aggression – usually entailed “staying cool.” “Staying cool”, for the most part, involved investing as little energy as possible into what went on in the studio, both in terms of politics and practical work:

Derek: We can show that those different body parts are being cut off, and then chopped with a knife, and sorted, and then ready for sale. I can come into the store, and the sales clerk can encourage me to buy something... she can say, “How can I help you?” And that way, we could establish where we are, and what we’re doing.

Grazyna: How about paying?

Agnieszka: I’m not sure... don’t you think that the mere situation of selling is not really explaining anything... what do you think?

Grazyna: I think that it does but we still...

Agnieszka: ...so are we doing it from this position?

Derek: I don’t know... I don’t care...(Ibid., 1/23/03)

Derek directed his “I don’t know... I don’t care...” at Agnieszka and Grazyna’s indifference to his suggestion about the scene. However, Derek’s “staying cool” went beyond his “I don’t know...I don’t care...” assertions; he also frequently adopted an “I don’t know... I don’t care” attitude in the tone of his voice, as well as in his demeanour. While this “tone” constituted a part of his attitudinal repertoire in our minute-to-minute interactions in the studio, he made it particularly apparent on one occasion, as he responded to Olga’s reprimand that he was “not doing things right:” he left the rehearsal room, dismissing Olga by sweeping his hands aside in a resigned “who gives a shit” gesture (Ibid., 2/04/03).

Unfortunately, the ambivalence Derek adopted in rehearsals, while possibly aimed at subverting the female actors’ ostracising, also, to a certain extent, compromised his own engagement with the project; and it perpetuated certain male stereotypes that the project had set out to contest; after all, the “I don’t know... I don’t care...” attitude Derek adopted lived up to clichés’ of men as “unemotional,” “in control,” or “uninterested in women’s issues.”

In Response – *Horses and Angels*

Dramatis Personae

Performed by

Groom.....Derek

Bride.....Olga

Daughter (initially Girl #2).....Agnieszka (originally performed by
Grazyna)

Son (initially Girl #1).....Shawn (originally performed by Agnieszka)

Bride and Groom commence the action by reciting wedding vows. Violence shatters the innocuousness of the ceremony as Groom forces himself onto Bride. While Bride sings a Polish lullaby, Daughter and Son emerge from beneath her wedding train, mockingly repeating the wedding vows. Bride and Groom begin sculpting their children after their own images. Initially Son and Daughter submit to their parents' expectations, but soon struggle to slip free from the reigns of gender stereotypes. Son and Daughter embark upon a journey in pursuit of "heaven" – a world of freedom and equality. Ready to take flight, crouching over the corpses of the past, Daughter and Son sing, "Heaven, we shall build heaven, upon a path of red roses." (see appendices H, I, and J)

Horses and Angels was publicly performed on March 21, 2003 (see appendix A) at the Cultural Centre for International Cooperation in the Arts in Elblag as part of the *National Festival of the Spoken Word: Is that Love?* As with *Dance as I Play You*, the Cultural Centre was responsible for audience recruitment. This time, however, the performance was advertised – as was the Festival – not only in Elblag’s local newspapers, local-regional television news programs, the Centre’s website, and on posters, but also in national newspapers, magazines, and television. The performance was promoted as an ethnographic theatre event, created by Shawn and me in collaboration with theatre students from the Cultural Centre. It was billed as a theatre piece “about” violence against women, and about society’s ideologies and norms that promote gender inequality in Poland.⁶¹

At the commencement of the performance, I read out the “Information Letter” regarding the audience’s consent to participate in the project, emphasising that I would be recording audience responses both in fieldnotes and on videotape. This time, Shawn and I once again did not conduct any systematic audience research; however, from our observations, we know that audience members were largely comprised of the participants’ parents, friends and acquaintances, and the general public. No employees from the Cultural Centre attended.⁶² The director of the Theatre Section informed me that numerous artists and visitors from various cities were present at the festival. Finally, a jury consisting of nationally and internationally renowned theatre and dance artists from Warsaw, Gdansk, and Wroclaw adjudicated our performance.

I observed and recorded – through fieldnotes – audience responses during the presentation of *Dance as I Play You*. While Shawn and I did not conduct a long-term ethnographic study or extensive interviews with audience members following the presentation of the performance,⁶³ we did manage to solicit some audience and participant responses immediately after, and in the weeks following, the performance’s public presentation. As in the case of the previous production, given the anecdotal character of the responses recorded, they cannot be generalisable beyond the situation.

A Personal Glimpse

My observations of, and reflections about, the performance, are reconstructed from fieldnotes recorded both during, and a few hours following, the performance. Observations appear below in standard font, reflections, in italics.

The actors are in their positions, waiting for the audience to come in. The Bride (Olga) and Groom (Derek) are kneeling downstage. They are frozen. Lifeless mannequins. Their expressive but subtle make-up reminds me of bride and groom marionettes I once saw in an artisan's shop in Venice.

Will such dead, marionette-like characterisations of the actors critique traditional conceptions of femininity, masculinity, and marriage? I can't relax. How are people going to receive this performance? Not many theatre pieces about gender are being done in Poland, as far as I know. Are we going to be labelled as feminists – in Poland a dangerous label indeed – and would this affect the verdict of the judges? The verdict of the judges! I said I wouldn't worry about it. But I am... because the actors are... because a lack of recognition could compromise their morale... this in turn could lessen their enthusiasm for the Roma project. And after all, I am human... and winning is not so bad, if it comes your way.

A large crowd of people walks in. They keep coming in for at least five minutes. We run out of seats. People are sitting everywhere, on the floor downstage, and along the walls. They carefully walk around the actors. Some scrutinise them. I look at the end of Bride's train. At the edge of it there is a mass, as yet, unidentified.

Sweat drips from the actors' foreheads. Are they going to handle the pressure of performing in front of such a large audience? Some audience members are loud, and comment on Olga's "dead look." I know she hears that.

The lights go down. It's fairly dark, feels like a church. A wedding at evening mass. The first words of the marriage oath are uttered. The audience is quiet. The first scene is spectacular and thought provoking. Beautifully dressed, but deadly looking, Bride and Groom swear, in a mechanical and distant manner, love and fidelity to each other. At the end of their pledge, in place of "so help me God," they utter, "so help me so." No God in their pledge. Why? I look at the audience. No reaction.

How will the audience interpret this scene here in Elblag? As a critique of the institution of marriage... the Sacrament of marriage? I'm anxious. What if I am accused of betraying my roots... of transferring middle-class Western women's experiences onto the experiences of women in postsocialist Poland... of assuming that their/my concerns are also the concerns of women here? What if the performance's call for liberating women and men from the bonds of traditional masculinity, and femininity is seen as a misinterpretation of Polish women's interests? Yes, we created the performance together, but will it be seen as collaborative research... a collaborative critique? Perhaps I should have recognised and revealed, by stopping the play mid-action... momentarily suspending the theatrical illusion... my relative privileged point-of-view. It is hard to do anthropology on one's own stage.

Derek is nervous. His voice is shaky, his breath rapid and shallow... he is sweating profusely. Olga seems to be "in control"... very relaxed... and her pacing is perfect. I hope her confidence will infect Derek.

Groom gets up, walks behind her, his face betraying tenderness. There is the sense that something is about to happen. He takes the bouquet of roses from her hands, raises it above her head... a moment, suspended in theatrical time... a time that can be thick and excruciating. I know what is to come, but I feel tense. It's like knowing that a balloon is about to pop, but being scared of the potential of getting startled. With the bouquet of roses, Groom pushes Bride violently to the ground. She collapses, then quickly assumes her horse posture, on her hands and knees, one fist out – her hoof. Bride is still whispering her vows, looking ahead. Groom walks back along the train, thrusting roses from side to side. I look at the audience. Nothing. Silence. I don't want to look at the jury... but I do. They sit still... expressionless.

Chanting ensues from the end of the train. The groom sits down on the mound as though he is mounting a horse... from beneath the train hands emerge. He rides the mound/horse in orgasmic ecstasy. His movements are legato, ending in a short staccato jerks... climax. Voices are heard coming from underneath the mound, repeating the oath sarcastically, precociously.

Groom gets up and starts walking towards Bride, his face intent and angry. He approaches her and mounts her. With agony etched upon her face, the Bride collapses

under his weight. He grabs her like a plaything and tosses her between his legs. I check the audience. Somebody is laughing. I'm not sure why.

Groom lifts Bride's legs, leans over and pushes her dress up her thighs, gently spreading her legs.

This scene makes me feel sick. Perhaps it is the gentleness with which he treats her at this point... yet she is like a plaything to him... I find that disturbing. And that assured expression on his face, his expression of superiority. I hate Groom, more than I hate Bride.

Some audience members whistle with delight.

It angers me. That's not what we intended. But on the other hand, I am aware that instead of critically engaging with the performance, some viewers will undoubtedly conceive of Bride as a sexual object, there for the pleasure of Groom, and for their own pleasure. It's inevitable in a patriarchal world, in which we are force-fed daily violent representations of women. And of course, there are a few audience members present that are barely eighteen. Perhaps, here we could have also broken the theatrical moment to confront the audience members about such representations of women... yet, that's not what the actors wanted. Also, should we really pontificate?

Groom is leaning over Bride, holding her legs open. The whites of his eyes are rolled back in ecstasy. The children begin emerging from underneath the train, making their way up towards Bride and Groom. They flop like fish on dry land, gasping for air. I look at the audience. Nothing.

Perhaps they are wondering who the emerging figures are. What do they think about the train extending from Bride's head to extreme upstage?

The birth scene. Daughter (Agnieszka) and Son (Shawn) fully emerge from beneath Bride's legs as she sings "From the Ashes an Ember is Flickering at Voytush".

This old Polish lullaby for a second transports me back to my childhood. Childhood – commonly believed to be a time of freedom and innocence. And yet so many expectations are being shovelled down children's throats, about how to be "proper girls" and "proper boys." There is so much, but also so little, that children can do. It's good that the ember in the song dies... perhaps Daughter and Son can rekindle that ember, and tell other stories.

Olga is singing in an unusually low register. It is not how she usually sings the song.

Why does Olga sing like this? Nerves? Dry throat? I don't know...but I like this "unfeminine" register.

Groom lifts his wife up by her hands. She continues singing. Enchanted by the song, the children are drawn towards Bride's breasts. They continue sucking... gasping for air. Now they notice the world beyond, slide away from Bride, and mesmerised, stare at the audience. Bride is frozen, resting her head against Groom's knee. The children run up to the audience. I hear someone whisper, "They'll run right into us."

The audience expects the illusion to be broken, maybe. In Polish theatre that's not unusual. But is the illusion broken here? The actors are directly looking at the audience. But I don't feel looked at by the actors. It's the characters that are looking at me. Directly looking at the audience does not necessarily break the theatrical illusion. I look at the audience. They don't seem to be very uncomfortable. They remain in the comfort of illusion.

Groom yanks Bride up by the hair. Son and Daughter wait for the audience to respond. Nothing. Silence. Son and Daughter realise their nakedness, shamefully cover their bodies, and huddle towards each other. The parents, with a quick staccato movement, faces betraying determination, scoop Son and Daughter over to centre stage. Bride takes off her slip, Groom, his outer jacket, and they carefully clothe Son and Daughter. The actors perform the action in a few staccato movements, rather quickly. They clothe their children in ideology... norms...stereotypes... expectations.

I am impressed with Olga and Derek's performances. It is hard to remove clothing like that so quickly and gracefully. But I wish Agnieszka and Shawn showed, with their bodies, the discomfort of Son and Daughter being dressed. I think Agnieszka had mentioned this at some point in rehearsals, but somehow we didn't follow up.

The children are dressed. The parents look them over with great satisfaction. Groom reaches over to Son's jacket, adjusts it to perfection. The children stand frozen. Then their bodies bow... compress under the weight of the clothes.... under the burden of parental/societal expectations.

Bride tears the train from her head. Groom picks up the far end of the train... they pull it taut across the stage, then brutally flap it... enchanted, Son and Daughter, are drawn into it. I hear someone remark, "Neat!"

I wonder if powerful visual images in a performance, images that "look neat," can actually distract a person from engaging critically with the content. Are audience members asking questions, or admiring the "beauty" of the scene? Or maybe they are doing both?

Son and Daughter walk into the train. Bride and Groom swoop the train over their heads, cover them from torso to feet, and then gently cocoon them in the train, squeezing their bodies together tighter and tighter, eventually pressing them onto their knees. The silhouettes of Son and Daughter's bodies are visible through the train. Bride and Groom ensnare Son and Daughter in a slow, enchanting movement. Hypnotised, Son and Daughter are sucked into a net of stereotypes. Proudly, Bride and Groom stand behind Son and Daughter forcing them further into the ground. Son and Daughter feel the discomfort of their bondage... resist being forced to the ground. Bride and Groom have Daughter and Son repeat, "I pledge to be a woman/ I pledge to be a man."

Agnieszka and Shawn are delivering their lines differently today. Before, there was passive enchantment in the tones of their voices. We wanted to stress how people are often "enchanted" into society's norms. But now the actors are delivering their lines with a touch of sarcasm. Why? We were once talking in rehearsal about Kantor's illusion breaking techniques. His actors, while enacting passivity with their bodies commented with their voices – often by means of sarcasm – on the passivity of their performance. An interesting effect. Perhaps the actors are now playing with it.

Bride and Groom bind Son and Daughter tighter and tighter... strangling them with the train. As their bondage becomes more unbearable, Son and Daughter attempt to break free. Son succeeds... he wrenches himself away from the train.

What does it mean when Son succeeds and Daughter doesn't? Initially, we developed the scene for two female performers. When Shawn replaced Grazyna, we decided to have Son break free, and Daughter remain ensnared, to foreground Daughter's particular degradation as a woman. We also wanted to stress that there were always more chances for men to "break free," due to the unequal distribution of power

between men and women in Polish society. However, having Son successfully break away from the bondages of gender oppression risks perpetuating the stereotypes of men as agents, and women as passive victims/objects. The performance, thus, while resisting certain hegemonic ideologies and practices, might, inadvertently, be perpetuating others.

Some audience members remark, “Wow!”

I am certain they are responding to the actors' performances, and not necessarily the content.

Son breaks free and flees downstage, back to the audience. His arms are straight back... as he crouches forward, he says, “I want to fly... do you hear me? I want to fly!”

Shawn delivers the text in a very soft, shaky and irresolute tone of voice. I think it works. He communicates the fear and alienation of challenging ones norms.

Groom struggles to restrain Daughter. Now envious of Son's emancipation, Daughter chastises Son, as he shouts out “I want to fly,” by spitting back his vow “I pledge to be a man ...always.” She attempts to shame him into returning.

Why is Daughter, who a few moments earlier was trying so desperately to break free from Bride's train, now siding with Bride and Groom? We discussed this contradiction in rehearsal. The actors wanted to show that at times people live by certain ideologies and norms, even though they resent them and see them as restrictive. People are afraid to confront and challenge what they live by. They are afraid of not being accepted by the majority, or of compromising their own comfort.

The Son's word “high” turns into a piercing scream of desperation. He eventually collapses under the chastising of Daughter, Bride, and Groom, as they drown him out with his old vow.

Why are his “wings” low to the ground? We blocked the scene in a way that Son holds his wings high up in the air, as if ready to take flight. Perhaps Shawn, by struggling to raise his hands up, wants to stress the effort it takes to “take flight.”

Bride and Groom are now binding Daughter with the train. With immense pleasure, Groom sculpts Daughter into a horse. She stands on all fours. He turns her fist outward... now a hoof. Her hoof angrily stomps to the ground. Bride and Groom, stroking and caressing Daughter, are commenting on her elegance, her nobility, her youthfulness... “what fine teeth... smile.” The audience laughs.

Two things are striking here. First, the performers again are using sarcasm as a means of commenting on the actions of the characters. Perhaps they are trying to counteract the audience's laughter to highlight the tragedy, pathos and hopelessness of the scene. Second, Bride and Groom forcing Daughter to smile rings particularly true in Poland, where young women are often chastised by strangers for not smiling. Walking through a park, I have often been prompted by passers-by that a "nice lady should always smile." I was told that a lot as a child, too. The actors also recognise that in Poland women are encouraged to smile.

Bride now jumps onto Daughter's back, throws her right arm over Groom, and ceremoniously removes her stilettos, dangles them tauntingly before Daughter, and drops them in front of Daughter's face.

I love the sound the shoes make when they drop to the floor. Such a heavy, sharp sound. Heavy shoes. The heavy load of expectations Daughter will have to carry as a woman. In Poland, many people often argue that feminism is only relevant in "Muslim countries" where women are "veiled." But not in Poland. Here women are free. They choose to wear stilettos if they wish to. Muslim women are forced to cover their faces. Thus, Polish women are endowed with agency, Muslim women with passivity. But how about a Muslim woman who chooses to wear the hijab as a means of resisting colonial rule... of escaping the male gaze...of exercising her choice?

A woman sitting beside me says to her friend, "that's what's being done to us." I look at her. She looks at me. Bride and Groom now each grab one of Daughter's legs, and haul them up. Daughter is standing on her hands in high heels, a smile plastered onto her face. The audience laughs. In some strange way the scene is funny.

Funny is the absurdity of our lives, our norms, our ideologies that transform us into horses. The irony of this scene is unmistakable.

Bride praises the obedience and agility of her Horse/Daughter. Daughter obediently, but with anger/resentment, slams her shoed hand against the floor. Groom makes clicking sounds with his lips. He encourages Horse/Daughter to walk.

This scene blatantly speaks to the objectification of women in society. Reigned and shoed, women are forced to trot back and forth to satisfy the sensibilities of

heterosexual pleasure. But there is anger...an anger that makes the shoe slam against the floor. From that anger, perhaps, action can arise... a protest... a change.

Bride and Groom trot Horse/Daughter from one wall to the other. As they walk, they sing an old Polish song, "Once a Krakowiak had Seven Horses." They violently toss Daughter's legs to the ground emotionlessly. Child's play. Slowly, Daughter rises up and slams her shoes against the wall several times. Oblivious, Bride and Groom stand frozen, enchanted, enjoying their play. The sequence repeats with Horse/Daughter ending up at the opposite wall.

The light tone of the song makes me joyful... and sad. When I was a little girl, my grandfather bought me a rocking horse. The horse is the only thing I clearly remember of him. I would sit on the horse, and rock, and rock as he sang to me... and in bed, his song about the Krakowiak would rock me to sleep. The song talks about war... and about a Krakowiak losing his horses. But this is not where my joy springs from... it's the melody, and my vague memories of my grandfather. The irony in this scene is poignant.

Daughter freezes. Bride and Groom turn away from her. They walk side-by-side upstage to opposite sides of the stage, and recede behind the black curtains. Son awakens. Slowly, he rises up and comes over to Daughter, who is frozen, leaning against the wall. He stands over her back, his hands touching hers... almost as though he wants to fit his hands into hers.

A tender moment. Man shows empathy for the suffering of woman. Also, their interaction is not meant to be sexual. We wanted to stress that a relationship between a man and a woman could be imagined beyond sexual terms. Now I am not sure whether this scene is entirely free from sexual innuendo. He stands over her back. She is a woman... he is a man. They are in a world of compulsory heterosexuality.

Son and Daughter stand as one, frozen. Daughter collapses... drops to the floor. A dead log. I hear someone say, "My God, that really scared me!" I look at the audience. They sit engrossed in the action. Son tenderly examines Daughter. He takes hold of her ankles, and excruciatingly drags her, facedown, to centre stage.

This scene makes me shiver, its silence, slow pacing, and scratching of high heels dragged across the floor.

Son touches Daughter's head tenderly, and tells her, "I'm flying high across the sky." Daughter's eyes are wide open. Looking ahead, she tells him that he is an Angel, and that he should only "breathe heaven," because here on Earth, Angels' wings are being torn off.

Perhaps Daughter died. I never thought of that before. Does the audience think she is dead? Do they think an Angel is taking her to heaven? But then, it would mean that everything that happens afterwards, in some sense, is not real. Such interpretation, though, would take the agency away from Daughter and Son and weaken one of the ideas we wanted to express: although we are situated within, and constrained by, various social forces, we are still beings with agency.

Son shakes the shoes out from Daughter's hands, and says, "Let's go to Heaven."

I think this scene risks an interpretation in which one might see the man as rescuing the woman from the bondage of the world... intimations of a Cinderella story. When we were developing the scene, however, both characters were female... now with Son, different meanings emerge. But perhaps the audience will see more than a man rescuing a woman. Perhaps. Yet, any conceptualisation beyond gender in a gendered world is an oxymoron.

Son slides Daughter under his legs. As she stands, he tears the wedding train from her, desperately, impatiently. He gathers it in a few staccato movements, looks at it, and throws it away. Daughter stands frozen looking ahead. The audience is quiet. Son takes Daughter's hand, stands by her side. They crouch together, hands raised behind them skyward. They slowly spin in a circle and sing, "To heaven... I'm going to heaven."

Agnieszka's transition here is weak. She goes directly from indifference to an awareness of what is going on. She forgot the "confusion" moment. The song works well, however. I like how Shawn and Agnieszka inflate their voices, in a sort of an old Polish village sliding modulation... by throwing a "hook" in their voices at the end of each line sung. I don't know why I have chosen this particular modulation. No reason, I think. It just fits the show. Perhaps it could be one more invitation for the audience to construct novel meanings about the performance.

While Son and Daughter are standing and singing, Bride and Groom emerge from the curtains as Ghosts. Their heads are covered, arms outstretched... they are wailing

over Son and Daughter. The song reaches a climactic pitch... then they all freeze. An audience member asks, "Who are they?" Someone answers, "They are in heaven." Son and Daughter look around. They are delighted with what they see. Then their delight slips away from their faces. Daughter asks, "Is this Heaven?" Son responds, "Heaven." "Only corpses are here," ponders Daughter. "Corpses...but they have wings!" answers Son. Son and Daughter approach the corpses, and gently touch them. They stir... nearly fall... then regain their balance. The Ghosts begin gathering roses off the floor, as Son and Daughter watch mesmerised. The Ghosts seductively hold out the roses towards Son and Daughter.... seduced by the beauty of the flowers, Son and Daughter walk over to the Ghosts.

Even those who stand up against inequality and injustice fall prey to hegemonic norms and practices. Son and Daughter are seduced by "eye candy."

The Ghosts mercilessly stuff the roses into Son's and Daughter's mouths. They begin waltzing with them... the pairs slowly spin/float in circles. They are humming, "To heaven, I am going to heaven," deceptively to Son and Daughter... to seduce them back to their own worldviews... ideas... expectations. No reaction from the audience.

The Ghosts have now caught Son and Daughter, pulling their slip/jacket over their heads. They too have now become ghosts. Son and Daughter are struggling to break free, but merely in vain. The Ghosts ride Son and Daughter like horses.

For the actors, this scene speaks of the insidiousness of stereotypes, which lurk in various places, waiting to seduce us to dance an intoxicating waltz.

Son and Daughter's bodies occasionally wince in pain as the Ghosts' "reigns" slash their faces. They obsessively repeat a distorted version of an old Polish children's rhyme, "Clippity-clop... clippity-clop... we're off to the land of corpses." They have been lulled to sleep... but then a thought, sound, or perhaps a movement snaps them out of it... they decide to escape and build their own heaven, beyond the reigns of the Ghosts. "We'll build our own heaven upon the Dead!"

Son and Daughter gently slip out from the Ghosts' reigns. They pull the Ghosts centre stage and drop them to the ground. The Ghosts collapse like a pile of old bones. Son and Daughter slowly get up, and in one fierce, sharp movement, cast their clothes upon the Ghosts. They look at them, and then at the train scattered upon the ground.

They walk up to the train, grab at it desperately, and unfurl it. As they approach the Ghosts, with the train in their hands, they sing, “Heaven, we shall build heaven.” They each pick up a rose and toss it upon the Ghosts. Then standing over the corpses, they crouch, hands extending back skyward. The Ghosts’ arms reach up, attempting to haul Son and Daughter down to join them. Eventually they release them and repeat the action sequence three times. Each time the pitch of the song intensifies, as Son and Daughter try to break free. The struggle is nearly impossible, as the Ghosts of the past hold steadfast. The singing of Son and Daughter tapers to nothing. The lights fade to dark. The audience claps... cheers.

Son and Daughter’ song continues ringing in my head... I feel strange... a kind of relief and disbelief that it’s all done... also sadness, because there is so much of me in this performance... my thoughts, feelings, ideas, beliefs, and struggles with gender inequality... truly, our ethnographic accounts are as much about ourselves as they are about our research participants.

A Wider View

Immediately following the public presentation of *Horses and Angels* on March 21, 2003, several audience members – men and women of various ages – came up to me to discuss the performance. As with *Dance as I Play You*, the audience members primarily spoke about the performance as a theatre event. A small number of people who addressed the play's content saw it as a critique of modern humanity, an interrogation of Poland's socialist past and postsocialist present, a profanation of Polish values and beliefs, and a critique of gender inequality and violence against women. The actors primarily spoke about competing in the festival, and the audience responses to the performance. As nobody from the Cultural Centre had attended our performance, we did not receive any immediate feedback from our colleagues, or from any of the centre's directors.

Those who talked about the play's theatrical aspects admired the artistic quality of the performance, its visual impact, its expressivity, and the acting. One woman, a renowned physical theatre director from Gdansk, praising the actors' high level of achievement in the play, referred to them as "Grotowskian" performers.

Audience members who perceived the performance as a critique of modern humanity argued that *Horses and Angels* questioned our "narrow-mindedness" and "small thinking" (Fieldnotes 2003). The director from Gdansk, for example, observed that the performance was not about gender inequality, but rather, addressed human beings' progressive enslavement to their own stereotypes and narrow-mindedness. Others shared her view:

Man 1: The next time you show *Horses And Angels*, you should change the write-up in your program notes... you shouldn't say that it [the performance] explores gender relations in Poland... you should say that the play looks at the incarcerating power of the human mind. We're so proud of our grand achievements in technology and science... but we forget that we are often prisoners of our own small-mindedness. (Ibid.)

Woman 1: Was your performance based on Milosz's [Polish philosopher, writer] book *Captive Mind*? I see so many parallels to your play... you know, how Milosz talks about how modern man has allowed himself to be seduced by dogma... to accept Totalitarianism merely for the promises of dogma... promises of a better world. Your call to free our minds from emotional thinking... to seek more objectivity... that is so true... we can't continue to allow ourselves to be swallowed up by pretty dogma. (Ibid.)

Spectators, for whom the performance was an interrogation of Poland's socialist past, largely pointed out that the play spoke of the enslavement of people's minds from "all those years of censorship... of brainwashing the communists put [Poles] through" (Ibid.).

A small group of young men in their late teens saw the performance as challenging Poland's postsocialist present, and argued that the performance – although it raised issues of gender inequality – above all spoke about the Poland of today that sits beneath the spectre of American and EU imperial politics:

Man 2: Once again we wear another country's reigns, but this time, the reigns don't come from out East... they come from the West. Just look... now the Polish government's joining America in its war against Iraq!

Man 3: There's no way we can talk of freedom here... Poland's been bought by American corporations... we're living through our fifth partition.

Man 4: You live in Canada! Your play should've criticised the West's exploitation of the Third World... even Canada's... Canadians shouldn't feel so good about their ridiculous ideas about being neutral... that's ridiculous! (Ibid.)

One older woman, who spoke about the performance in terms of the past and the present, argued that the play was a retelling of all the lies and defeats to which Poles had been subjected, as Poland was tossed from one political system to another:

Woman 2: I think the play was about all those lies Poles have been told by so many different governments since the war [WWII]... they leave you brainwashed... hopeless... no one knows what to think anymore, and no one cares to think anything. In the forties, the communists promised to free us from the shackles of capitalism... in the nineties, they promised to free us from communism... nothing's changed for us... but for politicians, money falls from the sky! I Like those characters [in the performance]: "I feel like escaping." But where to? For me... for us... there's no escape... and the next generation will create a more horrifying order based on more horrifying lies, because all young people today are only concerned about money! (Ibid.)

Yet for others, like one elderly woman, the play was nothing more than a profanation of marriage, the Catholic Church, and Polish values:

Woman 3: Your play profanes marriage... it's a sacrilege... it's easy to criticise Catholic marriages, because everyone else is doing it, but the future of the world depends on us to respect the sanctity of marriage. Those Canadian ideas of free love you've imported... I don't believe in them. And other Poles won't buy those ideas, either. Poles naturally have strong values, and a respect for the family. Your play follows today's fashion... everybody thinks it's fashionable to criticise Catholicism in Poland... but the time will come when they'll return to the church. (Ibid.)

People who considered the performance to be a dialogue on gender inequality talked about popular stereotypes of femininity and masculinity in Poland, as well as current Polish attitudes toward feminism. A former theatre student of the Cultural Centre, and my friend from Canada who had been an actor with Teatr Korzenie for several years, addressed the performance's representation of gender inequality in the following terms:

Friend: I think the show succeeded in talking about gender inequality in Poland. There are so many stereotypes about gender here... and women are exploited because of that... it's not going to be easy for them [women] to break free from these stereotypes. Here they're seen as the weaker sex... fragile... sex objects. People here are so restricted by traditional ideas of marriage... of what men and women should do. Feminism here is a dirty word! In Canada, things are so much better for women... we've managed to fight for so much.

Former Student: I agree that the situation for women in Poland is bad... and what's worse, nobody's talking about it, or doing anything. Lots of people say, "Who needs feminism here?" And anybody who supports feminism does it because that's what the West is doing... but that started with socialist propaganda... back then communists said that feminism was necessary in America, because women were locked up in houses cleaning kitchens and rocking babies... and they said that women here were emancipated long ago... and people still believe that today... but it's not true... things aren't so equal. I think the jury won't like your play... they probably have an older mentality about feminism... like everybody else here. (Ibid.)

According to another group of young women and men, it was important to have feminist art, such as *Horses and Angels*, in Poland because so many women suffered violence. Yet they also stressed that one had to be careful because feminist ideas, albeit important, might detract from more pressing issues in Poland, such as economic instability. While it was important that issues of gender inequality were at the forefront

of political agendas in certain Asian and Muslim countries, they argued that in Poland there were still more pressing issues to be dealt with first.

Immediately after the performance, the actors were very anxious. The verdict of the jury was on everybody's minds. They were convinced that we would lose because the thematic content of *Horses and Angels* would not be a "big hit" with the jury (Ibid.). Yet they admitted that the performance had been very popular with some audience members. They also recognised that people spoke primarily about the theatrical aspects of the performance. A few people who addressed the play's content, according to the actors, recognised that *Horses and Angels* spoke of sexism and violence against women; but the actors also pointed out that for a larger number of attendees, the performance was about the condition of the human race at the dawn of the new millennium. The actors admitted they had anticipated such responses, as not many people in Elblag were familiar with debates about gender.

Over the weeks following the performance of *Horses and Angels*, I also recorded the responses of various audience members, actors, and Cultural Centre employees. While once again most people commented primarily on the performance as a theatre event, some did address its themes, especially Poland's gender inequality under capitalism. One of the most interesting discussions I had was with a group of young women whose interpretations of the performance were rather unique:

Woman 4: In Poland, discrimination against women has increased since communism fell... our socialist state has managed to breed the worst type of capitalist... a capitalist who thinks everything's his property, including women.

Woman 5: Under communism, many people didn't have basic things... and now with capitalism, so many things are available... and what's become most important is to own those things. And women are viewed as a thing... something to be owned... controlled.

Woman 6: I know that in the West, a woman is treated like an object... but there's a strong force against that... there's feminism... and feminists have won many rights for women in the West. Here in Poland, it's the opposite... feminism is not very big... there's only small groups in larger universities thinking about these things. (Ibid.)

Other responses Shawn and I gleaned from audience members, participants, and Cultural Centre employees primarily touched upon *Horses and Angels*' participation in the festival's competition. On the day we were awaiting the jury's verdict, some audience members told the actors they believed that *Horses and Angels* should be the winner of the Festival's Grand Prix, because we had managed to create a performance of high artistic and intellectual calibre. Yet some argued the performance did not stand a chance of winning because it was "too physical," and because it dealt with issues that were "too difficult" (Ibid.).

When we learned that the performance had not won any recognition from the jury, there were a variety of responses from the actors, various audience members, and the Cultural Centre's employees. The opinions among the actors were divisive. Olga and Grazyna argued that although the performance might have been artistically superb, the theme of the performance was "too obscure" to be appreciated in Poland, particularly in Elblag (Ibid.). They regretted we had not chosen a different theme, as our work would have been more appreciated, and in turn, more worthwhile. They also blamed the lack of recognition on a biased jury who supported the same theatre groups every year. While Agnieszka admitted she was disappointed with the verdict, she found the whole situation to be very indicative of how mainstream theatre culture marginalised feminist works. According to Derek, the performance did not gain any recognition in the festival due to its subject matter, and also, its physical style of representation.

Both Shawn and I heard many contrasting opinions from audience members as to why *Horses and Angels* had not won at the festival. Some people claimed that the jury was extremely conservative, and was notorious for its prejudices against "Grotowskian" theatre in particular. Others argued that in Poland, feminist performances would never gain recognition in mainstream theatre festivals, as chauvinist men and women often adjudicated them. Some even claimed they had heard gossip circulating among participants of the festival that the members of the jury found no merit in our performance, both theatrically and thematically, as they believed it was "too obscure," and expressed "radical, unsupported feminist sentiments" (Ibid.). Yet others explained that *Horses and Angels* was snubbed mainly because of nepotism. They believed that in a

festival where the awards were monetarily substantial, adjudicators preferred to support their own students.

The responses from the Cultural Centre were initially articulated in practical terms. In the immediate days following the festival, nobody from the Cultural Centre in Elblag approached either Shawn or me about *Horses and Angels*, but we almost immediately began feeling the consequences of the jury's verdict. While the Cultural Centre had fully financed *Horse and Angels*, the majority of the Centre's funding for our Roma project was withdrawn. At first, nobody from the Centre's executive offices personally spoke to me, but I heard about the Centre's retraction of funds from fellow employees."⁶⁴ Eventually, however, the director of the Theatre Section informed me that the Centre would only support the Roma project by providing me with rehearsal space and limited technical support during the dress rehearsal and public presentations of the performance. The Centre's director was leaving, she explained, and the current assistant director was not willing to support the Roma project, both due to the Centre's financial woes, and because it was my doctoral thesis project, not a regular part of the Centre's theatre season. Finally, a few days later, the director of the Theatre Section informed me that the Centre was facing bankruptcy, and that it could therefore no longer employ Shawn as an instructor; and that my contract would not be renewed past September 2003 (Ibid.).

Shawn's "dismissal" was a devastating blow to the actors from both groups. Together they wrote a formal letter of complaint to the assistant director, in which they demanded a justification for Shawn's dismissal. The assistant director did not respond to the letter; but when the students approached him one day as he was leaving his office, he explained that due to the unstable finances of the Centre, he could no longer fund Shawn's salary (Ibid.).

A few days later, I met with both the Centre's assistant director and the artistic director of the Spoken Arts Section to discuss future plans. The assistant director asked the Spoken Arts director to assume some of Shawn's responsibilities, but she refused, explaining that this was not her area of expertise. She also insisted that he provide an explanation as to why Shawn had been dismissed. While the director initially blamed a lack of financial resources, he eventually admitted that he could no longer support two

instructors [Shawn and me] whose productions were not generating results. He conceded he was a dance choreographer, not a theatre specialist; yet he trusted the opinions of the festival's jury – all acclaimed theatre critics – who maintained my work lacked any artistic value. When I countered that artistic merit should not always be measured in terms of popularity, as the process itself was significant, and that my students had found much value in working on *Horses and Angels*, he agreed, and explained that was why he was allowing me to work as an instructor through September. But he qualified that he could not support my Roma project financially, as the Centre could not afford to sponsor yet another one of my “difficult” projects (Ibid.). As a concession, he offered that Shawn, albeit without financial remuneration, could continue teaching his theatre section until the public presentation of his performance, *The Cinderella Project: Prometheus Rebound*, at the beginning of May 2003.

The combination of the jury's verdict and Shawn's impending release significantly compromised the actors' morale. They no longer seemed enthusiastic about the Roma project, and Olga and Grazyna were even considering leaving our theatre troupe. They were concerned that the subject matter of our next project, “Violence and Roma Women,” would draw similar responses as *Horses and Angels*. Some actors, though, like Agnieszka and Gosia, were more enthusiastic, and argued that regardless of the judges' verdict, they still thought our work was important. In the end, however, none of the actors withdrew from the Roma project, although some of them never regained the enthusiasm they had held for doing ethnographic theatre in *Dance as I Play You*, and *Horses and Angels*.

Horses and Angels continued to have an effect on some of the actors' and audience members' lives long after I returned to Canada. Agnieszka and Maria, for instance, informed me, through email, that the project had made them more aware of gender relations in their lives. After I left, they initiated discussions about feminism, violence against women, and sexism with many of their friends and family members, some of whom had also begun to critically engage with issues of gender inequality. Some of my friends and family members also said they had been further questioning sexism in Poland since seeing our theatre production. One family member pointed out that she had become more aware of gender inequality in the elementary school where she taught, and

had noticed how society was indoctrinating boys and girls with traditional gender expectations. A friend said she had noticed in her workplace that attractive female secretaries were both office administrators and ornaments for their male bosses. Finally, some people who had initially argued that there was no gender inequality in Poland later conceded that they had started to notice some instances of discrimination based on gender. For example, a friend, who worked at a bank, complained of the sexism she had begun to notice in many of her fellow male employees, and how it influenced their attitudes towards clients: men enjoyed preferential treatment, and were granted credit more often than women.

Chapter 8

Excursion #3...

Hope

The process of developing and producing an ethnographic theatre performance with the Roma women in Elblag consisted of five stages: the initial building of rapport; learning about the Roma women's lives through participant observation, informal conversations, interviews and life stories/histories, and joint pre-rehearsal sessions with Roma women and non-Roma actors; rehearsals; public presentations; and participant/audience responses. In this chapter, I first discuss the three initial stages, and then look at the actual performances and follow-up discussions.

Building Rapport

Randia was the first woman I visited after returning to Elblag in July 2002. She was the elderly woman I had encountered the previous summer with Ana and Wlodek. I visited her first because I had forgotten where Ana and Wlodek lived, and I still had Randia's address in my notebook. I remember clearly the day I knocked on Randia's door. I was a little apprehensive, as it had been a year since we last spoke. I brought a bag of meats and chocolates as a courtesy. A man answered and informed me that Randia was out, and that I should come back in a few hours. However, when I introduced myself as an anthropology student from Canada who was studying the current situation of Roma in Poland, he invited me in. He introduced himself as Robert, one of Randia's sons. Another man in the house was Randia's son-in-law, Marek. Both men, without any encouragement from me, began talking over one another about the discrimination, physical violence, and hatred they experienced on a daily basis in Elblag.

Soon Randia walked in and – to my surprise – immediately recognised me. She did not show much enthusiasm, however, and only mentioned that she was tired from the day’s fruitless efforts at fortune telling. After drinking some water, she asked me if I still wanted to do research with them. When I explained my research plans for the coming year, Randia and her sons reiterated that Elblag would not be a good field location for me. They said the few Roma who did live in the city would not be interested in developing a theatre performance. Robert and Marek suggested that the Roma communities of Olsztyn or Ostroda (see appendix B) might be more enthusiastic about my project.

As in the previous year, I once again sensed that they were not very interested in my research. When they began bombarding me with questions about my background and motives, I became convinced that they did not trust me. From time to time, they spoke among themselves in Romani, excluding me completely from their discussions. While I felt discouraged, I was determined to give myself enough time to gain their trust and develop rapport. Surprisingly, Randia and her sons invited me to return another day, and offered to talk to me about anything I might want to know about their lives. It may have been only a polite invitation, as in Poland it is generally considered a courtesy to invite one’s guests back; or perhaps they hoped I would bring them more food. However, I took it as a sincere invitation to come back. I really had no other choice.

Initially, however, I mainly visited with Randia while she was fortune telling at the park by the tramline. It was there that she started introducing me to other Roma women. At first, they showed no interest in my project – or that I was going to write “some kind of a book about them” and develop a performance based on their lives. Even when I suggested that I might be able to pay them each a stipend for participating in the play, nobody showed any interest. According to the women, they could not spare the time, they lacked the necessary education to participate, and there was too much infighting among them.

Although discouraged, I continued visiting the women by the tramline on a regular basis for about a month. Gradually, they began warming up to me. Randia was particularly friendly, and spoke in favourable terms about me to the other women. As I stood there hour after hour with the women on the sidewalk, and the trams passing by, we left behind any mention of the project and instead chatted like close acquaintances,

discussing our lives, or recent gossip. The women particularly enjoyed talking about my life, and sometimes I spent hours unloading my personal baggage. “Don’t think that only YOU can ask questions!” Ana frequently taunted me nonchalantly. At times, I altogether forgot that I was doing research; yet at the end of the day, I ended up with very rich fieldnotes.

I think that some of the most interesting research occurs when we forget that we are actually doing fieldwork, and stop trying to conceal the involvement of our own “self” in the research process. Ana’s reminder that I bore no special privilege in asking questions pointed towards what is now common knowledge in anthropology, and what research participants have long demanded – that the ethnographer’s “self” becomes an object of scrutiny in the same way that our research renders as ‘objects’ those with whom we interact in the field (Crick 1992, 175). We need to acknowledge in our writings and in the field that the fieldwork “is not carried out from the door of one’s tent;” instead, it is a process based in dialogue and debate, through which the ethnographer and research participants together create ethnography (Hastrup, 1992, 118).

After the first month of hanging out with the Roma women by the tramline, I began visiting Randia (aged 57) at her flat frequently. She shared the flat – in a pre-war apartment block – with her daughter Zefiryňa (25), her son-in-law Marek (32), and their daughter Marta (9). The block was dilapidated, with the stairs leading to their third floor flat full of gaping holes, patched over with scraps of linoleum. Their living space was a marginal improvement from the corridor, and was heated by an old-fashioned ceramic woodstove. Randia was a widow, and had eight adult children. All of her children lived in Elblag, although two of her sons were currently in prison for robbery, vandalism, and assault. Under communism, she had worked as a cleaner. Before her husband died in a car accident, she had separated from him, and subsequently raised her children on her own, never to remarry. Her health was poor: she suffered from heart disease and diabetes. She now lived off a government disability pension, which was almost 500 zloty (\$200 cdn) per month. Randia also received foster support monies from the government for raising her granddaughter, Marta. Randia became her guardian because Marta’s mother, Zefiryňa, had been a minor when Marta was born. Randia was also trying to supplement her income by fortune telling, which was not very lucrative.

Zefiryna and Marek had no stable sources of income. They were unable to find employment, and were not eligible for welfare. Zefiryna occasionally did some petty trading that brought in a nominal amount of money, but Marek generated virtually no income for the household. Marta, an only child, attended public school, and although she was approaching ten, she was still in grade one. A family with limited resources, they often had to be very creative when putting food on the table. Generally, it was Randia's pension and meagre earnings from fortune telling that sustained the entire family, and her resourcefulness ensured they rarely went hungry.

Meanwhile, I also began visiting another family on a regular basis. Ana (38) lived in her mother's flat with her third husband, Wlodek (38), her mother Agata (53), and her children Kacper (20), Maciek (9), Gabrysia (6), and Franek (4). Ana had applied a few years ago for subsidised housing, but had not yet received placement when I began visiting her. Her mother had been diagnosed with schizophrenia. According to Ana, her mother's health was deteriorating, in large part, because she refused medical intervention. Ana's husband was rarely home, as he travelled to other cities trading electronic equipment and cars, although officially, he was unemployed. Ana's eldest son, Kacper, was living with her because he had recently divorced, and being unemployed, could not afford his own flat. Ana had five children in all; the two oldest boys, Kacper and Slawek, had different fathers.

The block in which Ana's family lived when I first met her was similar to Randia's. However, the conditions were much worse. The interior was literally crumbling, with walls collapsing into one another. There was only a toilet in their flat, so they had to wash themselves in a basin. Ana had a strained relationship with her mother. She claimed her mother, because of her illness, was abusive, and was perpetually throwing the family out of the apartment. Ana was unemployed, but she was trying to earn some money from petty trading in nearby villages, and through fortune telling. Wlodek also contributed to the family income through his trading activities. Ana developed a blood clot in her lungs after giving birth to her youngest son, and had since been suffering from chronic lung and heart problems. She also suffered from "nervous attacks." Ana was not sending her children to school, as she believed it would be impossible for them to attend classes every day due to the frequent evictions they endured

from her mother. Ana finally managed to rent a flat in December 2002. Although it was in no better condition than her mother's place – there was only a communal bathroom in the block, and the walls were covered in mould – Ana was grateful to be living away from her mother. She was planning to send her children to school in September 2003.

Soon Randia introduced me to Ana's sister, Nelka (28). Nelka lived in a derelict, pre-World War II row-housing complex with her husband, Sebastian (late 30s), and her four children, Adam (12), Jurek (10), Kornelia (6), and Antos (3). The City of Elblag had recently condemned the housing complex, and would demolish it in the near future. Nelka was unemployed and, like other Roma women I met, engaged in petty trading and occasionally fortune telling. Her husband was not involved in any form of employment or trade. All of Nelka's children were attending school. Her two oldest boys were in a special education school, since their former school's psychologist diagnosed them with learning disabilities and identified addiction problems, primarily glue sniffing. Kornelia was attending kindergarten in a regular public school. Nelka was very ill, suffering from high blood pressure, "nervous attacks," and alcoholism. The family was under constant scrutiny from family services due to earlier charges of child abuse and negligence.

Another family I frequently visited was that of Ewa (32), Randia's daughter. She lived with her husband, Antek (38), and her three children, Pawel (13), Bartek (10), and Bolek (7). Ewa received a disability pension for severe epilepsy and "nervous attacks." Her husband was officially unemployed, although he sold used cars. Ewa's children were all in regular public school, except for Bartek, who attended a special education school because of a mental disability. The family lived in an older, but well-maintained, row house on the outskirts of Elblag. They had recently renovated their house, and now wanted to sell it and move out of their neighbourhood, both because they thought it was racist, and because they wanted to be closer to friends and family. Other Roma from the community considered Ewa's family to be the most affluent Roma family in Elblag.

Randia also introduced me to Basia (43) who lived with her husband Bronek (62), her son Radek (15), and her nephew Jacek (17) in a pre-World War II flat. Basia and her husband were unemployed, but Basia was earning a small amount of money through petty trading, and was also receiving foster support monies for her orphaned nephew, who had a mental disability. Basia's husband had children from his previous marriage to a non-

Roma Polish woman. Outside of Radek, Basia also had a daughter (23) who lived in Suwalki, a city in northeastern Poland (see appendix C).

I often saw Ana's neighbour, Minka (43), over at Ana's flat. She lived with her granddaughter Zuzia (12). Minka's husband had passed away a year ago, so she was raising her granddaughter on her own. Minka had two children from her first husband: her daughter, married to a German Roma man, now lived in Germany with her children; her son, the father of Minka's granddaughter, had died in a car accident, and the mother lived with another man. Minka received a small government pension, and earned occasional monies from fortune telling and the petty trading she sometimes did with Ana, her close friend.

Beata (32), a non-Roma Polish woman who lived close to my block, was married to Randia's son, Piotr (30). Her oldest daughter, Patrycja (10), was born to Beata and her first husband, who was Polish. Piotr and Beata were parents to Kalinka (3) and Kasia (18 months). They lived together in a room in a decaying, early twentieth century house. They shared a bathroom with their landlord, who also lived in the house. Beata was currently collecting maternity leave benefits, as she had had a job prior to her pregnancy. She also received a monthly child tax benefit from the government. Piotr was unemployed, but sold electronic equipment, such as stereos and televisions. The combined family income was inadequate, and they often had no food on the table. Beata seldom associated with people from the Roma community, except for her mother-in-law, because the Roma, according to her, did not treat her as "one of them." (Fieldnotes 2002) Beata's oldest daughter was attending regular public school, but likely would have to repeat grade four.

Thus, within two months I was frequently visiting six Roma households, nearly all of the Roma families in Elblag. The Roma women to whom Randia introduced me were, I would say, the most widely known women in the community because, aside from Zefiryna and Beata, they were all fortune tellers. However, while many Roma in the community spoke favourably about their fortune telling, and admired the women's perseverance in trying to practice the "traditional Roma trade," Beata told me that other Roma, closely affiliated with the Catholic Church, snubbed them because of it. According to Ana, the Catholic priests disparaged fortune telling as a "pagan practice,"

and the Roma who were devout Catholics dissociated themselves from those who told fortunes. Indeed, I had never seen Randia or the other fortune telling women associate with any devout, practising Catholic Roma in the city. Though Randia introduced me to some of the more religious Roma in town when we encountered them on the street, I had never seen her visiting their homes, and she never wanted to tell me where they lived. Otherwise, all Roma in Elblag knew each other, although not all families were in regular contact with one another.

Discord over issues of money, business, friends and family was rife within the Roma community. In addition, the Roma women squabbled over the time I allocated to them for various reasons. In the immediate sense, they appreciated the food and money I often brought them to help make ends meet. With the exception of Ewa, whose husband was more successful in car sales, all the women were, more or less, in the same economic boat. I think the women hoped I would assist them and their families in immigrating to Canada, or at least generate interest, nationally or internationally, in their plights, which might eventually improve their lot.

Building rapport with the Roma in Elblag was difficult for me because of the complex nature of my relationships to the women, and because of my feelings towards them. On the one hand, the Roma women perceived me as a “friend.” As a Westerner, I was a symbolic bearer of Western authority (de Soto and Dudwick, 2000) and a doorway to the riches of the Western market economies and liberal democracies, so often idealised by Poles and other Eastern Europeans. I believe I was, to a certain extent, perceived as a patron, and as such, a “friend.” This was an inevitable outcome of the “unconscious assumptions held about the [Western] other [which had been] the result of a half century of Cold War ideologies perpetuated by the Soviet Union and the United States” (Kuehnast 2000, 102). On the other hand, as a Polish Gadjo I was a potential enemy because of the antagonisms, both current and historical, that framed Roma-non-Roma relations in Poland. The Roma women, as well as many of the other Roma with whom I had spoken in Poland, often referred to Gadjos as an “inferior race.” Thus, the women might have considered me to be “racially inferior” – someone not worth to be associated with closely.

At the outset of my research, because the Roma women did not yet know or trust me, they might have perceived me more as an enemy. In time, I believe, the women began thinking of me more as a friend than an enemy because of the immediate financial help I offered; because some of them might have hoped I could help them immigrate to Canada; and because they recognised I was genuinely interested in their lives. Yet, they always remained – even later in the research process – somewhat suspicious of the Polish Gadjo in me. They talked to me, joked, and called me their friend; at the same time, however, they chose not to teach me Romani, which permitted them to exclude me from any conversation at will. Initially, I tried to convince the women to teach me their language, but as time passed, I decided to respect their choice, as I saw it as the women's means of self-protection. I recognised it as their right to decide what they wanted me to hear and understand.

Building rapport with the Roma women was also difficult because of my suspicions, doubts, and resentment about working with them. There were times when I was uncertain why the women called me a friend, and why they invited me into their homes and told me about their lives. This was the case because I realised that conceiving of the relationship between the ethnographer and research participants in terms of friendship was problematic. Malcolm Crick (1992), for example, argues that “the substantial inequalities of wealth and power” that normally define the ethnographer-participant relationship, as well as the various ulterior motives of the ethnographer and participants for engaging in the research, make conceptualising the encounter in terms of friendship “odd” (Ibid., 176). I knew that although the women and I had started referring to one another as friends, and I was certain, for the most part, that both they and I sincerely believed this to be true, we were perpetually renegotiating our “friendships.” What seemed to be friendship on occasions, such as when we exchanged gossip and our personal problems, appeared at other times to be merely an interaction worth maintaining because it allowed us “to reach a sufficient number of personal goals” (Crapanzano 1980, ix). For the women, it might have been financial or political gain, and for me, generating research material needed to complete my Ph.D. dissertation.

There were times when I resented meeting with the Roma women altogether. I vividly remember those days when I grudgingly trudged over to their homes and forced

myself to put on the appearance that I really wanted to be there. There were four main reasons for this.

First, the women smoked cigarettes incessantly. As we sat around Randia's kitchen table, Zefiryňa and her sister Ewa would puff billows of smoke into my face. I had mentioned to them several times that I suffered from asthma, and that cigarette smoke aggravated it, but they never considered this. Often, after having spent an entire day with them, I would have to triple the dosage of asthma medication.

Second, the ways in which the women treated their children bothered me. While I knew they loved their children and wanted the best for them, to me their interactions with their children were at times abusive. Ana, for example, yelled and insulted her children continuously, and several times, I witnessed her hitting them. Zafira denigrated her grandsons, swore at them, or punished them severely for no apparent reason. Although Amadeusz accompanied me occasionally when I visited the women at their homes, I preferred not to take him with me, as I did not want him to witness the abuse and swearing, or to be exposed to the cigarette smoke.

Third, the women often spoke unfavourably of non-Roma. Although I understood their bitterness, there were times when their harsh remarks directed at Poles-en-masse disturbed me a great deal. For example, I felt incensed when the women nonchalantly expressed their hopes that some Polish "stara baba" (old woman)⁶⁵ might lose her wallet on the street so they could find it. I was a Pole, after all, and I knew that for many "stara babas," losing a wallet would be catastrophic, given the meagre government pensions many of them were receiving.

Finally, I sometimes found working with the Roma women taxing because of their concerns about confidentiality. While, understandably, they did not want me to relate any information to others – including fellow Roma – about things discussed in their households, I was also not permitted to disclose with whom I had visited. This often put me in a very awkward position, as I constantly had to conceal from the women the truth about where I had been, or with whom I had visited. The exceptions to this rule were social gatherings, christenings, or funerals, which most of the Roma community attended. Not surprisingly, because how could I, after being seen by a majority of Elblag's Roma at a christening party, insist that, in fact, I had not been there at all? I developed a kind of

paranoia about being seen with and/or by the Roma women in public. The women openly talked among themselves about my visits to their homes. Perhaps, in their view, if they were to share with others aspects of my relationships with them, it would have to be strictly on their own terms. While I recognised these rules of engagement as possibly a product of incessant infighting within their community, I still found them very trying.

Preparations for Hope

Preparations for the theatrical performance that eventually took the title *Hope* began in January 2003 (see appendix A). Although I had already mentioned to the women my idea of developing an ethnographic theatre performance with them on several occasions, the first time they seriously considered it was at Randia's flat right after New Year's Day. As usual, I was visiting Randia, Zefiryňa, and her husband Marek, and we were all having afternoon tea. Marek asked if I was still planning to create a theatre performance with the Roma. When I replied that this was still my hope, he suggested that I should involve Roma from Olsztyn, as many of them were "artistic types" (Fieldnotes 2003). When I stressed that I only wanted to work with the Roma women from Elblag, Marek scorned Randia and Zefiryňa, saying to them, "You lazy [women]... you should get to work... make some money... better than standing out in the cold for hours on!" (Ibid.) Then he turned to me and asked, "Can you guarantee they [skinheads] won't come and burn our homes down?" (Ibid.) When I assured him that the performance would not represent anything that might jeopardise their safety, or that would be contrary to the wishes of the Roma women themselves, he conceded that the project was a sound idea. Randia concurred with him because, as she put it, "[It's] better to sit in a warm theatre than to be spat upon on the street fortune telling. . . ." (Ibid.) Zefiryňa, however, wanted to know if she could withdraw from the project if she was not satisfied. When I assured her that she could, she replied, "If Randia goes... I'll go" (Ibid.). Randia, Zefiryňa, and I touted the idea of the project to other Roma women, many of whom agreed to participate – provided they had time – because "if Randia and Zefiryňa would participate, so would [they]" (Ibid.).

We usually went over details of the project when we met at Randia's house, or while the women were fortune telling. The issue at the forefront of our discussions was the Cultural Centre. Although the women were grateful we had free access to a rehearsal space and performance venue at the Centre, which was close to where most of them lived, they admitted that they felt intimidated about performing at the Centre; after all, it was a "cultural institution." They were concerned about what the real "professionals" there

would think about “some kind of dirty Roma wandering around the hallways” (Ibid., Ana).

The women were not familiar with the Cultural Centre. Many of them had only attended a few of its concerts, theatre performances, and/or films.⁶⁶ Generally, however, they did not think highly of the Centre because, like many other people in Elblag, they had heard about the corruption and mismanagement there. Nevertheless, the women hoped that performing at the Centre might be to their advantage: the Centre was the largest cultural institution in Elblag and, as such, could attract a large public (Fieldnotes 2003). Some of the women also hoped that making contacts at the Centre would benefit them in the future. For example, Randia thought that the Centre’s directors might possibly hire them if they needed Roma to work on other projects (Ibid.).

We also discussed rehearsal schedules, remuneration, and the women’s roles in the process. Right from the beginning, various constraints challenged the project. Time was one of them. We decided we would meet three times a week at the beginning, and later, when the performance text was intact, once or twice a week. The women could not commit any more time to the project, because they had to tend to their families and household chores, and devote some time to fortune telling and trading. In the first weeks of the process, the women would relate to me, in group pre-rehearsal sessions held in the studio, stories of their lives upon which they would like aspects of the performance to be based; and in rehearsals, we would create the physical and spoken texts, and design the scenography, costumes, lighting, and sound.

Furthermore, as the Cultural Centre had withdrawn its funding, I had to produce the project with my own money, which ultimately limited its scope in profound ways. Options for stage, costume, lighting, and sound design, as well as props, were severely limited. We lacked the monies to hire designers, or purchase expensive materials. The women and I had hoped to take the performance to other Roma communities in Poland, but this too would now be impossible. Also, as much as I wanted to compensate the women for any financial losses they might incur due to their involvement in the project, which would infringe on the time they could otherwise spend fortune-telling and/or trading, I could only offer to pay each woman 40 zloty (\$15 cdn) for every three hours of

rehearsal. The women were happy with this arrangement, as “fortune-telling and trading were hard-to-come-by [now]” (Ibid.).

There were also safety constraints and internal politicking within the Roma community that affected the women’s collaboration in the project. Initially, the women did not want to act in the performance because, as they claimed, they were not actors and would not feel comfortable on stage in front of an audience. After a while, however, they began entertaining the idea of performing, saying that “even though they were not actors, they could still tell people a lot about their lives [and] theatre was a good place to do it” (Ibid.). We even began making plans for Randia, Ana, and Ewa to act in the main roles, as they were the most comfortable with the idea of performing on stage. However, one day Randia and Ewa abruptly informed me that neither they, nor any other Roma women from the community, would perform in the play. They had come to this agreement among themselves, she argued, and believed that this decision was necessary in order to “protect themselves and their families” (Ibid.). In other words, the women worried about the repercussions they might experience from personally performing in front of an audience, in a country where racism against Roma is so widespread. Later, the women admitted that they also chose not to perform because “they did not want to make a laughingstock out of themselves in front of other Roma” (Ibid.). According to Randia, there was so much infighting among the Roma in Elblag that everyone looked for the slightest chance to “sick another person,”⁶⁷ and they were not willing to compromise their reputations for “some sort of play” (Ibid.).

I tried to assure the women that it was unlikely there would be any violent repercussions on the part of audience members in the theatre; yet they still refused: “Yeah, in the theatre they would cheer... but later we’d get our asses smacked,” quipped Ewa (Ibid.). I did not insist, because I did not want to jeopardise their safety, or their reputations. Instead, we agreed that they would participate in the project as playwrights, directors, dramaturgs, and designers, and that my students from the Cultural Centre would do the acting.

Initially, the women were slightly apprehensive about working with Polish actors. They wanted to know whether the actors “were trustworthy” and “friendly to Roma” (Ibid.). When I assured the women that the actors were very enthusiastic about working

with them, and that the very reason they were involved in the project was to speak out against discrimination, the women no longer seemed worried. They requested, however, that during the initial stages of the process, no male actors were to be present, as they felt uncomfortable about discussing their personal lives in front of men. The male actors were to join the rehearsal process once we began working on developing the texts of the performance.

These constraints, together with other factors, such as ethnicity, illness, and religion, had an impact on which Roma women were able to participate in the project. I could only afford honoraria for seven women, at most. In the end, five women from the Roma community participated – Randia, Zefiryna, Ana, Basia, and Ewa. They were the women with whom I had associated the most since commencing my research in 2002. Other Roma women either did not want to, or were unable to, participate in the project; Ana, Basia, and Ewa also excluded certain women from the process. Minka and Nelka were two of the women who were unable to participate. Minka was to have guests over the months of May and June, so she would be too busy. Nelka was not on speaking terms with her sister Ana and did not want to work with her. Beata – Randia’s non-Roma daughter-in-law – refused to participate because she did not feel comfortable contributing to a performance that would speak about Roma women’s lives. She did not consider herself Roma, and believed that the Roma women in the community would not appreciate her input. Randia and Zefiryna refused to permit two of Randia’s other non-Roma daughters-in-law to participate, as they claimed these women were not “reliable sources of information” (Ibid.). Ana’s mentally ill mother, Agata, was keen on participating; however, Ana and the other Roma women vehemently opposed her involvement, claiming that she was “dangerous” and “incapable of rational thought.” The women even threatened Agata that they would commit her to a hospital if she insisted on getting involved in the project (Ibid.). A group of Roma women who were devoutly Catholic also did not participate in the project. The other participants “discouraged” me from seeking their involvement, likely because of existing antagonisms between the two groups of women over fortune telling.

Other participants of the project included Shawn – co-investigator – who would also perform, and six students from the Cultural Centre: Agnieszka, Grazyna, Olga,

Gosia, Maria, and Derek. In this project, as in *Dance as I Play You*, and *Horses and Angels*, the students saw their roles as multiple: ethnographers, actors, and “subjects” of my ethnography. Before the rehearsals commenced, Shawn and I met with the students to, once again, briefly review some key points about doing collaborative ethnography. I also reminded them that we needed to treat the Roma women with respect, strive to make them feel comfortable in the rehearsal room, and not impose our opinions on them, as we were ultimately engaging in this process to learn from the women about their lives (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Hope*, 3/25/03).

How We Learned About the Roma Women's Lives

Participant Observation, Informal Conversations, Interviews, and Life Stories/Histories

Learning about the Roma women's lives did not begin in the studio at the Cultural Centre. During the initial five months of research, I was learning about the women's lives by engaging in participant observation, conducting interviews with them, and recording their life histories/stories. At the time, I did not yet know whether my plan of developing a theatre performance with the women would come to fruition, because they did not, as I have mentioned, decide to participate in the theatre project until January. However, still not entirely having given up the hope that the women would eventually agree to participate in an ethnographic theatre production, I expected that the research material generated in this stage of the process could be used later – if the women agreed to participate – in the development of the performance.⁶⁸

I visited the women and their families on an everyday basis: chatted with them; helped with their chores, such as shopping, taking out garbage, and hauling wood; accompanied them to various appointments, including visits to doctors and the welfare office; went to pawnshops; visited local cemeteries to pay respects to deceased relatives; traveled out of town for fortune telling and trading; and attended special occasions, such as christenings and feast days. Shawn and Amadeusz took Randia's grandchildren out regularly, to play in the park, or for pizza.

Initially, when I first began visiting their households, the women – while always willing to talk informally to me about their personal lives – were not very comfortable with participating in taped interviews; they preferred that I “just talked to them,” and if necessary, took notes. Perhaps they were still trying to “feel me out” before providing me with a more permanent record, which they might have feared could one day be used against them. It was not until later in the process, when the women became more comfortable with me, that they agreed to participate in taped interviews, and have their life stories and life histories recorded. However, they always emphasised that they

wanted to remain anonymous, which meant that I was not to disclose their first names or surnames in my dissertation. They agreed to be quoted under pseudonyms, requested that I keep all research materials confidential, and were aware that my observations of their daily lives and citations from our informal conversations might be included in my dissertation. Initially, I recorded their informed consent on tape, because they did not want to “bother with signing forms” (Fieldnotes, 2002). Specifically, I read to the women, translating into Polish, the “Informed Consent by Subjects” forms (see appendix A), and the women verbally stated that they understood the procedures to be used in the research project, and their right to withdraw at any time.

When visiting with the women, we mainly spoke about anything and everything, just as I would with any other friend – about family, children, work, spouses, and life’s tribulations. In taped interviews, which were both unstructured and semi-structured, I asked the women questions I had outlined in my thesis prospectus:

- “What events/things/people make you unhappy/afraid?”
- What problems – such as health, finances, education, or housing – are you currently facing? Why do you think you are experiencing these problems?
- Which problems do you need to address immediately... soon... later?
- What are possible solutions to these problems? Who else faces similar challenges?”

I also recorded the women’s life stories and life histories. It all started with Randia, who one day asked, “So why don’t you take that recorder of yours, and sit down with us, one by one, one day, and record everything we can tell you about our lives?” (Fieldnotes 2003, Randia) As much as the women were apprehensive at the beginning of the research, they were soon thoroughly enjoying recording their stories. Randia and Ewa eventually admitted that they enjoyed talking to me, and were finally letting things “off their chests” (Ibid.). It seemed the women took great pleasure confiding in someone without having their conversations becoming grist for the rumour mill the following day. Randia, for example, admitted she enjoyed recording her life story, because for the first time in her life, she truly realised how much she had lived through and how much she had accomplished (Ibid.).

Pre-Rehearsal Sessions with Roma Women and Actors

Similarly, the actors and I learned about the Roma women's lives in the pre-rehearsal sessions, which we began at the end of March 2003 (see appendix A). Initially, the Roma women, the students, and I met three times per week, for three hours each session.

For each pre-rehearsal meeting, I set a table with cake, cookies, and soda drinks to create an informal, relaxed atmosphere in the studio. The first pre-rehearsal sessions with the actors and the Roma women were devoted to signing the consent forms and introducing the project. I reviewed – by reading Polish translations of the “Informed Consent by Subjects” and “Informed Consent by Performers” forms (see appendix I) – the code of ethics governing the project, the rights of the research participants to terminate our research relationship at any time, and issues of confidentiality and anonymity. I stated that all research materials – video-/audio- recordings, and fieldnotes – would be kept strictly confidential, and that only Shawn, my Ph.D. supervisors from Simon Fraser University, and I would have access to them. To protect the participants' anonymity in my dissertation, I would use pseudonyms. While the actors were not concerned about disclosing their identities, the Roma women were satisfied that using pseudonyms would be sufficient to protect their anonymity. I also emphasised that it was important for everyone involved in the project to respect the confidentiality of others in the group. Finally, I obtained permission from the women and the students to audio- and video- record the process

We also established project etiquette guidelines to help us deal with such matters as lateness and mutual respect. I explained to everybody that the purpose of our pre-rehearsal sessions was to identify various forms of violence the Roma women experienced in their everyday lives, the women's responses to such violence, and the possible causes and solutions to such violence. I asked the women to focus their discussions on the problems and challenges they encountered on an everyday basis, and on the sources of their suffering, pain, or happiness. I also asked the women to talk about the changes they had witnessed/experienced since the collapse of communism, and how these changes had affected their lives (Ibid., 3/26/03).

At this stage of the project, I strove to facilitate a process in which the women – although the main storytellers and leaders in the discussions – were not the only ones answering questions, and in which both the students and I offered our own insights into the issues discussed. As Thomas R. Lindlof (1995) argues, an interviewer’s “self-disclosure” helps to establish rapport between the researcher and research participants, and “a sense of reciprocity” (182-3).⁶⁹

How the Roma Women Talked About Their Lives

The taped interviews, life story recordings, pre-rehearsal sessions, and informal conversations with the Roma women took place over a period of eleven months (July 2002-June 2003; see appendix A). Our discussions ranged widely. However, the women's comments fell into three broad categories – their problems, their coping strategies, and their expressions of hope. In the following pages, I bring together examples of how they talked about each of these themes.

Their Problems

Most of the time, the women talked about their problems. They saw them as forms of violence. The meanings the women attached to violence varied according to what was going on in their lives at the time, and where we were in the research process. However, for the Roma women, violence encompassed poverty, harassment, discrimination, Roma tradition, domestic violence, poor health, and emigration.⁷⁰ The women often articulated their accounts of violence in terms of hopelessness. They did not believe their life circumstances would improve significantly, in either the immediate or the distant future. Additionally, while talking about their lives, the women often compared the violence they had suffered in the past with the violence they were currently experiencing. They repeatedly described the present in more negative terms than the past.⁷¹

Poverty

Poverty, for the Roma women, was one of the most pervasive forms of violence in their lives. They defined it as the inability to afford the basic necessities of life, such as food, shelter, and medications (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Hope*, 3/26/03). The women attributed their poverty to the widespread unemployment in Poland, which they argued had a greater impact on Roma than on non-Roma; prejudice in the work force; Roma's lack of education; and their inability to fortune tell or trade:

Randia: It's really difficult to live through the day. I have a pension, and I can barely survive on it. . . . but it wasn't like that before. Life was easier... there was not so much hatred, and we were not so poor.

Magda: So you are saying that it was easier under communism?

Randia: Much easier.

Magda: How about young Roma who are growing up... how do they see their prospects for the future?

Randia: Even worse, because, if there are no prospects, no jobs for you who are educated, then even more so there will be no jobs for us Roma who have no education... and when we phone about a job, they say the job is still available, so we go 'n see them... but when they find out that we're Roma, then they say the job's already taken... but we know the job is still available (Ibid.).

I think this is the end of fortune telling for us... everything will end for us soon. Poles think that if I tell them their fortune, I'll rob them. . . . They hate us. That's why I don't fortune tell much... I've given up. I don't have hope that things will get better... they won't, certainly not for us... not for my children either. I tried to end it all many times because I'm so sick of it. This constant poverty! But I can't kill myself... I can't... I'm scared to leave the kids alone. (Nelka November 10, 2002)

Violence and Harassment from Non-Roma

Another form of violence in the Roma women's lives was the physical/verbal violence and harassment they experienced from non-Roma neighbours. They said it had worsened since the collapse of state socialism:

Randia: We have a free Poland now, but what's it worth... we still can't go out into the streets at night. . . . There was an incident in Mlawa [see p. 30]... there were rich Roma living there... but they [Poles] killed some of them, and they burnt their houses. . . if a Roma did something like that, then God knows what would happen... they would find and kill all the Roma who did that. Even when you go into a store. . . . you take a basket, and you're looking around... and then you see a whole line of people tailing you. (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Hope*, 3/26/03)

I'm hated here. Poles want us out of the country... all they want is to see us all dead. But when the Queen of England wanted us all to come to England, our president, that idiot [Lech] Walesa, said he wouldn't let us go because we beautified the country. . . . You'll hear a different story on the street. And it won't get any better, as everyone is getting poorer. (Zefiryna November 22, 2002)

Magda: What problems do you have with your neighbours? Could you share some stories about your neighbours? . . .

Ewa: Someone threw out diapers, and they [the neighbours] said that it was me... so I told them, "Why would I need diapers?" I told them that I didn't have small children... but they were making such a big deal that my father-in-law went and picked them up, and then the next day, there were more diapers lying around... and that one woman . . . she called the police on me, and they came and told me that I was throwing diapers out the window. . . . they gave me a fine for throwing diapers out the window!

Basia: I wouldn't pay!

Ewa: I won't pay!

Ana: I had a neighbour... he was living in our old place, so he used to come into my house... and he was so brave that he'd come into our place, and he wanted to beat us, me and my mom. And his wife was acting like a Gypsy... she'd come to my home, when I wasn't around of course, because she wouldn't do that when I was around... but she'd come to my house and ask my mom, "Auntie, can you give me a little bit of meat?" She was my mom's friend... and Agata [Ana's mother], screwed up in the head, would say, "Take... go ahead and take." Then she'd come and say, "Agata, give me some vegetables... some cabbage and some potatoes." And my mom would give it to her. . . . and she had the nerve to run up and look into my pot... and she says, "Oh, you're cooking chicken soup?" I told her, "Fuck off from that pot... because when I take the lid and smash you in the face, I'll kill you... or I'll pour it onto your head!" (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Hope*, 4/04/03)

The women said that, even at school, the Roma were not free from physical violence:

Ewa: . . . my children also go to school, and other kids are calling them names... they've had terrible experiences there. . . .

Zefiryna: And a teacher hitting a child in the face... can you imagine that? Because she's a Roma child!

Randia: But it wasn't like that before, because Zefiryna was going to school before.

Ewa: Yes... a teacher can come up to our child, and hit him in the face... so I went to the teacher and said that one shouldn't beat a child if they're teachers... and I showed her! (Ibid.)

Discrimination

Another significant problem the Roma women identified was discrimination, in both the public and private sectors. They said discrimination was prevalent in government offices, schools, hospitals, medical offices, and among property managers. Ana and Ewa poignantly talked about the discrimination to which they were subjected in welfare offices, and by social workers:

Ewa: I had a social worker come to my place once... she was sitting there and looking around my apartment. So I asked her, "Why're you looking around my apartment like that? Did you come here to look at my walls... or did you come here to help me?" "But you're living so nicely here... what do you want from me?" she asked. I said to her. . . . "I came once to ask you to give me some money for winter jackets for my children!" She said, "I'll give you 50 zloty [\$20 cdn]." And I said to her, "You take that 50 zloty, and go to the market and buy shoes and jackets for three children, and then bring them to me, and we'll see if that'll be enough. . . ."

Ana: my radiator flooded... it was a week after the renovations... the heater broke, and it flooded all the floors and walls. . . I was living on the fourth floor... I flooded three neighbours. So I'm tryin' to mop up all that water, and then the social worker comes in to have an interview with me. "Oh, what happened here?" she asked. [sarcastically] "What happened here? Water spilled here!" I tell her. So I tell her to sit down and wait for a bit 'coz I'm cleaning up the water. She said, "I can't wait till you pick up the water." "I can't give you an interview now," I said. "Come here in a day or so, then we can talk." No, she sits down and stays. I'm cleanin' up the water, and she sits and looks around my place... scrutinises it. So she says to me, "You know what? Your place is really nice... I don't have a place like this. . . ." I say, "You don't have it like that! So where're you working?" Because she made me so angry! "Don't you know where?" she says then I said, "Well then, sign yourself into a whore house, so you'll make more, and you'll renovate your place the way you want to." That's what I told her. Then I told her, "Get up now, quickly, or I'll push you down those stairs, and that'll kill you!" She left like a storm. (Ibid., 3/27/03)

Discrimination in both the subsidised and the private housing sector was an ongoing issue for the Roma women:

Randia: I got an exchange agreement for a new place... everything was set and I had everything packed. So I'm walking down the street, and I meet the woman that I'm exchanging my place with, and she said that there'd be no exchange. So I ask her why, and she said the tenants wrote up a petition... that they're afraid to live near a Roma. I went crazy! And I said, "Dear lady, who should have the last word on your place, the tenants or you? How? Why are you listening to them?"... So I decided, okay, and I went to Radio EL [radio-station], and all of Elblag heard.... I told [a news reporter], "Dear man, why shouldn't I live in that house just because the tenants don't want me there? Is that why? Because the tenants don't want a Roma woman there? Am I not a human being? I am, right?" (Ibid., 4/04/03)

Ana also spoke about how various property owners had discriminated against her:

Each time I phone, they say, "Yes, the place is available," but as soon as I go there and they see me, they realise that I'm Roma, and suddenly the place is already taken.... I'm telling you, I'm sick of life. (Ana April 4, 2003)

According to the Roma women, one of the most prevalent problems for their children in school was that non-Roma students received preferential treatment in terms of learning opportunities. As soon as Roma children fell behind in school, a psychologist referred them to a special education school where, the women complained, the children received an inferior education:

Magda: I wanted to ask you about school... on what basis are your children being referred to special schools?

Ewa: My son had to go to a special-ed school because he had speech difficulties. He was going to School Number 7 before, and there was a psychologist who wrote an assessment that qualified my child to go into special-ed.

Basia:.... us Roma are often told that our children don't qualify for regular schools... only for "backward" schools... and of course, the level of education there is lower than in regular schools... than a normal child has... a Polish child. (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Hope*, 3/27/03)

The women also complained of discrimination in hospitals and medical offices. Ana claimed that because she was Roma, the hospital denied her adequate postnatal care, which led to haemorrhaging and a blood clot that permanently damaged both her lungs and heart:

They just left me there bleeding for hours... but why would they care... I was Roma after all. They were probably hoping I would die... one less Roma! They blame us for everything that's going wrong now... that's why they hate us... and when we join the EU, the hospitals won't even let the Roma in. (Ana November 9, 2002)

The Roma women believed that in other Western countries, there was no discrimination based on race or ethnicity, while in Poland, no one was interested in Roma problems, only their culture. Yet, the same people who attended Roma festivals, and admired Roma music and dancing, also insulted Roma with racial epithets in everyday contexts:

Ewa: When there's a Roma concert, such as in Ciechocinek... have you seen how many people come to see it? Sometimes people come to the city just to see the Roma dance and sing... but then when the concert is over, and the Roma aren't on the stage anymore, then they call... they call those same Roma thieves and criminals.

Magda: So you think people are only interested in your music?

Zefiryna: Yes, our culture.

Ewa: They are interested in our culture, but not in our problems. (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Hope*, 4/02/03)

The women also argued that the division YOU-US, which in Polish society separates Roma from Poles, and reads "Gypsy" is synonymous with "bad," contributed to the discrimination to which they were subjected:

Ana: You... us... there's always that division. . . . Poles always look at us with that bad eye, as though you're human and we're not.

Ewa: When they see a Gypsy, then that's the end of everything... that's all they see, a Gypsy... and a Gypsy equals bad, according to my neighbours. (Ibid., 3/27/03)

At the same time, the Roma women themselves often spoke in dichotomous terms, rigidly differentiating between Roma and Polish ways of life, and frequently endowing Roma with good, and Poles with bad, qualities. For example, according to Ana, Roma marriages were very different from Polish marriages because Roma couples were “free” to “split up” when the marriage was not working out (Ibid.). In a similar vein, Ewa claimed that Roma women were better hostesses than non-Roma women (Ibid., 4/09/03). Randia argued that, unlike Polish women, Roma women would never give their children away to orphanages (Ibid., 3/26/03). The women also maintained that Polish girls and women were promiscuous and unhygienic, while Roma girls and women were modest and clean:

Zefiryna: for you [Poles], there's one tub... you wash your legs in it, your ass, and you peel your potatoes in it.

Ana: Not all Poles, because there are those who don't do that kind of thing... but there are women who'll use one bowl to wash the floors, and then they'll wash meat in that same bowl. But things like that never happen in a Roma household. In a Roma household, if a fork or a knife falls into the trash bin, we'd throw [it] out (Ibid., 4/04/03)

The Burden of Tradition, and Domestic Violence

The Roma women believed that Roma tradition restricted their lives in many ways and was often responsible for the violence they suffered at home. A particularly oppressive aspect of their tradition was the Roma custom of marrying off girls as young as 11. Parents sometimes arranged marriages, or a man and a woman sometimes eloped; but most often, a young girl was kidnapped by her husband-to-be. Three of the five Roma women in our group – except for Zefiryna and Ewa – had been kidnapped by their

first husbands. They admitted that they had not been ready for marriage at such an early age (13 or 14), and had suffered immeasurable abuse at the hands of their husbands and in-laws. Now they were trying everything in their powers to protect their own daughters from such a fate:

When I was 14 years old, I was kidnapped by a man and married off to him! I had my oldest son with him. . . . I didn't even get to see him, that husband of mine. I didn't want him to touch me, but he raped me, so I became his wife... I couldn't say no. But when I saw him in the morning, I started crying... I didn't want him... he looked so ugly... looked like a frog. I said that I wouldn't be with him, but I was stuck... I was stuck with a terrible man I hated... I felt like there was no way out for me. I was his because he took my virginity... I was also pregnant. Later on he began cheating on me with his cousin... she was also pregnant with him, and he would beat me up... my life lost its meaning then. I remember it like today... and you know what... I don't think I got it back... it's like something snapped in me forever. (Ana April 5, 2003) (see appendix E)

Agnieszka: If you could, what would be the most desirable life that you would give to your daughter?

Ana: It's hard to imagine, but I think that... I'd never allow anyone to take my daughter at such a young age... for sure not. I told myself that if someone comes here to take my daughter at a young age, I have a big knife hidden, and I'll cut his legs off. I won't give her away at such a young age... never!

Randia: Oh, God prevent!

Ana: If she was at least 17 or 18 years old, that would be different.

Randia: That's right! (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Hope*, 4/09/03)

The Roma tradition of marrying off girls at a very young age, the women maintained, was an obstacle to Roma girls' access to education:

Magda: What do you think is the biggest obstacle for Roma women, in terms of getting an education?

Ewa: It just doesn't happen among us, that a girl would go to school and finish elementary school, and go further... our tradition is such that girls get married early, at 13 or 14 years of age... for Polish women it's different. (Ibid., 4/02/03) (see appendix F)

For the Roma women, their tradition further restricted their lives by prescribing what to wear, who to marry, and which jobs to take:

Magda: Do you find your tradition restrictive in any way.... or tiresome... and would like to change it?

Ana: Yes, I'm sick of that tradition! My stomach hurts from that fucking tradition! [sarcastically] It's so nice and so wonderful that, oh God!

Ana: I'd like to change everything. . . . What's the worst? Well, I think the rules the [Roma] King establishes... and men like it... they like it because it's convenient for them... so they tell us what we should wear, and everything else, and they guard this tradition... you can't wear tight skirts with a slit at the back... you can't wear pants... you can't marry Poles... what else...

Zefiryna: ...you can't work as cleaners... you can't clean toilets...

Ana: ...Roma men can't have long hair. (Ibid., 4/04/03)

Similarly, the women complained that a common belief among Roma that “a Roma man can do everything and a Roma woman nothing” was unfair, hurtful, and a means of supporting violence against women. As a result, the women said that Roma men abused their wives physically and emotionally, committed adultery, and abstained from the everyday responsibilities of house chores, childcare, and finances. The women believed that the situation of non-Roma Polish women was much better because Polish husbands treated their wives with respect, helped with the daily chores and childcare, and financially provided for the family:

So I would lie there in bed, hoping that he wouldn't return... but eventually he would, reeking of booze and whores... but I would still have to give it to him, or he'd take it by force, so I had no choice. At first, I was fighting it, but then I just didn't care... it didn't matter to me what would happen anymore. You won't stop men from doing that... there is even a saying that if a man sticks to only one hole, he'll die. . . . A man can do everything, and a woman nothing, that's just the way it is with us Roma... it serves their needs, not ours. A woman's life is difficult, but no, I don't think that it will ever change. I would never talk about that to my husband, or I'd get a beating... or if I started talking about it other Roma would

think I'm nuts... laugh at me... the man is the boss, and that's it! (Ana April 5, 2003)

Zefiryňa: Polish women have easier lives... they're treated differently by their husbands. In Polish homes, men do more than women. When she comes from work, she'll sit down, and her husband will make her supper. I can't complain... some women have it worse... but it's different...we won't change it.

Magda: Do you think it's unfair?

Zefiryňa: Yes, but you know, there's the saying, "What is allowed a voivode, you're not allowed, you brat!" (Zefiryňa April 5, 2003)

The women also stated that in the eyes of the Roma community, adultery committed by a man carried no stigma; whereas, there was a severe stigma and other consequences attached to adultery committed by a Roma woman. Adulterous woman even risked being expelled from the Roma community. The women admitted that while they found the adulterous behaviour of their husbands hurtful, they were more willing to forgive if the adultery was committed with a Polish woman, because in their tradition, a Roma man cheating on his Roma wife with another Roma woman meant he had "remarried" (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Hope*, 3/26/03).

While the women often spoke of Roma tradition as a cause of their suffering, their attitudes toward tradition were contradictory and perpetually shifting. At times they vehemently opposed their tradition, and at other times, they spoke of tradition in glowing terms, and claimed that they tried their best to teach it to their children and Gadjo daughters-in-law:

Grazyna: What would you teach them [daughters-in-law]?

Ana: Everything... from the basics... especially Roma tradition and customs... because among you, it's like this... I'm sorry to say this in front of you and us, but you can undress to your underwear, and run around the house in underwear, right? Right in front of your parents! But not in a Roma household. My son can't walk out in his underwear and parade his eggs around in front of his mother and his sisters... we can't do that... he gets dressed under the covers. And here a Polish woman will come to our home, and some Roma will be sitting around, and she'd say, "Mother, I want to go pee."

I think that I'd grab her buy her hair, and I'd put her in order. That's why, because she has to respect us. (Ibid.)

The women themselves recognised that the ways in which they perceived and spoke about their tradition were contradictory. According to Ana, Roma women “love[d] and hate[d]” their tradition because, on the one hand, it limited their opportunities as women, but on the other hand, it “[bound] them to all Roma across the world... and their fathers and forefathers” (Fieldnotes, 2003). Without their Roma tradition, Ana argued, “Roma would not be Roma” (Ibid.).

In addition, the women maintained that while some aspects of their tradition, such as early marriages, would never change, they also recognised that other aspects had already changed, and continued to change in a variety of ways. According to Randia, Roma dress code and/or men's contributions to household finances had changed significantly in recent years because women were allowed to “wear tight skirts . . . with slits at the back,” and men began trading (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Hope*, 3/26/03).

The older women tended to perceive change in their tradition in negative terms, seeing it as the death of their culture. Randia and Basia believed that Roma tradition, and thus, the Roma people, were dying out. On the other hand, the younger women, such as Zefiryna and Ewa, argued that it was not clothing that made Roma “true Roma,” but their skin colour, and how society treated them:

Randia: . . . today there are no true Roma... there's only artificial Roma.

Basia: Not real ones.

Randia: Before, a Roma woman would never wear a skirt so that her ass is showing through it . . . only a loose skirt... and an apron.

Ewa: Mom, now it's in fashion!

Ewa: Mother, if there were no true Roma, then it would be better for us, because no one would stare at us like that... and they wouldn't say, “Oh look, a Gypsy is walking down the street!” Or, “You won't get a job because you're such a Gypsy!” Then we could say that today there are no true Roma... but not because a Roma woman wears a tight skirt. I can wear a mini-skirt for that matter, and they would still call me a Gypsy... a GYPSY!!!

Magda: So you think that true Roma are still around?

Ewa: Well, of course... how could there be no Roma? There are Roma who've married Poles... and their children? What do they call them? Poles? No way... well. . . . Maybe if they look like their father, and have blond hair... but if a girl has dark hair, she'll stay a Gypsy... or they'll call her speckled. (Ibid., 4/02/03)

Poor Health

The women were often despondent about their state of health. Nelka, who suffered from depression, “nervous attacks,” high blood pressure, and alcoholism, admitted that she did not want to live. When she was having a “nervous attack,” she acted like she “would never normally act,” as if she was “a single woman” (Fieldnotes 2002, Nelka). She stopped caring about her husband and children, wore pants and make-up, and untied her hair. However, after each attack, she felt guilty about what she had done, so she drank to numb the pain. Nelka believed her mental illness was both genetic – her mother suffered from schizophrenia – and a result of the poverty, discrimination, and domestic violence she endured on a daily basis. Nelka admitted she had attempted suicide several times by various means, including slashing her wrists, hanging herself, and overdosing on prescription drugs:

I think I just don't care about myself... if I die, I die. I love my kids, but life is rough. I know I won't get better, because I can't take care of myself and my kids like I used to. God has forgotten about me. Well, let it be this way then. I know I won't live long... maybe one day I'll kill myself... or maybe one day I'll have a stroke. I have high blood pressure, and I'm only 28... just feel bad for my kids, though, leaving them alone... he [her husband] won't take care of them. You probably think I'm crazy... well, I am. (Nelka November 10, 2002)

Ewa believed that her health problems resulted from the physical abuse she had experienced as a child. Her stepfather had loathed and abused her daily. One day he hit her on the head with a broomstick, which led to a blood clot forming in her brain. According to Ewa, the blood clot was responsible for the epilepsy and nervous attacks

from which she now suffered. While having epileptic-nervous attacks, she acted as if she was another person (Ewa April 4, 2003). She engaged in self-injurious behaviour, had a tendency to harm others, and suffered from total memory loss. Ewa confided that, in many ways, she would prefer to be dead:

My life is so hopeless... I live in constant fear of those attacks. I think that I'm getting worse. I have this epilepsy, and those strange attacks where I don't remember who I am, and I could hurt myself or others. I turn into a different person... I begin acting like a young child again, pick my nose and stuff... act silly. The worst is the fear that I'll hurt someone. Once I almost did, and that stayed with me forever... I was still a young girl then... my mother went to work, and she left me to look after my brothers and sisters, as I'm the oldest... then I had an attack. I told all my brothers and sisters to lie down in a row by the stove... I took an axe, and... and was going to chop their heads off, but my mother came back from work early, and that saved their lives... if it wasn't for my mother, they would have all been dead. . . . And you ask me what my life is like? It's pure misery. I don't believe I'll ever get better. The worst is the fear of what could happen. (Ibid.) (see appendix E)

Emigration

The inability to immigrate to a Western country was a terrible source of frustration for the Roma women. Zefiryňa, Ana, Basia, Nelka, and Ewa had all gone abroad, seeking asylum in Germany or Finland. Yet those host countries refused to grant them refugee status, and deported them back to Poland. They lost their life savings and possessions in the process. The women conceived of the West as the land of milk and honey, where racism, discrimination, physical violence, and poverty were non-existent. They felt dejected because they were forced to live in a country that held no future for them:

If only I could leave... you know, life has no worth for me anymore because I know that I'm stuck in this country forever. I'll die and rot here, that's why I don't want to live, because it hurts thinking that my children will never live like human beings. (Nelka November 10, 2002)

For Ana, on the other hand, her desperation arose from the fact that her husband was perpetually dragging the family across the border to try to live in other European countries. Every attempt resulted in financial hardship or ruin. According to Ana, had they not squandered money on these excursions, they would have been, by now, financially secure in Poland. Ana admitted that even in Finland, they still had experienced racism. Local Finnish residents who lived close to the immigrant barracks did not want their children to play with Roma children:

If it weren't for all of our immigrating, my life wouldn't be so hopeless now. All the money we've wasted would've built us a palace. And life wasn't much better there, either... there was racism and hatred... our neighbours didn't want our children to play with theirs. I think they actually wanted us out of there. I went and told them that we were people, too... that my children were human, even though their skin was darker. (Ana April 5, 2003)

Their Coping Strategies

In their interviews and life stories/histories, and sometimes in the pre-rehearsal sessions and informal conversations, the women talked about the violence in their lives with a sense of hopelessness. However, in the pre-rehearsal sessions, the women were more inclined to speak about the various strategies they used to cope with everyday hardships. The Roma women claimed that they possessed an “instinct” that made them “try everything to survive” (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Hope*, 3/27/03). Their means of coping with domestic violence, for example, ranged from the use of sedatives and passively accepting abuse, to reciprocating the abuse to which they were subjected:

Ana: . . . There are some women who won't let their husbands beat them up... if he hits me once, then I'll hit him twice. And when he's psychologically abusing me, then I can psychologically abuse him too. My husband has been abusing me psychologically all my life, so I try not to cross his path, and I only take pills... I take pills, and I take pills, and I take pills... and that's it. And then he says, “Oh, look at her, she's stuffed herself with all those pills!” But when I really lose it. . . . and if he really hurts me... when I really feel the pain, and when I really have one of my attacks... then, I'm telling you, he's already afraid of me, because I lose control over myself... because then I could do anything... I could take a knife from the table, and I could cut him. . . . I

cut him a few times... I cut his hand really bad once... I almost went for his stomach... and now, when he sees that I'm fighting with him, he says, "Go to hell," and he leaves the house.

Magda: What else can a woman do to avoid a beating from her husband?

Ana: She can sit quiet and not talk back... just sit and suffer... [if he says] warm, then warm... [if he says] cold, then cold... and then sometimes for agreeing she'd also get beaten.

Basia: Yes. (Ibid., 4/09/03)

To avoid harassment and discrimination, especially when trading, the women often wore pants and cosmetics to "look more like a Polish woman." They hoped to avoid being snubbed by potential customers:

Ana: We don't wear pants, but when we go somewhere trading, then we wear pants in order to make some money... because if people see a Roma woman selling something, they'd prefer to go to the next vendor and buy something from a Pole, even if it costs more... so in order for me to sell things faster, I'll wear pants... and I'll put on make-up... I'll wear a mask, so I look more like a Polish woman. . . . But to wear pants and walk around the city, that would be unacceptable. (Ibid., 3/27/03)

Developing rapport with the local grocer in order to establish a line of credit (Ibid., 4/04/03), or pawning personal items, such as jewellery, at local "Lombards" (pawnshops), were some of the other strategies the women adopted to alleviate the effects of poverty. The women admitted, however, that Lombards were both a curse and a means of hope for them: on the one hand, "if you run into difficulties, you don't have to ask for help;" on the other hand, "they are bad, because you lose a lot of money from them... when you want to buy back a ring, you'll end up paying more for it than it's worth" (Ibid., 4/04/03).

The women also considered theft as a way of getting-by when they lacked other means:

Olga: What happens if a man leaves a woman?

Ana: Well every Roma woman has the instinct that she'll know how to take care of things... unless she really is a loser.

Ana: But even if she doesn't know how to fortune tell, then she'll go trade... and especially if she has children, then she has to do it... there's no question about it... no discussion. . . .

Olga: . . . so either fortune telling or trading?

Ana: Well, not only trading... one can also steal. There are different ways of making money ... what profession am I good at... and what can I do at this moment. (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Hope*, 4/04/03)

Yet the women stressed that Roma would never steal in their own hometown, because they would not want to get caught:

Ana: I'll tell you something... a Roma woman will never do anything bad in her own town... there is even a saying, "A Gypsy won't steal anything in his own backyard." He'll go somewhere else and steal there, but . . . he'll keep guard of his own home so things won't get stolen.

Basia: True....

Ana: ...and especially here where there are so few of us... I'd never go and steal anything, because I might be lucky one time, but the next time, I'd get caught... that's why, if we want to do the dirty work, we never do it in our own town ... but we don't do such dirty stuff anyway, because we don't have the inclination to do those things... (Ibid.)

The women also related how they taught their children, both boys and girls, to "fight back" against the bullying they experienced from their non-Roma peers.

Ana: ...so Maciek runs after them [his non-Roma friends]... I tell him not to go to them, but then they use him, they kick him around... they played a game where if somebody doesn't score a goal, they get kicked... Maciek came back one day kicked all over like a dog... when he was going to sleep, I noticed that his entire legs were blue... so I said to him, "So is that a game? Is it?" He said that they were just playing like that, and that it's a game. "What kind of a game is that? Are you also kicking them like this?" He said, "Well, I didn't manage to kick any of them yet." So I grabbed a broom, and I

started hitting him so much that he was yelling out, “Help... mommy, I won’t do that anymore!” I said, “Oh, I’ll show you! You play ball, and you let them kick you like a dog?”

Zefiryna: I teach Marta to fight back... and when she comes home complaining that she was hit, I’ll only hit her in the face... yeah, because she has to learn how to fight back. (Ibid.)

Apart from what the Roma women themselves recognised as strategies of survival, there were other subversive means – evident from the stories they told us during our pre-rehearsal discussions – by which they responded to everyday hardships. The women often fought discrimination and violence in their lives by refusing to passively tolerate such abuse. For example, Ana was not intimidated by the social worker’s authority, and refused to submit to an interview while her suite was flooding. Nor did she endure the worker’s snide remarks about her flat – remarks meant to refute her claims for social support (Ibid.). Randia fought for her rights as a tenant by appealing to a local radio station and speaking out against the racist and discriminatory attitudes of her neighbours-to-be (Ibid., 4/04/03). Ewa refused to pay the fines for allegedly throwing diapers outside of her block. Ana fearlessly stood up to her neighbour’s exploitation of her mother (Ibid.).

Their Expressions of Hope

The women’s coping strategies, discussed in pre-rehearsal sessions, echoed, to some extent, the sentiments of hope I had heard and witnessed during the participant observation of their lives. When I visited the women daily in their homes, and accompanied them on errands, it was evident that the women also experienced, understood, and responded to their problems by investing hope in the future.

In immediate terms, the Roma women were preoccupied with the challenges of daily life, and with finding ways to improve their life circumstances. Although in interviews, and in their life stories/histories they often talked about “giving up,” in their everyday lives they continued doing “normal things,” like caring for their children,

cooking, cleaning, shopping, fortune telling, and trading. They rushed out from their homes early in the morning to secure the best spot for fortune telling, stood in long queues to purchase discounted cuts of meat as a surprise for the evening meal, or renovated their flat on their own “so it [looks] more like a home for Christmas” (Fieldnotes 2002). The mere fact that the women agreed to participate in the research, welcomed me into their homes, and spent hours being interviewed and relating their life stories, suggested that they had not entirely “given up,” and that they were searching for ways to improve their day-to-day existence. In our informal conversations, the women also expressed their hope for the future:

You know, one thing that I’m hoping for is that eventually all the Western countries... all the leaders will see how we live here... when Poland joins the [European] union, I mean. Maybe then they’ll somehow help us... somehow, I’m not sure, but I think that one day the world will see what they do to us here, and get us out... maybe not us... maybe our children. But see? You came all the way from Canada, and you’ll tell people, too. (Ana January 8, 2003)

The women also hoped that the violence they experienced at home would one day diminish:

Yes, we still fight, but things are better now... they will get better. We’ve been married for many years now. I’m so sick now that he’s afraid to hit me really hard... also, I don’t allow it. If he hits me, I hit him twice as hard. I think that he’s more afraid now... and maybe now he cares more about me. I think that as we get older, there’ll be less of that. (Fieldnotes 2003, Ana)

The women often talked about Western countries in hopeful terms. Many were saving money and making contacts abroad so they could one day leave Poland:

I’m saving up, little by little. As soon as we have the money, and the opportunity arises, we’ll leave: this thought keeps me alive. (Fieldnotes 2002, Ewa)

Additionally, I became aware that, as a representative of the West, I was a signifier of hope for some of the women. They often competed with each other for my attention, and jealousy was a common denominator as they chastised me for visiting other Roma families. The hope that I would help them immigrate to Canada frequently arose in conversations:

Magda, when you go back to Canada, don't forget me. Maybe there could be a way for you to bring me there... maybe through your school... there must be a way. (Fieldnotes 2003, Ewa)

Reflections

The performance development process, which involved participant observation, informal conversations, interviews, life stories/histories, and pre-rehearsal sessions, was valuable, not only because it allowed the actors, Shawn, and me to learn about the Roma women's lives; it also provided important insights into the various power relations that defined our mutual interactions and roles.

The power relations were made apparent in the disparate ways in which the Roma women spoke about their problems. Such disparities can be linked, possibly, to the various benefits and ends the women were trying to negotiate for themselves through both my research and their affiliation with me. It might have been the case that the women spoke about their experiences of violence in ways that they believed might help alleviate the hardships and violence they experienced daily; consequently, they constructed their accounts of violence according to whom they imagined as their potential audiences.

Perhaps the women spoke in more hopeless terms in their interviews and life stories/histories than they did in their informal conversations because they believed that what they said in their recorded stories, parts of which would be quoted verbatim in my Ph.D. dissertation, might reach larger international audiences, and ultimately result in bringing about changes in the future. This was indicated, for example, when one day

Ana, as I was about to turn on the recorder, asked me to wait a few minutes: “[I need to] compose myself and really think about what I want people to know about my life... it’s not like I’m blabbing to you whatever I want in the kitchen... if you’re going to show this to others, then they really gotta know how we Roma live” (Fieldnotes 2003, Ana). Randia also one time asked me if what she had said in her interview was not “too whiney,” because as much as she wanted people to help them, “too much whining” could have the opposite effect (Ibid., Randia). Finally, when I asked Zefiryra, following the first taped interview with her, if it was as intimidating as she had originally thought it would be, she responded, “No... but I was very conscious of what I said... not like when we talk everyday. I don’t pay attention then... I say what I want to say” (Ibid., Zefiryra). On the other hand, perhaps the women were less careful and particular about what they said during our informal (unrecorded) conversations, as the potential audiences and benefits were less apparent; thus, conveying a sense of hopelessness might have been less of a concern.

In addition, the group context of our pre-rehearsal sessions could have posed other demands. Talking about their lives in front of Gadjos, and in front of each other, possibly forced the women to consider, more carefully, how they were representing themselves and their community. The women might have wanted to show to the non-Roma actors that despite the difficulties in their lives, they did not lack a fighting spirit. When I visited Randia after the final performance of *Hope*, she asserted, “I’m not sure if these actors of ours learned anything through all of this, but I hope they know now that Roma don’t go through life meek like cows going to slaughter, because we fight like bulls!” (Fieldnotes 2003, Randia)

Finally, I believe that in the group setting of our pre-rehearsal sessions, in the stories they told, and in how they told them, the women also had to consider one another. Sometimes it appeared that through their stories of survival, resourcefulness, and standing up to Gadjos, the women were trying to impress, in addition to the actors, one another. After one pre-rehearsal session, Randia told me, “You know what, Magda, tomorrow I’ll tell you more how I had to stumble through life... but I did it so well... I was strong! Not like now... I knew how to make ends meet. . . . they [the other Roma women] need to

know this too... they only laugh at me that I stole hens! But I didn't, I never stole anything." (Fieldnotes 2003, Randia)

In terms of power struggles, instances of discord were rare in this stage of the research process. Despite the mutual distrust, and my doubts and resentments, that defined the relations between the Roma women and me, antagonisms between us never surfaced when I visited the women in their homes, recorded their interviews and life stories, or during pre-rehearsal sessions. The relations between the Roma women and the actors were also largely amicable in the pre-rehearsal sessions. Opening night was still safely in the distance, and thus, "the stakes" were relatively low. In such circumstances, everyone was committed to rehearsal etiquette – defined by a mutual respect for one another – which, in turn, kept any personal/group antagonisms and conflicts at a minimum. This was evident in the ways in which we negotiated our interactions, roles, and relationships in the studio: we all strove to keep the atmosphere in the theatre friendly and co-operative.

The actors and I tried to make the Roma women feel welcome in rehearsals, safe when telling their stories, and in control of group discussions; thus, we assumed the roles of facilitators, who listened, asked questions, took notes, and audio-/video-recorded rehearsals. The actors' commitment to respecting the Roma women's opinions was particularly apparent when they did not protest or challenge the women's, at times, negative and generalising views of Poles (Fieldnotes 2003).

The Roma women, in turn, worked to keep the sessions amicable and collaborative. Right from the start, they strove to establish good rapport with the actors. This was evident when they playfully tried to determine which actor might "pass as a Roma." Although they concurred that Grazyna – with her dark hair and complexion – could be "easily mistaken for a Roma girl," Ana qualified that it was not so easy to distinguish who was Roma, because many Roma were blonde, and in the end, "everybody's the same" (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Hope*, 4/04/03, 3/2703). While joking about who did or did not look Roma was the women's way of bonding with the actors, and "breaking the ice" in the pre-rehearsal sessions, later in rehearsals the women would use it for different ends, which would profoundly reshape their relationships with the actors.

As well, the Roma women's efforts at maintaining a friendly atmosphere in the studio were obvious when they encouraged us to ask questions, and enthusiastically responded to our inquiries. Randia warmly encouraged the actors, "Do you have any other questions? Don't be afraid to ask!" (Ibid.) Furthermore, the women were careful not to offend the actors with their stories. They often apologised for comparing their lives with those of non-Roma: "I'm sorry we're constantly saying you... us... we don't mean here you particularly, because all Poles are different... but there are some differences between how you and how we do things, so don't get offended" (Fieldnotes 2003, Ana). When they spoke about Poles negatively, they maintained that they were not generalising. For example, in a fragment cited earlier (see p.190), when Zefiryna complained about Polish people's hygiene, Ana cautiously qualified that they were not speaking about "all Poles.

As both the actors and the Roma women worked to maintain a friendly atmosphere in the theatre, our pre-rehearsal sessions largely passed with minimal conflict. The only significant tensions arose when Olga sardonically asked the women whether they thought that the Poles' hatred of Roma was a result of "blatant racism," or the Roma's "difference:"

Basia: You know what Magda... it's really hard to live here... even when you go to City Hall with some business, it's hard, because everybody just can't stand us.

Olga: Why do you think that's so? Is it a result of blatant racism, or maybe your own difference?

Basia: No, not because we're different... it's racism!

Zefiryna: Plain racism! Racism against Roma... against Jews... they show it on TV all the time... there's a whole program on TV about racism (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Hope*, 3/27/03)

The Roma women reacted to Olga's question with indignation. Not surprising, because it echoed the common view in Poland that prejudice against Roma stems from their cultural idiosyncrasies rather than from racism. Many Roma to whom I had spoken immensely despised such opinions. While Olga's remark marred the atmosphere in the studio for the remainder of the day, it did not significantly affect the interactions between

the women and the actors in this stage of the process. It was not until rehearsals – when the group’s “sense of propriety” eroded – that Olga’s remark began to influence the dynamics in the studio.

The Roma women’s commitment to maintaining the group’s equilibrium at this point of the process was also apparent in their amiable interactions among themselves. Minor tensions mainly arose when the women attempted to resolve family conflicts in the studio, or when the younger women tactlessly discussed issues considered taboo by the Roma code of conduct. For example, Ana became annoyed when Randia reprimanded her for refusing – due to personal reasons – to sue her nephew’s school for a beating he had suffered on its property (Ibid., 4/09/03). Or Randia once scolded Ewa for making an inappropriate remark about her Aunt Basia’s sexual relationship with her husband:

Ewa: Basia’s husband has to force her [to have sex], because he’s old and she won’t give it to him on her own... but she has to obey him I guess, so that’s the way he gets it.

Randia: How can you talk like that about your older aunt?!

Zefiryna: Whose fault is it but hers that she took for herself an old husband? How can she be with him when he’s in his sixties? (Ibid., 4/02/03)

Generally, however, such tensions were short-lived and rarely arose in the studio. Usually, the women were vigilant about obtaining Randia’s – the group’s elder – permission to discuss things taboo:

Ana: I became ill after giving birth to my youngest son... it was the hospital’s fault. But I shouldn’t really talk about this, because my Aunt Randia is here.

Randia: It’s fine with me... I said yesterday that you could tell them what happened. (Ibid., 4/04/03)

Yet, it seemed that the respect the younger women were showing their elders in the studio, in addition to following the Roma code of conduct, also served other ends. It might have been the women’s way of ensuring that our sessions did not taint their

relations outside of the studio. When Randia once assured Ana that she “[could] take it easy [and] talk about whatever [she] like[d],” Ana sarcastically responded, “Yeah, right! So you can poison my nerves about it later!” (Fieldnotes 2003) In addition, the young Roma women’s respect for their elders appeared to be directed at both the actors and me: it was meant to demonstrate to the Gadjos in the studio that Roma, unlike Gadjos, had a sense of propriety and respect for their elders. When Olga asked the Roma women whether they talked to their children about sex, puberty, or menstruation, Ana answered, “See, even now you’re talking about this, we’re embarrassed to talk about it because our elder aunt is here... we don’t talk about things like that in front of elders” (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Hope*, 3/27/03). Randia also asserted to Olga, “Among us Gypsies, elders are respected... you must know that... we know what’s right and wrong” (Fieldnotes 2003).

In this stage of the process, there were no apparent power struggles among the Roma women over leadership in the project. Although Ana dominated most discussions, the other women did not see it as a problem. They asserted that they agreed with everything Ana said, because, as Randia pointed out, “things are exactly the way she said they were... she’s got a better way than us of putting thoughts into words” (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Hope*, 3/27/03). Likewise, in this stage of the process, there were no conflicts between the actors themselves, or between the actors and me.

Pre-Rehearsal Sessions with Actors

I also held separate pre-rehearsal sessions with the actors as a group, usually in the studio immediately following our meetings with the Roma women. In our separate pre-rehearsal sessions, the actors and I reviewed the recordings of our discussions, identified emerging themes, and developed questions for future sessions. However, the actors also provided me with feedback regarding the pre-rehearsal stage of the research project. This, in turn, revealed important insights into how the actors and I constructed our perceptions of the Roma women, the stories they told us, and Roma in general; as well as how we negotiated our roles and relationships when we met outside of the joint sessions with the Roma women.

During the separate pre-rehearsal sessions – in which, to some extent, we were released from the tethers of the project’s etiquette – tensions, antagonisms, criticisms, and prejudices largely sublimated during the joint sessions with the Roma women now rose to the surface. This was evident, for example, in the ways in which the actors talked about the Roma women’s participation in the project. For the actors – and to a certain extent me – the Roma women’s participation in the process was a source of anxiety, and at times, bewilderment. In one of our separate sessions, we expressed our apprehension that the Roma women would not remain committed enough to the process to attend rehearsals regularly. Yet, when the Roma women did attend our sessions regularly and punctually, our apprehension was replaced by astonishment, and left us wondering what kept the Roma women coming back (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal [actors], *Hope*, 2/26/03; 4/3/03):

Magda: You know what I’m really astounded by, is that the women come so regularly, and I think that it’s hard for them.

Olga: Maybe the money is the motivation.

Magda: For sure it is, but I think that even if it was the main motivating factor, they still don’t have to come on time, and every time... what’s in it for them? What are your other thoughts? (Ibid., 4/3/03)

Thus, we perceived the Roma women's attendance/non-attendance at our sessions not as "normal" acts that could be supported or hindered by a variety of external factors, but rather, as peculiar developments. In contrast, we viewed our own acts of attendance/non-attendance – not all actors were always punctual or in attendance at rehearsals – as "normal." Namely, while both the actors and I found the occasional lateness or absence of fellow actors to be a nuisance – something I often addressed in the studio – nevertheless, we did not scrutinise our own punctuality/tardiness or presence/absence as we did the Roma women's. In other words, we did not view our own participation in the project as out-of-the-ordinary, while the Roma women's participation was always an object of scrutiny in our separate pre-rehearsal sessions. In this sense – while not deliberately – the actors and I were nevertheless labelling the women's work ethos as "abnormal."

Additionally, the actors criticised the Roma women for being largely passive in relation to their own oppression. In their view, the women approached their tradition uncritically, and accepted it as "natural" and "normal." In contrast, the actors argued that they themselves, as well as their parents, approached their own Polish tradition critically, and recognised its problematic aspects:

Olga: . . . it surprises me that they approach their tradition so uncritically. We're in the twenty-first century here, after all, and their only argument for everything they experience is that they have to because it's their tradition. (Ibid., 3/27/03)

Olga: But normally you'd think they might want to change that marriage contract... don't they feel bad about that contract... and don't they feel upset that their men are allowed to do everything... how can they simply take it like that?

Grazyna: Other than Ana, no one was really critical about their relationships.

Agnieszka: I think that to them it's more acceptable, because they have grown up around that, but I also think they realise something is not right... well they've talked about these problems here.

Olga: I don't know, but I think that if one is practising some kind of tradition, one has to assume a certain position towards that tradition... and one has to somehow explain things to themselves in their own heads.

Grazyna: But if they're already getting married at thirteen years of age, then I don't think there's really any chance. . . . But they consider this to be tradition... after a girl gets married, then in a month or two she's pregnant... this seems natural to them.

Olga: They do treat it as normal... you get married and then get pregnant, and that's just how things are. (Ibid., 3/31/03)

Olga: I was looking at Marta when she hugged her mom, and I was thinking that I can't imagine that this child would be married off in two or three years. But it's strange that they don't really see that, because my parents... they knew what was wrong with their tradition... in their lives... what was hurtful in their lives... they never repeated those mistakes in raising me, because they don't want me to suffer like them. . . . What is strange is that a woman who. . . . knows what she has been through, that she can say that she'll marry off her girl young. If she knows that it's not good for the girl . . . because they admitted that... but on the other hand, they say, "Such is tradition, and we have to."

Magda: But I think that all opinions and observations are always partial... we are sitting here and talking about Roma tradition, and how discriminatory it is for the women... but others can also find our reality very intolerant and unchanging. When my theatre group came here from Canada, they wondered how Polish women could be treated so terribly... and they found it surprising that women were not opposing such sexist treatment... they were shocked that men in Poland whistle at women. I think that truth is often situated... in terms of where we come from, and what position we are evaluating things from.

Grazyna: Sure, but the difference is that we also see those things... and we know that many things that are going on here are not right... and similarly, we could say many things about Canada that we might not like. . . . (Ibid., 3/27/03)

The actors were setting up here a binary that contrasted the Roma women, as passive/accepting, with themselves – and their parents – as active/resisting. However, such a binary accounted neither for what the Roma women had been telling us during our in-studio discussions, nor for what had been revealed through my encounters with the students – and some of the students' parents – in the two earlier projects, *Dance as I Play You*, and *Horses And Angels*.

While the Roma women's understandings of tradition were multiple, shifting, and often contradictory, on numerous occasions, they articulated very compelling critical

accounts of their tradition as oppressive and violent. They also talked about their efforts of coping with the burdens of tradition, such as taking sedatives, responding to the physical and psychological abuse of their husbands in kind, refusing to marry off their daughters at a young age, or wearing clothing not deemed acceptable by the Roma community. While most of these coping strategies constituted small everyday acts and practices that destabilise, rather than overthrow, unequal power relations (Scott 1985, 1990), they were, nevertheless, premeditated, and analytically reflected on, responses on the part of the Roma women directed *against* the violent and oppressive aspects of their tradition.

Likewise, while the actors painted a picture of themselves and their parents as critical thinkers who challenged problematic aspects of Polish tradition, such a picture can not be seen as anything more than a rather idealised portrait. Although the actors did indeed question many problematic aspects of Polish traditional values, beliefs, and practices, nonetheless, some of the students and their parents were not always critical in what they said or did. This was evident, for example, in the students' vilification of feminists for the ignominy of feminism in Poland in the project *Horses And Angels* (see p.111), or in the prejudicial attitudes some of the students and their parents expressed toward Tadzio's alleged disability while working on *Dance As I Play You* (see p.107).

In retrospect, I believe that the actors' socio-economic status was shaping, to a large extent, the ways in which they perceived the Roma women's responses to their oppression. Had the students been lower-middle class women, for whom self-fulfilment – as suggested by Marody and Poleszczuk (2000) – was being constructed in Poland in more traditional terms, such as homemaking and motherhood, their understandings of the Roma women's attitudes toward tradition might have been very different. However, for most of the actors who came from middle or upper-middle class families, and sought self-fulfilment in post-secondary education and professional careers, recognising the Roma women's responses to oppression as significant or meaningful was more difficult.

Furthermore, the actors at times constructed Roma culture largely as “primitive,” static, or “sealed off” from the rest of the world:

Olga: More proof that their culture is so tightly sealed off from the world is that living here in Poland, they still don't change their tradition... they must see that children are

being raised differently... and they see that girls are not being married off so early in Poland, generally... and it's surprising that it doesn't change gradually. It's not that they should change it themselves, and say "stop doing that," but that this hasn't changed so much historically... slowly... but if you think about our own culture, things have been changing gradually... things were different before, and now they're different, because circumstances forced us to do that. It's strange, because they're living here, and yet they're so hermetically sealed off from our reality. I guess the girls are just not being talked to, and they accept everything as it's served to them. I think this is the way they're being taught... like Marta, she gets hit at school, and then she also gets hit at home for not fighting back... instead of hugging her and talking to her, and explaining things to her... and giving her some good advice.

Magda: Well, I think that we can't look at the Roma as being separate from our reality ... we are all living in the same time and space. I also think that, as they themselves pointed out, their "tradition" has been changing in various ways as well... for instance, Polish marriages are a more common occurrence now... the relationship between men and women in the household has also changed, as men tend to contribute more in terms of finances. We can't think of their culture as unchanging, and of ours as evolving. In our culture, many things have been slow to change as well... our treatment of minorities, or women in general... I mean racism and sexism is a big reality in Poland.

Grazyna: That's different, though... I don't agree with you. I think that Roma as an ethnic group... the reason why their tradition stuck around for so long, and that it has been reluctant to change, is because... all the clothing... the caravans... because they're trying to protect themselves from taking on a Polish way of life... going to our schools. But I think that now... well, I don't know, but I think that now... they say that it won't... but I think that things will change eventually because it's all progressing... you can't stop it... they even have television... television also has a certain influence on them as people, for sure... it'll give them a different kind of awareness... they'll see a different world.

Agnieszka: Of course, but I don't think that an ethnic group can hermetically isolate itself from the rest... because we all live in the same time. I also think that what might contribute to the way things are in their culture is the lack of education... and that they are not able to exchange their opinions as freely as, for instance, we are.

Olga: Yes, if they get married at the age of thirteen, they have to quit school, and they have to stay with those husbands of theirs and take care of them... not much discussion is happening then... and they have to stay with that husband... and to break that, they need education and knowledge... but how can they achieve that if they're always stuck in that tradition?

Grazyna: You know what... their culture reminds me a lot of some of the more primitive Polish cultures... such as some of the groups that still live in small villages... in villages there's a similar understanding of marriage... it was often considered to be a kind of contract. (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal [actors], *Hope*, 3/27/03.)

The conversation above reveals several of the actors' assumptions about Roma. First, the actors maintained that Roma culture was "sealed off" from the rest of the world, and had not been changing historically, which they attributed both to the Roma's lack of education, and to their attempts at "protecting themselves from taking on a Polish way of life." In contrast, according to Olga and Grazyna, Polish culture had been changing throughout history. Second, some students assumed, as articulated by Grazyna, that Roma culture would inevitably undergo changes as Polish society progresses, because television "gives [people] a different kind of awareness." Third, Grazyna put forth that Roma culture echoed the "more primitive," "small village" cultures of Poland, where marriage was often perceived as a "kind of a contract." Such assumptions positioned the Roma culture at an earlier level of social development, and a separate historical moment from mainstream Polish culture. The actors were propagating what Fabian (1983) calls the "denial of coevalness" – representing "the other" as existing in "a time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse"(31), and thus obscuring the contemporaneity of the unequal relations of power that define the encounters between Western and non-Western cultures. Although the actors recognised that Polish culture is not homogenous, as it consists of different "smaller" cultures, they denied Roma culture such heterogeneity. According to Crehan (2002), "other" cultures, "the colonised rather than the colonising," are most often viewed as "bounded," stable, rooted, and unique (61). Yet, the Roma women themselves spoke of Roma culture and tradition as changing, in terms of dress code, men's contributions to family finances, Roma and Gadjo intermarriages, and the power dynamics between husband and wife in Roma households.

As well, the actors' observations suggest that they perceived – to some extent – the Roma women, and Roma in general, as "backward" in their conceptions of shame and sexuality:

Olga: I can't imagine how one could decide whether someone else can walk around in their underwear in the house. I'm not embarrassed to walk around however I want to... in a T-shirt... our home should be a place where we feel most comfortable, wearing whatever we want to... for me it's very strange... it'd be strange to walk to the bathroom in pyjamas or something. (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal [actors], *Hope*, 4/03/03)

While the actors contrasted the Roma women's "strange" with non-Roma's "progressive" notions of shame, such comparisons, once again, accounted neither for past nor present conceptions of shame in Poland. Merely fifteen years ago, when I lived in Poland, talk of sexuality, birth, or gynaecologists in front of family members or friends, was generally considered unacceptable. There had always been a strong sense of "decent behaviour" among Poles, and despite Olga's suggestion, walking around in one's underwear in many households was likely to be deemed "improper." It is difficult to imagine that there has been such a massive shift in attitudes over fifteen years in a culture where the Catholic "denial of the flesh," continues to shape Polish mores. Among my family members and friends, there is still a strong belief in the "propriety" of what should or should not be said and done in front of others. Thus, Roma notions of shame might not be as "strange" or culturally idiosyncratic as some of the actors suggested.

Furthermore, the actors spoke of the Roma women's attitudes toward children and childrearing as "strange:"

Grazyna: What is very strange is that the girls are being taught to be adults so early... that they clean, wash the floor... and they're supposed to take care of themselves, but no one talks to them about their destiny... about sexuality and marriage... and that marriage is not a game with a friend that you know... that it also entails different things, as well. This is so strange, that on the one hand, they are approaching their girls like they're adults, but on the other hand, they treat them like kids. (Ibid., 3/27/03)

Magda: How do the Roma women treat their children?

Grazyna: When an older boy beat up Marta, she was still hit by her mother because she didn't fight back. I know they're trying to maybe harden them up, but still I think that it's harsh. (Ibid., 3/31/03)

"Strange" here seems to imply "negligent," as according to the actors, Roma children were not taught about "destiny," "sexuality," or "marriage," were slapped for not fighting back, and were forced to "take care of themselves." Yet, while the Roma women, admitted they were at times impatient with their children, they did not believe

they harmed them, even if they “spank[ed] them occasionally [to] keep them in line” (Fieldnotes 2003). As well, although the Roma women admitted their tradition did not permit children to dine at the table with adults, they did not perceive it as “putting their men and themselves in front of their children;” instead, they saw it as a cultural practice aimed at cultivating respect in the young for the elders. “Our children don’t sit with adults at the table, and they must ask parents before they grab anything from the set table. They can’t just grab... this is to teach them respect for adults, because such is our tradition... we respect our elders,” explained Randia (Ibid.). The women also boasted that Roma mothers loved their children immensely, and “would never give [them] away to an orphanage” (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Hope*, 3/26/03).

The actors also spoke with negative undertones about the Roma women’s attitudes toward theft:

Magda: What do you think about their attitudes toward stealing? Don’t forget Roma are often stereotyped as thieves.

Agnieszka: I think they are saying that if the situation doesn’t force them to do it, then they won’t do it... but if a situation forces them to do it... if they wake up in the morning and have nothing to give their children to eat, then there is no other option for many Roma women but to steal. (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal [actors], *Hope*, 3/31/03)

Grazyna: But I also read in a newspaper... someone was writing that Roma, if you look at them, they right away get defensive and start asking, “Why are you looking at me like that? Do you think I’ll steal?”

Olga: Like they’re looking for a fight... but I think that in some stores, at least the smaller ones, if a customer comes in, then it’s natural that the people would turn their heads to see who is coming in... but I have seen Roma right away say, “Why are you looking at me like that? Do you think that I’ll steal? Everyone’s looking at me because I’m Roma... but be careful, because Poles can steal, too!” And then they start going on about how, no matter how hard you watch them, they’ll rob you if they want to.

Agnieszka: I think that they’re anticipating those reactions... it’s their way of self-defence.

Olga: Acting that way they won’t be able to accomplish anything because they are only making people angry.

Agnieszka: I was once in a store, and a Roma family walked in, and all the cashiers ran out and started following the Roma and coming up to other customers and telling

them something... and then I saw other customers grab their pockets and jackets tighter, and really looking out for the Roma in the store.

Olga: If someone is openly talking about how they might steal, then I'm not surprised... what are people supposed to do?

Grazyna: I'm not saying that they're stealing because they are Roma, because it does not depend on ethnicity whether you steal or not. It's been with us for so long, the belief that the Roma are thieves, and many people believe that. . . . and [Roma] are trying to defend themselves in strange ways... in some ways they're solidifying those stereotypes... maybe not knowing that they are doing that, and things remain as they were... because if you're in the store, and you're not even thinking that this Roma person could steal something, and then they spit it at your face that if they want to, they'll steal anyways, then what would you think? (Ibid.)

Grazyna: I also think that their attitudes are very conflicting... they say that you might keep an eye on them, but if they want to, they'll steal no matter what you do.

Agnieszka: They are always stressing how they are very good at stealing, and that you can stand behind their backs, and they'll steal anyhow.

Grazyna: I see that they are very wise and sharp.... that you don't really see in other cultures... something that really makes you feel intimidated. I think that they are really confrontational... they have something in their eyes, and they wield their superiority over you... they have a skill we don't . . . I think they would really do well at school if they only wanted to, because they have that skill. (Ibid.)

The above excerpts imply that the actors believed the Roma women conceived of theft differently than we did, primarily because the women did not directly condemn stealing, but rather, considered it to be a strategy of survival to which one could always resort – albeit not in one's own backyard – if need be. As well, the actors were surprised that the Roma women prided themselves on being “good at theft,” and revelled in their abilities to steal in stores. The actors were also astonished by how the Roma women confronted people's perceptions of them as thieves. While they understood the women's responses in different ways – Agnieszka and Grazyna saw them as a form of self-defence, and Olga as a way of “looking for a fight” – generally the actors concurred that such responses only solidified the stereotypes they were meant to contest (Fieldnotes 2003).

However, several things need to be debunked here. First, no matter how “different” the Roma women’s conceptions of theft appeared to us, such differences might have been more about how we constructed the women’s attitudes toward theft during our pre-rehearsal sessions, than about any concrete differences in how the Roma women thought, or any of us might think, in such circumstances. For both Roma and Gadjos living under conditions of abject poverty, acts of theft would most certainly carry different meanings and moral implications than for the affluent Roma and Gadjos.

Second, the Roma women’s responses to people’s perceptions of them as thieves perhaps could be seen as the only reasonable means of responding to prejudice and racism under the concrete political conditions of present-day Poland. From the women’s stories, it was clear that they answered the accusatory stares of store clerks and customers with sarcasm. In this context, sarcasm might have been a “weapon of the weak” (Scott 1985) wielded against the prejudice and discrimination of those in power. Maybe addressing the Gadjos’ allegations with sarcasm prevented the Roma women from resorting to a powerless defensiveness, and permitted them to preserve a modicum of self-respect in the face of constant humiliation.

Moreover, since the stories our participants tell us – and how they tell them – are always mediated and shaped by our own presence, likewise, what the Roma women were saying in the studio was always in response to the presence of the actors and me. The stories the women told us might have been subversive strategies directed at us Gadjos in efforts to challenge the unequal relations of power that defined our interactions in, and outside, of the theatre. Ana once told me that she hoped the rehearsal process would show the Polish actors that the Roma women had a fighting spirit, and could “speak up to Gadjos no matter what” (Fieldnotes 2003). Perhaps this was what the women were trying to show us; this was what the “intimidating something” in the women’s eyes – as Grazyna put it – might have been.

Furthermore, how we envisioned the potential problems of representation for this performance revealed certain problematic assumptions we held about the Roma women’s, and our ideas about theatre. Prior to one of our pre-rehearsal sessions, Olga asserted, “I think the women are really set on what they want us to show... they’ve got all these

different ideas for this play. I don't know, it's going to cause problems... theatre isn't like *Love and Hate*"⁷² (Ibid.). Olga's remark resonated further in the studio that day:

Magda: What do you think might be potential difficulties with this project... anything?

Grazyna: I think that there'll be difficulties in representing violence in this performance, because they might see things differently than we do, and also because they might not want to show certain things to an audience.

Maria: Yeah, how would we really get at those topics?

Magda: If they don't want to talk about them, then they don't have to.

Grazyna: We'll have to be careful about how we talk about it on stage, because they might object to what we're saying, or how we're portraying and improvising violence... I think that this will be challenging.

Magda: I think that we have to be aware that the women's conceptions of violence might be very different from ours Also, how they want to represent things in the performance might differ from how we'd like to have it done.... I mean, in terms of style... theatrical expression.

Olga: It'll be different... the women watch a lot of soap operas.
(Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal [actors], *Hope*, 3/31/03)

What stands out in the above excerpts is that, to some extent, we attributed any difficulties that might arise in the process to the "different ideas" the Roma women might hold about what to represent – and how to represent it – in the performance.

Consequently, rather than addressing potential issues of representation in terms of the discrepancies between the Roma women's and our ideas of what to include in, and exclude from, the performance, and focusing on how such discrepancies might be negotiated in productive ways, we bemoaned how the Roma women's "different" theatre aesthetics would create problems in the rehearsal room. This exposes certain assumptions we held about the Roma women's and our ideas about theatre. Specifically, we viewed our notions of theatre as "normal," and the Roma women's as "different." For us, the Roma women's different ideas – and not ours – would likely result in difficulties with constructing the performance's representation. Our understandings of the Roma women's

theatre sensibilities as “different,” and as a potential source of “problems,” continued to influence our attitudes toward the ways in which the Roma women created the spoken and physical texts of the performance throughout the process. Particularly, our conviction that the women wanted to construct the performance using a “soap opera” aesthetic as the framework would shape, in significant ways, the power dynamics between the Roma women, the actors, and me in the rehearsal stage of the process.

Moreover, the actors sometimes transferred their often-negative perceptions of the Roma women and their ways of life onto all Roma as an ethnic/cultural group. For example, when Grazyna spoke about the “intimidating something” in the Roma women’s eyes, she extended her observations to include the entire “Roma culture:” “I see that they [the Roma women] are very wise and sharp...that you don’t really see in other cultures... something that really makes you feel intimidated. I think that they are really confrontational... they have something in their eyes.” (Ibid.)

Finally, the ways in which the actors and I negotiated our roles and relationships when we met in our separate pre-rehearsal sessions, where project etiquette was not a going concern, varied significantly. While I was the main facilitator during the pre-rehearsal sessions with the Roma women, during our separate meetings I acted more as an instructor, hoping that certain assertions of my authority would allow me to temper some of the actors’ negative perceptions of the Roma women. For instance, in an earlier fragment of our discussion, when the actors spoke of the Roma women as passive victims of oppression, I discussed with the actors the partial and situated “truth” of our own observations (Ibid., 3/27/03).

The actors’ interactions with me, and the ways in which we now negotiated our roles in these separate pre-rehearsal sessions, on the other hand, were very different. Now the actors saw me more as a co-facilitator than as an instructor, and hence, more as their equal. Although during our in-studio discussions the actors endowed me with the role of primary facilitator, and rarely contested my comments, in our separate sessions they often took the reigns in our discussions. While this could be linked to the fact that during the sessions with the Roma women the actors might have still felt uneasy about the process, and felt safer when we met separately, I nevertheless found these shifting roles tiresome and frustrating. I noticed that acting as sole facilitator during our sessions with

the Roma women limited the actors' levels of participation in our discussions, and compromised the collaborative spirit of the project. On the other hand, the leading roles the actors assumed in our separate meetings often had little to do with making a meaningful contribution to the research project, and more with "venting" their sundry frustrations, which chipped away at the group's morale. My resentment of these shifting roles was at times responsible for the tensions that arose among us. This was particularly evident in my responses to the actors' concerns. On one occasion, for example, when the actors griped, with no end in sight, about the potential struggles that might emerge between them and the Roma women, I abruptly asserted, "I wish you stopped worrying about problems that don't yet exist... we'll cross that bridge if we get there. I think we could use our time more productively now!" (Fieldnotes 2003)

Pre-Rehearsal Sessions with the Roma Women

The separate pre-rehearsal sessions I held with the Roma women usually took place at Randia's or Ana's flats, or at the women's fortune telling spot. These meetings provided me with another chance to spend time with the women, and solicit feedback regarding rehearsals. As such, our separate sessions – in ways similar to the separate pre-rehearsal sessions with the actors – provided important insights into how the Roma women constructed their perceptions of the actors and Poles in general, and how the women and I negotiated our roles and relationships when we met outside of the joint pre-rehearsal sessions.

The pre-rehearsal sessions with the Roma women, like those with the actors, were marked by tensions, antagonisms, prejudices, and criticisms. This mainly stemmed from the distrust the Roma women felt for the research project, the actors, and me. While the Roma women largely managed to conceal their distrust during our joint pre-rehearsal sessions, in our separate meetings they spoke openly about it on numerous occasions. For instance, when I met Randia the morning after our first joint pre-rehearsal session, she confided that the other Roma women had not attended, as they were apprehensive about the project, and wanted her to first “feel things out” (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal [Roma women], *Hope*, 3/27/03).

Later in the process, when I met the Roma women in their flats or while fortune telling, they conceded that although “the actors [were] nice” and “seem[ed] interested in their stories,” they were still not sure whether they could trust the actors because, after all, why “would anyone put too much trust in Poles” (Fieldnotes 2003, Basia, Randia, Zefiryna). In one instance, the Roma women's distrust of the actors was made apparent in how they responded to the suggestion Olga had recently made that perhaps Roma's differences, and not racism, were to be blamed for the discrimination of Roma (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Hope*, 3/27/03). In the joint pre-rehearsal sessions, the Roma women let Olga's remark slide, but in our separate meeting, the women openly talked about their mistrust of Olga and the other actors. They complained that they had to be careful about what they said in rehearsals, because the actors were “really no different than any other Pole on the street,” and that they only “put on good appearances” in the

studio (Fieldnotes 2003). The women also worried that the actors might breach the project's confidentiality agreement and start relating what they heard in the studio to people outside of the project. When I assured the women that this would never happen, as the actors, despite their at-times stereotypical views of Roma, were nevertheless very committed to the project, Ana bawled, "Yeah, right, and who would trust that!" (Ibid., Ana)

While the women were very friendly with me in our separate meetings and, as far as I could ascertain, did not hesitate to discuss any of their concerns, they also approached me with a certain degree of distrust, as they incessantly questioned me about my intentions. They wanted to be assured that what I wrote about them in my "book" was going to "speak well of Roma to the world" (Fieldnotes 2003). The women were also mistrustful of the project itself, specifically in how it might affect their lives:

Ana: And I don't think that the performance will change anything, because nothing has changed for us ever.

Randia: You never know... maybe they'll show this play in Canada... and people will finally see how we've been treated... you never know what can come out of this.

Ana shrugs her shoulders in a "who knows" gesture. (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal [Roma women], Hope, 3/28/03)

Although the women discussed the impact of the performance on their lives among themselves, they were clearly directing such queries at me. I sensed that the women spoke about the potential impact of the performance in negative terms in order to provoke words of encouragement from me. In one instance, when I admitted that I did not think the performance would bring any significant, immediate changes into their lives, even if it managed to alter the attitudes of some Poles toward Roma, Ana disappointedly uttered, "You're right, we never had too much trust in things like that... life for Roma doesn't change that easily... at least not in Poland" (Fieldnotes 2003).

Moreover, my role in the separate pre-rehearsal sessions altered. While in the joint pre-rehearsal meetings I was mainly a discussion facilitator, I now ended up acting more as a mediator, seeking ways to restore and maintain the Roma women's trust in both the actors and the project. For example, when the Roma women voiced their unease over

Olga's comment about difference and racism, I tried to downplay – by stressing Olga's young age – the significance of her remark in order to prevent potential tensions from flaring up in the studio (Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal [Roma women], *Hope*, 4/04/03). The women also now saw my role differently: they expected me to be their advocate and friend in navigating the potential differences and conflicts between them and the actors. For example, when I met with Randia the morning following our first joint pre-rehearsal session, she assured me that she had spoken positively to the other Roma women about the rehearsal, and strongly encouraged them to come. She also wanted to make sure that if any conflicts arose between the actors and the Roma women, I would “not hesitate to take [their] side and show the actors who's the boss!” (Fieldnotes 2003) Later, when I visited Randia and Zefiryna at their flats, Zefiryna commented on Olga's remark: “You should tell all your actors that you and we are friends so that they watch what they say... and don't accuse us for the racism the Poles [subject us to]” (Ibid., Zefiryna). While during the pre-rehearsal phase of the project there were few opportunities for me to fulfil the women's expectations of me as their advocate, as no major conflicts between the Roma women and the actors had yet arisen, the power struggles that would mark the rehearsal phase of the process would make such expectations a pressing reality.

Rehearsals

Performing Violence and Hope

After our pre-rehearsal meetings wrapped-up, we began developing the physical and verbal texts of the performance in regular rehearsal sessions. To provide some guidance, I suggested various strategies – such as thinking about the central story, key images, individual scenes, characters, blocking, choreography, and the spoken text – we could implement to begin developing the performance’s texts. The Roma women were most comfortable with the idea of developing the texts of the performance by creating the main storyline first, as they argued it was like writing a script for a television series (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Hope*, 4/09/03).

The women were very fond of serials, particularly American or Brazilian soap operas, which they watched daily. I suggested that we make the central story of the performance fictive, loosely basing it on the women’s life experiences and memories (Ibid.). In this way, I hoped to spare the women from engaging in a potentially distressing, embarrassing, or even hazardous process of “displaying” their lives publicly in a documentary fashion.

I also encouraged the Roma women to think of the reasons⁷³ why they wanted to tell the story, and what they wanted the story to convey to the audience. This, I believed, would help them crystallise their ideas while developing the storyline of the performance. The Roma women wanted the performance to convey to the audience that Roma were people like everybody else, that they deserved to live peacefully in the country of their birth, and that their lives were filled with hardships (Ibid.). Ultimately, the women wanted the performance to alter people’s perceptions of Roma: “Maybe I’d like the play to change how people think about us... that they see us as people the same as them... no better, no worse” (Ibid.).

A basic storyline was first developed, and then we proceeded to establish the play’s key images; individual scenes, and the order in which they were to follow; the psychological, emotional, and physical makeup of the characters; blocking and

choreography; the spoken text; and the design. All of these elements were developed concurrently.

Storyline

Together we created the storyline of the performance in a variety of ways: the Roma women and/or I suggested fictive events and characters, or we discussed our ideas – and further developed them – as a group. Randia, for example, offered the skeletal basis of the story to be told:

Magda: How old would the youngest [character] be?

Randia: She could be fourteen, and a young man kidnaps her and runs away with her... and there you go, you have violence right there! (Ibid.)

The Roma women created all the characters, and established their names, ages, and relationship to one another (Ibid., 4/09-10/03). Randia was the one who suggested the name Nadzieja (Hope) for the main character of the play. We were all impressed with the name, as we appreciated the various associations it offered. While Randia argued that the name represented the hope that they held on to in their own lives, Ana countered that the name stood out in sharp contrast to their hopeless lives (Ibid., 4/10/03).

I also posed questions – based on ideas that were being exchanged in the studio – to help the women “flesh out” particular points in the unfolding story: “How are we going to show that [Nadzieja is] supporting herself? Can we show that she’s going out and fortune telling? That she’s trying to make money and is being treated poorly?” (Ibid., 4/09/03)

Finally, we brainstormed the central events of the story as a group. For example, once we had established that Nadzieja was to be kidnapped by her husband-to-be, Dennis, we volleyed back and forth ideas as to what would follow. Randia suggested that Nadzieja and Dennis might go to his family immediately following the kidnapping scene, while Basia and Ewa offered that the next scene could portray the wedding of Nadzieja and Dennis. Or in response to my question about whether the performance should portray

non-Roma acts of violence committed against the Roma characters, Randia proposed that Nadzieja and Dennis' wedding should be raided by "Polish hooligans" (Ibid.). The fragment below, for instance, demonstrates how we negotiated the plot following Nadzieja and Dennis' separation:

Ewa: Now this scene should end, and we should wait until he finds himself a new woman... then we'll go back to Nadzieja.

Randia: No, we won't go back to Nadzieja anymore.

Basia: We won't go back to Nadzieja?

Randia: No, it could be like this.... you [Zafira] have a daughter [Taisa] now, and it could be that now she has a man come over and ask for her hand, and now she gets married.

Ewa: No, not really... there's no point in showing that.

Basia: No there isn't!

Magda: So are we going to show Nadzieja? She was the main....

Ewa: ...yes...everything was centered on her... I think that we should now totally get rid of Dennis's family, and focus on Nadzieja? (Ibid., 4/20/03)

Key Images

The Roma women established the key images of the performance primarily on their own, although Ewa and Ana at times attempted to include the actors in their discussions. Some of the central images the women identified were: a banquet table set with food, a woman displaying affection to her pet, a dancing Roma woman twirling her dress, and a woman shielding her face with her hands while a man pulled her to the ground by her hair (Ibid., 4/09/03)

The associations the Roma women attached to the image of the set table were numerous, including the prestige of good fortune. Ewa pointed out, however, that the

table was also a source of constant worry for the Roma women who perpetually feared that one day the tables in their homes might stand empty.

The image of a woman hugging her pet was significant to the women, as pets were often their most cherished companions. According to Ana, Roma women identified with their pets, especially dogs, because “our men treat us like dogs... and Poles treat us like dogs” (Ibid.). Zefiryna, on the other hand, asserted that dogs in Roma households were better off than the women, and that she herself often wished that she was a dog – loved and fed by everyone.

For the women, a dancing Roma woman twirling her dress signified freedom. Ana explained that when she saw Roma women dance with abandon around a campfire, she felt “better inside” and was reminded of the Roma’s true, “free nature.” The women contrasted this image with that of the woman shielding her face as a man wrenched her by the hair. Ana emphasised that for Roma women, shielding ones face was a knee jerk response – a means of self-defence – to a man’s anger (Ibid.).

Scenes

Normally, we developed the content of individual scenes, and the order in which they were to proceed, through individual suggestions and group negotiation, before trying them out physically:

Agnieszka: Would it be possible for him to come back to me to take my children?
Could it happen that he wants to take my children away from me?

Ewa: But you wouldn’t let him do that!

Magda: Could that happen, that he would take her child, and not want to give it back to her?

Ewa: That could happen.

Randia: It could.

Ewa: But if he comes to take the child, and if she takes a risk and sends that child with him, then she does it at her own risk. Either she will give that child or not...

but if it's too difficult for her to raise the children, and he comes, then she gives the older one, or the younger one.

Randia: But that happens very rarely.

Ewa: I don't know if that ever happened.

Magda: Could Dennis come to Nadzieja and take one of her children away from her?

Olga: Kidnap it?

Ewa: It could happen... it could happen that he would kidnap her child... maybe when the child was playing in the playground, because otherwise she wouldn't have given him away... and then she's looking for the child... going crazy because her child is missing... she's phoning the police... but it doesn't even enter her head that he could.

Magda: Could we do a scene, where Nadzieja's husband is kidnapping her children... and she phones the police?

Ewa: Yes, and then she goes through a nervous breakdown... then you call for the police and they look for the child... but then your sister comes in and says, "Maybe it was your husband who took the child, because it never happens that a child disappears from the playground!" And then you realise that really he could have done that, but you, afraid of going there yourself... with your mom, you go there with your mom, and you take away the children with the police... with the police, because you can't go there yourself. (Ibid., 4/20/03)

At times, however, the women accepted our suggestions without much negotiation. For example, they immediately approved of my proposal to include a scene in which Nadzieja begins suffering from anxiety attacks, and asked the actors to incorporate it into their improvisations:

Ewa: ...yes...everything was centered on her... I think that we should now totally get rid of Dennis's family, and focus on Nadzieja...

Magda: I remember that you mentioned that she was taking pills for anxiety... and that emotionally she wasn't doing that well.

Ewa: Yes... Yes... that's right! Nadzieja... we need Nadzieja and the father of Nadzieja... and her mother... they're all sitting at the table and talking. (Ibid.)

But there were also instances when the Roma women held strong ideas about what a particular scene should be. For example, when I suggested that Nadzieja's birth scene should follow the scene in which Dennis went out with his friends, the women empathically disagreed and asserted that Nadzieja, at this point, should sneak past her mother-in-law, who was preparing a meal, and run away to the safety of her parents' house (Ibid., 4/16/03).

There were also times when the Roma women excluded us from the decision-making process altogether by speaking to one another exclusively in Romani. This happened, for example, when the women were debating what should follow Kalo and Zafira's argument, and they concluded that Nadzieja's grandmother should take Zafira's side and reprimand Kalo for not working (Ibid., 4/10/03). While the actors argued that the women deliberately spoke Romani to exclude them from the decision-making process, which indeed might have been true at times, I believe that often the women simply began speaking Romani out of habit; they normally used the language to communicate with each other outside of rehearsals, and probably were able to express their ideas more clearly in their native tongue.

Character Traits

While the actors had relative freedom in developing the physical, psychological, and emotional profiles of their characters, the Roma women helped them establish core traits of each character. Usually, this happened after the actors improvised new scenes during rehearsals, or showed the Roma women scenes they had prepared in extra-rehearsal sessions. For example, the women provided Derek with input on the physicality of his character after the actors performed the opening scene they had worked out earlier in extra rehearsal sessions:

Derek: I wasn't here when you were discussing things, and I don't how Roma men look... I mean how they behave.

Ewa: They behave like normal... simply loose.

Derek: How about any characteristics that you could tell me about that could help me.

Randia: When you said that you liked Nadzieja, it was good, but you should also show that you are shy a bit... you need to be a bit shy. (Ibid., 4/16/03)

In a similar vein, the women gave Olga feedback on her portrayal of Zafira, after the actors improvised, for the first time, the opening scene of the performance:

Ana: There's one suggestion, Magda... when the mother comes and starts acting, she [Olga] needs to be less aggressive.

Ewa: [to Olga] And don't hit the chair like that... this looks terrible.

Ana: If she's gentler, it'll look better... you're stressed out, but not so angry. (Ibid., 4/10/03)

Movement and Spoken Text

The Roma women and the actors developed the blocking, choreography, and spoken text of the performance in a variety of ways. On some occasions, the women directed scenes by explaining what the scene should convey. The passage below shows how the women blocked the opening scene of the performance:

Ana: (pointing extreme downstage right) [Kalo] sits in front of the television.

Ewa: Or sits and reads his newspaper.

Magda: So he's sitting in front of the television. So Gosia, you can be the father for now, as Shawn's not here. You're sitting and eating in front of the television. What is Grandmother doing?

Ewa: (pointing left of centre-stage) Grandmother is in the kitchen... she's walking around the sink, trying to prepare a meal.

Ana: Mother is busy making dinner.

Magda: So Mother and Grandmother are together...

Ana: ...in the kitchen... together in the kitchen.

Magda: What is Granddaughter doing... Nadzieja?

Ana: She has just returned from school, and she's doing her homework.

Magda: And what is her sister doing?

Ana: She's cleaning...

Magda: ...Sister is cleaning... (Ibid.)

In terms of choreography, the Roma women often offered ideas to the rest of the group for consensus. Randia, for example, recommended that in the fight scene between Nadzieja and Dennis, Dennis should grab his wife by the hair and throw her to the ground (Ibid., 4/16/03). And in the excerpt below, Ewa suggested the gestures Nadzieja should use when protecting herself from Dennis' blows:

Ewa: She could have some kind of tics when she sees him approaching... not her mother-in-law, but him. She'd make a gesture to protect herself from him hitting her... because most often what we are scared of is the face... we are scared to be hit in the face... and we're scared about our hair... so she would make gestures to protect herself. We talked about it before... she's covering her face. (see appendix F)

Similarly, the women, on an ongoing basis, fed the actors lines they wanted them to say at any particular moment:

Randia: And then [Nadzieja's] mother comes in... Kalo asks her why she's so frustrated. Her father tells her [Nadzieja] that she has to go... and they [Nadzieja and Taisa] go and fortune tell, and then they come back and make dinner. (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Hope*, 4/10/03)

The women also directed scenes by demonstrating specific movements and gestures they wanted the actors to perform. When we were developing the wedding scene, some of the Roma women enacted the gestures and movements of a traditional Roma dance. Ana was twisting and snapping her fingers and wrists, and thrusting and shaking her chest to show the female actors how Roma women danced (Ibid.). She also taught Derek the man's movements and gestures (Ibid., 4/13/03). I provided assistance in some of the scenes while the women watched and offered feedback. The excerpt beneath demonstrates how a session might unfold:

Then we move on to the next part of the script. The action continues to the end of Nadzieja's monologue, "What Happened then Papa?" When Nadzieja yells out, "Mama, I don't want to!" I tell Agnieszka to scream out the lines as if they are emerging from the past... as though she had travelled back to that very moment, and was trying to enact what had happened that day. Then I tell Nadzieja to grab Zosia by the hand and forcefully shove her towards the table where the guests sit. Zosia, as a figure from the past, is not to respond... she remains motionless. Then Zosia detachedly, mechanically utters, "Dennis kidnapped Nadzieja." Nadzieja follows this with her monologue about a dog she had once seen being beaten. I ask Agnieszka to run a few steps downstage and pick up the imaginary dog from the floor. At the end of her monologue, she looks at the audience and yells to the "dog", "Come back girl, come back! She'll never come back! Never!" Nadzieja enters a tableau looking out at the audience. I stop the actors and ask the women what they think about those parts (Ibid., 4/23/03)

Further, the actors suggested movements and gestures to the Roma women by acting them out while the women offered their opinions. For example, when we wanted to stylise the scene in which Dennis beats Nadzieja, Agnieszka and Derek "tweaked" their gestures and movements until the Roma women were satisfied (Ibid., 4/16/03).

However, the blocking, choreography, and spoken text also emerged through improvisation. While the actors improvised the scenes, the Roma women would stop to offer suggestions:

Nadzieja

(Agnieszka): Where were you? I've waited two whole nights for you. I'm leaving!

Dennis

(Derek): Where'll you go?

Nadzieja: Home... I'll be happier there.

Dennis: Home? To those poor bums?

Randia: Oh yes, it's good... very good! Nadzieja, you should now say, "And I'll raise the child myself." (Ibid., 4/13/03)

On other occasions, the Roma women did not halt the improvisations, but fed the actors the lines as they performed:

Nadzieja

(Agnieszka): Do you think that you can bribe me because you have money, and you have a house?!

Ewa: "See what you said to me... that when I get back to my mother, I'll starve to death... but I didn't, and I'm raising my children... you came yourself."

Nadzieja: You said when I go to my mother's I'd die of hunger... but look, we're healthy, the children are healthy, and we're managing very well!

Randia: "You know..." and you answer her like that, "You know, we were living with my parents, and maybe that is why things were not good... but now we'll be living alone."

Dennis

(Derek): You know we were living with my parents, and now we'll live on our own, and we have grown children already... we'll live better.

Ewa: "I'll think about it."

Nadzieja: I'll think about it, if you buy a house in my city.

Randia: And you'll accept her requests, and sell the house you bought, and buy a new house in her own city.

Nadzieja: I'll think about it, if you buy a house here.

Dennis: Everything was set already, but okay, I'll do that.

Nadzieja: If you do that, then come back and we'll talk again. (Ibid., 4/20/03)

At other times, the Roma women joined the actors in improvising the scenes. While initially they were reluctant to do any acting, they first stepped in and improvised to fill in for the missing actors – Derek and Shawn who had not yet joined rehearsals – in the matchmaking scene (Ibid., 4/10/03):

Ana: Okay, so the two of us [Ana and Ewa] will be the guests, and she [Gosia] will be the father.

Ana (Halina) and Ewa (Dennis's father) are looking at Nadzieja.

Halina
(Ana): So she's available... the youngest one?

Zafira
(Olga): Yes, Nadzieja is waiting for a husband.

Kalo
(Gosia): There's still time.

Zafira: Well, slowly she should be getting ready.

Grandmother
(Grazyna) : She's young... there's still time.

Halina: Well, they get married at that age.

Grandmother: She still can wait.

Halina: We have a very nice son for her... she could take a look at him.

Nadzieja: Can he cook?

Zafira: She got it into her head that her husband would be doing everything for her!

Halina: Well... for a man it doesn't look good to cook food for his wife.

Nadzieja: Does it look good for a girl?

Zafira: Watch how you talk!

Halina: It wouldn't suit a man to cook food for you... you as a girl must learn, and if you don't know how, he might help you. Listen, I won't keep the cat in the bag any longer. We came here because we have business with you... we have a son... you have a daughter... give us Nadzieja, won't you?

Zafira: But we don't know if she's going to like him.

Halina: We'll bring him in so you can take a look.

Zafira: But she's still very young!

Halina: So she's young! [sarcastic, assured] Where's the problem? We were young, too, when we married... yes? (Ibid.)

The Roma women enjoyed improvising – especially Ana and Ewa – because they admitted, “it’s a lot of fun,” and because “[we] never thought [we] could do it so well” (Fieldnotes 2003). Yet, such improvisations involving both the Roma women and the actors were also important because they enriched our collaboration, strengthened rapport between the actors and the women, and provided a ground upon which direct confrontations between the Roma women’s and the actors’ ideas and beliefs could take place. Such spontaneous confrontations left little room for careful consideration, and so provided invaluable insights into the ways in which the Roma women and the actors conceptualised the various social realities in which they lived.

In the above excerpt, for example, the differences between how the Roma women and the actors conceptualised men’s and women’s social roles were made apparent: Agnieszka (Nadzieja) asked Ana (Halina) whether Dennis should cook, and Ana answered that it was not suitable for a man to cook food for a woman. In this brief exchange between Nadzieja and Halina, Agnieszka’s idea of “what-Roma-men-do” clashed with Ana’s understanding of household chores, such as food preparation, as being the woman’s responsibility. More so, the ways in which Agnieszka and Ana conceptualised men’s and women’s roles in society were so disparate that Agnieszka’s question almost seemed incongruous. Had only the Roma women been improvising the scene, it is unlikely that Nadzieja would have ever asked Halina about Dennis’ cooking abilities, because for the Roma women – from what they had been telling me – the true measure of a good husband was not whether or not he could cook, as that was simply not what Roma men did, but rather, how willing he was to financially support his family.

Finally, the Roma women improvised some scenes of the performance with the actors sitting on the sidelines. Below, the scene in which Nadzieja encountered Dennis

with another woman on the street was solely improvised by the Roma women. Ewa was playing Nadzieja, Randia-Halina, and Basia-Dennis, while the actors sat in the audience:

Nadzieja

(Ewa): I saw your son with another woman on the street.

Halina

(Randia): I don't believe you!

Nadzieja: I hit her!

Halina: Where's my son?

Nadzieja: I don't know... he's run away somewhere. Of course he's not going to stand and watch it when I'm hitting that woman. I once forgave him, and I won't be sitting at home alone when he's walking around somewhere!

Basia comes in as Dennis.

Halina: What were you doing? Why are you going out with other women? You have a young woman, and I was guaranteeing you! You can't act like that... I won't fight with Gypsies over you!

Nadzieja: I won't be with you... I won't chase after you... and I won't look for you at nights, and I won't sit at home alone, do you hear?! I'm packing my things up and I'm going home! I'm going to my mom's!

Dennis

(Basia): You can't!

Halina walks off, while Nadzieja and Dennis are left alone to argue.

Nadzieja: Do you think that you can do what you want? That you can walk back and forth... left and right... when I'm pregnant?! So you think that I'll be more tolerant now because I'm pregnant! [to Randia] You come in now, because you've heard that I'm pregnant.

Halina: So what, you're expecting a child, and you're walking around with other women?!

Ewa: Now Dennis keeps his head down, and I say [as Nadzieja] "I won't be with you, and I won't forgive you, and I am going now to my mom's place!" [to Basia] Now I'm going to another room, and you're following me, and I ... oh right, he was supposed to hit her.

Magda: How would such a fight look like?

Randia: You grab her by the hair and throw her down.

Basia tries to grab Ewa by the hair, but she breaks into laughter, and concedes that she does not really know how to do it. Grazyna suggests that maybe the actors will act out the fight, and the women will instruct them on how the fight should look. Agnieszka and Derek come onto the stage. The women tell Agnieszka to yell that she will not stay with him. (see appendix F)

The Roma women, except for Basia, who seemed rather uncomfortable in her role as actor, enjoyed the opportunity to enact the scenes. They admitted later that they were impressed by their ability to “take over the project all by [themselves] like that” and were convinced they “could become actors and directors yet!” (Fieldnotes 2003) As evident in the above excerpt, the women preferred to relinquish their improvisations to the actors when the action required more precise choreography, or became physically demanding, such as during the fight between Dennis and Nadzieja.

These improvisations without the actors benefited the Roma women, as well as the actors, me, and the rehearsal process, in significant ways. First, I believe such improvisations constituted a means of self-empowerment for the Roma women. Here I do not naively propagate a paternalistic optimism in the unproblematic transfer of power from those who possess it to those who do not, which has managed, so successfully in some social research, to “discourage . . . nasty questions of who benefits and how,” and collapse “objectives, process, and outcomes alike into an undifferentiated rhetorical empowerment” (Cheater 1999). Instead, by self-empowerment I refer to the Roma women’s growing sense of ownership of the project, as was expressed in their astonishment at their ability to “take over the project all by themselves like that.” Yet, this is not to say that we transcended, in any way, the power differentials that defined our interactions in and/or outside of the research project; clearly, the more concrete benefits of the research process itself and its outcomes, while self-evident for the actors and me, seemed less apparent for the Roma women.

Second, the improvisations enacted solely by the Roma women were invaluable to the actors and me, as they provided us with more substantial chunks of the Roma women’s verbatim text, and with the opportunity to observe the women’s movements,

gestures, and speech patterns, which helped the actors develop the physical profiles of their characters. This opportunity was not, to the same extent, available to the actors when they improvised alongside the Roma women, because they were absorbed in their own performances.

Finally, thanks to such improvisations, our rehearsal process gained a critical dimension important to any performative and collaborative ethnography in politically charged contexts. It not only facilitated the dialogical construction of knowledge between myself (the ethnographer), the Roma women, and the actors (research participants), but also provided the actors and me with the opportunity to step back while the Roma women inhabited and controlled their own spaces to articulate their stories – spaces so rare in a world that snubs, censors, and even maims or kills Roma for expressing their ideas and opinions.

I also provided assistance in developing certain sections of the physical and spoken texts of the performance at the Roma women's requests. When we struggled with Nadzieja's scenes of schizophrenic delusions, Ana suggested, "Magda, why don't we tell you what we want... write it all down, and then in the peace of your home, you can work the scene out... then we will tell you if we like it or not" (Fieldnotes 2003). Everybody, including the actors, concurred with Ana, as they were all concerned that we lacked the time to work everything out through improvisations. Hence, I developed the majority of the scenes involving Nadzieja's delusions. However, with the women's permission, I based these scenes on what I had previously heard, recorded, or observed during my fieldwork and interviews with them. I also drew from my encounters with other Roma in Poland. In this way, I wanted to make the texts I created into ethnographic fictions, which Geertz (1973) defines as "*something made, something fashioned* – the original meaning of *fictio* – not that they are false, unfactual, or merely *as if* thought experiments" (15).

For example, the monologue I wrote for Nadzieja, in which she recalls how Dennis wanted to throw her dog out from their wedding reception because of its stench, was based on a life story related to me by one of the Roma women. In the original version, the woman talked about her husband's hatred of her dog, and his desperate but unsuccessful attempts of getting rid of it (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Hope*, 5/15/03).

Nadzieja's monologue, in which she tells the audience about her father singing of freedom just after hooligans had broken his jaw, was based on an anecdote a Roma woman from Olsztyn had once shared with me: her uncle, who was a musician, and had always sung about the bondage of Roma over the centuries, was one day severely beaten by the police (Ibid.).

However, there were also words/lines/short passages I unilaterally introduced into the spoken and physical texts of the performance, as I believed they would benefit the performance ethnographically and theatrically. For instance, in Nadzieja's opening monologue, I took the liberty to introduce a self-reflexive moment by inserting a small passage where she tells the audience that the performance is an ethnographic theatre event: "But of course, my dear ladies and gentlemen... of course, this is merely theatre! I was created by Roma women from our town... based on their life experiences and memories. Oh, and they collaborated with a few actors... an anthropologist... (*grandiosely*) ...it is what you call "ethnographic theatre"!" (Ibid., 4/20/03; see appendix G, p.442). This, I believed, would problematise any factual claims that the performance might implicitly make by merit of being an ethnographic representation.

I also wrote some of the play's transitional bridges between scenes in order to "glue" the text into a more theatrically cohesive whole. For example, at the end of Nadzieja's monologue, in which she tells the audience that she had witnessed a man beating a dog, I inserted the additional line, "What happened then, Papa?" This line is a bridge to the next scene in which Halina and Nadzieja's parents discuss the kidnapping of Nadzieja; the line also alludes to Nadzieja's illness, which had "impaired" her memory (Ibid., 5/15/03). In another instance, I wrote Nadzieja's line, "Sing with me Papa," at the end of her monologue when she talks about the fight that broke out at her wedding, in order to smoothly transition over to the next scene in which Dennis takes Nadzieja home (see appendix G, p.454). I always presented such insertions to the Roma women first for feedback, and then rewrote the passages with which they were not satisfied.

Design

As we developed the physical and spoken texts of the performance, we also designed the scenography, props, costumes, lighting, and sound. Our designs, however, underwent numerous revisions throughout the process. For instance, our costume design was altered several times before we finally decided that Nadzieja would wear a white wedding dress, and the rest of the actors would dress in black mourning clothes. Initially, we considered having the actors wearing everyday Roma clothing, including (specifically for the women) flower-patterned, pleated skirts and aprons, as well as non-traditional skirts with slits at the back (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Hope*, 4/09/03). Later in the process, the women suggested that Nadzieja should wear a colourful skirt, a white shawl covering her shoulders, and a bright headscarf, while her “guests” were to be dressed in black (Ibid., 5/15/03). The final decision, on Randia’s advice, was to have Nadzieja wearing a white wedding dress (Ibid.).

Similarly, our stage design underwent several incarnations before we finally decided to use a pedestal/platform as the sole stage piece in the performance. Originally, a banquet table and several chairs were supposed to occupy the stage (Ibid., 4/09-10/03); and closer to the performance, we wanted to have a coffin as the lone stage piece in which Nadzieja would rest at the beginning of the performance, and at which a banquet would be celebrated during the wedding feast scene (Ibid., 5/01/03). Ultimately, a few days before opening night, we decided to replace the coffin with the pedestal, which doubled as the banquet table in the performance (Ibid., 5/27/03).

Ideas for the play’s design emerged in a variety of ways. Generally, suggestions for props came about spontaneously as we were working out the physical and/or spoken text of the performance. For example, the idea for a scarf – in the play it was both Zafira’s costume piece, and the prop she used to bind the newlyweds’ hands – was born by a “fluke” when the Roma women and actors improvised Nadzieja and Dennis’s wedding scene:

Ana

(as Halina): Well, my dear children, you are married, so now you must live together in peace and stability... and now the grandmother, as the oldest, says, “Give some kind of tape.”

Grazyna: A scarf?

Ana: Sure... the grandmother⁷⁴ will bind your hands with a scarf... so they hold on to each other hand and foot. (Ibid., 4/10/03)

The choices of costumes were largely negotiated by all participants:

Magda: I also have some questions regarding costumes... so everyone will be in black except Nadzieja?

Ana: She'll be in white, because she died, and they're mourning her, so they're dressed in black.

Magda: How should Nadzieja be dressed?

Ewa: In white.

Magda: In white... but what kind of dress should she wear?

Ana: It has to be long.

Magda: But simple... or some kind of flowers. . . . How about a blouse?

Ana: She doesn't really need to have a blouse... she can just have a shawl that would be pinned down with a brooch... it doesn't necessarily have to be a brooch... or she can tie it around here with some kind of ribbon.

Ana demonstrates how to tie the shawl with a ribbon. The actors watch Ana dress Agnieszka in the shawl... Ana ties a scarf around Agnieszka's head... the scarf is folded lengthwise and tied at the front of her head.

Randia: Ana, listen... but now they don't really wear scarves like that.

Ana: Yeah, now they don't anymore, but in the old days, that's the only thing they would have on their heads.

Zefiryna: But now it's different.

Randia: Yes... it's different now!

Ana: Yeah, but before, that's how they would have it... sometimes they would have tied it at the back ... or at the front... young women would usually have it tied at the front...

Magda: How about a garland?

- Ana:** Could be a garland... it depends what you really want.
- Ewa:** I think that a scarf would be better.
- Ana:** Yeah, it'd be better... would make her look more like a Roma woman...
- Magda:** ...what colour?
- Ana:** That depends... it has to fit her face... it doesn't really matter. (Ibid., 5/15/03)
-

While we were all involved in discussing costumes, the Roma women also accompanied me to numerous second hand stores and markets, as it was critical for them to be directly involved in selecting and purchasing costumes (Ibid.).

Other designs for the play emerged from the suggestions offered by the Roma women, the actors, and me. The Roma women recommended that the stage lighting be subdued to set a sombre tone for the “funeral,” and to highlight the “darkness” of Nadzieja’s life that was marked by difficulties, violence, and schizophrenia (Ibid., 4/23/03). For the sound design, the actors proposed that we use a “canned” recording of the popular Roma song, “My, Cyganie [We Gypsies]” – the same song Kalo and Nadzieja sing as a duet – to be played during the wedding scene, and at the very end of the performance as Nadzieja dies (Fieldnotes 2003). I suggested that we use a single stage piece, a pedestal, both for Nadzieja’s coffin and as the banquet table (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Hope*, 5/27/03).

Factors that Shaped the Performance

When we were developing the physical and spoken texts of the performance in rehearsals, decisions about what to include and exclude from the performance were influenced by a variety of factors, such as practical/technical considerations, and the past, present, and future contexts of the project. The practical/technical considerations affected numerous aspects of the project, as we had a small budget, minimal production support, and an amateur cast. Our small budget limited the amount of props we could purchase, as

well as the overall stage design. For example, the Roma women initially wanted us to present the wedding as realistically as possible on stage, with a large table covered in white linen, a full setting of glasses, china and cutlery, and generous quantities of real food to show audience members that the Roma “really know how to play;” instead, we had to settle for a more symbolic representation of the feast to keep our costs down:

Ana: Yes, we should show a grand wedding, so people can see how we dance and sing... weddings are always happy among us Roma, [laughs] because the wedding is always the best part of the marriage. . . . we could have a large table set up, covered with a white table cloth, and lots of food on it, so they see that the Roma really know how to play!

Magda: We could do that. We’ll think about it... our budget is very small, as we’re not getting much support, so I’m not sure how much food we could have... maybe we could do it more symbolically... work more with people’s imaginations... that the table is full. (Ibid., 4/09/03)

Magda: So we’ll show you the text, and you can tell us what you think... as we discussed earlier, we’re going to use symbolic props to simplify things, as we can’t afford to have an entire table set ... we’ll have a broom... a pot... a bottle of vodka... and that will symbolise the wedding table.

Basia: Yeah, that’s fine.

Randia: You’ve gotta watch your money.

Basia: Right... the broom is good, because that’s what she does a lot. (Ibid., 4/23/03)

Furthermore, the past, present, and future contexts of the project, in part, shaped what we included and excluded in the play’s storyline. For example, the Roma women based certain aspects of the performance’s story on their own past experiences. When Ana proposed that Dennis’ sister-in-law, Zosia, manipulates Nadzieja into staying with Dennis, it became apparent in the ensuing discussion that Ana’s idea was spawned by her experiences with her sisters-in-law:

Grazyna: How does his sister respond to that?

Ana: His sister... his sister is telling her not to leave him, because she's [Nadzieja] had enough, and she wants to leave him. She [Zosia] says, "Just wait... he might change... just wait a bit more." She's trying to talk her into it... well usually, those sisters try to manipulate you and order you around. When I was first married, I was fourteen years old, and those other cows in the household were eighteen... so they were trying to order me around. That Celina! There were five other girls in the house, and there were also two boys, and they were all trying to order me around. [sarcastically] I let them order me around so much that they didn't know which way to turn... or which way to run. I was really unusual... I was very tough... I didn't let them do what they wanted to do with me... but a girl... such a sissy, that wouldn't know what to do... she'd suffer and keep quiet... it's always like that... a sister-in-law will hit me... and a husband will hit me... and a mother-in-law will yell and swear at me... and the girl will suffer then. (Ibid., 4/09/03)

The stories the women had related during our pre-rehearsal sessions also helped fashion the plot of the performance. For the wedding scene, we decided that Polish "hooligans" would crash the banquet, and that police officers would blame the Roma for the affray. This "hooligan" scene revisited the problems of racism in Polish society the Roma women had discussed earlier:

Magda: And now what happens, because we were also touching upon such issues as racism in Polish society... how would we incorporate that into the play? Would we want to show, in addition to violence within the family, the violence that Roma suffer at the hands of Polish society?

Randia: The wedding could be raided by young Polish boys, and they start a fight... and then the police would come, and there'd be a fight.

Magda: Who? Skinheads?

Ana: No, not necessarily.

Randia: Hooligans!

Magda: And then what happens?

Ewa: And then someone calls the police, and the police end all that partying and fighting, but they blame the Roma, not the Poles...

Ana: ...because that's how it always is... it's always the Roma's fault! (Ibid.)

In addition, certain events in the women's lives contemporaneous with rehearsals influenced some of our ideas for the storyline and central images of the performance. The mental illness of Ana's mother, which unexpectedly worsened throughout the course of our project, compelled Ana to commit her into a psychiatric hospital; this, in turn, influenced Ana's idea of having Nadzieja suffer from mental illness (Ibid.).

Along the same lines, Ewa's and Zefiryna's dogs played a role in shaping the scope of the performance in significant ways. During the rehearsal phase of the project, both Zefiryna and Ewa purchased puppies, which were a great source of pleasure and happiness for them. The women spent considerable amounts of time during rehearsals and breaks discussing their dogs. Ewa even brought her puppy to a few rehearsals, as she worried about leaving it alone at home (Ibid., 4/04/03). It was the women's current excitement over their dogs, I believe, that eventually led to the incorporation of Nadzieja's canine friend into the play's story. Furthermore, the women's preoccupation with their dogs in rehearsals,⁷⁵ as well as the numerous references the women made to their "lives-as-dogs"⁷⁶ during interviews and life stories, precipitated my idea to have Nadzieja suffer from schizophrenic delusions in which she "imagines" that she has a canine companion, and eventually believes that she herself is a dog:

Magda: I've been going through some of your interviews, life stories, and fieldnotes, and I noticed that animals are significant in your lives... you say at times that your lives are worse than a dog's life.

Randia: That's true... Nadzieja could have a dog... she could talk to it when she's lonely. I tell my dogs many things that I couldn't...

Basia: ...or she's nervous... she has delusions... maybe she's suffering from... [to Ana] what's that your mother has?

Ana: Schizophrenia.

Basia: Like that.

Magda: She could be deluded... that she's becoming a dog... because she's ill... and she also wants a better life so much.

Ana: Yes. (Ibid., 4/23/03)

The Roma women also shaped the spoken and physical texts of the performance according to how they believed a Roma should behave or respond in any given situation. For instance, as the actors were improvising the scene in which Nadzieja goes to her in-laws' home after the wedding, Ana interjected that Nadzieja should be helping her mother-in-law prepare a meal for the family because "this [was] how things [were] among the Roma:"

Kalo

(Gosia): Halinka, make something to eat... we... we've been driving for so long... and make something for the young ones to eat.

Ana: And Nadzieja, you can also help your mother-in-law, because that's how it is among us... you should really say, "Okay mother-in-law, I'll do it." (Ibid., 4/13/03)

When the Roma women and actors were improvising the scene in which Dennis and Nadzieja returned to Nadzieja's house after the kidnapping, Ana provided some guidance on Roma social etiquette:

Ana: [to Derek and Agnieszka] Now you should kiss your elder's hands... kiss your grandmother first, and then the other elders, because that's how you should be paying your respects to them. (Ibid., 4/10/03)

The future contexts of the project, specifically the performance's potential audiences, were pivotal in shaping what we included in, or excluded from, the performance. When we thought about "who" might watch the performance, we kept in mind both Roma and non-Roma spectators, for whom we at times made different allowances. For example, when we considered representing the violence to which Roma were subjected on an everyday basis in the performance, the women did not want to implicate Poles directly so as not to fuel existing antagonisms. Consequently, we decided to include a scene in which Polish hooligans – criminals, rather than everyday "law-abiding" members of Polish society – ransacked Nadzieja's wedding banquet. Constructing public violence in this way allowed us to mitigate any direct responsibility the audience members might feel, while still drawing people's attention to the violence that Roma had to confront in their daily lives:

Magda: And now what happens, because we were also touching upon such issues as racism in Polish society... how would we incorporate that into the play? Would we want to show, in addition to violence within families, the violence that Roma suffer at the hands of Polish society?

Ana: That depends... we have to be careful what we want to show... we don't want to have Poles thinking that we blame them... accusing them of violence... that wouldn't be good.

Ewa: No, that wouldn't be good for us... they'd come and burn our houses down.

Randia: Sure they would... Marek [Zefiryna's husband] said, "Be careful what you say in that play of yours so they don't come and throw us out the window."

Ana: Right... but we can be careful... do it delicately, because yes, they don't treat us well, but we wouldn't say that, "Oh, you all don't treat us well." But that some people treat us badly, because such is the truth... as long as it's...

Basia: ...maybe something happens to the kids at school.

Randia: No... you're explaining it poorly. For instance, the wedding could be raided by young Polish boys, and they start a fight... and then the police would come, and there'd be a fight.

Magda: Who? Skinheads?

Ana: No, not necessarily.

Randia: Hooligans!

Magda: Hooligans.

Randia: They have bald heads... do you like that?

Women and actors: Yes! (Ibid., 4/09/03)

We also took into account potential audience responses – specifically non-Roma audience members – when we were fleshing out the story of Nadzieja's life. At one point, we were faced with two versions of what should happen to Nadzieja after leaving Dennis, one in which Nadzieja ends up with mental illness, and another in which she

faces adversity head-on. The Roma women chose the former version to show audience members that the Roma women's lives were not "a piece of cake" (Ibid., 4/23/03):

Magda: After she leaves her husband, what happens to her? I think it's important to show what such a life is like... and what effects it has on her.

Ana: What happened to her? She looks neglected... tired... falling apart.

Randia: But she could still put her life back together.

Ana: Well, she could do that, but what're we trying to show here... that our lives are a piece of cake?! They're not a piece of cake... far from it! Isn't that what we want to show? But even then, like you say, she's trying to put her life together. Even then she'd be careful, and would be blowing on the cold⁷⁷... she'd be so careful. Some time will have to pass before she does it... she'd not want just any step father to raise his hands upon her children... even if she does put her life together, some time would have to pass.

Magda: So you said that she looks neglected... doesn't look good... what do you mean by that?

Ana: Her health... her suffering... it affects everyone differently. For instance, look at my mom... life fell on her head... it attacked her head... that's the truth... she [Nadzieja] can become mentally ill...

Magda: You mean mental illness?

Ana: Oh yes, that often happens.

Ewa: Or she could show that she is really standing up for herself and not giving up.

Ana: But what do we want to say in the play... do we want to say that Roma life is easy or hard? If we say that it's easy, then they'll... they'll say, "Those Gypsies! They only complain... and things are so good for them!" But nothing's good for us!

Basia: Yeah, and then if we went to get help... [sarcastically] they'd get us such help that we wouldn't know which way to leave. They'd say, "I saw the play... your life is good!"

Ana: Yeah, because you never know who might see it.

Randia: Yeah... she could get depressed, and then mentally ill.

Magda: And yet you are all so strong... you have all been through a lot... but it seems to me that you're not giving up that easily on life... not everyone would be that strong!

Randia: I think that it's in our veins.

Ana: We have it in our blood... we do so many things at once... we clean and wash and cook, and swat our children, all at once... all these jobs at once. (Ibid., 4/09/03)

Additionally, the audience's potential responses to the performance influenced our choices in costuming. For instance, the Roma women decided that instead of making the costumes from old fabric, we should purchase new costumes so that the actors would not look "sloppy:"

Ana is now demonstrating what we might do for costumes with the other characters. At this point, Ewa and Basia come up to me and complain that the fabric [from the prop room] is too sloppy. Then Ana once again starts explaining what we could do with the material. Finally, Ewa walks over, and slaps Ana on her back to get her attention.

Ewa: Listen... it's going to be... that show will be shown all over... so how will it look [the performance] with such rags?

Ana: Yeah. [to me] So you'll be buying new stuff?

Magda: I can buy things so they look new. I'll buy, but you'll have to tell me what you want it to be. (Ibid., 5/15/03)

The actors' and Roma women's focus on the potential responses of spectators also informed what we included in, and excluded from, the performance. The Roma women, for example, asked me to expurgate the moments in Nadzieja's birthing scene that intimated she was in labour. They worried that the portrayal of "labour" in the play – a subject taboo in Roma culture – could offend Roma audiences, and "make a laughing stock out of [them]." They asked me to rewrite the scene in a way that Nadzieja merely assists her dog in labour:

Ana: The birth scene can't be like that...

Zefiryňa: ...because Gypsies are going to make a laughing stock out of us...

Ewa: ...they'll simply leave.

Magda: So what are we going to do with the birth scene?

Ana: This labour should be done a bit different... she shouldn't be showing it on herself... but maybe on the dog... but among us Roma, we don't use such words. She can say that she is in pain to Zosia, for instance... she can't push... we can't show that she's pushing... oh Jesus, if Roma came and saw her pushing, my God, we'd be so ashamed. (Ibid., 5/27/03)

Once again with a Roma audience in mind, the women asked Agnieszka not to perform one of her monologues while standing on the table, and Derek not to jump on the table during the wedding dance scene, as standing on a table – forbidden by the Roma code of conduct – could offend Roma members of the audience, as well as compromise their own image in the community:

Dennis jumps onto the table, shouting "Hey!" He claps his hands, and everyone jumps up to dance. Dennis stands on the table, and is clapping his hands repeatedly while everyone else dances around the table, encircling him.

The women start talking in Romani.

I stop the scene.

Ewa: He shouldn't be on the table... that isn't appropriate!

Ana: You can't jump over the table... you should simply go around it! (Ibid., 5/01/03)

When Agnieszka delivers her monologue "Once I saw a dog, outside, behind the fence," she jumps up onto the table as if trying to take a better look at the dog "over the fence." Ana, however, stops her immediately.

Ana: Don't jump on the table!

Ewa: Is that table going to be there?

Ana: Is it?

Magda: Yes, covered with a white tablecloth.

Ana: But she shouldn't step on the table, because...

Basia: ...among us that's forbidden...

Ana: ...because one can't do that... she has to run around the table...but not step on the table... it's like as if you were running after that dog... you saw him from far away, and then you stop and see him, to save him and hug him... because if you produced this play, and then it would show on television, and if other Gypsies were watching it, then you know what? You know what we would eat and drink... they would say, "Look how nicely they taught them... to climb tables! So where do Gypsies climb tables like that!" (Ibid.).

In a similar vein, some of the actors refused to use a real coffin – on loan from a local coffin dealer – as a stage piece in the performance, as they worried some audience members might find it sacrilegious, and an affront to Polish values. As a solution, I suggested that we use a pedestal upon which Nadzieja would lie at the beginning of the performance, and which would later double as a table (Ibid., 5/27/03).

Reflections

The rehearsals were a valuable component of the research process because – in addition to elucidating how we created the spoken and physical texts of the performance, and what factors shaped the choices we made in all aspects of the production – they provided important insights into the power dynamics that unfolded in our mutual interactions, and into the ways in which we negotiated our roles in this phase of the project when the group's commitment to rehearsal etiquette began to erode as we struggled over issues of representation.

Our power struggles can be seen as resulting from the multifarious ways in which we conceptualised theatre and the rehearsal process, and from the disparities in what we hoped to accomplish through the performance development process, and the performance itself. The pressure of the closely approaching opening night made such differences more of an issue than they had been earlier in the pre-rehearsal stage of our project.

The Roma women largely seemed to conceptualise theatre as a soap opera. As mentioned earlier, when we set out to create the physical and spoken texts of the performance, the women started by developing the story of the performance first. For them, writing a play was like writing a script for a soap opera – an idiom with which they were all familiar and comfortable (Ibid., 4/09/03).

The soap opera is a genre of popular fiction that is often labelled as a “women’s genre,” both due to its “domestic” subject matter, and to its daytime programming slot, which is perceived by North American networks as primetime for housewives (Hall 1997, 366; Lacey 2000, 221). Soap operas are characterised by their focus on everyday, domestic life; protracted scenes; a narrative of repetition and similarity; a predilection for talk over action; an emphasis on the melodramatic; and the utilisation of realism and verisimilitude as chief modes of representation (Hall 1997, 344, 352, 371; Lacey 2000, 37-40, 220-3; re: realism, verisimilitude, and melodrama see endnotes 10, 11, 13 (pp.502-3)). Time in soap opera is constructed in ways that appear to “reflect real time, and the same number of days pass between the episodes for both the audience and characters” (Lacey 2000, 40). According to Stuart Hall (1997), soap operas – which focus on the everyday – are “heavily invested in cultural verisimilitude” (361). The “melodramatic emphasis” of the soap opera is the genre’s emphasis on “the heightened drama of family relationships and personal feelings, as opposed to the focus on public action in ‘male’ genres” (Ibid., 350).

The Roma women constructed the physical and spoken texts of the performance according to various conventions of soap opera. The storyline the women developed focused on Nadzieja and her family’s everyday, ordinary life: the domestic realm where female characters prepared meals, men read newspapers, and personal relationships unfolded (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Hope*, 4/10, 16/03). The spoken and physical texts the Roma women created also had – as in soap operas – a melodramatic emphasis: the vicissitudes of Nadzieja’s physical and emotional life were portrayed through the soap operatic themes of domestic violence, infidelity and jealousy (Hall 1997, 352).

The women’s preferred modes of representation were realism and cultural verisimilitude. They tried to represent the fictional world of the performance in a way that they recognised it as their own, and that referred the audience to the norms, mores,

and common sense of Roma social realities. For example, as mentioned earlier, the Roma women asked Agnieszka not to perform her monologue standing on the table, and Derek not to jump onto the table in the wedding scene, as these acts contravened the norms of the Roma women's social world (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Hope*, 5/01/03). For the same reasons, the Roma women asked me to rewrite the parts in Nadzieja's monologue that suggested that she was in labour (Ibid., 5/27/03).

The women were also constructing the texts of the performance by locating the play's central actions at the banquet table, where the characters sat and talked about "what was happening." The scenes of *Hope* that were set at the table – in both Nadzieja's and Dennis' flats – included: matchmaking, the wedding and wedding reception, the hooligan fight, discussions of immigrating and returning home, Nadzieja assisting the dog in labour, and Nadzieja's "descent" into mental illness (Ibid., 4/10, 16, 20/03). The women's placement of the main actions at the table reconstructed, on the stage, the-way-things-really-were in their lives. For the Roma women and their community, the dinner table was an integral cultural space of daily gatherings, where men discussed "business" as the women prepared food; where Roma women sat to rest, eat, and talk about everyday problems and exchange gossip; and where families and friends gathered to celebrate extra-daily events, such as christenings, weddings, or holiday gatherings. The Roma women's preference to have the characters engage in extended discussions at the table mirrored the predilection of soap opera characters to talk rather than act.

Moreover, by having events unfold on stage "as-they-were" in real life, and paying close attention to realistic details, the Roma women strove to represent the logic of naturalistic realism on stage. For example, the women originally – before a lack of funding forced us to settle for a more symbolic representation of the wedding – wanted the wedding table set with real food traditionally served at a Roma wedding, including sausages, bread, vodka, etc. (Ibid., 4/09, 13/03). The women also constructed the action of the performance in realistic terms, where time was linear and the action unfolded – at times – as it would in a soap opera, minute-by-minute. For instance, in the scene when Dennis leaves his house to visit his friends, and assures Nadzieja that he will return shortly, Ewa suggested that "Dennis should leave for about three hours and then return" (Ibid., 4/16/03). For Ewa, dramatic time was linear and transpired in real time:

Magda: And then what is happening?

Ewa: And after that, they go home the next day.

Randia: And then they [Dennis and Nadzieja] call them [Nadzieja's parents] to see if they are going abroad... and they say that they would, but that they don't have enough money for tickets... and the son-in-law says that he'll buy tickets.

Ewa: [to Derek] And the son-in-law isn't even listening, and in a second he asks, "So what's going on?" So now they return home and are waiting for a phone call from her parents.

Randia: He is asking Nadzieja if she remembers the phone number to her mother, because they want to start getting ready to go. (Ibid.)

The Roma women's commitment to realism as a mode of theatrical representation was also obvious in their numerous requests that the actors, like in most soap operas, adopt a psychological realism – Stanislavski's "method acting" – as an acting style. In "method acting," which seeks a "faithful" rendering of everyday interaction and conversation, the actors draw from their personal experiences to build their characters, and identify with their characters psychologically, emotionally, and physically. For example, Randia reprimanded Derek when he neglected to say "good morning" to Kalo in their conversation over the phone, as she expected him to accurately reconstruct the formalities of a telephone conversation:

Dennis

(Derek): [miming a telephone receiver in his hand] It's Dennis here.

Randia: [to Derek] Did you swallow your good morning? Don't you know that one should say a greeting?

Dennis: Good morning, it's Dennis calling... have you decided?

Basia: No, when he says good morning, his mother-in-law should say good morning, and ask how things are going for them.

Dennis: Good morning, how are things at your place?

Zafira

(Olga): Everything is fine. (Ibid.)

In the same way, the Roma women expected the actors to move on stage in an everyday manner. When Derek asked the women how Roma men walked and behaved, Ewa replied, “They behave like normal...simply loose” (Ibid.). Moreover, Randia often complained that Olga portrayed Zafira too aggressively, as Roma women did not act like that in front of men (Ibid.).

From the outset of the rehearsal process, when some of the Roma women compared writing the texts of the performance to writing television soaps, the actors fretted that the women would create the performance in the likeness of a soap opera. The soap opera, and its conventions, however, were everything the actors despised – for a multitude of reasons – in the worlds of “art” and “entertainment.” First of all, the formal modes of the soap opera did not sit comfortably with the actors’ – or my – modernist theatrical aesthetic sensibilities. As mentioned earlier, soap opera does not reify the modernist doctrine of autonomy; on the contrary, it appears to be deeply invested in “culture.” Soap opera relies on mimesis, or portrayals of the ordinary and the everyday, with people engaged in ordinary conversations and actions. It is heavily melodramatic, full of psychological realism and lengthy prosaic dialogue largely disdained by modernist aesthetics.

Second, soap operas are widely stigmatised within Polish intellectual and artistic circles – still largely dominated by the “upper crust intelligentsia” – as “mass culture art” and/or “women’s entertainment.” Both terms carry negative connotations in such circles. “Mass culture” is considered to be “inferior,” believed to be created by “popular” rather than “true” artists. Similarly, what is referred to as “women’s entertainment” is viewed to be intellectually mediocre, “apolitical fluff,” or what many disparage as “emotional masturbation,” where tears and pathos flow.⁷⁸ “Mass culture art” and “women’s entertainment” are pitted against “true” or “high art,” which is often associated with men who are seen as both creators and connoisseurs. “True art” or “high art” – the product of HIS genius – is considered by many as intellectually superior to other art forms.

For the actors, nearly all of whom considered themselves as intellectuals, artists, and feminists, it was important to avoid the stigma of being associated with “mass culture art” or “women’s entertainment.” Moreover, having already worked with Shawn and me

on *Dance as I Play You*, and *Horses and Angels*, the actors had grown familiar with – and many found inspiring – Shawn’s and my understanding of theatre and ethnography as a politicised practice. Thus, the “apolitical fluff” label of “mass art” seemed particularly disconcerting to them, as they wanted to practice socially aware theatre. All these factors combined, the actors clung to the forms and conventions of the modernist “high art” traditions of Grotowski, Kantor, Szajna – traditions that were ironically pervasively male, and often chauvinist in their representations of women – and to the Illustrative Performing Technique. Many of the actors were also committed to the kind of critical ethnography in which they had engaged in the two earlier productions. Thus, they hoped to achieve, through more symbolic, abstract, visual and metaphoric forms of representation an achronological montage, which they sought to employ – in a Brechtian manner – to defamiliarise the audience’s perceptions of reality to encourage social critique and action.

While on numerous occasions the actors assured me that they found the rehearsal process invaluable ethnographically, despite the women’s penchant for soap operas, they nonetheless resented and resisted the “mass culture art” that was being produced in rehearsals (Ibid., 4/20/03). These attitudes became manifest when the actors openly laughed at, ignored, snidely remarked under the breath, or openly, sarcastically commented on the Roma women’s suggestions and requests. While at times the actors only laughed to counteract their uneasiness with the material being developed by the Roma women, on other occasions, it seemed that they vindictively tried to subvert the Roma women’s directorial and dramaturgical choices. For example, the actors were impatient with the Roma women’s attempts at a “faithful” rendering of everyday conversation, as in the aforementioned scene in which Randia reprimanded Derek for not greeting Kalo on the telephone with “good morning.” After the actors repeated their improvisation incorporating Randia’s suggestion, they began laughing (Ibid., 4/16/03). The Roma women ignored their behaviour until Derek carelessly – likely bored by the “pedestrian” dialogue/action of the scene – made an inappropriate response to Kalo’s remark that he and his family had been “sick a bit.”

Dennis
Derek): So how are things?

Kalo
(Gosia): Good...we're sick a bit.

Dennis: That's great.

Ewa: No, that's wrong! How can you tell your father-in-law that it's great that he's sick... you're being silly!

Randia: Well, remember now, because we won't be saying the same thing ten times! (Ibid.)

As the actors all burst into laughter, and ignored my efforts to restore order, the Roma women seemed offended. Similarly, Randia became impatient with the actors when they laughed while improvising the scene in which the characters discussed their plans for immigrating:

Ewa: You say that you'll take your mom.

Dennis
(Derek): I'll take my mom.

Kalo
(Gosia): [to Halina] You agree to this?

Halina
(Grazyna): Yes, I'll go with the young ones.

Dennis: [to his in-laws] You come, too!

Halina: If you don't want to live with us, we'll live separately then.

Grazyna bursts out laughing, and all the other actors follow suit. Randia looks irritated.

Randia: Such a great scene, and you're laughing! (Ibid.)

At times, the actors also voiced, sardonically, their dissatisfaction with the lengthy and repetitious scenes the Roma women asked them to improvise:

Magda: So who is left on the stage?

Ana: The mother and her older daughter.

Olga: [sarcastically] So we sit like that for a month?

Ana: [impatiently] No, you don't sit. Something's going on... life goes on. *Ana looks over at me, possibly to see if I have noticed her impatience with Olga. I respond with a smile.* (Ibid., 4/13/03)

The actors also mocked the melodrama implicit in the texts the Roma women developed by acting in a hyper-melodramatic style – exaggerating their gestures and movements, and incorporating caricatures of pathos in their voices – that clearly came across as ridicule of the actions they performed:

Zosia comes in.

Zosia

(Gosia): Mama, Papa, Dennis kidnapped Nadzieja!

Zafira

(Olga): When... where... how?

Olga grabs her head, and in a gesture of feigned-desperation, shakes it from side to side. The actors and the women are laughing at her. (Ibid., 4/10/03)

Although in this particular instance the women laughed-off Olga's mockery, their discontent was evident, particularly in the facial expressions of Randia and Basia. While I regularly admonished the actors for their demeaning remarks and actions, my interventions usually had negligible effects. Many of the actors lacked the wherewithal to temper these behaviours: "It is hard not to laugh when one is blabbing the same things over and over again," quipped Olga (Fieldnotes 2003).

The actor's blatant and frequent derision of the Roma women's suggestions in rehearsals inevitably led to increasing conflicts and tensions between the women and the actors throughout the rehearsal process. In response to the actors' disrespect of, and resistance to, their work, the Roma women adopted their own means of coping by

asserting their authority as directors of the project. They did so by creating their own standards of perfection, which they expected the actors to attain in their performances. If the actors failed to meet such standards, the women responded – in ways very similar to how the actors responded to the women’s suggestions and requests – by being hypercritical, sarcastic, derisive, and at times, insulting.

The Roma women’s reciprocal acts of castigation could be seen as “mimetic acts” (Taussig 1993) by which the women strove to gain and maintain control over rehearsals. As such, these acts constituted “everyday forms of resistance” – less organised, pervasive, and more situational oppositional acts (Abu-Lughod 1990; Scott 1985, 1990). However, Lila Abu-Lughod and Sherry Ortner caution that the oppressed do not mechanically “react” to the oppressors’ oppressive ways; they also possess their own “internal politics” or “interworkings . . . of power” defined by their own personal relationships with one another, and their “hopes, fears, desires, and projects” (Abu-Lughod 1990, 53; Ortner 1995, 177, 185) that are internally diverse, and shape, in more complex, ambiguous, and contradictory ways, the oppressed people’s interactions and relationships with their oppressors. The Roma women’s responses to the actors were not merely reactionary, or unvaryingly mimetic, means of asserting authority in rehearsals. The women negotiated and re-negotiated their “mimetic” responses to the actors in ways that served their diverse ends, which extended beyond merely asserting their authority in rehearsals, but were also implicated in local, global, and gender politics. This was evident in the heterogeneity of ways in which the Roma women set their standards of perfection for the actors. Although all actors were expected to meet the Roma women’s standards of perfection in their performances, the women did not set such standards uniformly for everyone. Factors, such as gender, rehearsal history, physical appearance, relation to me, and nationality, shaped the Roma women’s expectations of individual actors, as they were inextricably linked to the ends the women pursued.

The Roma women were now hypercritical of all actors’ performances, as echoed in Randia’s remark, “they’ll never learn,” when Ana and Ewa choreographed the Roma dance in the wedding scene (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Hope*, 4/22/03); and when I suggested that Agnieszka would sing a popular Roma song in Romani (Ibid., 4/23/03). However, the Roma women were most critical of Derek and Olga. In Derek’s case, no matter how

hard he tried to meet the women's expectations, they continued to openly scorn him as incompetent, unintelligent, and clumsy, and mockingly mimic his movements and gestures, for example, when he practiced the steps of a traditional Roma dance:

Ana calls "Dennis!" as she wants him to join Nadzieja dancing. She tells Dennis to stand in front of Nadzieja and dance. Ana shows Derek how Roma men dance, hands hitting her knees and clapping. Derek tries to imitate Ana, but ends up falling into her. Ana laughs and says, "Jesus!" She gives the other women a look that I read as, "God he's slow!" Zefiryna looks into the camera and laughs. Randia rubs her forehead in resignation. Ana leads Agnieszka in a dance around Derek. Derek is to stand in one spot dancing, while Nadzieja circles around him. Derek has a hard time following Ana. His movements are clumsy and out of rhythm... he falters, and is barely capable of even clapping. Ana watches him, laughs, and cries, "Dennis, what are you doing!" She shows him the movement again, but despite his sincere efforts, Derek is unsuccessful. Ana tells him to relax his body more. Olga asks him to move forward and look at Nadzieja.

Ana: Dennis, look what you're doing.... look what you're doing!

Ana imitates Derek, exaggerating his clumsy, mechanical movements. Everyone is now laughing at him, both the actors and the Roma women. The actors sit at the table and start clapping, as if showing Derek what Ana really wants. Derek looks very embarrassed and uncertain as to what he should do next. He manages to smile, although it is strained. . . . Ana slumps as though she is resigning, and goes off to talk to the other women in Romani. Derek continues dancing with Agnieszka. [...] Agnieszka's dancing impresses the women. Ewa walks over to Derek.

Ewa: Don't jump like that!

Ewa mimics Derek's jumping. She mechanically jumps up and down... her body rigid. She then demonstrates how he should dance. Other Roma women are laughing . . . I turn off the music. Ewa breaks down the movements for the actors into beats.

Ewa: One, two, three, four....

She shows the actors how to count out the claps and the steps. The actors now stand in a row, except for Derek, who stands next to Ewa. Zefiryna gets impatient with Derek.

Zefiryna: Ewa, take those chairs away and explain it to him!

Ewa: [to Derek] Look here, don't walk like a stick!

Everybody laughs.

Ewa: [to Derek] But don't bend your legs so much!

Zefiryana: Maybe he has crooked legs.

Derek: I don't have crooked legs!

Zefiryana: Oh, he doesn't understand anything! . . .

Randia: He'll [Derek] never learn!

Ana is demonstrating the dance once again to Derek, who is patiently listening to her and following her steps.

Ana: Don't be so stiff.

The other actors are still standing in a row, practising the dance. The women are laughing at Derek again. Basia mocks his movements, thrusting one hand out as she dances. The Roma women continue watching Derek and openly laugh at him, pointing their fingers at him. (Ibid.)

Once again, the Roma women criticised Derek's deportment when he performed the scene in which Nadzieja and Dennis returned to Nadzieja's household to tell her parents about their marriage plans:

When Dennis walks in to take Nadzieja, he follows the women's directions from the previous rehearsal, and enters with a smile and a straight posture.

Ewa: Hey, where are your hands going now? Why are you walking like that?!

Ewa comes up to him and shows him how stiff he is.

Ana: [to Ewa] Okay, leave it....

Ewa: ...where are you keeping your hands?!

Randia: You have to be relaxed....

Ana: [in a softer tone of voice, trying to alleviate the mounting tension] Relaxed... you should hold your hands in front of yourself...

Ewa takes Derek by the hand and leads him away from Nadzieja further upstage. Derek rolls his eyes and reluctantly follows her. Ewa shows him how to walk. She pokes him in his stomach to summon his attention.

Ewa: Walk like me! Look, can you walk normally like this? (Ibid., 5/01/03)

Although in this particular instance Ana was attempting to alleviate the growing tension between Ewa and Derek, her efforts were insufficient balm to relieve Derek's discomfort and embarrassment, which he tried to shrug off by rolling his eyes and dragging his feet.

When we rehearsed the scene in which Dennis discusses his plans for immigrating with Kalo and Zafira, the Roma women harshly chastised Derek for asking an apparently legitimate question meant to establish theatrical continuity in the text being developed:

Randia: So now Nadzieja's family is grateful that they are going to get their tickets. Dennis asks Kalo what they are going to do there [in the country to which they are immigrating], and Kalo answers that they will ask for asylum.

Derek: Maybe Kalo is asking that, because I know what I'll be doing there.

Ewa: No! (pointing a demeaning finger at her forehead) How do you know what you're going to do there? You've never been there!

Derek: But I planned it all.

Ewa: No, you planned it all, but you don't know what you'll be doing there... you'll go there, and they'll take you, but you don't know what you'll be doing there... you'll find it out there! (Ibid., 4/16/03)

In the wedding scene, as well, after the actors toasted the newlyweds, the Roma women asked Derek to repeat his gestures of pouring vodka for himself and Nadzieja endlessly, complaining that "he look[ed] like a stick or a piece of wood," and not "Roma enough" (Ibid., 4/23/03).

The Roma women were also often hypercritical of Olga's performance, albeit in less vitriolic terms. They were particularly critical of her physical and verbal characterisation of Zafira. The feedback the women provided Olga, although necessary in helping her develop her characterisation, usually contained "put-downs:"

Ana: There's one suggestion, Magda... when the mother comes and starts acting, she [Olga] needs to be less aggressive.

Ewa: [to Olga] And don't hit the chair like that... this looks terrible.

Ana: If she's gentler, it'll look better... you're stressed out, but not so angry.
(Ibid., 4/10/03)

The actors play out the scene once again. All the women like the scene, except for Randia, who is shaking her head "no." It appears that Randia is still questioning Olga's portrayal of Zafira, but she is silenced by the other women. Ewa touches Randia's hand and says "good." Basia holds Randia's arm to calm her down. Ana looks at Randia knowingly. Olga, however, notices what is going on, and I sense that she is growing more and more frustrated.

Randia: [to Olga] Mother, be gentle when you sit down... just watch what you're doing! (Ibid.)

And even after Olga made considerable adjustments in her portrayal of Zafira by "softening up" her movements and gestures, the women continued being dissatisfied with her performance for most of the rehearsal process, asking her to redo certain scenes repeatedly (Ibid., 4/10, 16/03). Tensions between the Roma women and Olga mounted while we rehearsed the wedding dance scene. Although the women never verbally criticised her ability to dance, on numerous occasions they laughed and gestured disapprovingly with their heads and hands as Olga practiced her dance steps (Fieldnotes 2003).

To understand the Roma women's treatment of Olga, Derek, and – at times – the other actors, one needs to, as I have already argued, consider it against the backdrop of the various ends the women tried to negotiate for themselves in, and via, the rehearsal process. While asserting their authority as directors of the project during rehearsals, and counteracting the actors' contempt for their input indubitably constituted important ends in themselves, other equally significant goals also seemed to be at stake here.

The Roma women's antipathy toward Derek could be possibly explained in terms of gender. Derek was a man, and the women generally treated men with trepidation and suspicion, which was evident in their request at the beginning of the rehearsal process that "no male actors be present" during in-studio discussions, as they felt uncomfortable discussing their personal lives in front of men (Ibid.). But the women's trepidation of men went beyond a mere uneasiness of discussing their lives in front of them; the women were generally distrustful of men, because men abused and exploited them, and enjoyed a

privileged position within Roma culture, which the women recognised as an “unfair deal” (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Hope*, 4/04/03). “A woman is a slave to a man... that’s why she can’t ever trust men... a slave doesn’t trust his master,” Ana once confided in me (Fieldnotes 2003). Or Randia asserted, “You have to be careful with men. We Roma women know how to deal with them... not to cause ourselves trouble... but we feel most comfortable among women... among ourselves... it’s then when we can really talk... who would trust a man with that!” (Ibid.) But Derek was a man and a Gadjo, and thus, the women must have doubly mistrusted him. “Never, ever trust a Gadjo, not even if he’s a father to your children,” warned Randia (Ibid.).

Furthermore, Derek’s masculinity, I believe, stood in direct opposition to the Roma ideal of masculinity. With his long hair, gentle demeanour, and higher-toned voice, he was the antithesis of the Roma ideal of the macho man. After all, it was Derek’s lack of robustness and determination in his movements – as perceived by the women – that bothered the women the most. “All right... like a man, with balls!” Ana yelled as she directed him to walk over to Agnieszka (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Hope*, 5/01/03). Yet, it is precisely this macho ideal of masculinity that Roma and non-Roma men alike have historically inhabited to assert their alleged superiority and dominion over women. Thus, ridiculing and humiliating a man who failed to meet society’s glorified ideal of manhood might have been highly provocative to the Roma women, as it could have been one of the few very tangible ways available to them of subverting – be it momentarily – the power men wielded over them.

Derek, as both a Gadjo and a young student, made an especially inviting target, for the Roma women likely perceived the possible repercussions of such ridicule as minimal. In light of this, the Roma women’s mockery of Derek could be viewed as “sexually irreverent acts,” to borrow from Abu-Lughod’s (1990) notion of “sexually irreverent discourse,” by which she refers to the Bedouin women’s jokes about men who fail to live up to the “ideals of autonomy and manhood,” ideals that are normally used to justify men’s alleged superiority over, and control of, women (45). According to Abu-Lughod, the women’s jokes about men are meant to subvert men’s control over their sexuality, which is sustained by the Bedouin moral system (Ibid.).

While the Roma women were eager to mock and humiliate Derek, they at all times respected Shawn's performance, although he struggled with the pronunciation of both the Roma and Polish texts, and his masculinity, like Derek's, also strayed from the Roma ideal of manliness. Despite Shawn's long blond hair, gentle demeanour, and soft voice, the women unfailingly complimented his portrayal of Kalo:

Randia: . . . he acts so well, so true... he looks like a real Roma man would!

(Fieldnotes 2003)

Ewa's son Maciek is showing Shawn how to dance. First they start with clapping, and then Maciek is clapping his feet, his thighs, his hands. Shawn attempts the dance, and heartily laughs.

Ana: Bravo... [to Derek] see, he is already dancing our dance, and he just started! [to Shawn] You'll have to teach him!

Shawn: Sure.

Ana: [to the Roma women] Shawn will teach him because he's getting it.
(Transcript, Rehearsal, *Hope*, 4/23/03)

While the gestures and movements Shawn had adopted for his portrayal of Kalo were indeed "strong," determined, and full of machismo, when Derek eventually adopted a comparable characterisation of Dennis, it did not significantly alter the women's responses to his acting; only at the tail end of the process, when the good of the performance became the impetus for a temporary "amnesty," did the women soften their opinions of Derek. This preferential treatment of Shawn by the Roma women needs to be considered in relation to Shawn's nationality, and his relationship to the Roma women, and to me.

Shawn was a Canadian, and, as I have argued earlier, the Roma women held Canada – and its citizens – in high regard, mainly due to widespread ideologies in Poland that glorify the West, and Canada, as proverbial "lands of milk and honey." In addition, Shawn often babysat Zefiryna's and Ewa's children during rehearsals gratis, something

the women appreciated greatly; otherwise, they would have been unable to participate in the project. Finally, Shawn was married to me, and the Roma women's relationships with me were entangled in a complex web of factors that contributed to my favourable position among them. As I have argued, the Roma women perceived me as a potential "gateway" to the West, as evident in their frequent requests to help them immigrate to Canada. I was a source of regular – albeit nominal – material support for the women. In addition to financially recompensing them for participating in the rehearsals, I routinely brought the women and their families bread, eggs, meat, fruit, and confectionery whenever I visited their households. And finally, I was often a confidante to the women, lending an ear to share their joys and sorrows. With all these factors combined, the Roma women's attitudes toward Shawn and his performance were not surprising.

Olga's rapport with the Roma women, on the other hand, suffered irreparably in the pre-rehearsal sessions. Specifically, I believe that Olga's suggestion – expressed during one of our pre-rehearsal sessions – that the Roma's "own difference" was to be blamed for the discrimination they experienced in Poland, severely compromised her relations with the Roma women. Olga's tenacious, and at times malicious, resistance to the Roma women's suggestions later in rehearsals further contributed to the ways in which the Roma women now articulated their high expectations of Olga's performance.

Finally, what the Roma women deemed as "looking or not looking Roma enough," and "acting or not acting like a Roma" shaped the standards of perfection they set for the actors. The women were generally pleased with Grazyna and Agnieszka's performances:

Ana: but I'll tell you honestly, that the best actor of all is her [Grazyna]... she speaks with an accent... and Agnieszka, because she is feeling it with emotions. (Ibid., 5/15/03)

This was in part, I believe, due to the fact that the Roma women had ascertained at the beginning of the rehearsal process that Grazyna "looks and speaks like Roma." The women also perceived Agnieszka as "more Roma;" in one instance, Ewa fawned over Agnieszka, "See...she's different...not like a Pole...she's more like us... hospitable, like a Roma girl... but that's so rare!" (Fieldnotes 2003) Ewa's kind words were in response

to Agnieszka's efforts – not unusual for her – of offering the Roma women tea, coffee, and sweets from the snack table during a break. Similarly, according to the women, Shawn looked like a “real Roma man would,” while Derek was not “Roma enough.”

What was it about looking, or not looking, “Roma enough,” or acting, or not acting, “like Roma” that shaped, in such significant ways, the dynamics between the Roma women and the actors? It seems that the politics of establishing rapport with Gadjos were at stake here, which were inextricably linked to the Roma women's own “internal politics” of relationships with one another, and with other members of their community. In other words, what the women seemed to be concerned about was how to establish rapport with the Gadjo actors so as not to compromise their own reputations among one another, and within their community.

The Roma women told me that Roma children, early in life, were taught by their elders to never fully befriend Gadjos, or to “reveal” the Roma's ways of life to them.⁷⁹ Yet, to a certain extent, this was what the Roma women were doing in the rehearsal room. Their participation in this project was so much about betrayal – the betrayal of their personal experiences, memories, lives, as well as the betrayal of certain aspects of Roma cultural practices, customs, norms, and beliefs; and such a betrayal was not taken lightly among Roma.

The head of Tarnow's Association of Roma asserted, “There is a Roma code of conduct that forbids Roma to tell Gadjos the truth . . . that's why a Roma should never tell strangers the truth” (Marek 2001). And the cautionary tale of the famous Roma poet Papusza⁸⁰ who had been expelled from the Roma community for betraying the Roma way of life to Gadjos – familiar to all Roma, children and adults alike – warns of the potential consequences of such actions.

Perhaps for the Roma women, the criterion of looking or acting “Roma enough,” according to which they “evaluated” both the actors' and their performances, and according to which they fashioned their relationships with the actors, constituted a way of circumventing the Roma code of conduct. Favouring some actors over others on the basis of their “Roma-like” appearances and behaviour could have been, for the Roma women, a means of asserting to one another – and to others within their community – that although they had agreed to work on the project with Gadjos, they only endorsed the more

“acceptable” ones. Ana once told me that Roma only accepted Gadjos who were “more like them,” citing as an example her nephew’s Gadjo wife: “. . . she is Polish but she’s just like a Gypsy... looks like a Gypsy... you couldn’t tell who she was if you didn’t know... just like us... she speaks our language and respects our tradition... that’s why she’s welcome into our houses” (Fieldnotes 2003).

Antagonisms over representation framed and defined the relationships between the Roma women and the actors right until our final rehearsals when the physical and spoken texts of the performance were intact, and everyone was aware that only minor changes were possible. Moreover, the imminence of opening night spurred everybody on to maintain the group’s morale, as the overall good of the performance hinged upon it. As a result, the actors were more open to the Roma women’s suggestions, and the Roma women were more accepting of the actors’ performances:

Magda: Yes, and from that moment, they’ll have the other scenes... when he [Dennis] is beating her up... when she has a baby... to the end when she is swallowing the pills... so next time you come on Monday, the twenty-seventh of May, the play will be finished through to the end.

Randia: It’s excellent!

Basia: Very nice.

Randia: [pointing to Olga] And even *she* plays better!

Ewa: Not so nervously... (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Hope*, 5/15/03)

While for a large portion of the rehearsal phase of the project the Roma women’s relationships with the actors were strained, as the actors were sabotaging the women’s suggestions and requests, and the women were trying to assert their directorial authority over the actors, this did not, in the least, compromise my relationship with the women. On the contrary, as the antagonisms between the women and the actors grew, so did the women’s solidarity with me. This manifested itself through the camaraderie the women were trying to foment in their interactions with me, which was apparent in the ways in which they addressed me. In their verbal remarks, the women were always cordial, and

referred to me by the pronoun “you”, which in Poland, when used by adults to refer to one another, implies friendship. They also often addressed me by my first name, which in the Polish language adds an even more collegial tone to a conversation:

Ana: Magda, I wanted to ask you something. (Ibid., 4/10//03)

Randia: Such a basic coffin it will be... but you know Magda, it also could be that bench... you dressed her, and she died, but the coffin is still not purchased. (Ibid., 5/15/03)

This collegiality strongly resonated in rehearsals, and stood in stark contrast to the women’s verbal interactions with the actors, in which they never addressed the actors by their first names; instead, they used the pronouns “you” or “she/he.” Gesturally, the women asserted their chumminess with me by discreetly communicating to me, via facial expressions and hand gestures, their observations and sentiments about the actors’ performances, and the current politics in the rehearsal room:

Throughout the run-through, Ana keeps looking over at me, smiling in approval. (Ibid.)

Randia is really not impressed. She scrunches up her face, and flashes Basia and me the “he just can’t do it” look... Basia nods her head in agreement. (Ibid., 4/13/03)

However, the women’s solidarity with me was especially evident in our interactions when a reporter from TV Gdansk attended one of our rehearsals to discuss the possibility of making a documentary about our project. Ana, for example, asked me in Romani, in front of the reporter, if they would be remunerated for their participation in the documentary; this indubitably established her solidarity with me, and constituted a gesture in which Ana, in some sense, accepted me as “one of them” (Ibid.). There were countless other instances in which the Roma women asserted their camaraderie with me. For instance, they openly referred to me as their friend in the presence of the reporter, and ensured that I had no objections in regards to their participation in the film, and that it would not compromise our project:

Ewa: They're asking us if we'd like to be filmed outside of the theatre.

Ana: That depends on Magda.

Magda: Whatever you agree to do will be fine with me, as long as it isn't compromising our project in terms of time and stuff... I don't want to be the person in the middle mediating... I'm responsible for what is happening here in the theatre, but not outside.

Ana: Yes, we don't want to do anything that would jeopardise our friend's work... but we can't be here and there doing two things... then we wouldn't have enough time either. (Ibid.)

Furthermore, the women's trust in me was apparent when they insisted that I attend the outdoor filming sessions of the documentary:

Reporter: It's also very artistically interesting to do a movie like that, and we'll film you on the streets... so you agree, because it won't hurt Magda's project in any way?

Ewa: But Magda will be with us during those rehearsals?

Reporter: She'll be here in the theatre, and when we're doing work out in the field, she'll be able to be there, but she can't give you any directions.

The women agree by nodding their heads.

Reporter: But as a friend, she'll be able to be there... but you'll be more responsible for what you're doing... you'll be your own team.

Ana: Yet we'd still prefer it if Magda were there.

Magda: I'll hide behind the tree.

Ana looks at me, and smiles.

Ana: She speaks to us in a simple language... we understand her... and sometimes there are such Polish words that we don't understand very well... very educated words...

Ewa: ...and Magda would be able to explain it to us. (Ibid.)

The sense of camaraderie the Roma women expressed towards me in rehearsals, I believe, can be linked to the numerous factors – as I have discussed earlier – that framed my relationships with them. However, I also think that the women genuinely trusted me – as much as a Roma could trust a Gadjo – and considered me to be their friend, and hence, openly expressed their loyalty towards me. Ewa once told me, “We Roma don’t have many friends, because we trust no one... but friends that we have we cherish... we never betray them. There are so few one can trust, even among us, because such is today’s world... a man is a wolf to a man” (Fieldnotes 2003).

While my relationship with the women remained intact in spite of the tensions and antagonisms in the rehearsal room, the interactions among the Roma women themselves, on the other hand, were at times strained. The conflicts among the Roma women surfaced along generational divides. While it was Randia who should have had the strongest claims to authority due to her seniority, in efforts to assert their authority as directors over the actors, and to negotiate other diverse ends, the younger women often took precedence over Randia. This became manifest when they, at times, tried to minimise Randia’s input, or even entirely excluded her from the decision-making process. For example, on one occasion when Randia questioned Olga’s portrayal of Zafira, the other women tried to censor her by gently touching her arm and exchanging looks. Although Randia managed to counsel Olga, “Mother, be gentle when you sit down... just watch what you’re doing!” the women impertinently cut short her advice by changing the topic, and advised Taisa not to refer to Nadzieja as “young one” because “Nadzieja has a name” (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Hope*, 4/10/03). As well, when Randia suggested that having a real coffin in the performance was too contentious, and therefore, we should not use a coffin at all, Ana barked at Randia impatiently, “God, think about it! How could we do it without one?” (Ibid., 4/27/03) On another occasion, forgetting that Dennis did not have a father, Randia suggested that at some point Halina’s husband should take over the matchmaking discussion with Nadzieja’s parents; without hesitation, Ewa and Basia threw reproachful looks towards Randia (Ibid., 4/16/03).

Although the younger women were also embroiled in power struggles between and among themselves, and occasionally censored one another, tensions, however, mainly arose between them and Randia. At times, it appeared that the women suppressed

Randia's suggestions in order to moderate the frequent tensions that arose between her and the actors. However, as all women tried – to varying degrees – to assert their authority over the actors, a different explanation seems plausible here. I believe the younger Roma women marginalised Randia's input in rehearsals as they considered her to be old-fashioned, and worried that her "out-dated ideas" would compromise the quality of the performance. After one rehearsal, friction developed between Randia and the younger women over the choice of costumes, and Zefiryna mocked Randia's suggestion of having the actors wear colourful skirts and aprons as being "so old fashioned:" "You only argue Mom, but you just don't understand anything... you've got all these old-fashioned ideas... they'd only laugh at us... look at the backward Gypsies they'd say!" (Fieldnotes 2003) Also, during one of our rehearsal breaks, the women teased Randia that she was "a real director now", although all her life she had been "running around and stealing hens [and doing] all those other backward things" that "no Roma woman would ever do today" (Ibid.). Although the women taunted Randia in a joking manner, it nevertheless spoke, to a certain degree, of the younger women's perceptions of her.

It seems, however, that the younger women were able to assert their authority over Randia in rehearsals due to the contextual specificities of this phase of the research process, as well as the power dynamics that defined the women's mutual interactions in their everyday lives outside of rehearsals. In other words, Randia's "symbolic power" among the Roma women during the pre-rehearsal stage – a less "political" moment in the process – was now eroded by the women's struggles over directorial authority, over representation, and over the negotiation of diverse ends. Specifically, although Randia's "symbolic power" – her authority and power as an elder among the Roma women and her community – was "formally" unaltered, the Roma women no longer – in concrete terms – endowed her with the "symbolic power" needed to legitimise her suggestions and decisions. According to Pierre Bourdieu (1991), "symbolic power" is not necessarily a manifestation of recognised authority, but rather, the power to define the situation:

Symbolic power is a power which the person submitting to *grants* to the person who exercises it, a credit with which he credits him, a *fide*, an *auctoritas*, with which he entrusts him by placing his trust in him. It is a power which exists because the person who submits to it believes that it exists. (Ibid., 166, 192)

Bourdieu argues that symbolic power is “invisible,” as those who endow others with symbolic power are not aware they are doing it, and those who have been endowed with symbolic power are not cognisant that they possess such power to legitimise the state-of-affairs, because such power has been fostered through habit, instruction, and routine (Ibid., 166). Thus, although the Roma women were aware of Randia’s “formal” authority as an elder – as much as they had been prior to the project – they temporarily “forgot” to legitimise her authority in any meaningful ways. Instead, the women were now trying to assume such symbolic power for themselves, and Ana seemed to be the one who held the biggest slice of this “power.” The women repeatedly referred to her as “the boss,” which was demonstrated, for example, during the visit of TV Gdansk:

Reporter: So who should I contact... who could make decisions for you?

All the women point towards Ana.

Randia: Here’s the boss.

Ana is laughing.

Ana: When one of us goes, then we’ll all go. I won’t go by myself.

Randia: No.

Ana: Either we all go, or none of us will. (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Hope*, 4/13//03)

Obviously, while the women openly conferred Ana with authority and trust, she consolidated her symbolic power by showing her allegiance with them, which further validated the trust the women had placed in her (Ibid.). This was one of the ways by which Ana asserted her authority throughout this stage of the rehearsal process. By acknowledging her solidarity with the women – she did so by using the pronoun “we” when speaking on behalf of the Roma women in rehearsal (Ibid.) – she affirmed that the women’s choice to designate her as “the boss” was sound.

Ana further negotiated her symbolic power by confidently and enthusiastically assuming the role of co-director (Ibid.); actively participating in improvisations; (Ibid., 4/10/03); asserting her authority over the actors⁸¹ (Ibid., 4/13, 23/03); and openly bragging about her friendship with me to the Roma women. However, it would be somewhat simplistic to explicate Ana's "acquisition" of symbolic power – and consequently the women's "forgetting" of Randia's authority as an elder – mainly in terms of the specific politics of power in this phase of the research project.

While the present rehearsal context undoubtedly fostered the "transfer" of symbolic power from Randia to Ana – and this included, to some extent, the pre-rehearsal sessions, when Ana had established her "authority" as the main storyteller – something else must have also been at stake here. For why would the women endow Ana with "symbolic power" without reaching and struggling for it themselves, as clearly the benefits were potentially manifold? The advantages of being "the boss" in the rehearsal studio could conceivably extend beyond a mere sense of personal satisfaction, or an opportunity to control what was incorporated into, or excluded from, the final performance. Being "the boss" could have also been a powerful means for the Roma women to negotiate various other ends, such as establishing directorial authority over the actors, subverting men's power over them, or gaining access to the sundry benefits that might have come from forming an alliance with me. Thus, if being "the boss" in rehearsals could have potentially made it easier for the Roma women to negotiate their diverse ends, why did the women relinquish such an opportunity?

Bourdieu (1991) argues that "symbolic power" is also fostered through habit, instruction, and routine, and thus those who are endowing others with such power are not always aware they are doing so; and inversely, those who are being endowed with such power are not always aware that their practices have become a source of authority (166). Following Bourdieu's explanation, the women might not have been always conscious that they were endowing Ana with symbolic power, because, as much as it was being articulated and rearticulated in the context of rehearsals, Ana's symbolic power had also been fostered through the habits and routines of the power dynamics that defined the women's interactions in their everyday lives outside of rehearsals; that is, the Roma women appeared to also bestow Ana with symbolic power in their everyday interactions.

Ana had a reputation among the Roma women of being an effectual arbitrator in family disputes. The women spoke of – and I had personally witnessed – Ana counselling them over squabbles involving friends, spouses, siblings, or children. While fortune telling, the women regularly confided in Ana, sharing their problems with her, and seeking advice.

Furthermore, the Roma women admired Ana’s aptitude in recruiting potential fortune telling customers. Although I had never witnessed her actually telling somebody their fortune, I often saw her stop passers-by and pique their interest – if only briefly – in having their fortunes told. Yet, regardless of whether her reputation as an accomplished fortune teller⁸² actually translated into her ability to recruit more customers than other Roma women, or merely spoke of her successes in engaging passers-by in conversation, it can possibly be linked to her eloquence and charisma, as well as to her status of being half-Polish/half-Roma.

Ana was very articulate and passionate, and immensely gracious when convincing pedestrians to consider the potential advantages of knowing “the secrets of the future” (Fieldnotes 2003). In addition, her half-Polish/half-Roma status might have been somewhat implicated in her “success” at stopping pedestrians. Her complexion and hair colour were fairly light, and she dressed, as she often put it, “more like a Polish woman” (Ibid., Ana).⁸³ As a result, a passer-by could have easily mistaken her – especially if the other Roma women were not nearby – for a Polish woman who might, for instance, want to know the time, or get directions. Indeed, the people Ana managed to stop – although they invariably refused her offers to tell their fortunes – appeared generally less hostile to her than they were to the other Roma women. Although the women never admitted it, they seemed more eager to go fortune telling if Ana worked alongside them, perhaps in hope of somehow benefiting from Ana’s “abilities.” Randia would often say to me, “Ana’s there... I might as well go and fortune tell... you never know, maybe someone’ll stop” (Fieldnotes 2002).

Finally, Ana’s reputation for her ability in recruiting potential fortune telling customers also extended to her facility – as perceived by other Roma women – of “being generally good with Gadjos” (Fieldnotes 2003). For the Roma women, this meant that Ana was able to both cultivate positive relationships with Gadjos – as in her recruitment

of potential fortune telling customers – and “stand up” to the Gadjos’ abuse and discrimination of Roma.

During our pre-rehearsal sessions, Ana presented herself as both friend and foil to Gadjos. She told us stories in which she both forged friendships with them (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Hope*, 4/3/03), and challenged their prejudiced attitudes toward Roma (Ibid., 3/27/03). Randia, for example, admired Ana for her “strong spirit:” “When I go to all those offices, I get so stressed out... so worried. I know I should just tell them to go to the devil... but it’s hard when you’re a Gypsy, unless you’re like Ana. She’s got a strong spirit... she knows how to show them, but not everyone’s like that. My daughter Ewa, she can’t do that either. . . . (Fieldnotes 2003). Minka once offered Elzbieta – who was planning to visit the social assistance office to apply for a winter heating subsidy – the following advice: “Why don’t you go with Ana? She’ll manage. You won’t get anything done yourself... you’ll end up with a [nervous] attack!” (Ibid.)

Perhaps Ana’s sundry abilities and good reputation within the community combined to prop up the symbolic power she had enjoyed in everyday life, and had been central in securing her authority in rehearsals. After all, our project involved working with Gadjos, and who would be a better-suited “boss” in rehearsals than the Roma community’s central arbitrator and advocate?

Despite the politics of this phase of rehearsals, the dynamics among the actors, and between the actors and me, remained largely amiable. While some antagonisms between us did arise due to the actors’ perennial disrespect for the Roma women’s work, and especially from our disagreement over the “coffin issue,”⁸⁴ we did, however, manage to keep residual tensions from *Dance as I Play You*, and *Horses and Angels* outside of the rehearsal room. Even relations between the female actors and Derek – strained in the previous project – were now mostly amiable, aside from the few instances when the actors joined the Roma women in ridiculing Derek. Generally, however, the actors supported and respected one another’s work. I believe this was so because they seemingly banded together in an effort to thwart the Roma women’s directorial and dramaturgical suggestions in rehearsal. In this unmistakable politics of “US versus THEM,” any “internal” discord among the actors, and between the actors and me, would

have not been in the actors' better interests; thus, they vigilantly preserved in-group harmony.

However, the conflicts that arose in the rehearsal room could not be merely seen as resulting from the differences in how we conceptualised theatre as an art form; they also arose from the differences in what the rehearsal process meant to us, and in what we hoped to accomplish through both the rehearsal process and the performance itself. For the Roma women, the actors, and me, the rehearsal process had varied meanings and purposes.

The Roma women, for example, talked about the rehearsal process as an opportunity for them to attend to their immediate needs, such as earning an extra income. "I'd rather come here and make some money than stand out there fortune telling in the cold... it's warm here, and you're guaranteed to get paid," (Ibid.) admitted Randia. Ana enjoyed the social aspects of rehearsals: "I like coming here. I get a break from those Lucifers of mine, and him [her husband]. We also have fun here, and get to see others that I would not have seen so often... and of course, it's some help financially" (Ibid.). As well, for the Roma women, rehearsals provided a refuge from their real life problems. In one instance, Ana showed up to rehearsal distraught because both her mother and her sister were very ill; when I offered that she could go home if she needed to, Ana insisted that she preferred to be at the rehearsal with "us," because at home she would only sit and worry about everything (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Hope*, 5/01/03). Furthermore, the women pointed out that for them the project was a means of telling the larger public about their lives, and perhaps generating some help from the community, although not all women concurred with this. Finally, for the Roma women, the rehearsal process was very much about the celebration and sharing of their culture with the Gadjo actors. When they were being interviewed by a local television station, the women told the reporter that they enjoyed the rehearsal process because they took pleasure in teaching the young Polish actors about their culture and customs.

For the actors, the rehearsal process was a form of professional development, an opportunity to work on another ethnographic project, and to have some fun, as they were passionate about "doing theatre." Finally, it was also a means for them to "get to know

another culture” (Ibid., 4/13/03), which was particularly important to those actors who planned to study art and culture after graduating from the Lyceum.

Of course I also had my own stakes in the rehearsal process. To me, rehearsals were primarily a part of the research process from which I expected to learn about the lives of the Roma women, and about the workings of the ethnographic performance as a qualitative research methodology. I also hoped to explore, and challenge, the power relations that defined the interactions between the women, the actors, and me. The knowledge generated throughout the process was to provide me with the material needed to write my Ph.D. dissertation. Finally, the process was also, for me, about the joy of “doing theatre” – something I always felt passionate about, regardless of whether it was for artistic, or research purposes.

Similarly, the performance also had diverse meanings and purposes for the Roma women, the actors, and me. The Roma women wanted the performance to teach audience members that the Roma people, like everyone else, deserved to live peacefully in their country of birth, and that their lives were filled with hardships (Ibid., 4/09/03). Also, some of the Roma women, like Ana, hoped that the performance would somehow alter the ways in which people perceived Roma: “Maybe I would like the play to change how people think about us... that they see us as people the same as them... no better, no worse” (Ibid.). But like the rehearsal process, the performance itself was an opportunity for the Roma women to share their culture and customs with Gadjos. “We could have a large table set up, covered with a white table cloth, and lots of food on it, so they see that the Roma really know how to play!” suggested Ana during one rehearsal (Ibid.). And in an interview with a local television station, when the reporter asked the Roma women about the main message of *Hope*, they answered that it was all about their culture and life, and that all people, regardless of their skin colour or nationality, should be considered equal (Ibid., 5/27/03).

For the actors, the performance itself – like the rehearsal process – was a chance to develop professionally, and an opportunity to get acting exposure within the community. Furthermore, the actors wanted the performance to pass on a strong anti-racist message: “We have to be careful about how we say things... how we represent

them [the Roma] because we want the performance to speak against racism and not to perpetuate the stereotypes of Roma” (Fieldnotes 2003, Grazyna).

For me, the performance – like the rehearsals – was a component of the research process, and an ethnographic-artistic representation with a political agenda. The “political” in the performance, for me, entailed engaging the Roma women, the actors, and the audience members in a critique of the social realities that encouraged acts of violence against the Roma women, and Roma in general; and exposing/destabilising the unequal power relations that defined the relationships among us.

However, while the rehearsal process and the performance had diverse meanings for all participants involved, it seemed that certain participant expectations were particularly responsible for at least some of the antagonisms that framed our interactions in the rehearsal room: our disparate understandings of what “having fun” in rehearsals meant; and clashes between the Roma women’s understanding of the performance as a celebration of their culture, my notion of the performance as a form of social critique, and the actors’ conception of the performance as a forum for disseminating their anti-racist messages. “Having fun” in rehearsals, for the Roma women, appeared to include socialising with other women, talking about their everyday problems, sharing the latest gossip, joking, and laughing. While “having fun” for the actors also involved generous doses of socialising, laughing, and joking, they restricted these “fun indulgences” mainly to breaks; their “rehearsal fun,” for the most part, entailed doing “serious work,” which involved creating the final product (the performance), and gaining acting experience and training. To me, “having fun” in rehearsals also meant doing “serious work,” because this was, after all, my Ph.D. research, and because doing theatre was always for me a time for focussed and committed work, as I had been inspired by Grotowski’s words, “theatre is life and should be treated as such.”

The differences in what “having fun” in rehearsals meant to us, as well as the tensions that arose on such grounds, were apparent when Ewa and Randia brought their dogs to one of our rehearsals. We were forced to delay our run-through of the performance because the dogs were running loose in the theatre, and incessantly barking. Both the actors and I grew increasingly frustrated, as we were worried about the loss of time. The Roma women, on the other hand, were fully engrossed in their dogs’ play, and

it was extremely difficult to draw them back into the rehearsal. After the rehearsal ended, and the women had already left, the actors noticed that the dogs had urinated on Gosia's rucksack and clothes. They were outraged, and complained that the Roma women lacked respect for their work and refused to take the rehearsal process seriously (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Hope*, 5/27/03).

Likewise, while the Roma women wanted the performance to be – in largely exoticising terms – a celebration of their culture, replete with a traditionally extravagant Roma wedding feast, and passionate Roma music and dancing, the actors and I, for different reasons, resisted this idea. The actors, as I have argued earlier, although also interested in representing Roma and their culture with an exotic flavour to satisfy their own, and the non-Roma audience's, fantasies of Roma as the curious “other,” were unreceptive to the showcasing of such “Roma-ness” by the women, primarily because they found the women's ways of doing it theatrically uninteresting. From the actors' points-of-view – informed by modernist “high art” traditions in Poland – the Roma women's scrupulously realistic celebration of their culture, which they also saw as lacking a concern for the politics of life, was theatrically inferior.

I was uneasy about such exotic representations of Roma culture, as I did not want the performance to perpetuate stereotypes of Roma as the mysterious and pristine “other” propagated, historically and contemporarily, in Polish – and Western – popular and academic discourses. I did not want to gloss over – with the performance's exotic images of “Roma life” – the unequal relations of power that defined Roma's and Gadjos' interactions in present-day Poland, as well as our own relations in the rehearsal studio. Hence, for me, the women's understanding of the performance as a celebration of their culture lacked a politics of culture and power, which, in my view, seemed critical in a country where, to borrow Sherene Razack's (1994) words, “minorities are invited to keep their culture but enjoy no greater access to power and resources” (898).

How conflicts arose on such grounds was made apparent when I suggested, in one of our rehearsals, that we incorporate Brecht's strategy of suspending a play's illusion – such as having the actors step out of character and provide commentary on the performance's action, or showing the audience the ways in which decisions about the performance had been made – in order to expose the power dynamics between us, and to

reveal that the performance was a constructed event, not a “true” rendering of Roma life. The Roma women refused to incorporate these anti-illusion strategies, as they argued this would only “confuse the audience,” “compromise the beauty of the performance,” and make “people think that either the actors don’t know how to act, or that the Roma are ‘not all there’” (Fieldnotes 2003). The actors were unhappy about the women’s inflexibility,” and argued that “politically nothing will ever change for the Roma if all they show to the audience is how many hens they can eat at a wedding table”(Ibid., Olga). This rift heightened the tensions between the Roma women and the actors in the rehearsal room.

Also, though the Roma women originally wanted Nadzieja and Dennis’ wedding to make up a significant part of the performance, I discouraged this idea – and so did the actors for their own reasons – by arguing that while the wedding was an important aspect of the play, we should foreground the arduous, rather than the celebratory, moments in the characters’ lives if we wanted the performance to bear a political message (Fieldnotes 2003). Although the Roma women agreed with my argument, I believe this had a detrimental effect on the relationships between them and the actors, and was, in part, responsible for the unattainable standards of perfection the women expected the actors to attain while working out the wedding scene.

The actors’ and my resistance to the women’s conceptualisation of the performance as a celebration of their culture, I believe, spoke not only of the differences between how the Roma women, the actors, and I understood the performance’s goals, and how this led to conflicts between us in the rehearsal room; it also exposed the risks inherent in collaborative and critical ethnographies, such as ours, that take up the project of social critique and action. Such risks could include the political disempowerment of research participants, in cases when seeking to protect and advance their rights – as we understand them – we neglect to consider sufficiently what such rights might mean from the research participants’ points-of-view. This could set up a problematic relationship between the research participants and us, where we paternalistically assume that we know what is best for them, and ignore their own expressed needs, which are often contradictory and shifting. While the Roma women’s conception of the performance as a celebration of their culture was certainly problematic, as it advanced the notion of culture “whereby culture is taken to mean values, beliefs, knowledge, and customs that exist in a

timeless and unchangeable vacuum outside of patriarchy, racism, imperialism, and colonialism” (Razack 1994, 896), at the same time, I recognise it would be rather unfair to dismiss the Roma women’s representation of their culture merely as their identification – in the Gramscian sense – with the hegemonic ideologies and practices that perpetuated their oppression. In fact, the Roma women’s vision of the performance as a celebration of their culture might have been more “messy” and contradictory than we imagined, because what appears to be hegemonic practices on one side of the coin, might constitute counter-hegemonic actions on the flipside.

The complexity of power relations, Richard Maddox (1997) argues, can render hegemonic acts simultaneously counter-hegemonic, and vice-versa. Thus, what the actors and I failed to consider was that the Roma women’s understanding of the performance as a celebration of their culture, while it might have been perpetuating some of the more innocuous Roma stereotypes (mysterious, pristine, musical), at the same time it could have been destabilizing the more negative Roma stereotypes, such as lazy or dirty. Or else it may have been a concrete political move, on the women’s part, to assert their right to celebrate their ways of life, a right denied to them altogether for so many years by the socialist state’s racist agenda to homogenise all Polish citizens as workers of the state. Finally, what we neglected to take into account – sadly, given the project’s commitment to sensuous and engaged scholarship – was that the women’s celebration of their culture through the traditional Roma dance in particular, could have been about the “joy of dancing,” a more embodied, sensuous, and not easily rationalisable experience.

Ironically, while our project sought to facilitate a ground for the Roma women to articulate their claims for justice, in fact, we once again denied their right to speak for themselves. In other words, we had invited the Roma women to the discussion table, as long as, of course, what they had to say did not jeopardise our rhetoric – despite its postcolonial concern with the rights of “the other” – fuelled by Western bourgeois liberalism.

Extra-Rehearsal Sessions with Actors and Roma Women

Putting it All Together

I held separate extra-rehearsal sessions with the Roma women, and with the actors. The extra-rehearsal sessions with the Roma women, like the pre-rehearsal sessions, were held at Randia's or Ana's flats, or at the women's fortune telling spot. The extra-rehearsal meetings with the Roma women were primarily opportunities for me to touch-base with them and solicit their feedback regarding the rehearsal process.

The extra-rehearsal sessions with the actors were held in the studio, normally immediately following our regular rehearsals, or on days when we did not have rehearsals with the Roma women. In the extra-rehearsal sessions, the actors and I reviewed the video recordings of previous rehearsals, and selected potential spoken and physical texts to be included in the performance; rehearsed the selected scenes; and later in the process, polished details of the blocking, choreography, and spoken text. Finally, our extra-rehearsal sessions provided us with an opportunity to address issues and concerns that had arisen during the rehearsal process.

The Roma women were unable to devote the extra time required to review and select the physical and spoken texts from our video-recordings, and organize them into a coherent whole, due to other commitments. However, they asked me to select and put together the material in a way that was theatrically interesting to the audience, and that would not be too lengthy or repetitive (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Hope*, 4/16/03). The women provided us with feedback about the material we selected, and the ways in which we portrayed it on the stage, when we presented it to them in rehearsals.

While deciding which scenes and versions of our improvisations to incorporate into the performance, we took into account the women's input. We would first select scenes from the video recordings which the Roma had solely developed and improvised. Our secondary choices included improvisations enacted by the Roma women and the actors together, and scenes improvised by the actors with the Roma women feeding them

the text. We only included scenes that had been improvised solely by the actors if there were no other materials available:

Agnieszka: Everyone sits down.

Olga: No, I think Kalo says something.

Grazyna: No... they're kind of repeating what they said before... we improvised the drinking scene twice.

Magda: I think the first one is better... it has more of their own [the Roma women's] text.

Agnieszka: Yeah, now we should go directly to the wedding scene. (Transcript, Extra-Rehearsal [actors], *Hope*, 4/22/03)

We also incorporated all of the Roma women's suggestions regarding characterisation, blocking, and choreography:

Olga: Now the mother comes.

Maria: Taisa still has the broom, right?

Magda: Yes, but when did they [the Roma women] want her to take that broom?

Agnieszka: When she's coming in she takes the broom... and then I come up to her and grab it away from her, when Kalo tells me to go to work

Magda: So Nadzieja is sweeping, and then what? And then Zafira comes in... she's nervous... she sits down, and what does she say?

Grazyna: She doesn't say anything... it's her husband who's asking her what she's doing.

Magda: You're not supposed to be harsh here, remember?

Olga: [sarcastically] Yes, I remember! (Ibid., 4/14/03)

We chose the material that we believed poignantly spoke of the Roma women's lives:

Magda: Zafira says, "Go out to the villages and trade!"

Olga: "They won't buy anything." What does that mean?

Magda: Well, Kalo says that... this is one of the biggest problems for Roma men... even though many of them are willing to trade, these days no one really wants to buy their products.

Grazyna: We should have it then. (Ibid.)

We also decided what to include in, and exclude from, the performance's texts based on our considerations of what was theatrically appealing. For example, we decided not to include actions that were unnecessarily repetitive, and did not, in our view, bring any novel narrative or visual elements into the action of the performance:

Agnieszka: The guests say now, "Let's pack up and go home... we'll still drink and celebrate at home for a bit." Now they're leaving... but I don't think that we need to have a meal at their place.

Magda: Randia said it herself that it might be too much, as we already have them eat at the wedding.

Agnieszka: We should just skip it... maybe we can now go to the next scene, where we see Nadzieja sitting in the corner, and Halina comes up to her and asks what has happened. (Ibid., 4/22/03)

Similarly, we incorporated certain changes into the performance's texts in order to limit the number of entrances and exits made by the actors during the performance. As our improvisations were primarily about generating spoken and physical texts, and not about the logistics of the performance, the improvisations were often protracted. As a result, at the end of the day, we would end up with countless entrances and exits that did not contribute to the action of the performance. Thus, at times, in order to eliminate superfluous entrances and exits, we were compelled to slightly alter the progression of the performance's action:

- Magda:** So now, how are we going to do that... what is really happening?
- Olga:** Kalo and Zafira had a fight, and Kalo leaves.
- Magda:** Does mother call the daughters?
- Grazyna:** No. Remember, we decided that the daughters come in by themselves... they come in so as not to have so many entrances and exits.
- Agnieszka:** But then they'll have to go to the store again.
- Grazyna:** No, they've already gone to the store... everything happens at once.
- Olga:** They can come back and say that they've gone to the store. (Ibid., 4/14/03)
-

We would also change the word order of the spoken text, as initially requested by the Roma women, to ensure a "dramatic flow" of the action:

- Magda:** "You do nothing, but you send the children out!"... and then what?
- Agnieszka:** Maybe we should change it a bit... change the order... I think it would sound better, "You send the children out, while you...you do nothing!"
- Magda:** We'll see what they say... should be fine... I think it flows better, too. (Ibid.)
-

At times, we were somewhat compelled to modify the spoken text, as improvised by the Roma women, to ensure that the meaning of the text was accessible to the audience:

- Magda:** Taisa says, "Come Nadzieja, we'll go walking."
- Olga:** Yes, they refer to walking as fortune telling.
- Magda:** So she says, "Okay Nadzieja, let's go walking."
- Maria:** But who is going to know... the audience, I mean, if they say, let's go walking, they won't know that this means fortune telling.
- Olga:** No they won't.

Magda: Why don't we write up, "Okay Nadzieja, let's go fortune telling," and then we'll ask them if that's okay if we say it more directly.

Agnieszka: Sure, I think that people will think that they just want to go for a walk. (Ibid.)

In our extra-rehearsal sessions, we also came up with certain theatrical solutions that helped us accommodate the Roma women's ideas that were practically/technically difficult to realise due to budget restrictions, the lack of technical support, or the shortage of actors. For example, in order to actualise the Roma women's request that we insert a scene in which Polish hooligans invade Nadzieja's wedding reception, we decided to have the scene performed in darkness, as we did not have enough actors to perform the hooligans:

Magda: But how are we going to do this all?

Agnieszka: Yeah... who'll do it?

Magda: I know! Maybe the boys will come in and turn the lights off and... and then the whole scene takes place in darkness.

Agnieszka: We'll see what they say, but remember they wanted Nadzieja to sing... so maybe then when she's singing, all the lights go out...

Olga: ...no... that's good... you've got the voices. (Ibid., 4/22/03)

To accommodate the women's suggestion that police officers enter during the hooligan scene, and blame everything on the Roma, we decided to have one of the existing characters narrate this information, as it would be technically difficult and confusing to have the actors simultaneously perform the Roma characters and the police officers:

Magda: Yes... but how are we going to tell the audience that the police blamed the Roma for everything? That's what the women said.

Agnieszka: Well, maybe when the lights come up, there'll be one person missing... Dennis's sister or mother, and everyone will be sitting at the table... all the props are scattered around on the stage... and then mother or sister says that the police let them [the

hooligans] free, and that they told the Roma to wrap their party up, and decided that it was all the Roma's fault... because it would be all too difficult to show the whole scene with the police and stuff ... we don't have enough actors.

Magda: Okay...I think that'll work. (Ibid.)

After we selected and put together scenes from the video-recordings, the actors performed the chosen material to the Roma women for feedback in rehearsals. The women offered suggestions about the scenes we had selected, the ways in which we assembled them, and how we worked them out physically:

Magda: Do you have any comments regarding gestures and the physicality of what you have seen?

Ewa: No.

Randia: Only Olga... she's a bit...

Ewa: ...she gets up too fast, and she walks too fast.

Basia: But this is not supposed to be like it is at home... it's acting.

Randia: But generally it's good... very good... it's going well. (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Hope*, 4/16/03)

Occasionally, we put together two different versions of the text we had selected from the video recordings so the Roma women could choose which version to include in the performance. This happened when we believed that both versions were equally compelling, or if there was any unresolved contention between the Roma women and the actors, or among the Roma women themselves, over the ways in which the action of the performance should progress. For example, we decided to present two versions of the matchmaking scene, as no agreement had been reached between the Roma women and the actors as to whether Nadzieja or Dennis should have a father. In one version, Nadzieja had the father, and Halina visited Nadzieja's flat with Dennis' sister Zosia to arrange the marriage. In this version, Nadzieja's father mainly led the conversation with

the matchmakers. In the other version, Dennis had the father, and so Halina visited Nadzieja's parents with her husband, and Zafira was responsible for talking to Dennis's parents. After we presented the two choices, the Roma women selected the former version. They believed that although it would be important to have Dennis' father in order to show that the family's wealth had come from two working men, it was more significant to have Nadzieja's father present, because the man, as head of the family, should be brokering the match (Ibid.).

Reflections

The separate extra-rehearsal sessions, given all the antagonisms unfolding in rehearsals, also constituted an additional means for the Roma women, the actors, and me of negotiating our power in – and outside of – the rehearsal room. Thus, for the Roma women, our extra-rehearsal sessions became an important way to further assert their authority as directors and dramaturgs in the rehearsal room, and negotiate other diverse ends. This was evident in the ways in which the Roma women attempted to navigate their relationships with me.

The women's expectations that I be their advocate and friend when mediating the differences and conflicts between them and the actors – already articulated in our separate pre-rehearsal sessions – in the context of the sundry power struggles currently unfolding in the rehearsal room, became a pressing reality. The challenges of fulfilling such requests on my part, however, should not be difficult to imagine. While I was always deeply committed to the Roma women and their interests, "taking sides" in the rehearsal room was obviously problematic. Although I tried remaining "neutral" in the rehearsal room as much as possible in order to provide the Roma women and the actors a space to negotiate their differences in opinion, the Roma women did not always see it as a "fair deal."

The women would at times, during our extra-rehearsal sessions, chide me for "siding with the actors" and not asserting myself as the leader of the project (Fieldnotes 2003). For the Roma women, my "neutral" stance in rehearsals really meant that I was

standing with the actors. Thus the saying, “those who aren’t with us are against us,” that Hermine De Soto and Nora Dudwick (2000, 14) often heard expressed while doing fieldwork in postsocialist Armenia, also rang true in the context of our project. Therefore, I often found myself implicated in what Peter Loizos (1994) refers to as the “Faustian contract,” that is to say, an unspoken contract of reciprocity – in which the anthropologist is expected to compensate his or her informants for participating in the study, and “offering food and drink . . . friendship and moral support” – which often defines the ethnographer-informants relationships (14).

Likewise, in our extra-rehearsal sessions, the actors attempted to broker such a Faustian contract with me. They also expected me to rally behind them in their conflicts with the Roma women in the rehearsal room, and appealed to my “Polishness” and my credentials as a “theatre director.” “You surely must know where we’re coming from. You’re a Pole, after all, and a director!” asserted Olga during one of her attempts to convince me to “take charge” of the rehearsals (Fieldnotes 2003).

Yet, the bridles of my Faustian contract with the women and the actors did not merely entail – for me – being their friend and advocate in negotiating the differences and conflicts between them in lieu of their participation in the study. Now that the power struggles in rehearsals had largely eroded project etiquette, and consequently, the Roma women’s and the actors’ mutual respect for one another, the contract unscrupulously called for my complicity in the actors’ and the Roma women’s efforts of sabotaging each other’s work. And in the small print of this contract of conspiracy, I was to be the main executor of their ideas.

For the actors, this entailed convincing me to assert my authority as director of the project in order to shape the performance according to their vision of theatre. During one of our extra-rehearsal session breaks, a few of the actors approached me and insisted that I “wake-up and acknowledge [my] responsibilities as director [because] if we leave the performance entirely to the Roma women, the audience will leave [the theatre] bored to death” (Fieldnotes 2003). Yet, the actors did not expect me to assert my directorial authority in rehearsals in a heavy-handed manner, as they probably recognised that this could add to the existing frictions between them and the Roma women, which in turn could result in the dissolution of the project. They were also likely aware that this was

something to which I would never agree. Finally, I believe they did not feel it was just to entirely compromise the ethnographic and collaborative nature of the project, as on numerous occasions, they had expressed their enthusiasm for ethnographic theatre, for finding ways to maximise the Roma women's input in the project, as well as their concern for the Roma women's plight. Instead, the actors insinuated that I should table certain theatrical "solutions" and implement them through gentle persuasion and consent. In an effort to convince me to submit, they disparaged the ways in which the Roma women took the lead in rehearsals and the directorial decisions the women made. They argued that the women asserted their authority in rehearsals in an autocratic manner that fostered an intimidating atmosphere in the studio, and inhibited creativity and productivity:

Magda: But I think that we can't blame them for telling us to do things like that... I think that they're telling us things this way because you're not showing things any differently. There is not much going on with your part... I think that you might be able to put more effort into your improvisations.

Maria: I think that things are this way because we are scared to do that... because we've stumbled... and it's hard to speak about creativity in...

Magda: ...stumbled?

Grazyna: Well, for instance, like when Derek didn't know about our previous conversations, and what isn't allowed in their culture... and that's why we're scared.

Olga: Each time I start doing a scene, I hear the women, "But be calm...be calm..."

Grazyna: I think that for us, it's also difficult work. (Transcript, Extra-Rehearsal [actors], *Hope*, 4/20/03)

The actors also complained that the texts the Roma women were developing were racist, as they degraded Polish people and culture:

Grazyna: I really didn't like the text when it was proposed at some point that mother says to her son that he should take a Polish woman, because he's leading such a Polish life style.⁸⁵

Derek: It was racist!

Grazyna: It was a bit hurtful.

Magda: I think that you can't take anything the women do and say personally...

Grazyna: ... yeah... I guess you have to take into account that their culture is constantly attacked from outside, and that they have adopted a similar tactic... they are attacking the culture that is attacking them.... and racism spawns racism, and doesn't give birth to freedom. (Ibid.)

Although Grazyna was making an effort to situate the women's actions in the larger context of Polish society's racism, the other actors were less forgiving, as they expressed their disapproval of Grazyna's remark through groans and facial admonishments.

Furthermore, the actors complained that the Roma women's directorial decisions were theatrically unappealing. They argued that the story the Roma women were developing, albeit of anthropological value, was dramatically uninteresting. In their view, this was the case because the Roma women focused on uneventful and prosaic aspects of everyday life, such as their "kitchen work," and on aspects of life, such as Dennis' infidelity to Nadzieja, that for the actors were not unique to Roma culture – or any culture – but were universal to all people and all cultures. The actors believed that the Roma women should instead portray their experiences of violence they had shared with us during our in-studio discussions. Thus, two things seemed to be at stake here. In their commitment to the Polish avant-garde theatre tradition that grapples with the drama of human existence, the actors sought to portray "the real problems" of the characters – the tragic moments of their lives – and not the prosaic world of the domestic. Moreover, in the spirit of the avant-garde's modernist fascination with "the exotic," the actors wanted to present the drama of the characters' lives with an exotic flavour, to satisfy their own, and the audience's, desire for uncovering, displaying, and viewing the world of "the other" as a curiosity:

Magda: What are your impressions of today's rehearsal?

Agnieszka: Their lives are interesting, and a lot could be done with the stories they're telling us, because that's how they live it.

Grazyna: Not for me... for me, what they were saying before was fascinating.

Olga: But now there is... it seems like they don't want to introduce illness... they don't want to introduce violence... they want show how they live everyday, and every couple of minutes they go out to the kitchen!

Derek: I think that showing a lot of that is not going to help them... if we're to help them in some sense with that play.

Grazyna: I think that they've stopped showing their lives, and started showing some kind of story that they're making up.

Derek: But not necessarily about themselves.

Grazyna: A history that doesn't really show... or has to do with any culture, but rather, is such a mosaic of everything.

Magda: What do you mean?

Grazyna: Things that are totally universal... and that's why it seems so monotonous... nothing really worth showing... there are such moments... there are such elements.

Olga: Well, not worth showing... it's like we were saying yesterday... Poles also leave abroad, don't get jobs, and come back to Poland.

Derek: And Polish women are being cheated on by their husbands.

Magda: I think that this is a problem that will always be a problem in such undertakings... that there are always conflicts between an artist... if that artist is an ethnographer, and the people with whom we work... as artists, and myself as an artist, we're always looking for... in a play, we're looking for drama... for something that is unusual, fascinating, aesthetically and textually. But life often isn't like that... life is often boring, monotonous, and relatively uneventful, and I think that in this story, there are very dramatic moments... when she's poisoning herself... when her child is being taken away... these are very dramatic moments. Those women are beaten and tortured, but they don't necessarily go crazy... they don't poison themselves... they often are in the kitchen, cooking and cleaning... and such despair... often there is no way out of such violence... there is nothing to do... nowhere to go... he leaves and he comes back... he leaves and he comes back... he leaves and he comes back... nothing really extraordinary happens... and ethnography really strives to capture that everyday life. When an artist's soul is protesting, "but nothing really is happening here," and I think that this is a challenge of working ethnographically with people, especially if you're also an artist. How do you marry the different interests? Is this process frustrating for you? How do you see it?

Grazyna: I think that in terms of gaining knowledge, from an anthropological perspective, this is interesting for sure... but the theatrical work... rehearsal work... the last two rehearsals were very frustrating for me. (Ibid.)

Thus, for the actors – who sought to portray the dramatic, and not the prosaic, aspects of Roma life – the extra-daily problems of the Roma, particularly certain forms of violence in their lives, became the very objects of their fascination with “the exotic.” In attempts to address the actors’ concerns, I inadvertently reiterated, to some extent, their perceptions that the Roma women’s stories were dramatically uninteresting and incapable of helping their life circumstances; and thus, constructed a problematic dichotomy of theatre as capable, and ethnography and the stories of the everyday as incapable, of capturing the dramatic moments of life, and speaking to hegemony.

The Roma women’s commitment to cultural verisimilitude – portraying things on stage in accord with the values, norms, and beliefs of their own social worlds – was also a source of the actors’ dissatisfaction. For example, they maintained that the women’s decision not to have Derek and Agnieszka perform while standing on the table compromised the performance theatrically:

Olga: That was such a nice moment... my favourite... so they took it out, just like that... there wasn’t much negotiation there... (sarcastically) because that’s not how things are among them. The whole theatrical effect is now lost... but that’s not their concern, obviously. (Ibid.)

The actors also censured what they perceived as “last minute changes” the Roma women were introducing into the script:

Olga: So far everything was fine, and now suddenly they’re changing the text they were fine with before... so we can only imagine what will happen two weeks before opening night! . . .

Magda: I think that the text they changed fits, and that often is the case when one is developing a new script... when we’re creating the text, we have to take into consideration changes... and this is a different process than working with a readymade script. I think that the words they changed are fine... but this is ethnographic theatre, and we have to respect what they want... we can’t create a play which doesn’t really speak to them... that is not about their lives... and especially not about what they want the play to be. My position here is that I’ll be taking into account all their suggestions.

The atmosphere in the studio is tense. I see that Olga is angry... she avoids looking at me. But I also feel frustrated that the actors are trying to coerce me into changing the script.

Shawn: I mean, it's interesting how sacred the table is to them... that they don't see it as being a theatrical device... they see it as something from the real world that can't be desecrated ... no matter what the stakes are.... they don't care if it's a theatrical device... they say no, you do not stand on the table... and what comes out of that is really interesting, because even if you explain it in terms of the loss of the theatrical moment... it's a really beautiful moment when Agnieszka stands up there... a really wonderful moment... but ethnographically, it's really quite interesting what's happened with the table... that it's become a sacred object!

Magda: So Agnieszka, what did you...

Agnieszka: what I was thinking was that for sure in terms of text there's nothing really wrong with... that they still want to change things, but I think that some moments... when they're asking me to stand and tell that story, that this might be difficult to show, and that maybe it would be difficult to show all with words, so maybe we could come to some kind of agreement how we show that... but also, would they like that... but maybe not changing everything into words, but also... but also doing something that the women would like. (Transcript, Extra-Rehearsal [actors], *Hope*, 5/01/03)

Additionally, the actors complained that the means by which the Roma women were developing the performance rendered the action theatrically dead, which in turn made it difficult for them as actors to find creative inspiration and to "feel emotions:"

Agnieszka: I think that right now we're working for them... and we're doing what they want, but later...

Magda: ...and Derek?

Derek: I think that a play has to first of all live, and I don't see much life here.

Magda: It's not really a play... it's a series of improvisations.

Derek: When we were doing improvisation for *Horses and Angels*, then we were already feeling something... feeling some emotions... but here, you're just sitting and spitting out that text! (Ibid., 4/20/03)

In the above excerpts, although the actors shared with me their concerns about the Roma women's artistic choices, they also tried to coerce me into agreeing with them that "we" should try to achieve "some kind of agreement" with the Roma women that would satisfy both the women's, and our needs. Yet, while their suggestion was couched in egalitarian terms – it insinuated the validity of both the women's and their own artistic agendas – the agreement the actors were proposing, in fact, rested on the problematic assumption that their vision of theatre was somehow more theatrically valid than that of the Roma women. The actors further confirmed this when they proceeded to refer to such an agreement as being a compromise:

Grazyna: At the beginning, I was wondering how we could do that, because it looked like there was interesting material, anthropologically, but I always thought that it was great material for a documentary... but I wasn't sure how we could do a play out of this. I thought that we'd be doing a play similar to the previous show... and really, my fears are coming true. How would you translate such a documentary style onto the stage? I think that it is one thing to show their life as monotonous, and another thing to bore the audience to death, because you can do that, too! I think that we have to be aware that when we are choosing materials for the play... how to represent it in a way that it neither offends the women ... not that we don't find it boring or against our expectations.

Magda: Do you think that such a balance is possible?

Derek: I think that yes... we'll be choosing it the way that...

Agnieszka: ...I think such a compromise is possible, because they were interested in the more theatrical modes of expression we were showing them... I think that they can't think and create theatrically... I think that they are creating things the way they see them... it is our role to show them how things could be done.

Maria: Even today they were asking us for input... I think that they are waiting for our suggestions, too. (Ibid.)

Thus, for the actors, such a compromise entailed "show[ing the women] how things could be done" because "they [couldn't] think and create theatrically." Clearly, "theatrically" here stood for "in the ways that we do it," which the actors had proclaimed as theatrical, and the women's as non-theatrical. Therefore, while such a compromise, as Grazyna asserted, was not meant to offend the Roma women, somehow one could not help but

suspect it was the women's – not the actors' – compromise that was being negotiated here.

My responses to the actors' attempts at persuading me to comply with their efforts at reaching a "compromise" with the Roma women were by no means straightforward. I found myself perpetually caught in the dilemma of "what to do" so as not to compromise my relationship with the Roma women or the actors. On the one hand, I wanted to ensure that the process allowed the Roma women to construct and represent their knowledge in ways meaningful and important to them. On the other hand, I was cognisant of the insidious power struggles that had been unfolding in rehearsals, of which both the Roma women and the actors were victims. While I was troubled by the actors' incessant derision of the Roma women, I was likewise disturbed by the Roma women's derogation of the actors for failing to meet their – at times – unattainable standards of perfection. Also concerned about the general good of the project, I wanted to avoid any major conflicts between the Roma women and the actors, which could see the collapse of the entire undertaking. Finally, it would be misleading of me to deny that the artist-in-me, committed for so many years to physical and experimental theatre, was partial to the actors' aesthetic concerns, no matter how hard the anthropologist-in-me tried to quell such tendencies. Thus, I found myself involved in a struggle between the anthropologist-in-me and the theatre-director-in-me, a struggle that was neither won nor lost. Hence, while I usually tried to "honour" my Faustian contract in ways cognisant of both the actors' and the Roma women's interests, there were times, however, when I clearly sided with one party more than with the other:

Magda: I think that we can maybe compromise, and that we can't represent something on stage that the women don't want us to show... like when the women were saying that it would humiliate them in front of other Roma if you were jumping on the table. But on the other hand, we also need to make sure that the play is interesting for the audience, so I think we have to find some kind of balance here... even if we think that we would have done some things differently. I'll work on putting the script together on the weekend, and I'll get it to you next week, and we'll work things out over that one week before we meet with the women... they're supposed to come the week after. How do you feel about this, Derek? You haven't said much so far... so how do you feel about it, because I feel like this could be most difficult for you, because they seem to be criticising you so much... can you handle it? Can you deal with it?

Derek: Well, no, but what I'm interested in is whether we're doing it for them, or if we're doing it for the audience that'll be coming here and watching it, because if we are not doing that for the audience, then it'll be....

Magda: ...we're making it with them [the Roma women]... so it'll be both for them and for the audience... and for us... it is a project that is being created together.... there are almost always problems in such collaborative works, because what we are seeing... what you are seeing, and what I'm seeing, are two different things... and what they are seeing is different... and what the audience will be expecting, that's also something different... so all those aspects we have to somehow come to agreement over. (Ibid., 5/01/03)

Here I tried to reconcile the Roma women's commitment to cultural verisimilitude with the actors' concern for creating a piece of theatre "interesting to the audience." Of course, what the above excerpt also makes apparent is that both the actors and I somehow assumed that what the Roma women wanted would not be of interest to the audience. And while the actors' aesthetic assumptions were valid, considering the popularity of avant-garde theatre in Poland, the Roma women's vision of theatre might have been equally appealing, given the widespread popularity of soap operas and television serials in the country. Thus, it was clearly a particular audience, one that could either validate or negate our reputation as theatre practitioners in the community, about which we were most concerned.

There were also times, however, when I complied with the actors' suggestions to sell our vision of the theatre to the Roma women:

Magda: I think that there's always that dilemma of how to merge together art and anthropology... how do you create a work of art with people who don't really think about art the same way as we do... and how to make their vision, which according to our ideas of art, has really nothing to do with art as we know it... into an artistic event. So how do we merge together anthropology and theatre... how to do a performance that is theatrically interesting, but is also in agreement with what the women wanted to say through that performance. And it is also interesting to keep in mind how our interests in this performance are different from the women's interests... and it will be really interesting how we arrive at that final vision. I think that maybe on Wednesday we can start talking to the women about expressive realism, and the possible stylisation of the play... they have mentioned already and pointed out the gestures they want us to use... like not too big... and stuff, so far. (Ibid., 4/13/03)

This was in fact what transpired. The actors and I introduced the Illustrative Performing Technique's stylised mode of acting to the Roma women by having the actors enact particular scenes, including the scene in which Dennis beats Nadzieja. Although the Roma women appreciated the impact this stylisation had on the scenes, and agreed to incorporate it, nevertheless, the fact was that we had imposed our ideal of theatre upon the women – an ideal which would have likely never been realised in this performance had we not introduced it to the women. And although this stylisation was not introduced against the women's wishes, it is difficult to speak here of an agreement reached on equal grounds. It was unlikely that the women would have refused our suggestion, as I, with my authority as a theatre director, ethnographer, and principle investigator of the project, had sanctioned it.

Finally, there were times when I refused to support the actors' agenda, and openly defended the Roma women's interests. I took this position, for instance, when I perceived that the actors' requests would compromise the collaborative spirit of the project (Ibid., 5/01/03). I also occupied this position when I believed that the actors might jeopardise the Roma women's position within their own community, as in the excerpt below:

Maria: I feel that these women don't really want to show violence.

Olga: For instance, when we were saying that maybe Nadzieja falls to the floor after Dennis hits her, Randia said, "No, no, no!"

Magda: Why do you think that this is the case?

Maria: I think that they're maybe not comfortable showing that... that their women suffer like that.

Olga: Or they'd say, "They're beating themselves like that among Poles, but not among Roma." . . .

Grazyna: I think that they're maybe afraid to show on stage what they experience in reality.

Magda: I also think that this maybe is the case because it's the beginning of their marriage... Dennis and Nadzieja's marriage. I think that it's a good observation. Maybe

we can ask them on Wednesday when they want to show more violence... physical violence. If they say that they don't want to, then we can guess why... but if they say that this is because this is the start of their marriage, then maybe there are two answers.

Olga: They might say that this is because it is the beginning of the marriage, but then they might still not want to do it.

Derek: Maybe we could act that out, and say that it looks better if she falls down to the floor.

Grazyna: No, I don't think that we could do that, because then it'll be more what Magda was saying ... there would then be that artificiality... what we're talking about... even though we know how they're treated... we can't show it if they don't want us to show it.

Agnieszka: Maybe we could simply ask them why they don't want to portray that violence on stage... is it because it didn't happen, or is it because they don't think that it will be appropriate to show to the audience?

Magda: So we can ask them... if you could remember to ask them why... and if they don't want to... because after all, it's a performance, and we don't want them to bear any unpleasant consequences... maybe they think that portraying violence like that onstage could have some serious consequences for them. We know, from their stories that this violence looked much different, and that it doesn't always end with some kind of slap on the cheek.

Olga: They were talking about something else... that as soon as a bruise would disappear, a new one would appear.

Magda: Maybe they just don't want to see that again... even if it's to be on stage... maybe they don't want to live through those experiences again. (Ibid., 5/13/03)

Finally, although I always acknowledged and tried to assuage the actors' concerns – for example, when they complained about the Roma women's mistreatment of them – I did not bring their grievances to the Roma women's attention, as I was afraid it might jeopardise both my relations with the women, and the women's enthusiasm for the project:

Magda: Olga?

Olga: Today I'm a bit shocked... actually that's not the first time!

Magda: Why?

Olga: The way Randia's treating us.

Magda: I have to say that I really can't guarantee that they'll be treating you better, and ... I don't know really what to say... you can either ignore it... I mean you did sign consent forms, and you can always resign from participating, and I wouldn't resent that... this is a project that is very difficult, and we are working with people who don't dress words with pretty flowers... they're often talking to us the way they're addressing themselves... either we can ignore it and laugh with them, or if it really bothers us, we can quit. I can't really say that I would come up to Randia and say, "Please don't talk to them like that," because very likely she will not know what I mean. I don't want any of you to leave, because we all started this project together, and I would like all of us to finish, but as an anthropologist bound by a code of ethics, I remind you that you are free to leave this project at anytime if you think that the situation is unbearable... if you don't think that this collaboration is possible... or you don't feel like doing it anymore... so I don't know... do any of you have any suggestions as to what we should do?

Agnieszka: I think that we're maybe taking this wrong... when Ewa was showing today Dennis how he should walk, I don't think that she was laughing at him... that he looked funny as a person... but that she saw him totally different as a Roma man.

Magda: But I think that Olga is talking here about something else... not just the movement, right.... but also...

Olga: ...I'm talking about everything... about something like "a pole"! It's not that I feel hurt, because I'm used to that, but sometimes you feel like you've had enough when someone says it the fifth time in a row, "No, they're so dumb that they'll never get it," and then I start believing that!

Magda: Well, I don't know... what do you think Olga? Would you be able to continue working with that, and ignore it, and continue doing what you're doing, knowing that you're doing a great job, no matter what they say?

Olga: Sure... okay. (Ibid., 5/01/03)

My refusal to address in concrete terms – although I did, in general terms, speak to the group about the importance of respecting each other's work – the Roma women's mistreatment of the actors, while it enabled me to maintain a camaraderie with the Roma women, it did not preserve the Roma women's enthusiasm for the project. On the contrary, even though my silence did not directly compromise my relationship with the actors, it helped weaken their morale, which in turn further exacerbated the tensions and

conflicts in the rehearsal room, and consequently, diminished the women's enthusiasm for the project.

Similarly, the Roma women, in our separate extra-rehearsal sessions, were negotiating their own Faustian contract with me, asking for my assistance in implementing their ideas in the rehearsal room. They suggested that I rewrite the script in such a way that Agnieszka and Grazyna had the majority of the text, and controlled the main action of the performance, as they were unsatisfied with the other actors' performances (Ibid., 4/20/03). As one option, the women proposed that Agnieszka's character Nadzieja would tell her life story, while the remaining characters would be mainly pawns in her storytelling (Ibid.). The women also asked me to assign Agnieszka as the principal dancer, and give Derek a minimal role, in the dance scene (Ibid., 4/23/03). Clearly, the women wanted me to write many of the actors out of the play.

I responded to the women's persuasive appeals in kind to how I responded to the actors' requests: I walked the centreline as I tried to balance both the Roma women's, and the actors', needs. Thus, as I did not feel that it would be fair to the actors to write any of them out of the script – considering the time and energy they had invested into developing their characters – I had Nadzieja narrating her life story to the audience as the actors enacted certain sequences of the narrative, and then entered tableaux when Nadzieja performed her monologues. This allowed me to remove or shorten the more contentious parts of the action, as well as have the actors recede into the shadows of stasis during Nadzieja's monologues (Ibid., 4/20/03).

For example, when Nadzieja welcomes the audience in her opening monologue, and invites them to partake in her life story (see appendix G, p.302); or when she tells the audience about her wedding and invites Dennis to dance with her the way they “did that day,” the other actors faded into the background and assumed tableaux. The Roma women provided me with ideas for both monologues during rehearsals, and for the second monologue, I incorporated the women's text, “Everyone had a good time at the wedding” (Ibid., 5/01/03; see appendix G, p.452). Similarly, while I did not cut out Derek's dancing completely, I stylised his movements so that they were minimalist and performed in slow motion, which to some extent permitted him to circumvent the women's standards of perfection.

To accommodate the women's suggestion to have Nadzieja narrate her life story, I decided to structure the text of the performance as a montage, where scenes unfolded in a non-linear fashion, and commenced or ended with the actors' tableaux. This montage effect was meant to reflect the achronological nature of memory, and also, to represent the "fragmenting" of Nadzieja's "psyche" as she encountered her schizophrenic delusions (Ibid., 4/22/03; 5/15/03). When the actors and I presented portions of the play in this non-linear style in rehearsal, the Roma women were pleased with the action's shifts between past and present (Ibid., 4/23/03). In the end, my decision to use montage served both the Roma women's agenda and the actors' concerns about the theatrical appeal of the performance.

However, while I strove to meet the needs of both camps, signing and executing the terms of such a contract was never straightforward. My Faustian contract with the Roma women and the actors put me in the precarious position of a juggler of power, where one wrong move could see the entire production, as well as my relations with both the actors and the Roma women, tumble to the floor. But my juggling of power, as tricky as it might have been, in the Foucauldian sense also had a productive dimension, because it revealed to me the insidious workings of power and domination that defines Roma and Gadjo interactions in present-day Poland. It may have been that both Roma and non-Roma were their own jugglers of power in a world that perpetually warned them to distrust each other, marked their encounters by exploitation, discrimination, and violence – and yet they had to coexist on a daily basis. Thus, the precariousness of "what to do," at which I often found myself clutching during this project, might have been all-too-familiar for many Roma and Poles alike, as they attempted to work out their mutual relations. Perhaps when the Roma women asserted that Ana was "good with Gadjos" (Fieldnotes 2003), they meant that she had mastered this juggling of power in ways that both served her interests and did not jeopardise her relationships with Gadjos and Roma.

In Response – *Hope*

Dramatis Personae

Performed by

| | |
|--|-----------|
| <i>Zafira (Mama)</i> | Olga |
| <i>Kalo (Papa)</i> | Shawn |
| <i>Nadzieja (Zafira and Kalo's daughter)</i> | Agnieszka |
| <i>Taisa (Nadzieja's older sister)</i> | Maria |
| <i>Dennis (Nadzieja's fiancée/husband)</i> | Derek |
| <i>Halina (Dennis's mother)</i> | Grazyna |
| <i>Zosia (Dennis's sister)</i> | Gosia |

Audience members enter from backstage and walk past Nadzieja's body lying on a pedestal. They are ushered to their seats, joining Nadzieja's "family members" – guests at her funeral – who are holding tea lights cupped in their hands. As family members recite their prayers, Nadzieja abruptly sits up, interrupts the "service," and begins to recount her life story with her relatives peopling her drama. She explains that she is/was a Roma woman, a character created by the Roma women of Elblag, some students, and an anthropologist. Her story begins to unfold, going back to her teenage years, when, as an ambitious young girl, she wanted to finish school. Then we learn that she was kidnapped by Dennis – a young Roma man from another town – and snatched away from the innocence of her childhood into marriage. "If only I were a dog, Mama!" – Nadzieja laments before recalling the violence of her married life. As her memories unfold, she struggles to stop the action of the spectacle – to stop the painful retelling of her life and return to the dead. Yet her memories unrelentingly drag her back into the action, playing themselves out for the entertainment of the guests. As she slips into schizophrenia, her memories and delusions become one – she befriends, and transforms into, a dog. Her journey ends in a psychiatric ward, where with the help of her canine companion, she escapes into freedom. (see appendices G, H, and J)

Hope was presented on May 31 and June 1, 2003 (see appendix A) at the Cultural Center for International Co-operation in the Arts, Elblag. Unlike with *Dance as I Play You*, and *Horses and Angels*, the Cultural Centre was now largely uninvolved in audience recruitment; and Shawn and I were responsible for most of the advertising. With nominal assistance from the Centre's public relations department, we placed public announcements for the two performances in Elblag's local newspapers, on local and regional news, and the Centre's website; posters printed up at the Centre were mainly distributed by students to schools and public spaces in the area. The performance was publicised as an ethnographic theatre event created in collaboration with Roma women from Elblag, and based on their lives. While admission to *Dance as I Play You*, and *Horses and Angels* was free, Shawn and I decided to charge an admission of eight zloty for *Hope* in an effort to raise money for the Roma women.

At the commencement of the performance, as was the case with the two previous projects, I read out the "Information Letter" regarding the audience's consent to participate in the research and have their responses recorded in fieldnotes and on videotape. Although Shawn and I did not conduct systematic audience research for this project, based on our observations and the Centre's ticket reservation list, I can roughly approximate that the attendees of the two performances were primarily participants' relatives, friends, and acquaintances, and a few members from the general public. No employees from the Cultural Centre attended the performance.

Although Shawn and I did not conduct any focussed audience response research, I did record the audience's and my responses to the performance in fieldnotes during the public presentation on May 31. I also managed to solicit some anecdotal responses of audience members immediately after, and in the weeks following, the public presentations of the performance on May 31 and June 1.

A Personal Glimpse

My observations and thoughts about the performance are reconstructed from my fieldnotes recorded both during, and a few hours following, the closing of the performance on May 31, 2003. Observations appear below in standard font, reflections, in italics.

The performance opens with Nadzieja's funeral. Audience members – invited guests to the funeral – enter upstage, walking past Nadzieja (Agnieszka) to their seats. Darkness befalls the theatre...only a dim amber spotlight illuminates Nadzieja's body lying lifeless on a pedestal covered with a white iridescent shroud. The amber light warmly washes over Nadzieja's face, and occasionally glints against the gold that adorns her ears and neck. The sombre lighting sets a tone of uncertainty, mystery... and of disquiet. Silence. Only the shuffling of the audience is discernible. I notice a faint blue light spilling out over the audience, making them appear surreal, dead, cold, distant. Six figures are already sitting in the audience: Kalo (Shawn), Zafira (Olga), Taisa (Maria), Zosia (Gosia), Dennis (Derek), and Halina (Grazyna). The characters cradle tea lights in their hands.

Nadzieja's dead body, awash in a mournful light, looks noble, mysterious and intriguing. I carefully watch the audience... what are they thinking? As I wait for the lighting technician to cue me to close the house doors, I think about the theatre space... a black box... the audience must penetrate the semi-darkness, cross it completely before finding a comfortable seat. But their comfort will soon give way to uneasiness, as Nadzieja will speak directly to them, questioning and confronting them. There will be no fourth wall. I look at Nadzieja again. She wears a white dress...a wedding dress? In Poland, a white dress carries numerous associations: purity, virginity, youth, beginnings, marriage. Here the white dress is death's accoutrement. Deceased young women in Poland are usually buried in white dresses to underscore the untimeliness of their deaths: "Your light had yet to shine brightly in this world, but now has been extinguished forevermore."⁸⁶ I grieve Nadzieja's untimely death... I grieve the Roma women's loss of hope for a better, more just world. Will the audience feel the same? Will they feel complicit in Nadzieja's death? More audience members walk past me... people of

different ages...there are some Roma already, not many though... why did so few of them come?

My son and mother come through the door. *What will he think of the performance? Once he asked, "Mama, why are all of your plays so sad?"*

Some audience members are looking closely at Nadzieja's face. Her hands are resting across her chest. *Do they understand that she is dead? It should be clear.*

As the audience members file past Nadzieja, they stare at the characters already seated in the audience. Some audience members seem uncomfortable... most opt to sit a few seats away from the characters. My mom is one of them. But then I hear my son telling her that she should not worry, as they are only actors. *Yes, only actors... and yet they can affect people in so many tangible ways. Perhaps therein lies the power of theatre... the ability to affect how others feel, think, act.*

The technician signals for me to close the doors. I then take my seat. The lights fade to black. Silence... darkness for a few brief seconds... *it feels like an eternity to me. I can hear my heart pounding ... claustrophobia sets in... I want to leave. I worry about the Roma women... how they will feel about their stories being "displayed" in front of an audience. I also worry about the audience's reactions... what will other Roma from the community think... will this performance bring any trouble to the Roma women?*

The theatre is close to capacity... but there are a few empty seats... why? Other shows I had done here always had full houses. Were the tickets too expensive? Maybe a play about the Roma was not interesting enough for the general public. My thoughts scatter as the amber light reappears, grows bright... Nadzieja is lying there on her pedestal.

The rising light slowly melts the darkness blanketing the audience. Kalo stands and says, "Let us rise, in honour of our sister. May she rest in peace, now and forever, Amen." Individually, Zafira, Taisa, Zosia, and Dennis repeat this prayer. After Dennis is finished, the words are repeated in rounds... a cascading chorus of mourning. The characters' faces are solemn and serious; the moment etched eternally into their skin... not sorrow, just impenetrable coldness and mystery. It is extremely hot in the theatre, yet the characters' incantations chill the air. People in the audience strain to look up at the characters, steal a glance, look away... someone smiles uncomfortably... another looks at

a fellow audience member... These next few minutes of text should firmly establish for the audience that a funeral is being enacted, presented...

Nadzieja suddenly jolts up, stiffly, head jerking towards the audience. She is assured... calm... determined...her voice strong. She greets the audience, and introduces herself as a Roma woman – a character invented by Roma women from “our town,” and by actors, and an anthropologist. She reveals that the event is an ethnographic theatre performance. Nadzieja welcomes the audience members, or “guests,” to her funeral.

Nadzieja’s address to her “guests” strains or breaks the illusion of the moment. For Brecht, breaking the illusion of the performance – by revealing “the mechanics of the backstage,” or by having actors directly address the audience – was politically driven, as he wanted to “shake the ground” beneath the spectators to engage them cerebrally, rather than emotionally, with the actions presented on the stage. Yet, Nadzieja’s shattering of the illusion is not meant to banish the audience’s empathy; on the contrary, Nadzieja wants her pain and sorrow to be palpable and real for the spectators. She looks directly into the spectators’ eyes... asserting that the performance is for them... that they are about to be implicated in what is to come. How does it make them feel? I shift in my seat as Nadzieja’s eyes connect with mine... her body moves forward... she notices my discomfort... but it shall pass as she welcomes us all:

Welcome, ladies and gentlemen...
Thank-you for coming...
Thank you so much!
Wait a minute... please don’t leave!
Really, there is nothing to be afraid of...
you’ll lay me to rest soon enough.
Relax, there’s no reason to fret...
I only wanted, before I take-leave,
To share a few words with you... about my life...

Nadzieja walks back to her pedestal, smooths out the shroud, obsessively, as if preparing a table for a special occasion. Her hands do not stop smoothing out the cloth... a little crease here, a wrinkle there...

The role of the audience now becomes crystal clear...we have been invited to a feast... a celebration of Nadzieja’s life. A white shroud/tablecloth covering the pedestal-table... as I grew up in a Catholic family, the Last Supper plunges into my stream of

thought... we, the audience, are Nadzieja's Apostles...or perhaps Judases...ready to flee and betray. But Nadzieja is not permitting us to flee just yet... her eyes twinkle with anticipation, determination. More images float through my mind. The table draped in white reminds me of saint days, or feast days... Christmas, Easter, and other significant family gatherings. I feel more at ease... Nadzieja has managed to distract me.

Nadzieja announces, "Let us begin!" Kalo and Taisa hand their tea lights over to audience members and walk down to the stage. Taisa walks upstage, grabs a broom, and stands in tableau. Kalo picks up a newspaper downstage, sits cross-legged on the floor, freezes. Nadzieja removes a book from underneath the table and begins reading it. There is stillness on the stage for a few brief moments, and then Kalo shatters the silence as he cracks open his paper. Simultaneously, Taisa swings her broom, and Nadzieja flips a page in her book. A moment of silence. Taisa chastises Nadzieja for not helping her with the household chores. The relationship between Nadzieja and Taisa is quickly established, as Taisa attempts to wield her authority over her sister... Nadzieja resists, continues to read.

I think of ten year-old Marta, Zefiryňa's daughter. Marta once wanted to buy a book about animals, but nobody had the money for it. She is not doing well at school... next fall she will be placed in a special-ed school, so "it won't matter anymore," as Randia always says. For whom? Randia? Marta? Her teachers? Society?

Kalo reprimands Nadzieja, urges her to help Taisa... annoyed, Nadzieja throws her book and pencil down, walks over to Taisa and grabs the broom from her... angrily sweeps. Zafira leaves her candle with an audience member. She walks over to the table, kneels down... her body and face are tired, resigned, frustrated. Kalo asks, "Why are you so angry?" Yet, he does not expect an answer... he already knows. *I know, too. I have seen Zafira's face in the faces of so many Roma women I've worked with.*

She has just returned from her doctor, who prescribed her pills she cannot afford. The exchanges between Zafira and Kalo are strained... angry... but Zafira's anger eventually gives way to resignation once again. Her body relaxes, and collapses under the weight of her life.

"God, you look like you've melted into the chair!" Zefiryňa would sometimes exclaim after her mother Randia returned from a full day of fortune telling. Yet Randia

would remain silent...her body sunken into the chair with exhaustion, pain, frustration, and shame.

Kalo sends his daughters out fortune telling to help pay for their mother's medications... Zafira protests... does not want her daughters standing for hours on the streets with little chance of making any money. She accuses Kalo of exploiting the girls, and of not contributing to the household's finances.

Kalo remains calm, and justifies his failings: trading is not very lucrative these days, as nobody is interested in buying things... and there is no employment available. Perhaps the women wanted to portray Kalo as gentle to highlight the shifting dynamics of economic and gender relations within the Roma household... or maybe they did not want to offend any Roma men within the community.

Nadzieja and Taisa return from fortune telling. Taisa storms in, agitated... she proclaims that she will never go fortune telling again. Nadzieja, matter-of-factly, offers Zafira a handful of money, and explains that someone has just insulted Taisa in the streets. Not much more is said... nobody addresses Taisa's frustration, because after all, what is there to say?

I feel uneasy. I remember once walking with a friend from the Lyceum past a group of Roma women... he looked at them and called out, "Cretins!" I said nothing... I was guilty in my silence. I look around at the audience...

Zafira decides that the money her daughters earned will pay for food, and her pension will cover the cost of her medications. But Nadzieja will not get new books for school... who could think about books when there is no bread on the table.

Nadzieja's command rings out, "Enough!" She momentarily stops the action of the play.

Now she is holding the strings in her hands... yet, this is only a performance... when it's over, what then? Who holds the strings outside of the theatre?

The characters are all in tableau. Nadzieja walks over to her mother. Something has changed with her... she seems mysterious, earnest. Her stylised movements are precise and careful. She looks up at her mother who is lifeless, with a handful of money stretched out before her. Nadzieja gently touches her mother and tells her, with such vigour in her voice (*I shudder*), had she been given another chance at life, she would

come back as a dog... at least then she would be fed in the mornings, cuddled, and taken for walks.

Why does Nadzieja yearn to be a dog? The Polish vernacular is full of references to dogs: it's a dog's life; things are going to the dogs; I'm feeling under the dog today; what a dog day; someone's hanging dogs on you (someone's speaking badly of you); am I a dog?! (used when someone feels excluded); stop dogging me (stop harassing me); and many others. Many expressions with references to dogs are negative. Yet, the Roma women idealise the lives of dogs... in reality, dogs lead less than ideal lives in Poland. Countless unwanted dogs wander the streets, starving, diseased, abused. Why does Nadzieja aspire to be a dog? I like this metaphor... its tensions... ambiguities. I look at the audience. They look pensive...

This part of the performance is significant. Nadzieja begins to oscillate between reality and illusion, freedom and bondage, health and infirmity. Nadzieja's physicality slowly morphs into that of a dog... only a trace at the moment, but then, I know what is to soon follow.

Nadzieja looks at the audience... her voice is calm but firm... her body shifts and twists as she agonisingly recollects the day that would profoundly change the course of her life. Her speech hastens as she tells the audience about the day when some people "...walked into my life ... and settled there for good." Nadzieja glares at the audience, holds our unconditional attention. Halina and Zosia leave their candles behind... walk to downstage centre, backs toward the audience.

Nadzieja has reluctantly invited them... but they really come on their own volition... the summons was merely obligatory... what do they want? What has happened to Nadzieja? Are the shadows of her life consuming her story? Asserting their will upon her? As Nadzieja's descent/ascent into mental illness progresses, her control over the flow of events on the stage slowly loosens... the strings are slowly slipping from her hands.

The guests, Halina and Zosia, are now seated at the table, discussing Nadzieja's life. Halina asks Zafira and Kalo for Nadzieja's hand in marriage to their son Dennis. Kalo and Zafira are uncertain... they are worried that Nadzieja is too young. Nadzieja interjects, "I don't want to... my husband's still growing up."

Someone in the audience whispers, "At such a young age...it must be horrible!"

Dennis comes down from the audience, and is introduced by Zosia and Halina... Dennis assures everyone that if Nadzieja is a good wife, their life together will be happy. "No!" Nadzieja cries out, timidly, but convincingly. Halina and Zosia relent for the moment, and Halina suggests that they all share a friendly drink of vodka.

Does the audience sense the foreboding of the moment... do they trust Halina? Halina's intentions are not entirely social... her voice, her body betrays her... and Zosia shifts uncomfortably.

Everyone is seated at the table.... Halina sends Dennis out for vodka. Nadzieja stops the action again. She has reasserted her power over the action... and will tell us her story on her own terms... everyone enters tableau... that is exactly what Nadzieja wants... for everyone to stand stone-dead... powerless... pathetic... like marionettes... to stand helpless as they had forced her to live her life. Nadzieja walks slowly over to Dennis... she struggles to recall what happened next, as she stares out at the audience... she carefully leads Dennis upstage, who obeys her like a dog. Nadzieja is confident ... her gestures are once again assured, calm... but there is a sarcastic edge to her voice, as she tries to recall the events to come.

But this is all a farce... a put-on... she remembers exactly how everything should go... it's all sleight-of-hand, to trick the characters into playing her game... but in the end, she will show her hand. Nadzieja's little "trick" never occurred to me when we were developing the play.

Nadzieja starts to speak, nonchalant, as though describing yesterday's weather. She talks about Dennis leaving, about her and Zosia going to the store. Her tone abruptly shifts... her voice is harsh, accusing, unravelling. And her physicality... her gestures are tenser, rigid, as she talks about Dennis's "cold hands on [her] heart" – his kidnapping of her... she is resisting her own memories now. "Mama, I don't want to! Mama, where were you when I...?" screams Nadzieja.

Past and present are fused together in these two sentences. The former, an echo from her past, the latter, an entreaty to her mother, her family, the audience, the world, to confront the past and the present... and while the past shapes the present... the present also shapes the past: how we remember it... how we speak of it... how we forget it.

In the next scene, Nadzieja's life is being sold over the kitchen table. Halina, Zafira and Kalo sit at the table, talking about "trade" in the area... they suddenly notice that Nadzieja, Dennis, and Zosia have not returned yet. Halina knows why... she sits at the table uneasily... yet the audience members do not seem to suspect anything.

"Mama, I don't want to!" shouts Nadzieja.

Sadness overcomes me, as I know that little can be done.

Nadzieja snaps out of her reverie, takes Zosia by the hand and violently pulls her over to the table... Nadzieja is now angry... forceful... fierce. It is as though she wants to scream out, "This is what happened to me! Look, I was snatched away like this... just like this!" as she wrenches Zosia over to the table. She stands there beside Zosia, waiting for her to admit to everyone what has just happened. "Dennis kidnapped Nadzieja." Zosia reluctantly admits. A flicker of vengeance is in Nadzieja's eyes.

The play's linear flow is shattered... we are no longer gathered at the kitchen table in Nadzieja's house. She takes us now to another place, where only she and her little dog reside. "Once I saw a dog," begins Nadzieja. The pitiful story of a little puppy unfolds. Nadzieja witnesses a man brutally beating the dog... "Urrr!" yelps Nadzieja. She runs downstage... crouches down... extends her hands toward the emptiness before her. She caresses her imagined friend... hugs it... consoles it. "Shhhh."

I study her empty hands... I am filled with sorrow... her hands are also the hands of the Roma women I know, stretched out in supplication toward the future. I feel hopeless... there is so little that I can do. Then an uneasiness overcomes me... but the Roma women do not want the audience to be paralysed by hopelessness... the audience is to feel their hopelessness, but also to leave the theatre with a strong resolve to take action...to push for things to change. Then I relax... perhaps it's just me... Nadzieja's voice snaps me out of my daze as she calls to the dog, "Come back girl... come back!"

Nadzieja asks her father, "What happened then, Papa?" "The love of god!" Kalo responds, burying his face into his hands. Halina, Zafira, and Kalo discuss what has just happened, and what is yet to come: "They ran off, so now they'll stay together for good," throws in Halina. She assures Kalo and Zafira that if Nadzieja is obedient to Dennis and her in-laws, she will be happy in her marriage.

“They ran off...” but that’s not how it really happened. There was no mutual consent... and this is what Nadzieja emphatically asserts numerous times... she did not want to be married off. Ana was also kidnapped by her husband, then raped, and forced to marry him.

Dennis steps out of his tableau, approaches Nadzieja and smiles. Taking her hand, he walks her over to the table where everyone sits in absolute stillness. Nadzieja kisses the hands of Kalo, Halina, and Zafira. Zafira embraces her and cries. As Dennis stoops down to kiss his father-in-law’s hand, Kalo pulls away... Dennis kisses his mother’s hand... Zafira also turns her back on Dennis.

I look over at the Roma women. It’s the first time I can see them so clearly, as the lights are at their brightest now. Many of them are smiling... I know they like this scene. “The best part of a marriage is the wedding!” Ana once asserted. The women wanted the audience to see that Roma can dance and celebrate despite their poverty... and that, as hopeless as their lives are, they are not to be pitied... they want compassion, understanding, and help, but not pity! But does the wedding scene “read” like this? Not to me. I watch Dennis and Nadzieja kiss their elders’ hands... Zafira bind the hands of the bride and groom with her red headscarf... and finally, Nadzieja and Dennis slowly dance “Roma style,” as the women call it... but for me, this dance does not speak of the community’s integrity and splendour... instead, I see the dance as a dance of injustice... a dance, which subjugates women to men. Nadzieja and Dennis move gracefully around one another, but there is no passion... only the carefully choreographed movements of two people who have nothing in common. Nadzieja’s parents sit despondent, as do Halina and Zosia... perhaps they know what will follow... how could they not know... after all, “No Roma girl’s life is a river of milk and honey,” as Nelka once asserted.

Before Nadzieja invites Dennis to dance “like we did that day,” she asks the audience whether they find her life compelling. “Not too boring... but not exotic enough.” She then offers:

Well then, how about some music...
Someone once said that the Gypsy culture
makes our country beautiful!

Nadzieja claps, signalling the technician to play a Roma song.

I look back at the audience... someone laughs...others sit expressionless... some watch intently.

Nadzieja slowly loses her focus... tension mounts in her body... all of a sudden she trips, yelps pitifully... the characters freeze.

Nadzieja slides into her world of delusion again... not willingly...it is a world that now imposes itself upon her... she loses control... as does Ana when she is experiencing a nervous attack, "something snaps in you and... suddenly, you're not responsible for your own actions," Ana had told me.

Nadzieja stoops down towards the floor... notices the dog... alarmed by the dog's presence, she checks its snout. "It's better now, right? Doesn't hurt anymore?" Nadzieja's eyes brighten. *What a contrast to the wedding scene. But Nadzieja seems content... is she "losing control" then?*

Nadzieja looks over at Dennis who is standing, uncomfortable in his immobility... one leg suspended... she reproaches him for hating the dog. *Really for hating her... he hates her... her desire to be free... detests the stench of freedom that lingers long after "that bitch" leaves the room. Nadzieja's lips tighten, fists clench... she hates him, too*

"Attention everyone... I would like to ask my daughter-in-law to sing something for us," Halina calls out. Nadzieja sings the song she and Dennis danced to at their wedding... in the song, the Roma are dancing, the world swirling beneath their feet. While she sings, her body is static... lifeless... Nadzieja stares into space, above the heads of the audience.

Suddenly, total darkness. Unfamiliar voices shout: "The Gypsies are having a party! Thieves! Take your fuckin' party into the woods!"

The blackout is extremely effective... audience members shift, whisper... I feel claustrophobic but the dark void punctuates the poignancy of this scene. Much of the violence Roma experience happens at night... many of the Roma women I know fear nights... the anonymity of darkness. I look at the audience...who are the perpetrators now?

The lights return, revealing the characters in tableaux. Props are scattered across the stage... the pedestal propped on-end against the wall. Zafira sits in the middle of the stage, white tablecloth in hand, red headscarf staining the cloth. Kalo is lying upon the

floor downstage, arms and legs splayed out... his body impossibly contorted, twisted in agony... mouth agape. Dennis stands, resting his head against the pedestal. Taisa stands by the wall, a pot in her hand. Halina and Zosia are huddled together in a corner. Nadzieja is transfixed by the destruction. Silence.

Nadzieja's voice is filled with such unspeakable emptiness... she describes the aftermath... her father has a fractured skull and shattered jaw. The police doubly victimise the Roma, side with the hooligans. She straightens up... the hollowness in her voice disappears as she asks her father to sing with her about freedom. "He never stopped singing, no, he's been singing until today about freedom," Nadzieja reflects. They sing the same Roma song together.

The song talks of freedom... I've heard numerous Roma songs that mention freedom... a freedom for which many of them struggle.

Dennis comes up to Nadzieja, asks her to come home with him... she refuses... doesn't want to go... doesn't want to remember what happens next. Nadzieja proclaims she can no longer remember anything, but Dennis pulls her back... her memory pulls her back... the shadows of her memory refuse to leave her alone. Nadzieja looks ill... she is shaking, has lost control of the events she had been recounting. Protesting, she begs to be buried... to be left alone. Fleeing, she hauls the pedestal away from the wall, jumps onto it... but too late... other characters immobilise her, forcing her hands across her chest. Nadzieja is shivering... but she does not struggle... only resignation... she stares blankly, while the characters discuss her "condition."

Dennis picks Nadzieja up, carries her upstage... places her down on the floor. Halina comes over and readjusts her: "Yes... you always sat here... never saying a word... like this... good." Zosia and Halina curse Nadzieja's dog, and then Halina asks, "What then, Nadzieja?" Nadzieja rises up onto her knees, staring at the ground... shuffles downstage on her knees. She addresses the dog, notices it has been beaten again... its snout is cut. Nadzieja hears the dog tell her that it is pregnant, and that it never wants to return to its Master. Nadzieja swears that the dog will never have to go back... that it can stay with her.

Who will listen to Nadzieja...to her sorrow? Who will care? No surprise the Roma women envy their dogs.

Dennis comes back home after a long absence. Nadzieja defiantly declares she is leaving him... tells him she is pregnant. Halina intervenes and attempts to convince Nadzieja to stay with Dennis, as “the child needs a mother and father.”

I look over at the Roma women. Randia smiles knowingly. I imagine it probably feels as though they were watching their own lives play out before them. The Roma women tell me that Roma men often use the children to blackmail their wives to stay with them.

Nadzieja tells Halina that she has seen Dennis with another woman. “Shut your mouth!” Dennis screams, as he grabs her, white with rage, and throws her to the ground. Holding her by the hair, Dennis hits Nadzieja in the face three times.

I hold my son close to me, covering his eyes and ears... there are parts of the play that he just shouldn't see. I can't imagine the pain or fear Nadzieja feels... tears blur my eyes... I recall many of the stories the women had told me with tears tumbling down their faces... I discretely look over at Randia... she is not watching the scene... Randia's father had strung her mother up by a rope until she nearly asphyxiated. I feel guilty for showing the women what they likely want to forget. Is it my place to unearth such pain? Even with their consent... their full participation?

Nadzieja submits... her body goes limp, swings from side to side.

I worry that scenes like this will get the Roma women into trouble... that their husbands will be affronted by such portrayals. I wish the performance was over. I steal a glimpse of my watch... still another thirty minutes... I cannot bear to look at the audience. My son reprimands me... asks me to be quiet.

Dennis drops Nadzieja and leaves... everyone freezes... Zafira comes over to Nadzieja and assures her daughter that she is going home. Zafira stretches her hand out towards her daughter, just as Nadzieja, earlier on in the play, had reached out for the dog. Nadzieja looks up at her mother shyly... carefully... distrusting... she picks herself up and walks on all fours over to her mother... she curls up into her mother's arms, panting, whimpering... Zafira rocks Nadzieja, comforts her: “You won't go back to him, never.”

The silence in the theatre is impenetrable... the air thick and oppressively hot...nobody moves. A Roma woman in the audience shakes her head... I do not

recognise her... she continues shaking her head throughout the entire scene. I do not know what it means... approval? disapproval? She makes me feel uneasy.

Nadzieja lies there, nearly immobile... her eyes look up at her mother, pleading... she is panting.

The Roma women sometimes talk about their “nervous attacks” in positive terms... while experiencing an attack, they are permitted to do more... to act like they want to act. Nelka claims that when she is experiencing a “nervous attack,” she is allowed to dress more like a Polish woman... and this helps her to “get things done around the city,” because she looks like everyone else. What freedom do Nadzieja’s delusions give her?

Dennis and Halina walk over to Nadzieja and Zafira... Dennis demands that Nadzieja return home... Zafira refuses, and chastises Halina for breaking her vow given at the wedding, that Nadzieja would have a good life in marriage. Nadzieja, with a sudden change of heart, flatly announces, “Dennis promised me he’ll change... that this’ll never happen again. I’ll go...”

Yet, Nadzieja’s dog didn’t return to its Master. But as humans, we are engaged in a more complex tangle of social relations that limit our choices. Zefiryna once described her mother’s relationship with her father: “My mother would always return to him... he’d beat her, and she’d return... he’d beat her, and she’d return... it was like that until he died... I don’t know why... I guess she loved him... or maybe, she had no choice.”

Dennis announces his plans of going abroad with Nadzieja... he invites everyone to join them. Nadzieja says goodbye to her dog... she cannot take her, but feels guilty... the dog doesn’t want her to leave either... she cries... then the dog leaves... Nadzieja, overcome by sorrow, screams at the dog, “Then go... go now!” Leaving the dog behind, she abandons any hope for escape... for a better life... with Dennis she can only be his object.

And then they all return, destitute... bitter. They try to convince themselves that “everything will be fine.”

This scene has played out for most of the Roma women. They have attempted to immigrate countless times, only to return... eternally denied asylum... perpetually losing

their life-savings. Ana admits that since they have returned from Finland, they are still paying off their debt...and have nowhere to live.

We are now in Nadzieja and Dennis's bedroom. Dennis returns home in the middle of the night, drunk. He lies down beside her, shoves her to the side, insulting her... Nadzieja protests. Dennis grabs her by the hair, and cuffs her in the face... throwing her to the ground, he kicks her mercilessly...then storms off. Nadzieja lies motionless on the ground. The characters remain in tableau. After a few moments, Nadzieja awakens... growls... then notices the dog standing beside her... trying to console her... Nadzieja apologises to the dog for leaving... the dog tells her it did not return to its Master. "Smart dog!" Nadzieja praises. She now knows what she must do... her body grows determined... strength returns... Nadzieja huddles with the dog, enters tableau.

Halina and Dennis break the stillness. Halina tells Dennis that Nadzieja has left him... yet he insists that she cannot leave him, as they are going to have a child. Halina no longer listens to him... she knows what is to come.

"Quickly, where's the rag!" Nadzieja screams. Everyone else enters tableau. Nadzieja moves the pedestal centre stage, one end facing the audience. She straddles the pedestal... her dog goes into labour... the scene is chaotic... Nadzieja desperately works to deliver the puppies... her movements are frantic.

It is Nadzieja who is in labour... will the audience know that? We had to alter the scene upon the Roma women's request, because as Basia asserted, "A Roma woman cannot talk about giving birth in public... it's shameful!" Why is it inappropriate to portray a woman's labour, but all right to represent a man brutalising a woman? For me Nadzieja is giving birth... giving birth to her hope in freedom... a better life... as she bears down upon her death pedestal...

The dog loses consciousness... Nadzieja begs it not to die... not to leave her alone... she doesn't want to lose hope... she will hold onto it to the end... sobbing, she cups some water in her hands, pours it over the dog's face... in utter dejection, Nadzieja drives her fists into the puddle before her... water and tears become one.

A powerful moment... painful... I feel Nadzieja's desperation... I look at the Roma women... they look grave... the spectators sit petrified. I feel helpless... I know so much

about the women's lives... about their sorrows... but there is also so much that I don't know.

The puppies are born... Nadzieja collapses, remains still.

We learn from Zafira that Nadzieja has given birth to twins... she apologises that the twins could not be with us, as they are mourning the death of their mother. This is the first time, since the beginning of the performance that someone, other than Nadzieja, refers to her death. Nadzieja's second death is soon approaching.

Zosia and Taisa, now as twins, ask if their mother will ever return. "Never... she'll never return," Kalo admits. The children call for the dog to come... maybe along with the dog their mother will return... the children comprehend what the adults cannot.

Shifting backwards in time, momentarily, Nadzieja calls for her children to come in for dinner... there is no response... Nadzieja panics, calls out their names again... then runs over to Kalo and Halina, screams, "Mama, Papa... the children... the children are gone!" Dennis has kidnapped them, but things are quickly resolved when the police return the twins to Nadzieja. "Forgive us, Nadzieja," pleads Zosia. Halina joins Zosia, "Forgive us..." Nadzieja goes blank... she walks upstage, takes the broom and pushes it mechanically along the floor... weaving in and out of the characters, and around the pedestal, slowly gaining momentum. Zafira and Taisa ask the doctor about Nadzieja's unusual behaviour. Kalo, as the doctor, wants Nadzieja to be committed for psychiatric evaluation... Zosia, now a nurse, swiftly grabs Nadzieja's broom, stops her.... Nadzieja does not fight.

This might be what Nadzieja wants... Ewa admits that when she is in the hospital, having an attack, she is happy... even if she died "it would be fine with her."

Nadzieja is left alone in the hospital. She sits up like a dog begging for scraps... her arms hang in front of her... she is panting... *her descent is complete... or should I call it her "ascent."*

Dennis comes up to her. Nadzieja instinctively cowers. "Now everything will be different... you'll get better... you'll see," Dennis insists. Dennis inches closer, reaches out to stroke her hair. Nadzieja growls viciously, throws herself onto him, burying her teeth into his stomach... tearing at him... Dennis cannot break free. The characters, now nurses and doctors, rush over to Nadzieja... tear her away from Dennis. Zafira forces

Nadzieja down onto the floor... Nadzieja does not resist... closes her eyes. The white shroud/tablecloth that originally covered the pedestal is bound around her like a straight jacket... she is left lying on the floor... everybody backs away, extending their hands towards Nadzieja, enter tableau.

Nadzieja opens her eyes... remains still... bound. She is content. She calls for the dog. It approaches her. Nadzieja asks the dog to go over to the next room and bring her some pills from the night table. Nadzieja is calm, but there is an earnestness in her voice. The dog brings her the pills and places them into her mouth... fetches her some water... Nadzieja swallows the pills...says goodbye to the dog... kisses it... slowly, her body releases, her eyes open. Everyone remains in tableau.

Music gently breaks the silence as the lights fall: "I close my eyes... the leaves fall... as I fall silent, silence befalls the world."

Has Nadzieja really killed herself? If the dog is only a product of her delusions, then how does she kill herself? Is her death real... or only imagined? Regardless of interpretation, I do not feel much hope for Nadzieja...but is this what the Roma women wanted?

Complete darkness. Uncomfortable silence, then applause. The actors break their tableaux, and leave. The applause gently swells, then washes away.

I'm relieved it's over, although I'll have to face the Roma women, their families, audience members. What will they say? What will I say?

"That was very sad, Mama!"

A response.

A Wider View

Following the public presentations of *Hope* – May 31-June 1, 2003 – at the Cultural Centre for International Co-operation in the Arts in Elblag, I sought out responses from audience members, the Roma women, and the actors, through post-performance, informal group, and individual discussions. While I originally wanted to hold formal post-performance talk-back sessions (focus groups), the Roma women strongly objected, as they feared that close, personal encounters with the public – in such politically charged contexts – might put them at risk of insults, threats, or even physical violence. Consequently, we decided that the best way to solicit opinions from audience members would be to do so on a very informal basis by approaching individuals casually – particularly friends and acquaintances – either right after, or in the days following, the performances (Fieldnotes 2003).

After the first public presentation of *Hope* on May 31, the Roma women, actors, and I managed to talk to a significant number of audience members. As in the cases of *Dance as I Play You*, and *Horses and Angels*, people once again predominantly talked about the performance as a theatre event. Those who did discuss the performance's content primarily spoke of the performance as a representation of Roma folklore and culture. Only a few people talked about the performance in terms of racism and gender inequality as they pertained to Roma women and Roma as an ethnic group.

The group discussions mainly included the Roma women, their relatives (Ewa's husband Antek, Randia's son Robert, and his non-Roma wife Kamila), some actors (Agnieszka, Maria, Gosia, Olga and Grazyna), two of my friends, and Shawn and me. The audience members who participated in these discussions were women and men in their twenties and thirties. The relatives of the Roma women were mainly interested in discussing the degrees to which the actors had succeeded in faithfully representing Roma on stage. For the most part, they praised the actors' performances, and they were particularly impressed with Shawn's and Grazyna's representations of Roma. According to Ewa's husband Antek, Shawn's performance was very truthful in regards to his portrayal of both Roma men's speech patterns and physical mannerisms. Antek particularly appreciated Shawn's performance because he recognised that Polish was not

Shawn's native tongue, and because it would be very difficult for a Canadian to perform a Roma man. In his view, Roma men had their own distinct ways of being that would be difficult for a foreign Gadjó to imitate.

Randia's son and his wife commended Grazyna for her "Roma look" and physicality. Had they not known that Grazyna was non-Roma, they argued, they would have thought I hired a Roma actress for the part. According to them, in addition to her Roma-like appearance, Grazyna was also very sympathetic – while acting – toward the other Roma characters on the stage. They also praised Agnieszka for her theatrically strong performance. While they admitted that she was not as successful as Grazyna in capturing "the Roma way of being," she was nevertheless very convincing and emotionally compelling.

All the Roma to whom I spoke complimented me on the ability to facilitate a collaboration between Roma and Poles, because, they maintained, such undertakings were rare in Poland given the antagonisms between non-Roma and Roma. The Roma women's relatives also bemoaned the lack of support from the local Roma community, as only a few Roma, aside from them, had come to see *Hope*. However, the Roma women themselves maintained that they were not surprised by such dismal attendance. "No one would really care to come out and see the play... it's nothing to them," explained Randia. According to the women, the other Roma in the community were either ambivalent toward the project, or did not attend because they were bitter about not participating. Yet, the women stressed they did not "feel sorry" for them, because most women in the community were invited to partake in the project, but turned down the opportunity. However, the women also admitted that they did not take any extraordinary measures to invite other Roma to the show, because they knew "no one would come anyway."⁸⁷ According to Randia and Basia, it was probably "for the best" that only a few Roma attended *Hope*, because "who knows what people would [have] be[en] saying behind [their] backs about [it]."

While the Roma eagerly discussed the performance as a theatre event, particularly the actors' portrayal of Roma, they avoided addressing the specific questions and problems the performance had raised. Randia's son and his wife were the only ones

to point out that *Hope* effectively portrayed the problems and struggles facing Roma today in Poland.

Two of my friends, who were part of this group discussion, praised the performance for its acting and direction. They were impressed with Grazyna's and Shawn's "truthful" portrayals of Roma, and with Agnieszka's compelling physical performance and emotional commitment to her character Nadzieja. Moreover, they found the narrative structure of the play, in which Nadzieja was narrating her life story, and the characters were continuously moving in and out of tableaux, to adroitly deal with the issues of violence and mental illness. Finally, they argued that "ethnic" performances like *Hope*, which were long overdue in Poland, were important for people to see in order to learn about and understand other cultures, traditions, and customs. One friend alleged that by watching *Hope*, he had personally learnt a significant amount about Roma tradition, particularly in terms of marriage and kinship. Another friend admitted that she had previously known very little about Roma culture, and that the performance made her aware of both its uniqueness, and its similarity to Polish culture in terms of its respect for the elders, celebration of the family, and the mother figure.

The actors also mentioned that the play had taught them a lot about Roma culture and customs – a culture "[they] lived next door to but knew so little about." Furthermore, they claimed that the performance development process had been valuable to them in terms of actor training, and gaining experience in collaborative theatre work – still relatively unique in Poland. The actors fretted that after Shawn and I returned to Canada, they would have no opportunities to work on such projects. The Roma women shared the actors' sentiments, and agreed that the "process was fun," and provided them with the opportunity to introduce their culture and customs to Polish audiences. They also stressed that my departure to Canada would have a great impact on their lives, as I was "such a true friend to them."

Thus, while the Roma women, their relatives, the actors, and my friends talked about *Hope* primarily in terms of its theatrical merit, and/or as a study of Roma folklore/culture, they skirted – almost entirely – the play's treatment of such issues as inequality, racism, and violence. I did not broach any of these issues because, on the one hand, I did not want to discuss anything the Roma women were not comfortable

discussing, and, on the other hand, I did not want to sabotage the positive interactions unfolding between the Roma and my friends.

I also talked about *Hope* with another group of friends, and some other audience members. The age range of this group of men and women was from early-twenties to seventies. The discussion once again centred largely on the performance as a theatre event. There was a general consensus that the performance was dramatically compelling. While some friends praised the acting of the entire cast, others commented that only Grazyna and Shawn ably represented Roma. Everyone appreciated the narrative structure of the play and employment of tableaux, and the symbolic multi-use of the pedestal as deathbed, wedding table, and birthing bed.

However, some audience members also spoke about *Hope's* content. Although generally they agreed with the play's message that Roma women were victims of racism and sexism, they explained the oppression of Roma women in a variety of ways. Some conceptualised the disadvantaged position Roma women occupied in society in terms of the "inadequacies of their own culture." One person argued that Roma culture was very traditional, insular, and reluctant to "open itself up" to the larger Polish society, and ultimately, progress. In her view, if Roma had been more willing to assimilate into Polish society, there would have been less prejudice against them. She also pointed out that the oppression of Roma women was the direct result of their own culture's radical chauvinism that had little to do with Polish society at large. Another person suggested that Roma women's situation was tragic because they had not managed to "escape the cage of their own culture," mainly due to their lack of education. Indeed the Roma's lack of education was singled out by the majority as a direct cause of Roma women's disadvantaged position in society. Two people concurred, if Roma had been more interested in obtaining an education, both Roma men and women would have enjoyed happier lives. Others noted that the difficulties that Roma experienced in present day Poland could not be explained in terms of racism, simply because there was no racism against Roma in Poland. One person suggested that *Hope* was portraying Poles in a bad light, which he attributed to my alleged ignorance of Poland's postsocialist reality. Someone even suggested that I had been brainwashed by Roma to believe that Poles were to blame for the Roma's misfortunes. Due to my ignorance of the current situation in

Poland, he continued, I could be easily influenced by anyone. Had it been a Polish researcher doing this project, the Roma would not have been able to dupe them into doing a play that vilified Polish people for the advancement of Roma. In a similar manner, someone suggested that Roma led a good life in Poland, but ungratefully spread false accusations of Poles-as-racist to the international community, when in fact, this so-called discrimination they claimed to suffer was their own doing. In this person's view, the fate of Roma women was so grim because Roma held backward ideas about marriage, which kept women enslaved to men.

Another sentiment, shared by at least two people, was that *Hope* was really about Poland's socialist past when the disadvantaged situation of Roma had been caused by the communist government's – as opposed to the Polish people's – attempts at erasing all cultural difference to create a homogenous “worker's state.” Presently, according to these audience members, the situation of Roma in the country was radically different, because Poland's democratic government was now overly tolerant towards Roma, “letting them get away with murder,” which in turn had led to the demoralisation of their culture, and an increase in Roma crime rates. One person suggested that I should have clearly established at the beginning of the performance that the play's action was set during communist rule, so people would not be leaving the theatre thinking that the play reflected how Roma currently lived in the country.

One woman asked me what I thought about the situation of Roma in Poland today. When I responded that racism against Roma was prevalent, she suggested that I should talk to Polish ethnologists and sociologists to get a more unbiased view of life in Poland. One man, however, agreed with me that there indeed was racism against Roma in Poland, and maintained that things would likely not change in the near future because Poland lagged behind other European countries in terms of human rights. He blamed Poland's monoculture, which fuelled a pervasive fear of difference.

After the performance of *Hope* on June 1, I managed to talk to four Lyceum friends who had come to see the performance. They were generally impressed with the quality of the performance in terms of direction and acting, although they also criticised some of the actors' performances as “not very natural.” Two friends, very “moved” by the performance, wanted to know more about my collaboration with the Roma women.

They thought that collaborations like this were necessary, as they could affect how people – particularly those involved in the project – thought about Roma; whereas the performance itself – they argued – could not drastically alter audiences’ perceptions of Roma. One could only bring about a change in society’s prejudices by involving a greater amount of people as actors and writers in such collaborative processes. Yet, two other friends admitted that they had learnt a lot about the situation of Roma women just by watching the performance as audience members. They would leave the theatre, they argued, pondering the unfavourable situation of Roma women, discriminated against both on the basis of race by Polish society, and on the basis of gender by their own culture. They suggested I should have called the play *No Exit*, which – despite its blatant Sartrean reference – would poignantly describe the impossible circumstances in which Roma women lived. According to them, there was no easy way out for Roma women from their oppression, because disobeying the chauvinist rules of their own culture could get them expelled from their community, and leave them as outcasts in a society that rejects them.

I also engaged in further discussions, and conducted informal interviews, with some audience members, the Roma women, and the actors within a week after *Hope* closed. An overwhelming majority of audience members again commented on the theatrical aspects of the performance. Some, however, did address the performance’s content. There were those who spoke positively about the performance, and were sympathetic toward Roma:

Comment 1: It’s important for a show like *Hope* to be shown in a city like Elblag... a place where the unemployment rate is one of the highest in the country... and this creates more prejudice against Roma who are being blamed for Elblag’s economic troubles.⁸⁸

Comment 2: I’ve often seen Roma being insulted on the streets... falsely accused of stealing in the stores. Maybe your performance could have dealt more with that kind of violence... that Roma experience from Poles... and maybe there should’ve been less focus on the Roma’s domestic violence... focussing on this could further perpetuate stereotypes of Roma as violent, abusive, and morally deviant.

Comment 3: I’ve always known there’s been prejudice against Roma in Poland... and here [Elblag] as well... but after watching the show, I realise how terribly disadvantaged they are. And the show has also really made me think that they... especially the women... are humans like us, struggling to survive day-by-day... and there’s so little support from the government. Before your show, these [Roma] women were only some

strange ladies standing on the streets, desperately trying to tell people's fortune. I felt pity for them, but I didn't think about them as having real families... children... and problems like many of us deal with.

Comment 4: Now I'm going to for sure have a Roma woman tell my fortune, so I support her work.

Comment 5: I didn't necessarily agree with many of the things in the show... but I'm really happy that I got to see it, because it made me think about the situation of Roma in Poland... and about Roma culture.

Comment 6: *Hope* is very important... it has brought Roma culture to the forefront for Polish people... whatever Poles know about Roma culture is from their grandparents... and they told stories about Roma Caravans, going through town... and how Poles were forced to hide all their precious belongings, as well as their children, from the Roma passing through. Right now there's not much interest in Roma culture... and they're sentenced to be locked up in ghettos like in Prague. The play is a reminder that Roma people are indeed alive, and living as a part of Polish culture.

There were audience members who admitted that although the performance made them realise that Roma, in many ways, were "people like us," they still did not want to closely associate with Roma. This was primarily the case, they argued, because "Roma really hate Poles, and they could hurt or rob [them]" as revenge for the bad treatment they received from Poles. According to these audience members, only "trained professionals," such as priests, ethnologists, folklorists, social workers, or psychologists should be "dealing with Roma" who "...must be suffering from emotional problems from all those years of discrimination."

Others were blatantly negative about the performance and accused it of being "biased" against Poles. They either blamed Roma tradition, culture, and customs for Roma's suffering, or outright denied that Roma suffered at all. Some even accused Roma of "hiding their wealth" and making money "the dirty way:"

Comment 7: I agree with the theme of the play... that it's very difficult for Roma in Poland. There's definitely some prejudice against them in Poland... especially in a small city like Elblag. But they also isolate themselves... because their culture is so backward, they're isolated from Poles. If they assimilated better... if they renounced some of their outdated customs, there'd be more tolerance towards them from Poles.

Comment 8: They [the Roma] have hard lives... it's from their poor attitudes towards education. As a teacher I've seen Roma parents... many times, they simply don't care if their children go to school... and then they don't get them help when they start failing. Because they don't care to get an education to better their lives, they can't get jobs. If they were educated more, they could get rid of some of their old customs... like wearing old-fashioned clothing... things like that would make them fit into Polish society better.

Comment 9: I really feel sorry for the Roma women... but that violence is not really our [Poles'] problem... it's an internal problem. Such chauvinist treatment of women doesn't surprise me in a culture that came from India... and like other Asian cultures, they have a radically patriarchal nature.

Comment 10: One problem with your show is that some Poles will walk out thinking you're accusing them for the violence the Roma women suffered.

Comment 11: I know the situation of those women [Roma] is horrible... but in many ways, it's their own fault... they're like many Asian women who are submissive to their men, and not willing to get an education to gain freedom. Polish women would never put up with such abuse from men.

Comment 12: You should have shown the Roma's unwillingness to get a formal education... and the submissiveness of their women... if you had done that, then the women working on your project might have better realised how to solve their own problems.

Comment 13: Your play could be used to teach the Roma about how they could better their lives.

Comment 14: I think that some things were wrongly presented [in the play]. Life for Roma people in Poland is great... they make their money "the dirty way"... like theft and dirty trading. A lot of Roma from Northern Poland own a lot of extravagant houses in Southern Poland... they live here in poor apartments, so they don't show off their wealth, because they fear retaliation. They travel to their villas in the summer holidays, basking there in the sun and partying all day.

Comment 15: While some Roma hide their wealth and pretend to be poor, to "suck" yet more money from the government, others show off their dirty wealth in people's faces... and then you have things happen like in Mława... although I'm appalled by that kind of violence... that's not how we should deal with the Roma problem. There are Roma who are really poor... but their situation isn't different from the many Poles who are also poor, and live in similar conditions... you can't simply blame one's poverty on the fact that you're Roma, because many Poles don't have enough money to put a piece of bread in their mouths.

Comment 16: I think that your performance was really biased... you only presented the Roma point of view... to be more objective, you should have also inserted a Polish point of view. I'm not saying that the Roma point of view is worse, but it's different... people

need to know both sides of the story. Your research might not be so truthful... many of the things you show aren't objective... to do good research you have to work with Polish scholars, rather than taking for granted what the Roma say... they'll never tell you the truth, because they're trying to come out looking like victims of Polish intolerance.

Finally, I also participated in an interesting conversation about *Hope* that involved a man (in his sixties) and a woman (in her twenties) at the Cultural Centre. While the man was less sympathetic toward the plight of Roma and accused them of being passive victims, the woman countered the man's opinions with examples of Roma's resistance toward Polish racism:

Man: That play is only perpetuating how Roma see themselves as victims of Polish racism. I'm frustrated that the Roma used your play to propagate this view. There's really not much racism against Roma in Poland... and if there is any, then they shouldn't just accept it... they should fight back, and show with their hard work and brave spirit that those attitudes are wrong. There was a lot of racism against Poles in the Second World War from the Germans... but Poles never gave up. They weren't merely complaining about being victims... instead of complaining, they mobilised and fought against the Germans. But Roma... instead, they complain... they should get together and speak against any cases of racism they experience... they certainly have an easier job to do than Poles did during the war... or when Poland was under partition with the Russians, Prussians and Austrians.

Woman: But there're a lot of more incidents of racism against Roma than we think... and with such little support they get in their fights against racism in Polish society, they have done so much to fight it. They have organized amazingly... different Roma organisations are fighting for Roma rights in Poland. But it might be more difficult for the Roma women to organise themselves to fight racism and sexism... they don't have the same power in society like Roma men do... and they're also oppressed in their own culture

Man: Well sure it's more difficult for the women to fight for equality... but I don't agree that Roma men are well organized to combat racism. All I hear on the television and the radio is the Roma complaining about being victims of Polish racism... but I don't actually hear about them doing anything about it.

Woman: Well the complaining Roma do on television is actually a form of doing something against racism.

Man: That's not fighting... you have to show people what one has done to combat racism.

When I spoke to the Roma women, they all concurred that they had enjoyed working on the project. First of all, the project had been an opportunity for them to attend to their immediate needs, such as earning some extra income:

Randia: It was better for me to come to rehearsal than stand there, on the streets, trying to fortune tell, and be humiliated... yelled at. When I came to the theatre, nothing else interested me. I came out with some money in my pocket. At least we had bread for supper... but now it's over, and this won't be anymore.

Zefiryna: You know, at first I didn't want to come, but then my mom convinced me... it was so much fun, and it helped financially, because it's hard for us to make money like that.

Ana: Forty zlote doesn't walk around on the streets by itself... it's always more than you have... it'll be hard without it now, but we'll have to manage.

Second, the women maintained that the project had offered them an opportunity to get away from their homes – never-ending chores, children, husbands – and have some “fun” in the rehearsal room with other Roma women, an opportunity that, outside of holidays such as Easter and Christmas, rarely happened. But even at such family gatherings, Ana pointed out, they normally did not have much free time to socialise, as they were always busy preparing food and cleaning up:

Ana: When I got away from this house of mine, I could breathe... and we also laughed so much... it was fun. We never get together like that... only at holidays... but then we cook and clean... can't really sit down much... but here I was like a Queen, getting served cookies.

Ewa: I live far away, so this was great... no one ever visits me... but then we were all together and without the kids... now I won't see everyone like this probably 'til Christmas.

The women also valued working on *Hope* because they had been given a chance to tell young Polish people about their lives. This was an important opportunity, they

argued, because Poles needed to hear about Roma from Roma, and not from Gadjo sources that often portrayed Roma in a negative light:

Ewa: We could tell people the real truth... what our lives are like... really truly how they are, because no one believes when we tell them... but people need to hear from Roma about how we live and how we are treated, not from the government or the television, or they'll never hear a good word about us.

The Roma women's impressions about the actual performance were also very positive. They believed that we had all done a "good job," both in terms of acting, and the story we created:

Randia: It was very nice how it turned out... they [the actors] did a great job. When I was sitting there and watching it, I was thinking, that's the way we live... that's how Gypsy women live... and then I thought, my God, how hard it is to live like that! And to think that most of my life is already behind me.

Ana: The play told the whole story about... the true story about how we live. Some live better... and some live worse... but such is our Gypsy life. Ask any Gypsy and they'll tell you. The actors did very well, especially Grazyna and Agnieszka... and Shawn. The costumes looked good. I really liked it.

Some of the women mentioned that other Roma from the community who had seen *Hope* enjoyed it, and thought the performance truthfully represented Roma life. On the other hand, the Roma women had not heard any opinions about the play from non-Roma audience members, outside of our conversations immediately following the performance on May 31.

However, when I asked the women what impact they thought the performance might have on their lives in the future, they unanimously responded "none." They argued that even if some people, after seeing the performance, changed their opinions about Roma and became more tolerant of them, this would not bring any significant changes to their lives, because a couple of people could not change "how everyone thinks about us and treats us:"

Randia: Nothing will change for us here, Magda. What can a play like that do? Maybe if it was a film, and more people saw it... but even then, what people want to think, they'll think.

Zefiryna: Never in a million years would a play like that change something. They'll come see the play, and then tomorrow call us Gypsies... and thieves. Don't hope for too much!

The women's opinions, however, were somewhat divided in terms of what impact they thought my dissertation could have on their lives. Randia and Basia thought that my "book" might, if published abroad, bring people's attention to the racism that Roma in Poland endured, and perhaps generate some response from the international community:

Randia: When you write that book, I'll tell you, no one will read it here, because they don't care... but maybe there in Canada people will read it and finally see what our lives are like, and maybe they'll start talking about it... and slowly things will start changing. But we... me... I won't live long enough to see it.

Basia: Magda, I don't know, maybe your book... when people start reading it, and telling others about it... maybe someone will come to see how we live here... like dogs... all that racism against us... but if it's going to help us, I don't know, maybe.

Ana, Zefiryna, and Ewa on the other hand, did not believe that my "book" would bring about any significant changes into their lives. Ana insisted that "no one [would] read the book anyway" in Canada, and even if they did, people would not worry about some Gypsies "at the other end of the world." Zefiryna pointed out that even if my book was widely read, it would probably be dismissed on the grounds that "some Roma had written it," and that it was not objective enough. Ewa thought that no matter where my book was read, it would not alter the lives of Roma in Poland: even if it managed to change a few people's perceptions of Roma, it would not be enough to bring about any significant changes.

The women also regretted that I was leaving them, because they had grown accustomed to my constant presence:

Randia: Magda, I'm so worried that when you leave, that I'll miss you so much. You were like... like family to us. Every day you were here with us... and now you'll be gone... as if someone died. You won't probably feel that way, because you'll be gone... and busy. You have to write me... or call me... you won't forget us, will you?

Zefiryna: You have a good trip, but I'll think of you, because we got so used to you here... now you'll leave us... probably never hear from you again.

Ewa: Make sure you write me. I'll miss you. If there ever was an opportunity, maybe you could bring us to Canada. It'll feel so empty here without you... but what else can I say... we'll miss you.

The actors also spoke about the rehearsal process in very positive terms. In general, they said they had learnt a lot about the lives of Roma, and about acting and doing collaborative theatre. Agnieszka, Maria, and Gosia were particularly appreciative that they had learnt about the workings of racism and sexism, had come to “appreciate the Roma women more as people,” and were now more accepting of difference. For Maria, the project had inspired her to fight intolerance and racism in her own community. Agnieszka promised that in her future work as an artist, she would speak out against the oppression and suffering of underprivileged people.

All the actors were grateful for the opportunity to work in a collaborative creation. However, they conceded that our collaborative work had been very challenging, particularly in reconciling the participants' disparate ideas of what theatre should be, what it should say, and to whom it should speak. The actors found it very difficult to negotiate their notion of theatre as the symbolic representation of ideas with the Roma women's idea of theatre as a soap opera, where “nothing [was] left to the imagination.” Yet they also admitted that, to a certain extent, they had found this meeting of disparate ideas very useful, as it taught them to value and respect the opinions of others:

Maria: For me... yes it was difficult, because they [the Roma women] were seeing things so differently than we did... and at times it was frustrating, because I was thinking, “What kind of theatre are we doing here?” But then I also learned that other ways of seeing, and wanting to make theatre, are also okay... and that we can learn from that, too.

Agnieszka: The women saw things differently, sure, but in the end, they... it was harder for us to accept what they wanted, because they were very good... very accepting... it was our problem, not theirs.

When I asked the actors whether they thought the performance would change anything in the lives of the Roma women, they were largely sceptical. Although they all agreed that it could definitely change some people's opinions about Roma, they thought – like the Roma women – that much more would have to be done before people's beliefs, on a broader level, would alter:

Gosia: Well, maybe a few people will think about it... how they've been treating the Roma... and maybe they'll be more tolerant of them, but on a larger scale, no. It would have to be something bigger.... something that more people would pay attention to.

Agnieszka believed that had the play been performed in more venues nationally, there might have been a more systemic impact on people's attitudes toward Roma throughout Poland, which in turn might have brought more positive changes for them. At the same time, however, she recognised that more exposure nationally could also have had negative repercussions, as there certainly would be those who would find the content of the performance offensive. The actors felt that the performance was generally well received in Elblag, and that some audience members were sympathetic toward the plight of Roma, recognising that racism against Roma in Poland was real.

Since returning to Canada in mid-June of 2003, I have been in regular telephone contact with the Roma women, and also corresponded with two of the actors – in addition to my family and friends – over the phone and via email. They all asserted that discussions about *Hope* continued in Elblag, even two years after the performances. The Roma women told me that although they frequently talked among themselves about the project, and reminisced how fun it was, their lives remained unchanged, as well as people's attitudes toward them. They encountered the actors occasionally, mainly when fortune telling, and the actors were always very friendly with them and enthusiastic to talk. Although such encounters, the women argued, did not have any material impact on

their lives, nevertheless, they enjoyed their conversations with the actors. The women also mentioned that they spoke to some of my family members regularly. One family member had even forged a friendship with one Roma woman from Elblag. They often sat and talked in a park together about the increasing hardships of living in Poland.

While the women claimed that *Hope* had not, in any significant ways, changed their situation, they added that life had become even more difficult for them since Poland joined the European Union, particularly due to excessive inflation and the privatisation of healthcare. They could not afford to buy basic medications, or pay for certain medical procedures no longer covered by the government health plan.

What was also evident from my phone conversations with the Roma women was that, in some ways, my project had a somewhat negative impact on their lives. Randia stressed that she felt lonely and abandoned, as I no longer accompanied her with running errands. According to Randia, other Roma women shared her sentiment.

Two of the actors to whom I have regularly spoken – Agnieszka and Maria – told me that the project had a tremendous impact on their lives. As a result of their participation in *Hope*, they maintained, they were committed to combating racism and sexism, mainly by trying to engage people in discussions about the tolerance of difference. Both Maria and Agnieszka asserted that they kept in touch with the Roma women, and tried to visit them occasionally at their fortune telling spot. Agnieszka had even arranged to take some of the women's children out for a walk and help them with their schoolwork. The actors also argued that as a result of working on *Hope* they were now more sensitive to injustice. Maria claimed that she now had a more profound respect for Roma and other marginalised groups in Poland.

Both Maria and Agnieszka did not believe that *Hope* had significantly changed the lives of the Roma women. Maria claimed that some audience members had radically changed their attitudes toward Roma, and began perceiving them with greater respect and understanding. It was usually the older people, the actors maintained, that were more reluctant to engage in critical discussions about Roma and racism.

Some of my friends and relatives stated that the play had changed their attitudes toward Roma:

Relative: I've become more accepting of Roma... less afraid of them... I've begun noticing the injustice they suffer everyday in Poland.

Friend: About half a year after you [Magda] left for Canada, I was in a grocery store... and I noticed the clerk accusing a Roma boy of trying to steal a banana... but the boy claimed he was just looking at the banana to find the price [fruit is often individually priced]. Before I saw your show, I would've bought into that whole scenario, that the Roma boy really did steal something... but with that boy, I thought twice about it... so I asked people in the store if they'd actually seen the boy steal the banana, but nobody could confirm this. So I said to everyone, "If nobody saw him steal, then he shouldn't get accused of doing it!" The whole thing was dropped, and the boy was allowed to go home.

A few months after I left Poland, some Romanian Roma appeared in Elblag. Some of my family members organized a clothing and food drive in their apartment blocks to help them. They admitted that prior to seeing *Hope*, they would have never thought of helping Roma in such terms.

Epilogue

In the summer of 2005, I visited Elblag for two months. I met with Randia, Zefiryňa, Basia, and Minka. Ana had immigrated to Holland with her entire family; Nelka, Zefiryňa, Minka, and Ewa were all planning to join her shortly. Nelka had suffered a heart attack, and her husband Sebastian died in early 2005 from heart failure. Nelka and Ana's mother, Agata, had died in a diabetes-induced coma in 2005 when she was visiting a daughter in eastern Poland. Marek had separated from Zefiryňa, and was currently living with his new Roma wife abroad. Zefiryňa's daughter, Marta, had quit school in the past year. Ewa had given birth to her fourth son in fall 2004, and, according to Randia, her nervous attacks worsened. Randia claimed that nothing worth noting had happened in her life since 2003. She was not interested in immigrating to Holland, because Elblag was her home, and she needed to tend her mother's grave (Fieldnotes 2005).

Memories of our project *Hope* were barely alive among the women. Although many of them assured me that they missed it, they never initiated discussions about it. When I asked Randia to share her thoughts on the project, she admitted that working on *Hope* had been "nice" because it was a source of extra income. But she qualified that she would not want to participate in a similar project in the future, as working with the Polish students had been difficult. Zefiryňa asserted that *Hope* had not changed their lives (Fieldnotes 2005).

Throughout my stay in Elblag, I was unable to spend much time with the Roma women, as most of them were busy caring for a terminally-ill Roma woman I had never met. A month later, the woman passed away. I learned of her death shortly before I left for Canada, when I accidentally met Randia in a store. She apologized for not inviting me to the funeral, but explained she had forgotten that I was in Elblag. She also asserted that "this time parting'll be easier" because she "didn't have enough time to get used to [me] being around as much" (Fieldnotes 2005).

Although Shawn and I tried to contact the actors, we managed only to speak with Olga, Grazyna, and Maria. Shawn ran into Olga and Grazyna while walking to the park. They were both now students of Cultural Studies at the University of Poznan. Shawn and

I met Maria at a student theatre performance at the Cultural Centre. She was now attending Lyceum, and was no longer involved in either theatre or activism. She told me that Agnieszka was currently working with a physical theatre troupe in Gdansk, but that she was not in touch with any of the other actors. In the theatre, Maria sat in the row ahead of Shawn and me, and as the house lights faded, she flipped open her cell phone, and nimbly typed out with one thumb one text message after another. An eerie blue glow from her phone was illuminating her face... she was heedless of the actors on the stage... I watched her face in that strange light... it had only been two years, but I barely recognised her.

Recently I have spoken on the phone from Canada with Tomek's brother and Tadzio. Tomek was currently fulfilling his mandatory service with the Polish army. Tadzio admitted that he was very disturbed by his experiences in *Dance As I Play You*. Some of the actors still harangued him for compromising the success of the play due to his alleged incompetence as an actor. While Tadzio wondered why the ensemble had rejected him, he suspected that his age might have been a factor. Although he was still active in the arts, he admitted that because of his experiences in *Dance as I Play You*, he no longer participated in theatre programs in Elblag,

Conclusion – In Leaving

This dissertation is a “thick description” of my ethnographic journey in postsocialist Poland between May 2001 and June 2003. I began by setting out my histories, interests, assumptions, theoretical frameworks, research plans, objectives, and methodologies with which I entered the research field. I outlined the main theoretical and artistic influences on my conceptualisation and practice of ethnographic theatre, and discussed the blueprint for ethnographic theatre performance I developed in my Master of Fine Arts Thesis and Graduating Project. After discussing my encounters with violence in socialist Poland, and central arguments and debates in the study of postsocialism that influenced my decision to study violence committed against Roma women in Poland, I focused on my pilot research in Poland in the summer of 2001. I recounted my search for a research community, and how I originally arrived at a decision to conduct research with the Romanian Roma women in Morag. I also provided an overview of my assumptions about what constituted and promoted violence against the Roma women of Morag, and the plans and objectives I developed for my Ph.D. project after my pilot research.

My discussion of my Ph.D. research, conducted in 2002-2003, began with an overview of the circumstances that ended my plans of working with the Romanian Roma women of Morag, and how I subsequently decided to work with the Roma women in Elblag. I also provided a brief history and my personal recollections of Elblag, described present-day settings of the city, and my professional engagement with the Cultural Centre for International Cooperation in Elblag.

I followed with a detailed account of my Ph.D. research project, which involved the development, and public presentations, of the three ethnographic theatre performances: *Dance as I Play You*, and *Horses and Angels*, developed in collaboration with student actors from Elblag’s Cultural Centre; and *Hope*, created with five Roma women from Elblag, and actors from the Cultural Centre. I recounted all the stages of the performances’ development process: negotiating collaboration with the actors and building rapport with the Roma women; my participant observation, informal conversations, and recording of interviews and life stories/histories with the Roma

women in *Hope*; pre-rehearsal sessions; rehearsals; public performances; and participant and audience responses.

In the account of *Dance as I Play You*, I discussed the central aspects of, and insights gained from, the entire research process. I began by retelling the ways in which the actors talked about racism and intolerance in the pre-rehearsal sessions. I argued that the pre-rehearsal sessions played a role in encouraging social critique and action. For example, the group setting of our in-studio discussions permitted the actors to re-evaluate their taken-for-granted beliefs about racism and intolerance against the views of others. As well, the pre-rehearsal discussions extended beyond the theatre walls as the actors engaged in a dialogue with their peers about issues raised in the studio. I also examined my complicated position of “expert” in the studio, which, to a large extent, compromised our collaboration.

In recounting the rehearsal stage, I examined the ways in which the students developed the physical text of the performance. I delineated between improvisations created through in-group discussions, and improvisations developed more spontaneously with minimal preparation time. Offering some “readings” of the various scenarios improvised, I drew from Gramsci’s and Foucault’s notions of power, as well as feminist critiques of Foucault. Moreover, I discussed the ways in which various factors – the immediate contexts of the performance, and practical/technical considerations – shaped our decision-making in this stage of the research process.

I also argued that exploring racism and intolerance in physical terms – particularly through spontaneous improvisations – invited the actors, Shawn, and me to imagine, in more tangible ways, racism as a multitude of concrete violent and discriminatory practices and actions. This constituted “sensuous scholarship:” a way of doing research that involves the research participants and the ethnographer more tangibly, sensuously, and empathetically, in the construction of ethnographic knowledge. Such “sensuous scholarship,” I argued, facilitated a more dialogical – in the Bakhtinian sense – negotiation of “truth” by circumventing, to a certain extent, our binary thinking. This, in turn, invites a more complex interpretation of the actions developed that challenges the active oppressor/passive oppressed dichotomy.

In my discussion of the power relations that defined our mutual interactions, and the roles Shawn and I assumed in the rehearsal process, I primarily focussed on the tensions and antagonisms that arose between the ensemble, Tadzio, and Tomek, and suggested that such power struggles need to be understood in terms of the goals the students set out for the project. I also emphasised that the power struggles that unfolded in rehearsals also shaped, in significant ways, the interactions and relationships between the students, Shawn, and me. The students were continuously redefining and reconstructing their relationships with Shawn and me in ways that served their various ends. Shawn and I, on the other hand, negotiated our roles as facilitators and directors/dramaturgs in the rehearsal room in ways that both conciliated the students' agendas and mediated the power struggles that took place in the studio. This ultimately served our own goal of preventing power struggles from jeopardising the project. Unequal relations of power, I pointed out, also framed my interactions with Shawn, as it was my Ph.D. research project, and I ultimately bore the greatest amount of authority in rehearsals.

Finally, I provided some solicited responses from participants, audience members, and Cultural Centre employees to the public presentation of *Dance as I Play You* on December 14, 2002, and in the weeks following the performance. I pointed out that people primarily commented on the theatrical aspects of the performance, and avoided discussions about the performance's thematic content. I argued that *Dance as I Play You* continued to shape the power dynamics within our theatre ensemble for several months to come, leading to the eventual resignation of Tadzio from the ensemble.

My account of *Horses and Angels* commenced with a discussion of the actors' views on gender inequality expressed in the pre-rehearsal sessions. Further, I argued that the pre-rehearsal sessions – as in *Dance as I Play You* – facilitated social critique and action. The exchange of knowledge during our in-group discussions allowed the actors to critically re-evaluate their taken-for-granted beliefs about gender inequality in Poland. Our pre-rehearsal sessions also extended beyond the studio, as the actors engaged their peers and family members in discussions about the issues explored by the project. I argued, through examining the relations of power that defined our mutual interactions and our roles in the pre-rehearsal sessions, that the fallout from *Dance as I Play You*

challenged my role as “expert.” It also compromised the relationships between the actors, particularly between the women and Derek.

My discussion of the rehearsal stage included a description of how we developed the physical and spoken texts of the performance, and the performance’s design. I stressed that the actors preferred to discuss “issues” rather than improvise actions, which I attributed to their lack of experience working with the body as a means of theatrical expression.

Furthermore, one of my chief arguments – as in the account of *Dance as I Play You* – was that the rehearsals, despite the actors’ reliance on speech, constituted “sensuous scholarship,” as the actors and I were involved in concrete, tangible, and empathic ways in the construction of ethnographic knowledge. Such a “sensuous scholarship,” I once again pointed out, challenged our binary understandings and constructions of ethnographic knowledge, inviting a more nuanced interpretation.

I also discussed the ways in which various factors shaped our decision making in rehearsals, and how we negotiated our relationships and roles in the studio. For example, as the performance was to compete in a national festival, I was compelled to assume the roles of dramaturg/director. I did this to accommodate the actors’ goals, which included ensuring the performance’s success in the festival; and to accommodate my intent of maintaining good relations with both the actors and the directors of the Cultural Centre, relations central to the future realisation of my final project *Hope*. Moreover, in rehearsals – given the growing pressures of the upcoming competition – “baggage” from the previous project, as well as gender-defined divisions, further eroded the relationships between the female students and Derek.

I closed the account of *Horses and Angels* with a discussion of both audience members’ and my responses to the public presentation at the *Festival of the Art of the Word: Is that Love?* on March 21, 2003, at the Cultural Center. I also provided responses solicited from the actors and various audience members in the weeks and months following the public presentation. I argued that the most concrete effects of the performance were apparent in the responses of the Cultural Centre’s directors to *Horses and Angels*’ failure to win at the festival: their withdrawal of financial support for the Roma project, dismissal of Shawn as a theatre instructor, and refusal to extend my

contract past September 2003. Finally, I pointed out that the play encouraged some of the actors and audience members to engage people outside of the project in critical discussions about gender inequality in Poland long after the performance.

My account of *Hope* included a “thick description” of the performance development process. I began by discussing the initial building of rapport with the Roma women of Elblag; learning about the women’s lives through participant observation, informal conversations, interviews and life stories/histories; and joint pre-rehearsal sessions with the Roma women and the actors. I described the forms of violence as experienced by the Roma women, their coping strategies, and their expressions of hope. Reflecting on this stage of the research project, I argued that the power relations that defined our interactions were made apparent in the disparate ways in which the Roma women spoke about their experiences of violence. In their interviews and life histories/stories, and sometimes in the pre-rehearsal sessions and informal conversations, the women talked about violence in their lives with a sense of hopelessness. However, in the pre-rehearsal sessions, the women were more inclined to speak about the various strategies – such as dressing like Polish women – they used to cope with everyday hardships which, to a certain extent, echoed the sentiments of hope I had heard and witnessed during my participant observation of their lives. I suggested that such disparities could be attributed to the various ends the Roma women were negotiating for themselves through my research, and to the audiences they envisioned for their stories. I also pointed out that in this stage of the research, when everyone still adhered to our project etiquette, antagonisms in the studio were minimal. The only noteworthy tension that arose between the Roma women and the actors was when Olga blamed the Poles’ hatred of Roma on their “difference.”

Further, I focussed on the separate pre-rehearsal sessions with the Roma women, and with the actors. I maintained that a “release” from the guiding hand of project etiquette opened the door for various antagonisms and prejudices to come forth. This in turn affected the ways in which we negotiated our relationships and roles in the studio. In these sessions, both the actors and I navigated the terms of leadership in the project – for me it was a way of moderating the actors’ largely negative perceptions of the Roma women, while for the actors it provided a means of controlling certain aspects of the

project – which at times led to conflicts between us. In separate sessions with the Roma women, I often acted as a mediator, trying to restore and maintain the Roma women’s trust in the project, the actors, and me, which was eroded by existing antagonisms and prejudices. The Roma women, on the other hand, expected me to be their advocate in negotiating the potential differences and conflicts between them and the actors that might arise throughout the process.

In terms of rehearsals, I recounted how the physical and spoken texts of the performance were developed. Emphasising the importance of the improvisations enacted solely by the Roma women, I argued that they constituted a means of empowerment for the women – and enriched our collaboration – by contributing to their growing sense of ownership of the project, and by providing them with a space for self-expression. I also maintained that in this stage of the process, when project etiquette was tenuous, struggles over representation – fuelled by the differences in the ways in which we conceptualised theatre, in what the rehearsal process meant to us, and in what we hoped to accomplish through the performance development process – took precedence in the studio. At the centre of our antagonisms was the clash between the Roma women’s notion of theatre as a form of soap opera, and the actors’ and my commitment to Poland’s modernist avant-garde theatre tradition; and the collisions between the Roma women’s, the actors’ and my conceptions of the performance as a political tool. However, such antagonisms, I pointed out, were not merely about asserting power in rehearsals; they were also entangled in local, global, and gender politics.

In the account of the separate extra-rehearsal sessions with the actors, and the Roma women, I outlined how the actors and I constructed the performance’s physical and spoken texts from the video-recordings of rehearsals. I argued that the extra-rehearsal sessions with the Roma women, and with the actors, constituted for us a means of further negotiating our power in the rehearsal room, as well as other diverse ends. Most importantly, I brought to light the ways in which the Roma women and the actors negotiated a “Faustian contract” (Loizos, 1994) with me – an unspoken contract of reciprocity in which I was expected to compensate them for their participation in the project. This Faustian contract, I argued, required me to perpetually juggle power to

ensure that the project and my relationships with both the actors and the Roma women were not compromised.

I concluded the account of *Hope* with a discussion of the audience and participant responses to the play directly after the performances on May 31 and June 1, 2003, at Elblag's Cultural Centre, and in the days, weeks, and months following the production. I argued that a large majority of audience members talked about the play primarily in terms of its theatrical/aesthetic merits, and/or as a study of Roma folklore. The Roma women and Roma audiences were mainly interested in discussing the performance as a theatre event – specifically the actors' portrayals of Roma – and avoided addressing the performance's subject matter. The Roma women also spoke of the various ways – both positive and negative – in which the entire process affected their lives. For the actors and some audience members, the performance was a call to rail against racism and intolerance in their community. Both the Roma women and the actors were sceptical about the potential of the performance to engage a wider public in social critique and political action.

After a discussion of the three ethnographic theatre projects, I briefly described my visit to Elblag in the summer of 2005. I recounted the recent developments in the research participants' lives, their current perceptions of the research project, and my reflections on the effects of my research on their everyday lives.

As this dissertation is a “thick description” of my ethnographic journey in postsocialist Poland, it seems appropriate that in these concluding remarks, I also explicate the encounter between the “baggage” I was carrying when I entered the research field (my interests, research plans, objectives, assumptions, theoretical frameworks, and methodologies), and the realities of the field.

At the outset of my research, I intended to study – by means of ethnographic theatre performance – what constituted and supported the violence as experienced, in a variety of ways, by the Roma women from the community of Romanian Roma of Morag. Yet, in Poland's complex and highly politicised contexts, where diverse powers compete for cultural, social, political, and economic supremacy by penetrating everyday lives, social relationships, and practices, doing fieldwork – to use Roy D'Andrade's (1984) words – “is like attempting to study the physics of moving bodies while living in the

middle of an avalanche (111).⁸⁹ In such turbulent contexts, research plans can easily crumble in ways utterly unforeseen.

Right from the start of my fieldwork, the research field “disintegrated,” as the Roma in Morag had been deported to Romania. This altered the location and the scope of my research field, as I was now conducting ethnography with the Roma women in Elblag and the students at the Cultural Centre. As such, my research field was not merely Elblag’s Roma community at the intersections of both local and global processes; it was now the constructed “communities” of the ethnographic theatre projects, *Dance as I Play You*, *Horses and Angels*, and *Hope*. By “constructed communities” I mean – borrowing from Tim Hallett’s (2003) notion of “organisational culture” – a negotiated set of “social relations deliberately created, with the explicit intention to continuously accomplishing some specific goals or purposes,” which in this case entailed the productions of ethnographic theatre performances (Stinchcombe 1965,142).

As my research field altered, so did the objectives of my research. Although I had been unaware of this while in the field, as I commenced the analysis of the research material, engaged in discussions with my supervisory committee, and started writing this dissertation, I came to realise that in the course of my fieldwork the highly politicised circumstances, and the games of power in which we all became jugglers, unwittingly transformed my research objective of studying the violence as experienced by the Roma women in Elblag into a “look inward.”

This “look inward” went beyond my commitment to reflexivity – exposing the anthropologist’s presence, personal history, and methodologies of research as instruments of data generation, and the conditions of ethnographic knowledge and representation – with which I entered the research field. It involved a study of the social relations of our “constructed communities,” particularly the ways in which power entered, and was being produced in multiple ways – through negotiation and renegotiation – in, and through, these relations (Groves and Chang 1999, 257). In other words, it involved a study of power within the ethnographic process itself. As such, this “look inward” was nothing less than autoethnography, and the kind – as I argued in the Introduction – that both adopts a “strong reading of reflexivity” to unsettle the power differentials between the ethnographer and research participants by empowering the voices of the latter, and thus,

challenging the authority of the ethnographer (Ibid., 238), and at the same time acknowledges and critically analyses such power differentials within the research process itself (Ibid.).

Some of my original plans and objectives for the research project were also partially altered. *Hope* was developed in four distinct stages as planned. In the preliminary stage of the performance, I learned about the Roma women's lives by engaging in participant observation, conducting interviews with the women, recording their life stories/histories, and holding pre-rehearsal sessions with the Roma women and the actors. I also assembled a performance troupe. Some of the aspects of the project that deviated from my original plan included my employment as an instructor/artistic director of the student theatre section at the Cultural Centre; working with an ensemble of students from the Centre; the development of two additional ethnographic theatre projects, *Dance as I Play You*, and *Horses and Angels*; the inability of a performer from my Canadian theatre company to participate in the project; and the larger-than-expected number of Roma women participating. Surprisingly, ethnicity, religious affiliation, and disability – and not age or familial obligations – were factors that came into play in terms of who did, or did not, participate in the project. Some of the women excluded from the process were: Polish women married to Roma men, devout Catholic Roma women, and a woman with mental illness.

The second phase of the research, as I had originally planned, involved the development of a theatre performance over two months of regularly scheduled rehearsals; but my hope that the Roma women would act in the performance was not realised. The third stage involved public presentations of the performances to audiences at the Cultural Centre in Elblag. The performance was not shown outside of Elblag, as planned, largely due to budget constraints. In the fourth stage of the process, although I did record, through fieldnotes, audience reactions during the performance on May 31, 2003, and solicited some informal audience and participant responses after the performances, my intention to hold post-performance in-theatre talk-back sessions, and formal interviews with audience members never materialised. Similarly, while I did engage participants in a dialogue about the research process, no formal meeting with the participants took place, primarily due to the acrimony among them. Furthermore, although I conducted some

informal interviews with the research participants about the process up to a week after the final performance of *Hope*, I was unable to engage in a long-term ethnography of participant post-performance responses, as I had to return to Canada. The development of both *Dance as I Play You*, and *Horses and Angels* followed similar stages, except the preliminary stage of participant observation and interviews.

Further, in the course of my fieldwork, in addition to my original research field, plans, and objectives, my assumptions and theoretical frameworks were also challenged. First of all, with the change in research objectives, my main theoretical assumption about the various hegemonic social forces that support violence committed against Roma women was no longer the central issue (see pp.49-50). It was now a “look inward” – the study of power within the ethnographic process itself – that became the primary concern of my research.

However, since power was the central analytic concept in my study of the ethnographic process, I found both Gramsci’s and Foucault’s theories of power (as set out in Chapter 4, pp.45-8) still very relevant to the understanding of power at work in my field relations. This is the case primarily because they kindle a conception of power whose “strings can be pulled by everyone” – even those most socially and economically disadvantaged – and thus, a conception of individuals as agents capable of subversion and manipulation, even if it is only within the strict limits of oppressive regimes (see p. 47, 49). I also found useful in the analysis of power in my field relations, Gramsci’s understanding of hegemonic “truths” as working through “common sense” by coercion, consent, and force (see p.45); and Foucault’s conception of hegemonic discourses as ingrained in individuals’ actions and attitudes (see p.47)

For example, as I argued in this dissertation, all of the participants were “jugglers of power,” as we “juggled” for our own benefits and ends. In this sense, as Foucault would have put it, power implicated everyone who was involved in the research process, albeit, unequally. In *Dance as I Play You*, for example, the actors were continuously “playing” their relationships between Shawn and me to serve their own ends in the power struggles over the realisation of the goals they set out for the project (i.e. when they believed Shawn and my suggestions protected their interests, they endowed us with authority and expected us to assume directorial/dramaturgical roles; however when, in

their view, our suggestions jeopardized their interests, our authority was at question). Shawn and I, on the other hand, negotiated our roles as facilitators and directors/dramaturgs in ways that both conciliated the students' agendas, and mediated the various power struggles that unfolded in the studio, which ultimately served our agendas of preventing the power struggles from jeopardizing the project.

In *Horses and Angels*, the female students juggled power to undermine any attempts Derek might make of asserting his authority as a man over them, and to retaliate against Derek as a representative of men. Derek, on the other hand, negotiated power – by challenging our generalisations of men in pre-rehearsal sessions, and by adopting a strategy of “staying cool” in rehearsals – to counteract any claims of expertise made by the female students and me. I held onto power by assuming the roles of dramaturg/director to accommodate the actors' goals of ensuring the performance's success in the festival, which in turn served my ends of fostering good relations with both the actors and the directors of the Cultural Centre, which were central to the realisation of my final project *Hope*.

In *Hope*, during my participant observation, in their interviews and life stories/histories, and in the pre-rehearsal sessions, the Roma women juggled power to negotiate various ends for themselves. This was evident in the disparate ways in which they constructed their accounts of violence in these different contexts of the project. In the separate pre-rehearsal sessions with actors, we were juggling power to establish the terms of leadership in the project, which for me constituted a way of moderating the actors' largely negative perceptions of the Roma women, and which for the actors provided opportunities to control certain aspects of the project. In the separate pre-rehearsal sessions with the Roma women, I acted as a mediator attempting to restore and maintain the Roma women's trust in the project, the actors, and me, which was perpetually compromised by existing antagonisms and prejudices. In the joint rehearsals, we were juggling power in our struggles over representation, fuelled by the differences in the ways in which we conceptualized theatre, in what the rehearsal process meant to us, and in what we hoped to accomplish through the performance development process. And among themselves, the Roma women also negotiated power through struggles over directorial authority, over representation, and over the conciliation of diverse ends, which

resulted in the transfer of “symbolic power” from Randia to Ana. Thus, in these juggling of power, we were all agents negotiating and renegotiating our actions, interactions, relationships, and ends.

Furthermore, this juggling of power throughout the entire research process implicated all of us in a Gramscian intricate interplay of force (the expulsion of Tomek from *Dance as I Play You*, the Roma women’s enforcement of their often unattainable acting standards upon the actors during rehearsals of *Hope*, the refusal of the actors and me to realise the Roma women’s idea of the performance as a celebration of their culture), coercion (the resignation of Tadzio from our theatre ensemble in *Dance as I Play You*), and consent (especially my “Faustian contract” with the Roma women and the actors in *Hope*).

Finally, our actions and interactions in the studio could be explained in light of Gramsci’s understanding of the workings of hegemonic “truths” through “common sense,” and Foucault’s notion of hegemonic discourses, which both emphasise that individuals, through their discourses and actions, reflect hegemonic ideas and beliefs prevalent in their social environments. While it would be problematic to draw any “proof-like” linkages between actions and discourses of a particular micro-group of people in a particular place and time – such as the constructed “communities” of *Dance as I Play You*, *Horses And Angels*, and *Hope* – and macro-processes, it seems reasonable to draw some tentative associations between our actions and interactions in the studio (micro), and the social contexts (macro) in which they occurred. Clearly, what was going on in rehearsals seemed to “reflect” certain hegemonic ideas, beliefs, and actions prevalent in Poland’s social environments.

In *Dance as I Play You*, for example, the ways in which the students “otherised” Tadzio – as being “unfit” for the ensemble due to his age, incompetent as an actor due to his alleged mental disability, or for his “unmanly” physicality – could be considered alongside the various prejudices held in Poland toward age, disability, and homosexuality, which I sketched out in Chapter 2.

In *Horses and Angels*, many of the stereotypes of masculinity and femininity currently circulating in Poland – as discussed in Chapter 4 – seemed to be reproduced in the female actors’ interactions with, and attitudes toward, Derek – particularly in their

derogatory references to his demeanour meant to undermine his masculinity. Moreover, in our pre-rehearsal sessions, Olga and Grazyna's explanations of feminism's ignominy in Poland inadvertently echoed certain negative attitudes towards feminism prevalent in the country (see p.111).

In *Hope*, during separate pre-rehearsal sessions with the Roma women, and actors, the ways in which we constructed our understandings of one another, and how we negotiated our roles and relationships, seemed to be framed by many of the antagonisms and prejudices that have historically defined Roma-Gadjos interactions in Poland. For example, the actors' and my perceptions of the Roma women's attendance/non-attendance at rehearsals as "abnormal" (see p.209) can be seen as influenced, to a certain extent, by popular stereotypes of Roma in Poland which construct Roma as "unreliable," "lacking motivation," and "unwilling to work," as specified in Chapter 4.⁹⁰ Similarly, the binary the actors set up, with the Roma women as passive victims of tradition, and themselves – and their parents – as active agents of change (see p.210), can be considered in light of prevalent attitudes in Europe that stigmatise Roma as "passive victims," who throughout history – i.e. World War II – lacked a "fighting spirit" (see p.32). Likewise, the actors' tendency to apply their negative perceptions of the Roma women and their ways of life onto all Roma as an ethnic/cultural group (p.219) resonates with Western culture's all-too-familiar essentialising and reductionist perceptions of "the other" as an ethnic/racial/cultural group. Finally, the distrust the Roma women felt for the research project, the actors, and me – as articulated in Ana's remark that the actors could not be trusted, because why "would anyone put too much trust in Poles" (p.221) – could also be linked to the same prejudices and antagonisms that frame Roma-Gadjos relations in Poland.

While the relations of power at work in my ethnographic research process could indeed be illuminated by Gramsci's and Foucault's notions of power, they also – on many occasions – contested, challenged, and contradicted their conceptions of power in a variety of ways.

First of all, in many instances, the relations of power in our projects challenged the Foucauldian understanding of power whose "strings could [always] be pulled by everyone" stressing that, despite all of our manoeuvrings of empowerment and

subversion, power – as feminist critiques of Foucault point out – can also be a top-down affair, a property of a particular group and/or an individual. In *Dance as I Play You*, for example, this is particularly evident in the actors’ treatment of Tadzio and Tomek; in *Horses And Angels*, in the female students’ relationships with Derek; in both projects, in how I assumed and executed my directorial authority in the studio; and in *Hope*, in the standards of perfection the Roma women set out for the actors, and in the actors’ and my refusal to construct the performance as a celebration of Roma culture and customs, despite the Roma women’s wishes. Most poignantly, however, the ways in which the projects challenged Foucault’s notion of dispersed power were demonstrated in such instances as the Cultural Centre’s withdrawal of financial support for the Roma project, the dismissal of Shawn as a theatre instructor in response to the poor showing of *Horses and Angels* at the festival, or in the Roma women’s decision not to perform publicly in *Hope* in fear of violent repercussions. This was also made apparent in the concrete benefits – or the lack thereof – the projects and their outcomes offered to Shawn, the actors, the Roma women, and me.

Second, while to a certain extent our actions and interactions in the studio seemed to “reflect” – in the Gramscian-Foucauldian sense – certain hegemonic ideas and beliefs prevalent in Polish society, they also challenged Gramsci’s and Foucault’s understandings of the workings of hegemonic “truths.” This is particularly apparent in the vast disparities of knowledge constructed in the various stages of the research process. In *Dance as I Play You*, for example, while the students’ relations with Tadzio in rehearsals seemed to “reflect” certain xenophobic ideas and beliefs circulating in Polish society, in our pre-rehearsal sessions the students openly spoke against racism and intolerance. Similarly, in *Horses and Angels*, while the female students’ interactions with Derek in rehearsals appeared to “reflect” many stereotypes of femininity and masculinity, in our pre-rehearsal sessions the female actors vehemently railed against gender stereotyping. Also, in *Hope*, while the ways in which the students constructed their understandings of the Roma women’s lives and in-studio activities in the separate pre-rehearsal sessions seemed to be framed by many antagonisms and prejudices that have historically defined Roma-Gadjos interactions in Poland, on the other hand, the actors’ commitment to fight racism against Roma through the development of *Hope* contradicted this. In all three

projects, the actors spoke against racism, intolerance, and gender inequality in pre-rehearsal sessions, yet their actions and mutual interactions in rehearsals contradicted what they had spoken against, as if they had never heard their own critique of these issues.

It is evident that people, as much as they draw from big ideologies prevalent in their social worlds, in every day contexts they also constantly revise, recreate, redefine, and renegotiate big ideas into their own “truths” that serve their ends and needs. And the ways in which such negotiations took place in our projects were shaped by the power relations, material conditions, and immediate social/political/cultural contexts of the research process itself. Thus, the students drew from big ideas to negotiate their own “truths” differently in different stages of the research project as the various powers at play, material conditions, and the contexts of the projects altered. In our pre-rehearsal sessions, for example, the students might have been telling their stories in ways that strove to secure their relationships with me. This might have been particularly important to them in these early phases of the research project, especially in *Dance as I Play You*, given that the students still largely perceived me as an “expert.” According to Lindlof (1995), the power differentials that define the ethnographer-research participants’ relationship in the interview can, on certain occasions, lead to situations in which the research participants strive to “induce a more committed relationship with the researcher” (177). This can lead to the research participants’ adoption of the researcher’s “analytical interests” and perspectives in the stories they tell in their interviews (Ibid.). It might have been the case that in our pre-rehearsal sessions, which took the form of a group interview, or “focus group”⁹¹ (Ibid., 174), in efforts to strengthen their relationships with me, the students adopted my analytical perspectives on racism, intolerance, and gender inequality.

In our rehearsals, conversely, while the actors might have still been negotiating their “truths” in ways that sought to strengthen their relationship with me, perhaps this no longer necessitated a complete adherence to my analytical perspectives and beliefs. Or perhaps this might not have been an intentionally made decision at all. It could have simply been the case that it was the group setting of our pre-rehearsal discussions – the group interaction and participation – that compelled the students to negotiate their ideas in ways that concurred with my perspectives on racism, intolerance, and gender

inequality. Focus group interviewing, Lindlof (1995) argues, “create[s] settings in which diverse perceptions, judgements, and experiences concerning particular topics can surface. Persons in focus groups are stimulated by the experiences of other members of the group to articulate their own perspectives” (174). Perhaps the group interactions of our pre-rehearsal sessions stimulated a negotiation of ideas through a collective solidarity in which no one was willing to express an opinion that would be radically different from what the rest of the group – including myself – might say. Our rehearsals, on the other hand – although they also involved group interaction – might have been too spontaneous and not as calculated as our group interaction in the pre-rehearsal sessions, to facilitate such solidarity in the expression of ideas.

Such an understanding of the knowledge constructed in our rehearsals would, at first glance, seem to concur with Fabian’s argument – which was also one of the central theoretical assumptions with which I entered the research field – that certain knowledge about power can be “made present” only through performance or enactment (1990, 6, 86). However, a second look at what was done and said in the rehearsal room challenges and unsettles Fabian’s theoretical assumption. While at first it might seem that such collective solidarity in the expression of our ideas did not take place in rehearsals, and the students’ actions and interactions were more likely to “reflect” the hegemonic ideas and practices against which they had spoken in our pre-rehearsal sessions, at a second glance, it becomes clear that this was not always the case. For example, the knowledge which was being constructed in the performances’ texts corresponded more with the knowledge created in our pre-rehearsal sessions. In rehearsals of *Dance as I Play You*, while the actors were engaged in exclusionary and discriminatory practices against Tadzio and Tomek, at the same time they were enacting scenarios that “spoke” against the intolerance of “the other.” When developing the scenario “Shut up,” which looked at society’s silencing of “the other,” Maria and Gosia condescendingly rejected Tadzio’s suggestion to portray society’s intolerance of music subculture (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Dance as I Play You*, 11/12/02). In *Horses and Angels*, as they were creating scenes that critiqued gender stereotyping, the female students typecast Derek as “too male” or “not male enough,” as was demonstrated when Olga attributed Derek’s benign carelessness to his alleged “male energy” (see p.140).

Consequently, the distinction that the knowledge constructed in our pre-rehearsal sessions always put forth “truths” different from those that were constructed in rehearsals is difficult to delineate. One might argue that the similarities between the knowledge constructed in pre-rehearsal sessions, and the knowledge constructed in scenarios/scenes in rehearsals could be attributed to the more deliberate and formal nature of these forms of knowledge construction: the actors exchanged opinions in pre-rehearsal sessions, and developed scenarios/scenes in rehearsals with a purpose of creating anti-racist/anti-gender stereotyping texts. In contrast, our mutual interactions in rehearsals were more informal and on-the-spur-of-the-moment. However, this explanation does not always hold true because, as I already argued, in many instances, scenes/and scenarios were also developed through spontaneous improvisations (i.e. Chapter 6, pp.84-7). Hence, in our projects there were no fixed and always predictable sets of circumstances – that could be theoretically defined and explained – that would always privilege certain forms of knowledge construction over others. Different situations, circumstances, and contexts of our projects created different kinds of knowledge which – in retrospect – were all equally valuable sources of information about the various powers at play within the research process.

Furthermore, my conviction, as set out in Chapter 1, that the construction of knowledge about violence might require more indirect, non-discursive, metaphoric, and physical means of expression, was problematised significantly. This was not, however, a result of the unforeseen change in my research objective from originally being a study of the violence experienced by Roma women in Elblag to becoming a “look inward,” because throughout the whole research process, violence was still being explored through both physical and discursive means. This assumption was problematised by other factors. In the first two projects, as I argued, physical means of expression did indeed constitute valuable means of knowledge construction about racism, intolerance, violence, and gender inequality, as they engaged us sensuously and empathetically with the issues explored; and challenged our binary thinking, which facilitated a more dialogical negotiation of “truth,” and a more complex interpretation of the actions presented. However, in *Hope*, as I pointed out, this was complicated by the various power struggles in the rehearsal room. Yet, this is not to say that there were no valuable outcomes of, or

insights gained from, working with physical means of expression in *Hope*. “Performing” Nadzieja’s life did manage, to a certain extent, to engage us empathetically in the issues explored by evoking in us emotions of sorrow and anger in response to Nadzieja’s suffering and her overwhelming lack of alternatives. The improvisations enacted solely by the Roma women could also be seen, in some ways, as empowering for them. They seemed to contribute to the women’s growing sense of ownership of the project, and provided them with a space for self-expression. Moreover, it was through our physical interactions “on the ground” that important knowledge about the relations of power that defined our encounters in the field was constructed.

However, from a different perspective, physical means of communication were, at times, nothing more than a hindrance to the actors’ or the Roma women’s expression. For example, in *Horses and Angels*, as I argued, the actors struggled with improvising actions, and preferred to discuss “issues” because of their lack of experience working with the body on stage. They were also shy to enact the rape scene realistically. Similarly, in *Hope*, in certain instances, it was evident that although the Roma women spoke without reservation about the violence in their lives in the pre-rehearsal sessions, in rehearsals they were reluctant to improvise, or have the actors improvise, violence onstage, clearly because they found it too painful and/or embarrassing. This flies directly in the face of the central assumption with which I entered the field, that the construction of knowledge about violence might require more indirect, non-discursive, metaphoric and physical means of expression. For the actors, and the Roma women, ironically, exactly the opposite was often the case. Here again, the lesson learnt is that there are no means of communication that are at all times preferable over others in the construction of knowledge about violence. Different situations, circumstances, contexts of research projects, and our presence as anthropologists, affect what modes of expression our research participants favour and employ to convey their experiences, memories, conceptions and explanations of violence.

Like my research field, plans, objectives, assumptions, and theoretical frameworks, my research methodology was also problematised in the field – both in the ways in which it was implemented in the projects, and in how I have since begun

conceptualising it – because the powers-at-play that affected our field relations also shaped it according to their own designs.

As I argued, the performative research methodology to which I committed myself in the course of my graduate studies was concerned with collaborative, participatory, and engaged development of the ethnographic theatre performance with the research participants. This was influenced by Fabian's (1990) notion of performative participant observation, Conquergood's (2002) engaged scholarship, and Stoller's (1989, 1997) sensuous scholarship. To problematise the ethnographic performance's representation, I sought to incorporate the strategy of reflexivity, influenced by Ruby (1980); and the strategy of polyphony, which drew from Bakhtin's (1984) "dialogic sense of truth" and Ginsburg's (1995) "parallax effect." Finally, my methodology sought to negotiate "the aesthetic expressive" with "the political." As such, it was inspired by the avant-garde theatre traditions of Grotowski, Kantor, and Szajna; Edwards' (1997) notion of expressivity in ethnographic photography; Brecht's conception of politicisation (1964); and Mienczakowski's (2000) emancipatory theatre.

First of all, the collaborative and participatory objective of my performative research methodology – inspired by Fabian – was challenged in all three projects. In *Dance as I Play You*, for example, it was called into question by the agendas of the majority that led to the exclusion of Tadzio and Tomek from the research process; by my complicated position of "expert" in the studio, which resulted in the students' self-censorship; and by the roles of dramaturg and director Shawn and I adopted to serve both the actors' and our agendas.

In *Horses and Angels*, our collaboration was marred in part by the legacies of *Dance as I Play You*, which placed in jeopardy our mutual trust as a group. Our collaborative efforts were also impaired by the prospect of competing in a national competition; by the actors' gender biases that fuelled power struggles in the studio and deteriorated relationships between the female students and Derek; and by my assumption of the role of dramaturg/director to reconcile both the actors' and my ends that, in turn, significantly limited the actors' involvement in the development of the texts of the performance.

In *Hope*, the project's collaboration was diminished by the struggles over representation – a product of our contending conceptions of theatre, and of our different expectations of both the rehearsal process and the performance – that dominated the studio; by Poland's politically charged contexts, in which the Roma women's apprehensions over potentially negative repercussions led them to relinquish their roles as performers in the project; and by the "Faustian contract" that guided my relationships with the Roma women and the actors. On the other hand, collaboration in the project was enhanced by the improvisations enacted solely by the Roma women, which contributed to the women's growing sense of ownership in the project.

Similarly, my intention to engage the research participants and the ethnographer concretely, tangibly, and empathetically in the construction of ethnographic knowledge – inspired by Conquergood's (2002) call for emotionally engaged scholarship, and Stoller's (1989, 1997) sensuous scholarship – was problematised in the projects in a variety of ways. In *Dance as I Play You*, and *Horses and Angels*, both the actors and I did indeed engage in a sensuous construction of knowledge, which allowed us, as I argued, to circumvent our binary thinking and explore and interpret, in more complex ways, the issues at question. In *Hope*, however, such sensuous scholarship was complicated by a variety of factors. Although we explored violence as experienced by the Roma women in physical terms, which allowed us to imagine violence as a multitude of concrete practices and actions, in terms of empathy, things were less straightforward. While working out the texts of the performance, we all conceded, on several occasions, that Nadzieja's life and death evoked in us emotions of sorrow and anger, and often hopelessness as we pondered possible solutions – or the lack thereof – to such suffering. Generally, though, I believe that our empathic involvement with the issues explored was diminished in the project by all the power struggles in the rehearsal room. For myself, at least, emotional identification with the characters of the play was largely short-circuited by the demands of the "Faustian contract" that defined my relationships with the research participants. From what I observed, this might have also been the case for other participants, unless, of course, one considers bickering and insulting one another in the studio as an empathic engagement with the research material.

Furthermore, my intent to problematise the ethnographic performance's representation was also largely complicated, because the research participants challenged my notions of reflexivity and polyphony. In *Dance as I Play You*, for example, the actors' goals of advancing their careers as performers in the community weighed in against the incorporation of any reflexive gestures that would expose – through both Brechtian and Kantorian illusion breaking strategies – the performance as a constructed event, and critique the conditions of its knowledge. The actors worried that such theatrical strategies might not have mass appeal (see p.86). In *Horses and Angels*, in the same way, the actors' desires to win at a national competition influenced our decision not to incorporate illusion breaking techniques into the performance's texts, as the actors were certain that adopting an “unorthodox” theatrical representation would compromise the performance's success in the festival (see p.130). In *Hope*, the Roma women decided against employing Brechtian and Kantorian illusion breaking techniques, in any substantial way, as they believed this would compromise the quality of the performance, and both the actors', and their own reputations in the eyes of audience members (see p.281). The reflexive gesture I managed to include in the performance – to problematise any factual claims the performance might implicitly make by merit of being an ethnographic representation – was in Nadzieja's opening monologue when she exposed the performance as an ethnographic theatre event – a creation by “the Roma women from our town... a few actors... [and] an anthropologist” (see appendix G, p.442). However, in all three projects, although we did not incorporate Brecht and Kantor's illusion breaking devices, the metaphoric and stylised modes of representation did, to a certain extent, constitute a reflexive gesture because, by problematising any factual claims the performances might make, they exposed them as constructed events.

The strategy of polyphony – the Bakhtinian “dialogic sense of truth” – was realised in *Dance as I Play You* and *Horses and Angels* largely through our practices of sensuous scholarship that circumvented – to a certain extent – our binary thinking and, as a result, facilitated a more dialogic negotiation of “truth” that challenged the active-oppressor/passive-oppressed binaries, and invited a more complex interpretation of the actions presented. In *Horses and Angels*, the chauvinist social contexts of the project compelled us to avoid blatant didacticism, and to create more “open” and dialogic texts so

as not to be labelled a “man-hating show” (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Horses and Angels*, 2/20/03).

In *Hope*, a “dialogic sense of truth” was realised by employing Bakhtinian polyphonic devices, such as presenting a collective action against a collective problem, having performers assume double roles, incorporating diverse acting styles, and employing Ginsburg’s (1995) principle of parallax effect by having the spoken and physical texts of the performance contest each other’s representations. In specific terms, the Roma characters of *Hope* were united in their struggles against racism in Poland; the actors’ double roles included playing members of Nadzieja and Dennis’ families, and doctors and nurses in a psychiatric ward scene; stylised acting forms were fused with psychological realism in the performance’s texts which highlighted the diversity of voices in the performance (e.g. the Illustrative Performative Technique’s legato-staccato sequences of Nadzieja’s schizophrenic delusions contrasted with the realist representation of Nadzieja and Dennis’ wedding ritual [see appendix J]); and characters contradicted their speech with action (e.g. Nadzieja recalled her wedding day in a joyful tone of voice, “Everyone had a good time at the wedding;” yet her body remained stiff and uneasy to underscore the tragic overtones of the wedding scene (see appendix G, p. 452 and appendix J).

On the other hand, the performance’s dialogism was diminished in the sense that the performance represented Nadzieja’s life story mainly from the Roma women’s point-of-view, and no alternative perspectives were incorporated.⁹² The characters were also largely portrayed in a binary fashion, in which Nadzieja’s family was “good,” and Dennis’ family was “bad;” and in which Nadzieja was the victim, while Dennis was the perpetrator.

The polyphony of the performance was also short-circuited by the sundry power struggles occurring in the studio, fuelled by our disparate agendas and goals that we were negotiating in, and via, the performance. This resulted, for example, in the actors’ and my refusal to construct the play – in addition to it being a representation and critique of violence – as a celebration of Roma culture, although such a juxtaposition could have cogently diversified the performance’s representations of reality.

Finally, my methodology's negotiation of "the aesthetic expressive" with "the political" was also complicated in all three projects. In *Dance as I Play You*, and *Horses and Angels*, "the aesthetic expressive" was realised through the employment of the Illustrative Performing Technique as the principal style of acting. The most commonly used strategies of this technique in *Dance as I Play You*, and *Horses and Angels* were its dramatising trademark of staccato-legato movement sequences (see appendix J); the use of tableaux to separate scenes and/or highlight a dramatic moment on stage (see appendix J); the use of "facial masks" – the contracting and releasing of facial muscles, using legato-staccato movement sequences, to create a "carved-in-stone" effect (see appendix J); and the incorporation of metaphoric, symbolic, and poetic spoken texts (see appendix G, pp. 431, 436-7; and appendix J). Both in *Dance as I Play You*, and *Horses and Angels* the actors did not – in the Stanislavskian sense – identify with their characters psychologically, emotionally, or physically, but instead, employed the Grotowskian impulse-response acting, which led to a more expressive form of theatrical representation.

In *Hope*, my conception of "the aesthetic expressive" was complicated in a variety of ways. This was primarily because the actors' and my notion of "the aesthetic expressive" – influenced by the modernist avant-garde theatre traditions of Grotowski, Kantor, and Szajna, and the visual anthropology propagated by Edwards – did not remotely fall within the Roma women's aesthetic interests. For the Roma women, who favoured the aesthetic conventions of soap opera, theatre carried different meanings and purposes. In other words, my notion of "the aesthetic expressive" was complicated by the fact that the research participants had their own ways of conceptualising and defining it – ways that did not necessarily correspond with mine. Clearly, this was the case because any aesthetic conceptualisations and defining practices are also "forms of power complexly linked to nationalism, commercial expansion, and gender politics" (Marcus and Myers 1995, 35). Consequently, in the final version of *Hope*, my – and the actors' – notion of "the aesthetic expressive" was only partially realised, as the performance also accommodated the women's aesthetic concerns. In other words, *Hope* was a complex negotiation of – complicated, as I argued, by the "Faustian contract" that defined our mutual relations – the Roma women's, the actors', and my understandings of "the aesthetic expressive." As such, the final version of the performance incorporated a

melange of “the avant-garde” and “the soap operatic.” This melange was reflected in the performance’s mixture of psychological realism with stylised forms of representation, non-linear with chronological progression of action, and cultural verisimilitude with dramatic expediency.

The stylised parts in *Hope* included all the scenes of Nadzieja’s schizophrenic delusions in which she talks to, and/or personifies, her canine companion. In such scenes, Nadzieja’s movements were more precise, careful, and composed of Illustrative Performative Technique’s legato-staccato movement strategy. For example, in one of Nadzieja’s first delusional scenes in which she tells the audience about her first encounter with the dog, the staccato-legato strategy is employed to its fullest. Nadzieja’s staccato yelp, and running downstage-centre, picking up an imagined dog from the ground precede her languid, precise, legato gestures of cradling and rocking the dog; these in turn were followed by Nadzieja suddenly, sharply dropping the dog (see appendix J).

The chorus scenes were similarly stylised. They included all the scenes in which the characters acted in unison as a group: for example, as guests invited to Nadzieja’s funeral at the opening of the play, as doctors and nurses in a psychiatric ward (see appendix J), or as family members/hospital staff/guests at Nadzieja’s funeral at the closing of the performance. In the performance’s opening chorus scene, a vocal stylisation was introduced as the characters – guests invited to Nadzieja’s funeral – chanted a distant, hypnotic cascading prayer of mourning (see appendix J).

The scenes in which Dennis beats Nadzieja were also stylised by means of the legato-staccato strategy; however, staccato movements here dominated to underscore the brutality of the action presented (see appendix J). Dennis and Nadzieja’s wedding scene, on the other hand, employed a slow-motion stylisation in order to highlight the unreality of the action and its memory-like flavour (see appendix J).

As well, the actors relied on the Illustrative Performing Technique’s alienating effect – an acting strategy that seeks to present the action onstage as if enacted-from-a-distance, a movement-from-the past. To do this, the actors visualised fitting their gestures and movements into an imagined precast mould, or tried to exactly re-enact concrete actions they had once performed in the past. This gave their actions a sense of unreality,

uncertainty, and artificiality. The scene in which Zafira soothingly rocks Nadzieja in her arms employed this strategy (see appendix J).

Another way in which stylisation in the final version of *Hope* was achieved was by means of repetition – also a landmark tactic of the Illustrative Performing Technique.⁹³ The characters – Nadzieja in particular – performed some of their actions in a repetitive manner. For example, at the beginning of the performance, after having greeted audience members – guests to her funeral – Nadzieja walked back to her pedestal, and began smoothing out the shroud, obsessively, and repetitively (see appendix J). This stylising strategy of repetition underscored the repetitive and incessant nature of Nadzieja’s memories and her schizophrenic delusions. Other stylised parts in *Hope* included the use of tableaux, in which characters were motionless, at various times, on stage. To portray characters frozen-in-time, the actors adopted the Illustrative Performing Technique’s use of “facial masks” to achieve a carved-in-stone effect. Finally, stylisation was introduced into the spoken text of the performance – particularly into Nadzieja’s monologues that I had written – through metaphor and poetic verses, which further added to the unreality and memory-like character of the actions performed (see appendix G, p.453; and appendix J). Like in *Dance as I Play You*, and *Horses and Angels*, when enacting the stylised scenes, the actors did not identify with their characters, but employed a Grotowskian impulse-response acting.

On the other hand, however, the actors also employed psychological realism – the Roma women’s preferred mode of representation – to achieve cultural verisimilitude on stage, and refer audience members to the norms, beliefs, and common sense of the “Roma world” as understood by the Roma women. This was particularly evident in parts in which the action of the performance took place around the table in Nadzieja’s household. In these parts, the actors portrayed, as faithfully as possible, the nuances and cadences of Roma speech and demeanour, conversation, everyday interaction, and the Roma code of conduct (see appendix J). For example, in the wedding scene, the actors realistically rendered the Roma rituals and customs of marriage, such as the elders’ blessing, and the symbolic “tying-of-the-knot” (see appendix J). All throughout the performance, the actors playing female characters kept their hands crossed at their chests, and the actors playing male characters used strong, determined, and macho gestures, to portray as

realistically as possible the physical profiles of Roma women and men (see appendix J). Finally, cultural verisimilitude on stage was maintained through the use of realistic costumes (see appendix J).

However, while cultural verisimilitude dominated many scenes, on numerous occasions, dramatic expediency took precedence in the performance. This was made apparent in the symbolic use of props and stage pieces – the broom, the book, the white shroud, and the pedestal (see pp.243, 284). While some aspects of Nadzieja and Dennis’s wedding, such as the “tying-of-the-knot,” in which Zafira ties Nadzieja and Dennis’s hands with a headscarf, were presented as they are traditionally done among Roma, other aspects, such as the drinking of vodka at the table, were portrayed in more metaphoric terms – with gestures and facial expressions (see appendix J).

The fusion of “the soap operatic” and “the avant-garde” in *Hope* was also realised in the intertwining of non-linear and chronological progressions of action. The chronological progression of action – periodically interrupted by tableaux – unfolded primarily in the first part of the performance, beginning with Nadzieja’s words, “Let us begin,” (see appendix G, p.442; and appendix J) and continuing through to Zosia’s pronouncement, “Dennis kidnapped Nadzieja” (see appendix G, p.449; and appendix J). The action here unfolded in a linear fashion as we witnessed Nadzieja’s family discuss financial troubles, Taisa and Nadzieja relate their fortune telling incident, the arrival of Dennis’ family, and the kidnapping of Nadzieja. The non-linear progression of action largely framed the second half of the performance, and starts when Nadzieja repeats Zosia’s words, “Dennis kidnapped Nadzieja” (see appendix H, p.449; and appendix J). This was realised, as I argued earlier, through the Illustrative Performing Technique’s strategy of montage⁹⁴ – breaking up the action of the play into chronologically unconnected scenes by means of tableaux. For example, the scene in which Zafira tells the audience about the tragic effects of Nadzieja’s death on her children was followed by a scene in which Nadzieja discovers that her children have gone missing (see appendix G, p.465; and appendix J).

The notion of “the political” – my strategy of politicisation, inspired by Brecht’s epic theatre and Mienczakowski’s emancipatory drama, which aimed at impelling the research participants and audience members to social critique and action – was also put to

test in all three projects. On the one hand, it was realised by employing stylised and metaphoric modes of expression, which, in the Brechtian sense, strove to defamiliarise the audience's realms of experience and re-sensitise them to the violence presented on stage. The use of sharp, staccato movements in certain sequences of *Dance as I Play You* were intended – as in Bakhtin's grotesque of carnival – to critique and temporarily destabilise the established social order that maintains racism and intolerance in Poland. In *Horses and Angels*, the violence of rape was portrayed by means of stylised, soft, and legato movements when Derek mounted and rode – as though on a horse – Agnieszka and Shawn hidden beneath Olga's wedding train. This sequence sought to unmask the sexual domination of men over women, which often masquerades as love. In *Hope*, the scenes in which Dennis physically abuses Nadzieja were enacted in unnaturally slow movements to underscore the “eternity” of Nadzieja's pain and humiliation, in hope of exposing the Roma women's daily suffering.

On the other hand, however, I believe my strategy of politicisation was compromised in *Hope* by the performance's soap operatic focus on family drama and relationships, which largely diverted attention away from other forms of violence in the women's lives, such as racism and public violence.⁹⁵ And while the scene in which hooligans invade Nadzieja's wedding reception (see appendix G, p.453-4; and appendix J), and the scene in which Taisa and Nadzieja tell us about being insulted while fortune telling (see appendix G, p.444; and appendix J) did address issues of racism and public violence directed against Roma, they were too brief, and thus lost their significance in the midst of the scenes of domestic violence.⁹⁶ Additionally, I believe the performance's focus on family drama and violence presented violence in the Roma women's lives as an “internal” problem of the Roma community and culture. This further compromised, in my view, any critical understanding of the various powers at play that bring about the women's marginalisation and oppression. In this sense, I believe *Hope* also compromised the actors' notion of the performance as a medium for anti-racism, and the Roma women's idea of the performance as a way of championing peace and tolerance. This is most evident in the audience responses to *Hope* discussed in Chapter 8. While for some audience members the performance was indeed pivotal in the rethinking of their taken-for-granted ideas and beliefs about racism and gender oppression, for many, however, it

appeared to merely reinforce them. There were also those for whom the performance had a minimal political impact, as was made apparent in their predilections to discuss the theatrical aspects of the performance over its content. I recognise, however, that this might not have had anything to do with the soap operatic focus of *Hope* on family drama, particularly if one considers that the two other performances, *Dance as I Play You*, and *Horses and Angels*, received very similar responses from audience members, despite their more blatant avant-garde concern with “public action” and “social problems.” Perhaps it did not help that in all three projects there was no opportunity for audience members to partake in a more formal post-performance debate, as proposed by Mienczakowski (2000), which I had originally planned to hold. In *Dance as I Play You*, for example, the actors decided against holding post-performance discussions with audience members, as they worried that in the “cut-throat” world of Polish theatre, they risked – as amateurs – being harshly criticised, which could compromise their future careers as actors. For *Horses and Angels*, post-performance sessions were not an option, as they were not permitted according to the festival’s regulations. Finally, in *Hope*, we opted not to have post-performance sessions because the Roma women feared that in the politically charged climate of Poland, such personal encounters with audience members might put them at risk of insults, threats, or even physical violence. Perhaps more formal group interactions, as Lindlof (1995) puts it, would have inspired audience members to articulate their perspectives in more critical ways. Or it might be that impelling audience members to social critique and action is altogether more challenging to come by than I had originally hoped. It might not be as easy, to refer back to Mienczakowski’s words, to bring about “instrumental change through the insights [the performance] gives to the audience” (2000, 139).

It also might not be as straightforward to engage the research participants themselves in social critique and/or action. Clearly, Mienczakowski’s (Ibid.) other argument, that a significant level of insight and emancipation could be realised by people engaged in the ethnographic research process, did not have significant resonance in our projects. For some actors and Roma women, the process did indeed challenge, to some extent, their taken-for-granted ideas about race, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender. For example, after the closing of *Dance as I Play You*, Agnieszka told me that working on the

project was beneficial to her because it had made her realise that “racism was not merely about the hatred of people of colour . . . or violence committed against them,” but that it also involved “different small acts of indifference . . . and the lack of interest in the plight of minority groups in Poland” (Fieldnotes, 2003). Since her involvement in the project, Agnieszka argued, she had begun noticing racism and intolerance in Elblag more than she ever had, because the project “ha[d] opened her eyes wider to the injustice around” (Ibid.). Derek also admitted that his involvement in *Dance as I Play You* “ha[d] made him more sensitive” to racism, and several times he even challenged his friends’ racist jokes about both Roma and Ukrainians (Ibid.). Also, as indicated in the actors’ responses to *Horses and Angels* (see p.163), as a result of their participation in the process, Agnieszka and Maria, for example, engaged their family and friends in discussions about feminism, violence against women, and sexism (Ibid.). They also asserted that their involvement in the project *Hope* had made them more open to difference. Maria stated that as a result of the project, she was inspired to fight racism in her own community. Agnieszka promised that in her work as an artist, she would speak against the oppression and suffering of underprivileged people (see p.334). Maria and Agnieszka also argued that they made efforts to keep in touch with the Roma women, and tried to visit them occasionally at their fortune telling spot. Agnieszka even looked after some of the women’s children and assisted them with homework (Ibid.; see p.347). The Roma women often mentioned during my conversations with them on the phone that some of the actors visited them while they were fortune telling.

Yet notwithstanding these effects the projects had on the actors and the Roma women’s lives, it is difficult to speak of any substantial transformative-emancipatory potential of the ethnographic theatre process. While some of the actors came out of the projects committed to critiquing and challenging racism, intolerance, sexism, and violence against Roma, all the power struggles in the studio were not without an impact. For example, in *Dance as I Play You*, and *Horses and Angels*, in the actors’ interactions with Tadzio, Tomek, and Derek, many prejudicial attitudes and practices were still in place long after the performances. They were likely further reinforced by all the tensions and antagonisms in the studio. In *Hope* in particular, emancipation, in Mienczakowski’s sense, for some of the participants – despite their assertions that the project inspired them

to fight prejudice and discrimination of the Roma in their community – I believe, was unlikely. On the contrary, it seems that what might have been the case in this project is that some of the participants – given all the struggles and antagonisms in the studio – might have come out of the process more prejudiced towards one another than they had been at the start. After the closing of the performance, Olga, for example, asserted in response to Agnieszka’s observation that the project familiarised them with the Roma’s ways of life: “Sure we know about Roma now...we know things I’d prefer not to know!” (Fieldnotes 2003) To a certain extent, this might have also been the case for the Roma women. Ana made it clear, for instance, that while she had enjoyed working on *Hope*, she was not sure whether she would want to work with Polish actors again, because “a Pole is a Pole after all, [and] doing projects like that is always risky” (Ibid.). These attitudes reverberated to an even greater extent when I returned to Elblag for a summer’s visit in 2005. Randia told me that working on *Hope* was “nice,” as it generated some extra income for them; however, dealing with Polish actors was challenging, and she was not sure whether she would do this again (Fieldnotes 2005). Generally, while the women asserted they missed working on *Hope*, they never themselves initiated discussions about the project. When I asked Zefiryna if there was anything else she wanted to tell me – from the perspective of time – about her involvement in *Hope*, she stated, “Well...it happened and now it’s gone...but our lives remain the same...no money...no jobs...no hope” (Fieldnotes 2005). The women also stated that the actors were no longer visiting them at their fortune telling spot. When I met Maria, one of my former actors, she admitted that she was not involved in anti-racist activism, to which she had committed two years ago; and she did not express any interest in pursuing it in the future.

Finally, my understanding of “the political,” as Mienczakowski’s (2000) capacity of the performance to give voice to those who have been historically silenced, was generally compromised in our projects. While the projects did in fact provide the actors and the Roma women with the opportunity to express their opinions in public, in all three projects the “giving voice to the silenced” was only partially realised due to all the power struggles that led to the disempowerment – rather than the emancipation – of Tadzio and Tomek in *Dance as I Play You*, of Derek in *Horses and Angels*, and of the Roma women in *Hope*. The disempowerment of the Roma women in *Hope* resulted, in particular, from

my, and the actors', refusal to construct the performance as a celebration of Roma culture and customs (see pp.279-82). This took place, as I argued, both because the Roma women's display and celebration of their traditional cultural practices in the performance – a Roma wedding celebration and dance – neither concurred with our idea of “the political” in the ethnographic theatre performance, nor with our understanding of what constitutes “art.”

The women's acts of display and celebration of Roma traditional practices were not political to us, because in their commitment to realism, cultural verisimilitude, and authenticity, they did not assent to our idea of the politicisation of the performance – a Brechtian critique of social realities. On the contrary, we saw them as largely exoticising representations. For the actors, such representations were also artistically unappealing, because they did not concur with their idea of what constitutes art. This is all not surprising given the actors' and my commitment to the modernist aesthetic of the Polish avant-garde. From the perspective of modernism, as I argued, traditional cultural practices are seen as “folklore” – valuable as “authentic” “ethno-culture” – but not as “art” per se (see p.12). For the actors, the Roma women's displays and celebrations of their traditional practices could not have been art if they were realist “folklore.”

However, as I argued in Chapter 8, in stonewalling the Roma women's displays and celebrations of Roma traditional practices, we neglected to consider that such acts, rather than apolitical and exoticising, might have constituted concrete political strategies – on the part of the Roma women – to destabilise certain stereotypes of Roma and/or to claim the right to celebrate their ways of life, which was denied to them for so many years under state socialism (see p.301). James Clifford (2004), for example, argues that while in postindustrial contexts displays of cultural heritage have been often viewed as “a form of depoliticised, commodified nostalgia – ersatz tradition – [this] tend[s] to oversimplify the politics of localism” (9), and ignores the fact that “tradition” “is never politically neutral, and [that] the work of cultural retrieval, display and performance plays a necessary role in the current movements around identity and recognition” (6). In Clifford's view, subaltern displays and celebrations of “tradition” often act “within and between native communities, as sites of mobilisation and pride, sources of intergenerational inspiration and education, ways to reconnect with the past and say to

others, “ ‘We exist,’ ‘We have deep roots here,’ ‘We are different.’ ” (8) Or as Aaron Glass (2004) – who writes about the dance practices of the Kwakwaka’wakw First Nations people of the Northwest Coast – points out, such indigenous presentations of cultural heritage have been historically “a thin end of the wedge” as in the colonial past they opened “a space . . . [for indigenous people] whereby [they] could retain embodied knowledge, practice unique heritages, and support larger efforts toward self-determination” (76); and in the present they provide a means of asserting that “assimilation efforts failed . . . that despite the potlatch prohibition, missionary conversion, and residential schools, there was a successful transmission of cultural knowledge, both discursive and embodied, and the maintenance of a unique Kwakwaka’wakw identity” (52).

This could have also been the case in *Hope*. Displaying and celebrating their cultural practices – such as the traditional Roma wedding celebration and dance – in the performance could have been a means for the Roma women of asserting their identity, survival, and self-determination. And in the present-day world with the pressures of cultural objectification and commodification, the Roma women’s seemingly exoticising display and celebration of their cultural practices could have been nothing less than a pragmatic response to the concrete political and economic conditions of present-day Poland, where Roma often can only “make it” both politically and economically by satisfying non-Roma’s fantasies of “the other.” In other words, the Roma women might have been aware that in a world where racism is ubiquitous, the only recognition their work might get is by showcasing the “traditional” aspects of their culture. And finally, even if the Roma women’s acts of exhibiting their cultural practices were not intended as political strategies of any sort, it would be unfair to reduce them merely to objectification and commodification, as they still “constituted a powerful symbolic means of articulating contemporary social and political problems [because] the contexts in which they [were] enacted contain[ed] a political dimension (Kassam 2000, 190).

Thus, our refusal to accommodate the Roma women’s strategies for self-representation in *Hope* compromised my notion of “the political” as the capacity of the ethnographic performance for empowerment of the research participants. However, the Roma women’s strategies for self-representation also complicated my, and the actors’,

notions of “cultural/traditional” versus “political” versus “art” by showing that “culture,” “tradition,” “politics,” and “art” are interrelated. This in turn, has unsettled my entire understanding of performative ethnography, and my role as an ethnographer and artist, not only in the field, but in how I have since begun conceptualising them. What I have begun realising as a result of this ethnographic journey, the analysis of the research material, and the writing of this dissertation, is that the marriage between art and anthropology – theatre and ethnography – which I so enthusiastically embraced in the course of my graduate studies, is a very complicated one. Does it offer a more collaborative, participatory, engaged, and empowering (for the research participants) means of doing ethnography? I don’t know. More than what? More than interviewing, recording life stories/histories, or participant observation? But I think that all of these, if conducted with the research participants in mind, and a deep awareness of the power differentials that define the research participant-ethnographer relationships, could possibly all be collaborative, participatory, and empowering. In fact, the more I think about it now, the more I realise that it might have been the interviews I conducted with the Roma women, my daily visits to their homes, hanging out with them at their fortunetelling spot, accompanying them on errands, lending an ear to share their joys and sorrows, that were more participatory and equitable for the Roma women than the performative ethnography in which we engaged. In the end, I do not think that there is a straightforward answer to this question. All research projects and ethnographer-research participant relationships are unique. They are embedded in, and also create, often polarised and contested fields of power in which they become implicated in a dynamic interplay of complex ways. Thus, every performative ethnography will have different meanings, dimensions, and implications, depending on whom it involves and where it takes place. Naturally then, some performative ethnographies will be more collaborative, participatory, and equitable than others.

How do I envision my future journey in performative ethnography after working on *Dance as I Play You, Horses and Angels*, and *Hope*? As dubious as I may be about its collaborative, participatory, and empowering capacities, I am still committed to doing ethnography through performance, as I see its potential to study the complexities of the relations of power in the field – the relations that so unwittingly bind our worlds to those

of our research participants. This is a necessary study, indeed, for those for whom the anthropological project is not about discovering and interpreting human cultures and social life, but about engaging in a critique of social realities. It is this potential of the ethnographic theatre project to expose the complexities of the relations of power at play in the field that I would like to further explore in my future research.

This potential can be revealed by considering the multiple avenues through which knowledge in the ethnographic theatre project can be constructed. As evident from the research process of *Dance as I Play You*, *Horses and Angels*, and *Hope*, different kinds of knowledge about power were being constructed throughout each stage of the research process – in my preliminary research with the Roma women, in pre-rehearsal sessions, rehearsals, extra-rehearsals, and through informal post-performance discussions with audiences and participants, in all three projects.

I intend to explore additional avenues through which knowledge about power in the ethnographic theatre project could be constructed. To do so, I would like to conduct two separate ethnographic theatre projects with the same research participants and research objectives: one to develop an ethnographic theatre performance intended for public presentations, and one not intended for public presentations. More so, it might be beneficial to facilitate the construction of ethnographic knowledge in these two separate research projects, both by having sessions in which the participants improvise the performance's texts in a group setting, and by having sessions in which they improvise the texts only in the presence of the ethnographer. This, I believe, would provide additional insights into the various powers at play in the research field, and the ways in which they shape – and are shaped by – our field relations. This might be the most exciting potential of performative ethnography: the potential for a polyphonic construction of knowledge, which in turn can facilitate a more complex understanding of the workings of power in the field.

Moreover, I am interested in further inquiring into the potential of the ethnographic performance development process for the politicisation of both the research participants and audience members. The central question that remains to be addressed is how to maximise the ethnographic performance's capacity to engage both research participants and audience members in social critique and action. As far as research

participants are concerned, perhaps it would be important to inquire into whether minimising power struggles in rehearsals would maximise the emancipatory potential of the ethnographic performance, and into how this could be achieved.

Several options come to mind that will require an “on-the-ground” ethnographic exploration. Perhaps engaging the research participants themselves as actors in the ethnographic performance would be one such option. Yet, would this reduce power struggles in the studio, and subsequently, lead to a more critical engagement of research participants with the issues explored? Developing *Hope* solely with the Roma women, without the involvement of the actors, might have indeed made a difference in terms of curtailing some of the antagonisms in the rehearsal room; however, in *Dance as I Play You* and *Horses and Angels*, having the research participants involved as actors did not mitigate the power struggles in the studio in any way. While this, in part, could be attributed to the high stakes the research participants – being amateur actors seeking to establish themselves in Elblag’s artistic community – invested in the projects, involving research participants who are not, or do not aspire to be, actors could pose yet other challenges for the performative research methodology. For example, the research participants might be apprehensive about performing in front of an audience, and/or in front of one another, as was evident when Basia was uncomfortable while improvising in the studio (see p.236-7). Another option, perhaps, might be to engage, as performers, anthropology students trained in qualitative research methodologies. Perhaps their ethnographic background would make them more committed to protecting the interests of the research participants, and less interested in the success of the performance within the theatre community, which in turn might reduce the degree of power struggles in the studio, and consequently facilitate a more critical engagement of the research participants with the issues explored. On the other hand, however, this might do little to minimise power struggles in rehearsals, because, be it anthropology students, actors, or ethnographers – no matter how much they strive to facilitate non-hierarchical relationships in the studio – field relations are always complicated by differences in terms of gender, class, nationality, etc. And training in ethnography might not be enough to circumvent all tensions on such grounds.

As well, it might be important to inquire further into the impact that potential audiences might have on power dynamics in the studio. This might be made apparent in the option mentioned above of conducting two ethnographic theatre projects with the same participants and research objective: one intended, and one not intended, for public presentation. The latter process would constitute a form of theatre workshop where the spoken and physical texts of the performance are developed. After the completion of the two theatre projects, I would analyse rehearsal transcripts and fieldnotes to address the following questions: How does the presence or absence of potential audiences affect the interactions between the participants themselves, and the participants and the ethnographer? How do power struggles alter in the process of developing the ethnographic performance not intended for public presentations? Do they diminish? What other challenges does developing the ethnographic performance not intended for public presentations pose for the research participants, the ethnographer, and the performative research methodology itself?

Further, in terms of politicisation, I am interested in exploring the role of post-performance sessions in encouraging, through forum debate between research participants and audience members, social critique and action. At this point, I have doubts in regards to the politicising potential of post-performance sessions, at least in such unstable contexts like postsocialist Poland. I doubt the capacity of the post-performance sessions to engage research participants and audience members in a transformative critical debate on hegemonic powers, given the post-performance audience responses to *Dance as I Play You*, *Horses and Angels*, and *Hope*, where the majority of people commented primarily on the theatrical aspects of the performances, avoiding discussions of content altogether. And while it is the specific contexts of contemporary Poland, where racism or sexism are considered by many to be risky subject matter⁹⁷ that could, in part, be accounted for such responses, nevertheless I believe it is also the “inherent” politics of group discussions in general that might have been responsible for impeding such a critical debate. For even in a less public setting, such as the pre-rehearsal sessions of our projects – as I argued in Chapter 6 – our group discussions tended to facilitate, through “introspective scrutiny,” a sort of collective self-censorship as the research participants weighed and calculated their responses to avoid saying anything outside of what they thought was expected or

appropriate in the particular contexts of our projects. Such self-censorship, I believe, might be the case, even to a greater extent, in more public post-performance sessions. Ultimately, however, I am sceptical not only of the capacity of post-performance sessions to inspire social critique and action, but also of what indeed can be learnt from such post-performance sessions about the emancipatory potential of the ethnographic process, the performance, and the post-rehearsal sessions themselves.

In the end, I believe that to inquire into the emancipatory potential of post-performance sessions, as well as the ethnographic process and the performance, both in regards to the research participants and audience members, it is an engaged ethnographic fieldwork – extensive “hanging out” with, interviewing some audience members and research participants, or even a follow-up ethnographic theatre project – that might be necessary. If, as Mienzakowski argues – and I concur with him – ethno-drama is unlikely to “bring about emancipation collectively” (2000), but only can effect “instrumental change through the insights it gives to the audience,” then it is only through doing ethnography that we can learn of such small effects of the ethnographic process, the performance, and post-performance sessions on people’s everyday lives. As for the follow-up ethnographic theatre project, it might well be the case that a few of these projects would be necessary to instigate, in any meaningful way, people’s questioning of their taken-for-granted beliefs, ideas, and practices. It will be crucial, thus, for my future research to engage in the ethnography of post-performance responses.

Ultimately, however, as I am about to embark on my future performative ethnography journey, I am now cautious about the contents of the baggage I carry: my histories, interests, theoretical frameworks, and all my assumptions about ethnography and art. While they still so intimately define me as a person, ethnographer, and artist, I no longer look to them as the sole guide in my future ethnographic endeavours. I want my future ethnographic journey to be an ethnography of discovery, in which both the research participants and I learn the ways of doing ethnography together, all anew for each project and a different set of circumstances – even if those ways do not turn out to be performative at all. While there might be no best ways of doing performative ethnography, the best way of approaching it could be if the ethnographer enters the field with no commitments to a particular mode of ethnography, aesthetic, or art form. This is

one of the most profound lessons, I believe, the Roma women have taught me over the course of the project: a lesson I would like to share with those who wish to embark on projects similar to mine. As anthropologists, we should enter the research field as flexible as possible about our objectives, assumptions, methodologies, and research plans, and allow them to take shape alongside the unfolding circumstances and conditions of the field itself. Experiences in the field – especially in such contexts of political instability and dramatic change as postsocialist Poland – will always question and challenge our theories and categories, which in the field often become fragmented and irrelevant. As Greenhouse (2002) points out “people’s altered lives challenge . . . ethnographers to redefine order and disorder, losing and winning, cooperation and resistance, oppression and solidarity, mobilisation and denial, violence and humane affirmation, structure and agency, hegemony and resistance” (8). And this shall not be viewed as a hindrance to our ethnographic journey, but rather, as an opportunity to learn from life itself – fragmented, unstable, and full of contradictions. According to Greenhouse, in this lies the strength of the ethnographic method (Ibid., 28-9). In her view, the fragmentation of anthropology – “the inability to confirm those totalising claims from ethnographic ground” (Ibid., 29) – “looks less like disorientation and more like its opposite: engagement with the world as is . . . [and] an entirely reasonable and even necessary response to fragmentation in the world” (Ibid., 28). And performative ethnography, I believe, can expose the discrepancies of life particularly well. This is another lesson from my ethnographic journey in Elblag I want to share with others.

In conclusion, it seems apt to say but a few closing words about this dissertation itself. As an account of my ethnographic journey – of the power dynamics that marked my field relations in particular – this dissertation was also profoundly shaped by the powers-at-play in the field. This is primarily because, as Julian M. Groves and Kimberly A. Chang (1999) point out, the ethnographic tales we tell “depend not so much on what is objectively happening in the field, but on our relationship in it” (262). The bridles of my Faustian contract have relentlessly bound me until these very last words of my concluding remarks; worried about the implications this manuscript might have on my research participants, I endlessly weighed and considered which stories to tell, and which to withhold. As such, the writing of this dissertation was as much about the juggling of

power as were my field relations. But also, in this precariousness of “what-to-write,” through this weighing and considering, my dissertation also reconstructed, in many ways, the relations of power encountered in the field. I close this document in hope that my play with the power of words has managed to convey the fragmented, contradictory, and unstable nature of powers at play in my field relations, and that it will some day provide more tangible answers to Elzbieta’s – Ana’s aunt – question that has hounded me from the field to this page: “Lady, is that research of yours going to help anything...is it?” (Fieldnotes 2001)

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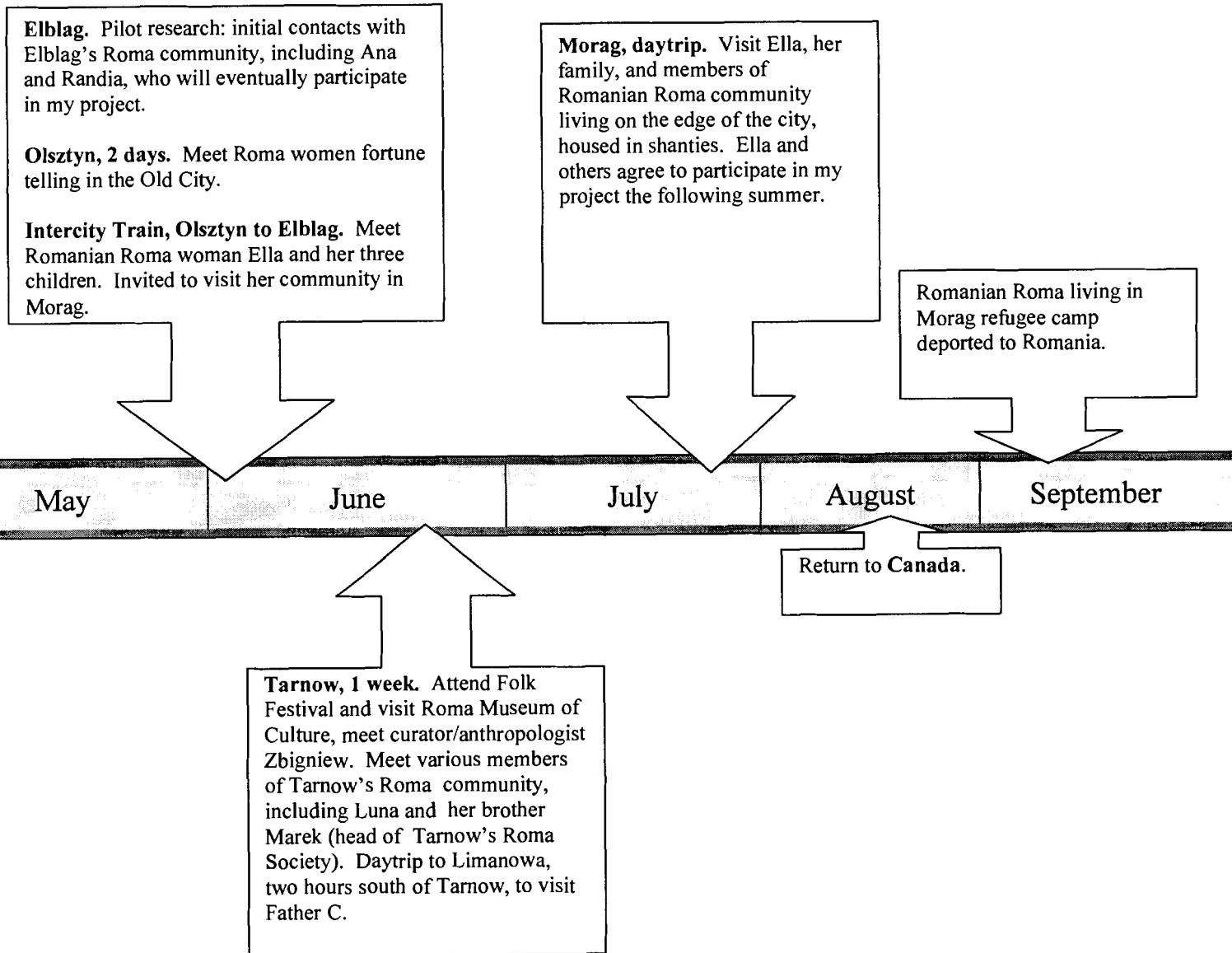
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Appendices

Appendix A

Timeline

2001 Timeline



2002 Timeline

July 1. Return to Elblag, Poland. Mid-July, visit Morag, and learn from neighbouring house that Romanian Roma had been deported to Romania last September.

Decide to conduct my research with Roma in Elblag.

Initial contact with Elblag's Cultural Centre for International Cooperation in the Arts. Shawn and I are hired as instructors, and I am also hired as the artistic director of the student theatre section at the Centre.

First visit, since returning, with Randia and her family. Soon start meeting, on a regular basis, Randia and other Roma women fortune telling by the tramline.

Now visiting on a regular basis the households of six Roma families through to end of project (interviews, life stories/histories).

Shawn and I start teaching at the Cultural Centre. We commence our collaboration with our students on the development and rehearsing of *Dance as I Play You*.

Elblag, Cultural Centre for International Cooperation In the Arts, December 14. Public presentation of *Dance as I Play You*.

July

August

September

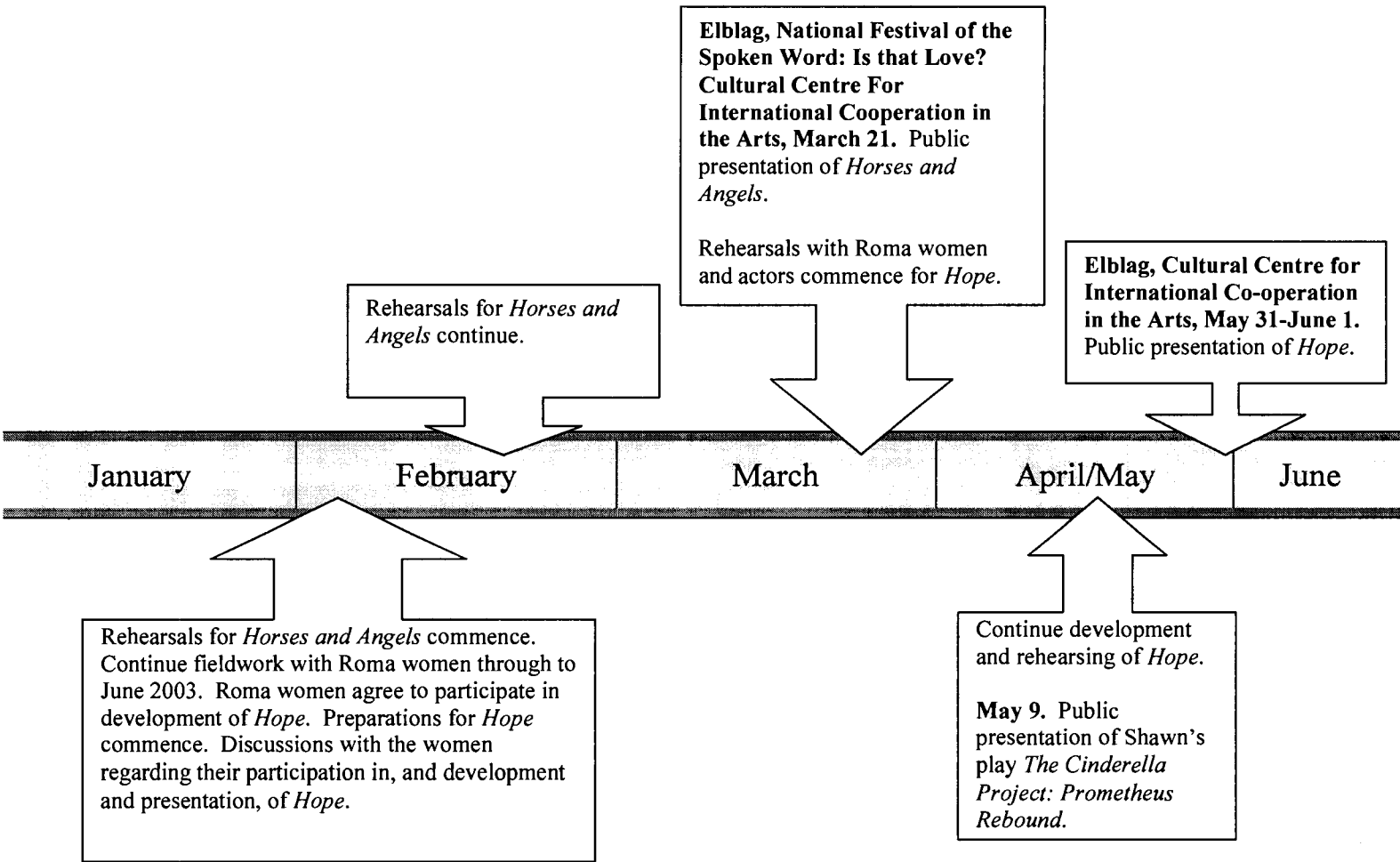
October/November

December

Continue developing rapport with Roma women.

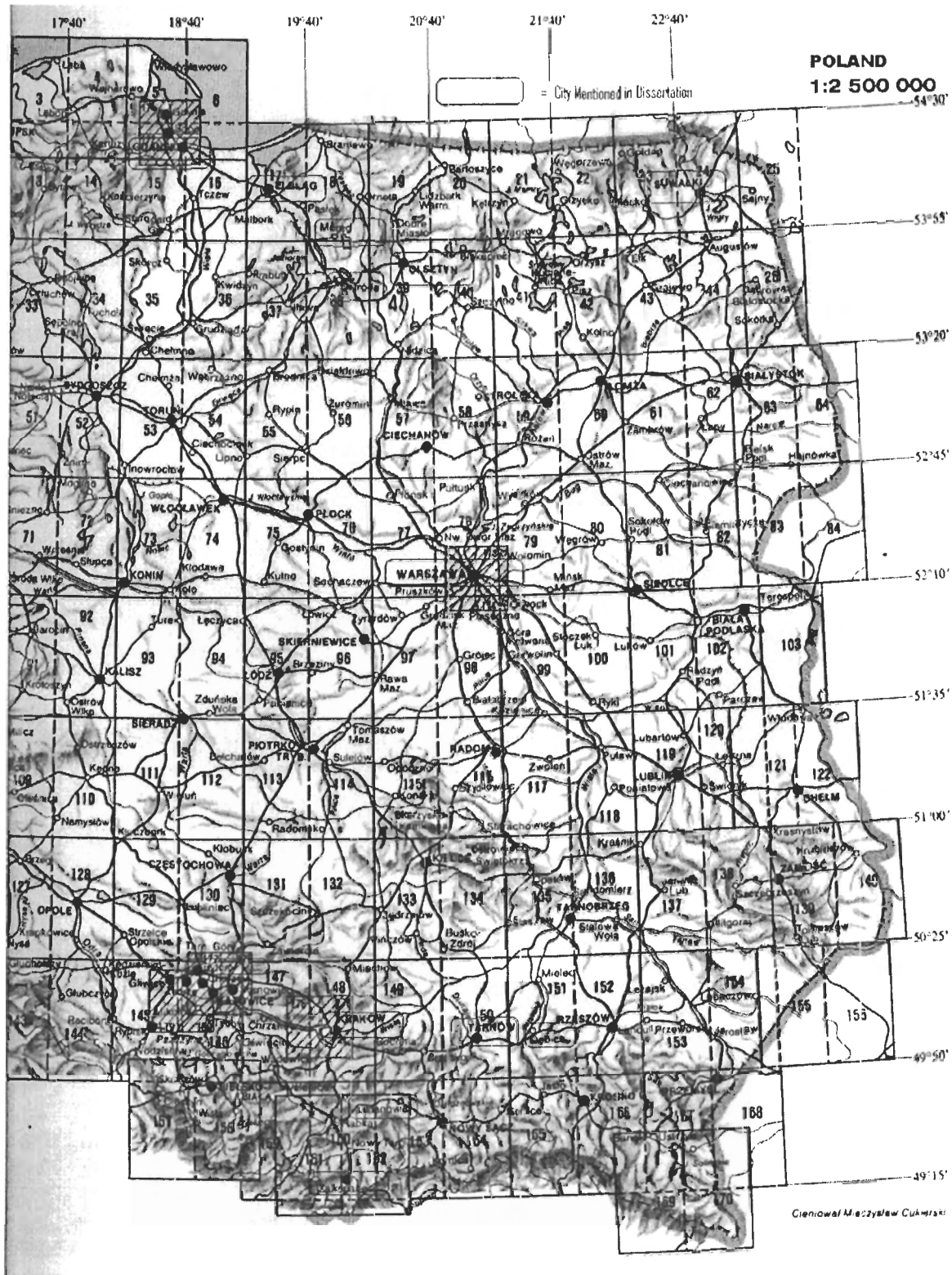
Continue development and rehearsing of *Dance as I Play You*.

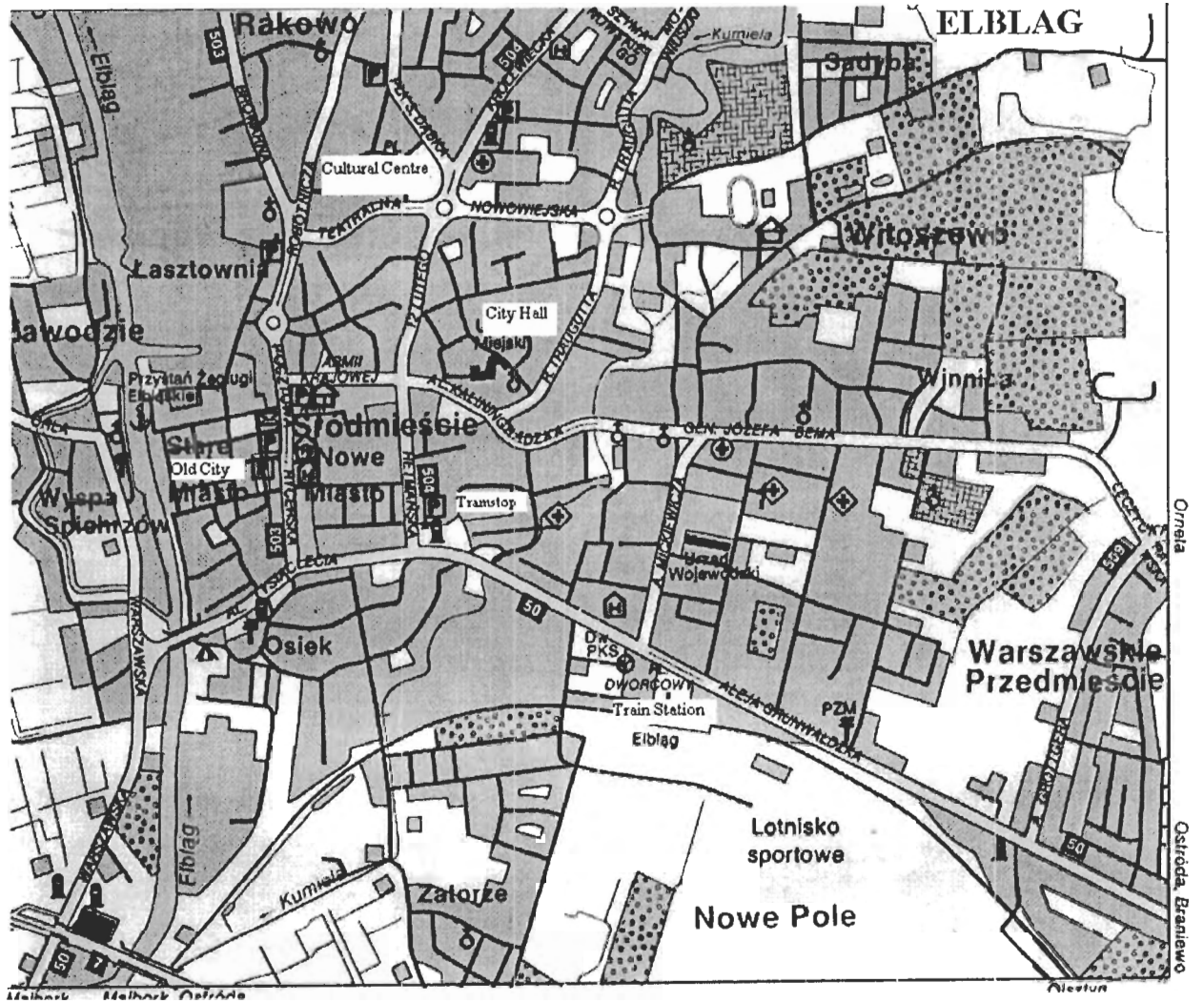
2003 Timeline



Appendix B

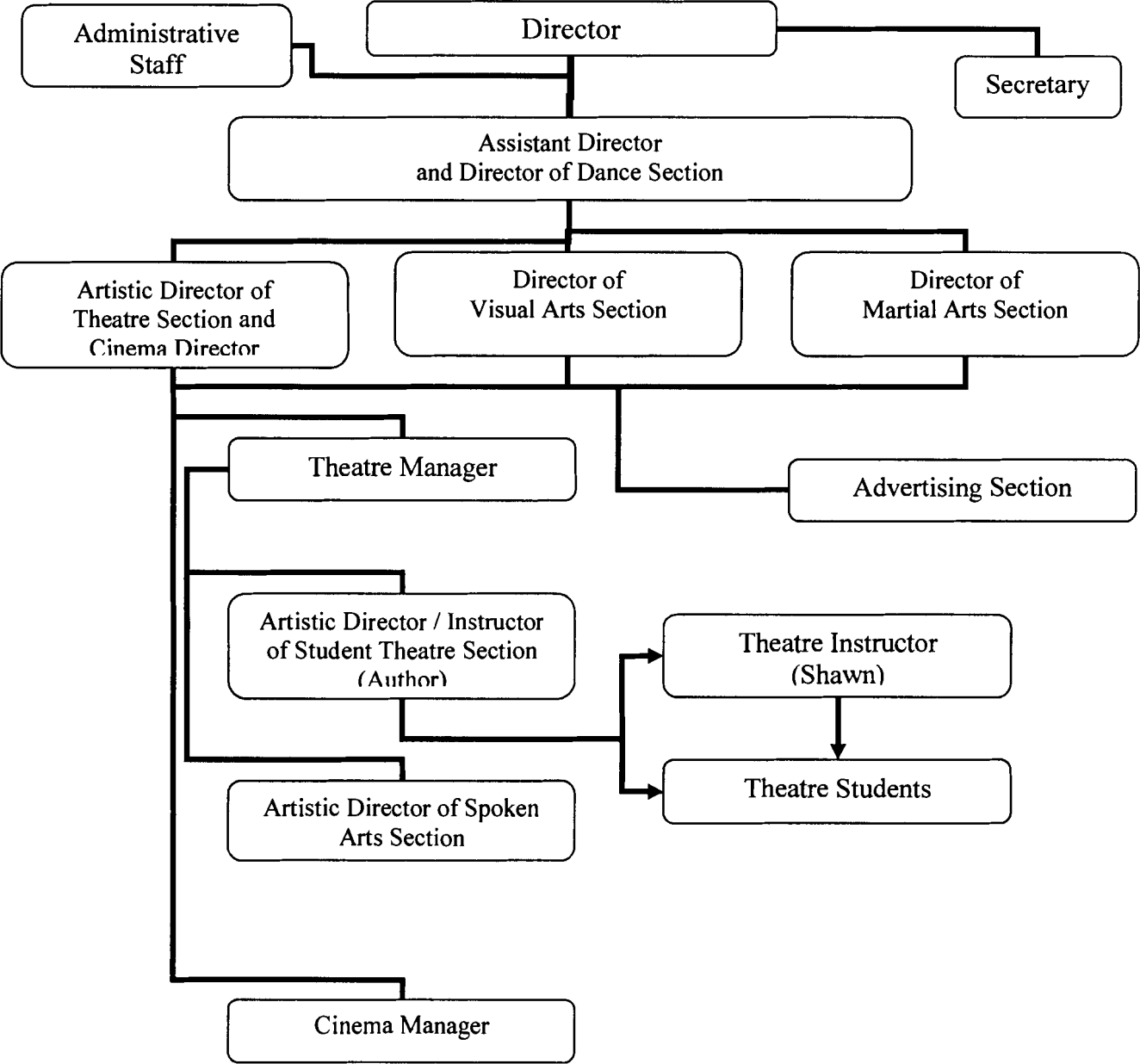
Maps





Appendix C

Cultural Centre Organisational Chart

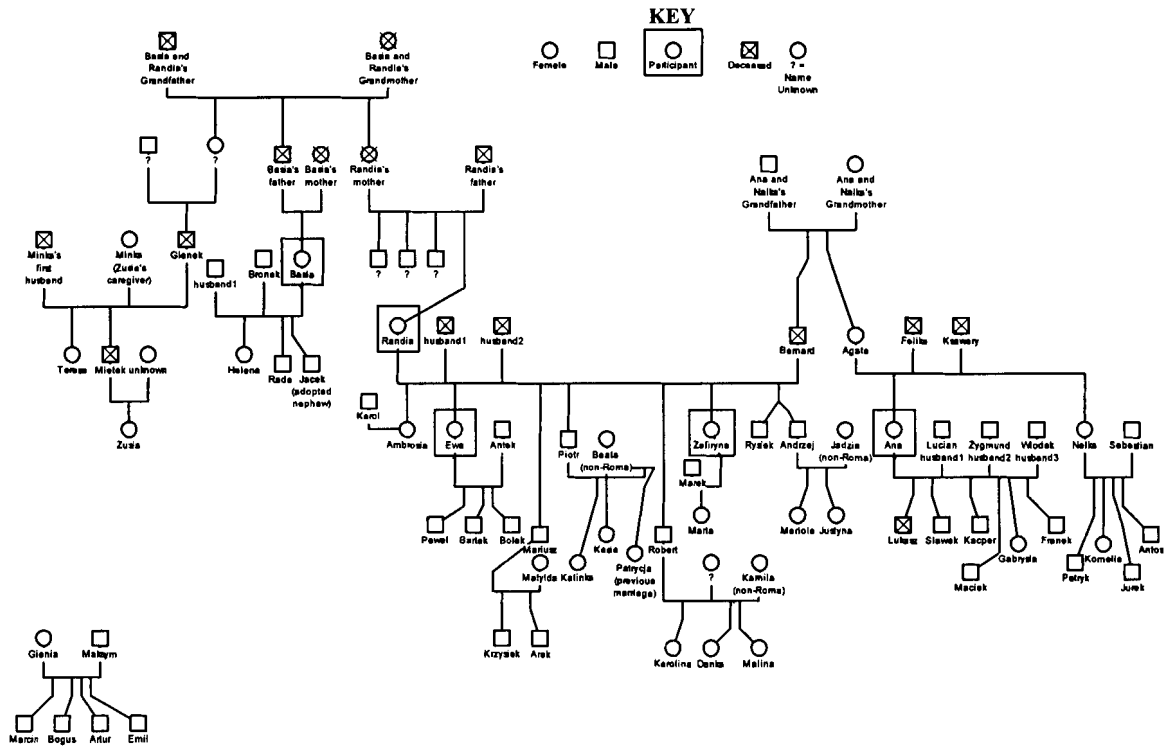


Appendix D

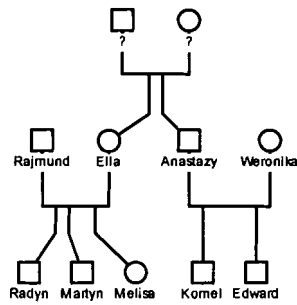
Roma Family Trees

and Actor Sketches

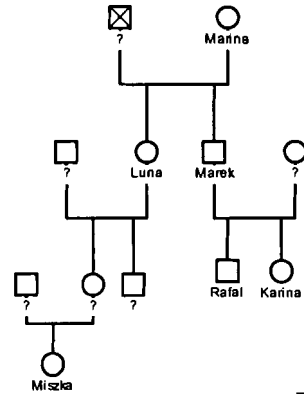
ELBLAG ROMA



MORAG ROMA



TARNOW ROMA



□ Zbigniew
□ Father C.

TARNOW AND LIMANOWA CONTACTS

ACTORS' SKETCHES

○
 Maria (14)
 First year
 Lyceum student.

Dance as I Play You
Hope

□
 Derek (18)
 Final year Lyceum, preparing for maturity and university entrance
 exams, plans to attend university in fall to study philosophy or theatre.

Dance as I Play You
Horses and Angels
Hope

○
 Joanna (20)
 Lyceum graduate, currently
 employed full-time.

no performances

□
 Tadzio (35)
 Dance
 instructor, actor.

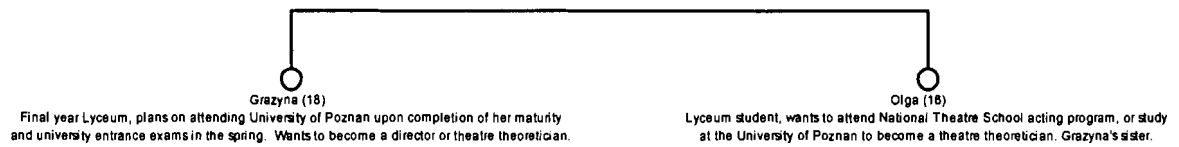
Dance as I Play You

○
 Agnieszka (19)
 First-year student of Polish Philology at Gdansk University,
 wants to attend National Theatre School acting program.

Dance as I Play You
Horses and Angels
Hope

○
 Irena (17)
 Student at Elblag's
 Economics Collegiate.

Dance as I Play You



Dance as I Play You
Horses and Angels
Hope

Dance as I Play You
Horses and Angels
Hope

○
 Gosa (18)
 Final year Lyceum, preparing for maturity and university entrance
 exams, plans to attend university in the fall to study theatre.

Dance as I Play You
Hope

□
 Tomek (18)
 Final year of Lyceum, plans to attend university
 in the fall and become a professional actor.

Dance as I Play You

Appendix E

Interview/Life Story Excerpts

Interview: Ewa
Recorded April 4, 2003

Magda: So why do you think your mother stayed with your stepfather?

Ewa: Because I think she had a lot of children with him... that's why... and she wanted to have a father for her children. But on the other hand, she didn't realize that she was hurting me. I never told her when he hit me... I tried not to show her when my eye or my hand was swollen... I didn't want to... I just told her I fell off a chair... it made no sense to tell her anything and complain. I remember when I once got really sick... I had severe meningitis and they took me to the hospital... I had a spinal tap, and they said I was very sick. When I came out from the hospital, I was not supposed to do much... because they said I needed rest... but my mom was also sick... so I had to get up and do everything around the house... clean... but when she wasn't around, cleaning was not really cleaning anymore... it was hell and torture... I couldn't stand up and sweep... he made me kneel and sweep... he made sure that there was not a single crumb on the floor... and if so, he would beat me.

Magda: Do these childhood memories have an effect on your present life?

Ewa: Yes, they do. I would never allow anyone to hurt my children. I always tell my husband not to beat the children. My mom says that I have to discipline them... but I couldn't... I couldn't raise my hand at the children because then everything would stand up in front of my eyes... my whole past would stand up in front of my eyes... because... I remember everything that I went through as a child... with my step father... how he tortured me... that's why I couldn't ever hit my own kids... never could... because how could I after what I suffered? I can't imagine how I could slap a child full force in the face... I can't imagine that... that's what he did to me... my face would all swell... that was normal. That's another reason why I take my pills... I take 'em so I never hurt my children, because that's what I'm most afraid of... I'm not afraid of anything else in life... I'm not afraid of work... of cleaning... doin' dishes... hard work I'm not afraid of either, because I never get tired of this... but if the kids make me angry, then I prefer to yell... just yell... that doesn't hurt them.

Magda: What medications do you take?

Ewa: I take Lorazepam... they calm me down. When I take a pill...when I take it, I usually take half a pill, because when I take a whole one, then I sleep all day... but I can't sleep all day.

Magda: If you weren't taking pills, what would happen?

Ewa: Well... what would happen? I'd be very anxious, and I'd have more frequent attacks... and I could hurt my children. That's what I'm afraid of most... always... my life... how can I say it... my life is so hopeless... I live in constant fear of those attacks. I think that I'm getting worse. I have this epilepsy, and those strange attacks where I don't remember who I am, and I could hurt myself or others. I turn into a different person... I begin acting like a young child again, pick my nose and stuff... act silly. The worst is the fear that I'll hurt someone. Once I almost did, and that stayed with me forever... I was still a young girl then... my mother went to work, and she left me to look after my brothers and sisters, as I'm the oldest... then I had an attack. I told all my brothers and sisters to lie down in a row by the stove... I took an axe, and... and was going to chop their heads off, but my mother came back from work early, and that saved their lives... if it wasn't for my mother, they would have all been dead... and I wouldn't have my children now, or be married. I'd be in jail... no, in a mental institution, locked away. And you ask me what my life is like? It's pure misery. I don't believe I'll ever get better...the worst is the fear of what could happen.

Magda: I'm sorry...

Ewa: Yeah, but you know, this was so long ago... but I remember it so well... as if it happened yesterday. We lived in an old house then. It happened right after my mother left. She forgot to put away the axe... I had my attack then... I arranged the kids, told them to lie down, in order... first Zefiryna... then Robert...then Andrzej... one by one. I told them not to move. If my mom didn't come back, I don't know what would've happened... thank-goodness that none of the kids locked the door. But if the door was locked, then she wouldn't have made it in time... but the door was open, and she walked in... quietly she came up behind me and took the axe out of my hand... but what... my God, I would've been locked up now in a mental institution... and I would have never come out... that's what would've happened.

Magda: How about your own children?

Ewa: With my children? You know now, when I'm having my attack, my husband is always with me... there's never been a day when I was having an attack and I'd be alone... day or at night... he's always there making sure the kids don't bug me too much then... he makes sure I don't lose control, and that I don't hurt not only them but also myself... or anyone around me. I'm not alone with my kids a lot usually... I don't like that... I don't like being alone with my kids. I'm afraid that I could harm them if I have my attacks. I'm also worried about taking them out by myself... what if it happens, and I'm with them...what would they do? Would people help them? This makes me feel so worried and helpless, like I'm not in control of my life.

Magda: How does your attack usually manifest itself... what are the symptoms?

Ewa: Usually I lose consciousness... I see only darkness, and I black out. And then I know, before I pass out, that something is going on. When I gain my consciousness back, I'm a totally different person... and then it all begins. I'm so afraid of this... even when I speak now... I'm so afraid.

Magda: So you always live in fear?

Ewa: I do, because it happens so suddenly. For example, once I went to the post office to pay for light and rent, and I never came back home. I was livin' back then on Podolna Street, so my husband came back home and started lookin' for me... but then he eventually found me in a different part of town... in front of a school... but I don't remember how he found me, or where he found me. I don't remember much. So I don't like going out on my own... or with my kids. Sometimes I have to pick them up from school alone, but I don't like that... so then when I have to, I go to my mom's, not to be alone with them.

Magda: Hmm...

Ewa: ...I think that's how it'll be for the rest of my life... it'll be like this until the end of my life... I'll live in this fear... all alone in this fear... I'll never live like other people live, in peace and quiet. There never was peace and quiet in my life, and there never will. [end of tape]

Life History: Ana

Recorded April 5, 2003

Ana: . . . So when my stepfather got arrested, my mother took us [children] along with her to her family. We were travelling from one family to another... from one to another, back and forth. We didn't have a place of our own, until we finally settled down in Elblag... I was ten years old then. First house we live is owned by a drunk... a crazy man... he often stayed in psychiatric hospitals... and he finally died there. When my stepfather came out 'a jail, my mother took him back, and she had three kids with him... Nelka is one of them... no, I mean she had four kids with him, and all those kids are just like him... all the men are criminals like their father... one of my brothers has been a criminal since childhood... since he was a little kid... he was locked up right from day one... and as an adult he lived in jail... he never really came out 'a jail. Look at Nelka... she's an alcoholic... they're all the same. So he drank, and she drank... my mother drank... and I had to look after the whole house. I had to make money by fortune telling... but I was very good at it... other Roma women were jealous that people'd stop for me just like that. I'd make money and give it to my mother. I'd also buy goods and then sell them in villages... walking from village to village and selling things. And this is how it is to this day. I don't feel like I'm a sister to my siblings... but a mother. And my mother... my mother treats me as if I was HER mother... everyone comes to me with their problems. I also had to take care of my mother because she was mentally ill. She'd spend many days in hospital. When Nelka was older, she'd help me out with babysitting when I went out to make money. Many times I wouldn't allow her to go to school if I had to work, because younger kids needed to be looked after... so she'd stay at home with the little ones... them boys were no good... I couldn't ask them for help... they were like boys... not interested in helping... only playing, so I had to work... visit my mother at the hospital... look after the kids... clean... cook... that was my role... so... such was my life as a child...

Magda: ...yes...

Ana: ...then I got married. When I was fourteen years old, I was kidnapped by a man and married off to him... they married me off! I had my oldest son with him... he's now twenty-three. I didn't even get to see him, that husband of mine. I didn't want him to touch me, but he raped me, so I became his wife... I couldn't say no. But when I saw him in the morning, I started crying... I didn't want him... he looked so ugly... looked like a frog. I said that I wouldn't be with him, but I was stuck... I was stuck with a terrible man I hated ... I felt like there was no way out for me. I was his because he took my virginity... I was also pregnant. Later on he began cheating on me with his cousin... she was also pregnant with him, and he would beat me up... my life lost its meaning then. I remember it like today... and you know what... I don't think I got it back... it's like something snapped in me forever.

Magda: Hmmm

Ana: I remember when I walked into their house, they were already celebrating my wedding... that's what was goin' on. Husband? What husband! Because it was not

really the man who kidnapped me, but my aunt... it was my blood aunt who came from another city and asked my mom to let me go with her... she said she was going fortune telling and that... that I was white... that I was half-Polish... I could help her, she said, to fortune tell... that people wouldn't recognize me as a Gypsy girl. I didn't want to go... as if I was suspecting something... but my mother said go... so I had to. See, among Gypsies, they already prepare the bed for you... in a separate room... they prepare the bed for you with white sheets... and they take you there...and the man is already waiting there... so I came into the room, but the lights were off... I didn't really know much about this custom... I never knew... I was wondering why they were taking me there... but they took me there and left me... it was so dark in the room... I didn't even see him... I didn't really give myself to him... but he took it himself... he raped me... and because he raped me, I became his wife.

Magda: Couldn't you say you didn't want to... to stay with him?

Ana: There really could be no discussion... there was no way I could have said anything. I mean, I was yelling and screaming that I didn't want to... I was yelling, "Let me go!" I said I didn't want to be with him, but he wouldn't let me go, so in the morning I opened my eyes... but he raped me... so there were the white sheets... but because he raped me, there was no blood on them... only on my skirt... but it frightened me... I didn't know what that was. I didn't have my period or anything. I said "WHAT IS THAT!" And then he said to me, "Don't worry, it has to be like this." So then his mother and sisters came to see if I was a virgin, and they scrutinized the sheets, and there was no blood, so they asked him... but he told them not to worry... he said, "I know, everything is fine." But then when I saw him... oh my God... I started to pull my hair... I was screaming at my aunt... "Who did you give me! You gave me a cat in the bag! You should've taken him yourself... count him as yours!" Of course he didn't have to look like an angel, but he didn't even look like a human being. I didn't want him... he was half my size... really... crooked nose, protruding eyes... so I told them all that I wouldn't live with him, but they said that I would... that I would live with him and get used to him. So I did... I stayed for a while. I had my first child with him, but I didn't like him... we lived like cats and dogs. When he came to me, to sleep with me, I'd beat him... I didn't want him... I was disgusted by him.

Magda: So was he continuously raping you?

Ana: Yes, all the time. We lived in the same flat with his parents... his parents slept in the kitchen, and we slept in the room...but there was no door between the kitchen and the room, and he would still rape me, like that, with his parents in the kitchen. I hated it... his parents could hear everything. He used to ask me if I had someone else, because I didn't want to give it to him. I told him that I simply didn't love him. When I didn't have children with him yet, before my son was born, I once escaped from him and ran off to my mom's... but then when I got pregnant, I had to stay with him. But then he started beating me severely. I didn't know what was going on, but it turned out he was also having an affair with his second cousin, behind my back... and his sisters knew about it... and my aunt knew about it... so finally he got her pregnant, and then she gave birth to a girl... a deaf girl... so when I found out, I went back to my mother's place. But over

there, my mother's man would beat me up... so I would go back to my husband again with my child, but he already lived with the other woman. I could only do his laundry, and had to sleep with him when he came back... and then I got pregnant with another child... but he left and I didn't see him for 4 months. I gave birth to my second son when he was away... he was born sick... very sick . . .

Appendix F

Transcript/Fieldnote Excerpts

DANCE AS I PLAY YOU

Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal Session, *Dance as I Play You*, 11/5/02

...

We continue talking about racism.

Agnieszka: Yes... racism is linked to socialisation.

Olga: People become racist if they're indoctrinated into racism since they are children.

Grazyna: In Poland, young kids are being told that... that Jews and Gypsies and Ukrainians are either lazy, greedy or drunks. See, ideas like that... they make people angry.

Agnieszka: I'm thinking. I'm not sure, but I think we need to differentiate between racism and intolerance... intolerance doesn't necessarily have to mean racism.

Olga: Maybe... maybe intolerance does not always imply racism, but racism always implies intolerance. I guess someone could be intolerant of a particular culture... like Muslims... if one does not tolerate Muslims, then one would avoid their company... it would not mean that he actually hates Muslims... that's a big difference... or that he wants them all killed off.

Grazyna: I agree, because maybe true cases of racism would be against blacks in the times of slavery... and Nazis against Jews... or Indians in America... that would be racism... but if I don't like someone's culture, that doesn't make me racist, yet.

Tomek: I disagree... I think that both terms are interchangeable... racism results from intolerance and intolerance results from racism.

Everyone, including Olga and Grazyna, agrees with Tomek that racism and intolerance are interchangeable.

Magda: So let's one more time try to think what racism is... what do you think it is?

Agnieszka: It's a stereotype...

Olga: ...thinking according to particular schemas...

Grazyna: ...belief that people of different races are worse or inferior to whites...

Tomek: ...well, what is race? I guess that race can be defined as a particular gene pool that determines particular characteristics of a human species.

Grazyna: There are different races... like the Chinese race... the white race... the Indian race... the black race... but all races are equal and good.

Agnieszka: I don't think that race is a gene pool... race is a concept created by people to discriminate against each other.

Magda: So what comes to mind when you think of racism?

Grazyna: Nazis, of course....

Olga: ...Blacks in America... slavery...

Maria: ...the Ku Klux Klan...

Gosia: ...Indians in America...

Tomek: ...but you're only talking about the past... how about the present... there's racism in the present... there's definitely racism in Poland. Until we accept everyone as equal, there'll be racism in Poland. If you only talk about the past, then someone might think that there's no racism in Poland. I also don't agree that one's upbringing should be blamed for racism. Sure, one could, but it's just one part of it.... there's more to racism than that. I was raised in a house where everyone was racist, and I'm not racist, at least to the extent that I'm aware of, because we never know whether we are free of racist attitudes... because I don't think that we can totally free ourselves from racism in a totally racist environment.

Magda: So can we once again say what forms of racism there might be?

Olga: Well, there are physical forms of racism... throwing stones... beatings... but there's also psychological racism.

Grazyna: Racism that manifests itself in verbal violence... like insulting epithets.

Tomek: Racist publications... like spreading racist propaganda... like in Poland that Roma are lazy and thieves. But also, I think that ignorance... ignorance is a manifestation of racism.

Gosia: Sure, ignoring someone or treating them as invisible is racism...

Olga: It would be racism if people were excluded from social life because of their skin colour.

Grazyna: Yes, in Poland, Gypsies are considered to be non-existent.

Agnieszka: I think that another form of racism in Poland is making it difficult for certain ethnic minorities to enter particular professions, such as teachers, university professors, doctors, nurses.

Olga: It's all because of a lack of knowledge in Poland about other cultures.

Agnieszka: It's ignorance... people don't know about other races and cultures, and that ignorance breeds racism... but Poles are also unwilling to get to know others... they don't care to find out about others.

Tomek: Out of this ignorance certain stereotypes grow... people categorise other people by what they look like... by their skin colour. There was a boy once in my class... everyone called him "Rumun" because he had dark skin... so eventually he had to accept it... he even stopped getting offended, because what else could he do?

Grazyna: Yes, the most horrifying racial epithets are what children call other children. Sometimes in the summer, when I open the window, I hear kids calling kids out names... they call each other Rumun, Jews... and those epithets often have some adjectives in front of them, such as dirty Rumun, greedy Jew, thieving Roma.

Olga: Yes, and those kids are very young... often four or six years old... very young!

Transcript, Rehearsal, *Dance as I Play You*, November 12, 2002

I then ask the students to present their sketches.

Sketch 1

Tadzio, Tomek, and Grazyna

Tomek and Grazyna are sitting on the stage floor, back to one another, a gap of a metre separating them, motionless. Tadzio enters from backstage and approaches them... he stands above them, slightly hunched over... hands hanging loosely at his sides. In a very subdued, tentative voice, he utters a "hi" to Tomek... then to Grazyna. Both turn away synchronously. Again he greets them, but they turn away. Tadzio gently grabs Tomek's shoulders and turns him toward Grazyna... then he repeats the same action with Grazyna... attempting to get Tomek and Grazyna to face each other.

Tadzio stops the scene, throws his arms down, and complains that he has forgotten what came next... he asks if they can start over. Grazyna responds with a "hmmmm." Tadzio chuckles uncomfortably. Grazyna explains something to Tadzio, who proceeds to

apologise to Grazyna... Grazyna responds that it is "fine." Tomek assures him that he shouldn't worry. They repeat the sketch.

The sketch runs to where Tadzio turns Tomek and Grazyna around... but they struggle against his adjustments, and turn to face the audience. Tadzio is now standing behind the pair. He approaches Grazyna and Tomek from the front... stumbles with his movements. Grazyna and Tomek burst out laughing and leave the stage. Tadzio, looking embarrassed, sits down against the wall.

I implore the actors not to laugh at each other's work, and explain that everyone should feel safe in the rehearsal room. Grazyna and Tomek assert they were not laughing at anyone, but rather, about "something else."

Irena, Derek, Maria – "I'm Afraid of You"

Irena is lying on the stage on her back, legs slightly bent upwards. She is scratching the air, meowing like a cat... maybe meowing for attention. Derek is standing stooped over in front of Irena, with his back towards her... hands touching the floor. He lifts his leg in the gesture of male dog urinating. Irena begins rolling across the floor, her meows more desperate. As a dog, Derek starts looking around. Maria enters from backstage and approaches the cat and dog. She walks slowly and carefully... stops and watches both the cat and the dog. The cat stands on its hind legs, meowing before Maria... the dog also stands on its hind legs and stands before Maria whimpering. Maria grabs the "paws" of both the cat and the dog, attempting to bring them closer together, but they start fighting and resisting. Derek and Irena claw at each other, meowing and barking louder. Maria continues to hold them. The cat and the dog start pulling away in opposite directions... they pull relentlessly until Maria drops to the floor, motionless on her back. Irena and Derek notice Maria on the floor, go over to her, meowing and whining... sniffing her. There is no response. They begin fighting with each other, meowing and barking and scratching. The cat eventually hurts the dog, which collapses to the floor, whimpering in agony. The cat then lies down on her back beside Maria, and meows contently.

Olga, Gosia, Agnieszka – "Rejection"

Olga, Gosia, and Agnieszka are kneeling in a circle facing one another... hands joined at chest level. They begin gently swaying, repeating, "shaga, shaga, shaga," then stop. A five second tableau. Agnieszka and Gosia brutally push Olga out of the circle, who then collapses to the ground. Agnieszka and Gosia are now kneeling, facing one another, hands joined at chest level. They repeat, "ma, ma, ma," swaying. Now Agnieszka modulates her voice, changes her sound to an excruciating "aaaaaah!" disconnects her hands from Gosia. Leaning her body into Gosia, she shouts at her, sending her to the ground. Gosia covers her ears and withdraws. Olga slowly rises up, comes over to Agnieszka. They are now both on their hands and knees, looking at each other... edging towards one another. Suddenly Gosia gets up and walks energetically through Olga and Agnieszka, separating them. Gosia stands motionless, and watches as Olga and Agnieszka recoil to the ground. Olga and Agnieszka again crawl up to each other, look, and then hug. Then Olga throws her head back across Agnieszka's shoulder and collapses to the ground. Olga crawls over to Gosia, who is standing indifferently, observing the whole situation. Olga slides up Gosia's body, looks at her face and

collapses. Then Gosia comes up to Agnieszka, and looks her directly in the eyes. Agnieszka shouts “aaaaaaah!” at Gosia, who then drops to the ground. Agnieszka remains on her knees, alone. She looks at the audience triumphantly.

Discussion following the scene presentations:

The actors point out that Gosia, Irena, and Derek’s “cat and dog sketch” is very poignant, because it is symbolic of the ways in which people treat one another... just like cats and dogs... where the dogs of society want to make everyone else bark like them. “You have to bark, even though you’re not a dog,” points out Tomek. The actors also suggest that Agnieszka, Gosia, and Olga’s “shaga sketch” is about people’s constant “fight to be on top.” Those who are in more disadvantaged positions, like the Roma or other ethnic minorities, are more bound to lose in such a fight. Finally, in the actors’ view, Tadzio, Grazyna, and Tomek’s “exclusion sketch” speaks of people’s unwillingness to get to know each other. The actors point out there is always that element of fear when people deal with those different from them. People often prefer to avoid such interactions “just in case.”

Magda: So now we have the last theme to explore, which is exoticisation. And now each of you should think about, individually, what you think exoticisation is, and how you think it manifests itself in Poland. Maybe you could think about Roma here... because they are the closest to you... and you can think where you see exoticisation in the context of Roma people... how this occurs.

Tomek: So you want us to do it individually?

Magda: Yes, individually... it doesn’t have to be long, just a little improvisation.

Sketch 2

Grazyna sits on the floor, legs crossed, closely examining her right palm... gently caressing it with her other hand. She traces the lines on her palm with a finger, looking up into space from time to time. It is apparent from her action that she is telling someone’s fortune.

Maria – “I Love You So”

Maria is sitting on a chair, relaxing, slouching as though bored. The energy exerted in this sketch is very minimal. She raises her hand up and down, miming channel surfing with a television remote control... continually flipping from one program to the next. Suddenly she jumps up and screams, “Look! Look!” She throws herself at the imaginary television, kisses and hugs it madly, and then carries it away upstage.

Sketch 3

Gosia stands and repeats, “shaga, shaga, shaga,” addressing the audience. At first she utters the words enthusiastically and with conviction, but with time she grows angry at the audience and begins yelling “shaga! shaga! shaga!” at them. Consumed with rage and frustration, she droops her shoulders and walks away.

HORSES AND ANGELS

Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Horses and Angels*, 1/21/03

Grazyna: I once read an article in a woman's magazine, and they were recommending what a woman should do after completing her education, and how she should find work. So they were saying that she should dress in a particular way, like wearing short skirts above her knees, and that she should have nice cleavage... and when she's sitting down, she should cross her legs in a feminine way... those things were particularly important in an interview, they were saying.

Derek: Basically what it comes down to is that it's not your qualifications that count, but how an employer sees you, and that is particularly important for women.

Olga: Are you suggesting that this is a good thing, and that women should dress like that? And what first impression are they talking about anyway... a first impression should not be about how a person looks... it should be a subconscious impression. Besides, since when should one trust one's first impressions, because a girl could be beautiful, but have no intelligence!

Derek: Are you telling me that? I know that!

Olga: Oh, I thought that you were defending him. I have an article here about how boys see girls... how they think that girls should look, and so on. Here the question is asked, "Do you like when girls are hitting on you?" The response was, "I hate it! I'm fascinated by mysterious women, not women who are pushing themselves on me. Once at a disco party, a chick wanted to pick me up... yuck! I don't like women who are all over me. Once at a party a woman wanted to sleep with me. She simply took her clothes off! She had no dignity. I don't like women who are hitting on me... they have no chance of getting me."

Agnieszka: Those are all such stereotypes... that a woman is being won over by a man, and that a woman should not do that!

Magda: Do you think that maybe biological reasons are being used to explain that?

Olga: Sure they do... that a woman is weaker biologically, and that she needs a man to win her over... that this desire to conquer is innate to a man.

Magda: Yes, like ducks... people used to argue that male ducks preen their feathers and dance to win over their mates... however, now a new theory has been advanced that male ducks are not preening their feathers and dancing to attract mates... it's to protect their nests from predators. So it shows that our stereotypes of how we perceive femininity and masculinity are being carried over to the world of biology where we see other species' male/female behaviours in terms of how we see what we believe is typically male and female behaviour among humans.

Agnieszka: Yes, so there is no objectivity. I have an article about what a Polish man should be like: a Polish man should be better than his wife... he shouldn't drive his wife's car or sleep in her house, because that would not be manly... a man should build a house and have a son... and have a career so that he can say "my house, my son, my woman." I think that it's very difficult to break down those stereotypes, because that's what people believe so much in... and that's how men and women are raised... and it's very difficult to change their perceptions, because that's what they grew up with. I also think that men do prefer to have male babies. I think that most men do, anyway.

Olga: I think that it's a good symbol of men... to build a house, plant a tree and have a son... that's what most men use to define themselves as men.

Grazyna: Well, I'm not sure... in my family, it really is the opposite. Daughters are celebrated, and I know that my father did not want to have a son... but I know that in other families, that really is an issue... that men do get disappointed if their child is not a son... especially their first child.

Olga: I know a friend who was pregnant and gave birth to a girl. Her husband was very angry about that, and he wasn't spending much time with the family or the child. But then she got pregnant again, and she had a boy, and he was so happy that he was drinking for a whole month... and everyone thought that he'd change, but he's still not coming home.

Magda: So you think there is something like that... that men are waiting for a son?

Agnieszka: Oh yeah! Of course I know a lot of people who are waiting for boys, especially men... and if a first child is a girl, then a woman is often forced into getting pregnant again so that they do have a boy. I guess maybe he feels that the male child is more of his own... that he will continue his legacy... whereas a girl would be more seen as a stranger and...

Olga: ...as... a son is a symbol of masculinity... he is a true man because he had a son... it's very strange and very absurd! I think that this is maybe determined by the past... when you had a girl, and she was getting married, you needed to provide her with a dowry as parents... so there really was no use and no gain of having a woman. But a man could really bring a lot into the family, because he would get his wife's dowry and also bring in money himself. I think that there is also a stereotypical view of who a boy should be. When I was young, I used to like to play like boys did, and I used to like burning fires and stuff, and I played with my dad a lot. But no one has ever told me that I was a daddy's boy. It was not until now that I noticed that other girls were not being raised like that... but now I notice that I was in a different situation... that I was encouraged to fix things and play with boy things.

Magda: Derek, did you ever come across such situations?

Derek: No, I don't think that this is the case. I think it depends on the man. I think it depends, and I think it's a personal preference of every man and family. I don't think that you can draw such general conclusions here. I don't think that we can say that all men want this or that... to me it doesn't make sense... if you want to have a child, what difference would it make if it is a girl or a boy?

Magda: Yeah, I think this would be an ideal scenario, but I also think that it used to be like that... at least for my parents' generation.

Olga: It's still like that!

Grazyna: Sure!

Transcript, Rehearsal, *Horses and Angels*, 2/4/03

Olga/Bride and Derek/Groom position Grazyna/Girl 1 on her hands and knees and lift her head up. Olga recommends that Girl's body should be decorated with red carnations. She runs and picks carnations up from the floor and decorates Grazyna's body.

Derek: We could stuff carnations in her mouth... it'll look like she's chewing hay! Then we leave Grazyna alone like that, chewing carnations... and we walk away a bit and laugh hysterically at her.

Agnieszka/

Girl 2: And I could go over to her... look at her....

The actors improvise. When Agnieszka approaches Grazyna, Derek asks Agnieszka to ride Grazyna like a horse now. But after they enact the scene, I ask, "Why is Agnieszka riding Grazyna if she was trying to break away from those stereotypes?" The actors agree, but do not know how to continue.

Agnieszka: Grazyna is chewing carnations... then when I come up to her, she stops chewing... and I could say something.

Magda: We should go back to the scene when the parents are putting her [Grazyna] into the position of a horse.... Grazyna should slam her fist against the floor like a horse stomping her hoof, and then Agnieszka should come over to Grazyna. Agnieszka, you could tell her something about freedom... if Grazyna is a horse, then who is Agnieszka if she has managed to break away from those stereotypes?

I ask the actors to take ten minutes to think about what images and animals come to mind when they think about freedom. After the ten minutes, the actors identify the following images: bird, pigeon, and flight.

Magda: The image of flying would definitely stand out as freedom... but I'm not sure how to insinuate that Agnieszka is a bird... it could be too simplistic. Write down some text that the girls could exchange when they're talking to each other... take twenty minutes, but write it down... work individually.

However, after twenty minutes, the actors have not come up with any text. They explain that they are not very good with writing text... they do not mind doing improvisations and thinking about the action, but they do not want to write, because they do not know how. They suggest I create the text for the performance.

Magda: If I write too much, the project won't be collaborative.

Olga: It will still be collaborative... we're thinking about the movement.

Magda: How about you try improvising the text. Agnieszka, go up to Grazyna.

Agnieszka: Should I first gently stroke her face... because I feel sorry for her?

Magda: Try it.

Agnieszka touches Grazyna gently, takes the carnations out of her mouth, and then sits down on her ... but instead of riding her, she hugs Grazyna.

Magda: Try this text: "I am free and I can fly all over the sky while you are here being ridden like a horse."

The actors laugh at Agnieszka's text. I get frustrated and tell them that it is not surprising we cannot create anything when we constantly mock each other. The actors stop laughing. I tell them that the text is good, and that we should try making it a bit more poetic. I take a piece of paper and write down the following text for Agnieszka: "I'm flying high, across the sky. I have wings that have grown into my heart, and bleed with freedom." Then I ask Grazyna what she would say.

Grazyna: You are free, but some have to stay as horses... to be ridden to death... it is too late for me now.

Magda: The text is good... but we should still bring more poetry into it...

Grazyna and I work on the text for a few minutes, and we come up with the following version: "An angel you are, you should only breathe heaven, because here they tear the wings from angels... they tie reigns upon them... and ride them unto death." The actors like the text.

Magda: The metaphor of angels is interesting because a woman as an angel is not free of stereotypes... but also angels in Poland are associated with freedom.

Agnieszka: It's great... like the horse image... things are not black and white, and we are not doing a play about good guys and bad guys... everyone, to some extent, is free and not free.

We repeat the scene with Agnieszka and Grazyna saying their text... then we run everything we have so far. I give the actors some notes in terms of blocking and physicality and we go home.

HOPE

Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Hope*, 4/2/03

(This document includes a combination of my observations recorded in fieldnotes shortly before and after the pre-rehearsal session, and an excerpt from a transcript of a video-recorded discussion between the Roma women, the actors and me during the pre-rehearsal session.)

Today I arrived forty-five minutes early to set up the studio, but to my surprise, everything had already been set up, including chairs, cookies, cake, and drinks. Agnieszka walked in from the backstage and explained that she really did not have anything to do, so she had come earlier to help me out. I knew that Agnieszka had a lot to do, as she was a full time student at the University of Gdansk, and also had a part time job. . . . I thanked her endlessly.

This morning I had received a phone call from Randia, who had informed me that Ana would not be coming tonight because she had had an angina attack, and had ended up in the hospital. Randia was very upset about Ana's condition, and worried that Ana would not eat anything in the hospital, as the food there was horrid. I promised Randia I would go and visit Ana in the hospital the following day and bring her some "home" food.

When the women arrived at the studio, they all seemed very concerned that Ana was not there, and were worried the rehearsal would not go as well without Ana. I assured them things would work out fine because they also had a lot interesting things to say.

Ewa arrived with a little puppy dog. She said she had found the puppy on the street, half-starved, and decided to take him home. Apparently, her husband was not too keen on having a puppy at home, but Ewa insisted, and the puppy was now staying. "I love dogs... he'll be my best friend... I'll never give him away!" said Ewa.

Magda: In the last rehearsal, you were talking about financial problems... what do you think would have to happen to alleviate your financial problems?

Basia: Jobs...

Randia: ...maybe a miracle...

Zefiryna: ...not a miracle... it'd be enough if we were given work... if I was going to work, then we'd have money, and there'd be one less problem. I think that people would have to start thinking differently about that. . . .

Magda: What do you think is the biggest obstacle for Roma women, in terms of getting an education?

Ewa: It just doesn't happen among us, that a girl would go to school and finish elementary school, and go further... our tradition is such that girls get married early, at thirteen or fourteen years of age... for Polish women it's different.

Basia: A young girls goes to school, and they'll drive up to the school and kidnap her, and we won't know where she is... and then we find out she's already been married.

Magda: Do you know of any Roma women who have a higher education?

Zefiryna: Yes, there's a Roma girl... but she's a mixture... she's half-Polish and half-Roma. She's finishing university... her brother even went further, but her father is Polish.

Magda: How did she manage to do it?

Zefiryna: Because she's a mixture.

Basia: The father is watching her every step.

Zefiryna: If she had a Roma man for a father, for sure she wouldn't have finished school... instead, she'd already be married... but she's part of Polish tradition.

Magda: But her mother is Roma.

Basia: Yes.

Magda: Are her parents educated?

Zefiryna: Her father is educated. You know, she [the mother] was raised in a Roma music troupe... she was traveling with them.

Magda: Do Roma men have better chances of finishing school than Roma women?

Basia: Yes, but they're lazy.

Zefiryna: They don't feel like it, although one of my cousins... he's a man, and he has finished elementary school, and in addition to that, he also has finished locksmith trade school... but he doesn't have work either... he has finished school, but there are no jobs for him.

Transcript, Rehearsal, *Hope*, 4/16/03

(This document includes a combination of my observations made while reviewing a video recording of the rehearsal, a description of the actions and conversations taking place, and a transcript of a video-recorded discussion between the Roma women, the actors and me in the rehearsal.)

We move on to the point in the play where we had stopped in the last rehearsal, after Nadzieja had caught Dennis with another woman on the street, and had decided to leave him. She had started packing her belongings, and was waiting for an opportunity to leave her in-laws' house unnoticed.

Randia decides that since the action is now occurring in Dennis's household, the table needs to be removed from the stage, as the wedding scene is already finished. She reminds the actors that Nadzieja is waiting for her parents-in-law to leave the house so she can escape. The women want us to replay the scene from when Nadzieja returns home and tells her parents-in-law that she has seen Dennis with another woman... to the moment when Nadzieja is deciding to pack her belongings and leaves Dennis. For the next couple of minutes, the discussion becomes very chaotic and incoherent. Randia tries to say something, but the actors are laughing and not listening to her. I tell everyone to be quiet. Ewa becomes irritated and asks why everyone is laughing. I feel frustrated with the actors.

The actors repeat the scene again. Randia tells Derek that when he comes in as Dennis, he should walk with his head down, feeling ashamed. Derek follows Randia's request. Then the argument between Dennis and Nadzieja ensues, in which she chastises him about his lover. During the argument, Dennis denies the whole situation, and Nadzieja violently shoves him to the side. Ewa interjects that Dennis should respond violently when his wife pushes him, as "no man would allow his woman to shove him around like that!" Ewa also decides that it would not be appropriate at all for Nadzieja to push Dennis like that in the presence of her mother-in-law. Randia and Ewa exchange looks, as they seem impatient with the actors' improvisation. I ask the women if a woman might ever hit her husband.

Randia: No, a woman has to be at the bottom...

Basia: ...a husband has to be on top.

Magda: Can I ask Randia, Basia or Ewa to play out the scene for us?

Randia refuses because of the pain in her legs, and Basia is also not enthusiastic about improvising. Ewa is trying to convince Basia to go with her... eventually Basia relents.

Ewa: So I'll be the woman, and you'll be the man.

Basia: Okay.

Ewa: [to Randia] Maybe you'll play the mother.

Randia takes her shoes off and decides to join the other women. Ewa is playing Nadzieja, Randia-Halina, and Basia-Dennis.

Nadzieja: I saw your son with another woman on the street.

Halina: I don't believe you!

Nadzieja: I hit her!

Halina: Where's my son?

Nadzieja: I don't know... he's run away somewhere. Of course he's not going to stand and watch it when I'm hitting that woman. I once forgave him, and I won't be sitting at home alone when he's walking around somewhere!

Basia comes in as Dennis.

Halina: What were you doing? Why are you going out with other women? You have a young woman, and I was guaranteeing you! You can't act like that... I won't fight with Gypsies over you!

Nadzieja: I won't be with you... I won't chase after you... and I won't look for you at nights, and I won't sit at home alone, do you hear?! I'm packing my things up and I'm going home! I'm going to my mom's!

Dennis: You can't!

Halina walks off, while Nadzieja and Dennis are left alone to argue.

Nadzieja: Do you think that you can do what you want? That you can walk back and forth... left and right... when I'm pregnant?! So you think that I'll be more tolerant now because I'm pregnant! [to Randia] You come in now, because you've heard that I'm pregnant.

Randia

as Halina: So what, you're expecting a child, and you're walking around with other women?!

Ewa: Now Dennis keeps his head down, and I say [as Nadzieja] "I won't be with you, and I won't forgive you, and I am going now to my mom's place!" [to Basia] Now I'm going to another room, and you're following me, and I ... oh right, he was supposed to hit her.

Magda: How would such a fight look like?

Randia: You grab her by the hair and throw her down.

Basia tries to grab Ewa by the hair, but she breaks into laughter, and concedes that she does not really know how to do it. Grazyna suggests that maybe the actors will act out the fight, and the women will instruct them on how the fight should look. Agnieszka and Derek come onto the stage. The women tell Agnieszka to yell that she will not stay with him.

Nadzieja

[Agnieszka]: I won't stay with you! No!

Dennis (Derek) grabs Nadzieja by the hair and throws her to the ground. Ewa and Randia tell Derek to leave, while Agnieszka is to remain lying on the floor. Ewa suggests that after a few moments, Nadzieja should get up and come over to Dennis, and tell him, "I won't be with you anyway!" After the actors show the scene again, the women are happy with what the actors have done. The women sit down in the audience, and Ewa says that now the actors should take over the improvisations. Ewa tells the actors that Nadzieja is waiting for Dennis to forget what has happened, and that she is waiting for the right moment to pack and leave him. Ewa says that a woman would usually try to escape when her husband and parents-in-law are away.

The actors repeat the scene from when Nadzieja comes up to her mother-in-law and tells her about Dennis walking in the streets with another woman. Derek incorporates the Roma women's directions and timidly walks in with his head bowed. However, this time Ewa interjects that he should walk in "straight," with his head up. "Be loose, but come in with head straight up... when your mother is yelling at you, then you put your head down." Ewa gets up and physically demonstrates how Dennis should make his entrance. As she walks onto the stage, her body is very strong... straight... assured. The actors repeat the scene with Dennis walking in with his head up. When mother confronts him, Dennis bows his head down. Ewa asks him to scratch himself uncomfortably when his mother is confronting him. Derek scratches himself on the head. The women seem pleased now with Derek's performance.

The actors repeat the scene at Ewa's request. When Dennis, defending himself to his mother, says, "How am I supposed to know whose child is that!" the Roma women in unison interrupt Derek to tell him that he cannot say that. Randia adds another line to Dennis's text when he argues with Nadzieja: "What! You'll take another man, so he can raise his hand at my child? You're not going anywhere!" Ewa wants Agnieszka to keep her head down. I ask the women if Nadzieja is frightened when Dennis is beating her, and if so, how she should express it with her body. The women agree that she would be very scared.

Magda: What do you think... how would we present it to the audience, theatrically, that she's afraid... because we can't show what she's thinking... we have to show that with movement... there are different ways of showing that in theatre.

Grazyna: Maybe we could physically express fear, and then the women could choose.

Ewa: She could have some kind of tics when she sees him approaching... not her mother-in-law, but him. She'd make a gesture to protect herself from him hitting her... because most often what we are scared of is the face... we are scared to be hit in the face... and we're scared about our hair... so she would make gestures to protect herself. We talked about it before... she's covering her face.

Randia demonstrates some gestures. She brings her arm repeatedly towards her face, moving to protect herself. The movements are subtle.

Agnieszka and Derek return to their positions on the stage to try the choreography out. Nadzieja stands, miming "washing dishes." Dennis comes up to her. She moves away from him, slightly raising her hand. Ewa tells her that it is good, but that she could raise her hand a bit higher when trying to protect her face. Agnieszka repeats the action, raising her arm higher. Ewa wants Dennis to ask Nadzieja, "Why are you so afraid? I won't harm you." The women really enjoy how Agnieszka enacts this scene. Agnieszka repeats the scene, making similar gestures, but a little more stylised. Her movements are the same as they were before, but a little slower, and slightly bigger.

Appendix G

Scripts

Dance as I Play You

Premiered at the Cultural Centre for International Cooperation in the Arts,
Elblag, Poland, December 9, 2002.

Various Characters Performed by:

Agnieszka
Grazyna
Olga
Gosia
Derek
Tadzio
Maria
Irena

House lights are low... only far upstage is illuminated.

A person enters through a curtain upstage, head askew to the left... she strolls to upstage centre, turns abruptly right, walks to extreme stage right, drops to her knees... head still askew, staring at the audience, she bends down, begins to slap the floor. She slaps out a rhythm that will be repeated throughout the play. Another person enters, head askew to the right... she reaches upstage centre, turns abruptly left, walks to opposite side of the stage... kneeling, she slaps the floor synchronously... in time, eight people form a line upstage, left to right, slapping the floor rhythmically.

The characters are all wearing black shirts and pants, and identical red vests.

A person breaks away from the line, shuffles on her knees downstage. As she nears the edge of the stage, she rounds back towards upstage and stops... she remains on her knees.

One by one, the characters shuffle on their knees towards the audience... eventually all eight form a circle centre stage, remain on their knees...

In synchrony, all eight rise up, hands on each other's heads, hunched over with heads bowing towards the centre of the circle, forming an impenetrable chain.

Silence.

One person begins clicking with her mouth, mirroring the 'slapping' rhythm at the opening of the performance... soon, everyone is clicking, never deviating from the rhythm/tempo of the circle...

A woman upstage strains her head and body back away from the circle, her scream crescendoing as she leans back. She momentarily strains the integrity of the circle to breaking-point... head upside-down, her eyes glare at the audience... the circle hisses "ssshhhhhHHHHH" as it yanks her back into formation

Two other people attempt to break free from the circle, but fail as well...

Finally the clicking stops... the people throw their hands down, stand erect, and spin 180° on their heels, facing away from the centre. Silence falls. Each person walks slowly away from the circle, premeditatedly assumes their own personal position at either side of the stage. A woman, stage left, crouches as she balances against the black curtain that skirts each side... a man stage left leans against the wall, the folds of the curtain cradling him... he gazes out vacantly, dejected... a woman stage right desperately clutches the curtains in one hand as she leans into a ridge of fabric, seeking support... all eight people maintain tableaux... characters involved in a particular sketch return to their original positions/tableaux following that sketch... characters outside of the action remain in tableau.

During the transition from one sketch to the next, the clicking resumes and then ceases as the action commences

Sketch One

Two women sit downstage centre separately.

Miming, Woman #1 pulls "something" out from her pocket, carefully snorts it deeply into her lungs... flinging her head back, she begins to hum a Polish children's song (Kotek na Plotek [Cat on a Fence]).

Miming, Woman #2 pulls "something" out from her pocket, tourniqueting her arm tightly, and injects "something" into the crook of her arm...grimacing ecstatically, she leans back, joins Woman #1 in humming the song.

The two notice each other, rise up... they come together, their bodies rigid/ confrontational... the words and the delivery of the song become tools of coercion and submission ... there is never any physical contact, only a shift in the dynamics of the struggle... they sing at each other their childhood song, towering above/ cowering beneath one another. Finally, Woman #2 mercilessly spits her song out at Woman #1, sending her dead to the ground.

As Woman #2 walks away triumphant/ grinning, she suddenly clutches at her chest... her face is etched with pain... she stumbles, collapses into a heap.

Characters along the sides click the rhythm, the women shuffle back into their original tableau positions...

Sketch Two

Three women and a man crawl towards centre stage... they continue crawling, turning a circle counter-clockwise... the circle tightens.

Woman #1 leaves the circle, remains at the periphery of the group, watching as the circle closes in upon itself. The people start crawling over one another, pushing those below them into the ground... the group of three become a mass of worms, writhing, struggling.

Woman #1 watches the spectacle, smugly enjoying the spectacle. Eventually she crawls over to the mass, pushes the group of three effortlessly into the ground. The struggle ceases, and the woman rises to stand. Assuredly, Woman #1 returns to her tableau at the side of the stage... the three other people recover and slowly crawl back to their positions at the sides...

tableau...

Sketch Three

A man is curled up right of centre stage.

A woman cautiously crawls over to examine him... she utters a sharp cry, awakening man... he stands up, unsure as to what awoke him. Woman remains on her knees, straining to look up at man. She grunts, but man is completely indifferent, and remains so throughout the sketch. Man starts to walk away... woman falls to the ground, rolls before him... man steps over woman... as man walks, zigzagging throughout the entire space, a tango of indifference ensues. Woman wines/grunts/howls as man steps over/behind/before her.

Finally man stops, crosses his arms. Woman reaches out to him, collapses over his feet. Stunned, man jerks free from woman, looks down at her. Disgusted, he brushes woman aside like a piece of refuse... she rolls effortlessly downstage to the audience... stillness...

The characters along the sides begin clicking the rhythm... man returns to his tableau at the side... woman, dejected, rises, returns to her tableau...

Sketch Four

A man and a woman stand far upstage at opposite corners, facing one another. They mirror each other's actions...it is not clear who is leading, who is following. Miming, man and woman lick ice cream cones.

Two people are crouched facing on another centre stage, close together. They also mirror each other's actions.

The imagined mirror runs vertically down the centre of the stage.

People are licking the floor, excruciatingly slow, meticulously. They notice their reflections and rise up. Man and woman take interest, abandon their cones, and watch people. They move towards people, then walk downstage past people, scrutinising them. People begin moving downstage, hunched over, groaning, bearing the indignities of woman and man's gazes.

Suddenly the game of mirrors reverses... people face out (backs to each other) at man and woman... all four move in synchrony... man/person and woman/person raise their hands... a sequence of movement slowly unfolds...there is never any contact. Suddenly the pairs collapse, hunched over. Man and woman rise up and begin to manipulate (in synchrony) people like marionettes. They "draw" people up, who tentatively stand, then falter and fall hunched over again.

Man and woman spin away from people, backs to each other. They tableau, standing tall.

People slowly recover, slide over to man and woman, examine them. People are now the puppet masters, manipulating man and woman. They direct man and woman down to the ground... subjugate them. Man and woman resist, rise up as people slide to the ground.

Man and woman sweep people off to the sides, return to their tableaux...

Sketch Five

Two women crawl (Girl #1 and Girl #2) to centre stage, face one another. Two women (Woman #1 and Woman #2) and a man stand around the two in the centre, forming a circle.

Girls in the centre crawl/roll around each other, innocently playing and laughing... they do not touch one another, but explore the space between them. As they play, the people on the periphery march around the two, like clockwork.

One-by-one, Women and Man stop, notice Girls in the centre. Woman #1 laughs mockingly... Woman #2 gasps in horror... Man hisses in disgust.

Girls eventually notice the spectators, grow self-conscious. They begin to withdraw from each other, attempt to leave the circle. People on the periphery draw them back into the centre, physically restrain Girls, force their hands to explore each other. People on the periphery indulge in a perverse game of voyeurism, although they are ultimately controlling the action.

As Girls in the centre are forced to touch each other, they grow disgusted/repulsed, and resist one another. People on the periphery back away, stand and observe. Girls stare at each other. Slowly, they come together and stand up...carefully/painfully they come

together, embrace... hold each other momentarily, straining, then repulsed, they scream and collapse. People walk away... Girls return to their tableaux...

Final Sketch

Woman #1 shuffles on her knees to centre stage, huddles close to the floor. She starts chanting "Ore, Ore... Shaba, Shaba" repeatedly (the first two chorus lines of a traditional Roma song), her voice monotone. As she continues chanting, she sits up on her knees, twisting her hands forwards/backwards in a semi-dance.

Woman #2 stands upstage of her, hands covering her face... she turns slowly around in one spot.

Woman #1 stops chanting abruptly, arches backwards. She crawls around Woman #2, stops behind her... slides her hands up along the standing woman's body, grabs her hands from behind. Woman #2 looks at Woman #1, alarmed, frightened. Woman #1 examines Woman #2's left palm, reads it to Woman #2. At first, Woman #2 appears relieved, interested, but as her future is further "revealed", she grows discontent... angry. In a rage, Woman #2 dashes Woman #1 to the ground, steps over her. Woman #1 raises her hand towards Woman #2 in a gesture of supplication, but is abandoned as Woman #2 returns to her tableau along stage left.

After a few moments of silence, Woman #1 re-enters her tableau...

Actors remain in tableau, lights fade to black. The Polish children's song from Sketch One (Kotek na Plotek) issues from speakers.

The actors leave the stage.

Horses and Angels

Premiered at the “*National Festival of the Spoken Word: Is that Love?*” in the Cultural Centre for International Cooperation in the Arts, Elblag, Poland, March 21, 2003.

Dramatis Personae

Performed by

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Groom..... | Derek |
| Bride..... | Olga |
| Daughter (initially Girl #2)..... | Agnieszka (originally performed by Grazyna) |
| Son (initially Girl #1)..... | Shawn (originally performed by Agnieszka) |

Audience members enter from a backstage door. Lights are up... far downstage a bride and groom are kneeling facing the house seats... Bride's wedding train trails behind her to extreme upstage... at the end of the train lies a mass, as yet unidentified

Groom is in black, Bride in white, a bouquet of red carnations in her hands, held to her chest.

Bride and Groom remain in tableau as the audience is seated.

House lights fade... stage lights rise.

Groom: *(mechanically)* I pledge to thee my love, fidelity, and marital integrity. 'til death do us part, so help me so.

Bride: *(mechanically)* I pledge to thee my love, fidelity, and marital integrity, 'til death do us part, so help me so.

Bride and Groom repeat their vows together, full voice... then again, sotto voce.

As Bride and Groom whisper their vows, Groom slowly rises, stands behind Bride... he stoops over her, slides his hands along her arms towards the bouquet, slips them out from Bride's hands, holds them above her head. Dutiful smiles remain pasted upon their faces.

A few moments pass, then Groom ploughs the bouquet into the back of Bride's head. She falls to the ground dumbstruck... immediately recovers, rests on all fours, contorted/twisted. Throughout this sequence, the vows are still whispered.

As Groom walks backwards upstage straddling Bride's train, dashing flowers to the ground stem-by-stem, two new voices grow, singing the vows like cantors. Four arms emerge from the mound beneath the train upstage, gently flap. Groom sits atop the mound, rides it equine...his face is skyward, betraying both pain and ecstasy... he is rising and falling. The two voices continue singing. As Groom settles, the singing ceases... the two voices recite the vows now, bitterly ironic... unabashed mockery.

Bride continues whispering. As the mound's voices dies to a whisper, Groom stands and creeps back along the train towards Bride... his body betrays menace. He violently mounts/crushes the back of Bride as her mouth falls open into a silent scream... she collapses gently beneath his weight. Groom tosses Bride like a rag doll, spins her over and over again, front to back to front to back. With Bride on her back, Groom thrusts her legs open, crouches into her... eyes white. Bride forces out a song... a fairytale commonly sung to Polish children at bedtime.

Bride: From the ashes an ember is flickering at Voytush.
"Come, come here...
I'll tell you a tale...
a long tale.

There was once a princess living,
who had a hut made of butter.
And in that hut,
nothing else but wondrous things."
Psst.... the ember died.

Bride sings the final line endlessly.

While Bride sings, Son and Daughter flop like fish, emerging from out of the mound... arms flailing wildly, they flop on their bellies towards Bride. Eventually they flank her (Son on her right/Daughter on her left). Son/Daughter are scarcely clothed. They stop at Bride's outstretched arms, sucking/clicking for air — fish out of water.

Groom rises slowly, places Bride's legs upon the floor. Bride stretches her hands out to Groom... he carefully turns her to face the audience. Brides arms are dropped lifeless beside her. Groom vigorously nudges Bride forward... she places her hands upon Son/Daughter, leans back as she pulls them onto her breasts... Son/Daughter continue sucking/clicking.

After numerous sucks/clicks Son/Daughter, mouths wide open, disconnect from Bride's bosom as they look at the audience. Aware of being watched, they slide their torsos out towards the audience... faces filled with wonder/anticipation. Suddenly they run up to the audience (opposite sides), hands outstretched as though in supplication... they await the audience's response.

Groom yanks Bride up by the hair. They both take interest in Son/Daughter's "becoming".

Growing disappointed/self-conscious, Son/Daughter withdraw from the crowd, cower as they cover their genitalia. Shame overcomes them... crouching, shivering, they move towards each other (centre stage), huddle together.

Bride/Groom dart downstage, separate Son/Daughter... guide them upstage (Bride and Daughter stage left / Groom and Son stage right).

Bride removes a slip from beneath her dress/ Groom removes an extra suit jacket identical to the one underneath...they forcefully place the articles upon Daughter/Son. Bride tears the veil from her head... Groom picks up the far end of the train... Bride/Groom pull it taut, spanning the width of the stage... they brutally flap the train, front to back, back to front, mechanically.

Daughter/Son are drawn towards the thrashing train (upstage) like moths to an inferno... they stumble towards the train... as they reach it, Bride/Groom sweep the train over their heads, cover them from torso to feet ... gently they cocoon Daughter/Son within the train, binding their stiff, unyielding bodies together, tighter and tighter, eventually pressing them onto their knees.

Bride: *(reciting to Daughter)*
I pledge to be a woman... always...
and forever to remain a woman,
thus help me so.

Daughter: *(repeating reluctantly/obediently)*
I pledge to be a woman... always...
and forever to remain a woman,
thus help me so.

Groom: *(spitting it out at Son)*
I pledge to be a man... always...
and forever to remain a man,
thus help me so.

Son: *(spitting it out reluctantly/obediently)*
I pledge to be a man... always...
and forever to remain a man,
thus help me so.

Daughter/Son repeat their pledges once... as they finish, Bride/Groom savagely rip the train into Daughter/Son's midriffs...as Daughter/Son recite the pledge again, Bride/Groom repeatedly wrench the train, increasing in frequency and brutality. Daughter/Son are barely capable of continuing their litany. Son finally breaks free, flees

downstage and turns back to audience... his arms are straining back and vertically as he crouches forward. Groom struggles to restrain Daughter.

Son: *(gently... dreamily)*
I want to fly.
Do you hear me? I want to fly!

Groom struggles to restrain Daughter. Now envious of Son's emancipation, Daughter answers Son's cries of "I want to fly" by spitting back his vow "I pledge to be a man ...always." She attempts to shame him into returning. Daughter, addressing Son, continues the pledge, speaking over Son... their voices fighting to be heard...

Son: Do you hear me?!
I want to fly... do you hear me?!
High!!!

Son/Daughter shouting at each other, Bride/Groom join Daughter's chastising. As they recite the pledge one final time, Son sings out "HIGH!!!" over and over again, the tone of his voice soaring higher and higher with each repetition. Struck by the final words Daughter/Bride/Groom throw at him, Son collapses head-first into the ground... only his wings remain defiant, skyward.

Triumphant, Bride/Groom scramble to enshroud Daughter in the train. They force her to the ground on her fours. Daughter slaps the ground with her right hand once.

Groom: Look how she stands!
(slaps her haunch)

Bride: *(stroking her)*
How noble!

Groom: *(caressing her cheeks)*
So elegant!

Bride: She'll never fade...

Groom: ...never grow old!

Bride: ...never wither!
(looks her over)
Check out her jowls!

Groom: And what fine teeth she has!!!

Bride: Not too big...

Groom: ... not too small...

Bride: ... not too yellow...

Groom: ... not too white...

Groom/Bride:
... just right for a smile
from ear to ear...

They draw Daughter's mouth back into a smile with their fingers.

Bride jumps up, sits down upon Daughter's back... throwing her right arm over Groom, she leans back and pulls her shoes off from her feet... she dangles them tauntingly before Daughter... drops them past Daughter's face... Bride/Groom scramble for the shoes, slam them onto the floor... force them onto Daughter's hands... they rise up, grab Daughter's legs, and haul them up... Daughter is now standing on her hands, in high heels... a smile is plastered across her face.

Groom: Obedient!

Bride: Faithful!

They pump and flex Daughter's legs.

Groom: And so agile!

Groom/Bride:
She'll be so great to ride!

Daughter violently stamps her shoed right hand five times

Groom clicks to Daughter, then both Groom and Bride trot her over to the wall downstage right as they sing.

Groom/Bride:
Once a Krakowiak
had seven horses,
he went to war
and was left with one.

Finishing their song, they toss Daughter's legs to the ground... tableau.

Pause/silence.

Daughter slowly rises up on her knees facing the wall... looking up, she hammers the shoes against the wall numerous times, then falters... she slides back to the ground, resigned. Tableau.

Groom/Bride spiritedly retrieve Daughter's legs, trot her over to the opposite wall as they sing their song again. As they finish singing, they toss Daughter's legs to the ground.

Daughter slowly rises up... hammers the wall... freezes.

Bride/Groom turn away from Daughter, walk side-by-side upstage...then they walk to opposite corners of the stage and recede behind black curtains.

Son awakens, strains to rise. Daughter remains lifeless, hands against the wall. Head bowed, arms behind him, Son treads softly over to Daughter... scrutinizes her. Dismayed, he straddles her back, gently rests his hand upon hers against the wall. Daughter collapses. Son tenderly takes hold of her ankles, excruciatingly drags her prostrate, with shoes in hand, to centre stage. Daughter's head is downstage. Son crouches over Daughter, snatches her head up from behind, her empty gaze falling upon the audience.

Son: *(distantly)*
I'm flying high, across the sky.
I have wings that have grown into my heart,
and bleed with freedom.

Daughter: An angel you are...
you should only breathe heaven,
because here... here they tear the wings from angels...
they tie reigns upon them,
and ride them unto death.

Son rests Daughter's head onto the ground, hauls her up by her arms... he shakes Daughter free from the shoes binding her.

Son: Come... let us go to heaven.

Son slides Daughter under his legs. Daughter rises to stand and Son tears the wedding train from her. Gathering it into his arms, he throws the train downstage, as far as he can. Son stands at Daughter's side, takes her hand... together they crouch, hands raised behind them skyward... they turn/dance in a circle as they sing.

Son/Daughter:

To heaven, I'm going to heaven,
upon a path of red roses.
I'll kick at the gates
with my boots,
with the help of my guardian angel.

As they sing a third round, Bride/Groom (now corpses) emerge from behind the curtains, heads concealed / arms outstretched, shouting over Son/Daughter... the song reaches a climactic pitch... they all freeze.

Son/Daughter break the tableau, rise up, dreamily.

Daughter: Is this heaven?

Son: Heaven.

Daughter: Only corpses here.

Son: Corpses, but they have wings!

Daughter: Like us!

Son: Just like us!

Daughter/Son reach out towards the standing corpses of Groom/Bride... the corpses stumble away... turn gracefully, swoop to the floor gathering roses in their wings. Groom/Bride extend bouquets of roses to Daughter/Son, inviting them... Daughter/Son succumb, walk over to the roses. Groom/Bride cover the faces of Daughter/Son with hands, pry open their mouths... they ram the roses into the gaping mouths of Daughter/Son who groan in agony.

Groom/Daughter—Bride/Son join hands, waltz slowly as they hum the preceding song... the pairs separate... Daughter/Son turn away, face the audience... Groom/Bride wrench the slip/suit jacket up over the heads of Daughter/Son who struggle to slip free... restrained/resigned, Daughter/Son press their faces into the articles of bondage... Groom/Bride hold these articles like reigns, "ride" Daughter/Son.

Daughter: I'm so cold!

Son: So cold!!!

Daughter: They've muzzled our mouths!

Son: Sealed them!!!

Daughter: They've put reigns upon us!

Son: Reigns!!!

Daughter: Clippity-clop... clippity-clop... we're off to the land of corpses.

Son: Clippity-clop... clippity-clop... we're off to the land of corpses.

Daughter: Clippity-clop... clippity-clop...

Son/Daughter:

(shouting)

...we're off to the land of corpses.

Pause... stillness.

Daughter: Then there is no heaven?

Son: There is, but not for us.

Daughter: Now what?

Son: We'll build our own heaven,
where there are no reigns or muzzles.

Daughter: Where?

Son: Upon the dead!

Daughter: Upon the dead!

As they repeat "upon the dead", Son/Daughter slip free from their reigns, hold them in their hands as they shuffle across the ground downstage... they drag Bride/Groom centre stage... pause... they jerk the reigns free from Bride/Groom, topple them into a heap, Bride over Groom.

Rising, they glare at the corpses. In a sudden burst of rage, Son/Daughter slam the reigns mercilessly into the heap. They freeze momentarily... release... they move downstage to the wedding train, unfurl it... ceremoniously, they cover the corpses as they sing.

Son/Daughter:

Heaven, we shall build heaven,
upon a path of red roses.
The dead will pry the gates open,
with the help of my guardian angel.

As they repeat the song, Son/Daughter each pick up a red carnation, place them upon the dead. With each repetition of the song, the pitch of the singing rises. Son/Daughter stand over the corpses, crouching, hands outstretched skyward... eventually, the corpses' arms reach up and attempt to haul Son/Daughter down into the heap... they release Son/Daughter. This sequence repeats several times. Each time, the pitch of the song rises as Son/Daughter struggle to break free...the song then tapers to a whisper... lights fade to black.

the end

Hope (Nadzieja)

Premiered at the Cultural Centre for International Cooperation in the Arts,
Elblag, Poland, May 31 and June 1, 2003

Dramatis Personae

Performed by

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Zafira (Mama)..... | Olga |
| Kało (Papa)..... | Shawn |
| Nadzieja (Zafira and Kało's daughter)..... | Agnieszka |
| Taisa (Nadzieja's older sister)..... | Maria |
| Dennis (Nadzieja's fiancée/husband)..... | Derek |
| Halina (Dennis's mother)..... | Grazyna |
| Zosia (Dennis's sister)..... | Gosia |

Scene 1

Nadzieja's funeral. Taisa, Zafira, Halina, Dennis, Zosia and Kało sit randomly in the audience, in tableau, dressed in black with glowing tea lights cupped in their hands. Downstage-centre stands a pedestal with a white shroud flowing down its side. Nadzieja lies upon it, dressed in a gauzy white dress, hands folded upon her chest. A white scarf covers her hair... gold jewellery adorn her ears, neck, and wrists... her face and hands are chalk-white. The lights are low... a sombre, warm amber glow washes over Nadzieja.

The lights brighten slightly... Kało rises.

Kało: Let us rise,
in honour of our sister.
May she rest in peace,
now and forever, Amen.

Zafira rises and repeats Kało's prayer. One by one (Taisa, Halina, Zosia, and Dennis) they rise and recite the prayer. As Dennis finishes, the words are repeated in rounds, a cascading chorus of mourning. Nadzieja suddenly sits up stiffly... her head jerks towards the audience.

Nadzieja: *(to the audience)*
Welcome, ladies and gentlemen...
thank-you for coming...
thank you so much!
Wait a minute... please don't leave!
Really, there is nothing to be afraid of....

you'll lay me to rest soon enough.
Relax, there is no reason to fret,
I only wanted, before I take-leave,
to share a few words with you... about my life...
to reminisce, because, of course,
this could be my last chance to do so.

I am a Roma woman, who happened to live
at the same time and place on Earth as you have.
Excuse me?
But of course, my dear ladies and gentlemen...
...of course, this is merely theatre!
I was created by Roma women from our town...
based on their life experiences and memories.
Oh, and they collaborated with a few actors... an anthropologist...
(grandiosely)
...it is what you call "ethnographic theatre"!

I would like to share with you fragments from my life...
traces forever etched in my memory.
There is a lot I DON'T remember,
because life has raced past me
like a panting dog.
Sometimes I recall only faces... sometimes hands...
or only a scent... yes, a scent...
the scent of my life fades and returns,
like the rotting stench of November leaves.

(smiles)
Welcome, Ladies and Gentlemen...
the pleasure is all mine!

Nadzieja carefully, obsessively smooths out the shroud on the pedestal, arranging it like a table. Then she stands before the table, leaning over it, addressing the audience.

Nadzieja: Let us begin!

Kało and Taisa pass their candles over to audience members, leave their seats. Kało is wearing black trousers, a black blazer, and a white shirt. Taisa wears a black skirt, blazer and camisole, a long, light patterned headscarf, and gold earrings and necklace. Taisa walks to the upstage-right corner, grabs a broom, and stands in tableau. Kało walks downstage-left, picks up a newspaper, sits cross-legged, and tableaux. Nadzieja sits down at the table, pulls out a book from under it, opens it, and leans as she reads, in tableau. All three characters remain frozen momentarily, until Kało cracks open his paper, Taisa swings her broom, and Nadzieja turns a page simultaneously.

Taisa: Nothing! All you do is study, study, study...
you'll study yourself inside out, Madame Professor.
Now get cleaning!
(whining)
Help me out!

Nadzieja: In a minute!

Kało: *(annoyed)*
Help your sister!

Nadzieja: What, can't she do it herself?!

Protesting, Nadzieja gets up, grabs the broom from her sister and starts cleaning.

Taisa: When you have a husband, you'll have to do this.

Nadzieja: I'll find a husband that'll do it for me.

Taisa: Where?

In a state of extreme agitation, Zařira storms onto the stage. Silent, she sits at the table. She is wearing a black dress, red headscarf, and gold earrings.

Kało: What're you angry about?

Zařira: I've been to the doctor.

Taisa: And so? Need more pills?

Zařira: Yes, as always.
There goes my pension!
Now what'll we live off of?

Kało: The girls'll go out'n and make some money.

Zařira: *(to her daughters)*
You heard your father.

Taisa: All right... Nadzieja, let's go fortune-telling.

Nadzieja and Taisa leave.

Zařira: *(to Kało)*
All you do is sit...
you send the children out,
while you... you do nothing!

Kalo: What am I supposed to do?

Zafira: Go out and sell something, like frying-pans...
You always expect your wife and daughters to feed you.
Go out to the villages and trade!

Kalo: They won't buy anything!
What am I to do if they don't buy,
and there's no work?

Silence. Daughters come in.

Taisa: I'm not fortune-telling anymore!

Angry, Taisa leaves.

Zafira: What happened?

Nadzieja: Someone swore at her out there.

Nadzieja gives Zafira a handful of money. Zafira takes the money and holds it in her hand. She pauses... reflects.

Zafira: What am I supposed to spend this on?
We have to eat something.

Nadzieja: But I need books.

Zafira: Books! Books can wait.
We'll spend it on food,
and my pension'll pay for my pills.

Nadzeja: *(to all the characters)*
Enough!

The characters all tableau... Nadzieja approaches Zafira.

Nadzieja: Mama, if only I could start over...
I'd be a dog,
a sweet, beautiful dog.
You'd pick me up and hold me,
take me for walks,
and feed me every morning.
I'd stand on my hind legs and beg for scraps.
Perhaps a miserable crumb of happiness
would drop to the floor.

If only I were a dog, Mama!

(to the audience)
The guests came soon after.
I remember that day....
stifling hot...
they walked into my life,
just like that,
and settled there for good.

Halina and Zosia walk onto the stage from the audience. Both are wearing long black dresses, headscarves (Halina wears blue, Zosia red), and gold earrings. They stand downstage-centre.

Halina: Good-day... good-day!

Zafira: Taisa, Nadzieja,
put the water on for tea... we have guests!
(to the newcomers)
Good-day. Please have a seat.
What brings you here?

The guests sit down. Kało joins them at the table.

Halina: Well, we were just passing through... trading....
staying in a hotel....
we asked around where the Gypsies are in town,
and someone showed us.
And are those your daughters... yours?
But they're still girls, aren't they?

Zafira: Well, the older one, Taisa, already had a husband....
but she left him.

Taisa and Nadzieja serve tea. They stand together upstage.

Halina: *(pointing at Nadzieja)*
But this one's a girl?

Kało: Yes, a girl.

Halina: So she's available... the youngest one?

Zafira: She's young... there's still time.

Halina: You're not raising her for yourself,
are you?
(pause)
Listen, I won't keep the cat in the bag any longer...
we came here because we have business with you...
we have a son... you have a daughter...
give us Nadzieja, won't you?

Zafira: But she's still young.... only 14 years!

Halina: So she's young!
(sarcastic... confident)
Where's the problem?
We were young, too, when we married... yes?
There's only one little thing...
our son had a wife already...
they're separated now.

Kalo: But our daughter is only a girl!

Zafira: And she deserves new shoes!

Halina: I understand,
but sometimes, old shoes fit better...
and he's the wiser for it, too.
She's not the first,
and she won't be the last to get married at such an age.
(to Nadzieja)
We'll bring him in so you can take a look.
(to her parents)
We'll treat her well.
If she's obedient, and a good hostess,
she'll do fine...
it'll be just like with mom and dad...

Nadzieja: I don't want to...
my husband's still growing up!

Zafira: *(to Halina)*
I'll let her father decide.

Kalo: We need to see the boy.

Halina: Zosia, call your brother.

Zosia calls across the table into the audience "Dennis!"

Zosia: This is Dennis.

Zosia joins Taisa and Nadzieja upstage. Dennis sits at the table between Halina and Kało. He is wearing black trousers, a white shirt, and a blazer.

Halina: As I said, he's divorced...
the woman left him for another man.
He's not an idiot...
he's capable, practical...
knows how to lead his head.

Zafira comes up to Nadzieja and leads her to the table.

Zafira: This is my daughter.

Halina: *(to Dennis)*
Do you like her?
You were already married...
don't make the same mistake twice.

Dennis: I like her...
if she's a good wife, we'll get along well.

Zafira: And you Nadzieja?

Nadzieja: No!

Halina: That's a shame...
but, we can't force her.

Kało: Maybe when she's older...
she's still too young.

Halina: No harm done...
we won't push things.
But hey, no bad will come
if we share a drink together.
(to Dennis)
Go get some vodka.

Nadzieja: *(to the audience)*
Hold it!
Let's stop here.

Everybody freezes.

Nadzieja: *(comes up to Dennis and leads him away from the table... Dennis tableaux)*

Dennis went out to get the vodka...
and me...?

(recollecting)

Just a minute... ahhh, I know,
Zosia and me... Zosia's his sister... we went to the store.

(goes to Zosia)

She wanted to go to the store... not me...

I don't recall what she bought,

but I do remember those cold, cold hands on my heart...

I felt ill.

(desperately to Mother)

Mama, I don't want to!

Mama, where were you when I....?

Nadzieja and Zosia flank Dennis, backs to the audience, enter tableau. After a few beats, everyone resumes the action.

Zafira: *(to Halina)*
You're heading home now?

Halina: We'll walk around town a day or two,
trade a bit...

Zafira: ...did you sell anything yet?

Halina: It's not too bad here... one can sell a bit,
as long as you have good stuff...
and a car, of course...
then you can load it up and go to apartments... villages.

Zafira: Without a car you can't move.

Silence.

After a while Zafira starts looking around.

Zafira: Where's Nadzieja?
(calling for her)
Nadzieja!

Taisa: Nadzieja went somewhere with Zosia.

Halina: And my son's been gone for so long.

Nadzieja: *(as if in a dream)*
Mama, I don't want to!

Nadzieja takes Zosia by the hand and forcefully pushes her towards the table where the guests sit.

Nadzieja: *(to Zosia)*
What did you tell them?
Do you remember?
Say it....
say it once again!

Zosia: *(reluctantly at first, then matter-of-factly)*
Dennis kidnapped Nadzieja.

Nadzieja: *(to Zosia)*
Yes...
(to herself)
Dennis... kidnapped... Nadzieja...
(to the audience)
Once I saw a dog...
(runs downstage)
outside, behind the fence...
basking in the sun....
only a puppy.
A man came up to it...
grabbed its snout and smashed its teeth in.
"You wretched bitch!" he yelled.

Nadzieja utters a pitiful yelp...runs downstage-centre, and picks up the imagined dog from the ground... she cradles it, rocking.

Shhhhh....Shhhhh.....Shhhhh

Nadzieja suddenly drops her hands.

(gently)
Run away....
(pauses)
I washed my hands in a puddle.
(she stares into space, looking at the "dog")
Come back girl... come back!

Nadzieja whistles... silence... she continues to stare... then she addresses her father.

What happened then, Papa?

Everyone steps out of tableau, except Dennis. Zosia returns to the table.

Kało: *(troubled)*
The love of god.

Halina: *(to Zafira)*
You didn't want to give her in good will,
so he took her out of anger.
She must have liked him...
and he liked her, too.
If she didn't want to, she wouldn't go.
They ran off, so now they'll stay together for good.

Kało: Can you guarantee that he won't leave her....
that she'll be happy?

Halina: I give you my word...
we'll do everything to keep them together.
He took her, to be with her...
and we will work hard to keep them together,
so they can grow old together as husband and wife.
There's no need to worry.

Kało: Well, as long as no harm comes to her.

Halina: We will bring her no harm....
but as in any marriage, young or old,
a woman must be punished if she asks for it.

Zafira: But Nadzieja's still in school...
she knows nothing yet!

Halina: Then we'll teach her....
if she is willing, we'll teach her everything.
We won't mistreat her... or beat her...
she'll only learn what is for her own good.

Dennis steps out of tableau, approaches Nadzieja, smiling... he takes her hand, and together they come to the table. Nadzieja kisses the hands of Kało, Halina and Zafira ... Zafira hugs her and cries. Dennis goes to kiss Kało's hand... Kało refuses, pulls his hand away... Dennis kisses his mother's hand... Zafira turns away as he takes her hand.

Halina: Well, my dear children,
you are married, so now you must live together
in peace and stability.

Zafira removes the scarf from her neck and binds the hands of the bride and groom together...

Zafira: I give this blessing,
so that you'll grow old together...
so that I live to see my grandchildren, and great grandchildren...
and so that you dance at your children's
and grandchildren's weddings.

Kalo comes up to Dennis.

Kalo: Son-in-law...
because you took my daughter for your wife,
be a good husband to her,
so that she suffers no harm.
May you have a good life together,
as we shall with you,
so help us God.

Everybody chants, "So help us God."

Nadzeja: *(looking out at the audience, distantly, she repeats the words of her father)*

So that she suffers no harm...
(everybody freezes)
may you have a good life together....

*(a trace of a smile... she emerges from her reverie,
addresses the audience)*

And so? What do you think, dear Ladies and Gentlemen?
Are you enjoying my life?
Compelling stuff?
(ironic)
Not too boring?
But maybe not exotic enough?
Well then, how about some music!
Someone once said that the Gypsy culture
makes our country beautiful!

Nadzieja claps her hands. Roma music plays. Dennis, Nadzieja, Zafira, Halina, Zosia, Taisa and Kało sit down at the table. Nadzieja stands and waits for the guests to sit down.

Nadzieja: Everyone had a good time at the wedding.
Mama asked Dennis to dance...
then she asked me...
everyone else began dancing.
(to Dennis)
Come Dennis, let's dance,
like we did that day... remember?

She takes Dennis's hand, and leads him upstage, behind the table.

Dennis moves his hands, slowly, dream-tempo... snapping, clapping with the music. Nadzieja dances very slowly around him.

Nadzieja: *(to Kało)*
Papa... a toast!

Kało: A toast to the newlyweds!
To their health!

Kało pours vodka. The guests drink to the newlyweds. Suddenly, as she is dancing, Nadzieja stumbles close to the floor, utters a sickening shriek, like a dog in agony. The music stops. The guests turn their heads. They rise and slowly surround Nadzieja as they watch keenly. Nadzieja extends her hands towards the floor.

Nadzieja: Little one, come here...
what are you doing here, girl?
(picks up the dog)
I nearly stepped on you.
C'mon... gimme your snout...
is it better now?
You've got a cut...
but it's better now, right?
Doesn't hurt anymore?
I saw him beat you...
poor thing.
Where's your Master?
You have a Master... yes?
He's probably looking for you right now.
Go... go to your Master...
good puppy... good girl.
(she sends the dog off)

(to Dennis)
I nearly fell... remember?
Poor puppy... scurrying from corner to corner,
through the entire wedding...
it drove you crazy...
“Throw this mutt out!” you yelled.
It left on its own, at night...
but the smell... it stayed forever...
you bitched for years, “It reeks like a dog!”
And now?
Can you smell it?
Can you?

Nadzieja forces a laugh.

Her laughter breaks as Halina comes up to her.

Halina: Attention everyone...
I would like to ask my daughter-in-law
to sing something for us.

Through a fog, Nadzieja starts to sing.

Nadzieja: O-ray, O-ray, shaba-daba-da amor-ay,
Hey-amor-ay, shaba-daba-da,
O moor-ya-teer, O sha-tra-teer,
Ch-havo, ch-hasa, hel-chee-ahhh.
O-ray, O-ray, shaba-daba-da amor-ay...

Blackout. Nadzieja stops singing. Everyone is in tableau. Shouting ensues.

Voice #1: What’s going on here?

Voice #2: We want to eat... give us a drink!

Voice #3: It isn’t a restaurant! Please leave! This is a wedding.

Voice #4: *(taunting)*
What... leave? What... leave?!!

Voice #5: Hey boys, over here!

Voice #6: The Gypsies are having a party... dirty pigs!

Voice #7: Thieves!

Voice #8: Goddamned darkies!

Voice #9: Take your fuckin' party into the woods!

Voice #10: Police!

Voice #11: Call the police!

Voice #12: Police!

The disturbance settles. The lights rise. Props are scattered across the stage. The pedestal leans up-ended against a wall. The characters are in tableau. Zafira sits in the middle of the stage, wringing the white tablecloth in her hands, a red scarf staining a section. Kało is lying on the floor...twisted in agony...mouth agape. Dennis stands at the pedestal resting his head on it. Taisa is at the wall with a pot in her hand. Halina and Zosia stand in a corner huddled together. Nadzieja is standing, surveying the destruction... she is the only one out of tableau.

Nadzieja: *(to the audience)*
The police said it was our fault...
as usual.
(coming up to her father)
Papa's skull was fractured...
his jaw smashed...
but he never stopped singing... no...
he's been singing until today...
about freedom...
as the words lash his tongue.
(to Kało)
Sing with me Papa...

Nadzieja approaches Kało... they begin to sing "Ore, ore".

After two verses, Dennis comes up to Nadzieja.

Dennis: Let's go home!

Nadzieja: Enough!

Dennis: *(insistent)*
Let's go home!

Nadzieja runs up to her pedestal, wrenches it down to the floor from the wall. She sits on it as she did in the opening moments of the play.

Nadzieja: Enough! It's finished!
I don't remember any more.
Good night, Ladies and Gentlemen...
once again, thank-you for coming...
how nice it was to muse over my life together,
before this road of ash.

Nadzieja lies down on the pedestal.

Dennis runs up Nadzieja, grabs her, and suspends her above the pedestal.

Dennis: Let's go home!

Nadzieja: Leave me!
I've forgotten everything!

Halina, Zosia, and Taisa come up to Nadzieja.

Halina: Nadzieja, we have to go now.

Zosia: Come Nadzieja...

Taisa: ...come.

Nadzieja: Leave me alone!
Mama, I don't want to!
I forgot it all...

(to everyone)
Leave!

As Nadzieja pleads with her mother, Zafira forces Nadzieja's hands across her chest, immobilizing her. Nadzieja strains to get free, but in vain.

Zafira: (holding Nadzieja's hands)
*Nadzieja hasn't been herself recently....
she is easily agitated ...
and loses control ...
it's as if nothing can reach her ...*

Taisa: ...she's very unstable...

Zafira: ...she talks to herself...

(addressing Kałó, who assumes role of Doctor)
You have to help her, Doctor.

Zosia: Please, doctor.

Kało
(as Doctor): I'll do everything I can, dear Ladies.

Dennis: And now?
Do you remember?
No?
Well, you'll remember soon enough.

(looking at his in-laws)
Your parents and sister left right after the wedding...
and we went home.

Nadzieja's parents and Taisa leave towards the audience. Dennis picks up Nadzieja like a mannequin, and carries her upstage left. He places her on her knees, walks centre stage and watches her. Halina and Zosia come up to Nadzieja.

Halina: Yes... you always sat here...
never saying a word...

(she forces Nadzieja into a sitting position)
...like this.... good.
What happened then, Zosia?

Zosia: That dog... cursed mutt!

Halina: Oh yes... that dog!
What then, Nadzieja?

Nadzieja's eyes are faraway... she rises onto her knees, shuffles a few paces... addresses the dog.

Nadzieja: Come little one....
Where were you?
How did you find me?

(she looks the dog over)
What is it?
What's wrong?
Let's see...

(pause)
Your snout is all cut up, again...
Poor puppy...
What happened?

(pause)
What? What are you saying?
Louder... I can't hear you.
You don't want to go back home?
You'd like to stay?
Why baby?... Why?
Well, tell me... don't be afraid.
What?... Who?...
Your Master?... Your Master is beating you...?
What are you saying?
Ahhh....
You have little ones on the way?
Don't cry, baby... don't cry...
What?

(pause)
Of course you can stay with me.....
(pause)
Hush girl, hush...
I promise... you'll never have to go back...
never....

Nadzieja holds the dog on her lap and rocks back and forth. Dennis comes up to her and watches her.

Dennis: What's with you?

Nadzieja: Where were you?
I've waited two whole nights for you.
I'm leaving!

Halina: Where were you?
You might be young, but you still have your responsibilities.
You're no longer a single man!

Dennis: I was out with the boys.

Halina: Apologise to your wife!

Nadzieja: I won't stay with him any longer.

Dennis: Where'll you go?

Nadzieja: Home... I'll be happier there.

Dennis: *(mockingly)*
Home... to those poor bums?

Nadzieja: I'll leave you...
and I'll raise the child myself!

Dennis: Child? What child?

Nadzieja: I'm pregnant.

Halina: You're having a baby, Nadzieja?
Well, you'll have to be more sensible than that!
You can't leave him now....
a child needs its mother and father.

Dennis: What... you'll take another man,
so he can raise his hand to my child?!!
You're not going anywhere!

Halina hits Dennis in the face.

Halina: (to Dennis)
Stay out of this!
(to Nadzieja)
You can't leave...
you can't support a child on your own...
and anyway, what are people going to say?

Nadzieja: I saw your son with another woman on the street.

Halina: I don't believe you!

Nadzieja: I hit her.

Dennis: She was my friend,
and Nadzieja threw herself on her,
wild-like, with her teeth bared!
Something's wrong with her mom.

Nadzieja: A friend?
So why were you fondling her then?

Dennis: Shut your mouth!

Dennis grabs Nadzieja's hair and throws her to the ground. Holding her by the hair, Dennis hits her in the face three times. Nadzieja yelps like a dog. Dennis slams her face into the ground and releases her.

Dennis: Freak!

Zafira comes down from the audience.

Zafira: Enough!

(everyone freezes)

Nadzieja will come home with us.

Zafira reaches for Nadzieja, who picks herself up from the ground and walks towards her mother on all fours. They huddle together. Nadzieja curls up into her mother's arms like a dog... panting... whimpering... Zafira rocks Nadzieja... comforts her.

Zafira: It's alright... shhhh...
it's alright now, my baby...
everything'll be fine....
let me see your face...
Where does it hurt?
It'll heal...
you'll come home with us...
you'll have your baby....
we'll help you out.
What? What are you saying?

*(she tenderly brings her ear close to Nadzieja's mouth...
strains to listen)*
Of course you won't go back to him...
never...
shhshhhshsh.

As Zafira rocks Nadzieja, Dennis and Halina approach them.

Dennis: Where is Nadzieja?

Zafira conceals Nadzieja with her body.

Kało: You can't have my daughter!

Zafira: *(to Halina)*
You gave us your word...
you stood behind your son...
and this is the state she comes home in!

(to Dennis)
Nadzieja won't be going home with you!

Dennis: I'm not leaving this house without my wife!

Nadzieja rises and looks at Dennis.

Nadzieja: Papa... Mama....
Dennis promised me he'll change...
that this'll never happen again....
I'll go.

Dennis: We'll go abroad and declare asylum...
life'll be easier for us there....
I'll sell cars.
Here we'll never accomplish anything!
Maybe all of you'll come with us.

Nadzieja yells out: "We went!" She speaks quickly... erratically... trying to recall everything in the greatest detail.

Nadzieja: Yes, we went...
now, I remember...
we all went...
wait a minute... no, not all of us...

(she whistles for the dog)
Girl, where are you...
come!
I have something to tell you...
just don't cry... I beg you... please don't cry.

(angrily)
Why are you blubbing?!
I'll take you... later!
Shut your mouth!!

(crying, Nadzieja listens to the dog)
What?! Well then go!
Go... now!
Go already!
Go!!!

Nadzieja goes into tableau as she shouts at the dog. After a pause, Zafira, Kało Taisa and Zosia come out of their tableaux.

Zafira: *(to the audience)*
They refused us asylum...
we lost so much money.
(to Kało)
Now what?

Kało: We went into it blindly...
if only we'd asked around.

Halina: Who could've known?!

Dennis: Don't worry...
we'll manage.
We'll buy something here...
sell something there...
our girls'll buy blouses at the warehouse...

Taisa: We'll manage...

Zosia: Everything'll be fine.

Nadzieja comes out of tableau, repeats "Everything'll be fine." She lies down on the floor downstage in a foetal position. Dennis comes over to her, swaggering... drunk... he lies down beside her, brutally shoves her aside.

Dennis: Move over!!

Nadzieja: Leave me alone... you stink!

Dennis shoves her violently once again.

Dennis: You smell like a bitch!
You filthy rag!

Dennis jumps up in a rage, grabs Nadzieja's hair... he cuffs her in the face, throws her to the ground, and then kicks her relentlessly. He leaves in a rage. Nadzieja lies motionless on the ground. Characters remain in tableau.

Nadzieja awakens, growls... makes licking sounds. Rising, she walks away in a daze... notices the dog beside her.

Nadzieja: You came back!
(listens to the dog)
What? No... there's nothing wrong with me...
(listens)
No... nothing hurts anymore...
I don't want anything... thanks...
(listens)
well, maybe fetch me some water...
yes, cold please.
(pause)
Thanks.
(drinks)
Why did he beat me?
I don't know... as usual, he came home drunk...
... reeked..
(Nadzieja pauses, smiles)
You know? I thought you wouldn't come back...
I missed you... I'm so sorry puppy that I left you.
What? You're not angry with me?
Good dog...
but where were you?
(listens)
You didn't go back to your Master? Smart dog!
Now we'll be together.
Lie down here... yes, here... like that...
it's still early...

Nadzieja falls asleep cuddling the dog. Halina, Dennis and Taisa step out of tableau.

Dennis: Where is Nadzieja?

Halina: Not here.

Dennis: What do you mean, not here?

Zosia: See what you've brought upon yourself?!
She's left you.
What're people goin' to say now?

Dennis: She'll come back...
she has no choice...
we have a child.

Halina: Child... child...!
You were away day and night... and now, a child?
We've got ourselves a father...!!!

Nadzieja snaps out of her tableau, and yells "Quickly!" as she runs over to the pedestal...she moves it centre stage, with one end facing the audience. Nadzieja straddles the pedestal.

Nadzieja: Quickly!
Where's a rag?!
Yes, here... come here.

(she clicks her mouth for the dog to come)

Don't be afraid...

we'll manage.

*(she lifts the dog off the floor
and places it before her on the pedestal)*

Lie down.

Breathe, like this...

(Nadzieja inhales and exhales)

good...

one more time....

(Nadzieja inhales and exhales)

It hurts?

Not much longer.

*(Nadzieja runs over to stage right...
scoops up a handful of water, runs back,
and pours it on the white cloth)*

Good dog... yes...

breathe... that's it!

(she inhales and exhales)

In... out... inhale... exhale...

(Nadzieja looks at the dog)

Wake up! Wake up!

What're you doing?!

Don't leave me!

You filthy carcass!

(Nadzieja weeps... violently shakes the pedestal)

Can you hear me?

Hear me....?!

*(she slaps the water on the pedestal with her open hands several times...
then a smile is slowly etched upon her face)*

You're alive... alive... good dog!

(Nadzieja delivers a puppy)

Look, it's so beautiful... he's yours... see?
And healthy... lick him... go ahead, lick him.

(Nadzieja delivers more puppies)

See? Another one... all of them beautiful, like you...
lick... lick...yeah, like that.

(exhausted, Nadzieja places her head down on the pedestal)

Taisa comes up to Nadzieja. Zafira rises. Nadzieja and Taisa freeze.

Zafira: Nadzieja gave birth to twins,
my dear Ladies and Gentlemen...
a girl and a boy.
They couldn't come today...
they haven't been themselves
since the death of their mother.

**Taisa
and Zosia
(as the twins):**

Will mommy return?

Kalo: No... never.

Zafira: Since the death of their mother,
they sit in the garden all day long,
calling for that dog.

Taisa whistles for the dog... Zosia clicks her lips.

Zafira: She went missing,
right after...
when Nadzieja...

**Taisa
(as girl):** When the doggy returns, she'll find mommy...

**Zosia
(as boy):** ...come back doggy... come back!

Nadzieja breaks her tableau. She leaves the pedestal and calls out.

Nadzieja: Janny, Rivana... come home....
dinner!

(pause)

Janny... Rivana... dinner!

Hurry! Where are you?

Don't joke around, please...

(Nadzieja gets up and walks downstage centre... distressed, she searches the audience)

Janny....

(she runs over to her parents)

Mama... Papa...

the children...

the children are gone!

I looked everywhere.

Call the police!

Taisa: Maybe it's that husband of yours...

Kało: ...maybe he took them!

Zafira: He was threatening you... remember?

Taisa and Kało enter tableau.

Halina: Luckily, everything turned out all right...
the police came and took the children...
returned them to their mother.

Zosia: Forgive us Nadzieja....

Halina: ...forgive us.

Nadzieja walks upstage centre, takes the broom and begins mindlessly pushing it along the floor... she weaves in and out between the characters, the pedestal, slowly gaining speed... her eyes are manic.

Zafira: Something bad is happening to Nadzieja...
she seems to be far away...
nothing reaches her.

Taisa: She only talks to that dog....
she has to see a doctor...
maybe he'll help her.

Zafira: *(to Kało)*
Is this the only way Doctor?

Kalo
(as the Doctor):

I don't see any other option.
She'll have to be under constant medical care.
We'll do as much as we can so she can return...

(to Zosia)
Sister, take Nadzieja to the ward.

Zosia (as a nurse) goes over to Nadzieja and pries the broom from her hand... the broom drops. Zosia guides Nadzieja downstage centre, sits her down on the floor and leaves. Nadzieja kneels, like a begging dog, arms hanging before her, tongue extended as she pants.

Dennis slowly comes up to Nadzieja, stoops down towards her... Nadzieja instinctively covers her face, cowers.

Dennis: Nadzieja, don't you recognise me?
It's me, Dennis.

(Nadzieja cowers more)
Don't be afraid...
everything'll be different now,
and you'll get better, you'll see.
We'll buy a house with a garden...
(he reaches towards her... Nadzieja growls)
just like you wanted.

(closer, Nadzieja growls more)
You look so beautiful.

As Dennis reaches for her hair, Nadzieja barks viciously... throws herself onto him, buries her teeth into his stomach, tearing like a deranged wolf. Dennis is unable to break free.

In slow motion, all the characters (now nurses and doctors) walk over to Nadzieja... they tear Nadzieja away from Dennis. Zafira lays Nadzieja down onto the floor, who capitulates and closes her eyes. The characters take the white cloth from the pedestal and tie it like a straight jacket onto Nadzieja.

After Nadzieja is bound, the characters leave her to lay on the floor... they all back away, hands extended, eventually entering tableaux. Nadzieja opens her eyes.

Nadzieja: *(quietly, inconspicuously calling for the dog)*
Here girl, come.
You're here, aren't you?
I know you're here.
(listens)
Is it you?
(she feels the floor for the dog)
There's a good girl...
you have to help me.
See that room?
(impatiently)
No, not there...
across the hall.
Go over there, all right?
Yes, that's it!
In the top drawer there are pills...
the small ones... see them?
Yes... bring them to me, quick!
Good girl...
close the door...
come over here...
give them to me...
a paw-full... yes...
put them into my mouth.

*Nadzieja opens her mouth,
waits for the pills...
now with her mouth full, she struggles to speak.*

A bit of water...
(she swallows hard)
good girl... thanks...
now off you go...
no, wait...
give me your mouth...

(kissing the dog)
don't say a word... remember...
now go.... go....
go...

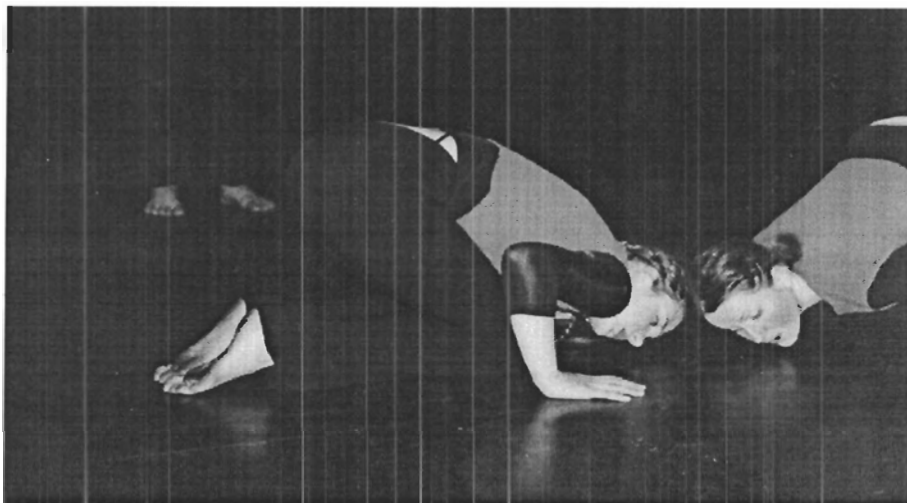
Nadzieja's body relaxes... eyes open... everyone in tableau... music fades in: "I close my eyes... the leaves fall... as I fall silent, silence befalls the world." The lights fade.

The End

Appendix H

Photographs

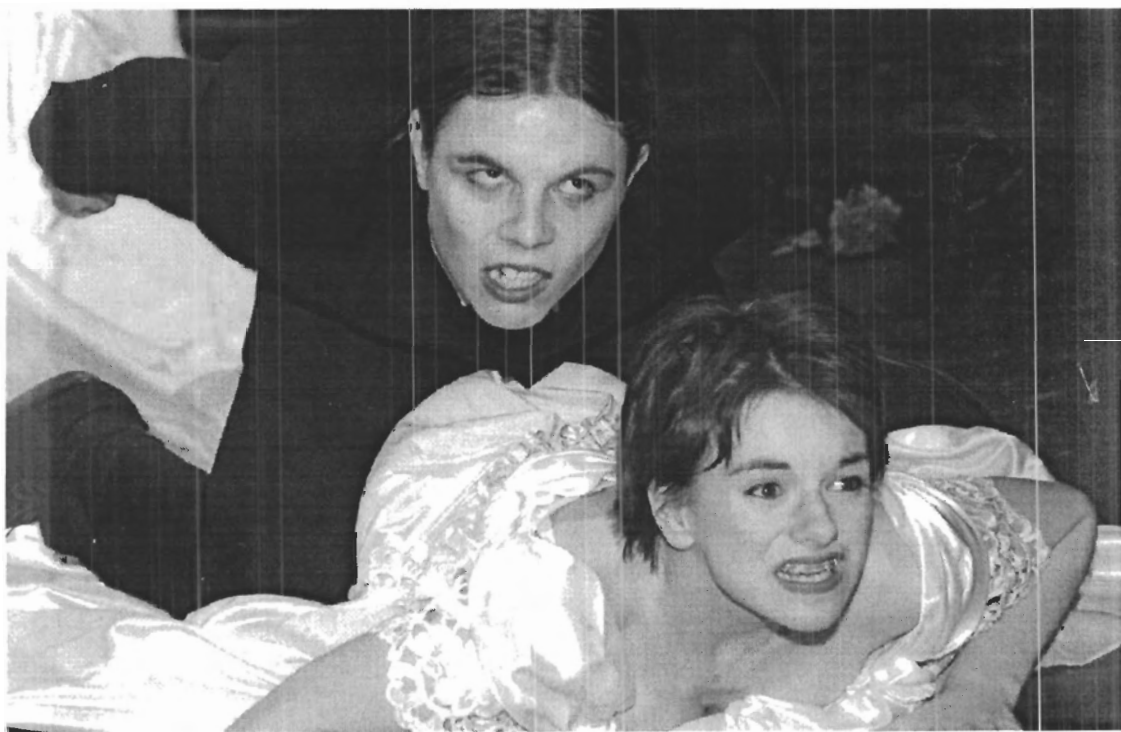
DANCE AS I PLAY YOU







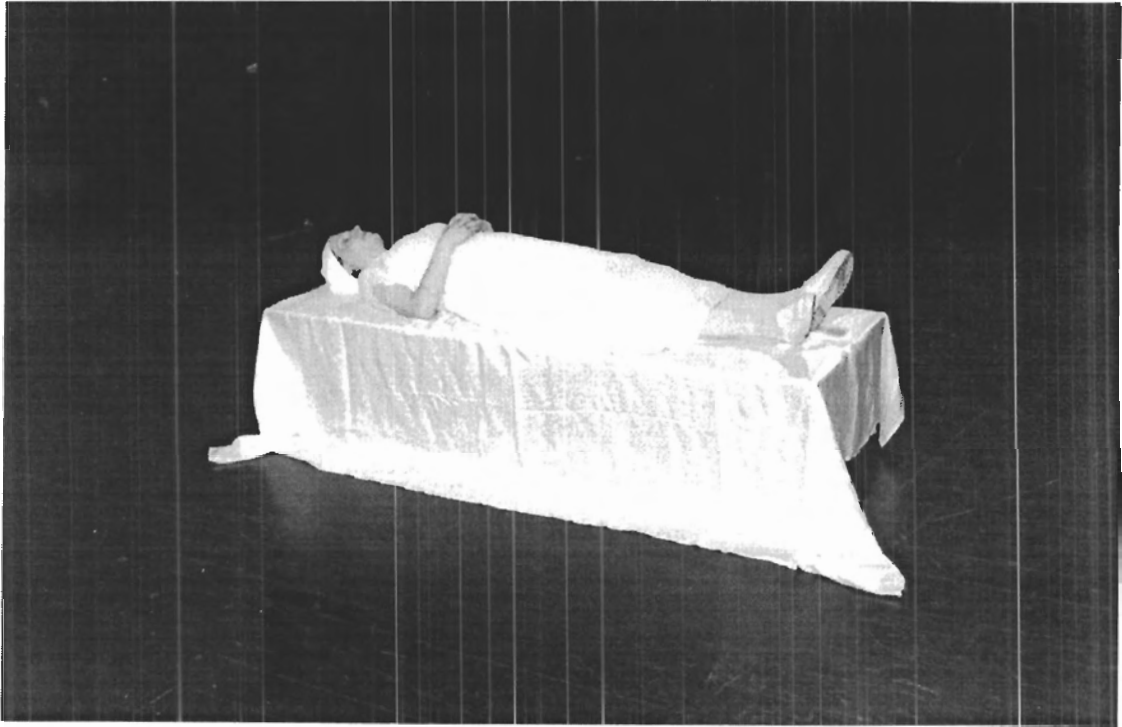
HORSES AND ANGELS







HOPE







Appendix I

Informed Consent Forms

The names in the attached Consent Forms have been erased to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants. The participants were advised that all original copies of these forms would be securely locked in a filing cabinet, and would be shredded after the completion of the study. They were also advised that all recording materials would be erased upon the completion of the study.

Form #1**Question #1**

To secure the informed, voluntary consent from children old enough to provide it themselves, they will each be given an *Informed Consent for Subjects* form to sign. The consent form will contain a statement outlining that the participants are aware of the project's objectives, that they voluntarily agree to participate, and that they may withdraw their participation at any time. The informed consent form will also include a statement of confidentiality and anonymity (see the *Informed Consent for Subjects* form).

**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
INFORMATION SHEET FOR SUBJECTS**

Title of Project: *Turning Back: Violence and the Gypsy People of Poland.*

This research project will investigate the nature and causes of, and alternatives to, violence against and within the Gypsy community of Warsaw, Poland. Specifically, the project will examine the larger social, political and economic contexts which sustain and support violence against and within the Gypsy community of Warsaw.

The **purpose** of this project is to yield a new understanding of the nature and causes of, and alternatives to, violence against and within the Gypsy community of Warsaw.

The **objectives** of this project are:

- 1) To study and document the nature and manifestations of violence against and within the Gypsy community of Warsaw, and to study and document the local and global social contexts which support and sustain such patterns of violence.
- 2) To document experiences of violence of the members of Warsaw's Gypsy community, as well as their observations and opinions in respect to the nature and causes of, and alternatives to, violence against and within their community.
- 3) To document the observations and opinions of individual members of the Polish community in Warsaw, in respect to the nature and causes of, and alternatives to, violence against and within the Gypsy community of Warsaw.
- 4) To produce an ethnographic theatre performance, entitled *Turning Back*, to be staged at the International Theatre Festival in Rzeszów, Poland in the Summer of 2003, and at the Vancouver International Fringe Festival in Vancouver, Canada in the Fall of 2003 for members of both the Gypsy and the Polish communities who participated in the research project, members of the cast, and audiences in both Rzeszów and Vancouver. This performance will be based on oral histories, individual interviews of the members of both the Gypsy and Polish communities of Warsaw, participant observation, and archival and documentary research.
- 5) This research project, including the performance *Turning Back*, will constitute research data for my Ph.D. dissertation.

The **methodology** of this project will consist of the following five approaches:

- 1) oral histories of individual members of both the Gypsy and the Polish communities of Warsaw;
- 2) interviews of individual members of both the Gypsy and the Polish communities of Warsaw;
- 3) participant observation;
- 4) archival and documentary research;
- 5) ethnographic performance.

INFORMATION SHEET FOR SUBJECTS PAGE 2

The **procedures** of the research project include the following:

- 1) first stage – setting up the research field in Warsaw, Poland: selecting informants from both the Gypsy and the Polish communities; conducting preliminary interviews with individual members of both the Gypsy and the Polish communities; preliminary participant observation; and archival/documentary research at the University of Warsaw (Warsaw, Poland), the Jagiellonian University of Kraków (Kraków, Poland), the University of Gdansk (Gdansk, Poland), and Simon Fraser University (Burnaby, Canada);
- 2) second stage – oral histories and interviews of individual members from both the Gypsy and the Polish communities of Warsaw, participant observation, and archival-documentary research in both Polish and Canadian Universities;
- 3) third stage – development of the ethnographic performance – *Turning Back* – based on research conducted in the first and second stages, and participant observation of rehearsals and development phases of the performance;
- 4) fourth stage – participant observation of public performances of *Turning Back* at both the International Theatre Festival in Rzeszów, Poland in the Summer of 2003, and the Vancouver International Fringe Festival in Vancouver, Canada in the Fall of 2003;
- 5) fifth stage – written analysis of research findings, the theatre performance and a report on research methods will follow in my Ph.D. dissertation.

Participation is voluntary. Knowledge of your identity is not required. Where requested, names and identifying features of individuals will not be recorded. Materials will be held in a secure location and will be destroyed after the completion of the study.

You may register any complaint you might have about the experiment with Dr. John Pierce, Dean of Arts, Simon Fraser University, B.C.. Telephone: 604-291-4415. You may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting: Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston, Simon Fraser University, (604) 421-3904.

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
TEXT OF ANNOUNCEMENT TO BE MADE
AT PUBLIC EVENTS AND/OR TO OBTAIN AUDIO-TAPED, VIDEO-TAPED,
OR WITNESSED CONSENT:

A research project is being conducted by Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston, a student researcher from Simon Fraser University. This research project began May 1, 2001, and will continue until July, 2004.

The title of this research project is: *Turning Back: Violence and the Gypsy People of Poland.*

This research project will investigate the nature and causes of, and alternatives to, violence against and within the Gypsy community of Warsaw, Poland. Specifically, the project will examine the larger social, political and economic contexts which sustain and support violence against and within the Gypsy community of Warsaw.

The **purpose** of this project is to yield a new understanding of the nature and causes of, and alternatives to, violence against and within the Gypsy community of Warsaw.

The **objectives** of this project are:

- 6) To study and document the nature and manifestations of violence against and within the Gypsy community of Warsaw, and to study and document the local and global social contexts which support and sustain such patterns of violence.
- 7) To document experiences of violence of the members of Warsaw's Gypsy community, as well as their observations and opinions in respect to the nature and causes of, and alternatives to, violence against and within their community.
- 8) To document the observations and opinions of individual members of the Polish community in Warsaw, in respect to the nature and causes of, and alternatives to, violence against and within the Gypsy community of Warsaw.
- 9) To produce an ethnographic theatre performance, entitled *Turning Back*, to be staged at the International Theatre Festival in Rzeszów, Poland in the Summer of 2003, and at the Vancouver International Fringe Festival in Vancouver, Canada in the Fall of 2003 for members of both the Gypsy and the Polish communities who participated in the research project, members of the cast, and audiences in both Rzeszów and Vancouver. This performance will be based on oral histories, individual interviews of the members of both the Gypsy and Polish communities of Warsaw, participant observation, and archival and documentary research.
- 10) This research project, including the performance *Turning Back*, will constitute research data for my Ph.D. dissertation.

Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston, from the *Turning Back: Violence and the Gypsy People of Poland* project, is here at this performance (stand up so everyone knows who you are). She will be recording her observations of the audiences' reactions to the performance.

TEXT OF ANNOUNCEMENT FOR PUBLIC EVENTS

PAGE 2

If at any time anyone wishes their responses and/or comments NOT to be recorded in any way by Magdalena, please indicate this by speaking to Magdalena either before, during, or after this event. We assure you your responses and/or comments will not be recorded if you do not wish them to be. Names and identifying features of individuals will not be recorded unless you specifically request that your name be noted.

Information sheets are available from Magdalena that provide more information about the research project and list the names and phone numbers of people to whom you may address any concerns or criticisms you may have of the research project and/or how the research is being carried out, and where you may obtain a copy of the research results.

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND ORAL HISTORIES

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT BY SUBJECTS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

The University and those conducting this project subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests, comfort, and safety of subjects. This form and the information it contains are given to you for your own protection and full understanding of the procedures. Your signature on this form will signify that you have received a document which describes the procedures of this research project, that you have received an adequate opportunity to consider the information in the document, and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the project upon considering the emotional or psychological stress that may result in such participation.

Having been asked by Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston of the *Roma, Postsocialism, Embodiment: Theatre Performance as an Ethnographic Research Methodology in the Study of Violence* which includes production of theatre performances *Dance, as I Play You; Horses and Angels; Turning Back* to be produced at the Cultural Centre for International Cooperation in the Arts (December 2002-July 2003) and at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Scotland (August 2003), and the partial fulfilment of her Ph.D./Special Arrangements through the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, of Simon Fraser University to participate in a research interview, oral history, participant observation, and the development process of the performances by providing feedback for the productions of *Dance, as I Play You; Horses and Angels; Turning Back*, assist in the creation of the written script and choreography of the performances, I have read the *procedures* specified in the document.

I understand the procedures to be used in this research.

I understand that I may withdraw my participation in this interview at any time.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the research interview with Dr. John Pierce, Dean of Arts, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-4415.

I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting: Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston, Simon Fraser University, (604) 421-3904.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

(a) I have requested that the research material will/will not [SELECT ONE] be held confidential by the researchers.

(b) I have requested that my anonymity be preserved. I have been advised that neither my name nor any identifying features will be recorded or released.

Yes X No _____

(c) I have agreed that my name may be used and I may be quoted.

Yes _____ No I maybe quoted under pseudonim

I agree to participate by granting an interview to the researcher identified above, as described in the document referred to above, on March 27, 2003 (date) at _____

NAME (please type or print legibly): RANDIA

ADDRESS: _____
Elblag, POLAND

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: March 26, 2003

CAST MEMBERS AND PERFORMERS

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT BY PERFORMERS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

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I understand the procedures to be used in this research.

I understand that I am giving my consent to participate as a cast member of the *Dance as I Play; Horses and Angels; Turning Back* projects throughout rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I am granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation during rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I may request that specific personal information not be attributed to me as an individual.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the research interview with Dr. John Pierce, Dean of Arts, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-4415, or Dr. Dara Culhane, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-5479.

I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting: Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston, Simon Fraser University, (604) 421-3904.

I, RANDIA (print full name) agree to participate by granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation at rehearsals and final performances of which I am a cast member, as described in the document referred to above, MARCH 27, 2003 (date).

NAME (please type or print legibly): RANDIA

ADDRESS: ELBLAG, POLAND

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: March 26, 2003

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND ORAL HISTORIES

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
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(b) I have requested that my anonymity be preserved. I have been advised that neither my name nor any identifying features will be recorded or released.

Yes X No _____

(c) I have agreed that my name may be used and I may be quoted.

Yes _____ No I maybe quoted under pseudonym

I agree to participate by granting an interview to the researcher identified above, as described in the document referred to above, on March 27, 2003 (date) at _____

NAME (please type or print legibly): BASIA

ADDRESS: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: March 27, 2003

CAST MEMBERS AND PERFORMERS

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT BY PERFORMERS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

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I understand the procedures to be used in this research.

I understand that I am giving my consent to participate as a cast member of the *Dance as I Play; Horses and Angels; Turning Back* projects throughout rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I am granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation during rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I may request that specific personal information not be attributed to me as an individual.

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I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting: Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston, Simon Fraser University, (604) 421-3904.

I, BASIA (print full name) agree to participate by granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation at rehearsals and final performances of which I am a cast member, as described in the document referred to above, March 27, 2003 (date).

NAME (please type or print legibly): BASIA

ADDRESS: Polska

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: March 27, 2003

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND ORAL HISTORIES

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

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Yes X No I may be quoted under pseudonym

I agree to participate by granting an interview to the researcher identified above, as described in the document referred to above, on March 27, 2003 (date) at _____

NAME (please type or print legibly): ANA

ADDRESS: _____

Edmonton

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: March 27, 2003

CAST MEMBERS AND PERFORMERS

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT BY PERFORMERS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

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I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the research interview with Dr. John Pierce, Dean of Arts, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-4415, or Dr. Dara Culhane, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-5479.

I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting: Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston, Simon Fraser University, (604) 421-3904.

I, ANA (print full name) agree to participate by granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation at rehearsals and final performances of which I am a cast member, as described in the document referred to above, _____ (date).

NAME (please type or print legibly): ANA

ADDRESS: _____
Elbląg, Polska

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: March 27, 2003

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND ORAL HISTORIES

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT BY SUBJECTS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

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Having been asked by Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston of the *Roma, Postsocialism, Embodiment: Theatre Performance as an Ethnographic Research Methodology in the Study of Violence* which includes production of theatre performances *Dance, as I Play You; Horses and Angels; Turning Back* to be produced at the Cultural Centre for International Cooperation in the Arts (December 2002-July 2003) and at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Scotland (August 2003), and the partial fulfilment of her Ph.D./Special Arrangements through the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, of Simon Fraser University to participate in a research interview, oral history, participant observation, and the development process of the performances by providing feedback for the productions of *Dance, as I Play You; Horses and Angels; Turning Back*, assist in the creation of the written script and choreography of the performances, I have read the *procedures* specified in the document.

I understand the procedures to be used in this research.

I understand that I may withdraw my participation in this interview at any time.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the research interview with Dr. John Pierce, Dean of Arts, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-4415.

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CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

(a) I have requested that the research material will will not [SELECT ONE] be held confidential by the researchers.

(b) I have requested that my anonymity be preserved. I have been advised that neither my name nor any identifying features will be recorded or released.

Yes X No _____

(c) I have agreed that my name may be used and I may be quoted.

Yes UNDER PSEUDONYM No _____

I agree to participate by granting an interview to the researcher identified above, as described in the document referred to above, on March 27, 2003 (date) at _____

NAME (please type or print legibly): EWA

ADDRESS: _____

ELBląg, POLAND

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: March 27, 2003

CAST MEMBERS AND PERFORMERS

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
~~INFORMED CONSENT BY PERFORMERS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT~~
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I understand the procedures to be used in this research.

I understand that I am giving my consent to participate as a cast member of the *Dance as I Play; Horses and Angels; Turning Back* projects throughout rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I am granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation during rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I may request that specific personal information not be attributed to me as an individual.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the research interview with Dr. John Pierce, Dean of Arts, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-4415, or Dr. Dara Culhane, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-5479.

I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting: Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston, Simon Fraser University, (604) 421-3904.

I, EWA (print full name) agree to participate by granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation at rehearsals and final performances of which I am a cast member, as described in the document referred to above, on MARCH 27, 2003 (date).

NAME (please type or print legibly): EWA

ADDRESS: ul. ... Elblag, Polska

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: MARCH 27, 2003

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND ORAL HISTORIES

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT BY SUBJECTS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

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I understand the procedures to be used in this research.

I understand that I may withdraw my participation in this interview at any time.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the research interview with Dr. John Pierce, Dean of Arts, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-4415.

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CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

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(b) I have requested that my anonymity be preserved. I have been advised that neither my name nor any identifying features will be recorded or released.

Yes X No _____

(c) I have agreed that my name may be used and I may be quoted.

Yes _____ No I maybe quoted under pseudonym

I agree to participate by granting an interview to the researcher identified above, as described in the document referred to above, on March 27, 2003 (date) at _____

NAME (please type or print legibly): ZEFIRYNA

ADDRESS: _____

ul. Elblag, Polska

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: March 27, 2003

CAST MEMBERS AND PERFORMERS

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT BY PERFORMERS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

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I understand the procedures to be used in this research.

I understand that I am giving my consent to participate as a cast member of the *Dance as I Play; Horses and Angels; Turning Back* projects throughout rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I am granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation during rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I may request that specific personal information not be attributed to me as an individual.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the research interview with Dr. John Pierce, Dean of Arts, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-4415, or Dr. Dara Culhane, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-5479.

I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting: Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston, Simon Fraser University, (604) 421-3904.

I, ZEFIRYNA _____ (print full name) agree to participate by granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation at rehearsals and final performances of which I am a cast member, as described in the document referred to above, MARCH 27, 2003 (date).

NAME (please type or print legibly): ZEFIRYNA _____

ADDRESS: _____
ul. Nowa Elbląg, Poland

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: March 27, 2003

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND ORAL HISTORIES

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
INFORMED CONSENT BY SUBJECTS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

The University and those conducting this project subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests, comfort, and safety of subjects.

Having been asked by Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston of the Turning Back: Violence and the Gypsy People of Poland, a research project, and a theatre performance to be produced at the International Theatre Festival in Rzeszów, Poland in the Summer of 2003, and at the Vancouver International Fringe Festival in Vancouver, Canada in the fall of 2003, and the partial fulfilment of her Ph.D./Special Arrangements through the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, of Simon Fraser University to participate in a research interview, oral history, participant observation, and the development process of the performance by providing feedback for the production of Turning Back, assist in the creation of the written script and choreography of the performance, I have read the procedures specified in the document.

I understand the procedures to be used in this research.

I understand that I may withdraw my participation in this interview at any time.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the research interview with Dr. John Pierce, Dean of Arts, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-4415.

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CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

(a) I have requested that the research material will/will not [SELECT ONE] be held confidential by the researchers.

(b) I have requested that my anonymity be preserved. I have been advised that neither my name nor any identifying features will be recorded or released.

Yes [X] No

(c) I have agreed that my name may be used and I may be quoted.

Yes No [maybe quoted under pseudonym]

I agree to participate by granting an interview to the researcher identified above, as described in the document referred to above, on June 7, 03 (date) at

NAME (please type or print legibly): BEATA

ADDRESS:

SIGNATURE: WITNESS:

DATE: June 7, 03

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND ORAL HISTORIES

INFORMED CONSENT BY SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

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Having been asked by ~~Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston~~ of the *Turning Back: Violence and the Gypsy People of Poland*, a research project, and a theatre performance to be produced at the International Theatre Festival in Rzeszów, Poland in the Summer of 2003, and at the Vancouver International Fringe Festival in Vancouver, Canada in the fall of 2003, and the partial fulfilment of her Ph.D./Special Arrangements through the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, of Simon Fraser University to participate in a research interview, oral history, participant observation, and the development process of the performance by providing feedback for the production of *Turning Back*, assist in the creation of the written script and choreography of the performance, I have read the procedures specified in the document.

I understand the procedures to be used in this research.

I understand that I may withdraw my participation in this interview at any time.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the research interview with Dr. John Pierce, Dean of Arts, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-4415.

I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting: Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston, Simon Fraser University, (604) 421-3904.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

(a) I have requested that the research material will/will not [SELECT ONE] be held confidential by the researchers.

(b) I have requested that my anonymity be preserved. I have been advised that neither my name nor any identifying features will be recorded or released.

Yes _____ No _____

(c) I have agreed that my name may be used and I may be quoted.

Yes _____ No I maybe quoted under pseudonym

I agree to participate by granting an interview to the researcher identified above, as described in the document referred to above, on June 6, 03 (date) at _____

NAME (please type or print legibly): _____ MAREK

ADDRESS: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: June 6, 03

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND ORAL HISTORIES

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

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I understand the procedures to be used in this research.

I understand that I may withdraw my participation in this interview at any time.

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CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

- (a) I have requested that the research material will/will not [SELECT ONE] be held confidential by the researchers.
- (b) I have requested that my anonymity be preserved. I have been advised that neither my name nor any identifying features will be recorded or released.
Yes ✓ No _____
- (c) I have agreed that my name may be used and I may be quoted.
Yes under pseudonym No _____

I agree to participate by granting an interview to the researcher identified above, as described in the document referred to above, on _____ (date)
at _____

NAME (please type or print legibly): NEODEK
ADDRESS: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____
DATE: June 6, 2003

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND ORAL HISTORIES

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

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(b) I have requested that my anonymity be preserved. I have been advised that neither my name nor any identifying features will be recorded or released.

Yes X No _____

(c) I have agreed that my name may be used and I may be quoted.

Yes _____ No X under pseudonym

I agree to participate by granting an interview to the researcher identified above, as described in the document referred to above, on Sept 1, 2002 (date)

at Elblag, Poland

NAME (please type or print legibly): SEBASTIANE

ADDRESS: Elblag Poland

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: [Signature]

DATE: June 9, 2003

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND ORAL HISTORIES

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

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I understand the procedures to be used in this research.

I understand that I may withdraw my participation in this interview at any time.

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CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

(a) I have requested that the research material will/will not **[SELECT ONE]** be held confidential by the researchers.

(b) I have requested that my anonymity be preserved. I have been advised that neither my name nor any identifying features will be recorded or released.

Yes X No _____

(c) I have agreed that my name may be used and I may be quoted.

Yes _____ No X under pseudonym

I agree to participate by granting an interview to the researcher identified above, as described in the document referred to above, on Sept 1, 2003 (date)

at Elblag, Poland

NAME (please type or print legibly): NELKA

ADDRESS: _____

ELBLAG, POLAND

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: June 4, 2003

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND ORAL HISTORIES

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
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CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

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Yes X No _____
- (c) I have agreed that my name may be used and I may be quoted.
Yes _____ No Maybe quoted under pseudonym

I agree to participate by granting an interview to the researcher identified above, as described in the document referred to above, on June 4, 2003 (date)
at _____

NAME (please type or print legibly): MINKA

ADDRESS: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: June 4, 2003

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND ORAL HISTORIES

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

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(b) I have requested that my anonymity be preserved. I have been advised that neither my name nor any identifying features will be recorded or released.

Yes ✓ No _____

(c) I have agreed that my name may be used and I may be quoted.

Yes under pseudonym No _____

I agree to participate by granting an interview to the researcher identified above, as described in the document referred to above, on _____ (date) at _____

NAME (please type or print legibly): ANIEK

ADDRESS: _____

ELBLOO

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: June 6, 2003

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND ORAL HISTORIES

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
INFORMED CONSENT BY SUBJECTS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

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CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

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(b) I have requested that my anonymity be preserved. I have been advised that neither my name nor any identifying features will be recorded or released.

Yes [checked] No

(c) I have agreed that my name may be used and I may be quoted.

Yes UNDER PSEUDONYM No

I agree to participate by granting an interview to the researcher identified above, as described in the document referred to above, on (date) at

NAME (please type or print legibly): PIOTR

ADDRESS:

SIGNATURE: WITNESS:

DATE: Jan. 7, 2003

CAST MEMBERS AND PERFORMERS

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT BY PERFORMERS TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

The University and those conducting this project subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests, comfort, and safety of subjects. This form and the information it contains are given to you for your own protection and full understanding of the procedures. Your signature on this form will signify that you have received a document which describes the procedures of this research project, that you have received an adequate opportunity to consider the information in the document, and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the project upon considering the emotional or psychological stress that may result in such participation.

Having been asked by Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston of the *Roma, Postsocialism, Embodiment: Theatre Performance as an Ethnographic Research Methodology in the Study of Violence* project which includes production of theatre performances *Dance, as I Play You; Horses and Angels; Turning Back* to be staged at the Cultural Centre for International Cooperation in the Arts (December 2002-July 2003) and at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Scotland (August 2003), and the partial fulfilment of her Ph.D./Special Arrangements through the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, of Simon Fraser University to participate in the *Dance, as I Play You; Horses and Angels, Turning Back* theatre performances, I have read the procedures specified in the document.

I understand the procedures to be used in this research.

I understand that I am giving my consent to participate as a cast member of the *Dance as I Play; Horses and Angels; Turning Back* projects throughout rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I am granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation during rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I may request that specific personal information not be attributed to me as an individual.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the research interview with Dr. John Pierce, Dean of Arts, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-4415, or Dr. Dara Culhane, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-5479.

I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting: Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston, Simon Fraser University, (604) 421-3904.

ILVA JARENA _____ (print full name) agree to participate by granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation at rehearsals and final performances of which I am a cast member, as described in the document referred to above, on DEC 8, 2002 _____ (date).

NAME (please type or print legibly): _____

ADDRESS: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: DEC 8, 2002 _____

CAST MEMBERS AND PERFORMERS

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

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I understand the procedures to be used in this research.

I understand that I am giving my consent to participate as a cast member of the *Dance as I Play; Horses and Angels; Turning Back* projects throughout rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I am granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation during rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I may request that specific personal information not be attributed to me as an individual.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the research interview with Dr. John Pierce, Dean of Arts, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-4415, or Dr. Dara Culhane, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-5479.

I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting: Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston, Simon Fraser University, (604) 421-3904.

I, TOMEK _____ (print full name) agree to participate by granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation at rehearsals and final performances of which I am a cast member, as described in the document referred to above, Dec 6, 2002 (date).

NAME (please type or print legibly): _____

ADDRESS: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: Dec 6, 2002

CAST MEMBERS AND PERFORMERS

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

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I understand the procedures to be used in this research.

I understand that I am giving my consent to participate as a cast member of the *Dance as I Play; Horses and Angels; Turning Back* projects throughout rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I am granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation during rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I may request that specific personal information not be attributed to me as an individual.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the research interview with Dr. John Pierce, Dean of Arts, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-4415, or Dr. Dara Culhane, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-5479.

I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting: Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston, Simon Fraser University, (604) 421-3904.

I, GRAZYNA (print full name) agree to participate by granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation at rehearsals and final performances of which I am a cast member, as described in the document referred to above, 26. 03. 2003 (date).

NAME (please type or print legibly): GRAZYNA

ADDRESS: POLSKA

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: 26. 03. 2003

CAST MEMBERS AND PERFORMERS

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

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I understand the procedures to be used in this research.

I understand that I am giving my consent to participate as a cast member of the *Dance as I Play; Horses and Angels; Turning Back* projects throughout rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I am granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation during rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I may request that specific personal information not be attributed to me as an individual.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the research interview with Dr. John Pierce, Dean of Arts, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-4415, or Dr. Dara Culhane, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-5479.

I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting: Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston, Simon Fraser University, (604) 421-3904.

I, TADZIO (print full name) agree to participate by granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation at rehearsals and final performances of which I am a cast member, as described in the document referred to above, on Dec 6, 2002 (date).

NAME (please type or print legibly): _____

ADDRESS: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: DEC 6, 2002

CAST MEMBERS AND PERFORMERS

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

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I understand the procedures to be used in this research.

I understand that I am giving my consent to participate as a cast member of the *Dance as I Play; Horses and Angels; Turning Back* projects throughout rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I am granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation during rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I may request that specific personal information not be attributed to me as an individual.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the research interview with Dr. John Pierce, Dean of Arts, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-4415, or Dr. Dara Culhane, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-5479.

I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting: Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston, Simon Fraser University, (604) 421-3904.

I, OLGA (print full name) agree to participate by granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation at rehearsals and final performances of which I am a cast member, as described in the document referred to above, on 26.03.2003 (date).

NAME (please type or print legibly): OLGA

ADDRESS: POLSKA

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: 26.03.2003

CAST MEMBERS AND PERFORMERS

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

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I understand the procedures to be used in this research.

I understand that I am giving my consent to participate as a cast member of the *Dance as I Play; Horses and Angels; Turning Back* projects throughout rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I am granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation during rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I may request that specific personal information not be attributed to me as an individual.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the research interview with Dr. John Pierce, Dean of Arts, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-4415, or Dr. Dara Culhane, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-5479.

I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting: Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston, Simon Fraser University, (604) 421-3904.

I, MARIA (print full name) agree to participate by granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation at rehearsals and final performances of which I am a cast member, as described in the document referred to above, on _____ (date).

NAME (please type or print legibly): MARIA

ADDRESS: _____

Pokka

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: 26.03.2003

CAST MEMBERS AND PERFORMERS

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

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I understand the procedures to be used in this research.

I understand that I am giving my consent to participate as a cast member of the *Dance as I Play; Horses and Angels; Turning Back* projects throughout rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I am granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation during rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I may request that specific personal information not be attributed to me as an individual.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the research interview with Dr. John Pierce, Dean of Arts, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-4415, or Dr. Dara Culhane, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-5479.

I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting: Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston, Simon Fraser University, (604) 421-3904.

I, AGNIESZKA (print full name) agree to participate by granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation at rehearsals and final performances of which I am a cast member, as described in the document referred to above 26.03.2003 (date).

NAME (please type or print legibly): AGNIESZKA

ADDRESS: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: 26.03.2003

CAST MEMBERS AND PERFORMERS

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I understand the procedures to be used in this research.

I understand that I am giving my consent to participate as a cast member of the Dance as I Play; Horses and Angels; Turning Back projects throughout rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I am granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation during rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I may request that specific personal information not be attributed to me as an individual.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the research interview with Dr. John Pierce, Dean of Arts, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-4415, or Dr. Dara Culhane, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-5479.

I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting: Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston, Simon Fraser University, (604) 421-3904.

I, GOSIA (print full name) agree to participate by granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation at rehearsals and final performances of which I am a cast member, as described in the document referred to above, on _____ (date).

NAME (please type or print legibly): GOSIA

ADDRESS: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: 26.11.2003

CAST MEMBERS AND PERFORMERS

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

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I understand the procedures to be used in this research.

I understand that I am giving my consent to participate as a cast member of the *Dance as I Play; Horses and Angels; Turning Back* projects throughout rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I am granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation during rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I may request that specific personal information not be attributed to me as an individual.

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I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting: Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston, Simon Fraser University, (604) 421-3904.

I, DEREK (print full name) agree to participate by granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation at rehearsals and final performances of which I am a cast member, as described in the document referred to above, on _____ (date).

NAME (please type or print legibly): DEREK

ADDRESS: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: 26. III. 2003

CAST MEMBERS AND PERFORMERS

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

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I understand the procedures to be used in this research.

I understand that I am giving my consent to participate as a cast member of the *Dance as I Play; Horses and Angels; Turning Back* projects throughout rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I am granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation during rehearsals and final performances.

I understand that I may request that specific personal information not be attributed to me as an individual.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the research interview with Dr. John Pierce, Dean of Arts, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-4415, or Dr. Dara Culhane, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6, 604-291-5479.

I may obtain copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting: Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston, Simon Fraser University, (604) 421-3904.

I, JOANNA _____ (print full name) agree to participate by granting Magdalena Kazubowski-Houston permission to conduct participant observation at rehearsals and final performances of which I am a cast member, as described in the document referred to above, on _____ (date).

NAME (please type or print legibly): JOANNA _____

ADDRESS: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: 04.13.2003 _____

Appendix J
DVD Recording:
Horses and Angels
Hope

Endnotes

¹ Such “strong readings” of reflexivity have been criticised for their potential to gloss over, rather than challenge, power differentials, leading to “a deeper, more dangerous form of exploitation” (Groves and Chang, 238; Stacey 1988, 22).

² Since in this dissertation I make several references to concepts, such as “narrative,” “life history” and “life story,” “interviews,” and “informal conversations,” it is important to explicate the similarities and differences between these concepts as I understand them, and as I have employed them, both in my research and in this document. By “narrative” I mean i) “something that is narrated (story) ii) the art and practice of narration or storytelling iii) the representation in art of an event or story” (“narrative.” *Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged*. Merriam-Webster, 2002.

<http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com> [accessed 18 Oct. 2005]). In this sense “narrative,” as I have referred to in this dissertation, is a form of discourse – oral, written literature and/or theatrical representation (both fictional and non-fictional) – through which speaker and listener create “culture” (Klein, 2000). I understand “life history” and “life story” to be forms of “narrative interviewing” through storytelling (Lindlof 1995, 172-3). In “life history” and “life story” interviewing, the interviewee listens to, and records, the narrator’s account of his or her life (Linde 1993). One’s “life story” and/or “life history” are constantly in-flux, because people interpret and re-interpret their lives according to the changing of contexts and circumstances (Ibid.) as well as the relations of power in which they are embedded. “Life history” and “life story” interviewing are co-created between the interviewee and interviewer (Ibid.) through their mutual verbal and non-verbal interactions mediated by the contexts in which they take place. The primary difference between “life history” and “life story” seems to lie in their approach to time. While “life histories” suggest a biographical framework, “life stories” are less time-bound.

I conducted both “life story” and “life history” interviews with the Roma women in Elblag. I contrast “life history” and “life story” with “oral history,” a common or dominant collective story that often includes the memories of marginalised and disadvantaged groups of society who have been excluded from the main narratives of the past – the “official histories.” Although they do not always represent factual occurrences, “oral histories” are sources of historical evidence because they reconstruct the various meanings people apply to what has occurred in the past, and are representative of a society’s experiences (Portelli 1991). “Oral histories” often also challenge, supplement, and critique the official historical record (Hamilton 1994). Finally, by an interview I mean an event in which the researcher “encourages another person to articulate [his or her] interests or experiences. . . .” (Lindlof 1995, 163). Interviews have a “purpose” and “structure.” Usually, the “purpose” of an interview is “designed” by the interviewer. Consequently, it is the interviewer who exercises greater control over the interviewee – the interview is (typically) furnished for someone else’s benefit” (Denzin 1978, 113).

During my research with the Roma women, I conducted both semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were often framed by pre-set, open-ended questions that served me as a guide in topics I wanted to explore; however, I allowed the participants to decide “the order and articulation” of such questions (Lindlof 1995, 164). In unstructured interviews, on the other hand, I did not have any pre-set questions for the participants to answer, but instead, allowed them to lead the conversation “freely” while I “prompted” the conversation in the desired direction (Ibid.), or came up with questions on-the-go (Ibid., 170). I recorded unstructured and semi-structured interviews with the Roma women on audio cassettes and in fieldnotes. Meanwhile, the “informal conversations” that I recorded through fieldnotes took place between the research participants and me during participant observation. These were the most informal, open-ended, unplanned, casual, and conversational form of interview I conducted. While they had a purpose, as both the Roma women and I were aware of the “purpose of my presence” in their lives, and because they were conducted “for my benefit,” they did not have a pre-designed “conversational purpose.” Our daily informal conversations “flowed” without any attempts on my behalf to move them in a specific direction. In this sense, the interview responses were shaped – more than our open-ended conversations – by me, and perhaps by what the participants considered “appropriate to say” in the contexts of our project.

³ Romani is the Roma women’s first language and the main language of communication among Roma in Poland.

⁴ “Gadjo” is the Romani word for non-Roma people.

⁵ Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999) was a Polish theatre practitioner-theoretician, and founder-director of the Polish Laboratory Theatre. His notion of “poor theatre” emphasised the relationship between actor and spectator, and called for the elimination of profligate scenography, props, costumes, sound, lighting and make-up. The actor training of “poor theatre” was rigorous, incorporated East Asian body training techniques, and was aimed, overall, at achieving the mastery of voice and movement (Grotowski 1968; Osinski 1991). Later on in his career, Grotowski abandoned theatre per se, and through undertakings such as *Special Project* (1973), *Project Mountain* (1977), *Theatre of the Source* (1976), and *Objective Drama* (1982), he explored what he referred to as “theatre anthropology.” Grotowski’s “theatre anthropology” sought to “discover” universally occurring, cross-cultural means of interpersonal communication and principles of performance, grounded in movement, gesture, and voice, which he hoped would reconnect people with their natural world (Osinski 1991).

⁶ Tadeusz Kantor (1915-1990) was a Polish theatre director and theoretician, painter and designer. He was influenced by Constructivism, Dada, Informel Art, and Surrealism. In his Cricot 2 theatre, actors performed in an artificial, anti-realistic manner which incorporated grotesque and stylised forms of expression. Kantor’s theatrical explorations went through a variety of stages, including *Informel Theatre*, (1960-62) dominated by chance, coincidence and the objectification of the actor; *Happenings*, which challenged conventional understandings of theatrical space; *Theatre of Death*, which explored death and memory via the concept of “Reality of Lower Order” – the lowest, poorest and most defenceless aspects of human existence (Plesniarowicz 1994).

⁷ Jozef Szajna (1922-) is a Polish theatre and visual artist. His concept of “visual theatre” focuses primarily on visual forms of expression by employing elaborate stage designs, props, and costumes. His acting style is highly expressive and stylised. Szajna’s artistic influences include Art Informel, Surrealism, and Expressionism. His art often conveys his wartime experiences as a prisoner of Auschwitz (Szajna 2000).

⁸ The “March Events” of spring 1968 involved the protests of students and intellectuals directed against Communist Party officials. They were frustrated by the limitations placed on civil liberties, and the refusal to incorporate reforms promised by then First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish Communist Party, Wladyslaw Gomułka, when assuming power in 1956 (Stola 2000).

⁹ The term “ideology of modernism” emerged with George Lukacs’ book *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* (1957), where in his polemic “The Ideology of Modernism” he critiques modernist writing, and modernist conceptions of realism. Supporting nineteenth century realism, he was critical of modernism’s subjectivism; denial of history, as manifest in the “solitary” and “asocial” hero of modernist writing (21); abstraction and distortion of reality (22-24); “obsession with the pathological. . . morbidity and eccentricity” (30-31); and essentialising of despair, pessimism, and angst (i.e. in the literature of Samuel Beckett, Franz Kafka, and James Joyce [36-46]). Lukacs’ critique of modernism needs to be understood in the context of the debates about naturalism and realism, expressionism versus partisan or committed art and soviet realism that characterised much of the literary and artistic scene after the Russian revolution and the rise of Weimar democratic politics. Such debates concerned not only questions of “whether art should be openly tendentious or ‘objectively’ partisan,” if it should “mirror or hammer” reality, or if it should “be sealed down to the present level of the masses, or the masses elevated to the current level of art” (Eagleton 1996, 9). They were also inextricably linked to the larger political climate, where one’s position on art was also seen as an indicator of one’s attitudes towards “the working class, . . . bourgeois democracy, . . . socialism . . . [and] . . . the importance of peasant and urban proletariat” (9). These debates are still relevant today, and are often seen as preceding those of postmodernism. Indeed, Lukacs is seen by some as the precursor of postmodernist critiques of modernism, such as those advanced by Frederic Jameson (Eagleton and Milne 1996, 141). Jameson (2002) provides a historical overview of modernism, and argues that the term modernity, as used in literary theory, has served as a means of demarcating history (the pre-modern) from the present (the modern). Jameson critiques modernism in relation to postmodernism, and the notion of subjectivity. He differentiates between the “late modernists” – the artists and intellectuals of the artistic and literary movement of the cold-war period – and the “high modernists” of the early twentieth century. His discussion of “late modernism” focuses on its tenet of the autonomy of the aesthetic, its dissociation from the political and the everyday, and its supposed anti-bourgeois stance.

¹⁰ Realism is a concept “through which we judge whether a fiction constructs a world we recognise as like our own” (Hall 1997, 360). Realist forms of representation “bring into play real-life assumptions . . . about space and time [and] about social and cultural relationships” (Shohat and Stam 1994, 179). A precursor of realism in theatre was Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938), Russian theatre director/actor, and co-founder of

the Moscow Art Theatre (1898), whose theories later formed a basis for the development of “method acting.” Stanislavski’s theory of theatre called for realistic characters and stage settings. The actors were to evoke what Stanislavski coined as “emotion memory” in order to faithfully represent the characters’ emotions. Stanislavski’s scenography represented reality through “truthful” costumes, props, stage pieces, make-up, etc. to support the actor’s belief in the character portrayed (Wiles 1980, 13-37).

¹¹ My understanding of verisimilitude has been informed by Steve Neale (1981), who borrowed the term from literary history to problematise the concept of realism in film by exposing the social and cultural constructedness of realist forms of representation (36-41). In contrast to realism, Neale argues that verisimilitude refers not to the world as is, or is not, but to what a culture (usually the dominant culture) believes the world to be, or not to be – what it accepts as “real” (Ibid.). In his view, “cultural verisimilitude refers us to the norms, mores, and common sense of the social world outside the fiction” (Hall 1997, 360; Neale 1981, 36-41). Neale’s notion of “cultural verisimilitude” corresponds with Bakhtin’s (1978) conception of genre. For Bakhtin, genre is saturated with ideology, because it “enters life and comes into contact with various aspects of its environment. It does so in the process of its actual realisation as something performed, heard, read at a definite time, in a definite place, under definite conditions It takes a position between people organised in some way” (131). Thus, in Bakhtin’s view, genre embodies and presents social relations, norms, and attitudes from a particular point-of-view (135).

¹² Naturalism – a movement in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century art and literature, influenced by Darwin’s principles of Natural Science – with its commitment to rigorously faithful representations of reality can be seen as an extension of realism. Emil Zola (1840-1902) was a chief proponent of naturalism in both theatre and literature (“Zola, Émile” *Encyclopædia Britannica* from Encyclopædia Britannica Premium Service. <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article?tocId=9383372> [Accessed 10 Sep. 2005]). Zola believed that a dramatist should be an objective recorder of truth, who brackets one’s own beliefs and prejudices, and represents real – not fictitious – characters in real settings. Influenced by Claude Bernard’s *Introduction to Experimental Medicine* (1865), a study of the impact of the environment on the human body, he also considered a playwright to be a doctor, whose role was to expose and remedy society’s illnesses (Turney 2005)

¹³ In the nineteenth century, melodrama was a popular form of literary and dramatic fiction. In melodrama there was a strong emphasis on emotional drama. Usually, melodrama had stock characters and a hero who partook in the struggles between good and evil, and often ended happily. With time, however, melodrama waned in its popularity. The influence of melodrama is significant in today’s television programming. (“melodrama.” *Encyclopædia Britannica* from Encyclopædia Britannica Online. <http://search.eb.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/eb/article-9051909> [Accessed 18 Nov. 2005]).

¹⁴ The precursor of French Romantic drama was Victor Hugo (1802-85). Influenced by English performances of Shakespeare in Paris, Hugo propagated historical plays with elaborate scenery and costumes, incorporating a mixture of the tragic and the comic, and abolishing the classical unity of time and place, and its constraints on meter and vocabulary. The hero of his romantic dramas was a lonely, Byronic individual pursuing

his love of the heroine, or of some “higher” ideal, such as personal or family honor. Romantic drama relied heavily on melodrama (Gassner and Quinn 1970)

¹⁵ This tendency of modernism to draw distinctions between Western art and non-Western folklore/artefacts is best illustrated in the modernist persona of the curator, and the modernist institution of the ethnographic museum. The Western curator travels to “other,” often economically disadvantaged places, and collects artifacts to display in a Western museum (Dimitrijevic 2003, 1). Such artifacts are “always excisions, removed, often painfully from the body of other, less powerful, cultures” (Hall 1997, 198). The ethnographic museum, as a modernist construct, “collects artifacts, man-made objects charged with cultural meaning and offering indications on a larger cultural situation” (Dimitrijevic 2003, 2). As an institution, the ethnographic museum is dedicated to art works that are viewed as “the ‘material culture’ . . . of ‘aboriginal,’ ‘indigenous,’ ‘first nations’ people” – namely, the material culture of those who have been historically set apart from the “more complex,” “superior” European culture (Hall 1997, 161). In the modernist tradition, the ethnographic museum stands in opposition to the art museum, which collects works “viewed as standing for an aesthetic” no matter “what [they] could tell us about the culture [they] come from” (Dimitrijevic 2003, 2). They are seen as producing a universal meaning beyond context and culture (Ibid.). Whether a non-Western artifact will ultimately be featured in an art museum is inextricably linked to an “ideology of celebrating difference, otherness, and exoticism” (Ibid.).

¹⁶ Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) was a poet, theatre practitioner, theoretician, and playwright who developed “epic theatre,” which aimed at the politicization of audiences by inviting them to engage in social critique and action. Brecht argued that a political theatre must stave off the audience’s empathy, rather than submerging them in the comforts of illusion, draining their emotions, and leaving them predisposed to accept the world as-is. In his view, politicized theatre needed to appeal to the audience’s intellect, and ultimately make them want to change the world represented on stage. Brecht’s “epic” style of acting is characterised by actors stepping in and out of character; the simultaneous presence of the actor and her character; actors shifting roles, and playing more than one character; actors offering commentary on the play’s action; and a symbolic – but economical – use of props. Such illusion breaking strategies are meant to expose the constructedness of the performance, and to de-familiarise events presented on stage to bring the audience to a consciousness of difference and political action. Brecht’s dramaturgy was influenced by various theatre traditions, including Chinese, Japanese, Indian, and Russian. For example, Brecht’s “alienation effect” – the simultaneous presence of the actor and her character meant to estrange the events presented on stage – was inspired by Chinese Opera, in which the actors’ characterisation is self-consciously presented. Brecht created many of his works in collaboration with members of his writing collective, including Elisabeth Hauptmann, Margarete Steffin, Emil Burri, and Ruth Berlau (Calabro 1990; Wiles 1980).

¹⁷ Filipowicz (1987), for example, argues that Grotowski’s theatre was political because it forged important social networks and a rare opportunity (specifically, in the Poland of that day) for “spontaneous interaction” between participants (Filipowicz and Tymicki 1987, 28). Grotowski himself argued that his theatre was always political, because the

politicised context of socialist Poland enforced a politically-minded interpretation of his theatrical practices (Filipowicz and Findley 1986, 212). Philip Auslander (1994) – specifically addressing contemporary American experimental theatre – reminds us that an experimental performance, although it might not be apparently political to the audience, can be a means of counter-hegemonic resistance if it exposes – by mirroring – the hegemonic structures of society (21-34; 83-104). This argument could certainly apply to both Kantor’s and Szajna’s theatres. Their performances often mirrored society’s oppressive norms through a grotesque and Dada sense of humour which critiqued the absurd automaton of war (Klossowicz, Kobialka, and Schechner 1986, 109-10).

¹⁸ Our use of “facial masks” drew from Grotowski’s work with facial muscles to achieve physical expressivity in the actor’s performance. However, Grotowski’s employment of “facial masks” rested on different principles, and did not include the same strategy of staccato-legato contraction-release of facial muscles.

¹⁹ Many theatre artists in Poland adopted Brecht’s idea of the politicization of theatre as a means of encouraging theatre goers to engage in political action. However, the ways in which they sought such politicization varied, as certainly not everyone concurred with Brecht that to politicize audience members one must discourage them from responding empathically to the play, or that this was even possible in the first place. Certainly, it is not difficult to doubt Brecht’s politics of anti-empathy, given the emotional depth and complexity of Brecht’s characters, such as *Mother Courage* or *Shen Te*.

²⁰ Yet, for me, this social critique was never contingent upon an abrogation of audience’s empathy, as I always appreciated the political potential of empathy in theatre.

²¹ At the time, however, I was not aware that – given Brecht’s belief in the “subversive power of the popular,” and his questioning of the boundaries between bourgeois art and politics (Gemunden 1994, 57) – his idea of social critique was so much directed against the modernist baggage of my theatre.

²² Eugenio Barba is an Italian theatre director and theoretician. He created his Odin Theatre in 1964 in Holstebro, Denmark. Barba’s theatre practice – “barter” – focuses on the ways in which theatre performance can facilitate cultural exchanges with the community-at-large. In 1979, Barba founded ISTA, the International School of Theatre Anthropology, where he explores “the pre-expressive level of the performer’s art” in transcultural contexts. Barba developed his notion of “theatre anthropology” with Jerzy Grotowski, one of his main theatrical collaborators. Barba’s performer training is also inspired by Grotowski’s “poor theatre” (Watson 2002)

²³ Grotowski (see Osinski 1991) and Barba (1991; 1995) are the progenitors of the sub-discipline, theatre anthropology. In their work, they explore principles of performance they believe recur across cultures, constituting the foundation of the performer’s art, upon which, in their view, different genres, styles, roles, personal and cultural traditions are all based (see also endnotes 5 and 22).

²⁴ My focus on the body in theatre performance was inspired, as I have argued, by my early encounters with the avant-garde theatre traditions of Grotowski, Kantor, and Szajna, and by the acting methodology – Illustrative Performing Technique – I developed with

members of my theatre ensemble Teatr Korzenie, founded over a decade ago. While developing this acting methodology, I learned that body movements and gestures are important human means of expression, capable of creating novel experiences – for both performers and audiences – and encouraging social critique and action. This physical means of communication cum agency is evident, for example, when movements and gestures embody, enact, and construct memories. People remember their experiences through their bodies; actors often invoke physical and sensuous memories of a particular event – smell, touch, emotion, or image – in order to inspire and create a physical action on stage. Such physical and sensuous memories called upon by actors are commonly referred to as *mnemonic impulses*. Moreover, the actor’s capacity of duplicating movements and gestures, night after night during the run of a performance, also suggests that people remember the past with their bodies.

²⁵ Brecht’s (1964) illusion breaking techniques employed in *Name Day*, and *Name Day: The Defence*, included his epic style of acting (see endnote 16).

²⁶ Kantor’s illusion breaking strategies implemented in *Name Day*, and *Name Day: The Defence*, included the revealing of the backstage to the audience by having the director present on stage intervening in the action of the performance and actors interacting with audience members (Plesniarowicz 1994, 38). In *Name Day: The Defence*, for example, as the author/director, I stopped the performance in order to re-work a scene poorly executed in rhythm and tempo. Both in *Name Day*, and *Name Day: The Defence*, the characters referred to me by my real name, interrogated me about the performances’ representations, and accused me of appropriating and objectifying their lives for academic and artistic ends. This was meant to expose the constructedness of the theatre event, and my authority as director/author/academic.

²⁷ Ginsburg (1995) borrowed the term *parallax effect* from astronomy to refer to the intertextuality – or “different angles of vision” – created by juxtaposing different modes of cultural representation, such as ethnographic film and indigenous media. She argues that these “different angles of vision” can contribute to a more complex understanding of culture (and the media representations located within it) that is not stable or bounded (65).

²⁸ In her conceptualisation of the “aesthetic expressive,” Edwards has been influenced by the ethnographic photography of Elizabeth Williams, and the photography of such visual artists as Leah King-Smith, Jorma Purane, Ingrid Pollard, and Claudette Holmes (Banks and Morphy 1997).

²⁹ In the social sciences, the notion of embodiment advances a new understanding of mind and body as a unified entity, and thus challenges Descartes’ mind-body dualism, as well as other binaries, such as cognitive/behavioural, reason/emotion, subjective/objective, and corporeal/incorporeal. It has been increasingly recognised that bodily means of expression, such as movement, gesture, non-verbal vocalisation, as well as emotions and sensations, are legitimate “objects” of research, as they constitute embodied actions of a human agent, rather than simply the physiological or the biological (Butler 1999; Farnell 1999; Scheper-Hughes 1992; Stoller 1995). This bodily agency, however, has been primarily understood in terms of its signifying capacity. Any considerations beyond discursivity have been limited to the momentary context of ritual (Stoller 1995). I

consider bodily acts as creative and dynamic social forces, capable of cultivating new experiences, and initiating social change.

³⁰ Boal's *Forum Theatre* is created in response to a particular group's oppression. The spectators are invited to take the actors' roles and replace the play's protagonists, and improvise an alternative to the narrative currently portrayed (Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz 1994,179)

³¹ Such "self-investment," Marody and Poleszczuk (2000) stress, is often articulated differently for upper-, middle-, and lower-class women. While for upper class women, self-investment entails an education, a professional career, and sexual attractiveness, for middle and lower class women, self-investment is articulated in more traditional terms, such as homemaking, motherhood, and sexual attractiveness (151-75).

³² One childhood memory, in particular, "drew" me towards this research field. As a young girl, I was walking with my older cousin to visit my grandfather's grave at a nearby cemetery. We passed by a barrack inhabited by several Roma families. I was afraid of Roma people in general, as I was often told – like many children in Poland – that a "Gypsy" might kidnap me if I misbehaved. As my cousin and I were walking, I suddenly noticed a large dog barking and running towards us. Some Roma children were laughing and taunting the dog, "sick her!" Terrified, I jumped into my cousin's arms; caught unawares, she dropped me, and I lost consciousness. When I revived, a Roma man was standing over me, repeating, "Wake-up! Are you all right?" I believe that the memory of that incident stayed with me, and made me want to understand the various social forces that both "brought about" my childhood fear of Roma, and "compelled" the Roma children to send their dog after me.

³³ Stereotypes are an outcome of "the collective imagination. . . . [and provide] simple answers in a complicated world" (Strauss 1998, 82). They deny individuality and diversity within a cultural group by making sweeping statements and generalisations (Ibid.).

³⁴ According to such sources, Roma baptise their children, for example, merely to collect presents from their god-parents.

³⁵ After the collapse of Ceausescu's regime, the economic crisis in Romania, coupled with the rise of nationalisms, contributed to an increase of prejudice and violence directed against ethnic minorities – particularly Roma – who became scapegoats for Romania's economic woes. Massive evictions, restitution, and privatisation policies limited the amount of land available to the Roma, and displaced entire communities to the margins of cities and villages, where they were victims of frequent pogroms, high unemployment, and minimal access to social protection and health care services. As a result, many Roma fled Romania in search of "better fortunes" (Zoon 2001). For Romanian Roma, Poland was either their final destination or a temporary stopover on their way to Germany (Bartosz 1994, 75).

³⁶ The research field I chose for my Ph.D. project was situated in a specific geographical location, and within a very specific community. However, I did not conceptualise it as being geographically "rooted," but as a "space" situated at the crossroads of "local" and

“global” processes that supported violence as experienced by the Roma women (Gupta, 1997). This was evident in the set of assumptions I developed about what constituted and promoted violence against them as described later in the chapter.

³⁷ The term “Western capitalism” should not be seen here as being synonymous with the American version. Polish capitalism, as it has been developing since 1989, although similar to forms of capitalism in many advanced economies, is also context specific. It resembles what sociologist Lawrence King (2002) refers to as a “dependant variety of liberal capitalism” (24-35). As such, it has been influenced by Western European forms of capitalism that emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, and is characterised by the pursuit of profit “through market exchanges, utilising free-wage labour, in a rule-governed legal and political environment, with a state that provides basic public goods” (Ibid., 25). The Polish class-structure, like those of many other Western European countries, comprises of “multinational corporate owners,” local capitalists, and a working class politically active through unions (Ibid.). Organisationally, Poland’s working class is stronger than its American counterpart, but weaker than German or French (Ibid.). In contrast to forms of capitalism in Western Europe, Japan, and the United States, Polish capitalism is characterised by higher imports to, and exports from, the West (Ibid.). Finally, Polish capitalism has been largely shaped by the legacy of its socialist past. Poland’s socialist “economy of shortage” (Kornai 1992) developed in contrast to its closest Western neighbour – Western Germany. It was profoundly influenced by Western Germany’s apotheosis of consumerism, propagated by magazines, videos, media, or gifts that managed to get through the Iron Curtain, and “reflected and confirmed the image of the prosperous ‘golden West,’ as a paradise that, if attained, could solve most every problem” (Berdahl 2005, 239). As Slavenka Drakulic (1991) poignantly argues, such images not only fuelled Eastern Europeans’ fascination with the West, but were “more dangerous than any secret weapon, because they ma[de] one desire that ‘otherness’ badly enough to risk one’s life by trying to escape. . .” (27-28). After the collapse of state socialism in Poland, such images of Western affluence have continued to “define consumption as the organising metaphor for the collapse of socialist rule.” (Berdahl 2005, 239). More so, consumption has become integral in shaping Polish-Western European relations (Ibid.). As in other Eastern European countries, such as Eastern Germany, “the acquisition of a cultural competence in consumption” has become a ticket for Poles into the Western world (Ibid.).

³⁸ In this dissertation, I outline the main arguments of Foucault’s and Gramsci’s theories of power, and feminist critiques of Foucault. I do not explore the differences between earlier and later writings of Foucault and Gramsci, or the complexities, ambiguities, and contradictions of all these theoretical standpoints, as this is beyond the scope of this document.

³⁹ Crehan’s (2002) interpretation of Gramsci’s hegemony largely departs from how the concept has been commonly understood in anthropology. Crehan argues that in anthropology, Gramsci’s concept of hegemony has been mainly linked to ideology, neglecting to consider “the importance of the material circumstances in which ideas and beliefs are embedded” (Ibid., 173). Her analysis of Gramsci seeks to re-articulate hegemony in relation to the whole field of power, including “‘practical activity’ and the

social relations that produce inequality, as well as ideas by which that inequality is justified, explained, normalised . . .” (Ibid., 174).

⁴⁰ These criticisms of Foucault’s notions of power, subject, and resistance, primarily address Foucault’s earlier work. Some feminist theorists argue that Foucault’s later writings are more relevant to the feminist project, and that even his earliest work opens up multiple possibilities for feminist scholarship. Lois McNay argues that Foucault’s notion of historically contingent nature of sexuality puts to question our society’s compulsory heterosexuality and opens up a space from which to negotiate “new realms in which bodily pleasures can be explored” (McNay 1992, 30). Sandra Bartky, employing Foucault’s notion of the body as an effect of the regimes of social control, explores dieting and exercise in our society as a means of controlling women’s bodies and identities (Bartky 1988). Finally, Judith Butler (1990), drawing on Foucault’s idea of the unstable subject, constructs her critique of feminism’s attempts to situate identity politics in an essentialised category of woman which – she argues – does not account for those who do not identify themselves within its parameters (4, 148).

⁴¹ I realized, however, that the locales of the performance would be chosen by the participants themselves. I considered the possibility that the participants might have different preferences for the performance venues, or even decide not to present in public at all. Although I hoped that we would negotiate the terms for public presentations – even if it would involve censoring certain aspects of the performance, or only showing the performance to certain audiences – I believed that even the rehearsal process itself, without audience participation, could provide a ground for dialogical construction of knowledge.

⁴² Poland joined the EU on May 1, 2004. Since then, inflation has soared, and some of the Polish press and politicians have criticized Poland’s accession into the EU. When I visited Poland again in 2005 prices of some grocery articles had risen as much as one to two zloty per item.

⁴³ Shawn and I were to teach introductory level courses in art and culture studies and acting. However, we could adjust the level of the courses according to the experience and seniority of the students enrolled.

⁴⁴ The seminar largely followed the experimental and performative ethnography course outline I designed for my Ph.D. Qualifying Examinations.

⁴⁵ Although I list Joanna as a participant, she is not mentioned again in the dissertation, because she left the group at the beginning of the process.

⁴⁶ I graduated from a similar program in 1990.

⁴⁷ My ethnographic adaptation of Jozef Szajna’s *Replika*, originally performed in Vancouver in 2000, was remounted at the Cultural Centre’s annual festival *Elblag’s Nights of Poetry and Theatre*, and at the 3rd International Festival for the Fine and Performing Arts in Tczew, Poland, September 2002.

⁴⁸ The Gardzienice Centre for Theatre Practices was founded in 1978 in Lublin. It was a “travelling theatre” that sought to engage in cultural exchanges with ethnic communities across Poland, and throughout Europe. The ensemble performed in small villages,

inviting residents to share their “ancient” songs, movements, and gestures. Between 1980 and 2000, the members of the company began exploring the relationship between theatre and “traditional” folk cultures in order to reunite “traditional” and “modern” worlds. The Gardzienice Centre’s program of actor training places its emphasis on the body and the voice. Its major influence has been Grotowski’s theatre anthropology, and his actor training (Allain 1997; Cioffi 1996).

⁴⁹ Leszek Madzik is a Polish theatre director, scenographer, and founder of the Plastic Stage Theatre (Scena Plastyczna) at the Catholic University of Lublin. He explores the intersections between scenography, sound, space, light, and silence. His performances are wordless, and do not rely on traditional modes of acting. The actor is merely a figure, a shadow, or a mannequin-mummy – a constituent of the scenography. Through his theatre, Madzik seeks to reach the “Absolute,” to “track the footsteps of Transcendence in the human world.” In his view, such “transcendence” can be achieved through tragedy, darkness, and suffering (Kocjan and Kolbuszewska 2000).

⁵⁰ Witkiewicz Theatre was established in 1985 in Poland’s small mountain town of Zakopane (see appendix B) by a group of theatre graduates from the Higher Theatrical School in Krakow. It was named after Polish playwright, philosopher, and theatre theoretician Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz (1885-1939). Witkiewicz Theatre is influenced by Dada, Surrealism and Formalism, and is devoted to primarily performing Witkiewicz’s absurdist plays. The main focus of Witkiewicz Theatre has been to critique and challenge the “impotent” established order of society, framed by mechanisation and materialism, by employing a stylised form of acting (Swiader 2005).

⁵¹ I am not suggesting that realism is more “natural” and less “performed” than Illustrative Performing, but merely, that as a style of representation, it would have had a greater potential to be shaped by the actors themselves, and less by Shawn and me.

⁵² Initially I audio recorded the actors’ consent to participate as performers and research participants in my Ph.D. project. I first read out the “Informed Consent by Performers and Cast Members” form (see appendix I), orally translating it into Polish, and then the actors recorded their consent to participate in the project. They were not concerned about anonymity or confidentiality, and agreed I could either use their real names, or pseudonyms, in my dissertation. In 2003 the actors also signed consent forms that I translated into Polish orally.

⁵³ I asked this question because I noticed that in Poland people often spoke about racism and intolerance as two distinct phenomena.

⁵⁴ The survey Olga and Grazyna conducted in their Lyceum – with approximately thirty peers – was entitled “*Racism... does it concern me?*” The following is a sample of the questions asked, and the answers provided:

Q. What is racism?

A.

- judging someone without knowing them;
- judging a person by their looks;
- it’s hatred... a wrong attitude towards a different person;
- pointing out difference in a negative light without really knowing the culture;

- associating Jews with money... long nose and big ears;
- associating good people with blond hair and bad people with black hair;
- racism is fanaticism.

Q. Does racism concern me?

A.

- yes, we live in a racist society.

(Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Dance as I Play You*, 11/06/02)

⁵⁵ The centrality of binary thinking to human thought has been articulated from a variety of standpoints. From the perspective of linguistics, binary thinking is essential to human thought because it establishes differences, which in turn is crucial in meaning-making processes (Hall 1997, 234). According to Saussure, meaning is “relational,” because we can only speak of whiteness in contrast to blackness, without which, whiteness would not be meaningful (Ibid.). Bakhtin (1981, 293-4) argues that meaning is constructed through a dialogue between different participants; therefore, “difference” is central to meaning-making. Anthropologically, culture has been seen, among others, as a process of meaning making by assigning everything around us “different positions within a classificatory system” (Hall 1997, 236). Thus, it is “the making of difference [that is] the basis of that symbolic order we call culture” (Ibid.). Processes of classification rely on binary thinking because in order to make classifications, one must be able to differentiate between objects (Ibid., 235). From the perspective of psychoanalysis, the establishment of “otherness” is seen as fundamental to the formation of the subject’s self, and to his or her sexual identity. Thus, in psychoanalysis, our subjectivities are contingent upon “unconscious relations with significant others” (Ibid., 238). According to Hall, however, while binaries establish the “diversity of the world within their either/or extremes,” at the same time, they are reductionist: in the so-called black-and-white photograph, “there is actually no pure ‘black’ or ‘white,’ only varying shades of grey” (Ibid., 235).

⁵⁶ All students participating in the project, except Tadzio, were either in their late teens or early twenties, and attended Lyceum, technical school, or university. Tadzio was in his mid-thirties. He had a Master’s degree, and worked as a dance instructor in Elblag.

⁵⁷ Shawn and I wrote the text for both the press release and the program, and I was interviewed by local and regional media.

⁵⁸ I did not need to record the actors’ informed consent for this project because the consent they recorded at the start of *Dance As I Play You* referred to all the three theatre projects – *Dance As I Play You*, *Horses and Angels*, and *Hope* – which were all part of my Ph.D. research (see appendix A)

⁵⁹ The survey on “gender inequality” Olga and Grazyna conducted at their Lyceum included the following questions the answers:

- Do you think that women in Poland are the victims of sexism?* 13 boys responded “yes,” 8 responded “no;” 33 girls responded “yes,” 6 responded “no.”
- What does feminism mean to you?* 14 boys saw feminism in negative terms, 3 boys in positive terms, and 2 boys gave no answer; 13 girls saw feminism in negative terms,

13 in positive terms, and 1 girl gave no answer. The negative associations of feminism for both girls and boys included: feminism is dead; sick ambitions of healthy women; feminism equals fanaticism; feminism equals fascism, nationalism, chauvinism, and communism; feminists are women who have not found a man and want revenge; feminism is the greatest travesty in the world since Hitler and Stalin; feminists are women who want equality in whatever is convenient for them; feminism is a hatred towards men; feminism is stupidity; feminists believe that men are idiots; feminism is a belief in the superiority of women; feminism can be associated with elderly and lonely women. Positive associations provided by both boys and girls included: feminists are independent of men; feminism is a necessary struggle of men and women for the rights of women; feminism fights for a liberation from stereotypes; feminists know what they want; feminism is the solidarity of women.

- c) *What, according to you, are the most common incidents of violence against women in Poland?* 43 respondents answered rape; 36-domestic violence; 19-sexual molestation; 23-verbal sexual abuse/humiliation; and 1-assaults by strangers.
- d) *Who should be responsible for raising children?* 5 boys responded “the mother;” 21 responded “both parents;” 1 responded, “it depends on the sex of the child.” 4 girls responded “the mother;” 33 responded “both parents.” Nobody responded that men should be the sole caregiver of their children.
- e) *Who in actuality is responsible for raising children?* 6 boys responded “the mother;” 1 responded both parents. 9 girls responded “the mother;” 2 responded “both parents.” Some opinions of both boys and girls included: the father should teach his children how to be tough in life; the father should be bringing in the income; a woman should look after the children until they go to school, and then a man should take over; a woman is responsible for the house because of her goodness and honesty, and caring qualities; women are granted custody more often than men; women are more attached to their children and have a bigger influence over them; a woman is responsible for, and should be raising, a child; the man should be working and supporting the family.
- f) *What do you think about the statement, “A women’s place is at home?”* 3 boys responded “it should be a woman’s choice to stay home;” 7 responded “I agree;” 8 responded “I don’t agree;” and 2 responded “although a woman’s place is in the home, she should also be able to work.” 7 girls responded “it should be a woman’s choice to stay home;” 1 responded “I agree;” 28 responded “I disagree;” and 1 responded “although a woman’s place is in the home, she should also be able to work.”
- g) *Who are single women?* The boys’ responses included: not very capable; they didn’t fulfil themselves in life; I feel sorry for such women; they are unhappy; they are unattractive; they are independent financially; they annoy men; they have no strength in life; they are not interested in men; they have a hard life and we should admire them; they are normal like other women; they are emotionally broken; they have no shoulder to lean on; they have to struggle for survival; no one can handle their personalities; young ones are okay – old ones are to be gassed; they don’t know how to put their lives together and find themselves a man; they are nasty, grumpy and ugly. Girls’ responses included: they are independent and strong; they know how to

take care of themselves; they are self-fulfilling; they are hurt, strange; they have a warped morality; those are the ones who cannot find a husband; they are as normal as other women; it's their choice, they are happy by themselves; I respect them; they were unlucky; it's easier for them without men; they're "old maidens;" not very attractive; they are mocked, talked about and laughed at, and I feel sorry for them; it's better to live on your own than with a monster; hard life for single mothers; they become sad and bitter; they are resilient to suffering; they pay more attention to children; ugly, boring, bitter; their attitude depends on whether they are single by choice or from necessity; that's often caused by the irresponsibility of men; they are waiting for that one chosen man.

- h) *Who should be making decisions about abortion?* 5 boys responded "the woman;" 10 responded "both the man and the woman;" and 4 responded "I am against abortion." 16 girls responded "the woman;" 12 responded "both the man and the woman;" and 12 responded "I am against abortion." Neither boys nor girls mentioned it should be the men who are solely responsible for making decisions about abortion.
- i) *Could a woman be as good of a driver, athlete, politician, or soldier as a man?*
 Driver: 11 boys and 34 girls responded "yes;" 9 boys and 7 girls responded "no."
 Athlete: 12 boys and 39 girls responded "yes;" 8 boys and 2 girls responded "no."
 Politician: 10 boys and 38 girls responded "yes;" 10 boys and 3 girls responded "no."
 Soldier: 5 boys and 23 girls responded "yes;" 14 boys and 18 girls responded "no."
 Some of the boys' responses included: a woman has worse reflexes and visual abilities; a woman is more calm; a woman is weaker than a man in certain aspects; a woman is too merciless; a woman is better in administrative jobs; a woman is weaker physically and mentally, and war is a manly affair... a woman would be too merciful in war. Some of the girls' responses included: a woman can't concentrate very well because she is too weak, and she can't control a car well; in certain aspects [athleticism] depends on how fit she is; a woman does not really know manly things; she is weak, she menstruates so she can't kill.
- j) *Can a woman who is not stereotypically feminine be attractive?* 15 boys responded "yes;" 5 responded "no." 27 girls responded "yes;" 3 responded "no."
- k) *Is a woman who is not stereotypically feminine less popular among men?* 16 boys responded "yes;" 1 responded "no." 15 girls responded "yes;" 3 responded "no." Girls' responses included: let the men judge; a woman can't be a tomboy... she should be feminine; she would be less popular among men in this epoch of Barbie dolls; what is important is personality, attractiveness, natural looks, acceptance of oneself, intelligence; men pay attention to looks. Boys responses included: what's important is character, natural look, intelligence, soul; what's important is a nice figure and face; feelings are important; men like women who are 100% feminine.
- l) *Who should be the dominant person in a relationship?* 4 boys responded "the man;" 11 responded "both;" 5 responded "it depends on the character of the person." 4 girls responded "the man;" 1 responded "the woman;" 29 responded "both;" 5 responded "it depends on the character of the person."
- m) *Would you like to have a child without having a partner?* 2 boys responded "yes;" 17 responded "no." 7 girls responded "yes;" 30 responded "no."

- n) *Would you be willing to sacrifice your career to raise a family and take care of the home?* 5 boys responded “yes;” 8 responded “no.” 18 girls responded “yes;” 13 responded “no.” 3 boys and 6 girls responded “career and child-rearing could happen at the same time.”
- o) *What is most important in a woman? [only the boys were asked this question]* Answers were as follows: character (4); personality (2); intelligence (7); looks (4); beauty (4); eyes (3); smile (1); happy soul (1); ambition (1); look well-kept (1); legs (2); breasts (2); vagina (1); butt (2); face (2); everything (2); humour (1); difference (1).
- p) *Do you feel responsible for a woman? Were you taught that at home? [only the boys were asked this question]* Answers were as follows: “I feel responsible” (8); “I don’t feel responsible” (2); “I was taught respect at home” (11); “I wasn’t taught respect at home” (3).
- q) *Would you be happy with a woman who doesn’t work outside of the home? [only the boys were asked this question]* 13 boys responded “yes, provided they had enough money;” 6 responded “no.”
- r) *Do you experience discrimination on the basis of gender? [only the girls were asked this question]* 9 girls responded “yes;” 32 responded “no.”
- s) *What do you think about a man kissing your hand? [only the girls were asked this question]* Answers were as follows: pleasant (25); showing respect (6); shows good upbringing and culture (18); shows good intellect (2); it is necessary (2); it is positive (7); I don’t like it (1); it’s not useful (1); I know how to open a door (1); stereotypical (2); polite (1); artificial (1).
- t) *Do you feel dependent on men? [only the girls were asked this question]* 23 girls responded “no;” 16 responded “yes.” Some of the reasons provided were as follows: if she loves him; difficult to live without men; need them for fixing things around the house; for love; for sex; for warmth; for friendship; as a driver; because they’re physically strong; for opening jars; for making kids.
(Transcript, Pre-Rehearsal, *Horses and Angels*, 1/21/03)

⁶⁰ Initially, Girl 1 was performed by Grazyna, and Girl 2, by Agnieszka. In the final version of the play, Girl 1 became “Son” (performed by Shawn), and Girl 2 became “Daughter” (performed by Agnieszka). The characters were altered because Grazyna became ill two weeks prior to the performance, and was replaced by Shawn.

⁶¹ Shawn and I wrote the text for the press release.

⁶² According to actors familiar with the Centre’s politics, this was not surprising, because the Centre’s employees generally did not attend “their own” theatre productions.

⁶³ Shawn and I also wanted to hold in-studio, formal group discussions with audience members and participants; however it was against the Festival’s regulations.

⁶⁴ Some employees from the Cultural Centre – and the actors – believed that the director’s decision to withdraw funding from *Hope* was primarily a response to the failure of *Horses and Angels* to win at the festival, and thus, its failure to fulfil the Centre’s mandate to produce works of art that are successful at the national level. Others, however, were convinced that this was only a pretext for the Centre’s director to funnel

Hope's funding into artistic/cultural events he was personally overseeing, or for events which he perceived as having a greater box office draw.

⁶⁵ While the direct translation from Polish to English is “old woman,” the nuanced connotations of “stara baba” in Polish culture are left behind. “Stara baba” evokes negative images, such as the ugly, old witch that appears in numerous Polish fairy tales.

⁶⁶ Among the Roma women, Ana was the most frequent attendee of the Centre’s cultural events; however, other women had also attended a few events there. Most women enjoyed the Centre’s popular or folk dance presentations, but some had also attended a few comedies during the mainstage season. The big hit among the Roma during my stay in Elblag was a concert given by Krzysztof Krawczyk – popular Polish pop and folk singer, and guitarist – hosted by the Cultural Centre in late winter, 2003. Many of his songs are either about, or written by, Roma.

⁶⁷ To “sick a person” is translated from the Polish word “zaszczuc,” which means to “hunt down an animal,” or metaphorically, to “bait someone.” The women used the expression in reference to “badmouthing a person behind his or her back” and compromising their reputation within the community.

⁶⁸ In retrospect, I also see this part of the research process as important in further establishing rapport with the Roma women – a part without which the ethnographic performance would have likely not taken place.

⁶⁹ Although Lindlof writes specifically about interviews, his observations are applicable to our in-studio discussions.

⁷⁰ I did not expect that the women’s understandings of violence would be so broad. I thought the women would identify violence as incidents of physical abuse on the street and at home. As such, my expectations need to be exposed as, in some sense, complicit with the stereotypical views of the oppressed as not “fully capable” of a critical and complex evaluation of their own situation.

⁷¹ While the Roma women predominantly talked about the present in more negative terms than about the past, they did recognise that certain aspects of their lives had changed for the better, particularly since their days of living in caravans. For example, Randia admitted that while life in a caravan had been “nice,” present non-nomadic life was more convenient:

Magda: Caravans were outlawed in Poland in 1967...

Randia: ...we could only get to Elblag in our caravan... we still wanted to go further, but they didn’t let us . . . they gave us apartments, whether we liked it or not. It was difficult to get used to such a different lifestyle... it used to be so nice... we would travel through the villages... people would come to talk with us by our fire. . . . My father and mother were also travelling through the forests under the Germans. But my kids don’t know about caravan life... they have no idea... how could they? Now it’s very different... on the one hand, it’s good, because we have our own places... and we have water... so there are more comforts than before... we had to draw water from streams, and that was difficult... and now it’s easy... you just throw your laundry into a washer.

But you know, we were also healthier then. . . . When we were travelling through the forests, sometimes it was cold, and we'd sleep in the cold... so maybe now it's all coming out. Before there were no couches and sofas, and we were sleeping on straw... there were no sheets. (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Hope*, 3/26/03)

⁷² A popular soap opera in Poland, *Milosc i Nienawisc*.

⁷³ I assumed here that the Roma women had other reasons for creating the performance outside of the necessity of fulfilling what the involvement in the project, and the financial compensation they received for it, required of them. Of course one could accuse me of the pretentiousness of this assumption, particularly given that the Roma women would have likely never participated in the project had it not been for the financial compensation they received. Yet, such an understanding of the women's reasons for creating the performance would be problematic, because it precludes, in a rather paternalistic manner, the possibility that our participants are capable of using our research projects for their own very specific reasons and benefits other than those we set out for them.

⁷⁴ Initially, we had Nadzieja's grandmother ceremoniously binding the hands of Nadzieja and Dennis in the wedding scene; however, later in the process, when we decided to expunge the character of "grandmother" from the play due to the lack of actors, this role was incorporated into Zafira.

⁷⁵ The Roma women not only talked about their dogs in rehearsals, but also on several occasions referred to their own lives as "dogs' lives." For example, when in one of our sessions Ana confided that her mother's mental health had deteriorated so much that she had to commit her to the hospital, and that her sister Nelka's substance abuse had spiralled out of control, Randia exclaimed, "See Magda, what this dog's life of ours is doing to us!" (Fieldnotes 2003)

⁷⁶ The references include: "A dog's life is better than mine" (Ibid.); "I wouldn't treat my dog like [my husband] treated me" (Ibid.); "They treat us like dogs" (Fieldnotes 2002); "Sometimes I look at my dog and I wish that I was him... what a life he has!" (Ibid.)

⁷⁷ "Blowing on the cold" in Polish translates into "dmuchac na gorace." Usually, a person who is excessively cautious in life is referred to in Polish as "blowing on the cold." While normally one blows on a spoonful of hot soup before placing it in their mouth, the excessively cautious person will even blow on a spoonful of cold soup, just in case!

⁷⁸ This is often the case because in Poland women are largely perceived as "less intelligent" and "more emotional" than men.

⁷⁹ According to Isabel Fonseca (1995), such distrust and fear of Gadjos result from the prevalent belief among Roma that Gadjos are *mahrime* – polluted – and that by associating with them one risks contamination (Ibid., 12). Stewart (1997) argues that Roma's perceptions of Gadjos as polluted are their way of transcending and transferring onto Gadjos the stereotypes of "impure" and "unhygienic" with which Gadjos have traditionally stigmatised Roma. I believe, however, that while Roma's distrust of Gadjos might be about pollution, and about the reversing of stereotypes, it also constitutes a realistic and concrete practice of self-protection in a world where associations with

Gadjos do not merely lead to contamination, but also to violence, and even loss of one's life.

⁸⁰ Papisza was born sometime between 1908-1910. She was a Roma poet and singer who convinced by the Polish poet Jerzy Ficowski, recorded her poems and songs phonetically in Romani. Ficowski translated her poems into Polish and published them in the Polish Press. However, Ficowski was also at the time writing a book about Roma, and was the government advisor on the "Gypsy Question," as he officially supported the government's plan for the settlement of Roma. Papisza, as his collaborator, was accused by many Roma in Poland of being an accomplice to Ficowski's and the Polish government's destruction of traditional Roma ways of life, as well as of betraying Roma "secrets" to Gadjos both through the poems she wrote and the stories she told Ficowski. She ended up being excommunicated from the Roma community, and lived in solitude until her death in 1987 (Fonseca 1995, 3-9).

⁸¹ The Roma women made approving facial expressions and gestures when Ana asserted her authority over the actors. Some women even repeated Ana's interactions with the actors. For example, after Ana derisively imitated Derek's movements and gestures while rehearsing the dance scene, Ewa walked over to Derek and, in a similar tone, parodied Derek's movements. In other words, Ana set the tone for the women's interactions with the actors.

⁸² When speaking of Ana's accomplishments as a fortune-teller, the Roma women did not imply, in any way, that she had a lot of fortune-telling customers, or that she earned a substantial amount of money from telling people's fortunes. They conceded that for Ana, like for many Roma women in Poland, fortune-telling was not lucrative due to a variety of factors including racism and people's inability to pay for fortune-telling. Rather, for the Roma women, Ana's accomplishments meant that she managed to recruit, on average, more potential customers than they did.

⁸³ Ana admitted that she often dressed – particularly if she was trading or fortune telling – more inconspicuously so as not to be recognised as a Roma.

⁸⁴ While originally we all had agreed to use a real coffin on loan from a local dealer, two days prior to the dress rehearsal, Olga and Grazyna notified me that they would withdraw from the production if a real coffin were used. Using a real coffin on stage, they argued, would be a sacrilege and an affront to Polish values. When I addressed the problem at the rehearsal the following day, havoc engulfed the proceedings. The Roma women sided with Olga and Grazyna that using a real coffin in the play could indeed offend some audience members, and that we needed to find a different theatrical solution. The other actors, on the other hand, firmly supported the idea of using a real coffin, which they believed was crucial, as a stage piece, to present Nadzieja's funeral clearly to the audience. The debate raged on for many hours until I suggested a pedestal, which is commonly used in Poland for the public viewing of the dead, to replace the coffin. The coffin dilemma, however, managed to unearth some old antagonisms among the actors, which unsettled the rehearsal atmosphere for several days (Transcript, Rehearsal, *Hope*, 5/27/03).

⁸⁵ The Roma women were insinuating here that Poles were promiscuous.

⁸⁶ A popular epitaph commonly seen engraved on the headstones of deceased, young people.

⁸⁷ I did not invite any Roma, as I wanted the Roma women to decide about whom to invite to the performance.

⁸⁸ All subsequent comments are from Fieldnotes 2003, unless otherwise stated.

⁸⁹ In much of Western academic discourse the social, political, and economic changes taking place in postsocialist states have been largely understood as ultimately resulting in a Western ideal of liberal democracy and market economy. However, such linear and unidirectional conceptualisations of postsocialist transformations are problematic. They fail to account for the complexity, diversity, and unpredictability of experiences that characterise postsocialist states; they also propagate a discourse of Western triumphalism, according to which the “good” forces of Western capitalism will conquer the “evil” forces of communism. These attitudes are based on the idealisation of Western liberal democracies and market economies which in reality have never existed in such ideal forms (Barsegian 2000; Burawoy and Verdery 1999; Pine and Bridger 1998; Verdery 1996).

⁹⁰ While the actors’ and my understandings of the Roma women’s participation in the project cannot be viewed as deliberately stigmatising, having lived in Poland for many years likely had an impact on how we conceptualised the women’s participation in the project.

⁹¹ They were informal, unstructured, and at times semi-structured, group interviews, or what Bingham and Moore (1959) refer to as “conversation[s] with a purpose” (Lindlof 1995, 154).

⁹² This, however, was the intention of our project, to maximise the women’s participation and expression in the performance by representing the world of the play – as much as it was possible given the constructed nature of ethnographic knowledge and representations and the unequal power relations between us – from their own perspectives.

⁹³ This tactic of repetition was inspired by Kantor’s famous strategy of repetitious negatives, a theatrical action that transforms the linear progression of life into “frozen-in-time-negatives” that repetitively appear and disappear, eventually fading into “nothingness.” Kantor used this strategy to express the futility and absurdity of human existence (Kantor 1993, 333).

⁹⁴ The strategy of montage was also widely used in the theatres of Kantor and Szajna.

⁹⁵ This is not to deny that exposing and critiquing domestic violence in the Roma women’s lives is important. However, I believe that in order to allow the audience members a meaningful critique of such violence, other forms of violence to which the women are subjected, such as racism and public violence, also must be addressed. Racism, and public and domestic violence are interconnected because racial prejudice, marginalisation, and physical forms of violence committed against Roma constitute an immediate context in which domestic violence occurs and needs to be understood.

⁹⁶ As I argued, however, a more substantial consideration of racism and public violence in the performance was not an option, as the Roma women feared the possible repercussions of such representations.

⁹⁷ I believe that in *Dance as I Play You*, or *Hope*, most audience members mainly spoke of the performances' theatrical aspects because of their "uneasy" subject matter. Racism and intolerance are currently hotly debated topics in Polish media, universities, the Catholic Church, and by politicians. This is the case because after the collapse of socialism, Polish post-war pogroms have attracted international attention, and have been cited as proof of an inherent Polish anti-Semitism (Novick 2000; Sherwin 1997). Some sources partly blame Polish anti-Semitism for Jewish persecution in the twentieth century, and identify Poles as Nazi collaborators in the murder of Jews, who "celebrat[ed] the decimation of Polish Jewry and eagerly appropriate[ed] Jewish property [after the war]" (Sherwin 1997, 16). There have been many responses offered to such accusations in Poland. Some politicians began framing Polish-Jewish relations in terms of Polish philo-Semitism. They represent Poles as hospitable to Jews throughout the centuries, and blame the post-war pogroms on the Communist Party which, they argue, forced Poles to carry them out (Sherwin 1997, 16-17). Others blame the depictions of Poles as inherently anti-Semitic on North American Jewish organisations which, they maintain, do so to counter prevailing stereotypes of the "Jew-communist" in the American consciousness. There are also those who argue that denying Polish anti-Semitism and the responsibility for the post-war pogroms altogether is nonsensical because, like in many other European countries, there were people in Poland who saved Jews, who collaborated with Nazis, who participated in pogroms, or who remained "neutral." Thus, in the context of such a politically charged landscape, some audience members might have been reluctant to discuss racism or intolerance, wishing to avoid potentially perilous confrontations.