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(Un)moved: On the Holocaust and Watchers,
Players and Chroniclers of History
— An Affective Perspective

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Grzegorz Niziołek, *Polski teatr Zagłady* (Warsaw: Instytut Teatralny im. Zbigniewa Raszewskiego, Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2013)

What can be said about this book, first and foremost, is that it is exceptional and important. Not only in the field of theatre research, though not being an expert I imagine that it would be so first of all in that field, but also in the fields of cultural and even humanistic research in Poland. Ultimately, it is not just in this sense that this is not only a work about theatre and the fatherland. The author, Grzegorz Niziołek, also harnesses literary, artistic and film works to his story. The material from which he works is rich, yet has been selected and compiled most conscientiously. It is not governed by the logic of free association, but rather by the rhythm of affective arousals. The systems of reference lead to places that for the uninitiated can be distant and dangerous. Everything here need not be pleasing; in fact, it stands to reason that little here could be pleasing. Without resistance to what's read and seen here, it would be difficult to present this reading experience.

The basic thesis of *Polski teatr Zagłady* [*Polish Theatre of the Holocaust*] is, on one hand, the conviction that in the very experience of works about the Holocaust, an important role is played by theatrical structure – the division into stage and offstage, actors and audience – and, on the other, that the post-war space of the theatre is a place where there could be and sometimes was a return to that which in the original event was repressed, namely traumas of participation of the audience, the viewers, the Hilbergian bystanders in this war story.¹ In the words of Iwona Kurz:

Here it's not about recalling an illustration, an 'image of the Holocaust' in the theatre, but about how the very structure of the theatre, the theatre's particular distribution of roles but also the vital energy of the theatre, operated in post-war memory infected by repression and a feeling of guilt.²

Niziołek, conscious of his position within history, is interested in the degree to which theatre today is capable of rethinking itself in light of memory of the Holocaust, and reinventing its role in the artistic space – it somehow appears privileged here – and in the public space, which in

1 See Raul Hilberg, *Perpetrators Victims Bystanders: The Jewish Catastrophe, 1933-1945* (New York: Aaron Asher Books / HarperCollins, 1992).

2 Iwona Kurz, in an unpublished commentary on the book. I thank the author for providing the text. See Grzegorz Niziołek, 'Publiczność u progu komory gazowej', <http://www.polskieradio.pl/8/402/Artykul/963108>, Grzegorz-Niziolek-publicznosc-u-progu-komory-gazowej, [accessed: 10 November 2013].

the understanding of the author has supplied the frame of this community (in)experience. Niziołek also points to the function of theatre that is helpful in the process of working through trauma and wounds, as well as the danger that it may preserve collective defence mechanisms.

The author constructs a narrative on two planes, complementary though not subordinated to each other: the textual and the visual. For *Polish Theatre of the Holocaust* is significant as an object. Its specific form – cover, the collection and placement of visual material – ‘say’ a great deal, they create their own story. They do not simply fulfil an illustrative function in this, but become elements that arouse the reader’s imagination, that disturb, that sometimes obstruct – in the positive sense of the word – because they break up the fluidity of reading and the coherence of the constructed plot (and, fundamentally, all temptations to consistency with its obvious prescription of noting that the book is a project of science, of research).

Questions addressed by the book are introduced by a photo essay: a series of images compiled from archive materials, in which as reader-viewers we watch the watchers. The affective basis of acts of perception is, in Niziołek’s understanding, fear³ (and sometimes, even when not expressed straightforwardly and emphatically, hatred, greed, envy, and so forth). We look first at a group looking into the distance, to the sky – a scene seemingly without significance. Next, we see people watching a burning building: The man closest to the fire reaches for his head, as if he wanted to lift his cap in a gesture of respect for death or, on the contrary, attempt to prevent it from being blown away by a gust of wind, though we’ll not learn which it is. The next photo presents an even bigger group of people looking at a building that’s even more clearly on fire (it’s closer). Next appears a crowd on a street, seen from the window of a vehicle: people gathering on one side, others on the other and, down the middle of the street, men standing in long coats. Then we look at a group of people on a footbridge, and tram no. 22. Then we see people on a playground and a woman, back turned toward us, looking at children playing, who in turn look at the woman thus at us.

Each page we turn, each new revelation, becomes more and more difficult as it becomes ever clearer what we are looking at now and what the person with the camera had looked at, as well as the person standing next to him or her. We continue looking at the crowd on the streets, looking over races of people squatting and people sitting on their shoulders (both those squatting and those sitting have armbands with the Star of David). We see a blurred photo of children looking into the lens, and around them others walking. Next, at the right of the frame, a small crowd looks at a scene playing out in the central part of the composition: with clubs, three men in uniform, standing, beat a fourth person, lying. This picture was taken from behind a fence. The fence can be seen in the lower part of the frame. Next: a black spread. Farther away, in the background, stand abandoned houses, perhaps ruins (?); in the foreground lie some kind of bundles (?) or remains (?) on the ground. Another turning/revealing: the title page. A dry description, as we know, doesn’t convey the nonverbal power of an image, all the more so of such an assemblage of images. This self-styled ‘lead-in’ brings the reader into

3 Grzegorz Niziołek, *Polski teatr Zagłady* (Warsaw: Instytut Teatralny im. Zbigniewa Raszewskiego, Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2013), p. 410.

the very heart of the book. The selection of photos appears no less conscious than the selection of the methodology; fundamentally the choice of photos is an integral element of this, at the beginning of the book and throughout it.

Niziołek makes an attempt to develop tools to analyse unaware or actually unconscious affective structures, which determine the shape of post-war symbolic space in Poland. An important role in this process is played by psychoanalytical tools, applied aptly and successfully. What is impressive here is the author's conviction that this choice need not be explained, expressed by his lack of justification that psychoanalytical theory, theory of trauma and theory of affects are necessary in handling complexities both of staging particular shows and of their reception. The author is prepared to admit at times to the weakness of his tools. He writes, for example, that studies of trauma led to drawing out the concept of trauma to such a degree that it covers too many phenomena today, in fact not naming anything at all. Yet there is no way to discard it.

Of course, Niziołek is interested by the particular historical trauma related to the disavowal of the position of onlooker, standing off to the side, an observer of the Holocaust, and the related dark (obscene) satisfaction and delight. Thus, he does not deal with theoretical development of the theories of trauma or affects, but introduces into the history of theatre, and into theatre studies as a discipline in the expanded field of cultural studies, the burning questions related here and now to the writing of such history, as well as to the subjective position of the researcher herself, along with timeless questions connected with relationship to historical traumas, the feeling of loss in the face of another's tragedy, the possibility of empathy, etc. What is most important here is understanding theatricality and its role as regards historical events and history in general.

As is stated above, Niziołek is interested by the Polish 'public', the public at the time of the Holocaust and the public living in its shadow after the Holocaust, with its stigma, with the trauma of one's own deprivation of subjectivity. This collectivity is not the actors of history, but those who sit and look; no one urges them to action, leads them to it – in fact, it's as if there is no room for their action, because what is important happens on the stage, thus beyond their reach. Thus the audience is in the deepest sense obscene.⁴ In performing detailed archival work, the author attempts to bring to life his own affective archive, which would bring together documentation of trans-conscious and trans-rational structures of

4 Andrzej Leder described this in 'Kto nam zabrał tę rewolucję?' The author presents the thesis that the period from 1939 to 1956 was one of a radical social revolution in Poland, which remains outside the popular consciousness, even though it brutally and deeply 'ploughed through the tissue of Polish society', becoming responsible for the current state of affairs in terms of class, the economy and symbolism. Leder stresses the not insignificant role of the Holocaust in this process, its results and consequences, which seem to be insufficiently explored, and are perhaps even taboo, in public as well as academic discourse. Here the question that becomes key is that of non-identifying and passive experience, which destine (un)experiencing collectives to treat that which happened as 'not ours' and thus 'null'. As a result, we are now dealing with a history of the construction of false identities and the establishment of erroneous hierarchies of goals and values. The author deems it essential for the Polish collective to recognize its proper place, its hard-to-accept genealogy, then to take responsibility upon itself (for the past, the future; for itself, but also for others – which is tied to the demand for, and possibly even the imperative of, empathy). See *Krytyka Polityczna* 2013, 29, pp. 32–39.

surviving and perceiving historical, political and artistic reality, as well as attempts to intervene in it. The texts of culture become, in the perspective thus outlined, a repository for emotions and feelings, as well as that which lies at their foundation: processes of displacement and the compulsion to repeat. This original archive is also made up of material objects (documents, reviews, accounts, notes, visual materials dug up from other archives) as well as non-material ones (understatements, omissions, narrative breaks, acts of self-censorship, etc.), which we usually do not really find in traditionally written histories of literature, film or theatre. For this, the particular temperament of the archivist is needed.⁵

Such an affective archive does not have its own (proper) place, nor its own owner, for it is an issue common to everyone, established in each act of reading and in each act of movement, affect, imagination, thought, and in each refusal to close this history (and other histories) in a single paradigm, whether heroic or traumatic. Thus, the historical narrative is built here from flickers and gaps; unasked, uncomfortable questions are posed to the source material. On that basis, and also on the basis of silent replies, are formulated hypotheses that are absent, and sometimes actually impossible. Though after a moment it becomes increasingly possible, and even obvious. One of the boldest examples of this strategy is the digging up of a forgotten, un-analysed episode from the history of Polish theatre: the presentation in 1957 one of Warsaw's theatres of *The Diary of Anne Frank*, a Broadway play written by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, which in Poland was seen by more than 60,000 people. Niziołek asks whether it's possible that the decision to stage it had nothing to do with the wave of anti-Semitism and emigration of Polish Jews in 1956,⁶ and what impressions it could have aroused in what was after all a large audience, watching 'Jews' on the stage of a Warsaw theatre, in an area that until recently was part of the ghetto, seeking refuge and deliverance from the Holocaust.⁷ Niziołek's assertions don't boil down to statements that when directors undertake to stage certain texts, the choice is never random and often arises out of deeply buried currents of collective life, from unconscious longings. He searches even deeper. Everything according to the logic of affective history, Niziołek seems to be saying, has meaning; nothing is senseless; these senses, nevertheless, arrange themselves according to different principles than those binding in the world thus far (of research, cultural criticism), making a division between the sensible and the senseless.

In creating a sort of original archive, Niziołek accurately explores the dominant cultural scheme, without sugar-coating it. To describe it well, he reaches for a variety of sources, spares nobody and in a certain sense – it can and must be said – nobody is innocent, and 'guilt' has various scales and ranges. It is difficult not to think, when writing these words, about on-going discussion around interrupted and suspended productions in Kraków's Stary Theatre and surrounding the film *Ida*, directed by Paweł Pawlikowski. It's difficult, which is why I take the liberty of

5 See Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feeling: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

6 According to some estimates, 47,000 Jews left Poland at that time; other reports cite 51,000. See Dariusz Stola, 'Emigracja pomarcowa' in the series *Prace Migracyjne* 2000, 34, Institute of Social Studies, Warsaw, http://www.academia.edu/1001572/Emigracja_pomarcowa, [accessed: 10 November 2013].

7 See Niziołek, pp. 224–241.

referring to a statement by Elżbieta Janicka, extremely close to me and in accordance with the theses of *Polish Theatre of the Holocaust*:

The cultural models rule us and speak through us, operating with the strength of coercion, as long as we remain unconscious of them. They permeate the entire social spectrum, they are shared by rich and poor, educated and uneducated, people of good and ill will. Not everyone, but the majority.⁸

And later:

The point is that we deserve more. All of us. After all, it's possible to have cinema [and literature, art, theatre, historiography, criticism, etc.] removed from a scheme. It's also possible to have cinema that operates according to the scheme, and even ostentatiously exposing the scheme, to blow it up from within. Operating by means of various poetics, but always self-aware enough not to say what was not wanted to be said.⁹

Such conscious speaking is typical of the author of *Polish Theatre of the Holocaust*. This book becomes a greatly significant gesture for many reasons: it is, first of all, a gesture of refusal to participate, a dissident gesture, not only with regard to what we could call the national collective but also, in a certain sense, with the collective of the discipline (psychoanalysis still appears to be a foreign language for Polish humanities, particularly when we begin to deal with the question of secular though sanctified history – a good example is historians 'indignant' at Jan Sowa's book *Fantomowe ciało króla. Peryferyjne zmagania z nowoczesną formą*¹⁰ [*The Phantom Body of the King*]. At stake here is emancipation: of the researcher, the object of research and the recipient-readers, their subjectivity, the imagination granted to them.

Everything indicates that historical research, in this case in the field of history of the theatre, or theatre studies, is an affective experience per se. The experience of intensity, of the struggle with the format of one's beliefs and one's perception, with the temptation to stick with certain 'facts' and not tear at the seams of the fabric. Niziołek tackled available archival material in the broadest possible sense of that word; he faced up to it, he didn't take it at its word or at its image, he looked askance. In the course of his argument, he frequently returns simply and not so simply to the question: What does it mean to be touched, and to feel, in the process of coming to know, and how can these impressions then be converted in the writing process into critical historical narrative? It appears that the issue is a particular type of remark or attentiveness, sensitivity and courage. For it also appears that it's impossible to touch the history of the Holocaust without being touched by it. Niziołek seems to be aware of his position as a subject and as a researcher, of the choices he makes and the danger to which he exposes himself. In connection with this, I assume that he runs the risk intentionally. He bears in mind the automatism of false empathy, narration of redemption and the rhetoric

⁸ <http://www.krytykapolityczna.pl/artykuly/film/20131125/janicka-ogon-ktory-machapsem>, [accessed: 10 November 2013).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Jan Sowa, *Fantomowe ciało króla. Peryferyjne zmagania z nowoczesną formą* (Kraków: Universitas, 2011).

of the sublime, that function in both cultural and academic production. In this framework, outside observers and commentators can never remain impartial. Even if they appear to be passionless or indifferent. One American theoretician and critic of historiography, Dominick LaCapra, accurately described the attitude which Niziołek takes on, it appears, and which in this context seems to be not so much possible or interesting as essential¹¹:

Without diminishing the importance of research, contextualization, and objective reconstruction of the past, experience as it bears on understanding involves affect both in the observed and in the observer. Trauma is a disruptive experience that disarticulates these self and creates holes in existence; it has belated effects that are controlled only with difficulty and perhaps never fully mastered. The study of traumatic events poses especially difficult problems in representation and writing both for research and for any dialogic exchange with the past which acknowledges the claims it makes on people and relates it to the present and future. Being responsive to the traumatic experience of others, notably of victims, implies not the appropriation of their experience but what I would call empathic unsettlement, which should have stylistic effects or, more broadly, effects in writing which cannot be reduced to formulas or rules of method.¹²

What LaCapra calls 'empathic unsettlement' here does not allow, on one hand, for the closure of one's story about the past and present in the convention that maintains itself in the spirit, while on the other, it does not allow fixation on trauma.

In the affective historical narration in post-war Polish theatre, we can distinguish the following stages: the immediate post-war period, supersaturated with direct relationships, with visual, feverish impressions captured in a form that does not always work out, as with the 1946 production of Stefan Otwinowski's *Wielkanoc* [*Easter*] directed by Leon Schiller, an attempt to inscribe the Holocaust in the Romantic tradition, and Juliusz Osterwa's staging of Juliusz Słowacki's *Lilia Weneda*; the period of Stalinism and with it socialist realism, with Jerzy Lutowski's *Próba sił* [*Test of Strength*] and Leon Kruczkowski's *Juliusz i Ethel* directed by Aleksander Bardini, where the character of the Jew appears as if from another world and there is no mention that the Rosenbergs were Jews (with the purpose – as Niziołek demonstrates – of making the story universal and guaranteeing audience empathy); then the period from October 1956 to the 1970s, with *The Diary of Anne Frank*, mentioned above, and 'Auschwitz' productions *Puste pole* [*Empty Field*], and *Akropolis* (both with Jerzy Szajna) with a universalist tinge as well as certain disturbing elements percolating to the surface, as Niziołek notes, certain cracks in those productions by Tadeusz Kantor and Jerzy Grotowski.

Still disturbing even if grotesque, these later productions appear to be examples of the almost allergic reactions of 'Polish' criticism to gross examples of distortion of the role of Polish citizens or Poles in general in the perpetration of the Holocaust. Niziołek brings up charges of anti-Polonism, insulting acts, on the one hand, while on the other, he

11 See, for example, Joanna Tokarska-Bakir in *Rzeczy mgliste* (Sejny: Wydawnictwo Fundacji Pogranicza, 2004).

12 Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

points to acts, difficult to understand today, of passing over and in fact ignoring those gaps in Kantor (in *Kurka wodna* [*The Water Hen*] and *Nadobnie i koczodany* [*Lovelies & Dowdies*]). The author describes the 1970s as a period of the triumph of the community and of strenuous work by theatre artists to strengthen it – they proposed models in accordance with collective approval, reflecting the feelings of the collective, building its spirit in the face of current struggles (here, Konrad Swinarski's productions of *Dziady* [*Forefathers' Eve*] and *Wyzwolenie* [*Liberation*] serve as examples). In this period, a rehabilitation also occurs of nostalgia and sentimentalism, at the price of 'erasing' (Andrzej Wajda's *Rozmowy z katem* [*Conversations with an Executioner*], in which the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, the capital's first uprising, is pushed into the background, almost disappearing). Finally there are the 1980s, when procedures were under way of a symbolic strengthening of the community, and the period after 1989, when individual gestures of settling accounts begin to appear in the work of directors Jerzy Grzegorzewski and Krystian Lupa, and finally with Krzysztof Warlikowski.¹³ This narrative has its positive and negative heroes, it doesn't flinch from harsh judgments but always in the most detailed possible context.

For Niziołek, a key category for understanding the complex role of theatre and theatricality is repetition: during a production, the traumatic situation of de-subjectification may be repeated, of being an observer of an unimaginable crime that one not only did not counteract but which one may have even quietly supported, though this is not certain. While reading the book, though, a question constantly nags: who is this audience, which might experience this kind of repetition, though it does not have to? And as a result, is this really always a return of that which is traumatic and repressed? So the fundamental problem applies to the characterization of this post-war public and its relationship to the war-time public.

This is also related, I believe, to the question about the effectiveness of all kinds of repetition within strategies applied by subversive theatre, politically incorrect and ethically risky, which is to deal with the spectres of the past. Problems with the shape of the community of viewers, as with who does not belong to this community, are closely related, I believe, to the problem of social class (both the experience of the Holocaust and its memory). It can be seen how the author struggles with this, though sometimes he is incapable of finding satisfactory solutions.

This can be seen clearly in the case of the narrative about Jerzy Grotowski's 1964 *Studium o Hamlecie* [*Study on Hamlet*], in which the atmosphere of a pogrom is staged – as the author says, "so that it hurts" – because the director is referring to the most painful and shameful image from the war,¹⁴ to the image of an anti-Semitic, brutal, blind and irresponsible mob, which nevertheless is making history, as Andrzej Leder put it. It's difficult to shake off the troublesome question of which public deserves the image proposed by Grotowski, and whether, significantly, he returns the innocent guilty ones to their traumatized role or, on the contrary, allows them to distinguish and distance themselves from what

¹³ In this ordering, I was helped by Małgorzata Szpakowska's 'summary', presented during a discussion of the book organized by the Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute in October 2013. The discussion was published in the journal *Dialog*.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 324.

is happening on stage, to think 'How good that it's not us. That's not us.' Does such a 'repetition' not fulfil the absolving role of a curtain; does it not constitute an example of that repressive action of theatre that the author writes of in a different place? It's not that the problems concerning the shape of the community don't bother the author himself. They return in his deliberations several times, as reflections of the 'rabble' inspired by Herman Broch (p. 423), and problems with being a community referred to by the critic Marta Fik (p. 426).

The non-universal, class-based character of this community is attested to by the author's detailed, critical description of the post-war recovery and the almost compulsive reconstruction of the canons – particularly the Romantic one – somehow under the influence of a collective self-preservation instinct. The author points many times to the 'senselessness' of these gestures, to their inappropriateness or actual indecency, and also to the fact that non-remembering constitutes a condition of social reconstruction, rebuilding: thus it requires and privileges narratives that make sense of the salvation, survival and perseverance of a given community. The thing about the Romantic canon is that it cuts both ways: it allows resistance to the oppressive authorities (for whom 'Polishness' is always a threat), and simultaneously allows resistance to that traumatic past with its undesired roles, experiences, etc., difficult to accept and process. Romanticism promotes the strengthening of the community and the marginalization of the Other/stranger outside its boundaries (pp. 214–216). The author analyses this perfectly, using the example of numerous post-war productions, perhaps most penetratingly in the context of Aleksander Bardini's *Balladyna* from 1954 and the now (in)famous 'question of lightning'.

That which is of the community lives on in various places (and bodies), where people are working out their own ways of feeling and experiencing what it means to be a historical being at a particular moment of a given political and cultural formation.¹⁵ How, then, to think of the historicity of one's own historical moment? Niziołek suggests a perspective that is to bring him beyond that which is known and already recognized as 'historical'. So he writes his story about Polish theatre, the audience and the (non)memory of the Holocaust, using an experimental method. He not only opens history to affect, but also affect to history: he writes about what is not seen (or is poorly seen), unexperienced and unremembered, even though it was present there and then (during the war and after the war on theatre stages), it was lived through. That which in this narration emerges as historical does not match up with what is 'historical' in the view of the history of Polish theatre written from the perspective of the symbolic order. In the latter, as the author writes, the history of theatre is 'acts of symbolic reinterpretation of great texts and collective myths, to which are ascribed cultural significance and permanence'.¹⁶ Niziołek goes against the grain; he wants to reveal a different history, to find its other mode, not only to unmask the anti-Semitic and defence-national character of this culture and its theatrical implementations, but also in order to point to a certain unrealized potential, missed opportunities but also moments of awakening that arouse hope, and

¹⁵ See Lauren Berlant, 'Intuitionists: History and the Affective Event', *American Literary History* 2008, 20/4, pp. 845–860.

¹⁶ Niziołek, p. 220.

fear-inducing instances of overlooking them.

'Is it just that every story of the Jewish fate during the Holocaust is fundamentally "anti-Polish"?'¹⁷ Niziołek asks, calling to mind the review of Aleksander Ford's 1946 film *Ulica Graniczna* [*Border Street*] written by Maria Dąbrowska at the request of the state. The writer, commenting on the film, directly expresses her indignation at 'masked anti-Polish propaganda', and actually accuses the creators of 'aggravating anti-Semitism'.¹⁸ 'Anti-Polonism' is the key issue, perhaps one that even affects the book itself. As with 'Polishness', at issue is who can be included in its bounds, who decides on its nature and decides who is on the margin. One of the most important advantages of this book is that Niziołek does not give up community, does not want to be freed from it, but attempts to think of Polishness differently, to establish it on a foundation of empathy (first and foremost, empathy towards the Other). And this is a project by all means worthy of recognition, even if it is utopian.

Memory of the Holocaust becomes both a reason for and a manner of reconstructing collective identity. The case of Krzysztof Warlikowski seems to particularly impress the author. In the context of the director's work, and particularly *(A)pollonia* (2009), the problem of the audience returns. At the centre here is the question of claiming through the medium of the theatre an unceasing and inconsolable trauma in public life. Warlikowski's play is governed by a melancholic ethic, radicalizing memory, according to which a ground zero is designated in the Polish discussion of the Holocaust, its own gestures are radicalised and the 'historical horizon' is cleared, and all of this so as not to mistake repression for processing, to avoid the trap of shifting social questions into the sphere of psychology and arrive at the conclusion, kitsch by nature, that everything can be processed. Theatre supports community defence mechanisms, Niziołek writes,¹⁹ and thus it should struggle with itself, so as not to become overly didactic. It needs art that presents resistance, that does not conform itself to easily recognizable models either of processing or of purification. In the theatre of the Holocaust there is no catharsis; it is an eternal suffering of memory. Thus, the point would be to create productions that, proposing this repetition on one hand, do not offer reconciliation. They indicate the need for processing, while simultaneously revealing its false note, this 'We did this, now we'll be better'.

Warlikowski's *(A)polonia* rejects the structure of the social drama, and thus rejects staging of situations that could easily be applied to real problems of life and death, heroism and cowardice, betrayal and redemption, etc. In the framework of the affective critic, the director says: Trauma cannot be undone (all attempts to do so end in either moral or aesthetic kitsch), but it is possible, through the means of art, to allow the audience to live on, perhaps even to affectively develop the experience of loss, to live through this loss and begin the process of mourning, or confront their own reluctance toward such work and come to know the opposite experience. Warlikowski, speaking to a kind of melancholic excess, a superabundance of what is difficult to bear and to contain in the space of academic writing – that which the artist is free to do on the stage is not to serve social causes in a one-to-one relationship – in this sense it is also

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 157.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 156.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 534.

not to be fully readable, Niziołek realizes, or comprehensible according to the binding practices of reading and understanding.²⁰

The task that the author of *Polish Theatre of the Holocaust* sets himself is in spirit Benjaminian: to grasp the shape of memory, which flashes in particular moments, to describe it as well and as faithfully as possible, trying in the process not to close off this description in a framework imposed at the outset. He follows the areas of art and the community life (or maybe one should say phantasmic life) of the collective that have been shifted beyond language. He develops the appropriate mood, which will make feeling possible and lead to the appropriate, or more appropriate, practices of thinking and acting in the public space, in the symbolic space. Niziołek in a sense moves this vector of loss, directing it at himself as well. The point is what Maria Janion once wanted from us:

We must live in an excess of pain, in a feeling of irreparable loss. Here we are not bound by the tradition of mourning lasting no longer than one or two years. This mourning can never end. As an ethical attitude, it describes the universal European consciousness. Poland, which Hitler designated as the scene of the crime, cannot avoid this mourning.²¹

Pain and responsibility, shame, but also guilt, more moved and ready to be moved more.

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²⁰ See *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, ed. by David L. Eng David Kazanjian (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

²¹ Maria Janion, *Niesamowita słowiańszczyzna* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2006), p. 33–34.

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